

The Henry Connection

In *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* Alice speaks of how she both loves and hates her love with an 'H' and wonders several times whether she exists only in the dreams of the Red King.

Alice



"Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" John Tenniel (1870).

"'Not at all,' said the King. 'He's an Anglo-Saxon Messenger — and those are Anglo-Saxon attitudes. He only does them when he's happy. His name is Haigha.' (He pronounced it so as to rhyme with 'mayor')."

'I love my love with an H,' Alice couldn't help beginning, 'because he is Happy. I hate him with an H, because he is Hideous. I fed him with — with — with Ham-sandwiches and Hay.'

Alice Through the Looking-Glass, Chapter 7.

The Red King (identifiable as Henry II) plays a passive role in the story, being asleep throughout the action, but as in chess, is the lynchpin of the action swirling around him.

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Shortly after Eleanor's marriage to Louis VII was annulled, she arrived in Poitiers and became engaged to the 9 years younger Henry II, the red-haired Duke of the Normans.

Eleanor



Peter O'Toole and Jane Merrow as Henry and Alice. *Lion in Winter* (1968).

Eleanor's second marriage, to the Norman duke who became Henry II, included many contentious years during which Alice Capet was a ward in his court and a thorn in Eleanor's side.

Eleanor and Henry jointly ruled an extensive territory from the Spanish border to the North of England for a quarter of a century together.

Eleanor's love of Henry was legendary and they would go hunting on horseback together in the forests of France. His name begins with H. As Henry was French, but became king of England, he would have been plainly aware of the differences between French and Anglo-Saxon manners.

Later, Henry II was the king in whose court the French Princess Alice spent her adolescent years trying to find her path through the courtly intrigues of the confusing manoeuvres in Henry's struggle for power.

After Eleanor's imprisonment and the death of 'The Fair Rosamund', Henry's attentions seem to have focused on Alice and he could be said to have dreamed of marrying her and resolving his claim to the French

“ ‘He’s dreaming now,’ said Tweedledee: ‘and what do you think he’s dreaming about?’

Alice said ‘Nobody can guess that.’

‘Why, about you!’ Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. ‘And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you’d be?’

‘Where I am now, of course,’ said Alice.

‘Not you!’ Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. ‘You’d be nowhere. Why, you’re only a sort of thing in his dream!’

‘If that there King was to wake,’ added Tweedledum, ‘you’d go out — bang! — just like a candle!’

‘I shouldn’t!’ Alice exclaimed indignantly. ‘Besides, if I’m only a sort of thing in his dream, what are you, I should like to know?’ ”

Alice Through the Looking-Glass, Chapter 4.

“After a while the noise seemed gradually to die away, till all was dead silence, and Alice lifted up her head in some alarm. . . . ‘So I wasn’t dreaming, after all,’ she said to herself, ‘unless — unless we’re all part of the same dream. Only I do hope it’s my dream, and not the Red King’s! I don’t like belonging to another person’s dream,’ she went on in a rather complaining tone: ‘I’ve a great mind to go and wake him, and see what happens!’ ”

Alice Through the Looking-Glass, Chapter 8.

territory. There is no historical information about how Alice felt about the arrangement, but mediaeval ladies in waiting were generally expected to tolerate such internecine suitors and usually seemed to deal with their role in the escapade with fortitude.



King Henry II (~13th century).