

But it is not so much for her successful statesmanship that Blanche is famous, as for the training which she gave to her son. Louis IX., Saint Louis, as he is generally called, was the ideal mediæval king. He was deeply religious, but with none of the weakness which characterised so many of the religious kings of the Middle Ages. He was just, honourable and straightforward in all his dealings; temperate, humble and charitable; a model son, husband, father and brother; an ideal knight, a shrewd statesman, a king who upheld the authority and fulfilled the duties of his position. "As a Christian and as a man, as a statesman and as a warrior, he was the exemplar of all that was best in his age."¹ There is no more attractive figure in history than that of Saint Louis as he appears in the pages of his biography written by his friend the Sieur de Joinville.

The character of Louis appears to great advantage in his dealings with England. Henry III. invaded France in 1242 to aid a rebellion of the nobles of the south-west in the hope of recovering Poitou. He was ignominiously defeated, but some years later Louis voluntarily returned to him certain parts of Philip's conquests to which he thought the English king had a just claim.

In his reign the royal power was extended in the south: his brother Alfonso succeeded to the Countship of Toulouse on the death of his father-in-law, while another brother, Charles of Anjou, became, through marriage to its heiress, Count of Provence, that part of Languedoc which had not hitherto been part of the French kingdom. It was this Charles

¹ Tout.