

The Identical Twins

In *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* Alice meets Tweedledum and Tweedledee, twin brothers who finish each other's sentences and continually battle each other.

Alice



The battle over the Rattle. John Tenniel (1870).

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
 Agreed to have a battle;
 For Tweedledum said Tweedledee
 Had spoiled his nice new rattle.

Anon

“We must have a bit of a fight, but I don't care about going on long,” said Tweedledum. “What's the time now?”

Tweedledee looked at his watch, and said ‘Half-past four.’

‘Let's fight till six, and then have dinner,’ said Tweedledum.

‘Very well,’ the other said, rather sadly: ‘and she can watch us — only you'd better not come very close,’ he added: ‘I generally hit everything

The Identical Twins

Two brothers, Henry and Theobald, sons of Theobald II of Champagne, married Eleanor's two daughters from her first marriage with Louis VII, Marie and Alice of France.

Eleanor



Mediaeval illumination of a double wedding (12th century).

Theobald II of Champagne was a grandson of William the Conqueror who had a pair of sons, Henry and Theobald. The two brothers became Henry I of Champagne (and Brie) and Theobald V of Blois, adjacent districts in the centre of France, and were both knight crusaders who always seemed to do everything together. In the same year (1164), they married the sister princesses of France, Marie and Alice (Alix) of France, the eldest daughters of Eleanor of Aquitaine (who were half sisters of Princess Alice of the Vexin by a different mother, Queen Constance).

Starting in 1192, Kings Richard I of England and Philip Augustus of France engaged in a series of skirmishes across the territory of the Vexin and other parts of northern France in which they alternately battled each other and made peace as the best of friends. In 1193 they went on the Third Crusade together, but they came back bitter enemies. The material symbol of the struggle for the territory of the Vexin (of which Alice was the nominal Countess) was the oversized elm tree at Gisors, the predominant Vexin stronghold. This famous elm tree had been the meeting place for the

I can see — when I get really excited.’

‘And I hit everything within reach,’ cried Tweedledum, ‘whether I can see it or not!’

Alice laughed. ‘You must hit the trees pretty often, I should think,’ she said.

Tweedledum looked round him with a satisfied smile. ‘I don’t suppose,’ he said, ‘there’ll be a tree left standing, for ever so far round, by the time we’ve finished!’ ”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Chapter 3.



Winged cherub baby rattle (~19th century).

opposing nations for generations. In 1188, according to one version of the story, the French King Philip Augustus challenged the authority of Henry II (or his son Richard) by saying that he would come and cut down this tree as a gesture of defiance. Although the English reinforced the tree with bands of iron, Philip’s men came and cut down the tree. Here Henry and Philip are playing the role of the battling twins. (It is unknown whether Alice was in the castle at the time.)



The central keep of the Castle of Gisors, capital of the Vexin. (Building begin ~1095)