



Chronicles of the Crusades (Penguin Classics)

By Jean de Joinville, Geoffroy de Villehardouin



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Two famous, firsthand accounts of the holy war in the Middle Ages translated by Caroline Smith

Originally composed in Old French, the two chronicles brought together here offer some of the most vivid and reliable accounts of the Crusades from a Western perspective. Villehardouin's *Conquest of Constantinople*, distinguished by its simplicity and lucidity, recounts the controversial Fourth Crusade, which descended into an all-out attack on the Eastern Christians of Byzantium. In *Life of Saint Louis*, Joinville draws on his close attachment to King Louis IX of France to recall his campaigning in the Holy Land. Together these narratives comprise a fascinating window on events that, for all their remoteness, offer startling similarities to our own age.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Geoffrey of Villehardouin was born in around 1150. In 1185 he was appointed to the office of marshal of Champagne, and having taken the cross in 1199 he was subsequently appointed as an envoy by the leaders of the Fourth Crusade. He was privy to crucial decisions made throughout the course of the crusade, which ended with the conquest of Constantinople from its Greek Christian rulers in April 1204. His account of The Conquest of Constantinople relates the controversial history of the Fourth Crusade and the early years of the Latin empire from the perspective of a well-informed insider. John of Joinville was born in 1224 or 1225. In 1233 he inherited the office of seneschal of Champagne that would give him a leading role in the administrative affairs of the county. He took the cross for the first crusade led by King Louis IX of France. Joinville became a close friend of Louis IX and after their return to France he was a familiar figure at the royal court. Joinville refused to join Louis on his second crusade and was therefore not present when the king died in 1270. He honoured his friend's memory by giving evidence to the enquiry that established the king's sanctity and by composing The Life of Saint Louis as a record of his holy words and good deeds.

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