

**THE LITTLE
LAME PRINCE**

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The Little Lame Prince by Mrs. G. L. Craik & Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward

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MRS. G. L. CRAIK & MRS. ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD

THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE



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THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE

cc
By MRS. G. L. CRAIK

(DINAH MARIA (MULOCK) 1806-1881)

AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN," "THE ADVENTURES
OF A BROWNIE," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY ETHELDRED B. BARRY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

MRS. ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD

BOSTON, U.S.A.

D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS

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PREFATORY NOTE.

ONE of the noblest of English writers has set herself no easy task in the making of this little book, and has achieved her end with a skill, of which it is enough to say that it is worthy of her mind and pen.

Wonder tales are not primers or sermons; and the fairy story, pure and simple, need own no graver aim than to give a happy hour to the young readers who love and crave this kind of literature. Stories of this class which admit a higher purpose are, if successful, usually the work of a master hand.

The English author, Mrs. Craik, — among those who love her still called by her maiden name, Miss Mulock, — has, in especial degree, the gift of telling a strong story with a beautiful purpose, or a beautiful story with a strong purpose, whichever way we choose to put it. Now that her fine hand is folded, who writes any more such simple, but exquisitely modelled and ennobling tales as *Two Marriages* or *Mistress and Maid*? *John Halifax—Gentleman*, one of the best novels of the English language, has become a classic, and, we may venture to say, will remain one as long as the language lasts. Thousands of this author's older readers will read any child's book that bears her name, because she wrote it.

The Little Lame Prince is a story which means more than it says, and puts the child's mind "at attention" lest the meaning miss him. Little Prince Dolor, like the offspring of heaven and earth in Charles Lamb's ethereal fancy, "goeth lame and lovely." A sad fate befalls him; a wonderful releases him; he suffers and enjoys more than other children do, or can.

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We wonder whether this is because of his lameness, his loveliness, or his princeliness; and we conclude that it is because of all these together that the Prince was the boy he was,— brave, patient, generous, forgiving, fine, unselfish, and as strong of soul as he was weak of body.

The story is as full of interest as if it had not a moral to its name. It is genuine fairy work, interlaced with the unexpected, alive with marvels. You will shudder before the inaccessible steepes of the Hopeless Tower; you will grow dizzy when you look from the skies in the travelling cloak; you thrill with the joy of freedom when the Prince floats out of his prison, and you are one of his heartiest subjects, when he comes to his throne, as all wronged princes ought to do.

But this will not be all. There are horizons to this fairy story. It looks beyond the story, and above the fairy; and it sees, far against the impatient wishes and caprices of a child's daily life, lying at a soft and purple distance, like the outline of cloud and hilltop, the eternal and the merciful meaning of pain. This is the last truth that is usually taught to children. Yet it is the first that life will force upon them. No child will be sadder, and many may be happier, for learning, without knowing it, how to bear suffering if it shall come to him; how to meet what this author describes as "the sense of the inevitable, as grown-up people call it—that we cannot have things as we want them to be, but as they are, and that we must learn to bear them and make the best of them. . . . When we see people suffering or unfortunate, we feel very sorry for them; but when we see them bravely bearing their sufferings and making the best of their misfortunes, it is quite a different feeling. We respect, we admire them. One can respect and admire even a little child."

Be sure that one can respect and admire this little Prince for the happiness that he achieves out of his lameness and loneliness,—for he was a happy boy, in spite of all his troubles, and the story has a happy ending, as all children's stories

should have. If it draw a few tears, they run into smiles; and the last page leaves us with a gentle, quiet feeling, such as grown men and women call peace.

It is one of the pleasant things about this story that the child who reads and loves it will be sure, when he is old enough, to read and love another book by this author, of which *The Little Lame Prince* reminds us. *A Noble Life*, whose hero, too, is "lame and lovely," is a gospel among novels; and the mind which conceives and executes books like these is almost as safe a guide for our children as if they sat at the feet of the Dear Disciple, and listened to the greatest and most wonderful of all the Wonder Tales, which was lived and told to make us happier, because it makes us better.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD.

NEWTON CENTRE, MASS.,
May, 1900.

