JOINVILLE and
VILLEHARDOUIN

Chronicles of the Crusades

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by
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PENGUIN BOOKS
Chronology

1095 November: Proclamation of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II
1096-9 The First Crusade
1099 July: Fall of Jerusalem to the First Crusade
1144 December: Edessa falls to the Muslims
1145 December: Proclamation of the Second Crusade
1147-9 The Second Crusade
c. 1150 Birth of Geoffrey of Villehardouin
1171 March: Mass arrest of Venetians in the Byzantine Empire and confiscation of their property
1182 May: Massacre of Italians in Constantinople
1185 Geoffrey of Villehardouin appointed marshal of Champagne
1187 July: The Battle of Hattin
   October: Fall of Jerusalem to Saladin; proclamation of the Third Crusade
1189-92 The Third Crusade
1191 July: Surrender of Acre to King Richard I of England and King Philip II of France; Philip departs for France
1192 September: Treaty of Jaffa between King Richard and Saladin ends Third Crusade
1198 August: Pope Innocent III proclaims the Fourth Crusade
1199 November: Geoffrey of Villehardouin among those to take the cross at Ecry-sur-Aisne
1201 February: Treaty of Venice (the leadership of the Fourth Crusade engages a Venetian fleet)
   25 May: Death of Count Thibaut III of Champagne

September: Marquis Boniface of Montferrat assumes leadership of the crusade army
1202-4 The Fourth Crusade
1203 Summer: Crusaders gather at Venice
   November: Zara falls to Venetian and crusader forces
1203 January: The Treaty of Zara (the leaders of the Fourth Crusade promise assistance to Prince Alexius)
   July: The first siege of Constantinople; Emperor Alexius III flees the city
   1 August: Coronation of Alexius IV as co-emperor with his father, Isaac II
1204 February: Co-emperors deposed; coronation of Alexius V (Mourtzouphlus) as emperor of Constantinople
   April: The second siege of Constantinople; the crusaders and Venetians capture and sack the city
   May: Election and coronation of Count Baldwin of Flanders as emperor
1205 April: The Battle of Adrianople; Emperor Baldwin is captured and subsequently killed
1206 August: Coronation of Henry of Hainaut as emperor
1207 September: Death of Boniface of Montferrat
   After September: Earliest point at which Geoffrey of Villehardouin may have begun composition of The Conquest of Constantinople (he dies between 1212 and 1218)
1213 April: Proclamation of the Fifth Crusade
1214-25 April: Birth of the future King Louis IX of France
1217-29 The Fifth Crusade
1219 November: Fall of Damietta to the forces of the Fifth Crusade
1221 August: Defeat of the forces of the Fifth Crusade at Mansurah
1224/5 Birth of John of Joinville
1226-29 November: Coronation of Louis IX (Blanche of Castile is regent until 1234)
1229 February: Emperor Frederick II negotiates return of Jerusalem to Christians
1233 John of Joinville inherits the office of seneschal of
Champagne (exercised on his behalf by his mother until 1239)
1239–41 The Barons’ Crusade
1239 November: Defeat of crusader raiding party led by Counts Henry of Bar and Amaury of Montfort at Gaza
1244 August: Jerusalem captured by the Khwarizmians
  October: The Battle of La Forbie
  December: Louis IX takes the cross
1248 Late summer: Departure of Louis IX’s crusade army from France
1249 6 June: Damietta falls to Louis IX
1250 8 February: The Battle of Mansurah
  April: Louis IX and his companions surrender and are taken prisoner by the Egyptians
  May: Assassination of Turan Shah, sultan of Egypt, initiates the Mamluk sultanate; Louis IX and the leading crusaders are released and sail to Acre
1251–3 March: Louis IX and his forces arrive at Caesarea, Jaffa (May 1252) and Sidon (June 1253)
1254 April: Louis IX and his companions set sail from Acre and return to France (July)
  December: Louis IX issues his ‘great ordinance’ for the reform of royal government
1261 July: Recapture of Constantinople by the Byzantines
1263 Mamluks begin a series of conquests of Christian strongholds in Syria
1267 March: Louis IX takes the cross for the second time, Joinville refuses to do so
1270 July: Departure of Louis IX’s crusade army from France
  25 August: Louis IX dies outside Tunis
1282 Joinville testifies to the enquiry into Louis IX’s sanctity
1291 May: Fall of Acre to the Mamluks
1297 August: Louis IX’s sanctity is proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII
1309 October: Joinville completes the composition of The Life of Saint Louis
1317 Death of John of Joinville

Introduction

The two works in this volume, both of which contain eyewitness accounts of thirteenth-century crusade campaigns, constitute a striking testimony to the fascination with crusading felt by the authors and their contemporaries, and they have long been familiar to modern audiences that share the same interest. Neither Geoffrey of Villehardouin nor John of Joinville was a professional writer, and their experiences on crusade were instrumental in prompting them to record their memories for posterity, which was a most unusual thing for a layman to do. The fruits of their labours, The Conquest of Constantinople and The Life of Saint Louis respectively, are remarkable both for the gripping first-hand accounts of crusade campaigns they present and as two of the earliest examples of historical writing in French prose. The Conquest of Constantinople recounts the Fourth Crusade, which was diverted from its intended target, Muslim Egypt, and instead went on to conquer the Christian city of Constantinople in 1204; Villehardouin was a leading figure in this most controversial of crusades. Joinville relates in intimate detail his experiences as a participant in King Louis IX of France’s first crusade, which took him to north Africa and the Near East from 1248 to 1254, and gives an account of his friend King Louis’s saintly life.

A brief survey of the historical context for the crusades of the thirteenth century and of the society and culture from which Villehardouin and Joinville came may assist the first-time reader. In the decades since Penguin Classics first published a translation of these works, the quantity and range of scholarship on the crusades has increased substantially. The intensity
of this scholarly debate is reflected in the variety of opinions as to what a crusade was. A broad definition might be that crusades were campaigns fought by Christians against perceived enemies of their faith in the hope and expectation of a penitential reward (a release from the penalties due for sin). The wars conducted in order to capture or defend the city of Jerusalem and other Christian holy sites in the Near East from Muslim control between the end of the eleventh century and the late thirteenth century readily qualify as crusades in the view of all historians, but campaigns fought in other theatres and against other opponents (including heretics, pagans and fellow Christians) in the Middle Ages and beyond were often described as crusades by contemporaries and are treated as such by many modern scholars.2 (Readers who wish to deepen their understanding of the many complex and compelling issues associated with the history of the crusades are encouraged to make use of the suggestions in Further Reading.)

Latin Christendom and Its Neighbours at the Turn of the Thirteenth Century

In 1095 Pope Urban II called on fighting men to join a campaign to liberate the Holy Sepulchre and Christian population of the Near East from Muslim rule. A Christian theology of just or holy war was not new, but what was new was, first, the formulation of his appeal, which coupled rousing images of the hardships and insults allegedly inflicted on Christ’s homeland and his people with the promise of great penitential reward and, secondly, the impact of this message. Tens of thousands of people, men and women of all ages and backgrounds, were inspired to abandon their everyday lives and join a lengthy and arduous armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In July 1099 the forces of the First Crusade captured the city. This was an astounding event that helped convince them and their fellow Latin Christians (members of the western Church over which the pope ruled) of the divine approbation and assistance that backed up their bloody exertions, which had cost many thousands of Muslim, Jewish and Christian lives.

Over the century that followed Latin Christians would be called upon to imitate the actions of those first crusaders in order to defend and extend their control over the Christian holy places (often referred to as ‘Outremer’ or the land overseas). By 1108 four crusader states had been established – the kingdom of Jerusalem, the counties of Edessa and Tripoli, and the principality of Antioch – but from the outset they were desperately short of manpower. The majority of those who had survived to see Jerusalem’s conquest in 1099 returned to the West soon afterwards, a fact that has helped historians overturn the misconception that crusade armies were filled with Europe’s land-hungry ‘younger sons’, eager to establish themselves in the Near East. Although military forces of modest proportions did come from the West to lend support to the fledgling crusader states, the most significant influx was pilgrims. The need to protect them inspired one of the most striking innovations associated with the crusades: the foundation of the first military religious orders, the Order of the Temple and the Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (the Templars and Hospitallers). Their members took vows and followed rules very similar to those of monastic orders, but were committed to fight as well as to pray, and their skills quickly became indispensable in the protection not only of visiting pilgrims but of the crusader states.

In the military orders we have evidence that there were people whose dedication to the cause of Christian control of the holy places was lifelong and absolute. For most people in the West, support for the crusading ideal (which was probably widespread, if not universal) did not translate into any real commitment. Indeed, calls for assistance from the Latin Christians in the East to their co-religionists in the West only prompted an organized, Europe-wide response when disaster struck the crusader states. The Second Crusade was launched after Edessa fell to the Muslims in 1144. Hopes for success were high when the forces of the Second Crusade, which included the armies of the kings of France and Germany, set out in 1147, but the campaign was abandoned two years later, after an attempt to capture the city of Damascus failed.
The shock that triggered the Third Crusade was much more profound. After inflicting a crushing defeat on Jerusalem’s army at Hattin in July 1187, Saladin, ruler of Egypt and Syria, went on to seize nearly all the strongholds in the crusader kingdom—only the port of Tyre remained in Christian hands. The loss of Jerusalem itself, three months later, spurred Christians in the West into action. This time the kings of Germany, France and England felt compelled to respond, and three great armies made their way eastwards. Although the Third Crusade recaptured the port city of Acre, it failed to win back Jerusalem. It might have done so had the French king, Philip II, not left the campaign early. His personal and political rivalries with Richard I of England lay behind his decision to do so, demonstrating the ease with which a crusade campaign could be diverted by extraneous concerns. This is a theme encountered again in considering Geoffrey of Villehardouin’s account of the Fourth Crusade.

When in 1198 the newly elected Pope Innocent III issued the call that launched the Fourth Crusade, the impending centenary of the First Crusade’s capture of Jerusalem and the more recent failure of the Third Crusade to reconquer it would have weighed heavily on his mind and on many Latin Christians’. His announcement was at once an acknowledgement of the grave dangers facing the remaining Christian territories in the Near East and an expression of a hope and belief that, with God’s help, the Holy Sepulchre and other holy places might be in Christian hands once more.

Contact and conflict between Latin Christians and Muslims did not begin with the crusades. There had long been a Muslim presence in western Europe; most of Spain had been under Muslim rule since the eighth century and Sicily since the ninth. Muslims from Sicily also became raiders and settlers in the southern Italian peninsula. In these regions Muslims and Latin Christians (as well as people of other religions – Jews in Spain and Greek Christians in Sicily) had lived alongside each other for many generations, in societies characterized by a degree of religious toleration and cultural exchange, as well as tension.

The balance of military and political power in both Spain and Sicily had shifted to favour Latin Christians before the First Crusade; the rulers of the Christian kingdoms in northern Spain began to make inroads against their Muslim neighbours earlier in the eleventh century, while the Norman conquest of Sicily and southern Italy was completed just a few years before the departure of the First Crusade. In both cases the Christian conquerors received support from the papacy and the ongoing conflict in Spain would, over the course of the twelfth century, come to be a species of crusade in its own right. But the confrontation between Christians and Muslims in the twelfth-century Near East was different from the fighting in Europe. It was not an extension of a long-running territorial dispute, and the crusaders arrived on the scene in Syria and Palestine quite unexpectedly, presenting the already unsettled Islamic communities there with new challenges.

The Islamic Near East was bitterly divided at the time; vast regions to the north and east were controlled by Seljuk Turks who were adherents of Sunni Islam and had for decades been at war with the ruling dynasty of Egypt, the Fatimids, who were Shi’ite Muslims and whom the Seljuqs therefore condemned as heretics. The lands in which the crusaders settled had been key battlegrounds in these wars; Jerusalem itself had been taken from the Seljuqs by the Fatimids in 1097. To complicate matters further, power within the Seljuk Empire was fragmented, and events in and around Jerusalem were of peripheral concern in the empire’s capital in Baghdad. While the rival military commanders and princes who exercised authority in the Near East were the most threatened by the arrival of the Christians, for the first fifty years they were primarily concerned with fighting each other. Sometimes they even made treaties and alliances with the crusader states in order to fight their fellow Muslims more effectively.

In religious terms the continuing confessional divide between Sunni and Shi’a was of greater concern to Islamic powers than the sudden arrival of the Latin Christians. It was left to lone voices within the wider Muslim community to express distress at the sufferings wrought on their co-religionists by the
crusaders, and to urge action against them. One such voice was ‘Ali bin Tahir al-Sulami, who wrote (in the early twelfth century) the Kitab-al-jihad (Book of Holy War) in which he urged his fellow Muslims to work for personal spiritual renewal and to unite to expel the Christian invaders. A fundamental element of Islam quite distinct from Christian holy war in terms of its origins, expressions and aims, jihad requires all Muslims to strive constantly for inner purity (this is the internal jihad, the first element of the programme al-Sulami promoted), while circumstance might compel the able-bodied to engage in a struggle against people or powers not subject to Islam (the external or physical jihad, the second element). Before 1099 the practice of the external jihad had waned in the Islamic communities of the Near East, and al-Sulami’s work was an early call for a revival of jihad spirit and action. Had he lived long enough he would have seen his wish fulfilled, though the revival of enthusiasm for the external jihad in the mid-twelfth century may have been as much a result of movements for religious reform within the wider Sunni Islamic world as of the arrival of Christian settlers.

Nonetheless, the crusaders were obvious targets once Muslim leaders emerged who possessed the military skill, personal ambition and aura of piety required to effectively propagate and prosecute the external jihad. In the middle decades of the twelfth century the ruler of Damascus and Aleppo, Nur ad-Din, channelled the energies of his fellow Sunni Muslims in Syria against both Fatimid Egypt and the crusader states. Under his rule jihad propaganda emphasized the special significance to Muslims of Jerusalem (from where the Prophet Muhammad had ascended into the heavens in the course of his Night Journey). Saladin, his successor, capitalized on Nur ad-Din’s efforts, by uniting Egypt and Syria under his control, thus ending the former confessional and political disunity of the Muslim Near East. From this powerful position he was able to crush the Latin Christians in 1187 in the Battle of Hattin and recapture Jerusalem. These feats have earned Saladin, in recent times especially, a reputation as an archetypal jihad warrior.

Throughout the period in which jihad ideas were being fos-tered, there were many Muslims inside the crusader states living under Christian rule. The population of Syria and Palestine in 1099 was diverse: as well as Muslims (both Sunni and Shi‘i) there were substantial communities of Jews and Eastern Christians (Armenians, Nestorians and Maronites among others). All had reason to be wary of Latin Christian rule, but it was the Muslims and Jews, as non-Christians, who had most cause for concern. Their fears were realized in the course of the First Crusade and in its immediate aftermath; the conquests in Syria and Palestine were accompanied by massacres, most famously at Jerusalem itself, and some non-Christians were driven from their homes. But a policy of violent persecution was unsustainable; the realization soon dawned on the massively outnumbered Latin Christians that the crusader states would only be viable if they found a way to coexist with the local populations. Under a system similar to that which governed the lives of Christians and Jews in Muslim lands, Jews and Muslims in the crusader states were required to pay special taxes and wear distinctive clothing. Their legal status placed them at the bottom of the scale, with Eastern Christians above them and Latin Christians set apart at the top.

But people of all faiths were free to practise their religion, and there were numerous instances in which the shared traditions of Muslims, Jews and Christians brought them into apparently respectful contact. A famous example comes from Usama ibn Munqidh, a Muslim who encountered Christians both on and off the battlefield during the twelfth century and wrote a fascinating memoir in his old age. He was in the habit of going to pray inside a former mosque, close to the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, that had been converted into a church run by the Templars, whom Usama described as his friends. On one such occasion the peace of his prayer was broken: he was assaulted by a furious Christian man who tried to force him to face east as he prayed. Usama was able to continue his prayers because a group of Templar knights expelled his assailant from the church; they explained apologetically that this man was newly arrived from the West and had never seen a Muslim at prayer before. But neither the friendship between Usama and the
Templars nor the violent reaction of the recently arrived Christian should be taken as being typical. The different faith communities in the crusader states tended to look at each other in terms of stereotyping and prejudice. Usama’s friendship with the Templars and with other Christians did not prevent him from writing an account of the Latin Christians that was, in general, scathing of them and contemptuous of their religion. The balance between curiosity and condemnation in Christian-Muslim encounters is a theme I will return to in considering John of Joinville’s *Life of Saint Louis*.

Instead of fighting Muslims, Geoffrey of Villehardouin and most of his fellow participants in the Fourth Crusade did battle with Christians. How it was that the Fourth Crusade was diverted from its intended target of Muslim Egypt and ultimately conquered the Greek Orthodox Byzantine empire will be considered in more detail below, but it was merely the most dramatic episode in a long history of Latin Christian involvement with Byzantium in the course of the crusades.

When Urban II launched the First Crusade, two powers claimed the right to leadership of the Christian world. In the West the pope and his followers asserted that, as the heir of Saint Peter, he held ultimate spiritual authority over all Christians, and from the mid eleventh century onwards the papacy was controlled by reformers who pressed these claims forcefully. In the East the emperor at Constantinople (whose lands are known as the Byzantine Empire) believed he was the supreme ruler of Christendom because he was heir to the legacy of Emperor Constantine I, who in the fourth century had become the first of the Roman emperors to adopt Christianity and who had founded their beloved imperial city. As the head of the Byzantine state and the Greek Orthodox Church, the emperor in Constantinople claimed a pre-eminent worldly authority bolstered by his special religious role. Ideological and doctrinal differences between the Roman and Greek Churches had caused tension before 1095, but the lines of communication between them had been maintained in order to pursue the possible unification of the two Churches and because the two communities—who were, after all, both Christian—were potentially useful allies.

The First Crusade began with the mutual hope that Latin and Greek Christians might collaborate. The Byzantines had for some time made use of mercenaries from the West, and when the emperor called on Urban II in 1095 to encourage fighting men to make their way eastwards to help him fight the Seljuq Turks, he probably expected to be joined by a modestly sized force of professional knights. In the event it was a quite different kind of army: massive, unruly, hungry and driven by a fierce religious zeal. The crusaders felt badly let down when their expectations of Byzantine support for their campaign were not fulfilled, and the Byzantines in turn felt betrayed when lands that had formerly been theirs were claimed by the crusaders. This helped seal a mutual mistrust between Latins and Greeks. Although over the course of the twelfth century there would be repeated attempts by the Latins to draw the Byzantines into their crusading projects in a useful way—the material support that Constantinople might provide was potentially massive and could not be ignored—the latter’s response was deeply frustrating. For the Byzantine emperors, the need to work in the interests of the empire (and above all to ensure Constantinople’s safety), while maintaining their claim to supreme Christian authority, overrode all other concerns. This meant alternating between courting westerners and rulers of the crusader states and undermining them, sometimes by cooperating with Muslim powers. This policy helped fix an impression in western minds that the Greek Christians were profoundly untrustworthy.

There was resentment of westerners in Constantinople, too, that had nothing to do with crusading. Italian merchants—especially from Venice, Genoa and Pisa—had for decades been a strong presence in Constantinople, the largest and richest market in the world, and benefited from trading privileges that aroused jealous anger among the local population. On two occasions concerted action was taken against Italians in Constantinople. In the first it was the Byzantine government itself that acted; in 1171 all the Venetians in the empire were arrested.
and their property confiscated, and many remained in prison until 1183. But with hindsight they may have seen this long captivity as a blessing for in 1182 the first of a series of coups in a period of serious political instability in Byzantium was accompanied by a massacre of Constantinople’s remaining Italian population. This time it was Constantinople’s mob rather than its emperor who lay behind this action, and although it was specifically Italians who were targeted, people throughout western Europe and the Latin East were horrified. The first century of crusading saw relations between Greek and Latin Christians become both more intense and more confused and fragile. The breaking point would come with the Fourth Crusade.

The World of Villehardouin and Joinville: French Knightly Society and Literary Culture

As well as providing accounts of crusades, The Conquest of Constantinople and The Life of Saint Louis are fascinating reflections of the values and concerns of the society and culture that the authors and their fellow crusaders lived in and were shaped by. Their status as knights, as Christians and as inhabitants of the lands that would come to form the country we know as France were key features of Villehardouin and Joinville’s world. The thirteenth century was a vital one in the formation of France and its literary culture, and both writers were important witnesses to and participants in this process.

Although men and women from every walk of life took the cross and joined crusade campaigns, the people whom the papacy most wanted were members of western Europe’s arms-bearing elite, which by the thirteenth century had developed into a knightly class with its own distinctive lifestyle, values and tastes. Geoffroy of Villehardouin and John of Joinville shared with their knightly colleagues an awareness that their material and social standing, as well as their highly prized personal honour, were dependent on their ability to secure and defend, often by force, possession of property and rights, whether their own or that of the lord they served as a vassal.

The skills, resources and bravery required by horse-borne combat were essential to performing these tasks effectively, as well as to the knightly self-image.

Alongside their worldly concerns, which required a readiness for violence, most knights felt a profound sense of spiritual obligation. Religious faith and the fate of one’s soul were constant preoccupations. In order to counter the sinfulness that was an inevitable consequence of living a normal, active life, knights and women of their social class (like all laymen and -women) engaged in penitential pilgrimages to the shrines where saints’ relics were housed and, if they had the means, gave generous gifts to the religious communities that cared for these shrines and would pray for the donors’ souls. These dual tendencies in knighthood – towards violence and piety – may appear contradictory to modern eyes and could be troubling to medieval people too. A large part of the appeal of crusading to the military elite lay in the way it reconciled these competing impulses, lending knighthood the qualities of a vocation akin to monasticism.

From the outset the French-speaking world had a special part to play in the crusades. Although people from many regions of Europe – Germany, England, Italy, the Low Countries and Scandinavia among them – responded to the proclamation of the First Crusade, the French-born Urban II had directed his initial appeal specifically at members of the French landed and military elite; and their descendants would continue to play a prominent role in the crusades. It is worth clarifying that the terms ‘France’ and ‘French’ did not refer to clearly defined geographical, political or linguistic units in the central Middle Ages. Throughout this period the king of France was a member of a dynasty known as the Capetians. The territories within which the earlier Capetian kings exercised effective authority were limited to a relatively small area around their capital at Paris, but they claimed sovereignty over a much larger area and over more extensive rights. In the thirteenth century the extent, in both geographical and qualitative terms, of the authority wielded by the kings of France would grow substantially as the Capetians used political manoeuvring, military might and
judicious marriage alliances to secure meaningful recognition of their supremacy over regions close to their power base in the north as well as territories further south.

Among those regions was the county of Champagne, to the east of Paris, home to both Geoffrey of Villehardouin and John of Joinville. The counts of Champagne were able to exercise power independently throughout most of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but were nonetheless attached to the kings of France by feudal ties and family connections. In 1284, when the heiress to Champagne, Joan (who was also queen of Navarre), married the future King Philip IV of France, Champagne was finally claimed by the Capetians. Men like Villehardouin and Joinville, high-ranking members of the society and administration of Champagne, had a primary loyalty to the county but also felt an association with the wider France into which Champagne was increasingly bound. Hence both authors refer to themselves and their fellow crusaders as 'French' or 'Franks'. Their sense of 'Frenchness' would have been enhanced by the thriving literary culture in what is the northern half of modern-day France that shared a common dialect known as Old French (examples of which may be found in Appendix I). Villehardouin's and Joinville's knightly peers would have listened to the stories of war recounted in epic poems known as chansons de geste, to the tales of knightly quests for spiritual fulfillment or the affection of their beloved told in romances, or to songs whose lyrics touched on a wide range of the dilemmas or desires shared by men and women of high social standing.

While the crusades and themes associated with crusading appear in all these different genres, they feature prominently in the chansons de geste, a number of which describe legendary wars supposedly fought by Christians against Muslim enemies. By the late twelfth century one group known as the Old French Crusade Cycle and based (sometimes very loosely) on the history of the First Crusade had been collected and written down for circulation among performers.

Some members of the knightly class participated more actively in French literary culture as patrons or writers, and Champagne seems to have been notable for spawning or attracting such individuals. Countess Marie, who ruled the county in the late twelfth century and appointed Geoffrey of Villehardouin as her marshal, was a patroness of the famous romance writer, Chrétien of Troyes, for example. A number of well-known songwriters were associated with Champagne; John of Joinville's lord, Count Thibaut IV of Champagne, was only the most famous and high-ranking. When Villehardouin and Joinville left their homeland to go on crusade, they found the campaigns could bring poets together, as was most clearly the case on the Fourth Crusade. Three of the crusaders mentioned by Villehardouin – Conon of Béthune, Guy the castellan of Coucy and Hugh of Berzé – are known for the lyrics they composed. A song attributed to Hugh V of Berzé, 'S'Onques nus hom pour dure departie', which blends themes of love and crusading and was probably written in the early stages of the Fourth Crusade, is included in Appendix I.

Both Villehardouin and Joinville came from an environment in which literary achievement was valued, and they are known to have been in close contact with accomplished poets, which may make it less surprising that they embarked on their own writing projects. What is striking, though, is that both of them broke with established traditions in vernacular literature by rejecting the verse form used in works written primarily by or for audiences of laymen and women. Villehardouin's account of The Conquest of Constantinople, alongside a second work of the same name produced by Robert of Clari, another participant in the Fourth Crusade, are the earliest surviving examples of French historical writing in prose. They coupled vernacular language – French, the language of easy communication with their knightly peers and of rousing stories – with the prose form of didactic and functional texts. The latter were 'truth-telling' and instructional texts such as Scripture, sermons and legal documents. By choosing prose both Villehardouin and Joinville emphasized their seriousness of purpose and in doing so Villehardouin also helped set a landmark in the history of French literature.
Contents

Prologue 141

Part I Louis's Sanctity in Word
1 King Louis's Holy Words and Pious Teachings 147

Part II Louis's Sanctity in Deed
2 King Louis Confronts Rebellious Barons 163
3 King Louis's Crusade Vow and the Voyage to Cyprus 173
4 The Fall and Occupation of Damietta 182
5 The Crusaders Venture Along the River Nile 191
6 The Battle of Mansurah 199
7 From Victory to Captivity 208
8 The Crusaders in Captivity 225
9 The Crusaders at Acre 246
10 The Crusaders at Caesarea (Reports Concerning the Tartars) 262
11 The Crusaders at Jaffa 274
12 The Crusaders at Sidon 286
13 The Journey Home 300
14 King Louis's Personal and Governmental Reforms 312
15 King Louis's Second Crusade, Death and Canonization 328
To his good lord Louis, son of the king of France, by the grace of God king of Navarre and count palatine of Champagne and Brie, John, lord of Joinville, his seneschal of Champagne sends greetings and love and honour, and his ready service.

Dear lord, I would have you know that my lady the queen, your mother, who loved me very much — may God have tender mercy on her — begged me as fervently as she could to make her a book of the holy words and the good deeds of our king Saint Louis. I promised to do so and with God’s help the book has been completed in two parts. The first part describes how he conducted himself throughout his life in accordance with God and the Church and to the benefit of his kingdom. The second part of the book then speaks of his distinguished knightly deeds and impressive feats of arms.

My lord, since it is written, ‘Attend first to that which pertains to God, and he will set all other affairs in order for you’, I started by having written down that which relates to the three things already mentioned, by which I mean: that which pertains to the well-being of souls and of bodies, and that which pertains to the government of the people. I have had other things written down to do further honour to this true saint, since through them it can be seen quite clearly that no layman of our time ever showed such holiness in life as he did, from the beginning of his reign until the end of his days. I was not there when he died, but Count Peter of Alençon, his son, who loved me very much, was there, and he reported to me the fitting end the king made, as you will find written at the end of this book.
[5] And it seems to me that he was not adequately recognized when they failed to set him among the number of the martyrs, considering the great suffering he endured on the pilgrimage of the cross over the course of the six years I was in his company, and especially because he followed Our Lord as far as the cross; for if God died on the cross so did he, for he was signed with the cross when he died at Tunis.

[6] The second part of the book will tell you of his distinguished knightly deeds and his great acts of bravery. These were such that on four occasions I saw him put his own life in mortal peril in order to save his people from harm, as you will hear hereafter.

[7] The first instance in which he put his life in mortal peril was as we arrived before Damietta. All his councillors urged him, so I have heard, to stay in his ship until he could see how his knights fared as they reached the shore. [8] Their reason for advising this was that if he should land with the knights, and his forces be wiped out with him among them, their project would be a complete loss, whereas if he stayed on his ship he might himself launch another attempt to conquer the land of Egypt. But he did not want to listen to any of them. Instead he leapt into the sea fully armed, with his shield at his neck and his lance in his hand, and was among the first to reach land.

[9] The second occasion in which he put his life in mortal peril was this: as he left Mansurah to go to Damietta he was advised by his council, so I have been given to understand, that he should go to Damietta in a galley. He was given this advice, so it is said, on the grounds that if things went badly for his people he might himself be able to secure their release from prison. [10] This advice was given to him especially on account of his physical frailty, brought on by his several sicknesses; he had a double tertian fever, severe diarrhoea and the sickness that had struck the camp was afflicting his mouth and legs. Nonetheless, he did not want to listen to anyone. Rather he said that he would never abandon his people, and would meet whatever end they met. It so happened that the diarrhoea he was suffering from made it necessary to cut out the seat of his breeches that night, and the intensity of the camp sickness meant he fainted several times, as you will hear later on.

[11] The third occasion in which he put his life in mortal peril was when he remained in the Holy Land for four years after his brothers’ departure. We were in great danger of death at that time because for each man-at-arms the king had in his force during his stay at Acre, the people of that city would have thirty when it was lost. [12] I know of no other reason why the Turks did not come and take us at Acre other than God’s love for the king, which struck fear into the hearts of our enemies so that they did not dare come and attack us. Because of which it is written, ‘If you fear God, so all those that look on you will fear you.’ The king chose to stay against all advice, as you will hear later. He placed his life at risk to save the people of that land, who would have been lost from that moment if he had not remained.

[13] The fourth instance in which he put his life in mortal peril was as we were returning from overseas and were off the island of Cyprus, where our ship struck bottom so violently that the sandbank we had hit tore away eighteen feet of the keel on which our ship was built. [14] After this happened the king summoned fourteen master mariners, from the damaged ship and from others in his fleet, to consult them as to what he should do. As you will hear later on they all urged him to go aboard another ship, for they did not see how this vessel could withstand the pounding of the waves, when the bolts that held the ship’s planks together had all been dislodged. They explained the danger facing the ship to the king using an example: during our outward sea voyage a ship in a similar situation had perished. I myself saw, in the count of Joigny’s lodgings, the woman and child who were the sole survivors from that ship.

[15] The king responded, ‘My lords, I can see that if I leave this ship she will be abandoned. It is my view that since each of the 800 and more people aboard loves their life just as much as I do mine, no one would dare stay on this ship, but would stay on Cyprus instead. I would not on this account – please God – put so many people as there are here in mortal danger, and therefore, I will stay aboard to save my people.’ [16] And
so he stayed. And God, in whom he placed his trust, saved us from the perils of the sea for ten weeks, bringing us into safe harbour as you will hear later on. Now, it so happened that Oliver of Termes, who had conducted himself well and vigorously overseas, left the king and stayed on Cyprus; we did not see him for a year and a half. It should be apparent from this that the king prevented any harm to the 800 people on his ship.

[17] In the last part of the book we will speak of his end, and the saintly manner of his death.

[18] Now I must tell you, my lord king of Navarre, that I made a promise to my lady the queen, your mother – may God have tender mercy on her – that I would make this book. I have done so in order to fulfil that promise, and since I see no one who should more properly have it than you, her heir, I am sending it to you so that you and your brothers and others that hear it might heed its good lessons and put those lessons into practice, and thereby make themselves pleasing to God.
himself avenged on the count either in person or through another’s actions. Instead, he wore his long hair parted like a woman’s. When my lord Geoffrey saw the count of La Marche kneeling before the king and pleading for mercy, along with his wife and his children, he had someone fetch a stool, unmade his parting and had his hair cut in front of the king, the count of La Marche, and all those present.

[105] I heard from those who took part in them that the king gave substantial rewards in the course of his campaigns against the king of England and against the barons. But neither the gifts he gave nor his expenditure on campaigns, on this side of the sea or the other, led the king to ask for or to take any contributions from his own barons, knights and men, or from his good towns, in a way that gave them cause for complaint. And this is no wonder, for he acted in accordance with the advice of the virtuous mother who was by his side, and of the pseudonimnes who had remained in the king’s entourage since the time of his father and his grandfather.

[106] Following the events just described it so happened that God’s will was that the king should be taken seriously ill at Paris. It was said that he was so unwell that one of the women attending him wanted to draw the sheet over his face, saying he was dead. But another woman, on the other side of the bed, would not allow her to do this. She said that his soul was still in his body. [107] As the king listened to these two women argue, Our Lord worked in him and restored him immediately to health, for he had been struck dumb and unable to speak. He asked for someone to give him the cross, and they did. When the queen, his mother, was told that he had regained the power of speech she displayed the greatest possible joy, but when she was told by the king himself that he had taken the cross, she demonstrated grief as profound as if she had seen him dead.

[108] After he had taken the cross, so did the king’s three brothers: Robert, count of Artois, Alphonse, count of Poitiers and Charles, count of Anjou, who later became the king of Sicily. Hugh, duke of Burgundy, took the cross and so did William, count of Flanders (the brother of Count Guy of Flanders who died recently), the good Hugh, count of Saint-Pol, and his nephew my lord Walter, who conducted himself very well overseas and would have been a most worthy man had he lived. [109] Along with them were the count of La Marche and his son my lord Hugh le Brun, and the count of Sarrebrück and his brother my lord Gobert of Apremont. It was in the count of Sarrebrück’s company that I, John, lord of Joinville, crossed the sea in a ship we had hired together because we were cousins.
We were twenty knights in all on that crossing, nine of them with him, and nine with me.

[110] At Easter in the year of grace 1248 I summoned my men and my vassals to Joinville. On the eve of Easter,\(^2\) when all the people I had summoned had arrived, my son John, lord of Ancerville, was born of my first wife, who was the count of Grandpré's sister. All that week we feasted and danced, for my brother, the lord of Vaucouleurs, and the other rich men present took it in turns to provide a meal on the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. [111] On Friday I said to them, 'My lords, I am going away overseas and I do not know if I will return. So if I have done you any wrong, come forward, and I will right it for each of you in turn, as I would usually do for anyone who has a claim to make against me or my people.' I settled these claims on the advice of all the men of my lands, and, so that I might not exert any undue influence, I withdrew from the meeting and followed all their recommendations unquestioningly.

[112] As I did not wish to take any money with me that was not rightfully mine, I went to Metz, in the Lorraine, to leave a large portion of my lands in pledge. You should know that on the day I left our country to go to the Holy Land, I had not 1,000 livres-worth of lands, for my lady my mother was still alive.\(^3\) And so I left with nine other knights; three of us were bannerets. I mention these things to you because if God, who has never let me down, had not helped me, I would scarcely have been able to support myself for so long a time as the six years I spent in the Holy Land.

[113] As I was preparing to leave, John, lord of Apremont, count of Sarrebrück\(^4\) by right of his wife, sent word to me informing me that he had made preparations to go overseas at the head of a group of ten knights. He said that, if I wished, he and I might share the hire of a ship. I agreed, and his people and mine hired a ship at Marseilles.

[114] The king summoned all his barons to Paris and had them swear an oath that they would offer faith and loyalty to his children should anything happen to him during the expedition. He asked this of me, but I was unwilling to swear an oath because I was not his man.\(^5\)

[115] As I was on my way to Paris, I came across three dead men on a cart whom a clerk had killed, and I was told that they were being taken to the king. When I heard this, I sent one of my squires after them to find out what had happened. The squire told me that the king, when he came out of his chapel, stood on the steps to look at the dead men and asked of the prévôt of Paris what had happened.

[116] The prévôt told him that the dead men were three of his sergeants from the Châtelet,\(^6\) and that they had gone into the backstreets in order to rob people. He said to the king, 'They came across this clerk you see here and stripped him of all his clothes. The clerk, wearing only his chemise, went to his lodgings and took up his crossbow. He had a boy fetch his falchion. When he saw the robbers he shouted to them and said that they would die on that spot. The clerk drew his crossbow, fired and struck one of them in the heart. The other two took flight, while the clerk took up the falchion the boy had been carrying and chased them by the light of the moon, which was bright and clear. [117] One of the robbers decided he would cut through a hedge and into a garden, but the clerk struck him with the sword,' said the prévôt, 'and cut right through his leg so that only the boot is holding it on, as you see. The clerk resumed his chase of the other robber, who had decided to enter a stranger's house where people were still awake. The clerk struck him in the head with the falchion, splitting it down to the teeth, as you can see,' said the prévôt to the king. 'My lord,' he said, 'the clerk showed what he had done to the householders in the street and then he went to give himself up to your custody. And so, my lord, I am bringing him to you so that you might do as you will with him. Here he is.'

[118] 'My lord clerk,' said the king, 'your bravery has lost you the chance of priesthood, but because of it I will retain you in my pay and you will come with me overseas. I would have you know that this is because I strongly desire my people to see that I will not uphold them in any of their wrongdoings.' When the people who were gathered there heard this, they cried out to Our Lord and prayed that God might give the king a good and long life, and bring him back in joy and health.
[119] I returned to our own country after these events. The lord of Sarrebrück and I made preparations to send our equipment to Auxonne in carts, where it would be put on the River Saône and taken as far as Arles, via the Saône and the Rhône.

[120] On the day I left Joinville I sent for the abbot of Cheminon, who was said to be the greatest preudomme of the white order. I heard one account of him while I was at Clairvaux on the feast of Our Lady (the king was also there), from a monk who pointed the abbot out to me and asked me if I knew him. I said to him, ‘Why do you ask?’ He replied, ‘Because I believe that he is the greatest preudomme there is in all the white order.’ [121] And you should also know,’ he said, ‘that I have heard a story from a preudomme who once lay in the same dormitory where the abbot of Cheminon was sleeping. The abbot had uncovered his chest because of the heat, and the man lying in the dormitory saw the Mother of God go to the abbot’s bed and draw his gown across his chest so that the draught might not do him any harm.’

[122] This same abbot of Cheminon gave me my staff and purse. And then I left Joinville, not to enter my castle again until my return. I was on foot, bare-legged and wearing a hairshirt. I went thus on pilgrimage to Blécourt, Saint-Urbain and other shrines thereabouts. As I made my way to Blécourt and Saint-Urbain, I did not want to cast my eyes back towards Joinville at all, fearful that my heart would melt for the fine castle and two children I was leaving behind.

[123] I and my companions ate at Fontaine l’Archevêque, near Donieux, and there Abbot Adam of Saint-Urbain – may God absolve him – gave a great quantity of fine jewels to me and my knights. From there we went to Auxonne, and from there to Lyons. All our equipment had been loaded on to boats and was taken down the River Saône. The large warhorses were led along beside the boats. [124] At Lyons we entered the river Rhône to go to Arles-le-Blanc. On the Rhône we came across a castle called La Roche-de-Glin, which the king had had torn down because Roger, its lord, was accused of robbing pilgrims and merchants.

[125] In the month of August we embarked on our ships at the Rock of Marseilles. On the day we embarked, the door of the ship was opened, and all the horses we had to take overseas were placed inside before the door was closed again and well caulked – as you would seal a barrel – because when the ship is on the high seas the whole door is underwater.

[126] When the horses were inside, our master mariner called to his sailors who were in the prow of the ship, and said to them, ‘Are you ready?’ They replied, ‘Yes sir, you can let the clerks and priests come forward.’ As soon as they had come, the master mariner called to them, ‘In God’s name, sing!’ And they all chanted with one voice Veni creator spiritus. The master mariner called to his sailors, ‘In God’s name, set sail!’

[127] Before long the wind had filled the sails and taken us out of sight of land, so that we could see only sky and water. Each day the wind took us further away from the lands where we were born. I am describing these events to you to show how foolishly is he who dares place himself in such peril, when he is in possession of another person’s property or is in a state of mortal sin, because seafarers go to sleep in the evening not knowing whether they will find themselves at the bottom of the sea the next morning.

[128] While at sea we experienced a great marvel when we sighted a perfectly round mountain off the Barbary coast. We sighted it around the hour of vespers and sailed all night, believing we must have covered more than fifty leagues. But the next day we found ourselves beneath this same mountain, and this happened to us two or three times. When the sailors saw this all of them were afraid; they told us that our ship was in great danger because we lay off the lands of the Barbary Saracens. [129] Then a preudomme priest, known as the dean of Maurupt, told us that there had never been any instance of suffering in his parish, whether as a result of drought or excessive rains or any other affliction, that God and his Mother had not delivered them from as soon as they had made three processions on three successive Saturdays. It happened to be Saturday, and we performed the first procession around the ship’s two masts. I myself had to be held up by my arms because
I was seriously ill. We never saw the mountain again after that, and we arrived at Cyprus on the third Saturday.

[130] When we arrived at Cyprus the king was already there. We found a great abundance of the king’s provisions: cellars, grain stores and money. The king’s supply of wine was such that in the middle of the fields along the shore his people had laid out large stacks of wine barrels that had been bought two years before his arrival. They had been placed one on top of another so that when they were seen from in front they had the appearance of barns. [131] The wheat and barley had been heaped in piles in the fields. When you saw them they looked like hills, because the rain that had fallen on the grain over a long period had made the outermost layer sprout, so that all that could be seen was green grass. And so, when they wanted to take these supplies to Egypt, they broke the outer crust of green grass to find the wheat and barley inside were as fresh as if they had just been threshed.

[132] The king would very willingly have gone on to Egypt without stopping, as I heard him say while we were in Syria, if it had not been for his barons, who urged him to wait for his people who had not yet all arrived.

[133] While the king was staying on Cyprus, the great king of the Tartars sent envoys to him, bringing many amiable and courteous messages. Among these, he sent word that he was ready to help him conquer the Holy Land and deliver Jerusalem from the hands of the Saracens. [134] The king received these envoys most graciously, and sent his own in return. They were away for two years before returning to him. Along with these envoys the king sent the king of the Tartars a tent made in the form of a chapel, which was very costly because it was made entirely from fine scarlet. In order to see whether he might be able to draw the Tartars to our faith, the king had the chapel decorated with images of the Annunciation of Our Lady and all the other points of the faith. These things were sent by the king in the care of two Dominican friars who knew the Saracen language, in order to show and teach the Tartars what they should believe.

[135] The two friars returned to the king at the same time as his brothers returned to France. They found the king at Caesarea, where he had gone to from Acre after taking leave of his brothers there. He was refortifying the city, since he had neither peace nor truce with the Saracens. I will tell you later how the king of France’s envoys were received, just as they themselves recounted it to the king. You will hear many interesting stories from their report to the king, but I do not want to relate them now as this would require me to break off from the subject I have begun, which is as follows. [136] I, who had not 1,000 livres-worth of lands, had taken responsibility when I left to go overseas for ten knights, myself included, two of whom were bannerets. It thus transpired that when I arrived in Cyprus, after having paid for my ship, I had only 240 livres left, and some of my knights informed me that if I did not secure funds for myself they would leave me. God, who has never failed me, provided for me in this way: the king, who was at Nicosia, sent for me and retained me in his service and put 800 livres into my coffers. Then I had more money than I needed.

[137] While we were staying in Cyprus the empress of Constantinople sent word to me that she had come to Paphos (a town on Cyprus), and that Erart of Brienne and I should go and fetch her. When we arrived there, we found that a strong wind had torn the cables of her ship’s anchors, and driven the ship towards Acre. The only belongings she had were the mantle she was wearing and a surcote for meals. We brought her to Limassol, where the king and queen and all the barons received her most honourably. [138] The next day, I sent her cloth to make a dress and with it a piece of vair. I also sent some tertiaire and cendal to line the dress. My lord Philip of Nanteuil, the good knight, who was in the king’s entourage, came across my squire as he was going to the empress. When the prudhomme saw the garments, he went to the king and told him that I had deeply shamed him and the other barons by sending the empress this when they had not been aware of her need.

[139] The empress had come to ask for aid from the king for her husband, who had stayed in Constantinople, and she was so intent on this that she took away a hundred or more duplicate letters from me and her other friends who were there.
These letters bound us on oath to go to Constantinople should the king or the legate wish to send 300 knights there once the king departed from overseas. [140] In order to fulfil my oath, at the time of our departure I told the king in the presence of the count of Eu (whose letter to this effect I have) that if he wished to send 300 knights, I would honour my oath and go. The king replied that he did not have the means; his treasury was not so vast that it was not already drained to the dregs. After our arrival in Egypt the empress went to France and took with her my lord John of Acre, her brother, whom she married to the countess of Montfort.

[141] At the time of our arrival on Cyprus the sultan of Iconium was the richest king in all the infidel world. He had done something astounding, for he had melted down a large quantity of his gold and poured it into earthen pots of the sort used overseas to hold wine, and each of these pots held at least three or four measures of wine. He had the pots broken, and the ingots of gold were placed on display inside one of his castles, so that each person who entered could see and touch them. There were at least six or seven of them. [142] His great wealth was apparent from a large tent that the king of Armenia sent to the king of France, which was worth at least 500 livres. The king of Armenia told the king of France that this had been given to him by a ferrais of the sultan of Iconium. A ferrais is the servant who takes care of the sultan’s tents and cleans his houses.

[143] The king of Armenia, who wanted to liberate himself from servitude to the sultan of Iconium, went to the king of the Tartars and placed himself in their service so that he might receive their help. He came away with such a large number of men-at-arms that he would be able to do battle with the sultan of Iconium. The battle lasted a long time, and the Tartars killed so many of the sultan’s men that nothing more was heard of him. The reports of this coming battle were widespread in Cyprus, and on this account a number of our sergeants crossed over to Armenia in the hope of profit and in order to join the fight. Not one of them ever returned.

[144] The sultan of Egypt, who was awaiting King Louis’s arrival in his lands in the spring, decided he would go and attack the sultan of Hama, who was his mortal enemy, and went and besieged him inside the city of Hama. The sultan of Hama did not know how to rid himself of the sultan of Egypt, and could see clearly that the sultan of Egypt would certainly overthrow him if he should live long enough. He made a bargain with the ferrais of the sultan of Egypt to have him kill his master. [145] This is how he was poisoned: the ferrais noticed that the sultan would come and play chess on the mats at the end of his bed each afternoon, and so he placed poison on the mat on which he knew the sultan sat. It so happened that the sultan, who was bare-legged, shifted his weight on to an open sore on his leg, and straightaway the poison entered his exposed flesh and took all power of movement from the side of his body into which it had entered. Each time the venom surged to his heart the sultan was unable to eat, drink or speak for two days. So they left the sultan of Hama in peace, and the sultan of Egypt’s people brought him back to his own lands.
CHAPTER 4

The Fall and Occupation of Damietta

(March–November 1249)

[146] At the beginning of March, by the king's command, the king, the barons and the other pilgrims ordered that the ships be reloaded with wine and food in order to leave when the king so instructed. So it was that when all had been put in good order the king and queen boarded their ship on the Friday before Pentecost. The king said to his barons that they should follow him in their ships and sail straight to Egypt. On Saturday the king set sail, and all the other ships too. This was a most beautiful sight for it seemed as if the entire sea, as far as the eye could see, was covered with the canvas of ships' sails. These vessels were numbered at 1,800, both large and small.

[147] The king dropped anchor below a small hill which is called the Point of Limassol, with all the other ships around his. He went ashore on the day of Pentecost. When we had heard Mass, a violent and strong wind coming from the direction of Egypt rose to such effect that of the 2,800 knights the king was taking to Egypt only 700 remained; the rest were torn from the king's company and driven to Acre and other distant lands. They did not return to the king for a long while.

[148] On the day after Pentecost the wind had fallen. The king and those of us who were still with him, as God so desired, set sail once again. We were joined by the prince of Morea and the duke of Burgundy, who had been staying in Morea. On the Thursday after Pentecost the king arrived off Damietta. We found the sultan's entire force on the seashore, and these were very fine men to look at, since the sultan's coat of arms were golden, and they glistened where the sun fell on them. The noise they made with their kettledrums and Saracen horns was terrifying to hear.

[149] The king summoned his barons to get their advice as to how he should proceed. Many advised him to wait until his people had returned, since only one-third of his men remained with him. He did not want to heed them at all. The reason he gave was that this would give heart to his enemies. Moreover, there is no harbour in the sea off Damietta where he could wait for his people; a strong wind might take the ships and drive them off to other lands, as had happened to the others on Pentecost.

[150] It was agreed that the king would go ashore on the Friday before Trinity Sunday and would go into battle with the Saracens unless they refused to fight. The king ordered my lord John of Beaumont to provide a galley for my lord Erart of Brienne and me in order that we and our knights could land, since the large ships were not able to reach the shore. [151] As God willed it, when I returned to my ship I came across a small boat that was given to me by my lady of Beirut (who was a first cousin of the count of Monbéliard and of mine) in which were eight of my horses. When Friday came, I and my lord Erart of Brienne, fully armed, went to the king to ask for the galley, to which my lord John of Beaumont replied that we were not going to have one.

[152] When our men found out that we were not going to have a galley, they let themselves drop, as and when each saw his chance, from the large nef into the ship's boat, so that the boat began to sink. When the sailors saw that the boat was sinking little by little, they fled back on to the nef, leaving my knights in the boat. I asked the master mariner how many more people there were in the ship's boat than it could carry and he told me 'twenty men-at-arms'. I asked him if he would take our men safely to the shore if I unloaded that number, and he replied, 'Yes.' I unloaded that many men and in three trips they were all taken to the boat where my horses were.

[153] While I was directing these men a knight named Plonquet, who was one of my lord Erart of Brienne's men, decided
to get down from the large nef into the ship's boat, but the boat moved off and he fell into the sea and was drowned.

[154] When I returned to my nef I put a squire whom I had knighted, whose name was my lord Hugh of Vaucouleurs, into my little boat along with two most valiant young men whose names were my lord Villain of Versy and my lord William of Dammartin, between whom there was grievous ill-will. No one had been able to make peace between them since they had seized each other by the hair while in Morea. I made them forgive each other's anger and kiss, for I swore to them on relics that we would not take their ill-will ashore with us.

[155] Then we moved off to go ashore and came alongside the boat from the king's great nef, in which the king himself was. His people started to shout to us because we were going more quickly than him; they said I should land alongside the standard of Saint-Denis,\(^5\) which was going ashore in another boat, ahead of the king. But I paid no attention to them and instead had us arrive before a large battalion of Turks,\(^6\) in which there were at least 6,000 men on horseback. [156] As soon as they saw we had landed, they came spurring towards us. When we saw them coming we set the points of our shields and drove the shafts of our lances into the sand, with the sharp ends towards the enemy. As soon as they saw the lances set so as to run through their stomachs, they turned tail and fled.

[157] My lord Baldwin of Rheims, a preudomme who had come ashore, sent a squire to ask me to wait for him. I told him that I would do so most willingly, for it was fitting to wait for a preudomme like him in such a dangerous situation. He was grateful to me for this all his life. He came to us with 1,000 knights, which should prove to you that although when I landed I had no squire, knight or soldier whom I had brought with me from my country, God did not fail to aid me.

[158] To our left landed the count of Jaffa, who was a first cousin of the count of Membéard and a member of the Joinville lineage.\(^7\) He made the most magnificent landing, since the galley of his that came ashore was painted all over – both the parts under the sea and those above – with shields bearing his arms, which are or with a cross patée gules.\(^8\) He had at least 300 rowers in his galley, and for each of them there was a shield bearing his arms, and alongside each shield was a pennon bearing his arms worked in gold. [159] As it came ashore the rowers drove the galley onwards with their oars, so that it seemed as if it was flying. It also gave the impression that thunderbolts were falling from the heavens, because of the sound made by the pennons and because of the kettledrums, drums and Saracen horns that were in the count’s galley. As soon as the galley reached the sand, coming up as far on to the shore as it could, the count and his knights leapt down from the galley, very well armed and very well equipped, and came and took up position alongside us.

[160] I forgot to tell you that when the count of Jaffa landed he immediately had his tents and pavilions pitched. As soon as the Saracens saw the tents set up, they all came and assembled in front of us and spurred on again, as if to charge us. But when they saw we would not flee they retreated rapidly.

[161] To our right, a good crossbow-shot’s length away, the galley carrying the standard of Saint-Denis landed. When they had come ashore one Saracen charged into their midst, either because he could not hold his horse or because he thought the rest of his companions would follow him, but he was cut all to pieces. [162] When the king got word that the standard of Saint-Denis had landed, he strode quickly across the deck of his boat, and, undeterred by the objections of his companion the legate, he leapt into the sea, where the water came up to his armpits. He went, with his shield at his neck, his helmet on his head and his lance in his hand, to join his men who were on the shore. When he came to land and saw the Saracens, he asked what people these were and was told that they were Saracens. He set his lance under his arm and his shield in front of him, and would have charged at the Saracens if the preudommes who were with him had allowed it.

[163] Three times the Saracens sent carrier pigeons to the sultan to let him know that the king had arrived, but they received no message in return because the sultan was in the grip of his sickness. Because of this they thought the sultan was dead and they abandoned Damietta. The king sent a knight into the
city as an envoy to confirm this news, and he returned to the
king and said that he had been into the sultan’s residences and
that it was true. Then the king sent for the legate and all the
prelates of the army, who sang *Te Deum Laudamus* at the top
of their voices. Then the king and all the rest of us mounted
our horses and went to set up camp outside Damietta.

[164] The Turks were unwise to leave the city without cutting
the bridge made of boats, because this would have caused us
great difficulty. But they did do us great harm as they left by
setting fire to the bazaar, where all the merchandise and goods
sold by weight were stored. The outcome of this was the same
as if someone were tomorrow to set fire – God forbid – to the
Petit Pont in Paris.10

[165] We should acknowledge that God Almighty granted us
great grace when he protected us from death and danger in the
course of our landing, since we arrived on foot to attack our
mounted enemies. And Our Lord granted us great grace in
delivering Damietta to us, which city we might not otherwise
have been able take except by starvation. And we can see this
quite clearly since it was by starvation that King John took it
in our fathers’ time.11

[166] Our Lord can speak of us as he did of the children of
Israel when he said *Et pro nihilo habuerant terram desiderabilem*.12 And what does he say after that? He says that they forgot
God, who had saved them. And I will tell you later on how we
forgot him.

[167] First I will tell you about the king, who summoned his
barons, both clerics and laymen, and asked them to help him
determine how the spoils of the city should be divided. The
patriarch13 was the first to speak. He said, ‘My lord, it seems to
me that it would be appropriate for you to keep the wheat,
barley, rice, and all the food in order to supply the city, and to
let it be known throughout the army that all other movable
goods should be brought to the legate’s lodgings on pain of
excommunication.’ All the other barons agreed with this advice.
But it so happened that the value of all the movable goods
brought to the legate’s lodgings amounted to only 6,000 livres.

[168] When this had been done, the king and his barons
summoned my lord John of Vallery, the *pseudomme*, and the
king said to him, ‘My lord of Vallery, we have agreed that the
legate will hand over to you the 6,000 livres to be divided up
as you think best.’ ‘My lord,’ said the *pseudomme*, ‘you do me
a great honour, for which I thank you. But I cannot accept this
honour and this proposition that you offer me – please God –
as this would be contrary to the good customs of the Holy
Land. According to these customs, when an enemy city is taken,
the king should have one-third of the spoils found inside, and
the pilgrims two-thirds. [169] King John held firmly to this
custom when he took Damietta, and, so our elders say, the
kings of Jerusalem before John also held firmly to it. If you
were willing to give me two-thirds of the wheat, barley, rice
and other food, I would gladly undertake to distribute them
among the pilgrims.’ The king was not inclined to do this and
this was how the matter was left. Because of this many people
were aggrieved that the king had broken with the good old
customs.

[170] The king’s men, who should have treated the people of
Damietta considerately, let out stalls to those who wished to
sell their goods at the highest rents possible, or so it was said.
Word of this spread far afield, which meant that many mer-
chants decided not to come to the camp. The barons, who
should have preserved their resources in order to make good
use of them at a fitting time and place, took to serving splendid
meals and lavish dishes. [171] The rank and file consorted with
women of loose morals, and this led the king to dismiss a great
many of his men later when we had returned from captivity. I
asked him why he had done this, and he told me that he had
established beyond any doubt that the people he had sent away
had run their brothels within a small stone’s throw of his tent,
and had done so at the time of the army’s greatest troubles.

[172] Now let us return to our main subject, and say that
shortly after we had taken Damietta, all the sultan’s mounted
forces arrived outside the camp and laid siege to it from the
inland side. The king and all the knights armed themselves.
Fully armed, I went to talk to the king and I found him sitting,
also fully armed, on a bench. With him were a number of the
preudomme knights of his battalion, all fully armed. I asked him if I and my men might be allowed to venture just outside the camp to prevent the Saracens attacking our tents. When my lord John of Beaumont heard my request, he shouted at me very loudly and ordered me on the king’s behalf not to leave my tent until the king commanded me to do so.

[173] I have already mentioned these preudomme knights who were with the king to you; there were eight of them, all good knights who had won prizes for their feats of arms on this side of the sea and the other, and such knights were usually called ‘good knights’. The names of the knights in the king’s entourage were as follows: my lord Geoffrey of Sergines, my lord Matthew of Marly, my lord Philip of Nanteuil and my lord Humbert of Beaujeu, constable of France. Humbert of Beaujeu was not present because he was outside the camp; he and the master of the crossbowmen, along with most of the king’s sergeants-at-arms, were guarding our camp so that the Turks might not do any damage.

[174] Now, it so happened that my lord Walter of Autrèches had armed himself at all points in his pavilion. When he had mounted his horse, a shield at his neck and a helmet on his head, he had the pavilion flaps lifted and spurred on to charge at the Turks. As he left his pavilion, all alone, all the members of his household cried ‘Châtilon!’ at the top of their voices. But it so happened that he fell before reaching the Turks and his horse galloped over his body. The horse, decked out with lord Walter’s arms, then took off towards the enemy; it was attracted to the Saracens because most of them were mounted on mares. [175] Those who saw this told us that four Turks came at lord Walter, who was lying on the ground. And as they passed by they aimed great blows from their maces at him there where he lay. The constable of France, along with several of the king’s sergeants, came to his rescue, and they carried him back to his pavilion in their arms. When he arrived there he could not speak. A number of the army’s surgeons and physicians went to him, and since it seemed to them that he was in no danger of dying, they bled him in both arms. [176] Very late that evening my lord Aubert of Narcy said to me that we should go to see lord Walter, because we had not yet done so and because he was a man of great renown and great valour. We entered his pavilion and his chamberlain came to meet us, asking that we walk softly so as not wake up his master. We found him lying on a rug of fine vair and approached very quietly to discover he was dead. When the king was told of this he said that he would not wish to have a thousand such men, since they would not want to follow his orders, just like this man.

[177] Saracen foot soldiers entered the camp every night and killed people where they found them sleeping. They killed the lord of Courtenay’s sentry among others, and left him lying on the table, having cut off his head and carried it away. They did this because the sultan gave a gold bezant for every Christian head. [178] We could be targeted in this way because each battalion took it in turns to carry out night-time patrols of the camp on horseback. When the Saracens wanted to enter the camp they would wait until the commotion made by the battalion and their horses had died down, and then break into the camp in their wake, leaving again before daybreak. Because of this the king ordered that the battalions that normally carried out patrols on horseback should patrol on foot instead. Thus the whole camp could be protected by the men on guard, who were stationed so that each man was within an arm’s length of the next.

[179] After this had been done the king decided that he would not leave Damietta until his brother, the count of Poitiers, had arrived, bringing with him French reinforcements. In order that the Saracens might not break into our camp on horseback, the king had it completely surrounded by large trenches, and every night crossbowmen and sergeants would mount guard over these trenches and also over the entrances to the camp.

[180] When the feast of Saint Rémy14 had passed and no news had been heard of the count of Poitiers, the king and all those in the army were very ill at ease, for they feared he had met with an accident of some sort. I related to the legate how, while we were at sea, the dean of Mautrapt had made us perform three processions on three Saturdays, and how, before the third
Saturday, we had arrived at Cyprus. The legate took note of what I told him and issued a call throughout the camp for three processions to be held on three Saturdays. [181] The first procession started from the legate’s lodgings, and went to the church of Our Lady in the city, which had formerly been used as a mosque by the Saracens but had now been dedicated to the Mother of God by the legate. He preached a sermon on two Saturdays, attended by the king and the great men of the army, to whom he granted a plenary indulgence.

[182] The count of Poitiers arrived before the third Saturday. It was just as well that he had not arrived sooner, because during the intervening fortnight there was such a storm in the sea off Damietta that at least 240 ships, both large and small, were broken up and destroyed, and all the people in them drowned and lost. And so if the count of Poitiers had come earlier, he and his people would all have perished.

[183] Once the count of Poitiers had arrived, the king summoned all the barons in the army in order to determine which route he should take, whether to Alexandria or Cairo. It transpired that the good Count Peter of Brittany and most of the barons in the army agreed that the king should go and lay siege to Alexandria, because that city had a good harbour where ships might arrive to bring supplies to the army. The count of Artois opposed this plan and said that he would only agree to a march against Cairo, since this was the capital of the whole kingdom of Egypt, and he said that he who wishes to kill the serpent must first crush the head. The king set aside all the other advice from his barons and followed his brother’s recommendation.

[184] At the beginning of Advent the king and the army set out in the direction of Cairo, as the count of Artois had advised. Quite close to Damietta we came across a stream that branches off from the great river, and it was decided that the army should halt there for a day and dam the stream so that we could cross. This was achieved quite easily, since we blocked the stream very close to where it left the great river, and this meant that its waters turned back into those of the river without difficulty. The sultan sent 500 of the most finely mounted knights he could find among all his forces to this crossing point on the stream, in order to harass the king’s army and delay our progress.

[185] On Saint Nicholas’s Day the king gave the command to prepare to move off, and warned that no one should be so bold as to charge at the Saracens who had appeared. It so happened that when the army set off on its march the Turks saw that no one would attack them and heard from their spies that the king had forbidden it. This emboldened the Turks and they attacked the Templars, who formed the first battalion. One of the Turks brought a Templar knight to the ground right at the hooves of the horse of Brother Renaut of Vichiers, who was at that time the marshal of the Temple. [186] When he saw this Renaut of Vichiers cried to his brothers, ‘At them, for God’s sake! I can’t bear this any longer.’ He spurred on, and all those in the army did likewise. Our men’s horses were fresh, while those of the Turks were already tired. I have heard it said that as a result not one of the enemy escaped and that they were all killed, a good number of them having fled into the river and been drowned.
Before going any further I must tell you about the river that flows into Egypt from the earthly paradise. I am relating these things to you so that you might understand certain things relevant to my story. This river is different from all others because the further that other rivers flow down their course, the more small rivers and small streams flow into them. But no such river or stream flows into this great river. What happens instead is that it arrives in Egypt by just one channel, and then it divides into seven branches that spread out across Egypt.

After the feast of Saint Rémy a has passed, the seven rivers flood across the land and cover the plains. And when the waters recede the peasants come and work their land, using a plough without wheels to sow the land with wheat, barley, cumin and rice. And these crops grow so well that no one would know how to do it better. No one knows from where this flood comes, unless it comes from the will of God. And if it were not for the flood no good thing would be produced by this land, because since it never rains in this country, the sun’s great heat would burn everything. The river is always muddy and because of this the local people who want to drink it take the water in the evening and crush four almonds or four beans into it, and by the morning it is so good to drink that it could not be faulted.

Before the great river enters Egypt, people who are used to doing so cast their fishing nets wide across the river each evening. When morning comes they find in the nets such goods as are sold by weight when imported into this country, b by which I mean ginger, rhubarb, aloe-wood and cinnamon. It is said that these things come from the earthly paradise, that the wind brings them down from the trees in paradise just as in this country the wind brings down the dry wood in the forests. Such dry wood as falls into this river is sold to us by merchants in this country. The river’s water is of such a nature that when we put it in the white earthenware pots they make in Egypt, and hung it from the ropes of our tents the water became, in the heat of the day, as cool as water from a spring.

In that land it was said that the sultan of Egypt had tried many times to discover the source of the river. He sent out people who carried with them a sort of bread called ‘biscuit’ (since it is baked twice), and they lived on this bread until their return to the sultan. They reported that they had explored the river and come to a vast expanse of sheer rocks that no one was able to climb, and that the river flowed out of these rocks. It seemed to them that there was a great profusion of trees high up on the mountain, and they said that they had found marvellous varieties of wild beasts of different kinds: lions, snakes and elephants that came to look at them from the banks of the river as they made their way upstream.

Now let us return to our initial subject. When the river reaches Egypt it divides into branches, just as I mentioned before. One of its branches went to Damietta, another to Alexandria, the third to Tanis, the fourth to Rexi. It was to this Rexi branch c that the king of France came with his entire army. He set up camp between the Damietta and Rexi branches. The sultan’s full army encamped along the banks of the Rexi branch opposite our camp in order to prevent us from crossing. This was easy for them since no one could cross that body of water to reach them except by swimming.

The king decided to build a causeway across the river in order to cross over to the Saracens’ side. To protect the people who were working on the causeway the king had two towers constructed. These were called cat-castles because there were two towers in front of the cats and two houses behind the towers to shield the people on guard from the shots fired by the Saracens’ engines. There were sixteen of these engines directly opposite. When we arrived there, the king had eighteen engines made, of which Jocelin of Cornant was master engineer. Our engines fired at the Saracens’ and theirs at ours, but I never heard it said that ours had much impact. The king’s brothers guarded the cats during the daytime, and the rest of us knights guarded them at night. And so the week before Christmas arrived.

Only once the cats had been built did we start work on the causeway; the king did not want the Saracens, who took aim and fired at us from the other side of the river, to be able to harm the people who were carrying the earth. In building this causeway the king and the other barons in the army were
very shortsighted. This was because, having blocked one of the river’s branches (as I told you earlier), which they did easily since they blocked it right as it left the great river, they believed they could block the Rexi branch at least half a league down-stream from where it left the main river. [195] In order to hinder the king’s building of the causeway, the Saracens dug holes in the ground on the bank by their camp. When the river reached these trenches the water flowed into them, increasing the width of the channel. So it was that everything we had achieved in three weeks was undone by them in one day, for by whatever extent we dammed up the river from our side, they widened the channel from theirs by digging these holes.

[196] In place of the sultan, who died of the illness he had contracted outside the city of Hama, our enemies had appointed as their commander a Saracen named Sceedin, the son of the sheikh. It was said that Emperor Frederick had knighted him. He ordered a group of his men to come and lay siege to our camp from the direction of Damietta. They did so, crossing over the Rexi river at a town on its banks which is called Sharamsah. On Christmas day I and my knights were dining with my lord Peter of Avalon, and while we were eating the Saracens came spurring right up to our camp and killed several poor people who had gone out into the fields on foot. We went to arm ourselves, but [197] we did not manage to return quickly enough, for we found that our host, my lord Peter, had already left the camp and gone in pursuit of the Saracens. We set spur to follow and rescued him from the Saracens, who had thrown him to the ground. We brought him and his brother, the lord of Val, back to the camp. The Templars, who had responded to the alarm, brought up the rear well and bravely, but the Turks came and harassed us as far as our camp. Because of this the king ordered that the camp should be enclosed by trenches on the Damietta side, from the Damietta to the Rexi branches of the river.

[198] Sceedin, the commander of the Turks I mentioned to you before, was the most esteemed among all the infidels. He bore on his banners the arms of the emperor who had knighted him. His banners had three bands: on one of the bands were the arms of the emperor, on another were the arms of the sultan of Aleppo and on the third were those of the sultan of Egypt. [199] His name was Sceedin, the son of the sheikh, which means ‘the old man, son of the old man’. His name was deemed a very fine one in the infidels’ lands, for these are the people in the world who most honour the elderly, whom God has protected from shameful reproach until their old age. This brave Turk Sceedin, so the king’s spies reported, bragged that he would eat in the king’s pavilions on the feast of Saint Sebastian.

[200] The king, knowing this, organized his forces. The count of Artois, his brother, would guard the cats and the engines, the king and the count of Anjou, who later became the king of Sicily, were stationed to guard the side of the camp towards Cairo, while the count of Poitiers and those of us from Champagne would guard the side of the camp towards Damietta. It so happened that the aforementioned commander of the Turks had his men cross over to the island which lies between the Damietta and Rexi branches of the river, where our army was encamped, and ranged his battalions from one of these branches to the other. [201] The king of Sicily attacked these forces and overcame them. Many of them were drowned in one river or the other, but there remained a large number whom we dared not attack at all because the Saracens’ engines were firing at our people in the area between the two rivers. In the course of the king of Sicily’s attack on the Turks, Count Guy of Forez broke through the Turkish ranks on horseback. He and his knights attacked a battalion of Saracen sergeants, who brought him to the ground. His leg was broken, and two of his knights carried him back in their arms. It was with great difficulty that the king of Sicily was saved from the perilous situation in which he found himself, but he won high praise that day. [202] The Turks came against the count of Poitiers and against us, and we charged at them and pursued them for a long time. A number of their people were killed, but we returned without loss.

[203] One evening when we were mounting the night-time guard over the cat-castles, it so happened that the Saracens brought forward an engine called a petraery, which they had not
used before, and loaded Greek fire into the engine’s sling. When the
good knight my lord Walter of Curel, who was with me,
saw this, he said, [204] ‘My lords, we are in the greatest danger
we have yet faced, for if they set fire to our towers and we are
inside them, we will be burned and killed, and if we leave
the defences we have been charged with guarding, we will be
shamed. No one can protect us in this peril except God. So I
advise and urge you, each time they launch the fire at us, to get
down on your knees and elbows, and pray to Our Lord that he
might protect us from this danger.’ [205] As soon as they
launched the first strike, we got down on our knees and elbows,
just as he had instructed us. The fire came between the two
cat-castles and fell in front of us, on the spot where the army
had been working to dam the river. Our firemen were ready to
put out the blaze, and since the Saracens could not fire directly
at them because of the wings of the two structures the king had
had built there, the Saracens instead fired right up into the
clouds so that their arrows fell straight down on to our men.

[206] These were the characteristics of Greek fire: the part
that came foremost had the bulk of a vinegar barrel, while the
flaming tail that shot from it extended as far as a long lance. It
made such a noise as it came that it was as if the heavens
thundered; it seemed as if a dragon was flying through the air.
The great mass of the fire cast such a great light that one could
see as clearly across the camp as if it were day. They launched
Greek fire at us three times that night, and fired it at us four
times with the frame-mounted crossbow.

[207] Each time our saintly king heard that they had launched
Greek fire at us, he sat up in his bed, reached out his hands to
Our Lord and said as he wept, ‘Sweet Lord God, protect my
people for me!’ And I truly believe that his prayers served us
well in our time of need. Every time that the fire came down
that night he sent one of his chamberlains to ascertain how we
were faring, and if the flames had done us any harm.

[208] Once when they fired at us the Greek fire fell alongside
the cat-castle that my lord of Courtenay’s men were guarding,
and landed on the bank of the river. A knight known as the
Albigensian appeared and he said to me, ‘My lord, if you do
not help us we will all be burned, because the Saracens have
fired so many missiles at us that it is as if a great hedge of
flame were coming towards our cat-castle.’ We rushed out and
reached the spot to find that what he said was true. We put out
the fire, but before we managed to do so the Saracens struck
every one of us with arrows fired across the river.

[209] The king’s brothers guarded the cat-castles by day,
climbing up into the towers in order to fire at the Saracens using
crossbows; the bolts could reach the enemy camp. The king
had ordered that when the king of Sicily guarded the cat-castles
by day, we would have to do so by night. Our hearts were very
ill at ease on the day the king of Sicily was on guard, when we
were due to take over that night. This was because the Saracens
had completely shattered our cat-castles, using the petry to
throw Greek fire at them in broad daylight. They had previously
only done so at night. [210] Their engines had been placed so
close to the causeway that our army was building to dam the
river that no one dared go into the cat-castles. The engines
threw large missiles that fell on the causeway and, as a result,
our two cat-castles were burned. When this happened the king
of Sicily went out of his mind, so much so that he wanted to
rush into the fire to put it out. But if he was enraged by this, I
and my knights praised God for it because if we had been on
guard that evening we would have all been burned.

[211] When the king saw this he sent for all the barons of
the army and pleaded that each of them should give some
timber from their ships in order to make a cat to dam the river.
He explained that it should be clear to them that there was no
wood with which to do this other than the timber of the ships
that had brought our gear upstream. Each man gave as much
as he was willing to, and when the cat was built its timber was
valued at over 10,000 livres.

[212] The king decided that the cat would not be pushed
forward over the causeway until the day came when the king
of Sicily was due to keep guard, in order to make amends for
the misfortune of the other cat-castles having been burned on
his watch. This was done as had been planned; as soon as the
king of Sicily took over the guard, they pushed the cat forward
to the spot where the two other cat-castles had been burned. [213] When the Saracens saw this, they readied all sixteen of their engines to fire at the causeway where the cat had been placed. And, seeing that our people were afraid to go into the cat because of the stones thrown by the engines onto the causeway, they brought forward the petrary, launched Greek fire at the cat and burned it right down. God did this very kind deed for me and my knights, since we would have been in great peril as we took guard that evening, just as we would have been in danger on the other watch I mentioned to you.

[214] Seeing what had happened, the king summoned all his barons to receive their advice. They all agreed that they would not be able to build a causeway to cross over to the Saracens, since our people could not dam up one side of the river as quickly as they could widen the other. [215] Then the constable, my lord Humbert of Beaujeu, told the king that a Bedouin had come and told him that he would reveal the location of a good ford in the river on the condition that he was given 500 bezants. The king said he would agree to give the payment to the man as long as he kept his promise. The constable talked to the Bedouin, who said that he would not disclose the ford unless he was given the money in advance. It was agreed that we would pay the money to him, and so it was handed over.

[216] The king decided that the duke of Burgundy and the great men of Outremer who were with the army should guard the camp so that no harm might come to it, while the king and his three brothers would cross by the ford that the Bedouin was due to show them. This operation was scheduled to take place on Shrove Tuesday, on which day we came to the Bedouin's ford. As day was breaking we armed ourselves at all points. When we were ready we entered the river and our horses were obliged to swim. Once we reached the middle of the river we found ground on which our horses could set their hooves. On the bank of the river there were at least 300 Saracens, all on horseback. [217] I said to my men, 'My lords, keep watching out to your left! Since everyone is going in this direction, the bank is very muddy and their horses are falling on top of them and drowning them.' And it was most true that some were drowned in the crossing, among others my lord John of Orléans, who had carried a banner vivre. We agreed to turn upstream and found a dry path; crossing in this way meant – thanks be to God – that not one of us fell. As soon as we reached the other side the Turks fled.

[218] It had been settled that the Templars would form the vanguard and that the count of Artois would have the second battalion, following the Templars. But it so happened that as soon as the count of Artois had crossed the river, he and all his men threw themselves on the Turks, who fled before them. The Templars let him know that he had done them a great dishonour by going on ahead, when he should have gone after them. They asked him to let them go ahead, as the king had decided they
should. But, as it happened, the count of Artois did not dare reply. This was because of my lord Fourcaut of Merle, who was holding his horse’s bridle. This Fourcaut of Merle, who was a very good knight, did not hear what the Templars were saying to the count because he was deaf. Instead he kept shouting, ‘At them! At them!’ [219] When the Templars saw what was happening, they believed they would be dishonoured if they were to allow the count of Artois to stay ahead of them. And so they all set spur, as and when each saw his chance, and gave chase to the Turks who were fleeing before them, right through the town of Mansurah and into the fields in the direction of Cairo. When they decided to turn back, the Turks flung beams and pieces of timber on them as they went through the narrow streets of Mansurah. The count of Artois died there, with Ralph, lord of Coucy, and so many other knights that the number was estimated at 300. The Temple, so the master told me later, lost 280 armed men, all of them mounted.

[220] I and my knights agreed that we would go and attack a number of Turks who were loading their equipment in their camp over to our left. And so we attacked them. While we were pursuing them through the camp, I saw a Saracen mounting his horse as one of his knights held the bridle. [221] As he had his two hands on his saddle, ready to mount, I struck him with my lance under his armpits and threw him down dead. When his knight saw this he left his lord and the horse, and as I made another pass he thrust his lance between my two shoulders, pinning me down on my horse’s neck so hard that I could not draw the sword I had at my belt. I had to draw the sword strapped to my horse, and when the knight saw that I had drawn this sword, he released his lance and left me.

[222] When I and my knights came out of the Saracens’ camp, we found a good 6,000 Turks, by our judgement, who had left their tents and retreated into the fields. When they saw us they charged at us and killed my lord Hugh of Til-Châtel, lord of Coublanc, who was with me and carried a banner. I and my knights spurred on and went to the rescue of my lord Ralph of Vanault, who was with me and who had been brought to the ground by the Turks. [223] As I returned, the Turks bore down on me with their lances. My horse was brought to its knees by the weight, and I went forward over its ears. I got up again as soon as I could, with my shield at my neck and my sword in my hand. My lord Erart of Sivry — may God absolve him — who was nearby me, came to me and told us that we should move towards a ruined house and wait there for the king, who was on his way. As we went there, on foot and on horse, a great horde of Turks rushed at us. They brought me to the ground, rode over me and sent the shield flying from my neck.

[224] When the Turks had passed, my lord Erart of Sivry came back to me and led me as far as the walls of the ruined house, where we were reunited with my lord Hugh of Ecot, my lord Frederick of Louppy and my lord Renault of Menoncourt. There the Turks attacked us from every side; a number of them got into the ruined house and stabbed us from above with their lances. My knights asked me to hold their bridles for them, and I did so, in order that the horses might not run away. The knights defended themselves against the Turks so vigorously that they received the praises of all the preudommes in the army and from those who were witness to the deed and those who heard tell of it. [225] There my lord Hugh of Ecot was wounded by three lance blows in the face, as was my lord Ralph, and my lord Frederick of Louppy by a lance between the shoulders; the wound was so large that blood came from his body as from the bunghole of a barrel. My lord Erart of Sivry received a sword blow full in the face, so that his nose was hanging down over his lip. Then I remembered my lord Saint James, ‘Dear lord Saint James, on whom I call, help me and save me in this need!’

[226] As soon as I had made my prayer, my lord Erart of Sivry said to me, ‘My lord, if you thought that neither I nor my heirs would be reprieved for it, I would go and seek help for you from the count of Anjou, whom I see over there in the fields.’ And I said to him, ‘My lord Erart, it seems to me that you would do yourself great honour if you were to go and seek help to save our lives, for your own is certainly in danger.’ (And indeed I spoke truthfully, for he died of that wound.) He asked the opinion of all our knights who were there, and all advised
him as I had done. When he heard this he asked me to let go of his horse, which I was holding by the bridle with the others, and I did so. [227] He went to the count of Anjou and begged him to come and rescue me and my knights. A great man who was with him advised against this, but the count of Anjou told him that he would do as my knight requested. He turned rein to come to our aid, and several of his sergeants spurred on. When the Saracens saw them, they left us. Ahead of these sergeants came my lord Peter of Auberive, sword in hand, and when he saw that the Saracens had left us, he attacked a large body of them who were holding my lord Ralph of Vanault and rescued him, severely wounded.

[228] As I was there on foot with my knights, who were wounded as I have already described, the king arrived with his entire battalion, accompanied by a great din and great noise of trumpets and kettledrums, and halted on a raised path. I never saw a man so finely armed; he could be seen from the shoulders up, set above the rest of his men, with a gilded helmet on his head and a German sword in his hand. [229] When the king stopped there, the good knights that he had in his battalion, whom I have named for you already, threw themselves among the Turks, along with other valiant knights from the king's battalion. And know that this was a very fine feat of arms, for no one fired either a bow or a crossbow, but rather there were blows of maces and swords from the Turks and our men, who were all ensnared with each other. One of my squires, who had fled with my banner but had returned to me, brought to me one of my Flemish horses on which I mounted and rode to the king, so that we were side by side.

[230] While we were thus together, my lord John of Vallery, the *preudomme*, came to the king and said to him that he advised that the king should move off to the right, towards the river, in order to have the support of the duke of Burgundy and the others who had been left guarding our camp, and so that the sergeants could have something to drink, since the heat was already very intense. [231] The king ordered his sergeants to go and look for his good knights whom he kept about him as his council, and mentioned each of them by name. The sergeants went to look for them amid the battle, where there was a great tumult of our men and the Turks. The knights came to the king and he asked them their opinion; they said that my lord John of Vallery had advised him very well. Then the king ordered that the standard of Saint-Denis and his own banners should move off to the right, towards the river. As the king's forces began to move there was again a great din of trumpets, kettledrums and Saracen horns.

[232] The king had hardly gone any distance when he received several messengers from his brother the count of Poitiers, the count of Flanders and several other great men whose battalions were there. They all begged the king not to move, for they were being so hard pressed by the Turks that they could not follow him. The king recalled all the *preudomme* knights of his council, all of whom advised him to wait. Shortly after, my lord John of Vallery returned, and reproached the king and his council for their delay. After this all his council advised the king that he should move off towards the river as the lord of Vallery had advised. [233] At that moment the constable, my lord Humbert of Beaujeu, came to the king and told him that his brother, the count of Artois, was defending himself in a house in Mansurah and asked that he go to the count's rescue. The king said, 'Constable, go on ahead and I will follow you.' I said to the constable that I would be his knight, and he thanked me very much for this. We set off to go to Mansurah.

[234] A sergeant with a mace came to the constable, greatly troubled, and told him that the king had stopped and that the Turks had come between him and us. We turned round and saw that there was a good thousand and more of them between the king and us, and we were only six. I said to the constable, 'My lord, we will not be able to reach the king through these men. Let us instead go upstream and put this ditch that you see in front of you between the Turks and us, and in this way we might return to the king.' The constable did as I advised. And know that if the Turks had taken notice of us they would have killed us all, but they were paying attention to the king and the other great battalions, and assumed that we were some of their own men.
As we came back downstream along the river, between the brook and the river, we saw that the king had reached the water. The Turks were driving back the king's other battalions, striking and hitting them with maces and swords, so forcing all the battalions back to the river with those of the king. The rout there was so great that several of our men attempted to swim across towards where the duke of Burgundy was, but they could not manage this because their horses were tired and the day had become hot. And so, as we came downstream we saw that the river was covered with lances and shields, and with horses and men who were drowning and perishing. [236] We arrived at a small bridge over the brook, and I said to the constable that we should stay to guard this little bridge, 'For if we leave it they will attack the king from this side, and if our people are attacked from two sides, they could well be defeated.' And so we did this. People say that we would all have been lost that day had it not been for the presence of the king himself. The lord of Courtenay and my lord John of Seignelay recounted to me how six Turks came and took the king by the bridle and were leading him away captive when he single-handedly freed himself with the great sword blows he gave them. When his men saw that the king was defending himself, they took heart and abandoned their attempts to cross the river in order to go to his aid.

Straight towards those of us guarding the little bridge came Count Peter of Brittany, from the direction of Mansurah. He had a sword wound across his face from which blood ran down into his mouth. Mounted on a small, sturdy horse, he had thrown his reins over his saddle-bow and held on to it with both hands, so that his men, who were pressing close upon him at the rear, would not force him to quicken his pace. It certainly seemed as if he did not think very much of these men, for when he spat the blood from his mouth, he often said, 'By God's own head, look at them - have you seen such a rabble?' Following his battalion came the count of Soissons and my lord Peter of Noville, who was known as 'Caier', who had suffered blows enough that day. [238] When they had passed and the Turks saw that we were guarding the little bridge and had turned to face them, the Turks let our men go. I went up to the count of Soissons, whose cousin I had married, and said to him, 'My lord, I believe you would do well if you would stay to guard this little bridge, because if we leave it these Turks that you see in front of you will rush across it, which would mean that the king would be assailed from the rear and from the front.' He asked whether, if he were to stay, would I do so also. And I replied, 'Yes, most willingly.' When the constable heard this, he told me that I should not leave before he returned, and he left in search of help for us.

As I remained there on my horse, the count of Soissons stayed on my right and my lord Peter of Noville on my left. A Turk appeared, coming from the direction of the king's battalion, which was to our rear, and he struck my lord Peter of Noville behind with a mace, pinning him down on his horse's neck with this blow. He then dashed to the other side of the bridge and rushed among his people. When the Turks saw that we would not abandon the little bridge, they crossed the brook and placed themselves between it and the river, as we had done when we came downstream. And we moved forward against them in such a way that we would all be ready to charge them if they tried to go towards the king or to cross the little bridge.

In front of us were two of the king's sergeants, one of whom was called William of Boon and the other John of Gamaches. The Turks who had positioned themselves between the river and the brook brought forward a whole body of peasants on foot who threw clods of earth at these two men, but they never managed to force them back on us. In the end they brought forward a peasant who three times launched Greek fire at the sergeants. In one of these instances, William of Boon caught the vessel of Greek fire on his round shield; if any of it had landed on him he would have been burned from head to toe. [241] We were all covered with arrows that had missed the sergeants. I happened to come across a gambeson, stuffed with wadding, that had belonged to a Saracen. I turned the open side towards me and used it as a shield, which served me very well, since I was only wounded by their arrows in five
places and my horse in fifteen. It happened too that one of my
bourgeois from Joinville brought me a banner bearing my arms
with an iron lance-head. Each time we saw that the Saracens
were pressing down on the sergeants, we charged at them and
they fled.

[242] While we were there the good count of Soissons joked
with me and said, ‘Seneschal, let this pack of hounds howl! For,
by God’s coat’—this was the oath he most often swore—‘we’ll
talk of this day again, you and I, in the ladies’ chamber.’

[243] In the evening, as the sun was setting, the constable
brought the king’s unmounted crossbowmen, and they lined up
in front of us. When the Saracens saw our men set foot in the
stirrups of the crossbows, they left us and fled. Then the con-
stable said to me, ‘Seneschal, that was well done. You go and
join the king, and don’t leave him until he has dismounted and
is in his pavilion.’ As soon as I had reached the king, my lord
John of Vallery came to him and told him, ‘Sir, my lord of
Châtillon asks that you grant him the rearguard.’ The king did
so most willingly, and then moved off. As we made our way, I
had him take off his helmet and gave him my iron cap so that he
might get some air. [244] And then Brother Henry of Ronay,
provost of the Hospital, who had crossed the river, came to the
king and kissed his mailed hand. The king asked him if he had
any news of his brother, the count of Artois, and he replied
that he had good news of him, for it was certain that the count
of Artois was in Paradise. ‘Oh, my lord,’ said the provost, ‘you
should be greatly comforted for no king of France has ever had
such a great honour as has come to you. In order to attack your
enemies you swam across a river, you defeated them and ran
them from the field, and captured their engines and their tents,
in which you will now sleep tonight.’ The king replied that God
should be praised for what he had given him, and great tears
then fell from his eyes.

[245] When we reached the camp we found that some of the
Saracen foot soldiers had taken down a tent and were pulling
on the ropes from one side, while some of our rank and file
were pulling from the other. We charged at them, the master of
the Temple and I, and they fled; the tent was left for our people.

[246] In this battle there were many supposedly worthy men
who shamefully fled across the bridge that I was telling you
about before. They took flight in panic, and we could not get
any of them to stay with us. I could name several of them, but
I will refrain from doing so because they are dead.

[247] But I will not hold back when it comes to my lord
Guy Mauvoisin, for he came out of Mansurah honourably. He
followed the route downstream that the constable and I took
upstream. And just as the Turks had forced back the count of
Brittany and his battalion, so too did they force back my lord
Guy Mauvoisin and his battalion. Both he and his men won
great praise that day. And it was no wonder that he and his
men acquitted themselves well that day, for I was told by some-
one who knew his affairs well that his entire battalion, with
hardly an exception, were knights of his lineage or knights who
were his liegemen.
CHAPTER 7
From Victory to Captivity
(February–April 1250)

[248] When we had defeated the Turks and chased them from their tents, and once all our men had left the Saracen camp, the Bedouins rushed into it in great numbers. They left not one thing in that camp, carrying off everything that the Saracens had left behind. I never heard it said that the Bedouins, who were subject to the Saracens, were thought less of because they would take or steal things; taking advantage of the weak was their custom and their way of life.

[249] Since it relates to my subject, I will tell you what sort of people the Bedouins are. The Bedouins do not believe in Muhammad. Instead they follow the law of Ali, who was Muhammad’s uncle.1 The Old Man of the Mountain, the patron of the Assassins, also follows this law. They believe that when a man dies for his lord, or for any good cause, his soul enters a better and happier body than before.2 It is because of this that the Assassins are not worried about being killed when carrying out the commands of the Old Man of the Mountain. I will say no more about the Old Man of the Mountain for the time being though, and talk about the Bedouins instead.

[250] The Bedouins do not live in villages or towns or castles; instead they always stay out in the fields. They set up tents each evening – or during the day if the weather is bad – where their servants, wives and children may spend the night. They make their tents using barrel hoops tied to poles – the same way ladies’ carriages are made – and over the hoops they throw sheepskins cured with alum, which are called Damascus skins. The Bedouins have long cloaks made from these skins that cover their whole body, legs and feet. [251] When it rains in the evening, or the weather is bad at night, they wrap themselves up in their cloaks, and unbridle their horses and let them graze nearby. When the next day comes they lay their cloaks out in the sun and beat them and tend to them so that they show no sign of having been wet overnight. They believe no man can die before the day appointed for him. As a result they refuse to wear armour and when they scold their children, they say to them, ‘Be accursed like the Frank who wears armour for fear of death.’ In battle they carry nothing but sword and spear.

[252] Nearly all of them wear tunics like the surplices that priests wear. Their heads are swathed in cloths which come down underneath the chin and make them hideous and repulsive to look at, also because the hair on their heads and of their beards is very black. They live on milk from their livestock, purchasing pasturage for their animals on the plains owned by rich men. No one can say how many Bedouins there are, for they can be found in the kingdom of Egypt, in the kingdom of Jerusalem, and in all the other lands of the Saracens and unbelievers, to whom they make large tribute payments each year.

[253] Since I returned from overseas I have come across certain false Christians in this country who adhere to the law of the Bedouins and say that no man can die before the day appointed for him. This belief is so wicked that it is equivalent to saying that God has no power to help us, for those of us who serve God would be fools if we did not believe that he had the ability to lengthen our lives and to protect us from evil and misfortune. We must believe in him, for he has the power to do all things.

[254] Now I will tell you that the king and the rest of us returned at nightfall from the perilous battle just described, and encamped in the place from which we had driven our enemies. Those of my people who had stayed in the camp from which we had set out brought a tent provided for me by the Templars, and they pitched it in front of the engines we had captured from the Saracens. The king had sergeants stationed to guard the engines.

[255] I was in great need of rest on account of the wounds
I had received earlier in the day, but it turned out that this was not to be, for, as I was lying in bed before day had fully dawned, someone raised the call in our camp, 'To arms! To arms!' I woke my chamberlain, who was sleeping at the foot of my bed, and told him to go and see what was happening. He was very agitated when he came back, and he said to me, 'My lord, get up! Get up! Look – Saracens have arrived on foot and on horse. They have routed the king's sergeants who were guarding the engines and have driven them back on to the ropes of our tents.'

[256] I got up and threw a gambeson over my back and an iron cap on to my head and called to my sergeants, 'By Saint Nicholas, they'll not stay here!' My knights came to join me, wounded as they were, and drove the Saracen sergeants from among the engines, as far as a large battalion of mounted Turks that was right next to the engines we had captured. I sent word to the king that he should help us, since I and my knights were unable to put on our hauberks because of the injuries we had sustained. The king sent us my lord Walter of Châtillon, who set himself in front of us, between us and the Turks. [257] When the lord of Châtillon had repulsed the Saracen foot sergeants, they retreated as far as the large battalion of mounted Turks that had taken up position in front of our camp to prevent us from surprising the Saracen army, which was encamped behind them. Eight of the captains of this mounted battalion, who were very well armed, had got down on foot and erected a barricade of stone blocks so that our crossbowmen could not hurt them. These eight Saracens fired volleys of arrows into our camp and wounded several of our people and our horses.

[258] I and my knights assembled and agreed that once night had fallen we would carry off the stones with which they were barricading themselves. One of my priests, who was called my lord John of Voisey, had his own ideas and did not wait for this to happen. He left our camp, all alone, and advanced towards the Saracens wearing his gambeson, with his iron cap on his head and his spear trailing; the tip was tucked under his armpit so that the Saracens would not notice it. [259] When he came close to the Saracens, who paid him no attention because they could see he was all alone, he withdrew his spear from under his armpit and rushed at them. Not one of the eight men put up a defence; instead they all turned and fled. When the mounted Saracens saw that their captains had taken flight, they spurred on to rescue them, while a good fifty sergeants sped out of our camp. The mounted Saracens came spurring on but they dared not engage with our foot soldiers; instead they swerved aside when they reached them. [260] When they had done this two or three times, one of our sergeants grasped the middle of his spear and hurled it at one of the mounted Turks, striking him between the ribs. This man trailed the spear off with him, the iron tip between his ribs. When the Turks saw this they dared not move one way or the other, and our sergeants carried off the stone blocks. From that time onwards my priest was well known in the camp, and people pointed him out to one another and said, 'Look! There's my lord of Joinville's priest, who routed eight Saracens.'

[261] These events took place on the first day of Lent. On the same day, a valiant Saracen whom our enemies had made their commander in place of Scecedin, son of the sheikh (whom they had lost in the battle on Shrove Tuesday), took the cote of the count of Artois (who had died in the same battle), showed it to all the Saracen people and told them that this was the king's coat of arms and that he was dead. [262] 'I am showing this to you because a body without a head is nothing to fear, and neither is a people without a king. Because of this we will attack them on Friday, if you so wish. In my view you really should agree to do so, since we cannot fail to take them all now that they have lost their leader.' And they all agreed that they would come and attack us on Friday.

[263] The king's spies in the Saracen camp came to tell him this news. And then the king ordered all the battalion leaders to have their men armed from midnight onwards and to come out of their tents as far as the palisade. (This palisade, which was intended to prevent the Saracens from launching themselves into the camp, was made of long wooden stakes set into the ground in such a way that one could pass between the stakes on foot.) And this was done as the king commanded.
[264] At the moment the sun came up the aforementioned Saracen, who had been appointed their commander, brought up at least 4,000 mounted Turks and had them take up position all around our camp, with himself in their midst. They were ranged from the river that comes from Cairo to the branch which breaks off at our camp and goes to the town called Rexi. When they had done this they brought up before us such a great number of Saracen foot soldiers that they could encircle our entire camp again, just as the men on horseback had. Behind these two battalions I have described to you were ranged all the forces of the sultan of Egypt, to help them if they needed it. [265] When they had done this their commander came forward on a small rouncy to observe the disposition of our forces. And, having seen that our battalions were stronger in one place than in another, he went back and summoned some of his men to bolster his battalions against ours. After this he had the Bedouins, who numbered at least 3,000, move in the direction of the camp guarded by the duke of Burgundy, which was between the two rivers. He did this because he thought the king would send some of his men to the duke in order to assist him against the Bedouins, thus weakening the king's forces.

[266] It took him until midday to make these arrangements. Then he had his kettledrums (called nacaires) sounded, and they rushed at us both on foot and on horse. I will tell you first about the king of Sicily, who at that time was the count of Anjou, since he was the first in the line on the Cairo side of the camp. They advanced on him in the same way one does in a game of chess, for they launched their assault with foot soldiers who threw Greek fire at him. The mounted Saracens and the foot soldiers bore down with such force that they overcame the king of Sicily, who was on foot among his knights. [267] Someone came and told the king of his brother's perilous situation. Hearing this, the king spurred into the midst of his brother's battalions, sword in hand, and rushed so far in among the enemy that they set light to his horse's crupper with Greek fire. By making this charge the king rescued the king of Sicily and his men, and drove the Turks from their camp.

[268] Alongside the king of Sicily's battalion was the battalion of the barons of Outremer of which my lord Guy of Jbelin and my lord Baldwin, his brother, were the commanders. After their battalion was the battalion of my lord Walter of Châtillon, full of pseudomes and fine knights. These two battalions defended themselves so vigorously that the Turks were never able to break through or repulse them.

[269] After the battalion of my lord Walter came Brother William of Sonnac, master of the Temple, with the few brothers left to him after Tuesday's battle. He had used the engines we had captured from the Saracens to have a barricade built in front of his position. When the Saracens came to attack him they threw Greek fire at the barricade, which was set alight easily because the Templars had used a large quantity of pine planks. And know that the Turks did not wait for the fire to burn out, rather they charged at the Templars through the blaze. [270] William, master of the Temple, lost one of his eyes in this battle. He had lost the other on Shrove Tuesday and the said lord William - may God absolve him - died of his injury. And know that behind the Templars there was an area of land of about the size that one man could work in a day. It was so densely covered with arrows that had been fired at the Templars by the Saracens that no ground was visible beneath them.

[271] After the Templars' battalion came that of my lord Guy Mauvoisin, which the Turks were never able to overcome. The Turks did, however, so inundate my lord Guy with Greek fire that it was only with great difficulty that his men were able to put it out.

[272] The barricade that surrounded our camp ran from the position of my lord of Mauvoisin's battalion towards the river, coming within the distance of a good stone's throw of it. From there the barricade continued in front of Count William of Flanders' forces and reached as far as the river that flowed out to sea. Our battalion was next to the barricade that came from my lord Guy Mauvoisin's emplacement. Because Count William of Flanders' battalion was facing them the Saracens dared not approach us, and in this God did us a great kindness since neither I nor my knights had put on our hauberk, as we were all wounded following Shrove Tuesday's battle.
The Saracens charged at the count of Flanders and his battalion very viciously and vigorously, both on foot and on horse. When I saw this I ordered our crossbowmen to fire at the Saracens on horseback, and when they saw that they were being struck from our direction, the horsemen took flight. Seeing this, the count’s men left the camp, threw themselves over the barricade and attacked the Saracens on foot and overwhelmed them. A number of them died and a number of their shields were captured. Walter of la Horgne, who carried my lord of Apremont’s banner, gave proof of his vigour in this clash.

After the count of Flanders’s battalion was that of the count of Poitiers, the king’s brother. The count of Poitiers’s battalion was on foot, with only the count himself on horseback. The Turks routed the count’s battalion utterly, and were leading the count away captive. When the butchers and the other men in the camp saw this, along with the women who sold provisions, they raised the alarm in the camp, and with God’s help they rescued the count and drove the Turks out of the camp.

After the battalion of the count of Poitiers was that of my lord Josserand of Brancion, who had come with the count to Egypt and was one of the best knights in the army. His men were arranged so that all his knights were on foot, while he was on horseback along with his son, my lord Henry, and the son of my lord Josserand of Nanton. They stayed on horseback because they were children. The Turks overwhelmed his men several times, but each time he saw his men overcome, Josserand of Brancion spurred on and took the Turks from the rear so that, on several occasions, the Turks left his men in order to charge at him. Even so, this would have been of no use in preventing the Turks from killing them all on the field of battle had it not been for my lord Henry of Côme, who was in the duke of Burgundy’s force. He was a wise knight, brave and thoughtful, and every time he saw the Turks were coming to attack my lord of Brancion, he had the king’s crossbowmen fire at the Turks from across the river. Thus the lord of Brancion came through that day’s misfortunes, although he lost twelve of the twenty knights who were in his company, not counting his other men-at-arms. But he himself was in such a sorry state that he never got to his feet again, and died from his injury in the service of God.

I will tell you about the lord of Brancion. When he died he had been in thirty-six battles and combats from which he had carried off the prize for feats of arms. I once saw him in a company led by the count of Chalon, his cousin. It was Good Friday, and he came to me and my brother and said to us, ‘My nephews, you and your men must come and help me, for the Germans are ransacking the church.’ We went with him and attacked the Germans, swords drawn, and with great difficulty and a great struggle drove them from the church. When this was done the preudomme knelt before the altar and called aloud to Our Lord and said, ‘Lord, I beg you to take pity on me, and remove me from these wars among Christians in which I have spent so much of my life, and grant that I may die in your service, so that I may enter your kingdom in Paradise.’ I have related this to you because I believe that God granted his wish, as you can tell from what you have just heard.

After this battle on the first Friday of Lent, the king summoned all his barons before him and said to them, ‘We owe great thanks to Our Lord since he has done us two honours this week: on Shrove Tuesday we drove our enemies from their camp, in which we are now lodged, and on the following Friday we defended ourselves from them, while we were on foot and they were on horseback.’ And he said many other fine words to give them reassurance.

Since it is useful in our pursuit of the matter at hand, I will include some additional information to clarify how the sultans kept their forces well ordered and well organized. The truth is that most of their knights were foreigners, brought by merchants for sale from other lands. The sultans were very eager to buy them, and paid high prices. The people who were brought to Egypt were captured in the East. When one of the kings in the East defeated another, he took the poor people he had conquered and sold them to the merchants, who then brought them back to be sold in Egypt.
The arrangement was that the sultan raised the boys in his household until such time as their beards began to grow. He had bows made that were appropriate for each of them; as soon as they grew stronger they would send these weaker bows to the sultan’s arsenal, and the master of the artillery would provide them with the most powerful bow they could draw. These young men, who were called bahariz, wore the same arms as the sultan, which were of gold. As soon as their beards began to grow, the sultan knighted them. They wore the sultan’s arms, but each was distinctive: by this I mean that some of them added red insignia to the golden coat of arms: roses, bands, birds or other emblems that characterized them. The men about whom I am telling you were known as the halqa, because the bahariz slept in the sultan’s tents. When the sultan was in the camp, the men of the halqa were installed around the sultan’s lodgings and constituted his personal bodyguard. The sultan’s doorkeepers and musicians were stationed in a little tent at the entrance to the sultan’s lodgings. These musicians had Saracen horns, drums and kettledrums, and made such a din at daybreak and at nightfall that while they could be heard clearly throughout the camp, those close by to them could not hear one another speak. The musicians would never be so bold as to sound their instruments during the day other than on the orders of the commander of the halqa. Accordingly, when the sultan wished to issue an order, he summoned the commander of the halqa and let him know his orders. Then the commander had the sultan’s instruments sounded and all the army would come to hear the sultan’s command; the commander of the halqa would announce it and the entire army would carry it out.

When the sultan went to war those knights of the halqa who performed well in battle would be made emirs, and the sultan would place 200 or 300 knights under their command. The better their performance the more knights the sultan would give them. The reward they receive for their achievements as knights is as follows: once they have attained such valour and such wealth that no one can challenge them, the sultan fears they might kill him or oust him from his lands. He therefore has them captured and killed in his prison, while he dispossesses their wives and children. This is what the sultan did to the men who captured the count of Montfort and the count of Bar. Baybars did the same to the men who defeated the king of Armenia. Following this success and believing they might receive some reward, they went to greet Baybars while he was hunting wild animals, and they got down from their horses to do so. His reply to them was, ‘I will not greet you’, since they had interrupted his hunting. And he had their heads cut off.

Now, let me return to my subject, and say that the sultan who had died had a son aged twenty-five years who was shrewd, sharp and wily. Because the late sultan suspected that his son would overthrow him, he had given him one of his kingdoms in the East. Now that the sultan had died the emirs sent for his son. As soon as he arrived in Egypt he seized the golden rods of office from his father’s seneschal, his constable and his marshal, and gave them to those who had come with him from the East. Seeing this, these emirs and all the others who had been in his father’s council were greatly outraged by the contempt the new sultan had shown them. Fearing that he would do to them what his father had done to the men who had captured the count of Bar and the count of Montfort (as was mentioned before), they strove to secure a promise from the men of the halqa (the men mentioned earlier, who formed the sultan’s bodyguard) that they would, at the emirs’ request, kill the sultan.

After the two battles already recounted, grave troubles began to afflict our camp. After nine days the bodies of our people who had been killed at Mansurah came to the surface of the water. People said that this was because the bile had decayed. They floated as far as the bridge between our two camps and could not pass under it because the bridge was low over the water. There was such a great number that the entire river was full of corpses from one bank to the other and for at least as far as a small stone might be thrown. The King had hired a hundred manual labourers who spent a full week there. They threw the corpses of the Saracens, which were
circumcised, over the other side of the bridge and let them be carried off downstream. They laid the Christians in large trenches, one with another. I saw the count of Artois’s chamberlains and many other people there, searching for their friends among the dead. But I did not hear that anyone was found.

[291] Throughout Lent we ate no fish in the camp besides burbots, and the burbots, which are fish that will eat anything, fed off the dead people. Because of this unfortunate situation and because of the noxiousness of that country, in which no drop of water ever rains, the camp sickness came upon us. The flesh on our legs dried up and the skin on them was spotted black and earthy-brown, like an old boot. Those of us who contracted this illness had the flesh of their gums decay first. No one survived it; they were sure to die. When the nose bled this was the sign that death was certain.

[292] A fortnight later, and to the amazement of many people, the Turks set about starving us out. They moved several of their galleys from upstream of our camp, dragged them overland and put them in the river which came from Damietta, at least a league downstream of our camp. These galleys inflicted famine on us, since because of them no one dared come upstream from Damietta to bring us supplies. We knew nothing about this until we were told of it by the crew of a small ship that belonged to the count of Flanders and which got past the Saracen galleys because of the strength of the current. They also said that the sultan’s galleys had captured at least eighty galleys of ours that had come from Damietta, and that the people on board had been killed. [293] Prices in the camp became so high because of this that by the time Easter came an ox was worth eighty livres, a sheep thirty livres, a pig thirty livres, an egg twelve deniers and a measure of wine ten livres.

[294] Seeing this, the king and the barons agreed that the king should have his army cross over from the camp closer to Cairo into the duke of Burgundy’s camp, which was on the river that went to Damietta. In order to take his people across with more safety the king had a barbican built in front of the bridge between our two camps. It was constructed in such way that one could enter the barbican on horseback from either side. [295] Once the barbican was in place the king’s entire force armed themselves. There was an intense assault by the Turks on the king’s camp, but despite this neither the fighting men nor any of the other people moved until all the equipment had been carried over to the other side. Then the king crossed, his battalion after him, and all the other barons after them except my lord Walter of Châtillon, who brought up the rear-guard. As they entered the barbican my lord Erart of Vallery rescued his brother, my lord John, whom the Turks were leading away captive.

[296] Once the rest of the army had passed through it, those who remained in the barbican were in a perilous position. Since the barbican was not very tall the mounted Turks aimed shots at them, and the Saracen foot soldiers hurled clods of earth in their faces. They would all have been lost were it not for the count of Anjou, later king of Sicily, who went to rescue them and brought them away safely. Among those who were in the barbican that day the prize was won by my lord Geoffrey of Messembourg.

[297] On the eve of Shrove Tuesday I witnessed something remarkable that I wish to relate to you. On that day my lord Hugh of Landricourt, who had been with me and carried a banner, was buried. As he lay there on a bier in my chapel, six of my knights were leaning against a number of sacks full of barley. Because they were talking loudly in my chapel and were disturbing the priest, I went to tell them to be quiet, and said it was a disgraceful thing for knights and gentlemen to talk while Mass was being sung. [298] And they began to mock me and said, laughing, that they were arranging a new marriage for Hugh of Landricourt’s wife. I scolded them and told them that such words were neither right nor seemly, and that they had forgotten their companion too hastily. And God’s vengeance on them was such that the following day was the battle of Shrove Tuesday, in which they were all either killed or mortally wounded. Thus the wives of all six needed to remarry.

[299] As a result of the wounds I received on Shrove Tuesday, I was struck by the camp sickness in the mouth and legs, and by a double tertian fever and a head cold so bad that mucus
streamed from my head through my nostrils. Because of these afflictions I took to my sick bed in the middle of Lent, which meant that my priest would sing Mass for me in my tent, at the foot of my bed. He had the same sickness I had. [300] Now, it so happened that on one occasion he passed out during the consecration. When I saw that he was about to fall I leapt from my bed, barefoot and wearing my cote, took him in my arms and told him that he should go on with the consecration softly and slowly, and that I would not let go of him until he had finished. He came round and performed his consecration and sang the entire Mass through to the end, though he was never to sing again.

[301] After this the king’s council and the sultan’s council fixed a date to reach an agreement. The terms of the agreement were these: Damietta would be returned to the sultan, while the sultan would return the kingdom of Jerusalem to the king. The sultan was also bound to protect the sick people who were in Damietta, along with the salted meats (since they did not eat any pork) and the king’s siege engines, until such time as the king could send for all these things. [302] The Saracens asked the king’s council what guarantee he would give that Damietta would be returned to them. The king’s council offered one of the king’s brothers, either the count of Anjou or the count of Poitiers, as a hostage until Damietta was returned. The Saracens said they would do nothing unless the king’s own person was left as surety. And to this my lord Geoffrey of Sergines, the good knight, said that he would rather the Saracens captured and killed them all than that they should be reproached for having left the king as surety.

[303] The sickness in the camp began to worsen; people had so much dead flesh on their gums that the barbers had to remove it before they could chew their food and swallow it down. It was most pitiful to hear people throughout the camp howling as their dead flesh was cut away because they howled like women in childbirth.

[304] When the king saw that he could not remain there without the certainty of death for him and his people, he com-

an descriptive sentence: at nightfall on the Tuesday evening after the octave of Easter, 10 He informed the sailors who were in charge of the galleys that they should collect all the sick people and take them to Damietta. The king ordered Jocelin of Cornant, with his brothers and the other engineers, to cut the ropes that held the bridges between us and the Saracens, but they failed to do so.

[305] I and the two knights who remained with me, along with the rest of my household, boarded my boat following the afternoon meal on Tuesday. When night began to fall, I told my sailors to lift the anchor so that we could go downstream. They said that they dared not do so, because the people on board the sultan’s galleys, which lay between us and Damietta, would kill us. The sailors had lit great fires to help them in bringing the sick people on to their galleys, and the sick had approached the riverbank. The Saracens came into the camp while I was pleading with the sailors to leave, and I saw by the light of the fires that they were killing the sick people on the bank. [306] While my sailors raised their anchors, those who had been charged with taking the sick people cut the cables of their anchors and the galley moorings and sped down upon our little boats and surrounded us, one on one side and another on the other, nearly forcing us under the water. Once we had escaped this peril and were going down the river, the king, who had the camp sickness and severe diarrhoea, would have been assured of safety in the galleys if he wanted it. But he said that, please God, he would never abandon his people. He fainted several times that evening and because of his severe diarrhoea, he went down to the latrines so often that it was necessary to cut the seat from his breeches.

[307] People called out to those of us sailing downstream that we should wait for the king. Since we were unwilling to do so they fired crossbow bolts at us, which meant that we had to stop until we were given permission to sail.

[308] I will break off here and tell you how the king was captured, just as he himself recounted it to me. He told me that he had left his own battalion and had joined, along with my lord Geoffrey of Sergines, the battalion of my lord Walter of Châtillon, who had the rearguard. [309] And the king told me
that he was mounted on a little rounsey covered with a silk cloth, and that behind him there remained not one of all his knights and all his sergeants besides my lord Geoffrey of Sergines, who led the king to the little village where he would be captured. He did so in such a way, so the king told me, that my lord Geoffrey of Sergines protected him from the Saracens just as a good servant protects his lord’s cup from flies. Every time the Saracens came near to him, he took up his short lance which he had placed between the bow of his saddle and himself, couched it under his armpit and charged at them, driving them away from the king. [310] In this way he led the king as far as the little village. There the king was carried into a house and laid, as if he were quite dead, in the lap of a bourgeoise from Paris. They thought he would not see the evening. My lord Philip of Montfort arrived there and told the king that he had come from the emir with whom he had negotiated the truce, and that if the king so desired he would go back to him to have the truce remade, in the way the Saracens wanted. The king begged him to go and said that he wanted this very much. Philip of Montfort went to the Saracens, and the emir removed the turban from his head and the ring from his finger as an assurance that he would keep the truce. [311] Meanwhile, a great misfortune struck our people: a treacherous sergeant named Marcel began to call out to our men, ‘Lord knights! Surrender yourselves – the king commands you to do so. Do not let the king be killed!’ Everyone believed that this order came from the king, and they surrendered their swords to the Saracens. The emir saw that the Saracens were leading our people away prisoner, and he told my lord Philip that there was no need for him to make a truce with our people, since he could see clearly that they had already been captured. [312] As it happened, although all our people had been captured my lord Philip was not taken prisoner since he was an envoy. There is a bad custom in the infidel lands according to which when the king sends envoys to the sultan, or the sultan to the king, and the king or sultan happens to die before the envoys’ return, those envoys are taken as prisoners and slaves no matter what side they are from, whether Christian or Saracen.

[313] While the misfortune of being captured befell our people who were on land, so too were those of us on the water captured, as you will hear shortly. The wind was coming at us from the direction of Damietta and this deprived us of the benefit of the current. The knights whom the king had set in his small boats to protect the sick had fled. Our sailors lost their course on the river and ended up in a backwater, which meant we had to turn back towards the Saracens. [314] A little before the crack of dawn those of us who were going by water arrived at the stretch of the river where lay the sultan’s galleys that had prevented the arrival of provisions coming from Damietta. There was a great commotion there because they were firing such a great number of bolts charged with Greek fire at us and at our people who were riding along the riverbank that it seemed as if the stars were falling from the sky. [315] When our sailors brought us back out of the backwater into which we had strayed, we encountered the king’s small boats, the ones he had assigned to protect our sick people, which were fleeing towards Damietta. A wind then rose up from the direction of Damietta, so strong that it deprived us of the benefit of the current.

[316] On one bank of the river and on the other there were a very great number of our people’s vessels that were unable to go downstream. The Saracens had stopped them and captured them. They were killing the people on board and throwing them into the water, and they were carrying off all the chests and baggage from the ships they had seized from our people. The mounted Saracens on the bank were firing bolts at us because we refused to go over to them. My people had dressed me in a jousting hauberck that I wore to avoid being wounded by the bolts falling on our vessel.

[317] At that moment those of my people who were down in the prow of the ship shouted to me, ‘Sir! Sir! Your sailors want to take you to land because the Saracens are threatening them!’ Faint as I was, I had myself lifted up by the arms and drew the naked blade of my sword on them; I told them I would kill them if they took me to land. And they replied that I should make my choice; either they would take me to land or they
would anchor me in the middle of the river until the wind fell. I told them I would prefer it if they would anchor me in the middle of the river rather than take me ashore, where I saw our people being slaughtered. And so they anchored for me.

[318] Not long afterwards we saw the sultan’s four galleys coming, in which there were at least one thousand men. I then called my knights and my people and asked them what they wanted us to do, whether to surrender ourselves to the sultan’s galleys or surrender ourselves to the Saracens on land. We all agreed that we would prefer to surrender ourselves to the sultan’s galleys, where they would hold all of us together, rather than surrender ourselves to the Saracens on land since they would split us up and sell us to the Bedouins. [319] Then my cellarer, who was born at Doulevant, said, ‘My lord, I don’t agree with this decision.’ I asked him what he would agree to, and he told me, ‘In my opinion we should all allow ourselves to be killed; that way we will all go to Paradise.’ But we didn’t pay any attention to him.

[320] When I saw that we could not avoid being taken captive, I took my casket and my jewels and threw them into the river, along with my relics. Then one of my sailors said to me, ‘My lord, unless you allow me to tell the Saracens you are the king’s cousin, they’ll kill you all, and we sailors with you.’ And I said I was quite willing for him to say what he wanted. When the people on board the first galley, which was coming towards us to ram our vessel from the side, heard what he said, they dropped anchor alongside our vessel.

[321] Then God sent me a Saracen, who came from the emperor’s lands. He wore breeches of rough linen, and came swimming across the river to our vessel. He held me around the waist and said to me, ‘My lord, you’ll be lost if you don’t act decisively. It’s vital that you jump down from your vessel on to the beak at the end of this galley’s keel. They won’t even notice you if you jump, since their minds are on the booty on your vessel.’ They threw me a rope from the galley and, as God so willed it, I jumped on to the prow. And know that I was shaking so much that if the Saracen had not leapt after me to hold me up I would have fallen into the water.

[322] He took me into the galley, where there were at least eighty of their men, holding me in his arms all the while. The others threw me down and flung themselves on my body to cut my throat, thinking that whoever killed me would be honoured for it. The Saracen still held me in his arms and cried, ‘He’s the king’s cousin!’ They threw me down twice in this way, bringing me to my knees once, and then I felt the knife at my throat. God saved me from this ordeal through the Saracen’s help. He
brought me to where the Saracen knights were, in the ship's castle. [323] When I had arrived in their midst they took off my hauberk and, taking pity on me, they threw over me my blanket that was made of scarlet and lined with fine vair. It had been given to me by my lady my mother. One of the Saracens brought me a white belt that I tied over the blanket, after I had made a hole in it so that I could put it on. Another brought me a hood that I put over my head. And then, because I was afraid and unwell, I began to shake violently. I asked for something to drink and someone brought me a pot of water, but as soon as I had the water in my mouth to swallow it down, it gushed out through my nostrils. [324] Seeing this, I sent for my people and told them I was dying since I had an abscess in my throat. They asked me how I knew this and I showed them. As soon as they saw the water gush out through my nostrils they began to weep. When the Saracen knights there saw my people crying, they asked the Saracen who had saved us why they were weeping. He replied that he understood I had an abscess in my throat which meant I could not survive. Then one of the Saracen knights told the man who had protected us that he should reassure us, for he would give me something to drink by which I would be cured in two days. And so he did.

[325] My lord Ralph of Vanault, who was in my company, had had his hamstrings cut in the great Shrove Tuesday battle and could not stand on his feet. But know that an elderly Saracen knight who was on board the galley would carry him, hanging from his neck, to the latrines.

[326] The chief admiral of the galleys sent for me and asked me if I was the king's cousin. I said that I was not, and told him how and why the sailor had said that I was. And he said that I had acted wisely because otherwise we would all have been killed. He asked me whether I was in any way related to Emperor Frederick of Germany, who was still alive at that time, and I replied that I understood my lady my mother to be his first cousin. He told me that he liked me the better for this.

[327] While we were eating, he had a bourgeois from Paris brought before us. When this bourgeois arrived he said to me, 'My lord, what are you doing?' To which I replied 'Well, what am I doing?' 'In God's name,' he said, 'You're eating meat on Friday!' When I heard this I thrust my plate aside. The admiral asked my Saracen why I had done this, and he told him. And the admiral responded that God would not hold this against me since I had not done it knowingly. [328] And know that the legate told me the same thing after we had left prison. But because of this I made sure that I fasted on bread and water every Friday in Lent from then on, as a result of which the legate was sorely angry with me since I was the only one of the great men who remained with the king.

[329] The following Sunday the admiral had me and all the other prisoners who had been captured on the water taken on to the bank of the river. My lord John, my good priest, fainted while they were bringing him out of the galley's hold. They killed him and threw him into the river. His clerk, who also fainted because he had the camp sickness, was struck on the head with a stone bowl. He too was killed and thrown into the river. [330] As they were bringing the other sick people out from the galleys where they had been held captive, there were Saracens ready, their swords drawn, to slay those who fell and to throw them all into the river. I told them, through my Saracen, that this struck me as a wicked thing to do since it was contrary to the teachings of Saladin, who said that one must not kill any man once one had given him one's bread and salt to eat. In reply I was told that these men were worth nothing since their illnesses rendered them helpless.

[331] The admiral had all my sailors brought before me, and he told me that they had renounced their faith. I said that he should not have any confidence in them, for just as swiftly as they had abandoned us so would they abandon the Saracens, if they saw a time or place to do so. And the admiral replied that he agreed with me, for Saladin said that one never saw a bad Christian become a good Saracen, nor a bad Saracen become a good Christian.

[332] Afterwards he had me mounted on a palfrey and led me along beside him. We crossed a bridge of boats and went to Mansurah, where the king and his people were being held prisoner. We came to the entrance to a large pavilion where the
sultan's scribes were, and they wrote down my name. Then my Saracen said to me, 'My lord, I will not follow you any further because I cannot. But I beg you, my lord, to hold always this boy you have with you by the hand, so that the Saracens do not take him from you.' This child's name was Barthélemin and he was the bastard son of the lord of Montfaucon. [333] When my name had been written down, the admiral led me into the pavilion where the barons were, together with more than 10,000 other people. When I entered there the barons all displayed such joy that you could not hear a thing and, praising Our Lord, they said they thought they had lost me.

[334] We had hardly been there any time when one of the most high-ranking men there made us all get up, and he led us into another pavilion. The Saracens were holding many knights and other people prisoner in a yard surrounded by an earthen wall. These men were led out from the enclosure in which they had been held, one by one, and the Saracens asked them, 'Do you want to renounce your faith?' Those who refused to do so were taken to one side and beheaded, while those who reneged were taken to the other.

[335] At this point the sultan sent his councillors to talk to us, and they asked to whom they should address the sultan's message. We told them they should speak to the good Count Peter of Brittany. There were people there called dragomans who knew the Saracen language and French, and they translated the Saracen into French for Count Peter. And these were their words: 'My lord, the sultan has sent us to you to know if you wish to be released.' The count replied, 'Yes.' [336] 'And what will you give to the sultan in return for your release?' they asked. 'Whatever is possible and bearable for us, within reason,' said the count. 'Will you,' they asked, 'give any of the castles in the possession of the barons of Outremer?' The count replied that he did not have the power to do so, because the barons held their castles from the emperor of Germany, who was still alive at that time. They asked whether we would give any of the castles of the Temple or Hospital in return for our release. And the count responded that this was impossible, since when the guardians of these castles were installed, they were made to swear on relics that they would not hand over any of the castles in return for any man's freedom. They said it seemed to them that we had no desire to be released, and that they would leave and send men in who would indulge in some swordplay with us, as they had done with the others. And then they left.

[337] As soon as they left, a large body of men came into our pavilion: young Saracens with swords at their belts. They brought with them a man of great old age, completely white-haired, who had asked us whether it was true that we believed in a God who had been taken prisoner for us, was wounded and killed for us, and came back to life on the third day. And we replied, 'Yes.' Then he told us that we should not be disheartened if we had suffered these persecutions for him. 'Because,' he said, 'you have not yet died for him as he died for you. And if he had the power to bring himself back to life, you can be certain that he will free you when he pleases.' [338] Then he went away, and all the other young men after him. I was very glad about this because I had been quite convinced that they had come to cut off our heads. And it was not long after this that the sultan's men came who told us that the king had negotiated our release.

[339] After the departure of the old man who had reassured us, the sultan's councillors returned and told us that the king had negotiated our release, and that we should send four of our men to him to hear how this had been achieved. We sent my lord John of Vallery the preuxhomme, my lord Philip of Montfort, my lord Baldwin of Ibelin the seneschal of Cyprus and his brother my lord Guy of Ibelin. He was constable of Cyprus and one of the most distinguished knights I ever saw, and the man who most loved this country's people. These four men reported to us how the king had negotiated our release, which was as follows.

[340] The sultan's council tested the king as they had tested us, to see whether he would be willing to promise to surrender any of the Temple or Hospital's castles, or any of the castles of the barons of that land. And, as God willed it, the king responded to them exactly as we had done. They threatened him and told him that since he refused to do this they would
put him in the barnacles. [341] The barnacles is the most terrible torture that can be inflicted on anybody. It is two pliable planks with intersecting teeth at the ends, tied together with strong straps of cowhide at the base. When they want to put people in this contraption, they lie them down on their side and place their legs inside, with the teeth on their ankles. Then they have a man sit down on the planks, as a result of which not half a foot of bone remains unbroken. And to make it as horrible as possible, after three days, when the legs are swollen, they put them back inside the barnacles and break all the bones again. The king responded to this threat by saying that he was their prisoner and they could do what they liked with him.

[342] When they saw that they could not prevail over the good king with threats, they went back to him and asked him how much money he was willing to give the sultan, surrendering Damietta along with it. And the king replied to them that if the sultan was willing to take a reasonable sum of money from him for their release, he would advise the queen to pay it. They said, ‘Why are you unwilling to commit to doing so?’ And the king replied that he did not know whether the queen, who was his lady, would be prepared to do this. The council went back to talk to the sultan and then reported to the king that if the queen was willing to pay 1,000,000 gold bezants (equivalent to 500,000 livres), the sultan would release the king. [343] The king asked them, on oath, whether the sultan would release them for this sum if the queen was willing to pay it. The councillors went back to confer with the sultan, and on their return they swore to the king that they would release him on these terms. And as soon as they had sworn the king promised the emirs that he would willingly pay the 500,000 livres for the deliverance of his people, and he would return Damietta to secure his own release, since a man of his rank should not buy his freedom with money. When the sultan heard this he said, ‘By my faith, this Frank is generous not to have bargained over such a large sum of money. Go and tell him that I’m giving him 100,000 livres towards payment of the ransom.’

[344] The sultan then had the great men board four galleys in order to take them to Damietta. On the galley into which I was boarded were placed the good Count Peter of Brittany, Count William of Flanders, the good Count John of Soissons, my lord Humbert of Beaujeu constable of France, the good knight my lord Baldwin of Ibelin and my lord Guy, his brother. [345] The men who had conducted us aboard the galley brought us to the bank in front of the lodgings the sultan had set up by the river, and you will now hear how they were arranged. In front of these lodgings there was a tower made of fir poles covered with dyed cloth. This was the gate to the lodgings. Inside the gate a pavilion had been set up in which the emirs left their swords and their armour when they went to speak to the sultan. Beyond this pavilion there was another gate like the first, and through this gate one entered a large pavilion that was the sultan’s hall. Beyond the hall there was a tower, like the earlier ones, through which one entered the sultan’s private chamber. [346] Beyond the sultan’s chamber there was a garden, and in the middle of the garden there was a tower taller than all the others, where the sultan would go to survey the entire camp and all the surrounding land. A path led from the garden to the river, where the sultan had erected a pavilion in the water in which to bathe. The entire compound was surrounded by a wooden fence, the exterior of which was covered in blue cloth so that people outside could not see in, and all four of the towers were covered with cloth.

[347] We arrived at the place where this camp was set up on the Thursday before Ascension Day. [The] Four galleys in which we were being held prisoner were anchored in front of the sultan’s lodgings, while the king was taken ashore to a pavilion close to the sultan’s quarters. The sultan had made arrangements for Damietta to be surrendered to him on the Saturday before Ascension Day, when he would release the king.

[348] The emirs whom the sultan had dismissed from his council in order to replace them with his own men, whom he had brought back from foreign lands, conferred among themselves, and one shrewd Saracen said this: ‘My lords, you can see the shame and dishonour that the sultan has inflicted on us, by removing us from the honourable positions in which his father had placed us. Because of this we should be certain
that should he find himself in the stronghold of Damietta, he
will have us captured and killed in his prison, just as his father
did to the emirs who captured the count of Bar and the count of
Montfort. As a result it would be best, so it seems to me, for
us to have him killed before he slips through our fingers.'

[349] The emirs went to the men of the halqa and asked them
to kill the sultan immediately after the meal to which he had
invited them. So it was that after they had eaten and the sultan
was making his way to his chamber after having taken leave of
his emirs, one of the knights of the halqa, the man who carried
the sultan's sword, struck him with his own sword across the
hand, between his four fingers, and split his hand open right up
to his arm. [350] The sultan then returned to his emirs, who
had ordered this to be done, and said to them, 'My lords, I
appeal to you against the men of the halqa — they wish to kill
me, as you can see.' The knights of the halqa responded to the
sultan with one voice, saying, 'Since you say we wish to kill
you, it would be better for us to do it than for you to kill us.'

[351] Then they had the kettledrums sounded, and all the
army came to find out what the sultan wanted. In reply they
were told that Damietta had been taken and that the sultan was
on his way to the city having ordered that the army should go
after him. They all armed themselves and spurred on towards
Damietta. When we saw they were going in the direction of
Damietta, we were very sad at heart, since we believed the city
had been lost. The young and agile sultan fled, along with three
of his bishops who had dined with him, into the tower he had
had built. This was the tower behind his chamber that you
heard about earlier. [352] The members of the halqa, who were
500 men on horseback, tore down the sultan's pavilions and
laid siege to him and the three bishops in that tower, from every
side. They shouted to him that he should come down. He
said that he would do so on condition that they guarantee his
safety, but they replied that they would force him to come
down; he was not yet in Damietta. They launched Greek fire at
him, and the tower, made of fir poles and cotton cloth, was set
alight quickly; I never saw a fire so fine and upright. When the
sultan saw this he came down at great speed and made off in
flight towards the river along the path I told you about before.

[353] The men of the halqa had hacked through on to the path
with their swords, and as the sultan passed on his way to the
river one of them struck him a spear blow in his side. The sultan
fled for the river, trailing the spear behind him. His assailants
came down to the water and swam out to kill him in the river,
quite close to the galley where we were. One of the knights,
who was called Faracatayye, slit him open with his sword and
pulled the heart from his chest. Then he came to the king, his
hand all bloody, and said to him, 'What will you give me? For
I have killed your enemy for you, who would have put you to
death had he lived.' But the king gave no reply.

[354] At last thirty of them came on to our galley, drawn
swords in their hands and Danish axes hanging at their necks.
I asked my lord Baldwin of Ibelin, who knew the Saracen
language well, what these men were saying. He replied that
they said they had come to cut off our heads. Many people
were making confession to a brother of the Trinity called John,
who was Count William of Flanders's priest. But for my part I
could not recall any sins I had committed. Instead I was thinking
that the more I tried to defend myself and the more I tried to
escape, the worse it would be for me. [355] And then I signed
myself with the cross and knelt at the feet of one of the Saracens,
who held a carpenter's Danish axe, and said, 'Thus died Saint
Agnes.' My lord Guy of Ibelin, constable of Cyprus, knelt
down beside me and confessed himself to me. I said to him, 'I
absolve you by such power as God has granted me.' But when
I got up from that spot I could not remember anything that he
had said or told me.

[356] They made us get up from where we were and impris-
ioned us in the galley's hold; many of our people thought
they had done this because they did not want to attack us all
together, but rather to kill us one by one. We stayed there in a
miserable condition all that night; we were lying so close
together that my feet were touching the good Count Peter of
Britany and his were right next to my face.

[357] Next morning the emirs had us brought out of where
we were being held, and their messengers told us that we were
to go and speak with them in order to renew the treaty the sultan had made with us. They told us that we should be sure that had the sultan lived he would have had the king’s head cut off, and ours too. Those who were able to go there went; the count of Brittany, the constable and I, who were gravely ill, stayed behind. The count of Flanders went to speak to the emirs along with Count John of Soissons, the two Ibelin brothers, and the others who were in a fit state.

[358] They reached agreement with the emirs on condition that as soon as Damietta had been surrendered to them, they would release the king and the other great men who were there. The sultan had already sent the people of lower rank, except those he had killed, out of the city and in the direction of Cairo. He had done this against the terms of the agreement he had made with the king, which made it seem likely that he would have had us killed too as soon as he had possession of Damietta. [359] The king also had to swear to pay them 200,000 livres before leaving the river, and another 200,000 livres once he had reached Acre. According to the agreement they made with the king, the Saracens had to protect the sick people who were in Damietta, along with the crossbows, weapons and engines, and the salted meats, until such time as the king should send for them.

[360] The oaths that the emirs had to swear to the king were formulated thus: if they did not keep the agreement made with the king, they would be as dishonoured as he who, because of his sinfulness, goes on pilgrimage to Muhammad at Mecca with his head uncovered, and as dishonoured as those who leave their wives and then take them back afterwards. (In such cases, according to the law of Muhammad, no man can leave his wife and ever be able to take her back, unless he sees another man sleep with her before he does so.) [361] The third oath was this: that if they did not keep the agreement made with the king they would be as dishonoured as the Saracen who eats pig’s flesh. The king willingly accepted from the emirs the oaths just described, because Master Nicholas of Acre, who knew the Saracen language, said that they could not swear a more powerful oath according to their law.

[362] When the emirs had sworn, they had the oath they wished the king to take written down. It was drawn up on the advice of priests who had converted to their faith. The text said this: that if the king did not keep the agreement he had made with the emirs, he would be as dishonoured as the Christian who denies God and his Mother, and is barred from the fellowship of his twelve companions and of all the saints. The king agreed readily to this. The last point of the oath said that if he did not keep terms with the emirs, he would be as dishonoured as the Christian who denies God and his law and who, scorning God, spits and tramples on the cross. [363] When the king heard this he said that, please God, he would never take this oath. The emirs sent Master Nicholas, who knew the Saracen language, to the king. He said to him, ‘My lord, the emirs are deeply outraged that they swore an oath precisely as you asked, and yet you refuse to swear the oath they ask of you. You may be certain that if you do not swear it, they will behead you and all your people.’ The king replied that they could do as they wished, for he would rather die a good Christian than live with the anger of God, his Mother and his saints.

[364] The patriarch of Jerusalem, an old and venerable man aged eighty years, had obtained a safe conduct from the Saracens and had come to the king to help him negotiate his release. Now, the custom among Christians and Saracens is such that when the king or sultan dies, those who have come as envoys, whether to infidel or Christian lands, are captured and enslaved. Since the sultan who had granted him safe conduct was dead, the patriarch was held prisoner just as we were. When the king had given his response one of the emirs said that it was the patriarch who had advised him in drawing up the oath, and he said to the infidels, ‘If you’re willing to trust me I will make the king swear the oath, for I will send the patriarch’s head flying into his lap.’ [365] They did not want to follow his advice. Instead they seized the patriarch from the king’s side and tied him to a tent pole with his hands behind his back, so tightly that his hands swelled up to the size of his head and blood spurted out across them. The patriarch called out to the king, ‘My lord, swear the oath for God’s sake; I will take the sin of
it upon my own soul, since you certainly intend to keep it.' I do not know how the oath was finalized, only that the emirs felt themselves satisfied by the oaths of the king and the other great men who were there.

[366] After the sultan was killed, his musicians and instruments were brought before the king’s tent, and the king was told that the emirs had been in favour of making him sultan of Egypt. He asked me whether I thought he would have taken the kingdom of Egypt if it had been offered to him. I told him that he would have been acting most foolishly had he done so since these people had murdered their lord. But he told me that in fact he would not have refused it. [367] And know that they say the only reason this did not happen was because the Saracens said that the king was the most steadfast Christian one could find. As proof of this they pointed out that each time the king left his lodgings he prostrated himself on the ground in the shape of the cross, and made the sign of the cross all over his body. They said that if Muhammad had made them endure so much hardship, they would never have continued to believe in him, and that if their people were to make the king their sultan, they would have to become Christians or all be killed.

[368] After the terms of the agreement had been confirmed and sworn to by the king and the emirs, it was decided that they would release us on the day following Ascension Day. As soon as Damietta was surrendered to the emirs, the king himself and the great men who were with him would be set free, as was outlined earlier. On the Thursday evening the men in charge of our four galleys anchored them in the middle of the river before the Damietta bridge. They put up a pavilion in front of the bridge where the king went ashore.

[369] At sunrise my lord Geoffrey of Sergines went into Damietta and surrendered the city to the emirs; the sultan’s banners were raised on the towers. The Saracen knights entered the city and started to drink the wine. They were soon all drunk. One of them came to our galley and drew his bloodied sword, saying that for his part he had killed six of our people. [370] Before Damietta was surrendered, the queen and all our people inside the city, except those who were sick, were brought on board our ships. The Saracens were under oath to protect the sick, but they killed them all. The king’s engines, which they were also supposed to protect, were hacked to pieces, and they did not keep the salted meats, which they were meant to look after since they do not eat pork. Instead they made one pile of salt pork and another of dead people and they set fire to both; there was such a large blaze that it lasted throughout Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

[371] The king and the rest of us whom the Saracens should have released at sunrise were held until sunset. We did not eat at all and neither did the emirs; they spent the whole day arguing. One of the emirs spoke for those who shared his opinion, ‘My lords, if you listen to me and the others on my side, we will kill the king and the great men here. That way we would have nothing to fear for the next forty years since their children are still small. We already have Damietta in our hands, so we can do this with greater confidence.’ [372] Another Saracen, who was called Sebrici and was a Mauritanian by birth, spoke against this view, saying, ‘If we kill the king after having killed the sultan, it will be said that the Egyptians are the most wicked and most treacherous people in the world.’ The man who wished to have us killed spoke again and said, ‘It is most true that we acted very wickedly in ridding ourselves of the sultan by murdering him, since we went against Muhammad’s commandment that instructs us to protect our lord as the apple of our eye – see the commandment written down here in this book. Now listen,’ he said, ‘to another commandment of Muhammad that comes later.’ [373] He turned over a page of the book he was holding and showed them Muhammad’s other commandment, which was this: ‘For the security of the faith, kill the enemy of the law.’ ‘So you can see that we have acted against the commandments of Muhammad by having killed our lord. We will do still worse if we do not kill the king, no matter what assurances we may have given him, since he is the strongest of the enemies the Saracen faith has.’ [374] It was as good as settled that we should die, and so it was that one of the emirs who opposed us, believing we should all be killed, came to the river and began to call out in the Saracen language.
to those who were in charge of the galleys, lifting the turban from his head and signalling to them with it. They immediately weighed anchor and took us off at least a league in the direction of Cairo, and at that point we thought we were all lost, and many tears were shed.

[375] But, according to the will of God, who does not forget his own, it was agreed around sunset that we were to be released. So they took us back downstream and brought our four galleys to the bank. We asked to be allowed to go, and they said that they would not do so until we had eaten, 'For it would be shameful to the emirs for you to leave our prison fasting.' [376] We asked to be given food by someone, and then we would eat it. They told us that someone had gone to their camp to fetch it. The food they gave us consisted of pieces of cheese that had been baked in the sun to keep them free of maggots, and hard-boiled eggs that had been cooked four or five days earlier. In our honour they had painted the shells with different colours.

[377] They put us ashore and we went to join the king, whom they were bringing to the river from the pavilion in which he had been held. A good 20,000 Saracens came behind him on foot, swords at their sides. On the river in front of the king was a Genoese galley, on board which it appeared there was just one man. As soon as he saw the king on the riverbank he sounded a whistle, and on this signal eighty well-equipped crossbowmen leapt from the galley’s hold, their crossbows drawn, and they immediately put bolts in the notches. As soon as the Saracens saw this they took flight like sheep; only two or three of them stayed with the king. [378] The men on board threw a plank on to the riverbank in order to bring the king aboard, along with his brother the count of Anjou, my lord Geoffrey of Sergines, my lord Philip of Nemours, the marshal of France who was known as ‘du Mez’, the master of the Order of the Trinity and me. The Saracens were keeping the count of Poitiers in prison until the king had given them the 200,000 livres’ ransom he was obliged to pay them before he left the river.

[379] On the Saturday after Ascension Day, which was the day after our release, the count of Flanders, the count of Soissons, and several other great men who had been held captive in the galleys came to take their leave of the king.12 He told them that he thought they would do well to stay until his brother, the count of Poitiers, had been set free. They said they could not do so since their galleys were all ready to sail. They went aboard their galleys and set off for France, taking with them the good Count Peter of Brittany. He was so ill that he only survived another three weeks, and died at sea.

[380] We began to gather the ransom payment on that Saturday morning and continued to do so later on Saturday and all day Sunday until nightfall. We used scales to amass the payment, each measure being valued at 10,000 livres. At vespers on Sunday the king’s men who were putting together the payment warned him there was a shortfall of at least 30,000 livres. The only men with the king were the king of Sicily, the marshal of France, the minister of the Trinity and me. Everyone else was preparing the payment.

[381] I said to the king that it would be sensible to send for the commander and the marshal of the Temple (the master being dead), so that he could ask them to lend him the 30,000 livres to ransom his brother. The king sent for them and told me I should speak to them. When I had done so Brother Stephen of Ostricourt, who was commander of the Temple, said to me, ‘My lord of Joinville, the advice you have given the king is neither good nor reasonable, since you know that when we receive deposits we are bound by oath not to release them to anyone other than those who entrusted them to us.’ A good number of hard and cruel words passed between us. [382] Then Brother Renaut of Vichiers, who was marshal of the Temple, said, ‘My lord, do not concern yourself with this argument between the lord of Joinville and our commander for, as our commander said, we cannot give you anything without breaking our oath. As for what the seneschal has suggested—that since we cannot lend you what you need, you should take it—this is not such an outrageous thing to say, and you should act as you think best. And if you do take anything from us, we hold at least as much money of yours in Acre, so you can easily repay us.’

[383] I told the king that I would go if he so desired, and he
ordered me to do so. I went to one of the Temple’s galleys, to
to go down into the
galleys, to their flagship in fact, and as I was about to go down into the
ship’s hold where the treasure was kept, I asked the commander of the Temple to come and observe what I took, but he would not deign to do so at all. The marshal said he would come and witness what violence I did him. [384] As soon as I was down where the treasure was kept, I asked the treasurer of the Temple, who was present, to give me the keys to a chest that was in front of me. He, seeing me thin and wizened by illness and in the same clothes I had worn in prison, said he would give me nothing. I saw a hatchet resting there, so I raised it and said I would use it as the king’s key. When the marshal saw this he grasped my hand and said, ‘My lord, we see clearly that you are using force against us. We will give you the keys.’ He then ordered the treasurer to hand the keys to me, which he did. The treasurer was greatly taken aback when the marshal told him who I was.

[385] I discovered that the chest I had opened belonged to Nicholas of Choisy, one of the king’s sergeants. I emptied it of what money I found inside and then went to the boat that had brought me there and sat in the bows. I fetched the marshal of France and left him with the treasure, while I stationed the minister of the Trinity on the deck of the galley. On board the galley the marshal passed the money to the minister, and the minister handed it to me where I was in the boat. When we approached the king’s galley I began to call out to him, ‘My lord, my lord, see how I am supplied!’ And the saintly man was most pleased and happy to see me. We handed over what I had brought to those who were putting together the payment.

[386] The members of the king’s council who had prepared the payment came to him when this was done and told him that the Saracens did not want to release his brother until they had the money in their hands. Some of those councillors advised the king against delivering the ransom to the Saracens until he had his brother back. The king replied that he would deliver it to them because he had an agreement with them, and the Saracens would keep their side of the agreement if they thought it was the right thing to do. Then my lord Philip of Nemours

told the king that they had cheated the Saracens by one measure of 10,000 livres. [387] The king was very angry and said he wanted us to return the 10,000 livres to the Saracens, because he had promised to pay them 200,000 livres before he left the river. Then I leant on my lord Philip’s foot and told the king not to believe him, that what my lord Philip said was not true since the Saracens were the world’s greatest cheats in such transactions. My lord Philip said I was in the right and that he had only spoken in jest. The king said that this was an ill-judged sort of joke. ‘And I command you,’ he said to my lord Philip, ‘on the faith you owe me as my vassal, that if the 10,000 livres have not been paid, you should have them paid without fail.’ [388] Many people had advised the king to take himself aboard the ship that was waiting for him out at sea, in order to remove himself from the Saracens’ hands. The king paid no attention to them, saying instead that he would not leave the river until he had paid the Saracens 200,000 livres as he had promised. As soon as the payment was made the king, without anybody urging him to do so, told us that he was now free of his oath and that we should leave that place and go to the ship out at sea.

[389] Our ship then set sail but we went at least one league before anyone talked to another. This was because we were troubled by the count of Poitiers’s continuing captivity. At that point my lord Philip of Montfort arrived in a smaller vessel and called out to the king, ‘My lord, my lord, speak with your brother the count of Poitiers, who is in this other boat.’ Then the king cried, ‘Bring a light! Bring a light!’ And it was done. Our shared joy was as great as could be. The king went aboard the count’s ship and we went with him. A poor fisherman went to tell the countess of Poitiers that he had seen the count of Poitiers set free, and she had him given twenty Parisian livres.

[390] I do not want to overlook certain things that happened in Egypt while we were there. First of all, I will tell you about my lord Walter of Châtillon. A knight named my lord John of Monson recounted to me that he had seen my lord of Châtillon on a road in the village where the king was captured. This road went straight through the village, so that you could see the
fields on one side and the other. My lord Walter of Châtillon was there in the road, his unsheathed sword in his hand. [391] When he saw the Turks were coming into the road, he charged at them with his sword in his hand and drove them from the village. As the Turks fled before him they showered him with arrows, since they could shoot things backwards just as well things forwards. Once he had driven them from the village, he got rid of the arrows that had landed on him, put his surcote back on, stood up in his stirrups, reached out his arms and brandished his sword, crying, ‘Châtillon, knights! Where are my pseudommes?’ When he turned round and saw that the Turks were coming in from the other end of the village, he charged at them again, sword in hand, and chased them away. And he did this three times, in the way already described.

[392] When the admiral of the Saracen galleys took me to join the people who had been captured on land, I enquired after my lord Walter of Châtillon from members of his entourage. I never found anyone who could tell me how he came to be captured, except that my lord John Fouinons, the good knight, told me that when he himself was taken off captive towards Mansurah, he came across a Turk mounted on my lord Walter of Châtillon’s horse, with its crupper all bloody. He asked the Turk what he had done with the man whose horse it was, and the Turk replied that he had cut his throat right there on the horse. It seemed from the crupper that this was so; it was reddened with blood.

[393] There was a most valiant man in the army whose name was my lord James of Castel, bishop of Soissons. When he saw that our people were retreating towards Damietta, he, having a great desire to go to God, did not wish to return to the land where he was born. Instead he rushed to go to God, spurred on his horse and attacked the Turks all alone. They killed him with their swords and set him in God’s company among the number of the martyrs.

[394] While the king was waiting for his people to make payment to the Turks for the release of his brother, the count of Poitiers, a very well dressed and very handsome Saracen came to the king and presented him with pots of milk and flowers of several different kinds on behalf of the children of Nasac, the former sultan of Egypt. [395] He spoke in French when he presented these gifts. [395] The king asked him where he had learned French and he said that he had been a Christian. ‘Be gone with you,’ said the king, ‘I’ll not speak to you any more!’ I took the man to one side and asked him about his situation. He told me that he had been born in Provins, that he had come to Egypt with King John [396] and that he had married there and was an important and wealthy man. And I said to him, ‘Don’t you understand that if you were to die in this condition you’d be damned and go to Hell?’ [396] ‘Yes,’ he said, for he was sure that no faith was as good as that of the Christians. ‘But I fear the poverty and reproach I would face if I were to go over to you. Every day people would say “Here comes the renegade!”’ So I prefer to live rich and at ease rather than put myself in the position I predict.’ I told him that the reproach on Judgement Day, when every man will look on his own sin, would be much more severe than the reproach he was describing to me. I gave him plentiful and good advice, but to no effect. Thus he left me, and I never saw him again.

[397] You have already heard about the great ordeals that the king and the rest of us suffered. The queen did not escape these hardships, as you are about to hear. Three days before she gave birth reports reached her that the king had been taken prisoner; she was so alarmed by this news that whenever she was asleep in her bed she imagined her whole room was full of Saracens, and she cried out, ‘Help! Help!’ In order that the child she was carrying might not perish, she had an aged knight, who was eighty years old, sleep at the side of her bed and hold her by the hand. Every time she cried out he said, ‘Don’t be afraid, my lady – I am here.’ [398] Before she gave birth she made everybody leave her chamber except that knight. She knelt before him and asked him to grant her one thing. The knight promised on oath that he would. She said to him, ‘Should the Saracens take this city I call on you, by the faith you have given me, to cut off my head before they can capture me.’ And the knight replied, ‘Rest assured that I will do it readily, for I had already decided I would kill you before they took us.’
The queen gave birth to a boy whose name was John. He was given the second name Tristan on account of the great sadness into which he was born. On the very day she gave birth she was told that the people of Genoa, Pisa, and the other Italian cities wanted to flee Damietta. The next day she summoned them all to her bedside, and with the room completely full, she said to them, 'My lords, for the love of God do not leave this city, for you can see that if Damietta were lost my lord the king and all those who are captive would be lost too. And if that does not move you, may you take pity on this wretched woman lying here, and wait until I recover.' They replied, 'My lady, how can we do so? We are dying of hunger in this city.' She told them that it would not be hunger that made them leave, 'For I will buy all the provisions in this city and from now on I will retain you all at the king's expense.' They talked among themselves, returned to her and confirmed that they would be willing to stay. The queen – may God absolve her – had all the food in the city purchased at a cost of over 360,000 livres. She had to leave her sick bed earlier than she ought to have, since the city had to be surrendered to the Saracens. The queen set off for Acre to wait for the king.

While the king was waiting for the release of his brother, he sent Brother Ralph, the Dominican friar, to an emir called Faracataye who was one of the most trustworthy Saracens I ever encountered. The king informed him that he was greatly taken aback that he and the other emirs had allowed their treaty to be so wickedly broken, since the sick people that the Saracens were supposed to have been protecting had been killed and because they had made firewood of the engines and had burned the corpses of the sick people and the salted pork they should have been guarding too. Faracataye replied to Brother Ralph, saying, 'Brother Ralph, tell the king that under my law I cannot put this right, and this pains me. And tell him from me that he should not make any show of his displeasure while he is in our hands, for he would be killed.' Faracataye advised the king to raise the issue again as soon as he arrived in Acre.

When the king came aboard his ship he found that his people had not prepared anything for him, no bed and no clothes. Until we reached Acre he had to sleep on the bedding the sultan had provided him, and he had to wear the clothes the sultan had ordered to be made for him and had presented to him. They were made of black samite, lined with vair and grey fur, with a great many solid gold buttons.

I sat beside the king throughout the six days we were at sea, despite my sickness. He told me then how he had been captured and how, with God's aid, he had negotiated his ransom and ours. He had me tell him how I was captured on the river, and afterwards he told me I should be most grateful to Our Lord for having delivered me from such great dangers. He sorely lamented the death of the count of Artois, his brother, and said that this brother would not willingly have failed to come and visit him on board ship, unlike the count of Poitiers.

He also complained to me about the count of Anjou, who was on board the king's ship but did not keep him company at all. One day the king asked what the count of Anjou was doing, and he was told that he was playing backgammon with my lord Walter of Nemours. The king, who was trembling all over because his illness had weakened him, went and seized the dice and the board, and threw them into the sea. He berated his brother very strongly for having taken up playing dice games so soon. But my lord Walter fared much better; he tipped all the money on the table – of which there was a great deal – into his lap and carried it off.
CHAPTER 9
The Crusaders at Acre
(May 1250–March 1251)

[406] Hereafter you will hear of the many trials and tribulations I faced in Acre, from which God, in whom I trusted and in whom I trust still, delivered me. I am having these things written down so that those who hear them may have faith in God in the course of their trials and tribulations, and God will help them just as he did me.

[407] Let me say first of all that when the king arrived in Acre, all the city came down to the sea to greet him in a most joyful procession. Someone brought me a palfrey, but as soon as I had mounted it my heart gave out, and I told the man who had brought the horse to hold me so that I might not fall. With great difficulty I was brought up the stairs to the king’s hall. I sat myself down at a window, with a child alongside me who was around ten years old and named Barthelemin; he was a bastard son of my lord Ami of Montbéliard, lord of Montfaucon. [408] While I was sitting there, with no one attending to me, a servant wearing a red cote with two yellow stripes came up to me. He greeted me and asked whether I recognized him. I said I did not, and he told me that he was from Oiselay, my uncle’s castle. I asked him in whose service he was, and he told me he was not in anyone’s service and that he would stay with me if I liked. I said that I would like it very much. He immediately went to fetch some white coifs and combed my hair very nicely. [409] The king then summoned me to eat with him, and I went wearing the garment that had been made for me out of scraps of my blanket when I was a prisoner. I left my blanket with the child Barthelemin, along with four lengths of camelin that had been given to me in prison for the love of God. Guillemin, my new servant, came and carved for me, and he managed to get some food to the child while we were eating.

[410] My new servant told me he had arranged lodgings for me near to the baths, so that I could wash away the filth and sweat I had brought with me from prison. That evening, when I was in the bath, my heart gave out and I fainted; only with great effort was I lifted out of the bath and carried to my bed. The next day an elderly knight called my lord Peter of Bourbonne came to see me, and I retained him in my service. He stood pledge for me in the city for the clothes and equipment I needed. [411] When I was ready – a good four days after our arrival – I went to see the king. He scolded me and told me that I had been wrong to delay so long in seeing him. He ordered that, since I valued his love dearly, I should eat with him each morning and evening without fail, until such time as he had decided what we were to do, whether to return to France or to stay.

[412] I told the king that my lord Peter of Courtenay owed me 400 livres in wages, which he refused to pay. The king said he would have me paid out of the money he owed to the lord of Courtenay, and this is what he did. On the advice of my lord Peter of Bourbonne we kept forty livres for our expenses and placed the rest in safe keeping with the commander of the palace of the Temple. Once I had spent the forty livres, I sent John Caym of Sainte-Menehoult’s father, whom I retained in my service while overseas, to fetch another forty livres. The commander told him that he did not have any of my money and that he did not know me. [413] I went to Brother Renaut of Vichiers, who had, with the king’s help, become master of the Temple. (Brother Renaut had been helpful to the king while in prison, as I told you earlier.) I complained to him about the commander of the palace who refused to give me back the money I had entrusted to him. When he heard this Brother Renaut was greatly agitated and said to me, ‘My lord of Joinville, I have great affection for you. But rest assured that if you are not willing to withdraw this appeal, I will no longer hold you as a friend, for you wish people to believe that our brothers are thieves.’ And I told him that, please God, I would not
withdraw it. [414] I spent four days feeling sick at heart, as would someone who has no more money to spend. After these four days the master came to me, all smiles, and told me he had found my money. They were able to trace these funds because it transpired that the former commander of the palace had been replaced. He had been sent to a village called Le Saffran, from where he returned my money.

[415] The bishop of Acre at that time, who was born in Provins, gave me the use of the priest's house in Saint Michael's parish. I had retained Caym of Saint-Menehould, who served me very well for two years, better than any man I ever had with me while in that country, and I had retained several other people too. It so happened that there was a small room by the head of my bed through which one entered the church. [416] A constant fever struck me, and I was bed-ridden by it, and the rest of my household too. All day, every day, I had no one to help me or to lift me up. I awaited nothing except death since I heard an ominous sound close by. There was not a single day when a good twenty corpses or more were not brought to the church and each time they came I heard from my bed the *Libera me, Domine.* So I cried and gave thanks to God, and said to him, 'My Lord, may you be praised for this misery you are sending me, for I have been proud in my waking and in my sleeping, and I beg you, Lord, to help me and release me from this illness.' And he did this for me, and for all my people too.

[417] After these things had happened I asked my new servant, Guillemin, to show me his accounts, which he did. I found that he had cheated me out of a good ten *livres* or more (in the currency of Tours). When I asked him for the money he said he would repay me when he could. I dismissed him and told him I would give him what he owed me, since he had certainly earned it. Once the Burgundian knights had returned from prison I learned from them that they had brought Guillemin overseas in their company, and that he was the most obliging thief there ever was; whenever a knight was in need of a knife or a belt, gloves or spurs or anything else, Guillemin would go and steal it and then give it to him.

[418] While the king was in Acre his brothers resolved to play dice. The count of Poitiers was such a courteous player that when he won he opened up the room and had all the gentlemen and gentlewomen summoned, if there were any about, and handed over fistfuls of money, his own as well as what he had won. When he lost money he guessed its value and bought it back from those he had been playing, whether the count of Anjou or others, and gave everything away, both his own money and the others'.

[419] One Sunday while we were at Acre the king sent for his brothers, the count of Flanders and the other great men, and said to them, 'My lords, my lady the queen, my mother, has informed me and begged me as earnestly as she can that I should go to France, because my kingdom is in great danger, since I have neither peace nor truce with the king of England. The men of this country to whom I have spoken have told me that if I were to go this land will be lost, since they would all go in my wake; no one would dare to stay here with so few people. I ask you,' he said, 'to think about this. And since the matter is a weighty one, I will give you a week's respite before you let me know what seems best to you.'

[420] During the week the legate came to me and said that he did not at all understand how the king would be able to stay, and urged me strongly to agree to return with him in his ship. I replied to him that I would not be able to do so since, as he knew, I had nothing; I had lost everything on the river when I was captured. [421] If I gave him this response it was not because I would not very gladly have gone with him, but because of a piece of advice that my cousin, my lord of Bourlémont – may God absolve him – had given me when I left to go overseas. 'You are going overseas,' he said. 'Take care of how you return, since no knight, whether rich or poor, can come back without shame if he leaves those of Our Lord's humble people with whom he set out in Saracen hands.' The legate was irritated with me and told me I ought not to have refused him.

[422] The following Sunday we came before the king again. The king then asked his brothers, the count of Flanders and the other barons what advice they would give him as to whether he should stay or go. They all replied that they had appointed
my lord Guy Mauvoisin to pass on the advice they wanted to give the king. The king commanded him to speak in accordance with the barons’ instructions. This is what he told the king: [423] ‘My lord, your brothers and the great men here have considered your situation and have concluded that, for your own honour and that of your kingdom, you cannot remain in this country. Out of all the knights who came in your company – you brought 2,800 to Cyprus – not a hundred remain in this city. So they advise you, my lord, to go to France, and raise men and money with which you might speedily return to this country in order to avenge yourself on the enemies of God who held you in their prison.’

[424] The king did not wish to be bound by what my lord Guy Mauvoisin had said, so he asked the count of Anjou, the count of Poitiers, the count of Flanders, and several other great men who were sitting alongside them, and they all agreed with my lord Guy Mauvoisin. The legate asked Count John of Jaffa, who was next, what he made of things. The count of Jaffa begged the legate to withdraw his question. ‘Since,’ he said, ‘my castles are on the frontier, and if I advise the king to stay, it might be thought that this was for my own benefit.’ [425] The king then called on him, as earnestly as he could, to speak his mind. The count said that if the king could manage to stay in the field for a year, he would do himself great honour by remaining. Then the legate asked those who were sitting next to the count of Jaffa, all of whom agreed with my lord Guy Mauvoisin.

[426] I was the fourteenth person sitting opposite the legate. He asked me what I thought of this, and I replied that I agreed fully with the count of Jaffa. And the legate, who was very annoyed, asked me how the king could possibly sustain a campaign with so few men as he had. My reply to him was equally annoyed, since I had the impression he was trying to goad me. ‘My lord, I will tell you, since it pleases you.’ [427] It is said, my lord – I do not know if it is true – that the king has not yet spent any of his money, but only the clergy’s money.3 So, the king should put his own money to use and send for knights from Morea and from overseas. When they hear that the king is offering sure and generous payment, knights will come to him from all parts. In this way he could, please God, sustain the campaign for a year. If he were to stay the poor prisoners who were taken captive in God’s service and his own might be released. They will never be set free if the king goes.’ There was no one there who did not have close friends in prison, and so nobody spoke against me. Instead they all began to cry.

[428] After me the legate asked my lord William of Beaumont, who was then marshal of France, his opinion. He said that I had spoken very well, ‘And I will tell you,’ he said, ‘the reason why.’ His uncle, my lord John of Beaumont, the good knight, strongly desired to return to France. He shouted at his nephew most cruelly and said, ‘You stinking piece of filth! What are you saying? Sit down and shut up!’ [429] The king said to him, ‘My lord John, you’re in the wrong – let him speak.’ But he replied, ‘Indeed, my lord, I will not.’ The marshal felt obliged to hold his tongue. No one else agreed with me after that besides the lord of Chacenay. Then the king said to us, ‘My lords, I have listened to you carefully, and in a week’s time I will let you know what choice I have made.’

[430] When we left his presence an assault on me began from all sides. ‘My lord of Joinville, the king is a fool if he doesn’t listen to you over the whole council of the kingdom of France!’ When the tables had been laid, the king had me sit next to him to eat, in the place where he always had me sit when his brothers were not there. He did not say a word to me throughout the meal, which was not how he usually behaved; he was always attentive to me while we ate. I really thought he was angry with me because I had said that he had not yet spent any of his own money, and that he should be spending it freely.

[431] While the king was hearing grace I went to a barred window that was in an alcove near the head of the king’s bed. I put my arms through the bars of the window and was thinking that if the king should return to France, I would go to the prince of Antioch4 – who looked on me as a relative and had sent for me – until such time as another expedition came to the country which I could join and through which the prisoners might be released. This would accord with the advice the lord of Bourlémont had given me. [432] As I was there the king came
and leant on my shoulders, placing both his hands on my head. I thought it was my lord Philip of Nemours, who had been taunting me all day because of the advice I had given the king. I said, 'Leave me in peace, my lord Philip!' By accident, as I turned my head the king’s hand fell across my face, and I knew it was him by an emerald he was wearing on his finger. 'Keep calm,' he said, 'I'd like to ask you how a young man like you is so brave as to dare to recommend my staying against all the great and wise men of France, who are urging me to go.' [433] 'My lord,' I said, 'even if I had wickedness in my heart I would not for any price have advised you to do so.' 'Do you mean,' he said, 'that I would be doing wrong if I were to leave?' 'Yes, my lord, so help me God.' And he asked me, 'If I stay, will you stay?' I told him, 'Yes, if I can, at either my own expense or someone else's.' 'Then be completely at ease,' he said, 'for I'm grateful to you for your advice. But don't tell anyone that.' All that week [434] I was comforted by what he had said and defended myself more vigorously against those who attacked me. The inhabitants of that country are known as 'colts'. My lord Peter of Avallon, who lived at Tyre, heard that I was being called a colt because I had advised the king to stay with the colts. He sent me word that I should stand up for myself against the people who were calling me colt, and tell them I would rather be a colt than a worn-out old nag like them.

[435] The next Sunday we all came before the king again. And when the king saw that we were all present, he made the sign of the cross on his mouth and called on the aid of the Holy Spirit. (Or at least I think he did so - my lady my mother told me that every time I wanted to say something I should call on the aid of the Holy Spirit and make the sign of the cross on my mouth.) Then he spoke to us. [436] This is what the king said: 'My lords, I am very grateful to those who advised me to go to France, and I also offer thanks to those who urged me to stay. In my opinion, there is no foreseeable danger that my kingdom might be lost if I were to stay, since my lady the queen has plenty of people with which to defend it. And I have also considered what the barons of this land are saying: that if I leave the kingdom of Jerusalem will be lost, since no one will dare to stay after I have gone. [437] And so I have determined that I will not for any price leave the kingdom of Jerusalem to be lost, since I came to conquer and defend it. My decision is to stay for the time being. And so I say to you, the great men here, and to all the other knights who are willing to stay with me, that you should come and talk frankly to me; I will offer you enough money so that should you decide not to stay, it will not be my fault but your own.' Many of the people who heard this speech were downcast, and many of them wept.

[438] The king, so it is said, ordered his brothers to return to France. I do not know whether this was at their request or by his wish. The king's announcement that he would stay was made around the time of the feast of Saint John. It so happened that on the feast of Saint James (whose pilgrim I had been) and who had done many kind things for me) the king returned to his chamber after Mass and summoned the members of his council who remained with him. These were: my lord Peter the Chamberlain, who was the most loyal and upright man I ever came across in a king's household; my lord Geoffroy of Sergines, the good knight and preudomme; and my lord Giles le Brun, another good knight and preudomme whom the king had made constable of France after the death of the preudomme my lord Humbert of Beaujeu. [439] The king raised his voice as he spoke to them angrily: 'My lords, it is already a month since people found out I was going to stay, but I have not yet heard news that you have retained any knights in my service.' 'My lord,' they replied, 'we cannot do so. Because they want to go home each man has so high a price that we dare not give them what they ask.' 'Have you found anyone,' asked the king, 'who is less expensive?' 'Indeed, my lord,' they said, 'the seneschal of Champagne. But we dare not pay what he demands.'

[440] I was in the king's chamber and heard this exchange. Then the king said, 'Call the seneschal to me.' I went and knelt before him. He had me sit down and said to me, 'Seneschal, you know that I have a deep affection for you, but my people tell me that they find you unyielding. How can this be?' 'My lord,' I said, 'it cannot be otherwise. For you know that I was taken prisoner on the river and lost all I had; I have nothing at
all.' He asked me what I was demanding, and I said that I had asked for 2,000 livres for two-thirds of the year, until Easter.

[441] 'Now tell me,' he said, 'have you secured the service of any knights?' And I said, 'Yes; my lord Peter of Pontomoulin and two men under his banner, at the cost of 400 livres each until Easter.' The king added up using his fingers. 'That makes,' he said, 'a cost of 1,200 livres for your new knights.' 'Consider, my lord,' I said, 'that I need at least 800 livres to provide myself with horses and equipment and to feed my knights, since you would not want us to eat with your household.' Then the king said to his men, 'I truly don't see anything excessive in this. I retain you,' he said, 'in my service.'

[442] After this the king's brothers and the other great men in Acre prepared their fleets. At his departure from the city the count of Poitiers borrowed jewels from those who were returning to France, and gave them freely and generously to those of us who were staying. Both the brothers entreated me earnestly to take care of the king, and they told me there was no one else staying in whom they had as much trust. Everyone was astonished at how sad the count of Anjou appeared when he saw he had to go aboard the ship. But he returned to France nonetheless.

[443] It was not long after the king's brothers had left Acre that messengers came from Emperor Frederick to the king with letters of credence. They told him that the emperor had sent them to secure our release. They showed the king the letters that the emperor had sent to the sultan who had died (the emperor had not known about that); the emperor ordered the sultan to have full confidence in what his messengers said with regard to the king's release. Many people said that it would not have benefited us if these messengers had arrived while we were in prison, because they thought the emperor had sent them to hinder rather than aid our release. The messengers found we had already been set free, and so they left.

[444] While the king was at Acre, the sultan of Damascus sent messengers to him. He complained bitterly about the Egyptian emirs who had killed his cousin the sultan. He promised the king that if he decided to help him, he would deliver the kingdom of Jerusalem to him, which was in his hands. The king decided that he would reply to the sultan of Damascus through his own envoys, and he sent them to the sultan. Along with the envoys to Damascus went Brother Yves le Breton, a friar of the Dominican order who knew the Saracen language. [445] While they were going from their lodgings to those of the sultan, Brother Yves saw an old woman crossing the street. In her right hand she was carrying a bowl full of fire, and in her left a flask full of water. Brother Yves asked her, 'What do you intend to do with those?' She replied that she wanted to burn Heaven with the fire and extinguish Hell with the water, so that neither would exist any more. And he asked, 'Why do you want to do that?' 'Because I wish no one to do good either for the reward of Heaven or from fear of Hell, but only to receive God's love, for he is so worthy of being honoured and can do all good things for us.'

[446] John the Armenian, who was the king's weapon-maker, went to Damascus to buy horn and glue for making crossbows. He saw a very ancient old man sitting in the market in Damascus. This old man called out to him and asked him if he was a Christian, and John said, 'Yes.' The old man said to him, 'You Christians must really hate each other, for I witnessed a time when King Baldwin of Jerusalem, who was a leper, defeated Saladin' even though he had only 300 armed men while Saladin had 3,000. Now your sins have reduced you to such a state that we round you up in the field like cattle.' [447] Then John the Armenian said that he had better keep quiet about the sins of the Christians because the sins of the Saracens were far greater. The Saracen replied that he had answered foolishly. John asked why, and the old man said that he would tell him, but that he had a question to ask first. He asked John whether he had any children. 'Yes,' he said, 'a son.' The old man asked which would be more aggravating, for him to receive a blow from the Saracen or from his son? John said that he would be more angry with his son than with the Saracen. [448] 'Now,' said the Saracen, 'I will give you the following response. You Christians are sons of God, called Christian after the name of Christ, and he has been so generous as to provide you with
teachers through whom you can learn when you are doing right and when you are doing wrong. Because of this God is more displeased with you when you commit a small sin than he is with us when we commit a much bigger one, since we do not realize it. We are so blind as to believe that we may be forgiven our sins if we are able to wash in water before we die, for Muhammad told us that at death we will be saved by water.'

[449] Once when I was going to Paris after my return from overseas, John the Armenian was in my company. While we were having a meal inside a tent a great crowd of poor people were begging from us for the love of God, and were making a great row. One of our number gave an order to a servant, saying, 'Get up and chase these paupers away!' [450] 'Oh!' said John the Armenian, 'that was a very bad thing to say. For if the king of France now sent messengers bringing each of us 100 marks of silver, we would not drive them away. And yet you chase off these envoys who are offering to give you the greatest gift you could be given. They are asking you to give them something for God's sake, which means that if you give them something of yours, they will give you God. God said with his own mouth that the poor have the power to give God to us, and the saints say they can reconcile us to him. In the same way that water extinguishes fire, charity extinguishes sin. May you never,' said John, 'drive the poor away. Rather give to them, and God will give to you.'

[451] Envoys from the Old Man of the Mountain came to the king while he was at Acre. The king had them come before him when he returned from Mass. He had them seated before him so that there was an emir in front, finely clothed and impressively equipped, and behind this emir was an impressively equipped young man who held three knives in his hand; the blade of each knife fitted inside the handle of another. If the king had rebuffed the emir the young man would have presented these three knives to the king as a token of defiance. Behind the man holding the knives was another who had a length of linen wound round his arm; if he had refused the Old Man of the Mountain's request, this too would have been presented to the king, as a burial shroud.

[452] The king told the emir that he should speak as he wished. The emir handed him letters of credence and said, 'My lord sent me to ask you if you know him.' The king replied that he did not know him, since he had never met him, but he certainly had heard talk of him. And the emir said to the king, 'Since you have heard talk of my lord, I am greatly amazed that you haven't sent him sufficient of your wealth to secure his friendship. The emperor of Germany, the king of Hungary, the sultan of Egypt and the other rulers do so every year; they are well aware that they will not survive unless it is pleasing to my lord. [453] If you are not willing to do this, then have him acquitted of the tribute he owes to the Hospital and the Temple, and he will deem himself to have been paid by you.' At that time the Old Man of the Mountain made tribute payments to the Hospital and Temple because they had no fear of the Assassins. The Old Man could not gain anything by having the master of the Temple or the Hospital killed because he understood clearly that if he had one of them killed, another man, just as able, would immediately replace him. Because of this he was unwilling to lose any of the Assassins when he had nothing to gain by it. The king replied to the emir that he should return in the afternoon.

[454] When the emir returned he found the king seated with the master of the Hospital on one side of him and the master of the Temple on the other. The king then told him to repeat what he had said that morning, but the emir said he was not inclined to repeat himself in front of anyone except those who had been with the king earlier. The two masters told him, 'We order you to speak.' And he said that he would repeat himself, since they commanded it. Then the two masters had him told in the Saracen language to come and speak to them the following day in the Hospital, and so he did.

[455] The two masters told him that his lord was very bold to dare to send such harsh words to the king. They informed him that, were they not concerned about the honour of the king to whom the emir and his companions had come as envoys, they would have drowned them in Acre's filthy waters in defiance of his lord. 'We order you to return to your lord and to be back
here in two weeks, bringing such letters and jewels from him that the king will deem himself satisfied and pleased with you.'

[456] Within two weeks the Old Man of the Mountain's envoys came back to Acre. They brought the king the Old Man's chemise and on their lord's behalf they told the king of its significance: just as the chemise is closer to one's body than any other piece of clothing, so the Old Man wanted to keep the king closer in love than any other king. He sent the king his ring, which was made of very fine gold and had his name engraved on it; their lord informed them that with this ring he formed a union with the king, wishing them to be as one from this time forwards. [457] Among the other treasures he sent the king was an elephant very finely made in crystal, an animal called a giraffe also made in crystal, apples made from various kinds of crystal, and backgammon and chess sets. All these things were decorated with ambergris, which was fixed to the crystal with fine gold settings. And know that their sweet smell was such that as soon as the envoys opened the chests holding these items the whole chamber seemed to be perfumed.

[458] The king sent his own envoys to the Old Man, along with a great quantity of jewels, lengths of scarlet, gold cups and silver bits for his horses. With these envoys he sent Brother Yves le Breton, who knew the Saracen language. He discovered that the Old Man of the Mountain did not believe in Muhammad. Instead he believed the law of Ali, who was Muhammad's uncle. [459] Ali had enabled Muhammad to obtain his position of authority, but once Muhammad became sovereign of his people he spurned his uncle and distanced himself from him. When Ali saw this he drew as many people to him as he could and taught them a different faith from the one taught by Muhammad. Hence it is still the case that all those who follow the law of Ali say that all those who follow the law of Muhammad are unbelievers, while all those who follow the law of Muhammad say that all those who follow the law of Ali are unbelievers.

[460] One of the points of the law of Ali is that when a man is killed fulfilling his lord's command, his soul enters a happier body than the one it dwelled in before. Because of this the Assassins are unperturbed by facing death when their lord commands it, since they believe they will be happier once they have died than they had been previously.

[461] Another point is this: they believe no man can die before the day appointed for him. But no one should believe this since God has the power to prolong our lives and to cut them short. The Bedouins hold the same belief and because of this they refuse to wear armour when they go into battle, since they think that to do so is to go against the commandment of their law. When they scold their children they say to them, 'Be accursed as the Frank who wears armour for fear of death.'

[462] Brother Yves found a book beside the head of the Old Man's bed in which were written several of Our Lord's sayings to Saint Peter during his time on Earth. And Brother Yves said, 'Ah, my lord - you should, for God's sake, read this book often, for these are very fine words.' The Old Man said that he did so, 'Because I hold my lord Saint Peter very dear, since at the beginning of the world when Abel was killed, his soul passed into Noah's body. When Noah was dead it passed into the body of Abraham, and from his body, when he died, it passed, at the time God came to Earth, into Saint Peter's body.' [463] When he heard this Brother Yves explained that this belief was not good, and he passed on much sound doctrine, but the Old Man did not want to believe it. Brother Yves related these things to the king when he returned to us. When the Old Man rode out he had a crier ride in front of him who carried a Danish axe that had a long handle covered with silver and with many blades embedded in it. He called out, 'Make way for the man who holds the death of kings in his hands.'

[464] I forgot to tell you what response the king gave to the sultan of Damascus. It was that the king was not inclined to join with him until such time as he knew whether the Egyptian emirs would restore the terms of the truce they had broken. He was sending envoys to them, and if they refused to restore the terms of the truce they had broken, he would willingly help the sultan avenge his cousin, the sultan of Egypt, whom the emirs had killed.

[465] While the king was in Acre he sent my lord John of
Valenciennes to Egypt. He demanded that the emirs make amends for the insults and injuries they had inflicted on the king. They said that they would do so willingly so long as the king would ally himself with them against the sultan of Damascus. My lord John of Valenciennes berated them strongly for the great outrages they had committed against the king, which I have already described, and advised them that it would be wise to release all the knights they were holding in prison, so as to soothe the king’s heart towards them. This they did, and they also sent all the bones of Count Walter of Brienne\(^\text{10}\) for burial in consecrated ground.\[466]\ When my lord John of Valenciennes returned to Acre with 200 knights, not counting the other people he brought out of captivity, my lady of Sidon received the bones of Count Walter and had them buried at the Hospital in Acre. She was the cousin of Count Walter and the sister of my lord Walter, lord of Reynel, whose daughter John, lord of Joinville, took as his wife\(^\text{11}\) after he returned from overseas. She arranged the service so that each knight offered a candle and a silver denier, and the king offered a candle and a gold bezant, all at her own expense. It was very surprising that the king went along with this, since we had never seen him offer anything other than his own money, but he did so this time as a courtesy.

[467] Among the knights my lord John of Valenciennes brought back with him, I discovered at least forty from the court of Champagne. I had cotes and green herigauts made for them and brought them before the king. I pleaded with him to be ready to do whatever was necessary to keep them in his service. The king listened to what they asked for and kept his peace.\[468\] A knight of his council said that I had been wrong to bring such a message to the king, who had spent 7,000 livres beyond his means. I told him that no good would come to him from saying things like this. Among those of us from Champagne we had lost at least thirty-five knights, all bannerets from the court of Champagne, and I told him, ‘The king will not do well if he listens to you, seeing that he is so short of knights.’ After saying this I began to weep heavily, and the king told me to be quiet; he would give the knights what I had asked.

The king took them into his service just as I wished and assigned them to my battalion.

[469] The king replied to the messengers from the Egyptian emirs that he would not make any truce with them unless they sent all the heads of Christians which had hung around the walls of Cairo since the time the count of Bar and the count of Montfort were taken, and unless they also returned all the children who had been captured while small and who had converted. They would also have to quit him of the 200,000 livres he still owed them. Along with these messengers to the Egyptian emirs the king sent John of Valenciennes, a distinguished and wise man.
Throughout Lent the king had his ships – of which there were thirteen, both nefs and galleys – readied for the return to France. The nefs and galleys were prepared in time for the king and queen to go aboard their nef on the eve of the feast of Saint Mark, after Easter. The wind was favourable as we set sail. On Saint Mark’s Day the king told me that he had been born on that day, and I said that he might well say that he had also been reborn on that day, for he was indeed reborn when he escaped from that perilous land.

On the Saturday we came in sight of Cyprus and a mountain on the island which is called the Mountain of the Cross. That Saturday a fog rose over the island and came down from the land on to the sea. Because of this our sailors, who saw the mountain above the fog, thought we were further away from the island than we were. This meant that they sailed on confidently, with the result that our ship struck a sandbank in the sea. It so happened that if we had not found and hit this stretch of sand, we would have struck a hidden expanse of rocks that would have shattered our ship completely and shipwrecked and drowned us all.

The moment our ship struck, a great cry went up on board. Everyone was shouting, ‘Alas!’ The sailors and others pounded their hands together, each of them afraid he would drown. When I heard this I got up from the bed, in which I was lying, and went to the ship’s castle with the sailors. After I arrived there Brother Raymond, who was a Templar and was in charge of the sailors, said to one of his valets, ‘Throw down your lead’, and he did so. And as soon as he had thrown it, the valet cried out and said, ‘Alas! We’re aground!’ When he heard this Brother Raymond ripped his clothes down to his belt and began to tear at his beard, crying, ‘Woe is me! Woe is me!’ At that moment one of my knights, whose name was lord John of Monson (he was the father of Abbot William of Saint-Michel), did me a great kindness; without saying a word he brought me one of his fur-lined surcotes and threw it over my shoulders because I was wearing nothing besides my cote. I shouted at him, saying, ‘What use to me is this surcote you’ve brought, when we’re drowning?’ And he said to me, ‘By my soul, my lord, I would rather we were all drowned than that you should die having been taken ill from the cold!’

The sailors cried out, ‘Ahoy there, galley! Take the king aboard!’ But none of the king’s four galleys that were nearby would come close. They were very wise in this, for there were at least 800 people in the ship who would all have leapt into the galleys to save themselves, sinking them all as a result.

The man with the lead threw it down a second time and came back to Brother Raymond to tell him that the ship was no longer aground. Then Brother Raymond went to tell this to the king, who was lying face down on the ship’s bridge with his arms stretched out in the shape of a cross, barefoot, wearing just a cote and completely dishevelled. He was prostrate before the body of Our Lord which was kept on the ship, as a man would be who was convinced he was going to drown. As soon as daybreak came, we saw in front of us the rocks on which we would have struck if the ship had not hit the sandbank.

The following day the king sent for the ships’ master mariners, who sent four divers down to the bottom of the sea. Into the sea they dived and when they came back, the king and the master mariners listened to them one after the other, so that each diver did not know what the others had said. They found out from the four divers that as our ship scraped against the sandbank, eighteen feet of the keel on which the ship was built had been torn away.

The king then summoned the master mariners before us and asked what advice they would give him about the damage
his ship had suffered. They discussed this with each other and urged the king to get off his ship and to go aboard another. [625] ‘We advise you to do this,’ they said, ‘because we’re convinced that all the timbers of your ship have been dislodged, which makes us worried that when your ship reaches the high seas, it won’t be able to withstand the pummelling of the waves without breaking up. The same thing happened when you were coming from France: a ship ran aground then too, and when it reached the high seas, it could not withstand the force of the waves. Because of this it broke apart and everyone on board was killed except one woman and her child, who found safety on a piece of the ship’s debris.’ And I can bear witness that what they said was true, for I saw that woman and her child in the count of Joigny’s lodgings in the city of Paphos; the count was providing for them for the love of God.

[626] Then the king asked my lord Peter the Chamberlain, my lord Giles le Brun, constable of France, my lord Gervase of Escrènes, the king’s master cook, the archbishop of Nicosia, who was his seal bearer and later became a cardinal, and me what our advice to him would be on this matter. And we replied to him that in all earthly matters one should put faith in those who know most about them: ‘Because of which we advise you, for our part, to do whatever the mariners recommend to you.’

[627] Then the king said to the mariners, ‘I ask you, on your honour, if the ship was yours and it was loaded with your merchandise, would you leave it?’ And they all replied as one that they would not; for they would rather put themselves at risk of drowning than buy a ship that would cost them 4,000 livres and more. ‘Then why are you advising me to disembark?’ said the king. ‘Because,’ they said, ‘the stakes aren’t equal; no gold or silver can be worth as much as your person or those of your wife and children who are on board. And because of this we cannot advise you to put either yourself or them in danger.’

[628] Then the king said, ‘My lords, I have listened to your opinion and the opinion of my men. Now I will tell you my own, which is that if I leave the ship, there are more than 500 people on board who will stay on the island of Cyprus out of fear of physical danger — for there is not one among them who does not love his life as much as I do mine — and who perhaps might never return to their homeland. Because of this I would rather place my own person, my wife and my children at risk in God’s hands than that I should do such harm to so great a number of people as there are on board.’

[629] The great harm the king would have done to the people on his ship can be seen by the case of Oliver of Termes, who was on board the king’s ship. He was one of the bravest men I ever saw and had conducted himself better than anyone else in the Holy Land. He did not dare remain with us for fear of drowning. Instead he stayed on Cyprus and encountered such difficulties that it was a year and a half before he returned to the king, even though he was a powerful and wealthy man who could easily have paid for his passage. So consider what the humbler people would have done who had no means with which to pay, when a man like him had such great problems.

[630] We passed from this danger, from which God had saved us, into another. The wind that had cast us on to Cyprus, where we should have been drowned, got up with such strength and fury that it threw us back on to the island by force. The sailors threw out their anchors against the wind, but the ship could not be stopped until they had thrown out five of them. It was necessary to take down the sides of the king’s cabin on the deck, although no one dared stay in it since they feared the wind would carry them into the sea. The constable of France, my lord Giles le Brun, and I had been sleeping in the king’s cabin below deck when, all of a sudden, the queen opened the door, thinking she would find the king there. [631] I asked her what she was looking for, and she told me that she had come to speak to the king, so that he might make a promise to God or his saints to go on some pilgrimage, by which God might deliver us from the peril in which we found ourselves; the sailors had told her we were in danger of drowning. I said to her, ‘My lady, promise to make a pilgrimage to my lord Saint Nicholas of Varangéville, and I will stand pledge for him that God will bring you, the king and your children back to France.’ ‘Seneschal,’ she said, ‘I would do so most willingly, but the king is so contrary that if he knew I had made this promise without
him, he would never let me go on the pilgrimage.' [632] 'There is at least one thing you can do,' I said. 'If God brings you back to France, you can promise him a silver ship of five marks for the king, yourself and your three children. And I will stand pledge that God will bring you back to France, for I've sworn to Saint Nicholas that if he should rescue us from the danger we've been in tonight, I will go from Joinville on foot and shoeless in order to pray to him.' And she said that she would promise the silver ship of five marks to Saint Nicholas and told me that I was her pledge for it. I told her I would be so most willingly. She left there and was gone only a short while, before she returned to us and told me, 'Saint Nicholas has saved us from this peril, for the wind has dropped.'

[633] When the queen—may God absolve her—returned to France, she had the silver ship made in Paris; in it were the king, queen and the three children, all made of silver, along with the sailors, mast, rudder and rigging, all made of silver, and the sails likewise. The queen told me the work had cost 100 livres. When the ship was completed the queen sent it to me at Joinville so I could have it taken to Saint Nicholas, and I did so. I saw it once more at Saint Nicholas, when we were taking the king's sister to join the king of Germany' at Haguenau.

[634] Now let me return to our subject and say that after we had escaped these two perils, the king sat down on the ship's bench and had me sit at his feet. He said to me, 'Seneschal, God has certainly demonstrated his great power, for one of his lesser winds—not one of the four great winds—nearly drowned the king of France, his wife and children, and all his company. So we must be grateful to him and offer him thanks for the danger from which he delivered us.'

[635] 'Seneschal,' said the king, 'the saints tell us that when people are struck by such tribulations, or by illness or other persecutions, these are warnings from Our Lord. For just as God says to those who are saved from serious illness, "Now you see clearly that I might well have killed you if I had so wished", so he can say to us, "You can see clearly that I might have drowned you all if I had so wished."' [636] So we must,' said the king, 'look into ourselves for anything that might be displeasing him and because of which he wanted to frighten us. And if we find anything displeasing to him, we should purge ourselves of it, for if we do otherwise after such a warning as he has given us, he will come down upon us with death or some other great suffering that would hurt our bodies and souls.'

[637] The king went on, 'Seneschal, the saint says, "Lord God, why are you warning us? For if you had lost us all, you would not have been any worse off because of it, and if you saved us all, you would not have been any richer as a result. And we can see from this," says the saint, "that these warnings God gives us are not made in order to further his benefit or to prevent his harm. It is only because of the great love he has for us that he prompts us through these warnings to see our own failings clearly and to rid ourselves of that which displeases him." Now let us do so,' said the king, 'and we will be acting wisely.'

[638] We left the island of Cyprus once we had taken on board fresh water and other things we needed. We came to an island called Lampedusa where we caught a great many rabbits. We also found an old hermitage among the rocks, along with the gardens made by the hermits who had lived there in the past. There were olive trees, fig trees, vine stocks and other trees there; the stream from a spring ran through the garden. We went with the king to the far end of the garden and found an oratory. The first chamber was whitewashed and had a cross of red earth. [639] We entered the second chamber and found two bodies of dead men, from which all the flesh had rotted away. Their ribs still held together and the bones of their hands were on their chests; they were laid out facing the East in the same way bodies are buried in the ground. When we went back on board our ship we were missing one of our sailors, whom the ship's master thought had stayed behind in order to become a hermit. Because of this Nicholas of Soisy, the master of the king's sergeants, left three sacks of biscuit on the shore so that the man might find them and live off the biscuit.

[640] When we left Lampedusa we came in sight of a large island in the sea that was called Pantelleria and was inhabited
by Saracens who were subject to the king of Sicily and the king of Tunis. The queen asked the king to send three galleys to fetch fruit for her children. The king agreed and ordered the master of the galleys so that once the king's nef had passed in front of the island, his galleys should be ready to return to him. The galleys reached the island via one of its ports, but it so happened that when the king's nef passed in front of the port we received no word from them.

[641] The sailors then began to murmur among themselves. The king had them summoned and asked them what they made of the situation, and the sailors told him it seemed likely to them that the Saracens had captured his men and the galleys. 'But we advise and urge you, my lord, not to wait for them because you are between the kingdom of Sicily and the kingdom of Tunis, neither of which has any love for you. If you let us sail on you will have been saved from danger once again tonight, for we will bring you through these straits.' [642] 'Truly,' said the king, 'I will not follow your advice that I should leave my people in the hands of the Saracens without at least doing what I can to free them. I order you to turn your sails - we're going to attack them.' When the queen heard this she began to show signs of deep distress and said, 'Alas! This is all my doing!'

[643] While the sails were being turned on the king's nef and on the others, we saw the galleys leaving the island. When they reached the king he asked the sailors why they had done this. They replied that they had no choice; it was the fault of certain sons of Parisian bourgeois. Six of them had been eating fruit in the gardens and the sailors could not find them but did not want to leave them behind. The king ordered that these six be put in the boat trailing behind his ship, at which they began to cry and wail, 'My lord, for God's sake, fine us as much as we can pay, but don't put us in the place where thieves and murderers are put, because it will always be a reproach to us.' [644] The queen and all the rest of us did what we could to dissuade the king, but he refused to listen to anyone. Therefore, the young men were put in the ship's boat and stayed there until we reached land. They were in great danger there because when the sea was rough, the waves were as high as their heads, and they had to huddle down so that the wind would not carry them off into the sea. And this served them right since their greed ended up setting us back significantly: we were delayed for a whole week because the king made the ships change course.

[645] We had another adventure at sea before the end of our voyage. As she was helping the queen to bed, one of her bégunes, who was not taking proper care, threw the cloth that had been wrapped round her head into the bottom of the iron pot in which the queen's candle was burning. And when the bégune had gone to bed in the cabin below the queen's, where the other women slept, the candle burned down far enough to set the cloth alight, and from there the fire spread to the sheets that were covering the queen's clothes. [646] When the queen woke up she saw the whole cabin engulfed in flames. She leapt up, quite naked, snatched the cloth and threw it, still burning, into the sea and then seized the sheets to put out that fire. The young men in the boat trailing behind the ship could be faintly heard calling out, 'Fire! Fire!' I lifted my head and saw the cloth still burning brightly on the sea, which was very calm. I put on my cotte as quickly as I could and went to sit with the sailors.

[647] While I was sitting there my squire, who slept at the foot of my bed, came to me and told me that the king was awake and had asked where I was. 'And I told him that you had gone to the latrines but the king said, "You're lying!"' While we were talking there, along came Master Geoffrey, the queen's clerk, who said to me, 'Don't be worried, because it's clear what did happen.' And I said to him, 'Master Geoffrey, go and tell the queen that the king is awake and that she should go to him to reassure him.'

[648] Next day the constable of France, my lord Peter the Chamberlain, and my lord Gervase the baker said to the king, 'What happened last night? We've heard talk of a fire.' I did not say a word. And then the king said, 'Unfortunately it seems the seneschal is more reticent than I am, so I will tell you what it was that meant we might all have burned last night.' [649] He told them what happened and said to me, 'Seneschal, I command you that from now on you should not to go to
bed before you have put out all fires on board, apart from the large fire in the ship's hold. And know that I will not go to bed until you have reported back to me.' And I did this for as long as we were at sea; once I had reported back to him the king went to bed.

[650] We had another adventure while at sea. My lord Drag-onet, a great man from Provence, was sleeping one morning on board his ship, which was a full league ahead of ours. He called one of his squires and said to him, 'Go and cover that porthole - the sun's shining in my face.' The squire saw that he would not be able to cover the porthole except by going over the side of the ship. So he climbed out, and while he was covering the porthole, he lost his footing and fell into the water. There was no boat trailing behind this ship, for it was only small, and he was immediately left behind by it. Those of us in the king's ship saw him but thought he was a bundle or a small barrel, because the man who had fallen into the water made no effort to save himself. [651] One of the king's galleys took him aboard and brought him to our ship, where he recounted to us how this had happened. I asked him why he had made no effort to save himself either by swimming or in another way. He replied to me that there had been no need and no point in trying to save himself, because as soon as he had started to fall, he commended himself to Our Lady of Vauvert, and she had held him up by the shoulders from the time he fell until the king's galley picked him up. To honour this miracle I had this scene depicted in my chapel at Joinville, and in the windows at Blécourt.

[652] After we had been at sea for ten weeks we arrived at a port two leagues from the castle of Hyères which belonged to the count of Provence, who later became king of Sicily. The queen and all the king's council agreed that he should land there, since this was his brother's territory. The king replied to us that he would not disembark until he had arrived at Aigues Mortes, which was in his own territory. He held fast to this view all that Wednesday and Thursday, no one could convince him otherwise.

[653] In these Marseilles-built ships there are two rudders, each of which is connected to a tiller so ingeniously that you can turn the ship to right or left in the same time it takes to turn a horse. On the Friday the king was sitting on one of these tillers. He called me and said, 'Seneschal, what do you think of this business?' And I told him, 'My lord, it would serve you right if what happened to my lady of Bourbon were to happen to you. She refused to disembark at this port but went back out to sea in order to go to Aigues Mortes, and remained at sea for seven weeks.' [654] The king then summoned his council and told them what I had said, and asked them what they advised him to do. They all advised him to disembark since it would not be wise, having already come through the perils of the sea, to endanger himself, his wife and his children further. The king agreed with the advice we gave him, which made the queen very happy.

[655] The king left the sea at the castle of Hyères with the queen and his children. During the king's stay at Hyères, while horses were being procured for the journey to France, the abbot of Cluny, who later became the bishop of Olena, gave him two palfreys - one for the king and the other for the queen - that would be worth at least 300 livres today. When he had presented them the abbot said to the king, 'My lord, I have some business that I will come to talk to you about tomorrow.' When the next day came the abbot returned. The king listened to him most attentively and at great length. Once the abbot had gone, I came to the king and said to him, 'I'd like to ask you, if I may, whether you listened to the abbot more graciously because he gave you those two palfreys yesterday?' [656] The king thought for a while and said, 'In truth, I did.' 'My lord,' I said, 'do you know why I asked you this?' 'Why was it?' he asked. 'So that, my lord, I might advise and urge you that once you have returned to France you should forbid all your sworn councillors to receive gifts from people who have business to settle with you. Because you may be certain that if they do receive gifts, your councillors will listen more readily and attentively to those people who have given them things, just as you did to the abbot of Cluny.' The king then summoned his entire council and straightaway told them what I had said to him, and they said that I had given him sound advice.
The king heard of a Franciscan friar called Brother Hugh, who was greatly renowned. Because of this the king sent for this Franciscan in order to meet him and to hear him speak. On the day Brother Hugh came to Hyères we looked out along the road by which he was approaching and saw that a great crowd of people was following him on foot, both men and women. The king had him deliver a sermon. The first part of the sermon concerned men of religion, and he said, 'My lords, I see too many men of religion at the king's court and in his company...', and he added, 'there's me, for a start.' He said that such men of religion were not in a position to achieve salvation (unless Holy Scripture lies to us, which is impossible). 'For Holy Scripture tells us that a monk cannot live outside his cloister without mortal sin, just as a fish cannot live out of water. And if these religious who are with the king say they are cloistered, I say that it is the largest cloister I have ever seen, for it stretches from this side of the sea to the other. If they say that a man can lead a harsh life in order to save his soul in this cloister, I do not believe them. Rather I tell you that in their company I have eaten a great quantity and variety of meats, and drunk fine wines, strong and clear ones. Because of this I am sure that if they had been in their cloister they would not have been as comfortable as they are with the king.'

In his sermon he instructed the king that he should conduct himself in accordance with the wishes of his people. At the end of his sermon he said that he had read the Bible and the books that may be read alongside it, but never — in either the books of the faithful or of unbelievers — had he read of any kingdom or lordship that had been lost or had changed hands from one king or lord to another for any reason other than a lack of justice. 'So the king should take care, now that he is going to France,' he said, 'to offer such justice to his people that he will retain God's love, so that God will not take the kingdom of France from him during his lifetime.'

I told the king that he should not let Brother Hugh leave his company. And he told me that he had already pleaded with him as strongly as he could, but the friar refused to do anything for him. Then the king took me by the hand and said, 'Let's go and ask him once more.' We went to him and I said, 'My lord, do what the king asks of you — stay with him while he remains in Provence.' And he replied to me, greatly irritated, 'Certainly, my lord, I will not. I will go instead to a place where God will love me better than he would if I were in the king's company.' He stayed with us for one day and left the next. Since then I have heard that his body lies in the city of Marseilles, where he performs many beautiful miracles.

On the day of the king's departure from Hyères, he left the castle on foot because the hill was very steep. He went so far on foot that, since his own palfrey had not come, it was necessary for him to get up on to mine. When his own palfrey did arrive he launched an assault of angry words against his squire Ponce. Once he had roundly scolded Ponce I said to him, 'My lord, you should be more patient with squire Ponce, for he has served your grandfather and father as well as you.'

'Seneschal,' he said, 'he has not served us. Rather we have served him by putting up with him in our household despite his bad habits. King Philip, my grandfather, told me that you should reward the members of your household in accordance with the quality of service they give — one more, another less. He also said that no man can be a good governor of lands unless he knows how to withhold just as firmly as he knows how to give. And I tell you these things,' said the king, 'since this world is so grasping that there are few people who consider the salvation of their souls or the honour of their persons if they have the chance to seize other people's property either justly or unjustly.'

The king travelled across the county of Provence as far as a city called Aix-en-Provence. It was said that the body of the Magdalene lay there, and we went into a cave high up in the cliffs where she was believed to have spent seventeen years as a hermit. When the king reached Beaucaire and I had seen him into his own lands and authority, I took my leave of him and made my own way via the lands of my niece the dauphine of the Viennois, of my uncle the count of Chalon and of his son the count of Burgundy.
CHAPTER 14
King Louis's Personal and Governmental Reforms
(1254–67)

[664] After I had spent some time at Joinville and attended to my affairs, I went to join the king, whom I found at Soissons. He was so overjoyed to see me that everyone there was astonished. Among them were Count John of Brittany and his wife, the daughter of King Thibaut, who offered homage to the king for the rights she claimed in Champagne. The king referred her claim and that of King Thibaut II of Navarre, who was also present, to the Paris parlement so that it might hear and do justice to both parties.

[665] The king of Navarre and his council came to the parlement, and the count of Brittany did so too. At the parlement King Thibaut asked whether he might have my lady Isabella, the king's daughter, as his wife. And although the Champenois contingent were talking behind my back about the deep affection for me the king had displayed at Soissons, I did not let this stand in the way of my going to the French king to talk about the proposed marriage. The king said, 'Go and make peace with the count of Brittany and then we will make our marriage.' I told him that he should not reject the marriage because of this dispute, but he replied to me that he would not proceed with it until peace was made, so that it might not be said that in marrying his children he disinherited his barons.

[666] I reported this exchange to Queen Margaret of Navarre and to the king, her son, and their council. Hearing this they hastened to make peace. After the peace was achieved the king of France gave his daughter to King Thibaut and a splendid and solemn wedding took place at Melun. King Thibaut took Isabella from there to Provins, where they were greeted by a multitude of barons and by lavish celebrations.

[667] After the king's return from overseas his conduct was so devout that never again did he wear vair or grey fur or scarlet, nor golden stirrups and spurs. His clothes were made of camelin or dark-blue wool, his blankets and clothes were trimmed with deerskin or lambskin or with fur from the legs of hares. He was so restrained in his eating habits that he never ordered any dish other than what the cooks prepared for him; he ate whatever was put in front of him. He mixed his wine in a glass goblet, adding an appropriate amount of water according to the strength of the wine; he held the goblet in his hand while the wine was being blended behind his table. Every day he fed his poor people and had money given to them after the meal.

[668] When the great men's minstrels came into the hall with their viols at the end of the meal, he waited until the minstrel had finished his performance to hear grace. He then stood up and the priests in front of him said grace for him. When we were in his chamber in private, he would sit at the foot of his bed and whenever the Dominican and Franciscan friars present mentioned a book he might like to have read to him he would say, 'You'll not read me anything, for there's no after-dinner book as good as a quodlibet, that is a discussion in which every man says what he likes.' Whenever great men from abroad dined with him, he was pleasant company for them.

[669] I will tell you about his sound judgement. People sometimes asserted that there was no one in his council as wise as he was himself. This was apparent because when someone discussed a matter with him, he did not simply say, 'I will take advice on this.' Rather, when he saw the right way to proceed quite clearly and straightforwardly, he responded immediately, completely independently of his council. I heard he made such a response to a request made of him by all the bishops in the kingdom of France, which was as follows. [670] Bishop Guy of Auxerre, speaking on behalf of all the bishops, said to him, 'My lord, these archbishops and bishops here present have charged me to inform you that the Christian community is crumbling
to pieces in your hands and will disintegrate further if you do
not attend to the matter, since no one today fears excomмуnic-
ation. We recommend, my lord, that you command your bailiffs
and sergeants to force those who have been under sentence of
excommunication for a year and a day to give satisfaction to
the Church.' The king replied to them, without taking any
advice, that he would willingly order his bailiff and sergeants
to compel excommunicates as the bishop requested, but that he
should be given evidence whether the sentence was justified or
not. [671] The bishops deliberated among themselves and
replied to the king that they would not allow him to pass
judgement in matters pertaining to religious authority. And in
response the king told them that in matters pertaining to him
he would never give them such authority, and nor would he
order his officials to force excommunicates to have themselves
absolved, whether their sentence was just or unjust, 'For if I
were to do so I would act against God and against justice. I will
give you an example. The bishops of Brittany kept the count of
Brittany excommunicate for a full seven years before his sen-
tence was overturned by the papal court. If I had compelled
him to reconcile himself after the first year, I would have done
so wrongly.'

[672] It so happened that after our return from overseas the
monks of Saint-Urbain elected two abbots. Bishop Peter of
Châlons - may God absolve him - rejected them both and
blessed as abbot my lord John of Mymeri, giving him the
crozier. I did not wish to accept him as abbot since he had
wronged Abbot Geoffrey, who had appealed against John and
taken his case to Rome. I kept the abbey under my own control
until the said Geoffrey managed to obtain the crozier, thus
depriving the man to whom the bishop had given it. While
this dispute continued the bishop excommunicated me, which
prompted very angry exchanges at a Paris parlement between
me and Bishop Peter of Châlons, and between Countess Marg-
garet of Flanders and the archbishop of Rheims, whom she
accused of lying. [673] At the next parlement all the prelates
begged the king to come and speak with them in private. When
he returned from this meeting he came to those of us in the
room where pleas were heard. He laughed as he told us of the
heated discussion he had had with the bishops. The archbishop
of Rheims had begun by saying to the king, 'My lord, what
are you going to do about the guardianship of the abbey of
Saint-Rémy at Rheims, of which you deprived me? For I swear
by the relics here present I would not for all the kingdom of
France wish to be burdened by such a sin as you bear.' 'By
those same relics here present,' said the king, 'I swear that your
personal greed means you would do so for Compiègne alone,
so one of us is forsworn.' [674] The bishop of Chartres asked
me,' said the king, 'to return those possessions of his I was
holding. And I told him that I would not do so until such time
as I had been paid what was due to me, and said that although
he had performed homage to me as my vassal, he did not
conduct himself well and loyally towards me when he sought
to deprive me of what was mine by right.' [675] The bishop of
Châlons then said, 'My lord, what are you going to do for me
about the lord of Joinville, who is witholding the abbey of
Saint-Urbain from this poor monk?''' 'My lord bishop,' said
the king, 'you have agreed among yourselves that no excom-
municate should be allowed to give evidence in a secular court,
and I have seen letters sealed with thirty-two seals that say that
you have been excommunicated. Therefore, I will not hear you
until you have been absolved.' I am telling you these things so
that you might see clearly how he dealt with matters that
concerned him on his own, through his sound judgement.

[676] After I had settled matters in his favour, Abbot Geoff-
rey of Saint-Urbain answered the goodwill I had shown him
with bad, and appealed against me. He gave our saintly king to
understand that the abbey was in the king's guardianship. I
asked the king to find out the truth of the matter, whether the
guardianship was his or mine. 'My lord,' said the abbot, 'you
should do no such thing, please God, but rather conduct a
formal trial involving the abbey and the lord of Joinville, for
we would prefer our abbey to be under your protection than
under the protection of the person who owns its lands.' Then
the king said to me, 'Is he right that the guardianship of the
abbey is mine?' 'Certainly not, my lord,' I said, 'it is mine.'
[677] Then the king said, ‘It may well be that you are lord of the abbey’s lands, but that does not mean you have the right to the guardianship of the abbey. But, may it please you, lord abbot, according to what you have said and what the seneschal has said, the guardianship must pertain either to him or to me. I would not, despite what you have said, do anything other than find out the truth of the matter for myself. For I would be doing a great wrong to my own vassal if I were to bring him before the court, presenting his claim for formal judgement, when he has offered to tell me the truth of the matter straightforwardly.’ The king was informed as to the truth and, the truth being known, he delivered the guardianship of the abbey to me and provided me with documents to this effect.

[678] As a result of the saintly king’s negotiations the king of England and his wife and children came to France to conclude a peace between the two kingdoms.7 The king’s councillors were very much opposed to this peace agreement, and they said to him, ‘Sir, we are very surprised that you want to give the king of England such a large part of the lands taken from him by yourself and your ancestors through your conquests and his forfeit. It seems to us that if you think you hold this land wrongfully, you are not being fair to the king of England because you are not returning to him all the conquests made by yourself and your ancestors, while if you think you hold it rightfully, it seems to us that you are simply abandoning whatever land you return to him.’ 679 The saintly king responded in this way: ‘My lords, I am sure that the king of England’s ancestors were justly deprived of the territories I hold; the lands I am handing over to him are not being given because I have any obligation to him or to his heirs, but in order to foster love between his children and mine, who are first cousins. And it seems to me that I am putting the land I give to good use, since before this he was not my vassal, but now he will do homage to me.’

[680] He worked harder than any other man in the world to build peace among his subjects, and especially among great men who held neighbouring lands and among the kingdom’s princes, as he did between the count of Chalon (the lord of Joinville’s uncle) and his son the count of Burgundy, who were warring fiercely when we returned from overseas. To achieve peace between father and son he sent some of his councillors to Burgundy at his own expense, and through his efforts the two generations made peace.

[681] Later there was a major conflict between King Thibaut II of Champagne on one side and Count John of Chalon and his son, the count of Burgundy, on the other over the abbey of Luxeuil. To bring an end to this war my lord the king sent my lord Gervase of Escrènes, who was master cook of France at that time, and through his negotiations they came to peace.

[682] After this war had been brought to an end by the king, another great conflict arose between Count Thibaut of Bar and Count Henry of Luxembourg, who had married the count of Bar’s sister. It so happened when they were doing battle with each other outside Prény that Count Thibaut of Bar captured Count Henry of Luxembourg along with the castle of Ligny, which belonged to the count of Luxembourg by right of his wife. To bring the war to a peaceful end the king sent, at his own expense, my lord Peter the Chamberlain, the man whom he trusted above all others in the world. The king’s efforts were enough to bring the two sides to peace.

[683] As for the foreigners whom the king brought to peace, certain of his councillors said that he did wrong not to leave them to their wars; if he had allowed them to impoverish themselves they would not have been able to attack him as easily as they would if they were plentifully rich. The king answered these councillors and said they were wrong, ‘For if neighbouring princes see me leaving them to their wars, they might discuss this together and say, “The king, in his malice, allows us to keep fighting.”’ If their hatred for me on this account should lead them to attack me, I might very well lose, not to mention the fact that I would have won the hatred of God, who says, “Blessed are the peacemakers.”’

[684] As a result the Burgundians and Lorrainers, whom the king had reconciled, loved him so much and were so obedient to him that I saw them come to the royal court in Rheims, Paris and Orléans seeking judgement from him on disputes that had arisen between them.
[685] The king so loved God and his sweet Mother that he severely punished all those he could ascertain had spoken basely of them or had sworn blasphemous oaths. I saw that he had a goldsmith put in the stocks at Caesarea. He was wearing his breeches and chemise and had the guts and innards of a pig piled round his neck — there was such a quantity that it came right up to his nose. I heard it said that after my return from overseas he had the nose and lips of one Parisian bourgeois branded, although I did not see this myself. And the saintly king said that he would willingly be branded with a hot iron if it would mean his kingdom was rid of all foul oaths.

[686] I spent at least twenty-two years as a member of his entourage and never heard him swear by God, or by his Mother or his saints. When he wanted to emphasize a point he said, 'Truly it was so', or 'Truly it is so.' [687] I never heard him say the name of the Devil, unless it appeared in a book where there was reason to use it, or unless it was mentioned in the saint’s life recounted in the book. And it is a great shame to the kingdom of France and to the king that he tolerate talk of the Devil, to the extent that people can barely speak at all without saying, 'In the name of the Devil!' And it is a great abuse of speech when one sends to the Devil a man or woman who has been destined for God since the time of their baptism. In the house at Joinville anyone who say these things earns himself a slap on the face or the hand — such bad language has nearly been stamped out there.

[688] The king asked me whether I washed the feet of the poor on Maundy Thursday, and I replied I did not, since it did not strike me as a seemly thing to do. He told me that I should not despise doing this, for God had done so, 'And you would be particularly reluctant to do what king of England does; he washes and kisses the feet of lepers.'

[689] Before he went to bed he had his children come before him and recounted to them the deeds of good kings and emperors and told them that they should follow the good example of these men. He also told them of the wicked deeds of powerful men who through their debauchery, plunder and greed had lost their kingdoms. 'I remind you of these things,' he said, 'so that you may take care to avoid them and so that God is not angered by you.' He had them learn the hours of Our Lady and made them recite the hours of each day in front of him to accustom them to listening to Divine Office when they would be governors of their own lands.

[690] The king was so generous in his charity that wherever he went in his kingdom, he made gifts to impoverished churches, to leper-houses, to almshouses, to hospitals and to poor gentlemen and gentlewomen. Every day he gave food to a great number of the poor, not to mention those who ate in his own hall; on many occasions I saw him cut their bread and pour their drink himself.

[691] Numerous abbeys were built in his time: Royaumont, the abbey of Saint-Antoine near Paris, the abbey of Lys and the abbey of Maubuisson, as well as several other convents of Dominicans and Franciscans. He built the almshouses at Fontoise and at Vernon, the hospital for the blind at Paris and the convent for Franciscan nuns at Saint-Cloud that his sister, Lady Isabella, founded with his permission.

[692] Whenever a benefice of the Holy Church reverted to the Crown, the king would seek advice from good men of religion and from others before granting it. Once he had taken advice he granted these benefices of the Holy Church in good faith, fairly and according to God's will. He refused to give any benefice to a cleric if he would not give up any other Church benefices he held. In every town in his kingdom he had not visited before he went to the convents of Dominicans and Franciscans, if there were any, to ask for their prayers.

[693] How the king reformed his bailifs, his prévôts and his mayors, how he put new ordinances in place, and how Stephen Boileau was prévôt of Paris. After King Louis returned to France from overseas he conducted himself with great devotion towards Our Lord and with great justice towards his subjects. He deliberated and concluded that it would be a very fine and good thing to reform the kingdom of France. He began by setting down a general ordinance for all his subjects throughout the kingdom of France, which was as follows:
We, Louis, by God’s grace king of France, ordain that all our baillis, viscounts, prévôts, mayors and all others, in whatever matter it may concern and in whatever office they may hold, must swear that, for as long as they hold an office or the status of bailli, they will deal fairly with all people without exception – the poor as well as the rich, strangers as well as friends – and that they will maintain the usages and customs that are good and proven. And if it should happen that these baillis or viscounts or others (including sergeants and foresters) should be convicted of acting in contravention of their oath, it is our will that they be punished in their possessions, and in their persons if the crime warrants it. The baillis will be punished by ourselves, and the others by the baillis.

Moreover, the other prévôts, baillis and sergeants will swear to maintain faithfully our revenue and our rights, not suffering our rights to be suppressed, usurped or diminished. In addition to this they will swear not to take or receive, either in person or through others, any gold or silver, any indirect benefit or anything else unless it be fruit, bread or wine or another gift worth up to ten sous, which sum must not be exceeded. With this they will swear not to take, or cause to be taken, any gift of whatever kind made to their wives or children, or to their brothers and sisters, or to any person however close to them. And as soon as they discover that such gifts have been received, they will return them as soon as possible. Also, they will swear not to receive any gift of whatever kind from a person under their jurisdiction nor from any other person who may have reason to bring a case or give evidence before them.

Moreover, they will swear not to give or send any gift to any member of our council, nor to their wives, children or friends, nor to those who will receive their accounts on our behalf, nor to any enquêteur sent by us to their bailiages or prévôté to make enquiry about them. With this they will swear to have no part in any sale of our revenues, rights or coinage, or anything else pertaining to us.

And they will swear and promise that if they know of any official, sergeant or prévôt under them who is disloyal, rapacious, usurious or consumed by any other vice for which they should be removed from our service, they will not protect them on account of any gift or promise or personal affection or anything else. Rather they will in good faith judge and punish them.

Moreover, our prévôts, viscounts, mayors, foresters and other sergeants, mounted or on foot, will swear not to give any gift to their superiors, or to their wives or to children in their ward.

And because we desire that these oaths be made on a sound basis, we require them to be taken in open session, in front of everyone, clerics and laymen, knights and sergeants, notwithstanding that they may already have taken the oath in our presence. In this way they should fear the sin of abandoning their oaths not only out of fear of God and ourselves, but because of the fear of public shame.

We will and ordain that all our prévôts and baillis should abstain from blasphemous swearing against God and Our Lady and any of the saints, and they should avoid games of dice and taverns. We desire the manufacture of dice to be banned throughout our kingdom, and for prostitutes to be put out of their houses; whoever rents a house to a prostitute will surrender one year’s rent for the house to the prévôt or bailli.

Further, we expressly forbid our baillis to buy, in person or through an agent, property or land within their own bailiages or in another, without our permission for as long as they are in our service. And if such purchases are made, it is our will that the property be forfeited and should remain in our hands.

We forbid our baillis for as long as they are in our service to marry their sons or daughters or other people in their ward to any person from their bailiages without our specific consent, nor may they place them in a religious house in their bailiages or obtain for them a benefice of the Holy Church or any property. Further, they may not demand provisions or lodgings at any religious house or in its vicinity at the expense of the community of religious. As we have stated, it is not our
will that these prohibitions on marriage and the acquisition of property should extend to prévôts or mayors or to others of lesser office.

[705] We order that neither baillis nor prévôts nor others should employ too great a number of sergeants or beadle or that the people might not be burdened by them, and it is our will that the beadle be nominated in open court, otherwise their office will not be recognized. It is our will that when our officers are sent to a distant location or to any foreign country, they should not be given credence without letters from their superiors.

[706] We order that no bailli or prévôt in our service should oppress good people with sentences that exceed what is just, and neither should any of our subjects be imprisoned for an unpaid debt, unless it is owed to us.

[707] We ordain that no bailli of ours should impose a fine on any of our subjects for debts owed by them or for any offence, unless it is determined in open court where it may be considered and assessed on the advice of trustworthy men, even if payment has already been made to the bailli. [708] If it should happen that the accused does not wish to wait for the court to offer judgement on his fine, he may offer a certain sum of deniers as determined by usual practice. We desire that the court accept that sum if it is reasonable and fitting, and if it is not it is our will that the fine be determined as laid out above, the accused submitting himself to the will of the court. We forbid the bailli or the mayor or the prévôt to use threats, menaces or any wiles to compel our subjects to pay a fine, whether openly or clandestinely, or to make accusations against them without reasonable cause.

[709] We ordain that those who hold prévôts, viscounts or other offices may not sell them to anyone without our permission. And if a group of people should purchase one of the aforementioned offices, we desire that one of these purchasers should perform its duties on behalf of all the others and enjoy the customary privileges relating to long-distance travel, taxes and other charges. [710] We forbid them to sell the said offices to brothers, nephews or cousins after having purchased them from us. Nor may they use their status to recall debts owed to them, unless they be debts pertaining to their office; their personal debts should be called in under the authority of the bailli, just as if they were not in our service.

[711] We forbid baillis and prévôts to inconvenience our subjects involved in cases brought before them by moving from place to place. Rather they should hear these cases in the customary locations, so that our subjects do not abandon pursuit of their rights because of the effort or expense involved.

[712] Moreover, we order that they should not deprive any man of his possessions without full consideration of the cause or without our express command, and nor may they burden our people with new exactions in the form of new taxes or fees. Nor may they summon men to military service in order to raise money from them, for we desire that no one who owes military service should be summoned to the army without good cause, while those who wish to fulfill their military service in person should not be compelled to redeem the service they owe with a money payment.

[713] Further, we forbid baillis and prévôts to prevent grain or wine or other produce being taken out of our kingdom without good reason. When it is fitting that such a prohibition be made, we desire that it be made in committee with the advice of predominnes, free from suspicion of fraud or deceit.

[714] Likewise it is our will that all former baillis, viscounts, prévôts and mayors shall, once they have left their offices, stay in the region where they held that office for forty days, either in person or by proxy, in order to respond to the new baillis concerning their misconduct towards anyone who might wish to file a complaint against them.

[719] In all these measures we have ordained for the benefit of our subjects and of our kingdom, we reserve to our majesty the power to clarify, amend, add and retract as seems fit to us. Through this ordinance the condition of the kingdom of France was greatly improved, as many wise and aged people attest.

[715] At that time the office of prévôt of Paris used to be sold to the bourgeois of the city, or to one among them. And so it
was that any of these men, having purchased the office, would tolerate the scandalous behaviour of his children and nephews; these youths could rely on the protection of their parents and friends who held the prévôt. The humbler people were sorely oppressed as a result and could not assert their rights against the rich men because of the lavish presents and gifts the wealthy gave to the prévôt. [716] During that time anyone who told the truth to the prévôt, or who wanted to uphold an oath so as not to be forsworn in the matter of a debt or anything else he was obliged to answer for, was fined and punished by the prévôt. Because of the great injustices and the great robberies committed by the prévôts, the humbler people did not dare stay in the king’s lands; instead they went to live in other prévôts and in other lordships. The king’s districts were so empty that when the prévôt held his court no more than ten or twelve people came.

[717] Besides, there were so many criminals and thieves in Paris and beyond that the whole country was full of them. The king, who was very mindful of how the humbler people were being looked after, saw the whole truth. And so he refused to allow the position of prévôt of Paris to be sold any more. He gave a generous and substantial salary to those who were to hold the post thereafter and abolished all the bad customs by which the people could be burdened. He made enquiries throughout the region and the kingdom as to where he might find a man who would do good and firm justice, and who would not spare the rich man any more than the poor.

[718] He was told about Stephen Boileau,10 who upheld and protected the office of prévôt so effectively that no criminal, thief or murderer dared remain in Paris; if he did he would be swiftly hanged or executed and no parent or relative or gold or silver could save him. The king’s territories began to improve, and people came to them because of the sound justice done there. There was such population growth and regeneration that the king’s revenues from land sales, legal proceedings, trade and other sources doubled in value compared with earlier times.

[720] From his childhood the king had compassion for the poor and needy. It was the custom that wherever the king went...
served Our Lord there a sufficient income. [725] Soon afterwards he had another house built outside Paris, on the road to Saint-Denis; it was called the House of the Daughters of God. He placed a great many women in that house who through poverty had given themselves up to sins of lust, and provided them with an income of 400 livres to support themselves. He also built houses for béguines in several places in his kingdom and gave them revenues to maintain themselves, ordering that women who wanted to make a commitment to live chastely should be received into them.

[726] Some of those close to him grumbled that he gave so much charity that the cost was excessive. And he said to them, 'I prefer it that my extravagant expenditure be incurred through giving charity for the love of God than through worldly pride or vainglory.' And the king’s great expenditure on charity never meant that he failed to spend generously within his own household from day to day. The king gave freely and abundantly at parlements and at assemblies of barons and knights, and the hospitality he extended at his court was very courteous and generous, more so than had been the case at the courts of his ancestors for many years before.

[727] The king loved all men and women who gave themselves to the service of God and wore the religious habit; none of them ever came to him without receiving something to support their way of life. He provided for the Carmelite friars and bought a property by the Seine near Charenton, where he had a house built for them. He bought them vestments, chalices, and those things necessary to perform the service of Our Lord. Afterwards he provided for the Augustinian friars and bought a farmstead for them from a Parisian bourgeois along with all the possessions associated with it, and had a church built for them outside the Montmartre gate. [728] He provided for the Friars of the Sacks, giving them a site on the Seine near to Saint-Germain-des-Prés where they installed themselves, although they did not stay there very long since the order was soon suppressed. After the Friars of the Sacks had been housed another sort of friars appeared, called the Order of the White Mantles, and they asked the king to help them establish them-

selves at Paris. [13] In order to accommodate them the king bought them a house and some old buildings in its vicinity near the old Temple gate at Paris, quite close to the weavers’ district. This order was suppressed at the Council of Lyons held by Gregory X. [729] Later another sort of friars came who called themselves the Friars of the Holy Cross and wore crosses on their chests. They asked the king for his help and he gave it willingly, housing them in a street called the Temple Crossroads, which is called Holy Cross Street today. In this way the good king installed men of religion all round the city of Paris.
CHAPTER 15

King Louis's Second Crusade, Death and Canonization
(1267–1309)

[730] One Lent, following the events just described, it so happened that the king summoned all his barons to Paris. I excused myself to him on account of a quartan fever I was suffering at the time, and asked that he might do without me. He let me know that he most certainly did want me to come, since he had good physicians at Paris who knew well how to cure a quartan fever. [731] And so I went to Paris. When I arrived there, late on the eve of the feast of Our Lady observed in March, I could find no one – neither the queen nor anyone else – who was able to tell me why the king had summoned me. It so happened – as God willed it – that I fell asleep during matins. As I slept I thought I saw the king kneeling in front of an altar, and I thought I saw several prelates in their vestments dressing him in a chasuble made of red Rheims serge. [732] After having this vision I called my lord William, my priest, who was very learned, and related what I had seen to him. And he said to me, ‘My lord, you will see the king take the cross tomorrow.’ I asked him why he thought so, and he told me that it was on account of the dream I had experienced. ‘For the chasuble of red serge signified the cross, which was reddened with the blood God poured out on it from his side and from his hands and feet, and the chasuble being made of Rheims serge signified that this crusade will achieve little, as you will also see if God grants you a long enough life.’

[733] When I had heard the Mass at the church of the Magdalen in Paris, I went to the king’s chapel and found him there. He had gone up on to the reliquary platform and was having the relic of the True Cross fetched down. As the king came down again, two knights from his council began to talk to one another. One of them said: ‘Never believe me again if the king doesn’t take the cross now.’ And the other replied that, ‘If the king does take the cross, this will be one of the saddest days there has ever been in France. For if we don’t take the cross we’ll lose the king, and if we do take the cross we’ll lose God, since we would not be taking the cross for him, but out of fear of the king.’

[734] As it happened, the king took the cross the following day along with his three sons, and, in accordance with my priest’s prediction, it turned out that this crusade achieved little. I came under heavy pressure from the king of France and the king of Navarre to take the cross myself. [735] I replied to them that while I had been overseas in the service of God and the king, and in the aftermath of my return, the officials of the kings of France and Navarre had oppressed and impoverished my people to such an extent that there would never be a time when they and I would be in a worse position. I told them that if I wanted to act in accordance with God’s will I would stay here in order to help and protect my people. For if I were to expose my life to the dangers of the pilgrimage of the cross when I could quite clearly see that this would be to the harm and detriment of my people, I would incur the anger of God, who offered up his life in order to save his people.

[736] I deemed all those who advised the king to go to have committed a mortal sin, for during the time he was in France the whole kingdom was at peace both within itself and with its neighbours, and since his departure the condition of the kingdom has done nothing but decline. [737] Those who advised the king to go committed a great sin because of his very weak physical condition; he could not bear to travel either in a carriage or on horseback. His frailty was such that he allowed me to carry him in my arms from the court of Auxerre’s residence, where I took my leave of him, to the house of the Franciscans. But even in this feeble state, if he had stayed in France he might have lived a while longer and done much good.

[738] I do not want to say or relate anything concerning his expedition to Tunis, since I was not there – thank God – and I
do not want to say or include in my book anything of which I am not certain. My subject is our saintly king, nothing else, and therefore, I will simply say that after his arrival at Tunis, before the castle at Carthage, he was seized by a diarrhoea sickness while his oldest son, Philip, fell ill with a quartan fever and the same diarrhoea that afflicted the king. The king took to his bed, feeling sure that he would soon pass from this world to the other. [739] He called for my lord Philip, his son, and commanded him to uphold, just as if he were making out his will, all the teachings he was leaving him. These teachings are written out here in French and were, so it is said, written down by the king’s own saintly hand.

[740] ‘Dear son, the first thing I admonish you is to apply your heart to the love of God, for without doing so no man can be saved. Keep yourself from doing anything displeasing to God, by which I mean any mortal sin; you should rather endure all manner of torments than commit a mortal sin.

[741] ‘If God sends you hardship, you should accept it patiently, give thanks to Our Lord for it and know that you have deserved it and that he will direct events for your own good. If he gives you good fortune, give humble thanks to him for it, so that a blessing that should make you more worthy does not lead you into pride or any other fault by which you will be diminished. For we should not make war on God with his own gifts.

[742] ‘Make confession often, and choose as your confessor a preudomme who knows how to instruct you as to what you should do and what you should beware of. You should conduct yourself in such a way that your confessor and your friends are not afraid to make you aware of your faults. Listen devotedly to the services of the Holy Church without mocking or making light of them. Pray with both your heart and tongue, especially when the consecration is performed during the Mass. Your heart should be tender and compassionate towards the poor, the wretched and the suffering; comfort and help them as much as you can.

[743] ‘Uphold the good customs of your kingdom and abolish the bad. Do not be covetous of your people; do not burden your conscience by imposing taxes or charges unless you have an urgent need to do so.

[744] ‘If anything weighs heavy on your heart, immediately tell your confessor or another preudomme who is not full of frivolous talk, and then you will be able to cope with it more easily.

[745] ‘Make sure that you have faithful preudommes in your company who are not full of greed, both laymen and men of religion, and talk to them often. Shun and remove yourself from the company of wicked men. Listen willingly to the word of God, keep it in your heart, and secure for yourself prayers and indulgences. Love that which is beneficial to you and your virtue, and loathe all wickedness wherever it may be.

[746] ‘Let no one be so bold as to say anything in your presence which might attract or incite men to sin, or to defame and slander others behind their backs. Nor should you permit anything denigrating to God or his saints to be said in your presence. Give frequent thanks to God for all the blessings he has given you, so that you might be worthy of receiving more.

[747] ‘To uphold justice and be fair to your subjects, you should be trustworthy and firm, not turning to right or left; follow the straight path and support the side of the poor until such time as the truth is revealed. And if anyone brings a case against you, do not draw any conclusion until you know the truth of the matter; in this way your councillors will make their judgement more assuredly in accordance with the truth, whether for you or against you.

[748] ‘If you are in possession of anything that belongs to someone else, whether by your own doing or that of your ancestors, you should return it immediately if the fault is certain. And if the situation is unclear, have it investigated speedily and diligently by men of sound judgement.

[749] ‘You should take care to ensure that your people and your subjects live under you in peace and in accordance with the law. Likewise you should keep the good towns and communes of your kingdom in the condition and freedom in which your ancestors maintained them. If there is anything that requires reform, do what is needed and set matters straight,
keeping these communities in your favour and love. For the strength and wealth of these large towns will give rise to a fear of wronging you among foreigners and your own people, especially your peers and barons.

[750] Honour and love all representatives of the Holy Church, and make sure that no one may diminish or deprive them of the gifts and alms offered to them by your ancestors. They say that King Philip, my grandfather, was once told by one of his councillors that the men and women of the Holy Church were doing him great harm by usurping his rights and encroaching on his justice, and that it was a great wonder that he allowed this to go on. The good king replied that he knew what the councillor had said to be true but, in view of the blessings and honours granted to him by God, he would rather let some of his rights be lost than engage in a dispute with the men and women of the Holy Church.

[751] Honour and respect your father and mother and follow their commands. Give benefices of the Holy Church to good men of pure life, and do so with advice from preudommes and virtuous people.

[752] Beware of embarking on a war against a Christian without long deliberation. If it is necessary to do so, then protect the Holy Church and those who have done no wrong. If wars or disputes arise among your subjects, bring them to peace as quickly as possible.

[753] Take special care to have good prêvôts and good bailis, and enquire often of them and of those in your household concerning their conduct and whether they are guilty of excessive greed, dishonesty or trickery. Work to rid your lands of all base sins; in particular you should combat the swearing of blasphemous oaths and heresy with all your power. Make sure that your household expenditure is reasonable and measured.

[754] And finally, most sweet son, have Masses sung and prayers said for my soul throughout your kingdom, and dedicate a full and special share of all your good deeds to me. My sweet, dear son, I offer you all the blessings a kind father can give to his son. May the blessed Trinity and all the saints keep you and defend you from all ills, and may God grant you grace always to do his will, so that he may be honoured by you and so that you and we may be together with him after this mortal life and praise him without end. Amen.

[755] When the good king had given his instructions to his son my lord Philip, his sickness began to worsen grievously. He asked for the sacraments of the Holy Church and was seen to receive them in sound mind and with the proper understanding, for when he was anointed and the seven psalms were said, he spoke the verses in response. [756] I have heard my lord the count of Alençon, the king's son, recall that when he was approaching death he called on the saints to help and comfort him. He called on my lord Saint James in particular as he said his prayer which begins 'Esto, Domine', 'O God be the sanctifier and protector of your people.' He then called on my lord Saint Denis of France to aid him when he said his prayer which has this meaning: 'Lord God, grant that we may despise the riches of this world so that we may fear no adversity.' [757] And I heard from my lord of Alençon — may God absolve him — that his father then called out to my lady Saint Genevieve. After this the king had himself laid in a bed covered with ashes and placed his hands on his chest; as he looked towards Heaven he returned his spirit to our creator, at the same hour at which the Son of God died on the cross for the salvation of the world.

[758] It is a pious and fitting thing to weep for the passing of this saintly prince, who maintained his kingdom in so saintly and honest a manner and who gave such generous alms and instituted so many fine ordinances there. Just as the scribe who has made a book illuminates it with gold and azure, this king illuminated his kingdom with the beautiful abbeys he built there, and the great number of hospitals and houses of Dominicans and Franciscans and other religious that have already been mentioned.

[759] Good King Louis passed from this world on the day following the feast of Saint Bartholomew the apostle 4 in the year of Our Lord's incarnation, the year of grace 1270. His bones were kept in a casket and brought back for burial at Saint-Denis in France; he was buried there where he had chosen
to have his tomb and where God has since, through his merits, performed many fine miracles for him.

[760] Afterwards, through the efforts of the king of France and at the command of the pope, the archbishop of Rouen and Brother John of Samois (who later became a bishop) came to Saint-Denis in France and stayed there for a long while in order to enquire into the life, works and miracles of the holy king. I was summoned to go to them, and they kept me for two days. After having heard testimony from me and from others, their findings were taken to the papal court at Rome. The pope and the cardinals examined this evidence carefully, and on the basis of what they saw, they did the king justice and placed him among the number of the confessors. [761] This was a cause, as it should still be, of great joy throughout the kingdom of France and great honour to all those of his heirs who wish to emulate him in conducting themselves virtuously, as well as to those of his lineage who wish to follow him in their good works. It should bring great shame to those of his heirs who seek to do wrong, for fingers will be pointed at them and they will be told that the saintly king from whom they issue would have spurned such wicked behaviour.

[762] After this good news arrived from Rome the king appointed the day following the feast of Saint Bartholomew for the translation of the saintly body. When the saintly remains had been exhumed, they were carried out to the platform that had been prepared for them. The then archbishop of Rheims — may God absolve him — and my nephew my lord Henry of Villars, who was archbishop of Lyons at that time, were at the head of the party that bore them, with several other archbishops and bishops whose names I do not know behind them.

[763] Brother John of Samois delivered the sermon there, and among the other great deeds performed by our saintly king he mentioned one that I had given sworn testimony of, and which I had seen for myself. He said, [764] ‘So that you might understand that he was the most trustworthy man of his age, I want to tell you that he was so honest that in his dealings with the Saracens he wished to be bound by an agreement he had made with them on a purely verbal basis. If he had not upheld

if he would have profited by 10,000 livres and more.’ Brother John then recounted all the details as they are written down above. And when he had reported what had happened he said, ‘Don’t think I am misleading you, for I can see the man here who gave evidence of this to me under oath.’

[765] Once the sermon had ended, the king and his brothers, with help from other members of their family, carried into the church the saintly body to which they should offer due reverence, for a great honour has been done to them and resides only in them, as I said to you before. Let us pray that the saintly king might plead with God to give us that which we need for the good of our bodies and souls. Amen.

[766] In what follows I would like to describe certain things concerning our saintly king that I saw in my sleep and which will be to his honour. In my dream I had the impression that I saw him outside my chapel at Joinville; he was, so it seemed to me, wonderfully happy and at ease in his heart. I too was very glad to see him in my castle, and I said to him, ‘My lord, when you leave this place I will put you up at one of my houses in my town called Chevillon.’ Laughing, he replied to me, ‘My lord of Joinville, by the faith I owe you, I do not wish to leave here so soon.’

[767] When I woke up I reflected on this, and it struck me that it would be pleasing to God and to the saintly king if I were to offer him a resting place in my chapel. And I did just that, for I established an altar dedicated to God and to him, and endowed it with an income in perpetuity to enable Masses to be sung there in his honour forever. I have brought these things to the attention of my lord King Louis, who has inherited his name, since it appears to me that he would do God’s will and our saintly King Louis’s, if he would seek out relics of the true body of that saint and send them to the said chapel of Saint Lawrence at Joinville, so that those who visit his altar might increase their devotion to him.

[768] I hereby inform everyone that I have set down here a great number of the deeds of our saintly king that I saw and heard myself, as well as a good number of his deeds that I found in a book in the French language and which I have had written
down in this work. I am bringing these things to your attention so that those who hear this book might believe firmly what it says about those things I did truly see and hear myself. I cannot state whether the other things written down here are true since I neither saw nor heard them. [769] This was written in the year of grace 1309, in the month of October.

Appendix I

TWO ‘CRUSADE SONGS’

The lyrics to these two Old French songs have been chosen primarily because they were composed in the context of the crusade campaigns narrated by Geoffrey of Villehardouin and John of Joinville. Their lyricists may serve as representatives of the literary milieu in which these crusader—authors existed, and Joinville might have written the second song himself.

Both were included in a collection of twenty-nine published in 1909 by Joseph Bédier and Pierre Aubry under the title Les Chansons de Croisade.1 Although the term ‘crusade song’ has proved a convenient one for historians and literary scholars interested in the relationship between the crusades and contemporary literature, it is not a label that would have been recognized by people in the Middle Ages as marking out a distinct genre. Rather, crusading themes appeared in songs of a range of different types: exhortation or propaganda, celebrating or lamenting specific crusading events, and love. A further reason for including these songs is that they demonstrate the contrasting contexts in which crusading themes were explored by thirteenth-century lyricists; the first is a love song, the second a complaint about particular crusading circumstances.

The English translations are my own.

‘S’onques nus hom pour dure departie’

The lyrics were most probably written by Hugh V of Bérzé, a knightly poet from Burgundy (in the east of the French-speaking lands) who took part in the Fourth Crusade.2 Hugh’s cross-taking, in which he was joined by his father, was reported by Villehardouin (Conquest, § 45). Born between 1165 and 1170, Hugh of Bérzé composed the