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HEROES OF THE
CRUSADES.

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474 BY
BARBARA HUTTON,
AUTHOR OF 'CASTLES AND THEIR HEROES.'

'Bound for Holy Palestine.'

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Peter Preaching the First Crusade.—Page 16.

PREFACE.

WHEN walking over our old country church or cathedral, have we not sometimes cast upon full-length effigies of cross-legged knights, and been told that they whose bones reposed beneath those stones were Crusaders? It was sometimes, but not always so; as that distinction was often bestowed after death on knights who had never fought out of their own country. Still one associates the cross-legged attitude with those who left their hearths and homes to fight in the Holy Land; and we feel an involuntary reverence for their remains, which throws over their graves a halo of romance. We cannot help being interested in those brave but mistaken warriors. Their blood was given in a vain cause; but we feel that they gave up a great deal when they fixed the cross to their shoulders.

A great many very interesting histories have been written on the Crusades. The following pages are not intended to be a history, but merely sketches of the principal points of those expeditions of the Middle Ages which, should they



P R E F A C E.

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interest, may lead to the reading of better and graver books on the same subject. 'Heroes' they were in one sense; but, I fear, even the brightest examples of knights in those days fall very short of anything like real heroism. They were often cruel and barbarous; and many a dark deed took place in the Holy Land, in the name of the Cross, that shamed the cause of chivalry. Still the Crusades did much to civilise the West in the Middle Ages. The Saracens and Turks were looked upon as barbarians, but their Christian foes copied their manners and customs, and learned much that was good in the East. The earlier Crusaders, when they went back to England or France, contrasted their rude castles with Eastern or Italian palaces, rebuilding them in accordance with more refined ideas acquired in Palestine—the land that they conquered, but could not keep. The dangers that the Crusaders went through, the hardships they endured, may teach us a lesson, that to be heroic we must endure; and though many a century has passed away since the Crusades, we may find much to imitate in the story of those warriors of old who gave up, often from genuine motives, lands and home to become Crusaders, and to fight for the Holy Land.

'The knights they are dust,
Their good swords rust,
Their souls are with the
Saints, we trust.'

B. H.

OCTOBER, 1868.



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