

King Richard the LionHeart

Richard I or better known as Richard the Lion Heart was a very powerful and interesting figure during the middle Ages and even to this day. During his reign, he accomplished many military victories and received numerous titles, even Lord of Cyprus, and many victories in the Middle East against the powerful and historically popular Saladin. Nevertheless, his shortcomings in England and perhaps his respect to the Church prevented him from

accomplishing complete success during the Third Crusade in 1189.¹

Richard I was born on September 8th, 1157 in Oxford, England at Beaumont Palace.² He was the second son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. His mother Eleanor gave Richard his strong French influence; she was very influential and came from a very wealthy family of the Duchy of Aquitaine. When Richard was young, his parents separated and he went to live with his mother in France, which explains why he only spoke French and not English. Nevertheless, Richard was

considered very well educated and often composed poetry in French. He was said to be very attractive; his hair was between blond, green or blue eyes, with a pale complexion.³ Richard was considered a bad son, clearly after revolting against his father several times, (he was also a bad husband). Richard was very occupied with the Crusade to pay too much attention to his marriage, and a bad king, he was clearly criticize for not concerning himself with the ruling of England but rather focusing solely on the Crusades; however, he was in fact a very gallant and splendid soldier, military

commander, and very pious. While living in France with his mother Eleanor, at first he had strong devotion to France, and this became even stronger when he became Duke of Aquitaine in 1172, inheriting his mother's domains in France.⁴ Despite being very capable he was not able to assume the English crown because his brother Henry III was the next in line for the English crown, however, this was about to change soon. Richard had very successful battles as a young commander showing a lot of potential from a young age. He was a very good horse rider and used his taller than

average height to strike fear on his enemies.⁵ during his lifetime Richard was never an obvious choice for ruling, he had his domains in France given; such as the Duchy of Aquitaine but he always had to answer to someone.

Richard was from youth a very influential man in France, as previously stated, his mother was often pleading to the French crown about Richard. For instance, Richard met several times with King Phillip Augustus of France while residing in his domains in Aquitaine. Furthermore, Richard sister in law was Margaret of France; which was married to Henry the Younger. In

addition, Margaret of France was caused of several disputes over lands between King Philip and King Henry II and was later settled when King Béla III of Hungary offered to marry Margaret. During his early years, Richard made several regrettable mistakes. The first of many mistakes was taking part in a rebellion with his brother Henry against his father King Henry II for control of their father's domains. Henry II domains included the Count of Anjou, Count of Maine, Duke of Normandy, Duke of Aquitaine, Duke of Gascony, Count of Nantes, Lord of Ireland. ⁶ Henry had strong

character and a strong claim to the throne; he was militarily capable and was the son of Geoffrey V grandson William the Conqueror. William the Conqueror was the Duke of Normandy and the establisher of the house of Plantagenet in England.⁷ Duke William came from France, which made Richard eventual claims on French territories legitimate even so that when he became King he inherited several possessions in France.

Richard was part of a brief family military conflict between him and his brothers Young Henry the Heir, and

Godfrey against their father King Henry II. This conflict turned into a full-fledged civil war over King Henry's Dominions. Furthermore, battles were fought between the Princes; England was going through a very unstable period, it was so fatal that King Phillip of France tried to exploit the situation; however, the revolt collapsed and when young Henry died bringing France ambitions to an End. Richard I and Godfrey agreed to surrender the territories taken from Henry II during the conflict; consequently ending the family conflict. Henry sent Richard to

Aquitaine to punish some Barons revolted against Henry during the conflict, even if this meant that Richard had to punish his own supporters; and Godfrey was sent out of London and stripped of any resources that could be used to raise an army or used against Henry II the King of England. At this point, the relationship between Richard and his father was much deteriorated, with reason. Richard quickly suppressed his rebellious barons in Aquitaine; then he eventually tried to overthrow his father for the throne of England, for the second time. Finally, in 1183 Richard was attacked in

Aquitaine by Godfrey and his younger brother Henry the young King.⁸

However, Richard and his troops were able to repel the invading forces; the result of this conflict was the death of Henry the young King and the imprisonment of Eleanor of Aquitaine by King Henry II as insurance for Richard's future loyalty, avoiding definitely any further wars with Richard. With the death of Henry the Young King, Richard became the next son in line to the English throne, but he continued to oppose his father; rather than waiting for his father's eventual death. Upon assuming the

throne of England, among many other titles, Richard stayed briefly in England and quickly departed on the Third Crusade, the Kings Crusade, with King Phillip Augustus of France, and Frederick Barbarossa the Holy Roman Emperor among others.⁹

Richard traveled by sea to the holy land trying to avoid any confrontation with Byzantine Empire. This was an issue because the path overland to the Middle East led through, Constantinople Richard new that the best way to complete the journey of

this crusade was to travel by sea. On his way to the holy land, he made a stop at the island of Cypress and quickly defeated Isaac Commenus, a rebel of the Byzantine Empire controlling the Island, and took control of the island. In the holy land, King Richard faced the mighty Saladin King of a unified Kingdom and able and respected commander.¹⁰ Even though Saladin was powerful and wise he never defeated Richard. Nevertheless, Richard ended the war and made peace with the condition that the holy land opened to unarmed Christian Pilgrims. The only issue with ending the war was

that Richard did not take the city of Jerusalem, the intended target of the Crusade. After making peace with Saladin Richard marched back home, however, on his way back he stopped to suppressed a revolt in France and besieged the small castle of Chalus-Chabrol. He laid siege to these likely insignificant castle because according to Professor Madden in his book, Crusades it is said to be Roman gold in there and Richard as King and overlord of the lands was claiming it as his, however, the populace were refusing to open their gates. Moreover, on day Richard was surveying the siege

without armor, and as usual, missile fire was shot from the castle walls, but this was amusing to the King, nevertheless, an arrow hit the King on his neck on April 6th 1199 King Richard the Lionheart died in Chalus France on his mother's arms.¹¹

In my opinion, Richard the Lionheart was a very capable military commander as well as a just ruler. For instance, on the Third Crusade Richard defeated Saladin and took some territories in the

East, however, he never took the Crusade's target Jerusalem; nevertheless, he made peace with Saladin and secured access to unarmed Pilgrims into the Holy land. I personally think that having access to the Holy land for the pilgrims was a tremendous success, especially during these unstable times. Furthermore, Richard was feared by the French, because soon after his death they tried to take English territories and try to invade England. Moreover, Richard was respected by the Muslim community for his ability to command. Further, the European community as

being very Pious perceived him. In my opinion, he was very reverent to God during his lifetime. For instance, he devoted his entire life, after becoming King, to returning the holy lands to Christian's hands.

After studying King Richard's military successes, origins and legacy will be an amazing project. Furthermore, I believe reading and exploring the life of King Richard the Lionheart has been a great and amazing journey for me, and hopefully the reader. One can never talk about Medieval History without mentioning King Richard, the English

King who did not speak English. King Richard was very influential in England, France as well as in the East; as we go deeper into the life of Richard we will see how important he was to the Crusades and to Christianity, and how his legacy survived to this day. This paper has discussed, in detailed, the early life of King Richard as well as his early military and rebellious actions against his father King Henry II. Furthermore, we explored, in its entirety, Richard's involvement in the Third Crusade as well as his legacy in the East and his failure to take the city of Jerusalem a surprising event to the

Christina world. However, he added to his legacy the accomplishment of granting Christians Pilgrims access to the holy city of Jerusalem unchallenged; something that had not happened in a long time.¹²

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