

Justin Fox
5/14/08
Dimensions of History
Professor Swanson

London: The Holy War

One of the events that take place in Edward Rutherfurd's novel *London* is the crusades, most notably the one that is led by King Richard the Lionheart. David Bull, one of characters in the story, wants to go on the crusade with King Richard. His father Sampson, a merchant, does not think his son should risk his life to take the trip to the "Holy Land" and feels that his son is too young to be fighting anyways. Yet David tries to persuade to his father that he is ready for the crusade.



King Richard the Lionheart (picture to the left), who was one of the leaders of the crusade, raised money for the crusade by imposing an unusual tax upon all classes, as well as robbing and persecuting the Jews. This was going to be the Third Crusade, after Saladin, the sultan of Egypt (picture to the right), captured Jerusalem and began attacking many of the Christian cities that were there. The other nations that sided with England were Germany, led by Emperor Fredrick Barbarossa and King Philip Augustus of France.



Some of the other characters involved in *London* are Ida and Pentecost Silversleeves. Ida, a widow to a knight, is to marry Sampson in a few days. It's an arranged marriage and she isn't happy about it at all. She feels that she deserves better and does not like the idea of never meeting her future husband. Pentecost Silversleeves is a clerk who is responsible for delivering Ida to Sampson. It was a part of King Richard's plan to raise money for the crusade, by using young aristocrat widows and selling them to the highest bidder. Ida was one of them and there was nothing she could do about it. As Silversleeves said "At least you're being sold in a good cause."

There was much of a stir in London around the time of the Third Crusade. King Richard, who had spent much time in France, was just about to be crowned and then immediately after depart to Jerusalem. The only other heirs were his brother John, who was known to be dark and hard, and his nephew Arthur, who was still just a boy. This would cause a great deal of problems, and even civil war, for John was not going to allow a boy to run the kingdom.

On September 3, 1189 Richard was crowned king at Westminster Abbey, which in fear of witchcraft or polluted allowed neither Jews nor women to attend the crowning. It was this day that Sampson learned of his son's plan of joining the crusade, which to David's surprise, did not cause much anger to his father. Still, he was not going to allow his son be killed on the crusade. Ida, at that moment, stood up and supported David for doing what he believed in. However that did not change Sampson's mind.

Shortly before Richard could go forth with the crusade, a riot broke out in London. It began when some members of the Jewish community came to offer King Richard gifts. The guards at Westminster Abbey saw this as an attack and began

assaulting them. It did not take long for this to spread throughout London, and soon Jews were being assaulted by anger mobs, all of which were screaming “It’s a crusade, lads. Kill the infidels!”

Still, this did not stop King Richard from leaving for the Holy Land. The



kingdoms and empire of England, France, and Germany were on route to Jerusalem. Fredrick led the German army on foot (as seen in the red line on the map). His plan was to

lead them through Asia Minor and travel south to Jerusalem, as was Germany’s route in the first two crusades. However, the German army meets much resistance in Asia Minor and lost a great amount of soldiers. The Emperor leads the rest of the soldiers he has onwards, until he drowns while trying to cross a river on his horse. As a result, the German army returned home.

King Richard and King Philip traveled by sea (as shown on the blue line on the map) were able to complete the journey and led their army to the city of Acre in 1191. The Christian province besieged by Saladin and his army and had already been fighting for two years. It took them only four days, which was



Battle Before Acre

still a costly battle for the English and the French, but in the end was victorious.

However, King Philip and King Richard, whose relationship had been unstable before the crusade even begun, fought over about how the rest of the crusade should go, and as a result, Philip and the rest of the French army departed, back home.

It was two more years that Richard and Saladin would engage in combat in the Holy Land. Despite many beliefs, Saladin had great respect for the King of England, and even gave his rival one of his best horses after Richard's was killed in combat. Saladin tried to ambush Richard when he and his troops were marching down the coast at the Battle of Arsouf. Richard however was prepared and able to foil the ambush. Saladin did not dare to risk another direct attack on Richard.

Throughout those two years of combat, King Richard could not conquer Jerusalem and knew he could not finish the crusade. King Richard and Saladin finally called for a truce. The agreement allowed Christians to enter the Holy Land without paying tribute, that they could be allowed to visit holy places, and that they could control the coast from Jaffa to Tyre.

While the crusade was underway, there was much going on back in London. In the novel, Bull curses King Richard, stating "Richard, you must understand, knows nothing of England, and cares less." As a merchant and an upper-class member of society, he felt that the king should be back in England and ruling it. He wanted to support a baron system, believing that this was the only way to uphold law and order. Ida, on the other hand, disagreed with Bull; believing that Richard was to be the one to rule England. However, a solution appeared that displeased both of them. John, Richard's brother, had returned from France.



Prince John (picture to the left) was not what the English had in mind for king. In fact, he was the very opposite that King Richard was. For awhile, John did nothing in England; fearing that his brother would hear of his arrival in England and plans to take the throne. Many people thought that John was here to live in Western England and rule some of the area there, but Silversleeves knew otherwise.

Soon John was gaining some power, but not yet confident to assume the throne. He created huge tax arrangements which were heavily enforced. However, it was only brief and soon after it was setup, it was abolished. Bull and the other merchants were pleased by this. News also spread that the Third Crusade was over and Richard was returning to England. However, there were going to be some complications.

On his way back to England, King Richard's boat became shipwrecked. He attempted to travel on foot through Austria in disguise to get back to England, but was caught. The duke of Austria was furious with Richard, who the English king insulted back in the Battle of Acre. Richard was held ransom and was forced to pay it, which cost twice the annual revenues of England.

Things began to look bad in England again. There was no baron to oppose John, and any baron that was appointed was a friend of his. It was this time that John seized the castle of Nottingham (the picture to the right), which was one of the most powerful



strongholds in the country. So far London remained loyal to the king, but there was no word of Richard.

When news came the Richard was still alive and well, there was a sense of hope in England. Still, Prince John did not seem to give up what he has taken so far in England. The country was split between those who had become loyal to Prince John and those who were still loyal to King Richard, like Bull and many other merchants. They saw John as more of a chancellor, a substitute king almost. Many of them thought Richard was the king, but that he was a horrible king for spending most of time outside of England when he should be present and ruling it. On October 7, 1191, John was crowned king, but London was still to be a commune.

Prince John had done some damage as ruler of England while his brother was away. In *London*, John has his men all throughout England, making sure that no one tries to disobey his orders. Pentecost and Ida strongly oppose John, believing what he is doing is an act of treason. Pentecost rides with some men one night, looking for David who ran away from home after hearing his father talk about allowing John to be the “mayor” of London. They were also looking for more information about John’s plans, and if he really was going to take the city. On course they ran into some of John’s men, and a fight broke out. David, with rage of his father’s beliefs about John, joined in the fight, but was killed. Sampson blamed Ida for what happened to his son, believing that she had manipulated him. He threatened to kick her out and even began beating her, until she told him that she was pregnant.

It was not until 1194 that Richard finally returned home. Many wondered was to be the fate of John for his attempt to steal the throne while his brother was away.

However, Richard forgave him and John was forced to live under his shadow until Richard was killed in battle.

Sites used:

<http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/the-third-crusade.htm>

http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/war_crusade3rd.html

<http://www.britannia.com/history/monarchs/mon28.html>