

# The Conquest of Constantinople

*Translated from the old French of*  
**Robert of Clari**

By  
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¶ Here begins the prologue of Constantinople, how it was taken; afterwards you shall hear why they went there.<sup>1</sup>



HERE begins the history of those who conquered Constantinople, and afterwards we shall tell you who they were and for what reason they went there. It happened, in that time when Pope Innocent was apostolic<sup>2</sup> of Rome and Philip was king of France and there was another Philip who was emperor of Germany and the year of the incarnation was one thousand two hundred and three or four,<sup>3</sup> that there was a priest, Master Fulk<sup>4</sup> was his name, who was of Neuilly, a parish which is in the bishopric of Paris. This priest was a right worthy man and a right good clerk, and he went through the land preaching the cross, and many people followed him because he was so worthy a man that God wrought great miracles for him. And this priest won much wealth to be carried to the Holy Land oversea. In that time Count Thibaut of Champagne was given the cross, and Baldwin, count of Flanders, and Henry his brother, and Louis, count of Blois, and Hugh, count of St. Pol, and Simon, count of Montfort, and Guy his brother. Next we shall name you the

<sup>1</sup> Each of the five works included in the manuscript has an introductory sentence written in red ink. These were apparently invented by the copyist to serve as titles and were not part of the manuscripts he was copying. In this case he has merely paraphrased the opening sentence of Robert's chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> *apostoiles*, the current synonym for pope in Old French (from the Latin *apostolicus*); so used in Villehardouin, in the Old French history of the kingdom of Jerusalem, and in the Old French translation of William of Tyre.

<sup>3</sup> Robert apparently had no notion of calendar years—it was in the summer of 1202 that he himself set out for Venice. Fulk had been preaching repentance for some years before receiving the papal authorization to preach the cross, at the hands of Cardinal Peter Capuano in November, 1198.

<sup>4</sup> *Foukes*. For Fulk of Neuilly, see Gutsch, "A Twelfth Century Preacher—Fulk of Neuilly," in *Crusades and Other Essays*, with references to the sources. Villehardouin, Gunther of Pairis, and the *Devastatio* also mention his preaching as the beginning of the crusade.

bishops who were there. There was the bishop Nivelon of Soissons, who was a very worthy man and valiant in every duty and in every need, and the bishop Warnier of Troyes and the bishop of Halberstadt<sup>5</sup> in Germany, and Master John of Noyon, who was elected to be the bishop of Acre. There was also the abbot of Loos in Flanders, which was one of the houses of the order of Cîteaux—this abbot was a right wise and a right worthy man—and other abbots and clerks so many that we cannot name you them all. And the barons who were there, we cannot name them all, but a part of them we can name you. From Aminois there was my lord Pierre of Amiens, the fair knight and the worthy and the valiant, and my lord Enguerand of Boves, one of four brothers (one of them was named Robert, another Hugh, and the other brother was a clerk), Baldwin of Beauvoir, Matthew of Warlincourt, the advocate of Béthune, and Conon his brother,<sup>6</sup> Eustace of Canteleux, Anseau of Cayeux, Renier of Trit, Wales of Frise, Girard of Manchecourt, Nicholas of Mailly, Baldwin Cavarom, Hugh of Beauvais, and many other knights, high men, who were Flemings and of other countries, all of whom we cannot name you. And there was also my lord James of Avesnes. From Burgundy there was Odo of Champlitte and William his brother, who had many people in the host. And there were many others from Burgundy, all of whom we cannot name you. From Champagne there was the marshal<sup>7</sup> and Ogier of Saint-Chéron and Macaire of St.-Menehould and Clarembaux of Chappes and Miles of Brabant. These were from Champagne. Then there was the castellan of Coucy, and Robert of Ronsoi, Matthew of Montmorency, who was a right worthy man, Raoul of Aulnoy and

<sup>5</sup> *Hanetaist*, in the manuscript. This was Bishop Conrad.

<sup>6</sup> The French title *avoué* meant originally the patron or protector of a monastery. In the early feudal age this "protection" was often forced on the abbot by a powerful local lord as a means of getting possession of the monastery lands. Early in the eleventh century an ancestor of William and Conon of Béthune became the advocate of the rich monastery of St. Vaast in Arras. Conon of Béthune, mentioned here, was a poet of some reputation (see Wallensköld, *Les Chansons de Conon de Béthune*, 1921).

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey of Villehardouin, the famous chronicler of the expedition.

Walter his son, Giles of Aulnoy, Pierre of Bracheux, the worthy knight and the hardy and the valiant, and Hugh his brother. Those whom I name you here were from France<sup>8</sup> and from Beauvaisis. From Chartrain there was Gervais of the Châtel and Hervé his son and Oliver of Rochefort and Pierre of Alost and Payen of Orleans, Pierre of Amiens,<sup>9</sup> a good knight and worthy and one who did many deeds of prowess there, and Thomas, a clerk, his brother, who was a canon of Amiens, Manasses of Lille in Flanders, Matthew of Montmorency, and the castellan of Corbie. Now there were so many other knights of France and of Flanders and of Champagne and of Burgundy and of other countries that we cannot name you them all, valiant knights and worthy. Those whom we have named you here were the richest men<sup>10</sup> and they carried banners,<sup>11</sup> and we have not by any means named all those who carried banners. And of those who did most deeds of prowess and of arms, rich and poor, we can name you a part. Pierre of Bracheux, he was the one among rich and poor who did most deeds of prowess, and Hugh his brother and Andrew of Dureboise and my lord Pierre of Amiens, the worthy and the fair, and Matthew of Montmorency and Matthew of Warlincourt and Baldwin of Beauvoir and Henry, the brother of the count of Flanders, and James of Avesnes. These were those of the rich men who did most deeds of arms. And of the poor, Bernard of Aire and Bernard of Soubrengien, Eustace of Heu-

<sup>8</sup> The "Île de France," the region around Paris. Beauvaisis and Chartrain mean respectively the district of Beauvais and the district of Chartres.

<sup>9</sup> By inadvertence Robert repeats the name of Pierre of Amiens, mentioned earlier among those of Aminois, and goes on to add other names from that region.

<sup>10</sup> *li plus rike homme*. Old French *riche* implies power and importance as well as wealth.

<sup>11</sup> *baniere*. This is one of the very earliest instances of the use of the word "banner" in its technical sense as a standard carried in battle, the right to which was a mark of feudal rank. Guillaume le Breton, who wrote his chronicle just about this time, uses the Latin term *vexillum*, "standard," in this sense (*Ceuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton*, I, 290), and in the contemporary acts of Philip Augustus we find the term *vexillarii*, "knights banneret." See Guilhiermoz, *Essai*, pp. 138-71.

mont and his brother, Gilbert of Vismes, Wales of Frise, Hugh of Beauvais, Robert of Ronsoi, Alard Maquereau, Nicholas of Mailly, Guy of Manchecourt, Baldwin of Hame-lincourt, William of Embreville, Aleaumes of Clari in Ami-nois, the clerk, who was right worthy and did many deeds of hardihood and of prowess there, Aleaumes of Sains [and] Willerames of Fontaine. Those whom we have named here were those who did most deeds of arms and of prowess there. And many other good people, on horse and on foot, so many thousands that we do not know the number of them.

Then there came together all the counts and the high barons who had taken the cross. And they sent for all the high men who had taken the cross, and when they were all come together, they took counsel among them as to whom they should make their chieftain and lord, until they took Count Thibaut of Champagne and made him their lord. Then they parted from one another and went away each to his own country. And then it was not a great while afterwards that Count Thibaut died, and he left fifty thousand livres to the crusaders and to the one who after him should be chieftain and lord of the cru-saders and to do with as the crusaders should wish. And Master Fulk died also, which was a very great loss to the crusaders.<sup>12</sup>

When the crusaders knew that the count of Champagne, their lord, was dead, and Master Fulk also, they were very sad and greatly troubled and greatly dismayed. And they all came together on a certain day at Soissons and took counsel among them as to what they should do and whom they should make their chieftain and lord, and finally they agreed among them to send for the marquis of Montferrat in Lombardy.<sup>13</sup> They sent right

<sup>12</sup> Count Thibaut died in May, 1201, and Fulk just a year later in May, 1202. The death of Fulk is in the wrong place in the narrative, since it occurred some time after the election of the marquis.

<sup>13</sup> The marquis Boniface. This powerful family of Lombardy was connected by marriage both with the Capetians and with the Hohenstaufen, and its members had played important rôles in the kingdom of Jerusalem and in the Byzantine empire. The father, William the Old, had gone on the Second Crusade and had spent some time in the Holy Land. Returning later, he was captured by Saladin in the fatal battle of Hattin in 1187.

good messengers for him there. The messengers got them ready and went to the marquis. When they came there, they spoke to the marquis and said to him that the barons of France greeted him and sent word to him to pray him in God's name to come and talk with them on a certain day, which they named to him. When the marquis heard this, he wondered much that the barons of France should have sent for him, and he answered the messengers that he would take thought on it and let them know on the morrow what he would do about it. And he did great honor to the messengers.<sup>14</sup> When the morrow was come, the marquis said to them that he would go to talk with them at Soissons on the day they had named to him. Then the messengers took their leave and went back, and the marquis offered them some of his horses and jewels, but they would not take any of them. When they were returned, they made known to the barons what they had done. Then the marquis got ready his gear and crossed over Mont Joux and went on into France to Soissons. And he made known to the barons in advance that he was coming and the barons were there to meet him and did him great honor.

When the marquis was come to Soissons, he asked the barons why they had sent for him. Now the barons had taken counsel together, and they said to him: "Sir, we have sent for you because the count of Champagne, our lord, who was our commander, is dead. So we sent for you as the most worthy man that we knew, and the one who, God willing, could give us the best counsel in our affair. And we all pray you, in God's name, to be our lord and to take the cross for the love of God." With these words, the barons kneeled down before him. And

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Boniface's oldest brother, William Longsword, married Sibylle of Jerusalem and was the father of Baldwin V. The next oldest brother was the famous Conrad of Montferrat. He married Isabelle of Jerusalem and was recognized as king in 1192, but was assassinated the same year. His exploits at Constantinople and at Tyre are narrated by Robert later on. A younger brother, Rainer, married a daughter of Emperor Manuel of Constantinople and perished in the palace revolution of 1183. See Ilgen, *Markgraf Conrad von Montferrat*.

<sup>14</sup> *fist molt feste des messages*; this expression recurs frequently.

they said he should not be dismayed at undertaking it, for they would give him a large part of the money which the count of Champagne had left to the crusaders. The marquis said that he would think on it, and when he had done so, he answered that he would take the cross, for the love of God and in order to succor the land oversea. Then the bishop of Soissons was straightway vested, and he gave the marquis the cross; and when he had taken the cross they gave him twenty-five thousand livres out of the money which the count of Champagne had left to the crusaders.

Afterwards, when the marquis had taken the cross, he said to the barons: "Lords," said the marquis, "where will you want to pass oversea, and to what land of the Saracens will you want to go?" The barons answered that they did not want to go to the land of Syria, for they would not be able to accomplish anything there, but they had thought of going to Babylon<sup>15</sup> or to Alexandria, there in the very midst of things, where they would be able to do most, and had planned to hire a fleet which could transport them there all together. Then the marquis said that this was a good plan and he was right well agreed to it, and that they should send good messengers from among their best knights to Pisa or Genoa or Venice. To this plan the barons all agreed.

Then they chose their messengers, and they all agreed that Conon of Béthune should go and the marshal of Champagne.<sup>16</sup> Then when they had chosen their messengers, the barons parted from one another, and the marquis went away to his own coun-

<sup>15</sup> The common name in the West for Cairo; so used in the *Anonymi gesta*, Fulcher of Chartres, William of Tyre, etc. Miss Lees, in her edition of the *Anonymi gesta* (p. 117), says: "The name Babylon, strictly speaking, refers to the old fortress at some distance from the modern Cairo, which is said to have been built by one of the later Pharaohs to receive the Babylonian mercenaries in the Egyptian service."

<sup>16</sup> Villehardouin (§ 12) gives the correct list, which is also found in the texts of the treaties (Tafel and Thomas, I, 362 ff.): the envoys of Count Thibaut were Geoffrey of Villehardouin and Miles of Brabant; of Count Baldwin, Conon of Béthune and Alard Maquereau; of Count Louis, John of Friaise and Walter of Gaudonville.

try and each of the others likewise. They commanded the messengers to hire vessels to transport four thousand knights and their harness and one hundred thousand men on foot. The messengers got ready their gear and went straight on until they came to Genoa, and they spoke to the Genoese and told them what they were seeking, and the Genoese said they could not help them in it at all. Then they went to Pisa and spoke to them of Pisa, and they answered them that they did not have so many vessels and could not do anything for them. Then they went on to Venice and spoke to the doge of Venice and told him what they were seeking: that they wanted to hire passage for four thousand knights and their harness and for one hundred thousand men on foot. When the doge heard of this, he said he would think on it, for so great an affair ought to be well considered. Then the doge summoned all the high councilors of the city and spoke to them and showed them what had been asked of him. And when they had counseled together the doge answered the messengers and said to them: "Lords, we are willing to make a bargain with you. We will find you a navy large enough for your needs for one hundred thousand marks, if you agree, on the understanding that I shall go along with half of those who are able to bear arms from all of Venice and that we shall have half of all the gains that are made there. And we will add fifty galleys at our own cost. And within a year from the day we shall name we will set you in whatever land you wish, whether at Babylon or at Alexandria." When the messengers heard this, they replied that a hundred thousand marks would be too much, and they talked together until they made a bargain for eighty and seven thousand marks, and the doge and the Venetians and the messengers swore to keep this bargain. Then the doge said that he wanted to have twenty-five thousand marks as advance payment, in order to begin building the navy. The messengers replied that he should send messengers back with them to France, and they would gladly see to it that the twenty-five thousand marks were paid to them. Then the messengers took leave and went on back,



and the doge sent a high man of Venice along with them to receive the advance payment.<sup>17</sup>

Then the doge had his ban cried through all Venice, that no Venetian should be so bold as to engage in any business, but rather they should all help to build the navy, and they did so. So they began to build the richest navy that ever was seen.

When the messengers came to France, they made it known that they were come. Then word was sent to all the barons who had taken the cross that they were to come straightway to Corbie. When they were all come together, the messengers told what they had done. When the barons heard it, they were greatly pleased and they approved right well what they had done. And they did great honor to the messengers of the doge of Venice, and they gave them some of the money left by the count of Champagne and some of the money which Master Fulk had collected, and the count of Flanders put in some of his money, until there were twenty-five thousand marks. So they gave this money to the messenger<sup>18</sup> of the doge of Venice and they gave him safe-conduct to go with it to his own country.

Then word was sent to all the crusaders through all the lands, that they should all set out at Easter to go to Venice,

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<sup>17</sup>The actual treaties between the doge of Venice on the one side and the envoys of the three counts of Champagne, Flanders, and Blois on the other are found in Tafel and Thomas (I, 362 ff.). The terms were as follows: the service for a year of a fleet large enough to transport 4,500 knights and their horses, 9,000 squires, and 20,000 foot soldiers, together with their arms and armor and provisions. In addition, the doge promised fifty armed galleys, also for a year's service. The year was to be reckoned from the next feast of SS. Peter and Paul (June 29), unless changed by common agreement. For this the crusaders were to pay 85,000 marks of pure silver of the weight of Cologne—15,000 by the first of the next August (1201), 10,000 more by the Feast of All Saints (November 1), 10,000 more by the Purification of the Blessed Virgin (February 20, 1202), and the remaining 50,000 by the end of April. The mark was a money of reckoning, equivalent, at least in the fourteenth century, to about 234 grams of silver, or about the silver of nine silver dollars. Purchasing power, of course, was many times that of the same weight of silver today. Villehardouin, one of the negotiators of the agreement, gives the correct terms (§§ 20 ff.), but he does not mention any dispute about the price.

<sup>18</sup>This confusion between singular and plural is found in the manuscript.

so as to be there between Pentecost and August, without fail, and they did so. So when Easter was past they all came together. Many there were of fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, wives and children, who made great lamenting over their loved ones.

When the pilgrims were all assembled at Venice and saw the rich navy that had been made, the rich ships, the great freighters,<sup>19</sup> the transports<sup>20</sup> to carry the horses, and the galleys, they marveled at it greatly and at the great riches which they found in the city. When they saw that they could not all find quarters in the city, they decided among them to go and quarter themselves on the Isle of St. Nicholas,<sup>21</sup> which was entirely surrounded by sea and was a league away from Venice. So the pilgrims went there and set up their tents and quartered themselves the best they could.

When the doge of Venice saw that all the pilgrims were come, he sent for all those of his land of Venice. And when they were all come, the doge commanded that half of them should equip themselves and make ready to go along in the fleet with the pilgrims. When the Venetians heard this, some of them were glad, but others said they could not go; and they were not able to decide how the half of them should be chosen to go. Finally they made a drawing of lots in this way: balls of wax were made in pairs and in one of the two they put a slip of paper. Then they came to the priest and gave

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<sup>19</sup> *dromons*. This term is rather rare in the West, except in poetry; the *Estoire de la guerre sainte* uses it in describing the fleet of Richard Lionheart. It was originally applied by the Byzantine Greeks to the fast war galley, but by this time it had come to mean the great freighter. It is so used by William of Tyre in describing the fleet brought together by Emperor Manuel for the attack on Egypt in 1169, and by Ralph of Coggeshall, *anno* 1191, in describing the great Saracen ship encountered by the English fleet on the way to Acre.

<sup>20</sup> *uissiers*, so called from the door or port (*huis*) in the side of the vessel for the loading and unloading of the horses. See note on the fleet and the forces, p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> The present Lido. The medieval name was taken from the church of St. Nicholas on the island, to which the relics of the saint had been brought in 1100.

## Crusaders in Venice

them to him and he made the sign of the cross over them and gave one of the two balls to each of two Venetians and the one who had the ball with the writing in it had to go with the fleet. So they were divided. Now when the pilgrims had taken quarters on the Isle of St. Nicholas, the doge of Venice and the Venetians went to talk with them, and they demanded their pay for the navy which they had prepared. And the doge said to them that they had done ill in this, that they had sent word by their messengers to have a navy prepared for four thousand knights and their harness and for one hundred thousand men on foot, and of these four thousand knights there were not more than a thousand, because some had gone to other ports, and of these hundred thousand men on foot there were not more than fifty thousand or sixty. "So," said the doge, "we want you to pay us the covenanted price that was agreed on between us." When the crusaders heard this, they talked together and agreed among them that each knight should give four marks and each horse four [*sic*] and each mounted sergeant two, and that he who gave less should give at least one mark. When they had gathered this money, they gave it to the Venetians and there still remained fifty thousand marks to pay. When the doge and the Venetians saw that the pilgrims had not paid them more than this, they were all very angry. Finally the doge said to them: "Lords," said he, "you have used us ill, for as soon as your messengers had made the bargain with me I commanded through all my land that no trader should go a-trading, but that all should help prepare this navy. So they have waited ever since and have not made any money for a year and a half past. Instead, they have lost a great deal, and therefore we wish, my men and I, that you should pay us the money you owe us. And if you do not do so, then know that you shall not depart from this island before we are paid, nor shall you find anyone to bring you anything to eat or to drink." The doge was a right worthy man, and so he did not cease from having brought to them enough to eat and to drink.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *si ne laissa mie pour chou que on ne leur portast asses a boire et a menger.*  
In other places in the manuscript we find confusion between *laisa*, "per-

When the counts and the crusaders heard what the doge said, they were sorely grieved and greatly dismayed. Then they made another collection and borrowed as much money as they could from those who they thought had any, and they paid this to the Venetians, and when they had paid it, there still remained thirty-six thousand marks to pay. And they told them that they were in an evil plight and that the host was impoverished by this collection which they had made and that they could not raise any more money to pay them, but rather had scarcely enough for the host to live on. When the doge saw that they could not pay all the money, but were indeed in very hard straits because of it, he spoke to his own people and said: "Lords," said he, "if we let these men go back to their own land, we shall always be held for rogues and cheats. Rather let us go to them and tell them that if they will pay us the thirty-six thousand marks they owe us, out of the first gains which they shall make for themselves, we will put them overseas." The Venetians agreed willingly to what the doge said. So they went to the pilgrims where they were quartered, and when they were come there the doge said to them: "Lords," said he, "we have taken counsel, I and my people, to this effect, that if you are willing to promise faithfully to pay us the thirty-six thousand marks you owe us, out of the first gains that you shall make for yourselves, we will put you oversea." When the crusaders heard what the doge said and proposed, they were right glad, and they fell at his feet for joy and promised faithfully that they would do what the doge had devised. And there was such rejoicing that night that there was no one so poor as not to make a great illumination, and they carried great torches on the end of their lances around their lodges and inside of them, so that it seemed as if the whole camp were on fire.

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mitted," and *lassa*, "ceased, gave over," so that this passage may have either the meaning given above in the translation, or the opposite: "nevertheless, he did not allow them to bring them enough to eat and to drink." The *Devastatio*, which is hostile to the Venetians, says that the crusaders were kept on the island as virtual prisoners and suffered heavy losses.

Afterwards the doge came to them and said: "Lords, it is now winter and we cannot cross oversea. The fault cannot be laid on me, for I would have had you make the crossing long ago if it had not been for you. But let us make the best of it," said the doge. "There is a city near here, Zara<sup>23</sup> is its name. They of the city have done us much harm, and I and my men want to be avenged on them if we can. If you will trust me, we will go there and stay there this winter until toward Easter, and then we will make ready our fleet and go oversea to the service of God. For Zara is a very fine city and plenteous in all good things." The barons and the high men of the crusaders agreed to what the doge had said, but the host as a whole did not know anything of this plan, save only the highest men. Then they all got ready their gear and their navy and put to sea. And each of the high men had his own ship for himself and his people, and his transport to carry his horses, and the doge had with him fifty galleys all at his own cost. The galley he was in was all vermilion and it had a canopy of vermilion samite spread over him, and there were four silver trumpets trumpeting before him and drums making a great noise. And all the high men, and the clerks and laymen, and great and small, displayed so much joy at the departure that never yet was there such rejoicing, nor was ever such a fleet seen or heard of. And the pilgrims had all the priests and clerks mount on the high poops of the ships to chant the *Veni creator spiritus*. And everyone, great and small, wept with emotion and for the great joy they had. When the fleet set out from the harbor of Venice . . .<sup>24</sup> freighters and these rich ships and so many other vessels, that it was the finest thing to see that has ever been since the beginning of the world. For there were fully a hundred pairs of trumpets, of silver and of brass, all sounding at the departure, and so many drums and tabors and other instruments that it was a fair marvel. When they were on that sea and had spread their sails and had their banners set high

<sup>23</sup> *Jadres*, the usual medieval name. In 1181 Zara had expelled its Venetian governor and submitted itself to Bela III, king of Hungary.

<sup>24</sup> A half-line blank in the manuscript.

on the poops of the ships and their ensigns, it seemed indeed as if the sea were all a-tremble and all on fire with the ships they were sailing and the great joy they were making. Then they went on until they came to a city, Pola was its name. There they made land and refreshed themselves and stayed there a little, until they were well restored and had bought new provisions to put in their ships. Afterwards they put to sea again. And if they had made much joy and festivity before, now they made as much or even more, so that the people of the city were amazed at the great joy and at the mighty fleet and at the noble display they made. And they said, and it was true, that never had so fair a fleet or so rich been seen or assembled in any land as there was there.

The Venetians and the pilgrims sailed until they came to Zara on the eve of the feast of St. Martin.<sup>25</sup> Now they of the city of Zara were sore afraid when they saw these ships and this mighty fleet approaching, so they had the gates of the city closed and took arms to defend themselves as best they could. When they were armed, the doge spoke to all the high men of the host and said to them: "Lords, this city has done much harm to me and to my people, and I would gladly avenge myself on it. So I pray you to help me." And the barons and the high men answered that they would gladly help him. Now the people of Zara knew right well that the Venetians hated them, so they had secured a letter from Rome, saying that anyone who should make war on them or do them any harm would be excommunicated.<sup>26</sup> And they sent this letter by good mes-

<sup>25</sup> St. Martin's day is November 11. The month between the departure from Venice, October 9, and the arrival before Zara is accounted for by the actions of the fleet. According to the chronicle of Dandolo, the doge went with a part of the fleet to secure the submission of Trieste and Moglie. The treaties with these towns are published in Tafel and Thomas, I, 386 f., 396 f.

<sup>26</sup> The policy of Innocent III in the matter of Zara is rather obscure. The best account is found in Luchaire, *Innocent III: la question d'Orient*, pp. 98 ff. Villehardouin seems to have suppressed some of the facts. The story is told from various angles in the *Gesta Innocentii*, the letters of Innocent, the Anonymous of Halberstadt, Gunther of Pairis, the *Hystoria albigensis* of Pierre of Vaux-de-Cernay, and the *Devastatio*.

sengers to the doge and the pilgrims who had landed there. When the messengers came to the camp, the letter was read before the doge and the pilgrims, and when the letter was read and the doge had heard it, he said that he would not give over having his revenge on those of the city, not even for the excommunication of the apostolic. At that the messengers went away. Then the doge spoke again to the barons and said: "Lords, know you well that I will not in any degree give over being avenged on them, no, not even for the apostolic." And he prayed the barons to help him. The barons all answered that they would gladly help him, save only Count Simon of Montfort and my lord Enguerrand of Boves. These said that they would not go against the commandments of the apostolic, nor did they want to be excommunicated. So they made themselves ready and went to Hungary to stay there all the winter.<sup>27</sup> When the doge saw that the barons would help him, he had his engines set up to assault the city, until they of the city saw that they could not long hold out. So they threw themselves on their mercy and surrendered the city to them. Then the pilgrims and the Venetians entered in, and the city was divided into two halves so that the pilgrims had one half and the Venetians the other.<sup>28</sup>

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Afterwards it happened that a great fray arose between the Venetians and the common people of the pilgrims, which lasted fully a night and half a day, and this fray was so fierce that the knights were scarcely able to part them. When they had parted them, they made so good a peace that never afterwards was there ill-will between them. Then the high men of the

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<sup>27</sup> The *Hystoria albigensis* has a vivid account of the violent scene between the doge and Simon de Montfort on the occasion when the abbot of Vaux-de-Cernay read the papal warning. According to this chronicle, the author of which was a nephew of the abbot, Simon withdrew from the camp and left to go to Barletta in Apulia and there take ship for the Holy Land. Villehardouin and Ernoul agree with Robert in saying that Simon went to Hungary and from there to the Holy Land.

<sup>28</sup> Dandolo relates the later fate of the city of Zara, how it revolted again and was finally reduced to subjection by the doge's son, Reiner, in 1203. The final treaty is found in Tafel and Thomas, II, 421 ff.

crusaders and the Venetians talked together about the excommunication that had been laid upon them because of the city which they had taken, until they agreed together to send to Rome to be absolved. So they sent the bishop of Soissons and my lord Robert of Boves,<sup>29</sup> and these men procured a letter from the apostolic that all the pilgrims and all the Venetians were absolved. When they had their letter, the bishop returned as soon as he could, but my lord Robert of Boves did not return with him; instead he went oversea straight from Rome.

In the meantime, while the crusaders and the Venetians were staying there that winter, the crusaders bethought them that they had spent a great deal. And they talked with one another and said that they could not go to Babylon or to Alexandria or to Syria, because they had neither provisions nor money for going there. For they had spent nearly everything, on the long delay they had made as well as on the great price they had given for the hire of the fleet. So they said they could not go, and if they went they would not be able to do anything, because they had neither money nor provisions to maintain themselves.

The doge of Venice saw right well that the pilgrims were in sore straits, and he spoke to them and said: "Lords, in Greece there is a land that is very rich and plenteous in all good things. If we could have a reasonable excuse<sup>30</sup> for going there and taking provisions and other things in the land until we were well restored, it would seem to me a good plan. Then we should be well able to go oversea." Then the marquis rose and said: "Lords, last year at Christmas I was in Germany at the court of my lord the emperor. There I saw a youth who was

<sup>29</sup> According to Villehardouin, the crusaders chose two of the clergy, the bishop of Soissons and John of Noyon, and two lords, John of Friaise and Robert of Boves. Gunther of Pairis says that his abbot was also a member of the embassy. Robert is in error in saying that the Venetians associated themselves with the crusaders in the request for absolution.

<sup>30</sup> Pope Innocent had warned the crusaders not to attack any Christian lands "unless the inhabitants should wickedly oppose their march or some other *just or necessary cause* should arise." See the letter in Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, CCXIV, col. 1178.



brother to the wife of the emperor of Germany.<sup>81</sup> This youth was the son of the emperor Isaac<sup>82</sup> of Constantinople, whose brother had taken the empire of Constantinople from him by treason. Whoever could get hold of this youth," said the marquis, "would be well able to go to Constantinople and get provisions and other things, for this youth is the rightful heir."<sup>83</sup>

Now we shall leave off here about the pilgrims and the fleet,<sup>84</sup> and we shall tell you about this youth and the emperor Isaac, his father, how they arose. There was once an emperor in Constantinople, Manuel was his name.<sup>85</sup> This emperor was a right worthy man and the richest of all Christians who have ever been, and the most generous. Never did anyone ask him for anything of his—anyone who was of the law of Rome and who was able to speak to him—but that he would give him a hundred marks; so, at least, we have heard it told. This emperor loved the French very much and much he trusted them. Now it happened one day that the people of his land and his councilors reproached him greatly, as they had many times before reproached him, for being so generous and for loving the French so much. And the emperor answered them: "There are only two who have the right to give, the Lord God and I.

<sup>81</sup> Alexius, later Alexius IV Angelus, 1203-4. He was the son of Isaac and a former wife and is said to have been twelve years old in 1195, when his father was blinded and deposed. His sister Irene was married to Philip of Swabia.

<sup>82</sup> *Kyrsac*. This is Isaac II Angelus, 1185-95. The Greek honorary title, Kurios Isaak, Kur' Isaak, "Lord Isaac," gave rise to the various forms of the name by which he was known in Western chronicles: Kyr Ysac, Kirsac, Kirisacus, Tursachus, etc.

<sup>83</sup> The chronology of the flight and journeyings of young Alexius is a central element in the "diversion question" and has been discussed by the scholars who have struggled with that question (see note 25, Introduction). According to Villehardouin, however, young Alexius was in northern Italy on his way to the court of Philip of Swabia in the summer of 1202, so that the marquis could not have met him there at Christmas, 1201.

<sup>84</sup> *Or vous lairons chi ester des pelerins et de l'estoire*: literally, "Now we shall let you rest (or stand) here about the pilgrims," etc. This is Robert's regular locution for a transition.

<sup>85</sup> Manuel I Comnenus, 1143-80.

Nevertheless, if you want me to, I will dismiss the French and all those of the law of Rome who are about me and in my service." And the Greeks were very glad of this and said: "Ah, sire! then you will do a very good thing, and we will serve you right well for it." So the emperor commanded all the French to go away, and the Greeks were glad of it more than a great deal. Then the emperor sent word to all the Frenchmen and all the others whom he had dismissed from his service to come and talk with him privily, and they did so. When they were come, the emperor said to them: "Lords, my people give me no peace, telling me not to give you anything and to hunt you out of my land. But now do you all go away together, and I will follow you, I and my people. And you will be in a certain place," and he named it to them, "and I will send word to you by my messengers to go away. Then you will send back word to me that you will not go away, not for me nor for all my people. Instead, you will make a great show of coming at me. Then I shall see how my people will prove themselves." And they did so straightway. Now when they were gone, the emperor sent for all his people and followed them. And when he came near to them, he sent them word to go away forthwith and vacate his land, and those who had advised the emperor to hunt them out of his land were greatly pleased and they said to the emperor: "Sire, if they will not go forthwith, give us leave to slay them all." And the emperor answered: "Willingly." When the messengers of the emperor came to the French, they delivered their message very haughtily, that they should go away forthwith. The French answered the messengers and said that they would not go away, not for the emperor nor for all his people. Then the messengers came back and told what the French had answered, and the emperor commanded his people to arm themselves and help him attack the French. And they all armed themselves and advanced toward the French. And the French came to meet them and they had their battles<sup>86</sup> well ordered. When the emperor saw that they were coming toward him and his people

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<sup>86</sup> *batailles*, battalions, combat divisions.

to fight with them, he said to his people: "Lords, now bethink you to acquit yourselves well. Now you can have your revenge on them." As he said this, the Greeks were taken with a great fear of the Latins—for they call all those of the law of Rome, Latins—whom they saw approaching. And the Latins made a great show of riding at them. When the Greeks saw this, they turned to flee and left the emperor all alone. When the emperor saw this, he said to the French: "Lords, come back now with me, and I will give you more than I have ever yet done." So he brought the French back with him. When he was returned, he summoned his people and said to them: "Lords, now it can well be seen who is to be trusted. You fled away when you should have helped me and you left me all alone, and if the Latins had wanted to they could have cut me to pieces. So now I command that no one of you be so bold or so hardy as ever to speak again about my largesse or about my loving the French. For I do love them and put my trust in them more than I do in you, and I shall give them more than I have ever given them before." And the Greeks were never again so bold as to dare to speak to him about it.

This emperor Manuel had a very fine son<sup>87</sup> by his wife, and he bethought himself that he would like to make for him the highest marriage that he could. So on the advice of the French who were about him he sent word to Philip, king of France, to give him his sister for his son. So the emperor sent to France messengers who were very high men and who went in very rich array. Never were people seen to go more richly or more nobly than these did, so that the king of France and his people marveled greatly at the noble display the messengers made. When the messengers came to the king, they told him what the emperor wanted of him, and the king said he would take counsel on it. And when he had taken counsel his barons advised him to send his sister to a man as high and as rich as the emperor

<sup>87</sup> The child emperor, Alexius II, 1180-83. He was married to Agnes, the daughter of Louis VII and Alix of Champagne and the own sister of Philip Augustus. She was then some ten or twelve years old. As empress she was given the Greek name Anna.

was. Then the king answered the messengers that he would gladly send his sister to the emperor.

Then the king arrayed his sister very richly and sent her with the messengers to Constantinople, and many of his people with her. And they rode and journeyed without stopping until they came to Constantinople. When they were come, the emperor did very great honor to the damsel and made great rejoicing over her and her people. In the meantime, while the emperor was sending for this damsel, he also sent one of his kinsmen, whom he loved very much, Andronicus<sup>38</sup> was his name, in the other direction oversea for the queen Theodora<sup>39</sup> of Jerusalem, who was his sister, so that she might come to the coronation of his son and to his wedding feast. So the queen put to sea with Andronicus to come to Constantinople. When they were well out to sea, what does Andronicus do but become enamored of the queen,<sup>40</sup> who was his cousin, and he lay with her by force. And when he had done this, he dared not return to Constantinople, but he took the queen and carried her off by force to Konia<sup>41</sup> among the Saracens, and there he stayed.

When the emperor Manuel heard the news that Andronicus had thus carried off the queen, his sister, he was greatly grieved, but he did not for that give over making a great feast and crowning his son and the damsel. And it was not long afterwards that the emperor died. When Andronicus the traitor heard it told that the emperor Manuel was dead, he sent to his son who was now emperor to beseech him in God's name to lay aside his wrath. And he made him believe that it was nothing but a lie that had been put upon him, until the emperor,

<sup>38</sup> *Andromes*, Andronicus Comnenus, grandson of Alexius I and cousin-german of Manuel; he was emperor, 1183-85. The life of this extraordinary person is related by Diehl in his *Figures byzantines*, II, 86-133.

<sup>39</sup> *Teudore*. This was Theodora, daughter of Isaac, an older brother of Manuel, therefore Manuel's niece and not his sister. She was the widow of Baldwin III, king of Jerusalem, who had died in 1162.

<sup>40</sup> *si ne fait mais el Andromes si aama le roine*: "Andromes does nothing else (*el*) but loved the queen." This is one of Robert's favorite locutions, which he uses over and over from this point on.

<sup>41</sup> *Coine*; ancient Iconium.

who was only a child, laid aside his wrath and sent for him. So this Andronicus came back and was always in the company of the child, and the child made him steward of all his land, and he became more than a little haughty over the stewardship which he held. And it was not a great while after that that he took the emperor by night and murdered him and his mother also. When he had done this, he took two great stones and had them tied to their necks and then had them thrown into the sea. Then he had himself straightway crowned emperor by force. When he was crowned, he had all those seized who he knew bore it ill that he was emperor, and he had their eyes put out and had them slain and made to die shameful deaths. And he took all the beautiful women he found and lay with them by force. And he took to wife the empress who was sister to the king of France, and he did so many great villainies that never did any traitor or murderer do as many as he did. When he had done all these villainies, then he asked a chief steward of his, who helped him do all these evil deeds, if there were any left of those who bore it ill that he was emperor. And he answered that he did not know of any, save that it was said that there were three young men in the city who were of the lineage called the lineage of the Angeli,<sup>42</sup> and they were high men, but they were not rich; instead they were poor and did not have any great power. When the emperor Andronicus heard that these three youths were indeed of this lineage, he commanded this steward of his, who was a right wicked man and as great a traitor as he was himself, to go and take them and hang them or make them die some evil death. The steward went off to take these three brothers, but he took only one of them and the other two escaped. The one who was taken had his eyes put out and afterwards he became a monk. The other two fled, and one of them went to a land called Vlachia.<sup>43</sup> This one was

<sup>42</sup> This family was descended from one Constantine Angelus who married a daughter of the emperor Alexius I.

<sup>43</sup> *Blakie*. The territory occupied by the Vlachs, including part of Thessaly and part of Epirus, was known to the Greeks as "great Blachia" (Nicetas, p. 841). The name survives in modern Walachia.

named Isaac. And the other went away to Antioch and was captured by the Saracens during a raid made by the Christians. The one who fled to Vlachia was so poor that he could not maintain himself, so that he came back to Constantinople for very poverty. And he concealed himself in the house of a widowed woman in the city. Now he had no chattels in the world except a mule and one servant. This servant earned wages with his mule by carrying wine and other things, whereby Isaac, his master, and he managed to live. Finally the news came to the emperor Andronicus, the traitor, that this youth had in fact returned to the city. Then he commanded his steward, who was greatly hated by all the people for the evil that he did every day, to go and take this Isaac and hang him. So one day the steward mounted his horse and took many people with him and went to the house of the good woman where Isaac was staying. When he came there, he made them call at the door, and the good woman came out, wondering greatly what he wanted, until he ordered her to make him who was concealed in the house come out. The good woman answered and said, "Ah, sire! by God's mercy, there is no one hidden within." Then he commanded her again to make him come out, or if she did not make him come he would have them both seized. When the good woman heard this, she had great fear of this devil who had done so much evil, and she went into the house and came to the youth and said to him: "Ah, fair lord Isaac! you are a dead man. Here is the emperor's steward and many people with him, who are come seeking you to destroy and to slay you." The youth was sore dismayed when he heard this news; nevertheless he came, since there was no way to avoid going out to meet the steward. So what does he do but take his sword and put it under his coat and come out from the house. And he came up to the steward and said to him: "Sir, what do you want?" And he answered him right villainously and said: "Stinking wretch, now they are going to hang you." So Isaac saw that he would have to go with them in spite of himself, and he would gladly have avenged himself on some of them. So he came as close to the steward as he could and

drew his sword and struck the steward in the middle of his head and clove him through clear to the teeth.

When the sergeants and the people who were with the steward saw that the youth had thus cut down the steward, they fled away. And when the youth saw that they were fleeing away, he seized the horse of the steward whom he had slain and mounted it, and he still held his sword which was dripping with blood. And what did he do but set out to go toward the church of Saint Sophia, and as he went along he kept calling for mercy to the people who were thronging the streets, all in a maze at the tumult they had heard. And the youth called out to them: "Lords, for the mercy of God, do not kill me, for I have slain the devil and murderer who has done so much shame to those of this city and to others." When he was come to the church of Saint Sophia, he went up to the altar and embraced the cross, because he wanted to save his life. Then the noise and the tumult were loud in the city, and the cry went up and down until it was known through all the city that Isaac had slain that demon and murderer. When they of the city knew it, they were right glad of it, and they ran each as best he could to the church of Saint Sophia to see the youth that had done this hardihood. And when they were all assembled there, they began to say to one another: "He is valiant and brave, since he dared to do this great hardihood." Finally the Greeks said among them: "Let us do the right thing. Let us make this youth the emperor." And in the end they were all of one accord. So they sent for the patriarch, who was right there in his palace, to come and crown a new emperor whom they had chosen. When the patriarch heard this, he said he would not do anything of the sort, and he began to say to them: "Lords, you are doing ill. Calm yourselves. You are not doing right to undertake such a thing. If I were to crown him, the emperor Andronicus would slay me and cut me to pieces." And the Greeks answered that if he did not crown him they would cut off his head. So the patriarch, perforce and for the fear that he had, came down from his palace and went to the church, there where Isaac was in a wretched cloak and in

wretched garments, he for whom that very day the emperor Andronicus had sent his steward and people to take and destroy him. So the patriarch, whether he would or no, vested himself and crowned him there forthwith. When Isaac was crowned, the news of it went up and down, until Andronicus heard of it and learned too that he had slain his steward. And he could never believe it until he sent his messengers there, and when his messengers came there, they saw that it was indeed true. So they came back straightway to the emperor and said: "Sire, it is all true."

When the emperor knew that it was true, he rose and took many of his people with him and went to the church of Saint Sophia by a passage that led from his palace to the church.<sup>44</sup> When he came to the church, he got himself up on the vaults of the church<sup>45</sup> and saw him who had been crowned. When he saw him, he was very angry and he asked his people if there was anyone of them that had a bow, and they brought him a bow and arrow. And Andronicus took the bow and bent it and made to shoot Isaac, who had been crowned, through the body. And as he bent the bow, the cord broke, and he was sore dismayed and in great despair. Then he went back to the palace and told his people to go and shut the gates and arm themselves to defend the palace, and they did so. In the meantime, ~~he left the palace and came to a secret postern and went out of the city and entered into a galley, and some of his people with him. And they put to sea, because he did not want the people of the city to take him.~~

Then the people of the city went to the palace and took the new emperor with them. And they seized the palace by force and led the emperor into it. Then they seated him on the throne of Constantine, and then when he was seated on the throne of Constantine they all adored him as the holy emperor.

<sup>44</sup> Andronicus occupied the Great Palace (which Robert calls *Bouke de Lion*), close to Saint Sophia. Ebersolt (*Le Grand Palais*, p. 25, note 1) speaks of a passage by which one could go from the Chalké, or great entrance hall of the palace, to the upper galleries of Saint Sophia.

<sup>45</sup> The gallery supported by the vaults over the aisle.



The emperor was very happy over the great honor that God had given him that day, and he said to the people: "Lords, now see the marvel of the great honor that God has given me, that on the very day on which they were going to take and slay me, on that very day I am crowned emperor. And for the great honor that you have done me, I give you now all the treasure that is in this palace and in the palace of Blachernae."<sup>46</sup>

When the people heard this, they were very glad of the great gift which the emperor had given them, and they went and broke into the treasure and they found there so much gold and silver that it was a fair marvel, and they divided it up among them.

The same night on which Andronicus fled, there arose so great a storm at sea and so great a tempest of wind and thunder and lightning that he and his people knew not where they were going. And finally the storm and the tempest drove them back to Constantinople without their knowing it. When they saw that they were driven on shore and could not go on, Andronicus said to his people: "Lords, see where we are." They looked and saw right well that they were come back to Constantinople, and they said to Andronicus: "Sire, we are dead men, for we are come back to Constantinople." When Andronicus heard this, he was so dismayed that he knew not what to do. And he said to his people: "Lords, for God's sake, take us somewhere away from here." And they answered that they could not go on, were he to cut off their heads. When they saw that they could not go any farther, they took Andronicus the emperor and led him to an inn and hid him behind the wine casks. The innkeeper and his wife looked right well at these people and they were well aware that they were the people of the emperor Andronicus. And finally the wife of the innkeeper happened to go among the casks to see if they were all secured, and she looked around and saw Andronicus

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<sup>46</sup>The palace of Blachernae was at the other end of the city in the corner made by the land walls and the Golden Horn; see map, facing p. 31: D. This had been the favorite residence of the emperors from Alexius I to Manuel I. Andronicus, as we have seen, occupied the Great Palace.

sitting behind the casks in all his imperial robes, and she recognized him right well. So she went back to her husband and said to him: "Sir, Andronicus the emperor is hidden within there." When the innkeeper heard it, he sent a messenger to a certain high man who lived near by in a large palace, whose father Andronicus had slain. And he had lain by force with the wife of this high man. When the messenger came there, he said to this high man that Andronicus was at the house of an innkeeper, and he named him. When the high man heard that Andronicus was at the house of this innkeeper, he was very glad of it and he went with some of his people to the house of the innkeeper and took Andronicus and led him away to his palace. And when morning was come on the morrow, the high man took Andronicus and led him to the palace before the emperor Isaac. When Isaac saw him, he asked him: "Andronicus, why didst thou thus betray thy lord, the emperor Manuel, and why didst thou murder his wife and his son, and why didst thou take delight in doing so much evil to those who bore it ill that thou wert emperor, and why didst thou seek to have me taken?" And Andronicus answered: "Be still," said he, "I would not deign to answer you." When the emperor Isaac heard that he would not deign to answer him, he sent for a great many of those of the city to come before him. When they were come before him, the emperor said to them: "Lords, here is Andronicus, who did so much evil both to you and to others. It seems to me that I can not do justice upon him according to the wishes of all of you, so I hand him over to you to do with him as you will." Then they of the city were very glad, and they took him, and some said to burn him and others to boil him in a cauldron, so that he would live and suffer longer, and others said to drag him through the streets. And they could not agree among them by what death or by what torture they should kill him, until finally there was a wise man who said: "Lords, if you will take my advice, I will show how we can be right well avenged on him. I have a camel at home which is the vilest and most loathsome beast in the world. We will take Andronicus and strip him naked and bind him on the

back of the camel, so that his face is right in its rump, and then we will lead him from one end of the city to the other. Then all those, both men and women, to whom he has done evil can be right well revenged on him." And they all agreed to this, and they took Andronicus and bound him as that man had said. And as they led him down through the city, those whom he had wronged came and pierced him and tore him and struck him, some with knives and some with daggers and some with swords. And they said, "You hanged my father"; and, "You lay with my wife by force." And the women whose daughters he had taken by force, they seized him by the beard, and they did him such terrible shame that when they came to the other end of the city there was no flesh left on his bones. Then they took the bones and threw them into a sewer. In such wise did they avenge themselves on this traitor. Now from that day on which Isaac became emperor it was pictured above the portals of the churches how Isaac had become emperor by a miracle, and Our Lord was shown standing on one side of him and Our Lady on the other, placing the crown on his head, and an angel was shown cutting the cord of the bow with which Andronicus wanted to shoot him, wherefore they said his lineage had the name of Angelus.

Afterwards he had a great desire to see his brother who was in captivity in heathendom, so he took messengers and sent them to seek out his brother. They sought until they learned where he was in prison, and they went there. And when they were come there, they asked the Saracens for him. Now the Saracens had heard it said that this youth was the brother of the emperor of Constantinople, and they held him the more dearly for that and said that they would not surrender him without a great price. And finally the messengers gave them as much gold and silver as they demanded. When they had ransomed him, they went back to Constantinople.

When the emperor Isaac saw his brother, he was very glad of it and did him great honor. And that one was very glad also that his brother was emperor and that he had won the empire

by his own prowess. This youth was named Alexius.<sup>47</sup> Now it was not long afterwards that the emperor his brother made him steward and high commander of all his land. Then he was made very proud by the stewardship which he held, and the people of the whole empire stood in great awe of him and feared him, because he was brother to the emperor and because the emperor loved him so much.

Afterwards it happened one day that the emperor went hunting in his forest, and what does Alexius his brother do but go into the forest where the emperor was and take him by treason and put out his eyes. Then when he had done this, he had him put in prison in such a way that no one knew anything about it. And when he had done this, he came back to Constantinople and made them believe that the emperor his brother was dead, and he had himself crowned emperor by force. When the governor of the son of the emperor Isaac saw that the uncle of the child had betrayed the child's father and made himself emperor by treason, what does he do but take the boy and send him to Germany, to his sister who was the wife of the emperor of Germany,<sup>48</sup> lest his uncle should have him slain. And he was the more rightful heir than was his uncle Alexius.

Now you have heard how Isaac arose and how he became emperor and how his son went to Germany—he for whom the crusaders and the Venetians were going to send, on the advice of the marquis of Montferrat, their leader, as you have heard before in the story, so that they might have an excuse for going to the country of Constantinople. And now we shall tell you about this youth and the crusaders, how the crusaders sent for him and how they went to Constantinople and how they conquered it.

When the marquis had told the pilgrims and the Venetians that whoever had this youth, of whom we have just spoken, would have a good excuse for going to Constantinople and getting provisions, then the crusaders had two knights right,

<sup>47</sup> Alexius III Angelus, emperor 1195-1203.

<sup>48</sup> Irene, daughter of Isaac and wife of Philip of Swabia.

well and finely equipped and sent them to Germany for this youth to come to them. And they sent him word that they would help him gain his rights. When the messengers came to the court of the emperor of Germany, there where the youth was, they told him the message they had been charged to tell. When the youth heard this, and learned the offer which the high men of the crusaders had made to him, he was very glad and made great joy over it. And he was very gracious to the messengers and he said that he would consult with the emperor his brother-in-law. When the emperor heard it, he said to the youth that this was a fine chance that had come to him and that he was greatly in favor of his going to them. And he said that he would never get anything of his heritage unless it should be by the help of God and of the crusaders.

The youth knew well that the emperor was giving him good counsel, and he arrayed himself the finest he could and went off with the messengers. Now before the youth and the messengers were come to Zara, the fleet had gone on to the island of Corfu, because Easter was already past; but when the fleet set out to go there they left two galleys behind to wait for the messengers and the youth.<sup>49</sup> So the pilgrims stayed at the island of Corfu until the youth and the messengers should come. When the youth and the messengers came to Zara, they found these two galleys that had been left for them, and they put to sea and went on until they came to Corfu where the fleet was. When the high men saw the youth coming, they all went to meet him, and they greeted him and did great honor to him, and when the youth saw the high men honoring him so and saw all the fleet that was there, he was glad as no man ever was before. Then the marquis came forward and took the youth and led him away to his tent.

When the youth was there, then all the high barons and the doge of Venice assembled at the tent of the marquis, and they talked of one thing and another, until finally they asked him what he would do for them if they made him em-

<sup>49</sup> According to Villehardouin (§§ 110 f.), the marquis and the doge also stayed behind at Zara to wait for Alexius.

peror and made him wear the crown in Constantinople, and he answered them that he would do whatever they wanted. So they parleyed until he said he would give the host two hundred thousand marks and would maintain the fleet a year longer at his own cost and would go oversea with them with all his forces and would keep ten thousand men in the land oversea at his own cost all the days of his life and would give provisions for a whole year to all those who should leave Constantinople to go oversea.<sup>50</sup>

Then all the barons of the host were summoned and the Venetians. And when they were all assembled, the doge of Venice rose and spoke to them. "Lords," said the doge, "now we have a good excuse for going to Constantinople, if you approve of it, for we have the rightful heir." Now there were some who did not at all approve of going to Constantinople. Instead they said: "Bah! what shall we be doing in Constantinople? We have our pilgrimage to make, and also our plan of going to Babylon or Alexandria. Moreover, our navy is to follow us for only a year, and half of the year is already past." And the others said in answer: "What shall we do in Babylon or Alexandria, when we have neither provisions nor money to enable us to go there? Better for us before we go there to secure provisions and money by some good excuse than to go there and die of hunger. Then we shall be able to accomplish something. Moreover, he offers to come with us and to maintain our navy and our fleet a year longer at his own cost." And the marquis of Montferrat was more at pains to urge them to go to Constantinople than anyone else who was there, because he wanted to avenge himself for an injury which the emperor of Constantinople who was then holding the empire had done to him. Now we shall leave off here about the fleet and tell you about the injury for which the marquis hated the emperor of Constantinople. It happened that the marquis Conrad, his brother, took the cross and went oversea and took two galleys with him, and he went by way of Constantinople. And when he

<sup>50</sup> For the terms actually offered by Alexius, see Introduction, p. 13.

came to Constantinople, he spoke to the emperor<sup>51</sup> and the emperor greeted him and gave him good welcome. Now just at that time a high man of the city<sup>52</sup> was besieging the emperor in Constantinople, so that the emperor dared not venture out of the city. When the marquis saw this, he asked the emperor how it was that this man had him so besieged and how it was that he dared not go out and fight with him. The emperor answered that he did not have the heart and the help of his people, and that was why he did not want to fight with him. When the marquis heard this, he said he would help him, if he wanted him to. And the emperor said that he did want it and would be right grateful to him for it. Then the marquis told the emperor to send for all those of the law of Rome, for all the Latins of the city, and he would take them into his company and fight with them to form the vanguard, and the emperor should take all his people with him and follow after him. So the emperor sent for all the Latins of the city, and when they were all come, the emperor commanded them to arm themselves. And when they were all armed and the marquis had made all his own people arm themselves, he took all the Latins with him and ordered his battle the best he could. And the emperor also was fully armed and his people with him. And what does the marquis do but set out in advance,

<sup>51</sup> As noted in the Introduction (p. 20), Robert is here retailing the version of the tale in which the emperor was erroneously supposed to be Alexius III, the one "who was then [1203] holding the empire." In fact, Conrad was in Constantinople in 1187, in the time of Isaac. Nicetas says that Isaac sent envoys to Italy to offer the hand of his sister Theodora to Marquis Boniface. Finding that Boniface was already married, they made the offer to his older brother Conrad, who accepted, came to Constantinople, married Theodora, and received the title of Caesar. After helping Isaac defeat Alexius Branas, he became dissatisfied with his position and prospects in Constantinople, and went to the Holy Land with his followers, where, forgetting his marriage with the Greek princess, he married Isabella, heiress of the kingdom of Jerusalem.

<sup>52</sup> Alexius Branas, whom Robert later calls li Vernas. Some years before he had tried to get the throne by staging a demonstration in Saint Sophia, but this had failed. He was pardoned and put in command of an army to be sent against the Vlachs, but instead of starting on the campaign, he led his army to Constantinople to attack Isaac.

and the emperor follows after him. And as soon as the marquis is outside the gates with all his people, the emperor goes and has the gates closed after him. As soon as Branas, the one who had been besieging the emperor, saw that the marquis was coming out boldly to fight with him, he advanced, he and his people, to meet the marquis. And as they were approaching one another, what does Branas do but put spurs to his horse and put himself ahead of his people a good stone's throw to hasten and fall upon the battle of the marquis. When the marquis saw him coming he spurred forward to meet him, and he struck him full in the eye with the first blow and struck him dead with that blow. Then he struck right and left, he and his people, and they slew many of them. When the others saw that their lord was dead, they began to give way and turned to flee. When the emperor, the traitor, who had had the gates closed on the marquis, saw that they were fleeing, he sallied forth from the city with all his people and began to pursue them. And they gained much booty, the marquis and the others, in the way of horses as well as many other things. Thus did the marquis avenge the emperor on the one who had been besieging him. When they had defeated them, they came back to Constantinople, both the emperor and the marquis, and when they were returned and had laid aside their arms, the emperor thanked the marquis right heartily for avenging him so well on that enemy of his. And then the marquis asked him why he had had the gates closed on him. "Oh, so that is it now!" said the emperor. "Yes, by God!" said the marquis.<sup>53</sup> And it was not long after this that the emperor and his traitors planned a great treason, namely, to have the marquis slain. Finally an old man who learned of it had pity on the marquis and came to him right fairly and said to him: "Lord, for God's sake, go away from this city; for if you are still here the third day from now, the emperor and his traitors have planned a great treason, to take you and have you slain." When the marquis heard this news, he was not at all happy. So he went that very night and had them make ready his galleys, and he put to sea before it

<sup>53</sup> *Ba, ensi est ore, fist li empereres; or, de par dieu, fist le marchis.*



was day and went away. And he did not stop until he came to Tyre. Now it happened before this that the land was lost and the king of Jerusalem<sup>54</sup> was dead and the kingdom of Jerusalem was all lost and there was not a city which held out, save only Tyre and Ascalon. Now the king who was dead had two married sisters. A certain knight, my lord Guy of Lusignan in Poitou, had to wife the elder, the one to whom the kingdom had fallen, and my lord Humphrey of Thoron had the younger.<sup>55</sup> Now one day all the barons of the land and the count of Tripoli and the Templars and the Hospitallers assembled in Jerusalem at the Temple and said among themselves that they would separate my lord Guy from his wife, because the kingdom had fallen to his wife and they wanted to give her another husband who was more fitted to be king than my lord Guy was. And they did so. They separated them, and when they had separated them, they could never agree on the one to whom they should marry her, until finally they left it all to the queen who had been the wife of my lord Guy. So they gave her the crown and she was to give it to the one whom she wanted to be king. And so on another day all the barons and the Templars and the Hospitallers assembled again, and there was the count of Tripoli, who was the best knight of the kingdom, and who thought the lady would give him the crown, and there was my lord Guy, who had had the queen to wife. When they were all assembled, the lady took the crown and looked up and down and saw the one who had been her husband, and she went forward and put it on his head. So my lord Guy was king.<sup>56</sup> When the count of Tripoli saw this, he was so aggrieved

<sup>54</sup> Baldwin IV died in 1185, shortly before the fall of Jerusalem.

<sup>55</sup> They were half-sisters, daughters of Aymeri I by his first and his second wife, respectively. The elder was Sibylle, whose first husband was William Longsword, son of William the Old of Montferrat, and brother of Conrad and Boniface. The offspring of this marriage was Baldwin V, who reigned only a year and who is not mentioned by Robert. The younger was Isabelle, later married to Conrad of Montferrat, as Robert tells.

<sup>56</sup> This romantic tale of the election of Guy of Lusignan is found also in the *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims* (§§ 28 ff.). The editor, De Wailly, implies in the introduction (p. xlv) that this is the earliest appearance of the story, ignoring Robert's account.

that he went away to his own country, to Tripoli, in wrath.

It was not long afterwards that he [the king] fought with the Saracens and was taken prisoner and all his people were defeated, and the land was lost, so that there was never a city which held out, save only Tyre and Ascalon. When Saladin saw that he had the land in his hands, he came to the king of Jerusalem, whom he had in his prison, and said to him that if he could make them surrender Ascalon to him he would let him go and a large part of his people with him. And the king answered him: "Take me there, then," said he, "and I will make them surrender it to you." And Saladin took him there. When they came there, the king spoke to those of the city and told them to surrender the city, because he willed it so. And they went and surrendered the city to him. When Saladin had the city in his hands, he let the king go and part of his people with him. And the king, when he had thus escaped from prison, went with all the people he had to Tyre. And while the king was doing these things, the marquis had won over all those of Tyre, the Genoese who were there and all the others, to his side, and they had all promised fealty to him and had sworn on relics to hold to him in all things as to their lord, and he would help them defend the city. Now the marquis had found so great dearth in the city that a measure of grain of the city which would not make more than a *sestier* and a half at Amiens, sold for one hundred besants. Now when the king came to Tyre, his sergeants began to call out: "Open, open the gate! Behold the king who comes here." And those within answered that they should not enter, and finally the marquis came to the walls and said that he should not enter. "How now?" said the king. "Am I not lord and king within there?" "By God's name," said the marquis, "you are neither king nor lord, nor shall you enter, for you have brought everything to shame and have lost all the land. And, besides, the dearth is so great within here that, if you and your people should enter, the whole city would be lost through hunger. And I had rather," said the marquis, "that you were lost, you and your people, which would be no

great matter, than we who are within, and the city, too." When the king saw he could not enter, he turned away with all his people and went off toward Acre to a certain castle and lodged there. And he was there until the king of France and the king of England found him there. Now while the marquis was at Tyre in that great dearth that was there, God sent them comfort, so that a merchant came bringing a grain ship and offered at ten besants the grain that had been at a hundred. And the marquis and all they of the city were right glad of it, and all the grain was kept and bought in the city.

It was scarcely any time after this that Saladin came and besieged Tyre both by land and by sea, so that neither food nor anything else could come into the city, and he sat there so long that the dearth was again as great in the city as it had been before.

When the marquis saw that the dearth was so great in the city and that they could not have relief or comfort from any quarter, he sent for all those of the city, both the Genoese that were there and all the others, and he spoke to them and said: "Lords," said he, "we are in an evil plight, unless God have mercy on us, for the dearth is so great in the city that there is scarcely any food or grain by which we can keep ourselves alive much longer, and no comfort can come either by sea or by land. 'Fore God, if there be any one of you who can offer a plan, let him do so." And finally a Genoese came forward and said: "If you are willing to put your trust in me," he said, "I will give you a good plan." "What then?" said the marquis. "I will tell you," said he. "We have here in the city certain ships and galleys and barges and other vessels. Now I will tell you what I will do. I will take four galleys with me and man them with the best men we have, and I will put to sea before day-break, as if I were trying to escape. And as soon as the Saracens see me, they will not take time to arm themselves, but they will be in such great haste to come up with me and chase me that they will not arm themselves at all; instead, they will set sail after me. And you will have all your other vessels and barges.

and galleys right well manned with the best men you have, and when you see that they have all set sail after me and are well under way, then cast loose all your vessels and set sail after them, and I will turn about and we will fight with them. Then God will send us help, if it pleases Him." And they all agreed to this plan and did everything just as he had proposed.

When it came toward day and he had his four galleys right well prepared and right well manned, and all the other vessels also were right well manned, what did he do but put to sea a little before daybreak. Now the sea harbor, by means of which the ships were wont to leave and to enter, was within the walls of the city of Tyre. And he got under way and began to go at a great pace. When he was at a little distance and the Saracens saw him, they made such haste to follow him that they did not arm themselves at all, and they launched all their hundred galleys and began to give chase to him. When they were all well under way, they of the city set sail after them, and those whom the Saracens were chasing turned about. And so the Tyrians came up with these Saracens who were all unarmed, and they slew many of them and defeated them so that of all the hundred galleys only two escaped being taken by the Tyrians. And Saladin was watching all this and lamenting more than a good deal and pulling his beard and tearing his hair for grief at seeing his people cut to pieces before his eyes and he not able to help them. And when he had so lost his navy, he broke camp and went away. So in this way the city was saved by the marquis. And the king Guy was in this small castle near Acre, there where the king of France and the king of England found him later.

It was scarcely any time after this that King Guy was dead and his wife also, and the kingdom fell to the wife of my lord Humphrey of Thoron, she who was sister to the queen. So they went and took his wife away from my lord Humphrey and gave her to the marquis. So the marquis was king, and he had a daughter by her, and then the marquis was slain by the Assassins. Then they took the queen and gave her to Count Henry

of Champagne. And afterwards they besieged Acre and took it.<sup>57</sup>

Now we have told you the wrong for which the marquis of Montferrat hated the emperor of Constantinople, and why he was more at pains and more urgent than all the others that they should go to Constantinople. So we shall return now to our earlier matter. After the doge of Venice had said to the barons that now they had a good excuse for going to the land of Constantinople and that he was greatly in favor of it, then all the barons agreed to it. Then the bishops were asked if it would be a sin to go there, and the bishops answered that it would not be a sin but rather a righteous deed; for since they had the rightful heir who had been disinherited, they could well help him to win his rights and avenge himself on his enemies. Then they made the youth swear on relics that he would keep the covenants he had made with them before.

Then all the pilgrims and the Venetians agreed to go there, and they got ready their fleet and their gear and put to sea. They went until they came to a port which is called Abydos,<sup>58</sup> which was a good hundred leagues this side of Constantinople. Now this was the port where Troy the Great was located, at the entrance of the Arm of St. George.<sup>59</sup> From there they set out again and sailed up the Arm of St. George until they came within a league of Constantinople. Then they waited there until all the vessels were come together. And when the whole fleet and all the vessels were come together, they arrayed

<sup>57</sup> In fact, Acre was taken by the crusaders in July, 1191, while Conrad was assassinated at the end of April, 1192.

<sup>58</sup> *bouke d'ave*. This really means the mouth or strait of Avie (Abydos), as in Villehardouin's *Boque d'avie*; the letter of Hugh of St. Pol refers to the city as *portum Buccaviae*.

<sup>59</sup> *Bras saint jorge*. The Latin form is *Brachium Sancti Georgii*. This name was applied in the West to the Bosphorus at least from the time of the First Crusade; so the *Gesta Anonymi*, Gilbert of Nogent, Albert of Aix, Odo of Deuil, William of Tyre, etc. Robert uses it here for the whole extent of the Straits from the opening of the Hellespont to the end of the Bosphorus, and so does Villehardouin. The name seems to have been derived from the monastery of St. George of the Mangana, or Arsenal, which stands on the citadel of Constantinople, overlooking the Bosphorus.

and adorned their vessels so finely that it was the most beautiful thing in the world to see. When they of Constantinople saw this fleet which was so finely arrayed, they gazed at it in wonder, and they were mounted on the walls and on the houses to look upon this marvel. And they of the fleet also regarded the great size of the city, which was so long and so wide, and they marveled at it exceedingly. Then they passed by and made port at Chalcedon,<sup>60</sup> across the Arm of St. George.

When the emperor of Constantinople learned of it, he sent good envoys to ask them what they sought there and why they were come there, and he sent word to them that if they wanted any of his gold or his silver, he would right gladly send it to them. When the high men heard this, they answered the envoys that they did not want any of his gold or his silver, but rather they wanted the emperor to surrender the empire, for he held it neither rightfully nor loyally, and they sent word to him that they had the rightful heir with them, Alexius, the son of Isaac the emperor. Thereupon the envoys answered and said that the emperor would do nothing of the sort, and with that they went away. Then the doge of Venice spoke to the barons and said to them: "Lords, I propose that we take ten galleys and place the youth on one of them and people with him, and that they go under flag of truce to the shore of Constantinople and ask those of the city if they would be willing to recognize the youth as their lord." And the high men answered that this would be a good thing to do. So they got ready these ten galleys and the youth and many armed men with him. And they rowed close to the walls of the city and rowed up and down, and they showed the youth, whose name was Alexius, to the people, and they asked them if they recognized him as their lord. And they of the city answered plainly and said that they did not recognize him as their lord and did not know who he was. And those who were in the galleys with the youth said that he was the son of Isaac, the former emperor, and those within answered again that they did not know anything about him. Then they came back again to the

<sup>60</sup> *Mauchidone.*

host and made known how the people had answered them. Then it was commanded throughout all the host that all should arm themselves, both great and small. And when they were all armed, they confessed themselves and received communion, for they were very fearful of landing over against Constantinople. Then they ordered their battles and their ships and their transports and their galleys, and the knights entered the transports with their horses, and they got under way. And they had the trumpets sounded, of silver and of brass, fully a hundred pair, and drums and tabors more than a great many.

When the people of the city saw this great navy and this great fleet and heard the sound of the trumpets and the drums, which were making a great din, they all armed themselves and mounted on the houses and on the towers of the city. And it seemed to them very much as if the whole sea and land trembled and as if all the sea were covered with ships. In the meantime, the emperor had made his people come all armed to the shore to defend it.

When the crusaders and the Venetians saw that the Greeks were come to the shore all armed to meet them, they talked together until the doge of Venice said that he would go in advance with all his forces and seize the shore with the help of God. Then he took his ships and his galleys and his transports and put himself in front at the head of the host. Then they took their crossbowmen and their archers and put them in front on barges to clear the shore of the Greeks, and when they were drawn up in this way, they advanced toward the shore. When the Greeks saw that the pilgrims were not going to give up coming to the shore for fear of them, and saw them approaching, they fell back and did not dare wait for them. And so the fleet made the shore. As soon as they had made land, the knights issued forth from the transports on their horses; for the transports were made in such a way that there was a door that could be opened and a bridge thrust out by which the knights could come out on land all mounted. When the fleet had made land and the Greeks who had drawn back saw that they were all come out, they were greatly dismayed at it.

Now these were the same people, these Greeks who had come to defend the shore, who had boasted to the emperor that the pilgrims should never land as long as they were there.<sup>61</sup> When the knights were come forth from the transports, they began to give chase to these Greeks, and they chased them as far as a bridge which was near the head of the city.<sup>62</sup> On this bridge there was a gate through which the Greeks passed in their flight to Constantinople. When the knights were returned from chasing these Greeks, they all talked together until the Venetians said that their vessels would not be in safety unless they were in the harbor, so they decided to put them in the harbor. Now the harbor of Constantinople<sup>63</sup> was right well secured with a great iron chain<sup>64</sup> which was fastened at one end in the city and at the other end, across the harbor, at the tower of Galata. This tower was very strong and defensible and was right well manned with defenders.

By the advice of the high men this tower was besieged and finally taken by force. Now there were Greek galleys placed along the chain from one end to the other to help defend it.

<sup>61</sup> Villehardouin's account of this landing across from Constantinople (§§ 156, 157) deserves to be quoted: "And the morning was fine, a little after sunrise, and the emperor Alexius was awaiting them with his great battles and his great forces on the other side. And the trumpets sounded, and each galley was tied to a transport to cross over more safely. They did not ask which should go first, but each made for the shore as best it could. And the knights issued forth from the transports and vaulted into the sea up to their waists all armed, with helms laced on and swords in hand, and the good archers and the crossbowmen were each in his place at the landing. And the Greeks made a show of resisting, but when it came to the lowering of the lances they turned their backs and yielded them the shore. And know that never was a port taken more proudly or more worthily. Then the seamen began to open the doors of the transports and put out the bridges and lead out the horses, and the knights began to mount the horses and the battles began to arrange themselves in the order agreed on."

<sup>62</sup> This is the bridge over the stream that flows into the Golden Horn. Villehardouin says that the Greeks broke it down and the crusaders had to repair it when they made their march to invest the walls at that corner of the city.

<sup>63</sup> The Golden Horn; see map facing p. 31.

<sup>64</sup> For this chain, see Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, p. 228. It is described in the letter of Hugh of St. Pol; Dandolo says that it was broken by the attack of the great Venetian ship *Aquila*.