

The Prince and the Pauper

US : 1937 : dir. William Keighley : Warner Bros / First National : 120 min
 prod: Hal Wallis : scr: Laird Doyle : dir.ph.:

Billy Mauch; Bobby Mauch
 Errol Flynn; Claude Rains; Alan Hale; Montagu Love; Henry Stephenson; Barton MacLane;
 Eric Portman; Lionel Pape; Halliwell Hobbes; Fritz Leiber; Robert Warwick; Leonard Willey;
 Murray Kinnell; Phyllis Barry; Ivan Simpson; Elspeth Dudgeon; Mary Field; Forrester Harvey;
 Helen Valkis; Lester Matthews

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ≠ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Mauch Ado About Nothing; or: Clothes Maketh the Boy

Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

Leonard Maltin's *Movie and Video Guide*
 1996 review:

"Rousing filmisation of Mark Twain's story of young look-alikes, one a mistreated urchin, the other a prince, exchanging places. Top-billed Flynn, cast as the boys' rescuer, doesn't appear until the second half of the film. Great music score by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Remade as

"CROSSED SWORDS". Also available in a computer-coloured version. ***½ "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review - a précis of the above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"In Tudor London, young Edward VI changes places with a street urchin who happens to be his double. Well-produced version of a famous

story; it never quite seems to hit the right style or pace, but is satisfying in patches. * ”



Westminster Abbey looks a mite cramped, even with the carefully arranged crowd, but studio-bound productions were par for the course in the 1930s. Which Mauch is which? Ah, that's their little secret. Source: Warner Bros Story

“Lavish but not convincing. Doubtful box office: the commercial aspect seems wholly concerned in the timeliness of a Coronation sequence and the name of Errol Flynn. It is not enough.”
- **Variety**

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

“Warners resurrected Mark Twain’s old tale because they had the Mauch twins, Billy and Bobby, under contract. They play Prince Edward and the cockney ragamuffin with whom he changes places, supported by a number of heroes and heavies, including Errol Flynn (top billed but he doesn’t appear for the first hour), Claude Rains, Eric Portman, Henry Stephenson, Barton MacLane and Alan Hale. Montagu Love plays the dying King Hal, whose demise permits the piece to end with a coronation in Westminster Abbey – a subject topical at the time. * ”

Halliwell’s Filmgoer’s Companion general note:

“Mark Twain’s mediaeval story, about a prince and a commoner who change places, was filmed

in 1909, in 1915 with Marguerite Clark; in 1923 with Tibi Lubin; in 1937 with the Mauch twins (and Errol Flynn); and in 1962 with Sean Scully.”

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

“Exciting, skilful adaptation of Mark Twain’s story about a beggar who changes places with a prince. ***½ ”

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

“Fulfilled the wish dream of every child: changing places with royalty. Done with panache in William Keighley’s 1937 version of Mark Twain’s story, with Errol Flynn and Claude Rains. 3 ”

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

“Of all his stories, Mark Twain loved best **“THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER”**. Produced with sincerity and lavishness, this film (from a dramatised version by Catherine C Cushing) is a costume picture minus any romance

whatsoever¹. In this film are the Mauch Twins, in addition to Errol Flynn, who is at his best in romantic, swashbuckling roles. But there is no girl opposite Flynn². So it's just the story of the tudor Prince who exchanges places with a beggar boy, and regains his throne on Coronation Day through the heroism of a dashing soldier of fortune.

Such interest as the film contains could have been heightened by some drastic trimming in the early scenes, so that Flynn's entrance might have been moved up. He does Miles Hendon with the proper dash and spirit. The Mauch boys play their contrasting parts with earnestness if not too much skill. Claude Rains as Hertford; Montagu Love as Henry VIII, and Barton MacLane as John Canty, are fiercely melodramatic.

It doesn't seem that William Keighley, in his direction, has captured sufficient sympathy for the two youngsters to compensate for the romantic loss in having no fiancée for Flynn³. The fragile plot scarcely holds together a full-length screenplay."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Enjoyable story of the young Prince of England trading places with his identical lookalike, a street beggar. One of Errol Flynn's lesser-known films. Erich Wolfgang Korngold wrote the music. ***½ "

The Virgin Film Guide review:

"This Mark Twain doppelganger tale of rags and royalty in 16th century England is sumptuously produced and full of high drama and adventure, with Errol Flynn swash-buckling between the precocious Mauch twins - Bill and Bobby⁴. The look-alikes decide that they will switch roles as a lark, one being Prince Edward (later King Edward VI), the other a beggar boy. Despite the beggar boy's outlandish behaviour in his new station, the royal court and advisors accept him as the heir to the throne. The true Edward, however, is submerged in low-life London and, when he decides he's had enough

of the game, asserts that he is the real prince. Miles Hendon (Flynn), a soldier of fortune, meets the real Edward and is amused by his claims to the throne, thinking him mad until he begins to believe the emphatic urchin just as the impostor is about to be crowned king. Enemies at court send an assassin (Alan Hale) after the boy, but he is prevented from carrying out his evil task by Miles, who saves the real king-to-be at the last moment. Based on the novel by Mark Twain and the play by Catherine Chishold Cushing. ***½ "

That Was Hollywood - the 1930s review:

"Errol Flynn was back in period costume for this lavish and lengthy adaptation of the Mark Twain classic. The two lookalikes, the beggar boy and the young heir to the English throne who exchange places, were played by the Mauch twins, Billy and Bobby, and Flynn's role as the soldier of fortune who befriends the real prince was secondary, his participation solely to add box-office appeal. Claude Rains was the villainous Earl of Hertford, and others cast included Henry Stephenson, Alan Hale and British actor Eric Portman in his only Hollywood film. The film ended in a big coronation scene, which had particular appeal as the real ceremony was taking place in England this month with King George VI and attracting massive media coverage. William Keighley directed from a screenplay by the late Laird Doyle, and Erich Wolfgang Korngold provided the score."

The Warner Bros Story review:

"Elaborately produced by Hal Wallis, **"THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER"**, based on Mark Twain's novel, was basically for the young 'uns. Although Errol Flynn received top billing and indulged in some routine swordplay, grand larceny was committed by the Mauch twins, Billy and Bobby, playing the Prince and the Pauper who exchange identities much to the confusion of everyone around them. The film ended with an elaborate, no-expense-spared coronation ceremony, nicely timed, no doubt, to coincide with the coronation of George VI a week after its release. William Keighley directed with a pleasing sense of period (16th century London), Erich Wolfgang Korngold's score was appropriately rousing, while Laird Doyle's screenplay was certainly workmanlike, though it could have had more excitement in it.

¹ Hurrah!

² No, but two boys instead.. Ah well..!

³ Didn't you make that point **twice** already?

⁴ Buffoon! - what makes them "precocious" exactly, beyond the grievous sin of being pre-adolescent?

Claude Rains played the unpleasant Earl of Hertford, Henry Stephenson was the Duke of Norfolk and Alan Hale the Captain of the Guard. Also cast were Barton MacLane, Eric Portman, Leonard Willey, Murray Kinnell, Halliwell Hobbes and Phyllis Barry. Robert Lord supervised the production (First National). The film was remade as "CROSSED SWORDS" (released in Britain as "THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER") in 1978."

NFT Bulletin note:

"A prince changes place with a street urchin."

Excerpt from **The Moving Picture Boy** entry on the Mauch twins (pronounced "Mawk" apparently):

"...With both twins now on the payroll, Warners decided they had better get their money's worth. Mark Twain's "THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER" was an obvious subject – and they made a classy job of it, with fine music by Erich Korngold and rich costumery. Then Billy alone was cast as the hero in another version of Booth Tarkington's second "Penrod" book. The object of the strategy became clear when, with some violence to the Tarkington canon, Penrod was cloned into twins, producing endless scope for hilarious

confusion, and jobs for both Mauchs in two more comedies. The series could have run and run, but thank goodness it didn't. The twins were nice, cheerful, personable boys. Great comics they were not."

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "Hollywood in the Thirties", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide" or "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995"]

Radio Times note:

"The son of a beggar swaps places with Edward Tudor, heir to the throne."

TV Times (?) note:

"Swashbuckling adventure starring Errol Flynn, Claude Rains, Billy Mauch and Bobby Mauch.
*** "

Sunday Times note:

"A prince and a beggar exchange places."

For all its lack of box office names, my preferred film version remains Disney's more modest 1962 remake with Sean Scully, but comparisons between the two are useful. On occasion, this film seems like an Erich Wolfgang Korngold concert with moving picture accompaniment. I gather he had a preference for scoring an entire film, opening titles to end credits, and though his work is widely acclaimed, to my taste it is too florid and excitable. Critics lamented the long wait before Errol Flynn's appearance on screen, and to general viewers he is certainly the most engaging part of the film. Fresh-faced, moustacheless, and uncharacteristically restrained, he makes a very appealing Miles Hendon. Montagu Love however is less successful as Henry VIII. Charles Laughton had swallowed the part whole only four years previously in Korda's "THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII", and the character as written in this script is almost a penitent sinner foreseeing imminent judgement. Charlton Heston made an interesting choice for the role in an otherwise dismal 1978 Mark Lester version.

But Variety simply misses the point entirely in sulking at length about the absence of so-called "love interest". Twain is hardly classified as a children's writer, yet all his most popular stories – "Tom Sawyer", "Huckleberry Finn", "A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur" – are romances intended to appeal primarily to boys, or to the child self in his adult readers. And none more so than this dashing Tudor fantasy. His two boys are not mere travelling cameras around which the action is largely played out by adults (a criticism that could better be made of "Treasure Island"), they are the pivot and lynchpin of the story, actively engaged in every scene. Miles Hendon is a supporting character, and if he is more interesting a personality than the principals, it is only that a boy's mind is more excited by the adult heroes and villains

than characters his own age. Fagin and Micawber are drawn better than the heroes of the stories they figure in, but is foolishness to complain that *Oliver Twist* takes up too much of the story, or that we have to wait too long for Micawber to appear in "**DAVID COPPERFIELD**".

Star egos are always a factor in Hollywood however, and Errol Flynn's role in the film was certainly "written up" at the expense of the Mauch twins. In the later Sean Scully film, the two boys are more affirmative, independent-minded characters reacting on their feet. Here they are given altogether more passive roles to play. The Earl of Hertford, played with sneering relish by Claude Rains, does not figure as a villain in the later film at all. It is the Prince's whipping boy who advises Tom Canty on the ways of the palace, where he quickly gets his teeth into the business of social reform. Here, Canty is a cringing pawn in the hands of a baleful Lord Protector, making him almost complicit in the deception Rains is perpetrating. By the same token, Scully's Edward makes a feisty beggar-lad who wins the respect of the Ruffler's outlaws by his own mettle, accepts the title "King of the Game Court" with good humour, and refuses point blank to take part in any thievery. The Mauch Edward is easily cowed (like "*Oliver Twist*") into participating in the burglary of an inn, and weeps piteously at the indignity of his position.

In this version, Edward is rescued in the nick of time by Hendon from assassination in a forest by the King's captain of the guard, sent by Rains to dispose of the surplus ten-year old. He is kneeling (weeping again) reciting the Lord's prayer as the assassin's dagger is poised to strike, when Flynn weighs in to swash the buckle. This scene was doubtless thought too heavy for the Disney remake, but again it reinforces Edward's status as a boy "heroine", forever to be plucked from the jaws of danger, rather than a feisty self-willed boy hero. The coronation scene, dwelt upon for obvious topical reasons, contains unexpected formulae, and one wonders how well researched it was. St Luke's choristers give their all from the rafters.

As regards Billy and Bobby, not *quite* identical twins when seen shoulder to shoulder, they giggle at each other most fetchingly, but are not very deeply immersed in their characters. Billy, as Tom Canty, tries to mask his accent by enunciating too carefully ("Hwhy?", "Hwhen?") while Bobby, as Edward, is given some raucously anachronistic lines – "I just wanted to see ya!" he tells the King; "My dad's dead!" he sobs to Sir Miles. Both boys take repeated drubbings about the shoulders (from Canty's father, the captain of the guard and others) to stamp them both as vulnerable wide-eyed flotsam on the fickle tide of events, rather than, as I suspect Twain intended, stout-hearted lads in the thick of an adventure. Neither one has the necessary bearing and self-conceit of a Tudor prince.

So this is the fifth known film adaptation, but only the first Hollywood one to deploy actual boys in the title roles. After the very creditable but generally ignored Disney 1962 version, and the lamentable 1978 rehash called "**CROSSED SWORDS**", with a superannuated Mark Lester looking (and acting) like he'd taken a turn on the rack in the Tower, Disney returned with an animated 1990 version scuppered by the fell presence of Mickey Mouse. In "**P.J. AND THE PRESIDENT'S SON**" (TV 76) the story was updated and properly relocated to the centre of the known universe, with Lance Kerwin playing the dual roles. Disney molested the story again in "**DOUBLE SWITCH**" (87) with George Newhorn and Elisabeth Shue (would you believe a rock star's son switching places with a street kid?). Among straight TV adaptations was one in 1957 with the aptly monickered Rex Thompson, a 1975 serial starring pasty Nicholas Lyndhurst, and in 1996 a superior one, handsomely mounted and starring Philip Sarson, with Keith Michell reprising his most celebrated TV role as Henry VIII.

Billy and Bobby were 13 apiece. Billy alone had been credited in "**ANTHONY ADVERSE**" (36, playing Adverse aged 10) and "**THE WHITE ANGEL**" ('36, as a Napoleonic drummer boy), but Holmstrom says that Bobby secretly stood in for his brother on numerous scenes so that their mother could secure studio contracts for both. After "**PENROD AND SAM**" (37),

Bobby gained equal credits in the inspirationally titled "**PENROD AND HIS TWIN BROTHER**" (37) and "**PENROD'S DOUBLE TROUBLE**" (38). Errol Flynn, much later, was at his roistering best again rescuing Dean Stockwell from comparable scrapes in "**KIM**" (50).

See also the 1909 Edison original, the Austrian silent "**PRINZ UND BETTELKNABE**" (20), remakes in 1915, 1932 (India) and 1962, TV versions in 1957, 1975 and 1996, "**CROSSED SWORDS**" (77), "**P.J. AND THE PRESIDENT'S SON**" (76), and "**DOUBLE SWITCH**" (87), all based to a greater or lesser extent on the Twain story. See subject index under **ARISTOCRACY / ROYALTY, EYEWITNESSES TO MURDER, HISTORY, ORPHANS / ADOPTION, RUNAWAYS / STOWAWAYS, SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS, STREET KIDS, MARK TWAIN ADAPTATIONS** and **TWINS / LOOKALIKES / SWITCHED IDENTITIES**.