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# Crusade

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

2

The very 20th-century looking girl on its jacket does not accurately portray the heroine of this novel set in 13th-century France. Georgette is a devout Catholic, and that strong faith runs deeply through this story. She and her difficult brother leave their father's home to join what is now known as the Children's Crusade in the summer of 1212. The other main character is Robert, a foundling who has been raised and educated by the Abbot of the monastery where he was left, and who also feels he has been called to join the Crusade, which is led by the charismatic Stephen (who according to history was 12 but seems much older in this story). As the Crusade travels its way across France to Marseilles where Stephen has promised the sea will part so that they can walk to Jerusalem, many children die, including Georgette's brother Gregor, and the feeding of so many children brings difficulties for the villages through which they pass. Stephen may be charismatic and able to deliver stirring sermons to his followers and the villagers, but he is surrounded by his cronies and they drink and take the prettier of the girls off into the woods. Robert, who can recite the offices of the Catholic Church from memory, is drawn into this circle but finds it not to his liking at all, and saves Georgette from certain rape. When the Crusade arrives at Marseilles, the children find that the sea has not parted for them, Stephen then disappears and the children are left at the mercy of slave traffickers. Georgette is rejected to sail on the ships for what she thinks is a certain path to Jerusalem, as is Robert. The two are thus drawn together, gradually fall in love and plan to marry. They end up in Paris, married and after Robert speaks for tolerance of other religions, they flee to Lyons. This last part of the story is rather rushed and would perhaps have made a sequel allowing the author to develop the issues involved.

The Church is also a central plank of the story, and the prose, which at times is rather dry, tries to convey the strong faith of the young people involved that led them to leave their families and homes to follow Stephen in his crusade. In this respect the story is less than satisfying. The subject matter will not appeal to many young people which is a pity as stories that deal with faith of whatever sort are not often written, yet faith was at the heart of people's lives for a good part of history. An earlier novel covering the same Crusade in France is Henry Treece's **The Children's Crusade** published in 1958 and long out of print.

Running Order:

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**Links:**

[1] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/crusade-0>

[2] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/187>

[3] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/janet-fisher>