

STONEHENGE TO STONEWALL

by charlie emond

Not Just a Job: An Adventure

There's nothing like a good swashbuckler to liven up the March doldrums, so here are a couple for you. Believe me, these are two of the best men to ever swash (or swish) a buckle—Lawrence of Arabia and Richard the Lionheart. Though separated by seven centuries, they were certainly cut from the same cloth. Both were superheroes, both were English adventurers off to the fabled Orient, and both were as gay as the Sahara is hot.

When you compare the two, the similarities are remarkable. Fired up by a crusader's zeal, Lawrence wanted to free the Arabs and Richard the Holy Land. They were superb military leaders pitted against the infidel, yet more likely to lure a hunky young officer back to the tent for the night than to raid the local harems.

Their grandiose names (somehow Tom Lawrence and Dick Plantagenet just don't cut it) are the work of their publicists. Richard had the famous troubadour Blondel, who tirelessly sang his praises at every castle in Europe. Lawrence had Lowell Thomas, the American journalist, who put together an incredibly popular illustrated lecture on his exploits called *The Last Crusade—with... Lawrence in Arabia*.

The Lion Sleeps Tonight

Richard the Lionheart (1157-1199) was the man "whose valor became the symbol of chivalric idealism." He single-handedly "drove" the Third Crusade and emerged as the most famous figure of his time.

His mother was the highly respected Eleanor of Aquitaine, and he was her favorite son. Because Eleanor badly wanted her son to produce an heir, she arranged a hasty wedding just before Richard left for the Holy Land. She dragged in one Berengaria (sounds like a country in the Balkans) to be the lucky bride.

No matter; Richard didn't even bother to stay for the wedding night. Berengaria drifted so far into the background that when Richard died, she had to sue the pope to be recognized as his heir. Quoth one biographer, "He left no children by his marriage, which appears, in effect, to have been no marriage."

You may well ask what Richard did to relax after a tough day of hacking up infidels. John Boswell quotes a contemporary account of one

of his romantic flings: "Richard, Duke of Aquitaine, son of the king of England, remained with Phillip, the king of France, who so honored him for so long that they ate every day at the same table and from the same dish, and at night their beds did not separate them. And the king of France loved him as his own soul; and they loved each other so much that the king of England was absolutely astonished at the passionate love between them and marveled at it."

Richard was profoundly Catholic and attended Mass every day. He often repented of his lifestyle but never actually changed it. Once a religious hermit shouted at him, "Be thou mindful of the destruction of Sodom and abstain from what is unlawful." The penance he gave Richard was to sleep with poor Berengaria.

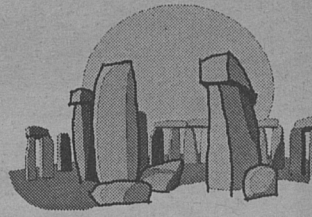
Midnight at the Oasis

T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935) was the second of five illegitimate sons of an Anglo-Irish noble. An interest in archaeology led him to look east, and when World War I broke out, he enlisted and went off to Cairo. There he became an expert in Arab nationalist movements, and soon joined their fight for freedom against the Turks.

When asked to explain his motives, he said, "I liked a particular Arab, and I thought that freedom for the race would be an acceptable present." That Arab was a boy named Dahoum. According to one source, he was "not particularly intelligent... but beautifully built and remarkably handsome." Lawrence and Dahoum were inseparable for quite a time.

Lawrence became a military technician for the Arab struggle against the Turks, and the Arabs admired his great heroism, as evidenced by his 32 wounds, and his vision. But Lawrence was nothing if not enigmatic. He enjoyed the adulation at first, but came to hate it later in life. He even changed his name to try to get away from the public eye. He never married: unlike Richard, he didn't have a pushy queen for a mother.

He was as profoundly spiritual as Richard was Catholic. Lawrence wrote of his spiritual side in his best-known work, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, published in 1926. In it, he waxes rhapsodic about the pleasures of wartime homosex-



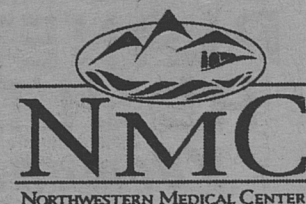
uality: "... our youths began indifferently to slake one another's few needs in their own clean bodies—a cold convenience that seemed sexless and even pure. Later, some began to justify this sterile process and swore that friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace found there hidden in the darkness a sensual co-efficient of the mental passion which was welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort." Notice that this guy could also write.

Lawrence's homosexuality had a darker side. Like Richard, he spent time in captivity, but unlike him, he was raped by his captors. The experience left him with twisted nightmares, and he never really came to terms with being gay.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

So brighten up your Ides of March and see *Lawrence of Arabia* again. Appreciate what one of our own can do when fired up. Realize that neither of these great military leaders would be allowed to join the United States Army. Then lament the idiocy of a policy that excludes such brave men as these.

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