



Lionheart: The Diaries of Richard I

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Richard the Lionheart has long been considered the greatest heroic figure in the history of the Christian world. Born as the third son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, he became King of England and ruler of the Angevin Empire at the age of thirty-two, following the deaths of his two elder brothers. Already established as Europe's finest soldier, he undertook the Third Crusade to come to the aid of Jerusalem, which had recently fallen to Saladin. Richard's epic military and strategic achievements in confronting Saladin's vast armies on his home soil were repeatedly punctuated by the acts of extraordinary personal courage, which made him a legend. From the age of fifteen, at his father's instruction, Richard had kept a series of journals recording all of the personal aspects of his daily life. On his death, according to his instructions, the diaries passed to his wife Berengaria. She was buried clasping the diaries to her chest. For over seven hundred years the diaries lay entombed with her in a crypt in a French abbey. Then, following the Nazi invasion of France in 1940, Berengaria's grave was opened and the diaries were removed and secretly taken to Germany to a private collection. Whilst at Oxford University in the 1980s, Chris Manson had first learned of the possibility of the existence of the diaries of Richard the Lionheart in a series of private tutorials. Recently, after an extensive search, he finally discovered their location. Unfortunately, only parts of the diaries remained legible, the rest having been destroyed by mildew and other corrosives. Following exhaustive verification carried out by experts across a number of fields, he bought these Latin manuscripts. He has spent the past eighteen months translating the diaries. Historians and academics have wondered for centuries why Richard did certain things, but only now can we gain a genuine understanding of the events that drove him to act in the way that he did. Now published for the first time, these diaries provide a unique, personal insight into the legend of the man universally known in his own time as the 'greatest king who ever lived

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