

**THE PRINCE AND THE
PAGE: A STORY OF
THE LAST CRUSADE**

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The prince and the page: a story of the last crusade by Charlotte M. Yonge

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A Story of the Last Crusade

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CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

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PREFACE

IN these days of exactness even a child's historical romance must point to what the French term its *pièces justificatives*. We own that ours do not lie very deep. The picture of Simon de Montfort drawn by his wife's own household books, as quoted by Mrs. Everett Green in her *Lives of the Princesses*, and that of Edward I. in Carte's *History*, and more recently in the *Greatest of the Plantagenets*, furnished the two chief influences of the story. The household accounts show that Earl Simon and Eleanor of England had five sons. Henry fell with his father at Evesham. Simon and Guy deeply injured his cause by their violence, and after holding out Kenilworth against the Prince, retired to the Continent, where they sacrilegiously murdered Henry, son of the King of the Romans—a crime so much abhorred in Italy that Dante represents himself as meeting them in torments in the *Inferno*, not however before Guy had become the founder of the family of the Counts of Monforte

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in the Maremma. Richard, the fourth son, appears in the household books as possessing dogs, and having garments bought for him; but his history has not been traced after his mother left England. The youngest son, Amaury, obtained the hereditary French possessions of the family, and continued the line of Montfort as a French subject. Eleanor, the only daughter, called the *Demoiselle de Montfort*, married, as is well known, the last native prince of Wales, and died after a few years.

The adventure of Edward with the outlaw of Alton Wood is one of the stock anecdotes of history, and many years ago the romance of the encounter led the author to begin a tale upon it, in which the outlaw became the protector of one of the proscribed family of Montfort. The commencement was placed in one of the manuscript magazines which are so often the amusement of a circle of friends. It was not particularly correct in its details, and the hero bore the peculiarly improbable name of Wilfred (by which he has since appeared in the *Monthly Packet*). The story slept for many years in MS., until further reading and thought had brought stronger interest in the period, and for better or for worse it was taken in hand again. Joinville, together with the authorities quoted by Sismondi, assisted in picturing the arrival of the English after the death of St. Louis, and the murder of Henry of Almayne is related in all

crusading histories; but for Simon's further career, and for his implication in the attempt on Edward's life at Acre, the author is alone responsible, taking refuge in the entire uncertainty that prevails as to the real originator of the crime, and perhaps an apology is likewise due to Dante for having reversed his doom.

For the latter part of the story, the old ballad of *The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green*, gives the framework. That ballad is believed to be Elizabethan in date, and the manners therein certainly are scarcely accordant with the real thirteenth century, and still less with our notions of the days of chivalry. Some liberties therefore have been taken with it, the chief of them being that *Bessee* is not permitted to go forth to seek her fortune in the inn at Romford, and the readers are entreated to believe that the alteration was made by the traditions which repeated *Henry de Montfort's* song.

It was the late *Hugh Millar* who alleged that the huge stone under which *Edward* sleeps in *Westminster Abbey* agrees in structure with no rocks nearer than those whence the mighty stones of the *Temple at Jerusalem* were hewn, and there is no doubt that earth and stones were frequently brought by crusaders from the *Holy Land* with a view to the hallowing of their own tombs.

The author is well aware that this tale has all the