



Otto of the Silver Hand (Illustrated)(Annotated)

By Howard Pyle

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Otto of the Silver Hand (Illustrated)(Annotated) By Howard Pyle

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Otto of the Silver Hand was one of the first historical novels for young adults to present the realities behind the chivalric ideal. Pyle reveals the prevalence of cruelty and vengefulness in medieval society. The lesson that chivalry was not always glorious does not, however, overshadow the high sense of adventure found in the story. The story's unflinching portrayal of the unpleasant aspects of medieval life may shock some young readers, but its well-organized and exciting plot makes for entertaining reading.

The book centers around the life of Otto, the son of German warlord Baron Conrad. Otto's mother, Baroness Matilda, has died in premature labour, brought on by the sight of the Baron's battle wounds, prompting Conrad to take his newborn son to be raised in a nearby monastery. When Otto reaches the age of eleven his father returns to claim him from the gentle monks, taking him back to live in Castle Drachenhausen, ("Dragons' House", in German) the ancestral mountaintop fortress from which the Baron launches his attacks. Here Otto learns of and is horrified by his father's life as a robber baron, and particularly the revelation of how Conrad killed a defeated, surrendering enemy, Baron Frederick, a rival robber baron who with his men was defending a column of merchants in return for the tribute they were paying him.

Shortly thereafter Baron Conrad obeys a summons to the Imperial Court, taking the vast majority of his men-at-arms with him as an impressive escort but leaving Castle Drachenhausen practically undefended as a result. The late Baron Frederick's heir, his nephew Baron Henry, then attacks the castle, burning it to the ground, and taking Otto captive. In the dungeon of his castle, Baron Henry explains to Otto that he has sworn a solemn oath that any member of Baron Conrad's House who fell into his hands would never be able to strike a blow like the one which killed his uncle, Baron Frederick. Because Otto is so young, the Baron keeps this oath by cutting off his right hand instead of killing him, and as an afterthought has a healer sent to tend to him. While Otto is feverish from the pain of his wound, he is comforted by Baron Henry's eight year old daughter,

Pauline, who visits his cell.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5-9-Although Howard Pyle's 1888 tale about medieval Germany may seem an unlikely choice for 21st century children, *Otto of the Silver Hand* has audience appeal for fans of the Arthurian legends. Born into a baronial family that is already engaged in a blood feud with another noble house, motherless Otto is sent to live with monks while still an infant. Reclaimed at age 12 by his militant, but loving father, the gentle-natured boy is kidnapped and mutilated by the rival family. Fortunately, Otto finds comfort with his captor's daughter, Pauline, who helps him escape. His father's courage and cunning allow the lad's safe return to the monks who place him under the emperor's protection. His silver hand is a replacement for the one Otto lost while in captivity, but his injury does not prevent him from maturing wisely and marrying Pauline. Geoffrey Howard's crisp diction and nuanced characterizations enhance this classic story which is more likely to be listened to than read. The recording opens with a brief, informative biography of Pyle, and uses his original artwork on the cover. The case is a durable plastic with useful information, and the cassettes are well-marked. While this is not a necessary purchase, it is a worthy addition to any audiobook collection seeking lesser-known classics in children's literature.

Barbara Wysocki, Cora J. Belden Library, Rocky Hill, CT

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From the Back Cover

A rich and engrossing thread of Romance runs through this tale of the motherless son of a valiant robber baron of Medieval Germany. Young Otto, born into a warring household in an age when lawless chiefs were constantly fighting each other or despoiling the caravans of the merchant burghers, is raised in a monastery only to return to his family's domain and become painfully involved in the blood feud between his father and the rival house of Trutz-Drachen.

The narrative is told with Howard Pyle's consummate skill and illustrated with some of the most enchanting sketches ever done for a book of this type. Like the same author's version of *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights* and his collection of original stories known as *The Wonder Clock*, this book has become a legend, a modern story with the feel and sound of an ancient tale. It is a reading adventure that youngsters will not soon forget.

Unaltered, unabridged republication. 25 full-page illustrations. 30 other drawings.

About the Author

The stories and drawings of Howard Pyle (1853–1911) epitomize "the golden age of American illustration." A priceless contribution to American children's literature, Pyle's work set a standard of excellence, with tales and images remarkable for their engaging simplicity and penetrating realism.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Deborah Ellefson:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book entitled *Otto of the Silver Hand*

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Sue Joseph:

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Maxine Ford:

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