



13. The Near East (Map by the University of Wisconsin Cartographic Laboratory)

XI

THE FIFTH CRUSADE

A. Preparation and the Efforts of 1217

Although Innocent III had made the best of the results of the Fourth Crusade, he was, of course, disappointed in his hope that the taking of Constantinople would facilitate the conquest of the Holy Land. In the autumn of 1207, however, his former legate to Constantinople, cardinal Benedict, reported on actual conditions in the Latin empire, and thereafter Innocent once more concentrated

The following are the chief primary western sources for the Fifth Crusade: *Chronique d'Ernoult et de Bernard le trésorier* (ed. L. de Mas Latrie, Paris, 1871); *Chronica regia Coloniensis*, in *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (ed. G. Waitz, Hanover, 1880); Emo, *Chronicon* (ed. L. Weiland, MGH, SS., XXIII); *L'Estoire d'Eracles empereur* (RHC, Occ., II) James of Vitry, *Historia Iherosolimitana*, in J. Bongars (ed.), *Gesta Dei per Francos* (Hanover, 1611), I, 1047-1124; Oliver Scholasticus, *Historia Damiatina* (ed. H. Hoogeweg, *Die Schriften des Kölner Domscholasters, späteren Bischofs von Paderborn und Kardinal-Bischofs von S. Sabina Olivverus*, in *Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart*, CCII [Tübingen, 1894], 159-282). Of the sources collected in R. Röhricht, *Quinti belli sacri scriptores minores* (Geneva, 1879) and *Testimonia minora de quinto bello sacro* (Geneva, 1882), both published by the Société de l'orient latin, the following are of chief importance: *Gesta crucigerorum*; *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*; John of "Tulbia" (Tolve), *De domino Iohanne rege Ierusalem*; and *Liber duellii Christiani in obsidione Damiate*. The English sources of primary importance are: Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora* (ed. H. R. Luard, 7 vols., 1872-1883, Rolls Series, LVII); Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum* (ed. J. Stevenson, 1875, Rolls Series, LXVI); and Roger of Wendover, *Flores historiarum* (ed. H. G. Hewlett, 3 vols., 1886-1889, Rolls Series, LXXXIV).

The letters of principal value as sources are: *Innocentii III epistolae*, in *PL*, vols. CCXIV-CCXVI, and in *RHGF*, XIX; *Gervasii Praemonstratensis Abbatis epp. ad Innocentium et Honorium*, in *RHGF*, XIX, 604-605, 618-620; and James of Vitry, *Epistolae, 1216-1221* (ed. R. Röhricht, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XIV [1892-1894], 97-118; XV [1894-1895], 568-587; XVI [1895-1896], 72-114). For Andrew II and the Hungarian Crusade the primary source is *Ex Thomae historia pontificum Salontanorum et Spalatinorum* (ed. L. von Heinemann, MGH, SS., XXIX, 568-598).

The chief Arabic sources are: Abū-Shāmah, *Kitāb ar-raūdātain* (Cairo, 1870-1871; extracts tr. in *RHC, Or.*, IV-V); Abū-l-Fidā', *Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar fi akhbār al-bashar* (extracts tr. in *RHC, Or.*, I, 1-165); "Extraits de l'histoire des patriarches d'Alexandrie relatifs au siège de Damiette" (tr. E. Blochet in *ROL*, XI [1908], 240-260); Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fi-t-tārīkh* (extracts tr. in *RHC, Or.*, I, II, part 1); al-Maqrīzī, *Akhbār Miṣr* (tr. E. Blochet, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, VI-XI [1898-1908]).

The principal secondary works for the Fifth Crusade include, first of all, three by R. Röhricht: *Studien zur Geschichte des fünften Kreuzzuges* (Innsbruck, 1891); "Die Belagerung von Damietta (1218-1220): Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters," *Historisches Taschenbuch*, ser. 5, V, 6 (1876), 61 ff.; and "Die Kreuzzugbewegung im Jahre 1217," *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte*, XVI (1876), 139 ff. Another work of first importance

his efforts on the organization of a new crusade in the west. Yet conditions in western Europe were hardly favorable for the enterprise: Germany was torn by the conflict between Philip of Swabia and Otto of Brunswick, and after the assassination of Philip in 1208, it soon became apparent that Otto's imperial ambitions were irreconcilable with the papal plans. In France the nobility was engaged in the war against the Albigensians, enjoying privileges and immunities similar to those of crusaders in Syria. The bitter territorial conflict between Philip Augustus and John Lackland preoccupied both monarchs, while the attention of Spain was absorbed by the crusade against the Muwahhids (Almohads). The mystical appeal, which had evoked a universal response in earlier crusades, now led only to such fiascos as the Children's Crusade. It was not until 1213 that Innocent III at last sent forth his letters summoning the leaders of Christendom to a great council to be held in November 1215, at the same time announcing that the causes nearest his heart were the reformation of the universal church and the conquest of the Holy Land.¹

The tone of Innocent's letters leaves no doubt that he was determined to take every precaution to insure that the plans did not miscarry through falling into the hands of others than the chosen agents of the church. What is usually designated as the Fifth Crusade was to be above all else a papal crusade. Innocent

is H. Hoogeweg, "Der Kreuzzug von Damietta," *Mittheilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung* VIII, IX; of lesser importance but useful for details of the expedition and the siege of Damietta is: M. Reinaud, "Histoire de la sixième croisade et de la prise de Damiette d'après les écrivains arabes," *Journal asiatique*, VIII (1826), 18 ff. The financing of the crusade and, particularly, the role of the Templars is treated by L. Delisle, "Mémoire sur les opérations financières des templiers," *Mémoires de l'Institut national de France, Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, XXXIII, part 2 (Paris, 1889), 1-250.

The most thoroughgoing effort to deal with Francis of Assisi and his visit to Damietta is G. Golubovich, "San Francesco e i Francescani in Damietta, 5 Nov. 1219-2 Feb. 1220," *Studi Francescani*, XXIII (n.s., XII; 1926), 307-330; and supplementing this, see P. L. Lemmens, "De Sancto Francisco Christum praedicante coram sultano Aegypti," *Archivum historicum Franciscanum*, XIX (1926), 559-578, and Nazzareo Jacopozi, "Dove sia avvenuta la visita di San Francesco d'Assisi al Sultano Malek el-Kamel," *Congrès international de géographie, le Caire — Avril, 1925*, V (Cairo, 1926), and more recently M. Roncaglia, "San Francesco d'Assisi in Oriente," *Studi Francescani*, I (1953), 97-106.

Biographical works dealing with leading personages are L. Böhm, *Johann von Brienne* (Heidelberg, 1938); J. Clausen, *Papst Honorius III., 1216-1227* (Bonn, 1895); O. Hassler, *Pelagius Galvani* (Basel, 1902); J. P. Donovan, S.J., *Pelagius and the Fifth Crusade* (diss., University of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, 1950); D. Mansilla, "El Cardenal hispano Pelayo Gaitán (1206-1230)," *Anthologica Annua*, I (1953), 11-66, a spirited defense, based chiefly on the papal letters; W. Junckmann, "Magister Oliverius Scholasticus, Bischof von Paderborn, Kardinalbischof von S. Sabina, und der Kreuzzug von Damiette," *Katholische Zeitschrift* (Münster, 1851); and L. C. F. Petit-Radel, "Olivier ou Olivarius, écolâtre de Cologne, cardinal-évêque de Sabine," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, XVIII (1895), 14-29.

¹ *PL*, CCXVI, cols. 823 ff.

hoped to inspire all spiritual and temporal leaders with the urgency of the task confronting the church.²

He called for energetic action, reminding the faithful of the thousands of Christians languishing in Saracen prisons and of the Moslem fortress recently erected on Mt. Tabor, thought to be the place of Christ's transfiguration — a fortress dominating the city of Acre, through which the Saracens hoped "to invade, unopposed, the remnants of the kingdom of Jerusalem." He summoned bishops, abbots, cathedral chapters, all members of the clergy, the cities and villages in most regions of Europe to furnish armed troops in proportion to their capabilities, together with the necessary arms and supplies for three years' service. He urged maritime cities to provide transportation and naval supplies.

So that the more urgent mission in the orient might not suffer, Innocent suspended the privileges granted to other crusaders, such as those who had elected to fight against the Albigensians and the the Muwahhids, a change in policy which must greatly have disturbed those who in good faith had accepted the pope's own earlier assurances that the heretics were no less dangerous than the "infidels". Kings, princes, counts, barons, and other magnates, unable to take the cross in person, should equip and maintain combatants. Corsairs, pirates, and others guilty of molesting and despoiling pilgrims en route to the Holy Land were to be excommunicated, together with all their associates.

In order that the enterprise might be supported by spiritual as well as by physical weapons, the pope ordered the institution of monthly processions, men and women marching separately. Public prayers were to be offered beseeching God to restore to the Christians the Holy Sepulcher. During the daily celebration of mass, immediately after communion, men and women were to prostrate themselves humbly while the clergy chanted the 67th (68th) and 78th (79th) Psalms: *Exsurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici eius*, and *Deus, venerunt gentes in haereditatem tuam*. At the conclusion of the ceremony a special prayer, provided by the pope, was to be offered for the freeing of the land consecrated by the blood of Christ.

To France Innocent sent his former schoolmate Robert of "Courçon" (Curzon) as legate and crusading preacher,³ and appealed

² The following account of the preparations for the crusade is based, in large part, on the letters of Innocent III in *PL*, CXXVI, cols. 817-832, 904-905.

³ For the following, and many other details, see F. J. G. la Porte du Theil, ". . . Mémoire biographique sur Robert de Courçon, avec l'analyse et l'extrait de dix lettres anecdotes du pape Innocent III," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, VI (Paris, 1800-1801), 130 ff.

to the royal family and to the clergy of France to give him whole-hearted support.⁴ Soon after Robert's arrival in France, he summoned a council to deal especially with the difficult question of usury, through which many of the nobles and clergy had been pauperized and, as a consequence, could not afford to give the desired support to the crusade. But the clergy of France complained bitterly to the pope of the legate's encroachments upon their authority, of his avarice, and of the slanderous abuse to which they were subjected, both by the legate and by the crusading preachers associated with him. Contemporary sources are in agreement that his imprudent conduct had incurred general hatred. Philip Augustus supported the clergy in their complaints, and the pope, seeing the grave danger to the success of the crusade, acknowledged the excessive zeal of Robert, although pleading extenuating circumstances.⁵

The preaching of Robert of Courçon, like that of his greater contemporary James of Vitry, was most successful among the masses, the unfortunate, and the weak. He permitted all who volunteered to accept the cross: old men, women, children, cripples, the deaf, and the blind. William the Breton, a contemporary historian, alleges that many nobles refused to take the cross because of the difficulties and confusion occasioned by the presence of so many ill-suited to the task of a crusade.⁶ But this was largely Innocent's fault: in his anxiety lest aid to the Holy Land be unduly delayed, the pope had expressly admonished his agents not to take the time, at the moment when the cross was assumed, to examine too closely the physical or moral fitness of the crusaders. Exceptions could be made later in all cases of urgent necessity.

In the autumn of 1215, when Robert returned to Rome to participate in the Fourth Lateran Council, the prelates of France, in his presence, placed before the pope their list of grievances, so numerous and, in many instances, so well founded that the pope could only plead with the prelates to forgive the legate's indiscretions.⁷ Yet, at the end of 1218, at the request — incredible as it may seem — of the French crusaders, Robert was sent to Palestine by Honorius III as spiritual adviser to the French fleet, but in all things subordinate to the recently chosen papal legate, cardinal Pelagius.⁸

⁴ *PL*, CCXVI, cols. 827-828; *RHGF*, XIX, 579.

⁵ Du Theil, "Mémoire," pp. 578-580. See also the letter of Innocent III (May 14, 1214) to Philip Augustus in *RHGF*, XIX, 59.

⁶ *De gestis Philippi Augusti*, in *RHGF*, XVII, 108.

⁷ *Ex chronologia Roberti Altissiodorensis*, in *RHGF*, XVIII, 283.

⁸ P. Pressutti (ed.), *Regesta Honorii papae III* (2 vols., Berlin, 1874-1875), nos. 1498, 1558; O. Rinaldi ("Raynaldus"), *Annales ecclesiastici*, ad ann. 1218, no. 5 (vol. XIII, Rome, 1646).

Meanwhile Simon, the newly appointed archbishop of Tyre, already in France as a crusading preacher and as papal representative at the Council of Melun, had in December 1216 been designated by Honorius as legate in France.⁹

In western Germany, the task of preaching a crusade was entrusted to an impressive array of bishops, abbots, and other high clerics.¹⁰ By far the most successful of these was the scholasticus Oliver of the school of Cologne. The term scholasticus appears to have been employed to designate his role as scholar, teacher, and man of letters, rather than in its narrower significance as a student of scholastic theology.¹¹ It has been conjectured that Oliver was probably of a noble Westphalian family which had long been in possession of the episcopal see of Paderborn.¹² Innocent again called upon him, this time designating as his province Westphalia, Frisia, Brabant, Flanders, the diocese of Utrecht, and neighboring regions. His success was phenomenal. In the maritime cities and towns fifty thousand are said to have taken the cross; at any rate 300 ships were fitted out in Cologne.¹³ As usual, one must accept such figures with reservations.

A third crusading preacher, James of Vitry, had, in the early years of the thirteenth century, come under the influence of the saintly Mary of Oignies, had become a canon regular, and after 1210 had preached the crusade against the Albigensians. His reward was election as bishop of Acre. Honorius III in 1217 summoned him to preach the new crusade in the Latin settlements of Syria, a task all the more difficult because of the widespread corruption prevalent in the cosmopolitan ports of Acre, Tyre, and Sidon, and because of the general use of the Arabic tongue in many communities.¹⁴

As if determined to prevent the revival of the mercenary interests which had diverted the Fourth Crusade, James unrelentingly attacked the westerners, especially the Venetians, Pisans, and Genoese, who had colonized the port cities. As he traveled through Syria he saw, with rising indignation, the extent to which the colonists had adopted not only the language but the manners and

⁹ *Epistolae Honorii papae III*, in *RHGF*, XIX, 616.

¹⁰ Listed by R. Röhrich, *Studien zur Geschichte des fünften Kreuzzuges*, p. 5 and accompanying notes.

¹¹ Petit-Radel, "Olivier ou Olivarius," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, XVIII, 14 ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, and see also Junckmann, "Magister Oliverius Scholasticus," *Katholische Zeitschrift*, 1851, pp. 101 ff.; H. Hoogeweg, "Die schriften d. Domscholasters Oliverus," *Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart*, CCII (Tübingen, 1894), pp. x ff., xx ff.

¹³ See the letter of Oliver in *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst*, X (1891), 170.

¹⁴ James of Vitry, *Epist.* II, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XIV, 115.

customs of the Moslems. Perhaps he exaggerated the depravity of the Syrian Christians, especially of the "poulains", the descendants of the first Latin settlers, whose effeminacy and immorality shocked him. But at best he found them a lascivious and treacherous people, always eager to teach the westerners their vicious habits. He charged that they did not scruple at serving as spies for the "infidel" against their own people.¹⁵ In Acre, the key city of the Latin kingdom, where criminals thronged, where women of the street accepted the favors of the clergy, and where the scum of the Mediterranean came to prey upon the newly arrived crusaders, the eloquent James of Vitry restored something of the spiritual ardor of the early crusading era.

In the west troubadours no less than preachers aided the pope in awakening interest in the crusade. Pons of Capdoh (Chapdeuil) expresses the wish that the kings of France and England would make peace, and that the king of Apulia (Frederick II) and the emperor (Otto IV) would become friends until the Holy Sepulcher should be recovered by the Christians. With equal fervor a poem of Aimery of Péguilhan, inspired by the call of Innocent III, urges the young William IV of Montferrat to emulate the deeds of his forebears who had won fame and honor in Syria.¹⁶ An anonymous troubadour appeals to Philip II, Otto IV, and John of England to make peace and go forward together to the conquest of Syria.¹⁷

Meanwhile the Lateran Council afforded Innocent III an opportunity for arranging the final details.¹⁸ Brindisi and Messina were designated as the places of assembly for departure on June 1, 1217, at which time Innocent himself intended to visit Sicily to bestow his blessings upon the departing pilgrims. The clergy were to urge and, if necessary, compel all crusaders to fulfill their vows, and see to it that the nobles provided and equipped their assigned quotas of armed men. After the expedition was under way the clergy should aid in maintaining discipline through guidance and

¹⁵ James of Vitry, *Historia Iherosolimitana* (ed. Bongars), I, par. 74-79, pp. 1089 ff.

¹⁶ F. Diez, *Die Poesie der Troubadours* (Paris, 1845), pp. 212-213. For the fixing of the dates of these poems see also K. Lewent, *Das altprovenzalische Kreuzlied* (Erlangen, 1905), pp. 28 ff. Cf. A. Pillet and H. Carstens, *Bibliographie des Troubadours* (Halle, 1933).

¹⁷ R. Zenker, "Peire von Auvergne," *Romanische Forschungen: Organ für Romanische Sprachen und Mittellatein*, XII (Erlangen, 1900), 798 ff.:

"Al rei Felip et a'n Oto
et al rei Joan eisamen
laus que fasson acordamen
entr' els. . ."

¹⁸ J. D. Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, XXII (Venice, 1778; reprinted Paris, 1903), 1058-1067, analyzed in some detail by Röhrich, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, pp. 6 ff. The constitution is also in *PL*, CCXVII, cols. 269 ff. See also W. E. Lunt, *Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages*, II (New York, 1934), 86 ff.

example. All clerics who accompanied the armies were to receive the income from their benefices for three years, even if their properties had previously been encumbered by mortgages.

The apostolic see, which had already appropriated 30,000 pounds to be used in the orient, pledged itself still further to supply equipment and ships for the Roman crusaders and an additional 3,000 marks. The pope mentioned other large sums which were to be paid through the masters of the Temple and the Hospital. In order to obtain other contributions, the pope and the priests of Rome were to pledge a tenth of their incomes. The clergy in general and the religious orders, with the exception of the Premonstratensians, Cistercians, and Cluniacs, who had already been taxed in support of the Albigensian or other crusades, were to pay a twentieth of their incomes for a period of three years. Those refusing to do so would be excommunicated.

As financial officers, the pope used Aimard, treasurer of the Temple in Paris; Martin, the chamberlain of the Temple; John, the marshal of the Hospitallers, and other representatives in the Holy Land; king John of Jerusalem; and the masters of the Templars and Hospitallers.¹⁹ Among the last letters of Innocent III, one addressed to Aimard and another to king John of Jerusalem and the masters advised them that he was sending 9,000 pounds sterling for use in the Holy Land.²⁰

The crusaders themselves were to be freed from all other tax obligations, from rents, and from importuning by Jewish money-lenders, and were to receive the special protection of the pope, or of their immediate patrons, until their return home. Maritime trade with the Moslems was to be suspended during four years and severe penalties were to be imposed upon those who engaged in piracy and those who were found selling munitions or essential building materials to the enemy. Finally, special measures applying to the nobility compelled a general peace for four years and forbade the holding of tournaments during a period of three years. All crusaders were to be granted plenary indulgence. Innocent also authorized Ralph of Mérencourt, the patriarch of Jerusalem, to serve as legate in the province of Jerusalem after the arrival of the crusading army. In order to protect Ralph against attacks from Saracen galleys on his return trip to Palestine, the pope called upon John of Brienne, king of Jerusalem, to provide the necessary escort.

¹⁹ Röhrich, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 10 and note 66. Concerning Aimard see Delisle, "Mémoire sur les opérations financières des templiers," p. 28, and especially pp. 61 ff. William of Chartres was master of the Temple; Garin of Montaigu, of the Hospital.

²⁰ A. Potthast, *Regesta pontificum Romanorum*, I (Berlin, 1874), nos. 5180 and 5209.

Since John was himself engaged in a conflict with the kings of Armenia and Cyprus, Innocent peremptorily ordered him to keep the peace.²¹

Despite his efforts, Innocent achieved but partial success. The preaching, the systematic agitation, the efforts to secure temporary peace in the Christian world unquestionably produced a profound impression upon western Europe, but the movement won its chief support among the lowly. Chivalrous society no longer responded with enthusiasm to the call for a holy war, and did not provide the necessary leadership. Mercenary motives persisted among those who took the cross. It was the tragedy of Innocent III that the dominant aim of his pontificate could not be realized within his lifetime. Perhaps, indeed, a crusade undertaken in the spirit in which Innocent conceived it was no longer a possibility. When, in the summer of 1216, he himself set out in an effort to compose, by his own presence, the perennial conflicts of the northern Italian cities, death overtook him at Perugia on July 16, 1216.²²

His successor, the aged but vigorous Honorius III, devoted himself unsparingly to the realization of Innocent's plans. Despite infirmities, Honorius believed implicitly, according to a contemporary, that it was to be his God-given destiny to free the Holy Land.²³ But the many difficulties of which Innocent III was so keenly aware quickly reappeared and were often accentuated as a result of his death.

Young Frederick II, for example, in a moment of enthusiasm had taken the cross and had appealed to the nobility of Germany to follow his example.²⁴ But as long as his Welf foe, Otto IV, remained to contest his claim to the throne, Frederick was helpless to embark upon a project which must necessarily remove him so long from Germany. The bitter feuds among the English nobility did not abate with the death of king John on October 16, 1216. Nor were conditions hopeful in France or Spain. Honorius III could not hope for the leadership of the kings and barons of the chief countries of Europe. At best, he could expect immediate assistance only from disparate and ill organized pilgrim groups.

Two significant letters of the Premonstratensian abbot, Gervase, one addressed to Innocent III and the other to Honorius III, reveal the problems facing the promoters of the crusade.²⁵ Many

²¹ Röhrich, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 7.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Burchard, *Urspergensium chronicon* (MGH, SS., XXIII), pp. 378-379.

²⁴ See below, chapter XII, pp. 430-431.

²⁵ These two letters, analyzed here in some detail, are in *RHGF*, XIX, 604-605, 618-620.

who had taken the vow, Gervase writes, desired to know whether the pope had accorded to the French nobles permission to delay their departure for a year. Archbishop Simon of Tyre, lately arrived as legate in France, had because of his limited authority given no satisfactory reply, merely answering that the pope had changed nothing which had been determined by the council. The inability to obtain sufficient answers to such questions was all the more disturbing because the Parisian doctors had declared that one would be guilty of mortal sin in failing to fulfill his vow within the prescribed year, save with papal dispensation.

The nobles, the powerful men, and even the commoners of the cities had, for the most part, determined not to go at all, having little regard either for spiritual or for temporal penalties. On the other hand, the masses, the "little crusaders", were ardently desirous of fulfilling their vows, but were at a loss as to when to depart. Many had also expressed serious doubts as to their usefulness in the Holy Land in the absence of leaders from their own country who could speak their language. Gervase firmly believed also that the French and the Germans, unable to coöperate in any great enterprise, should not be required to set out together.

The most pressing difficulty, however, was the unequal justice meted out to the upper and lower classes. In France sometimes the clergy had overlooked the failure of the nobles to depart but had threatened the lowly with excommunication, with an eye to filling their own pockets. Gervase advised that the French be permitted to choose their own ports of embarkation. He further recommended the appointment of a special nuncio or legate, acting directly under papal orders, and expressed his disappointment that the new duties of James of Vitry in the Holy Land precluded his returning to France. If the pope felt it inadvisable to send a legate with full powers, Gervase recommended the creation of diocesan commissions empowered to guarantee the privileges of the crusaders, to grant dispensations to the unfit, to collect all accrued sums, and to supervise the distribution of funds. Gervase urged that potential leaders, such as dukes Odo of Burgundy and Theobald of Lorraine, should be compelled to fulfill their vows punctually as a salutary example to all pledged crusaders, whether of high or low degree. He feared that many who had accepted the cross with fervent devotion would now fall "into the abyss of despair", in the belief that the delay in departure, over which they had no control, would deprive them of all privileges and all indulgences. He insisted, however, that the clergy, who were obliged to pay one twentieth

without first deducting the ordinary and general taxes, could hardly afford to do so, except for those who had an assured living.

Everywhere indeed the twentieth was regarded as an onerous burden. Its collection often required compulsory measures. In Spain, where a twentieth had already been levied to meet the expenses of the war against the Moors, demands for the collection of another twentieth occasioned bitter protests. In Scandinavia the twentieth had to be levied through payments in kind, and could not be accurately estimated. Generally the twentieth, together with similar taxes, constituted a part of the donation chest maintained in many churches. After collections were made in this manner they were usually sent through Aimard, treasurer of the Temple in Paris, and thence through a duly designated agent to the papal legate in the Holy Land, or directly to the leaders of crusading armies. It was expected that the legate, upon receiving these funds, would distribute them equitably among those crusaders who had taken the cross in the diocese where the taxes had been collected. Exceptions to this practice were authorized in those cases where previous arrangements had been made and sanctioned by the pope, permitting the sending of the money directly to the leaders. The questionable handling of such funds is more than suggested in Gervase's second letter. He complains to Honorius that the people were asking, "What use has been made of the money deposited in the chests of the church, and of the taxes paid by the clergy?" False accounting by some clergymen, even though the culprits were all too frequently absolved, indicates the difficulties in the administration of the finances of the crusades. In at least one instance, there was evidence of actual theft.²⁶

Only a few Frenchmen, including archbishop Aubrey of Rheims and bishops John of Limoges and Robert of Bayeux, took part in the expedition of 1217. Most French nobles were pre-occupied in the west, and unwilling to go in the company of Germans and Hungarians.²⁷ But king Andrew II of Hungary and duke Leopold VI of Austria, in the absence of support from the greater princes of Europe, devoted themselves all the more zealously to assembling and equipping their troops.²⁸

Many years before, at the time of his father's death on April 20, 1196, Andrew had assumed the crusading obligation which his

²⁶ Röhricht, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 10.

²⁷ *L'Estoire de Eracles (RHC, Occ., II)*, p. 322; Aubrey of Trois-Fontaines, *Chronicon (MGH, SS., XXIII)*, p. 905 (also in *RHGF, XVIII*, 787).

²⁸ Röhricht, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, pp. 24-36, is a basic study of the Hungarian crusade.

father had been unable to fulfill. Unstable conditions in Hungary, however, had caused pope Celestine III to consent to the postponement of his departure. Three times thereafter, in 1201, in 1209, and again in 1213, after Andrew had succeeded his brother Emeric on the throne, Innocent had granted further postponements until, at last, he fixed the date of departure for the year 1217.²⁹ In case he should not return, Andrew's sovereign rights were to descend successively to his three sons, Bela, Coloman, and Andrew, while the actual governance of the kingdom of Hungary was left to John, archbishop of Gran, and that of Croatia and Dalmatia to the master of the Hungarian Templars, Pons of the Cross.

To secure the necessary shipping for his troops Andrew sent to Venice as his agents plenipotentiary the provost Alexander of Siebenbürgen and the prior of the Hospitallers of Hungary, who concluded an agreement with the doge, Peter Ziani. The crafty doge now compelled the king of Hungary to cede the city of Zara in perpetuity to Venice: Hungarians and Venetians, after paying the usual eightieth at the borders, might trade freely in each other's territory; pearls, precious stones and metals, silks, and other luxury products were to be duty-free, clauses which, of course, chiefly benefitted the Venetians, who agreed to supply ten ships of 5,000 hundredweight at a rental of 550 Venetian silver marks each. Other ships were to have carrying capacities of not less than 3,000 hundredweight with rates of hire proportional to their sizes. Rentals were payable in instalments, the first to be made the following Whitsunday, the second not later than May 31, and the last a week before the actual departure. The ships, fully equipped, were to be in the harbor of Spalato (Split) by July 25, and must wait at least thirty days for the arrival of the king.³⁰

To raise the necessary funds, Andrew sold and mortgaged property, and resorted to the prevalent custom of debasing the coinage. There is evidence also that he pillaged some of the churches and abbeys of their sacred utensils.³¹ At the beginning of July 1217, the crusading army began its march toward Spalato. In company with king Andrew were dukes Leopold of Austria and Otto of Meran, the latter's brother Berthold, archbishop of Kalocsa, and numerous bishops, abbots, and counts from all parts of the empire,

²⁹ B. Katona, *Historia critica regum Hungariae*, IV (Bratislava and Košice, 1781), pp. 464 ff., gives these preliminaries in detail. See also the letter of Honorius III to Andrew, 3 *Idus Febr.* in Fejer, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*, III (Budapest, 1829), 189; and I. A. Fessler, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, I (Leipzig, 1867), 276, 313-314.

³⁰ *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium* (ed. Academia scientiarum et artium Slavorum meridionalium), I (1868), 29-31.

³¹ Röhricht, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 24.

together with many crusaders from Hungary.³² The ships sailed from various Adriatic ports to the port of embarkation, Spalato. Supply trains moved overland, followed by large numbers of the German settlers of Transylvania, the so-called Siebenbürgen Saxons.

On August 23, 1217, Andrew, accompanied by a brilliant retinue, arrived at Spalato and was received with pomp and ceremony by the clergy and citizens. As the procession approached, the clergy, clad in silken vestments and bearing censers and crosses, came out to welcome the king. In the church of St. Dominus mass was celebrated. Thomas, archdeacon of Spalato, who describes these events in great detail, relates that the citizens, as a gesture of hospitality, permitted the crusaders to take over their homes in the suburbs of the city. Because of the huge numbers, however, many were compelled to pitch their tents in the surrounding country. The king was deeply moved by the hospitality and generosity of both the clergy and the citizens. In return he offered them as a gift the neighboring castle of Clissa, together with the island in front of it. But they declined, because of the heavy obligations which its maintenance would impose upon them, and therefore Andrew bestowed the castle upon the Templars. So great was the number of crusaders, more than 10,000 mounted men and an unknown number of foot-soldiers, that Andrew and the main body of the crusaders had to wait several weeks for enough ships to transport them. Many knights had to return home or make plans for sailing the following spring.

Duke Leopold of Austria, however, embarked immediately after his arrival in Spalato, and reached Acre after an exceptionally rapid voyage of sixteen days.³³ He had sent an embassy inviting Bohemond IV of Antioch to meet him, and Bohemond, together with his chief vassals, appeared in answer to the invitation. Two German knights were sent to urge Andrew to hasten his embarkation. Meanwhile king Hugh I of Cyprus and his chief vassals and prelates landed at Acre with a large following of Turcopoles, or mounted natives. Shortly afterwards king Andrew arrived. At Acre were assembled the dignitaries of Jerusalem, including the king, John of Brienne, the patriarch, Ralph of Mérencourt, and many others, both laymen and clerics. Military leaders included duke

³² *Ex Thomae historia pontificum Salonitanorum et Spalatinorum* (MGH, SS., XXIX), pp. 577 ff., is the chief source for the following account. Otto's sister Gertrude had been Andrew's first wife; his sister Agnes had been the third wife of Philip II of France. See also Röhrich, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 24.

³³ Röhrich, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 25.

Leopold of Austria, duke Otto of Meran, Walter of Avesnes, Garin of Montaigu, master of the Hospital, William of Chartres, master of the Temple, and Hermann of Salza, master of the Teutonic Knights. Present also were archbishops Simon of Tyre, Peter of Caesarea, Robert of Nazareth, Berthold of Kalocsa, and Eustorgue of Nicosia, many bishops, including James (of Vitry) of Acre, Egbert of Bamberg, Peter of Raab, Thomas of Erlau, Otto of Münster, Engelhard of Naumburg and Zeitz, Otto of Utrecht, and Robert of Bayeux. A council of war was held in Acre and so great was the number in attendance that the tent, though large, was almost filled.³⁴ The statement of one contemporary that there were 20,000 knights and 200,000 foot-soldiers is surely an exaggeration,³⁵ but the number was certainly very great indeed.³⁶

The poor harvest of the previous year in Syria had created a famine, a small loaf of bread selling for as much as 12 denarii. So great was the crisis that the patriarch of Jerusalem and other leaders advised many of the pilgrims to return home. During the month of September alone, 66 ships are said to have departed, and 100,000 crusaders to have perished of hunger.³⁷ Here again is obvious exaggeration, but at the close of 1217, and during much of the following year, the famine helped produce unrest. The scholasticus Oliver mentions especially the lawlessness of the Bavarians who, contrary to the laws of crusaders, committed many acts of violence against the native Christians. Duke Leopold of Austria, however, appears to have conducted himself throughout in an exemplary manner.³⁸

Prior to the arrival of the main body of the crusaders, king John of Jerusalem and the masters of the three orders appear to have been contemplating a two-fold plan of attack: an assault by a small force upon al-Mu'azzam Sharaf-ad-Dīn, son of the Aiyūbid sultan al-Ādil, in his stronghold at Nablus, and a simultaneous landing by the main body at Damietta in Egypt, designed to wrest Egypt from the Moslems and thus to open the door to the conquest of the whole of Syria. The war council in Acre apparently abandoned this project, at least temporarily, probably because of insufficient manpower and ships, but reached no clear and well defined plan of their own. Not improbably the council decided, pending the arrival of

³⁴ *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), pp. 321-323; Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 162-163.

³⁵ *Annales Ceccanenses* (ed. L. C. Bethmann, MGH, SS., XIX), pp. 276 ff.

³⁶ Röhrich, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 26 and note 30.

³⁷ *Annales Ceccanenses* (MGH, SS., XIX), p. 302.

³⁸ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 163, 168.

reinforcements, to carry out a series of petty campaigns designed to keep the enemy occupied and uncertain. Conceivably it regarded Damascus as an ultimate objective.

The Christian camp was located southeast of Acre on the left bank of the Nahr Na'mān at Recordane (Khirbat Kurdānah). On November 3, 1217, the patriarch of Jerusalem appeared bearing the remnants of the True Cross, which had been rescued thirty years before in the battle of Hattin (July 4, 1187) and which were now to become the standard of the army. In intense heat and through revealing clouds of dust the crusaders traversed the plains of Esdraelon and al-Fūlah to 'Ain Jālūt and Tubania ('Ain aṭ-Ṭuba'ūn), their leaders expecting a surprise attack. Indeed, no sooner had the march begun than al-'Ādil had proceeded from Jerusalem towards the region of Nablus, apparently with the intention of intercepting the crusaders in the vicinity of Tubania. When he realized how many and how determined they were, however, he retreated to Baisan (Bethsan), rejecting the proposals of his son al-Mu'azzam, who wanted to attack from the heights of Nain as the pilgrim army crossed the plain of Esdraelon.³⁹ Ibn-al-Athīr says that the crusaders knew that al-'Ādil's armies were widely dispersed in the provinces.⁴⁰

Observing that the Christians continued their march toward Baisan, al-'Ādil determined to retreat across the Jordan, abandoning Baisan and its terrified inhabitants to the mercy of the invaders. Again his son al-Mu'azzam questioned this decision, but the sultan, with growing impatience, swore at his son in the Persian tongue, evidently desiring to conceal his remarks from his Arab-Turkish followers.⁴¹ As al-'Ādil made good his retreat across the Jordan, the crusaders entered Baisan, where they pillaged unopposed, both within the city and throughout the countryside just south of Lake Tiberias. Al-'Ādil, however, continued his retreat to 'Ajlūn, ordering al-Mu'azzam to cover Jerusalem from a position on the heights of Lubban near Shiloh. From 'Ajlūn the sultan turned northward towards Damascus, proceeding through Ra's al-Mā' to a point some forty miles south of Damascus, Marj aṣ-Ṣuffar.⁴²

Meanwhile the crusaders crossed the Jordan, on November 10, 1217, by Jisr al-Majāmi', a bridge some six miles south of Lake

³⁹ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 163 ff.; *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), pp. 323 ff.

⁴⁰ Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī-t-tārīkh* (RHC, Or., II, 1), p. 112.

⁴¹ Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-rauḍatayn* (RHC, Or., V), p. 162.

⁴² Concerning this route see R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1927), p. 385.

Tiberias.⁴³ The city of Damascus and the surrounding villages were in consternation. The governor of the city was ordered to provision the citadel, to flood the surrounding area, and to take other defensive measures. In response to the call of the sultan, al-Mujāhid Shirkūh of Homs came to the assistance of the terrified city. But, as the Moslem populace thronged the highway to welcome the reinforcements, the crusaders pursued a leisurely march northward along the Jordan and Lake Tiberias, and then westward across the Jordan at Jacob's Ford, south of Lake Hulah, back to their camp at Acre. From the outset, the expedition appears to have been a mere reconnaissance in force, probably, as the chronicle of Ernoul implies, for want of an acknowledged leader.⁴⁴

For the moment, the zeal of the crusaders was intense, but it was soon to extinguish itself. The author of the *Eracles* relates a conversation reported to have taken place between al-'Ādil and his son al-Mu'azzam, in which the sultan advised against combat while the Christians were filled with crusading ardor; he preferred to wait until they had grown weary when, he said, the land could be freed without peril. As the Christians came to the Jordan and the shores of Lake Tiberias, they found outlets for their religious fervor in bathing in the sacred river and in making numerous pilgrimages to local holy places.⁴⁵

After a brief sojourn there, the crusaders, this time without the king of Hungary, who preferred the comforts of Acre,⁴⁶ moved against Mt. Tabor, which al-Mu'azzam, at the direction of the sultan, had fortified some years before as a vantage point overlooking the region traversed by the routes from Acre to Jerusalem. It was this stronghold with its 77 bastions and its garrison of 2,000 men that had caused Innocent III such great concern when in 1213 he had issued his call for a crusade. The fort was regarded by the Moslems as impregnable, and only through information obtained from a native boy were the crusaders encouraged to undertake the assault.⁴⁷ On December 3, the first Sunday in Advent, taking as their command the words of Matthew 21:2 ("Ite in castellum, quod contra vos est"),⁴⁸ they swarmed up the mountain in an unusually

⁴³ The *Eracles* (*RHC, Occ.*, II), p. 324, says they crossed "au pont de Judaire". See the note of Röhrich, *Fünft. Kreuz.*, p. 33, note 38.

⁴⁴ *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le trésorier* (ed. L. de Mas Latrie, Paris, 1871), p. 412; see also *Eracles* (*RHC, Occ.*, II), pp. 323-324.

⁴⁵ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 164-165.

⁴⁶ *Eracles* (*RHC, Occ.*, II), p. 325.

⁴⁷ R. Röhrich, *Geschichte des Königreichs Jerusalem, 1100-1291* (Innsbruck, 1898), p. 725.

⁴⁸ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 165.

heavy fog which hid them from the garrison.⁴⁹ The patriarch of Jerusalem, with the fragments of the cross, led the way, while the clergy prayed and sang. The crusaders came so close that they could touch the walls with their lances. Although John of Brienne fought with extraordinary bravery in repelling a sally from the fort, the attack failed.

Upon his descent John took counsel with the master of the Hospitallers and several Syrian barons. Bohemond IV strongly urged the abandonment of the attack, and was supported in this advice by other leaders. Both the scholasticus Oliver and James of Vitry criticized John severely for giving up the attack on Mt. Tabor and for causing others to do so. Yet the courage and wise leadership of John throughout the crusade give the modern historian some confidence in the decision, although one Moslem source implies that the losses of the garrison had been so heavy that it was on the point of surrendering.⁵⁰

Two days later, some of the crusaders, including the Hospitallers and the Templars, dissatisfied with the decision of the leaders, undertook another attack, this time unsuccessfully placing an assault ladder against the walls. But a counterattack from the garrison, using Greek fire, destroyed the ladder and scattered the assailants with heavy losses. Discouraged by this second failure, the crusaders abandoned the siege, and on December 7 they departed for Acre.⁵¹ Shortly after the departure of the attackers, however, al-Mu'azzam decided to destroy the fortifications of Mt. Tabor, yielding evidently to the widespread belief among the Moslems that the mere existence of the fort had subjected them to attack by the Christians.

A third crusader sortie was even more futile, if possible, than the two previous ones. Not more than 500 soldiers, chiefly Hungarian, participated. According to Abū-Shāmah, a son of the sister of the king of Hungary took part in the expedition, presumably as leader, but the author of the *Eracles* identifies the leader only as a certain "rich man called Dionysius".⁵² This confusion further suggests that the responsible leaders of the crusade had no hand in the expedition, which appears to have set out to attack the brigands who infested the mountainous region east and southeast of Sidon, contrary to the advice of Balian of Sidon, who knew the difficulties

⁴⁹ Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-rauḍatain* (RHC, Or., V), p. 163.

⁵⁰ Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (RHC, Or., II, 1), pp. 113-114.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114; Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-rauḍatain* (RHC, Or., V), p. 164.

⁵² *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), p. 325; *Ar-rauḍatain* (RHC, Or., V), p. 164; Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 167.

of the country and the cleverness of the brigands.⁵³ Near Mashgarah, where the crusaders remained for about three days, the mountaineers fell upon them, seizing their horses and slaying or taking captive large numbers of troops. Moslem sources report the nephew of the king of Hungary among the captives. Those who had escaped the massacre endeavored to retrace their steps to Sidon. A Moslem prisoner, known as al-Jāmūs, who had been taken during the battle, agreed to guide them by a shorter route if, in return, they would free him. But he led them into a deep ravine where they were pursued and slaughtered. Al-Jāmūs was slain for his ruse, but very few of the crusaders escaped, although Abū-Shāmāh undoubtedly exaggerates when he says that only three of the original 500 returned to Sidon. As the remnants made their way from Sidon to Acre, in the region near Sarepta (Şarafand) heavy rains and severe cold on Christmas Eve caused the death of some of the weary stragglers. This expedition marked the close of the crusading efforts of 1217.

King Andrew of Hungary had played no part after the first sortie across the Jordan, but had remained in Acre. Well before the end of the year, he began to make his preparations to return home. His singular inactivity may have resulted, as Thomas of Spalato intimates, from an illness, probably the result of poisoning.⁵⁴ In early January 1218, despite the admonitions of the patriarch of Jerusalem threatening excommunication, Andrew took with him many crusaders, beasts of burden, and much military equipment, and "departed stubbornly with his retinue".⁵⁵ He proceeded overland along the coast road to Tripoli, accompanied by young king Hugh of Cyprus and Bohemond of Antioch. Andrew remained in Tripoli for the marriage of Bohemond with Melisend, half-sister of the king of Cyprus, and was there when Hugh died suddenly on January 10, 1218. Before leaving Syria, Andrew visited the castles of Krak des Chevaliers and al-Marqab, bestowing gifts upon them to aid in their defense.⁵⁶ He then proceeded through Armenia,⁵⁷ where he arranged a marriage between his son Andrew and Leon's daughter Isabel, through the territory of the Selchūkid sultan of Iconium, into the Nicaean empire of Theodore I Lascaris, whose daughter Maria was betrothed to his eldest son, Bela. After crossing

⁵³ Abū-Shāmāh, *Ar-rauḍatain* (RHC, Or., V), p. 164, describes him as the governor of Sidon. For his identity see C. D. DuCange, *Les Familles d'Outremer* (ed. E. G. Rey, Paris, 1869), p. 434.

⁵⁴ *Ex Thomae historia* (MGH, SS., XXIX), p. 578.

⁵⁵ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 168.

⁵⁶ Katona, *Historia critica regum Hungariae*, V (Bratislava and Košice, 1783), 287-288.

⁵⁷ *Ex Thomae historia* (MGH, SS., XXIX), p. 579.

into Europe, Andrew continued through Bulgaria, with his army greatly reduced by difficulties and privations, and reached Hungary, bearing numerous relics of the Holy Land. His crusade had achieved nothing and brought him no honor. He returned to an impoverished country whose treasury had been so pillaged, by both lay and spiritual lords, that the debts incurred for the crusade could not be paid.⁵⁸ Such was the ineffectual conclusion of the Hungarian phase of the Fifth Crusade. The Latin orient had been deceived in its hopes of the Hungarian king and disillusioned by his conduct, some people believing that his expedition had actually damaged the crusading cause.⁵⁹

Andrew's departure so reduced the numbers of effective troops in Syria that further operations had to be suspended, at least until the arrival of new crusading bands from the west. By now, the crusaders from northwestern Germany and Frisia, many of whom had taken the cross as the result of the preaching of the scholasticus Oliver, were en route by sea to Acre. In the meantime the leaders in Syria, including king John, the duke of Austria, and the members of the military orders, desiring to employ the remnant of the expedition in some useful manner, determined upon the restoration of certain key strongholds. At Caesarea the work of reconstruction was quickly completed with little interference from the Moslems, although their approach was several times reported. On February 2, 1218, the patriarch of Jerusalem, assisted by six bishops, celebrated mass in the church of St. Peter within the newly fortified city.⁶⁰

Meanwhile the Templars, aided especially by Walter of Avesnes, pushed forward the work of restoring the fortifications of Château Pèlerin (Athlith),⁶¹ between Haifa and Caesarea, on a lofty promontory overlooking the sea, which thus protected it on three sides, and sheltered from sudden attack on the fourth by a rugged cliff. The work of restoration required especially the reconstruction of the main tower, known as Destroit, protecting the eastern end of the promontory, and originally constructed by the Templars to guard the narrow road to Jerusalem against the highwaymen who

⁵⁸ Fessler, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, I, 319 ff.

⁵⁹ Such is the judgment of Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 168; *Eracles (RHC, Occ., II)*, p. 325; James of Vitry, *Epist.* III, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XV, 569.

⁶⁰ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 168-169. The church, formerly a mosque, was dedicated as the church of St. Peter in 1101.

⁶¹ For details of this restoration, see E. G. Rey, *Étude sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire des croisés en Syrie et dans l'île de Chypre* (Paris, 1871), pp. 93 ff., also "Excavations in the Pilgrim's Castle (Athlith)," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, I (Jerusalem-London, 1932), no. 3, pp. 111 ff.

waylaid pilgrims as they passed this point. After weeks of labor, the crusaders had erected a well-nigh impregnable barrier across the promontory, and also built dwellings for the Templars, which were to serve as their quarters until the restoration of Jerusalem. Admirable as was the location of the castle strategically, it also dominated a region rich in fish, salt, wood, oils, vines, grain, and fruits of all kinds. Its harbor, naturally good, admitted of easy improvement.⁶² Quite possibly the reconstruction of Château Pèlerin hastened the decision of al-Mu'azzam to destroy the nearby fortifications of Mt. Tabor. In any event it was not until Easter that the crusaders could return to Acre, leaving garrisons in each of the castles.

The work had barely been completed when, on April 26, 1218, the first units of the fleet of the long expected Frisian-German expedition arrived,⁶³ after an adventurous journey that had lasted nearly a year. Having set sail from Dartmouth early in June 1217, under the command of counts William of Holland and George of Wied, the ships had touched at Brest, at Cape Vâres on the Galician coast, and at several Portuguese coastal points before arriving at Lisbon in the third week of July. Here the bishop, Suger, and the masters of the knightly orders and others had urged them to postpone their departure for the east until the following spring, and to join in an attack on the last remaining stronghold of the Moslems in the region of Lisbon, Alcácer (al-Qaṣr) do Sal. The counts of Holland and Wied and many of the German crusaders had accepted the invitation, knowing that the emperor Frederick II would surely not be embarking for the Holy Land before 1218. Some 180 ships had remained in Lisbon. But the Frisians had refused the invitation, mindful of Innocent III's command that nothing be allowed to delay the crusade. With 80 ships, they had continued their voyage immediately.

While the Germans had joined the Portuguese in the siege of Alcácer do Sal, which ended successfully on October 21, 1217, and had then returned to winter in Lisbon, the Frisians had coasted southward along the Portuguese shore, plundering the Moslem ports of Santa Maria⁶⁴ and Rota, resting in Cadiz, whose inhabitants had deserted it for fear of them, and sailing through the Strait of

⁶² In addition to Oliver, *loc. cit.*, see also *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), pp. 325 ff.; James of Vitry, *Epist.* III, pp. 569 ff.; and *Chronique d'Ernouf*, pp. 421 ff.

⁶³ The following account is based on Emo, *Chronicon* (MGH, SS., XXIII), pp. 478 ff., and the *Chronica regia Coloniensis* (*Annales Colonienses maximi*), partim ex MGH recusa (*Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*, Hanover, 1880), pp. 239 ff., the latter text appearing also in the MGH, SS., XVII, 829 ff.

⁶⁴ Emo, *Chronicon* (MGH, SS., XXIII), p. 480: "nunc Hairin dicitur"; modern Faro.

Gibraltar, northward along the Mediterranean coast of Spain by Tortosa and Barcelona, and thence, with many delays along the French and Italian shores, to Civitavecchia, in papal territory, where they passed the winter. They set sail once more on March 20, 1218, with a good many Italian crusaders on board, and via Syracuse and Candia reached Acre late in April. On March 31 the German ships set sail from Lisbon, and, though scattered by storms off the Balearic islands and driven to take refuge in various French and Italian ports, also made their way to Acre, arriving during May.⁶⁵ Oliver welcomed his countrymen, and assumed a position of leadership among them.

With the gathering of an ever increasing number of crusaders in Acre, the leaders soon decided to employ the expedition against Egypt rather than in Palestine, a plan which king John and the masters of the knightly orders had abandoned a year earlier only for want of sufficient men and ships. Oliver eloquently supported John's proposal to move immediately against Damietta, and appears to have gained unanimous approval for it,⁶⁶ and in a letter to the pope dated September 22, 1218, James of Vitry explained that the spring was not a good time for a direct attack on Jerusalem because of the excessive heat and the scarcity of water. Egypt, on the other hand, in contrast to the hot and rugged land of Jerusalem, was a land of great fertility and abundant water. Moreover, it was a level country where the fortifications were chiefly in three cities. The taking of one — Damietta, "the key to Egypt" — would open the way to the others. James recalled also that Egypt was rich in its associations with the life of the infant Jesus and that among its inhabitants were numerous Christians, long under subjugation by the Saracens.⁶⁷ No less significant also is the statement of the Arab historian, Ibn-al-Furāt, who quotes the crusading leaders as saying: "It was with the aid of the resources of that rich country [Egypt] that Saladin conquered Syria and subjugated the holy city. If we become masters of it, we can easily retake Jerusalem, with all our former possessions."⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Chronica regia Coloniensis*, pp. 244 ff.; *Annales Colonienses maximi* (MGH, SS., XVII), p. 832.

⁶⁶ James of Vitry, *Epist.* III, p. 570, declares the plan to have been "omnibus unanimiter concordatum".

⁶⁷ James of Vitry, *Epist.* IV, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XV, 571-572.

⁶⁸ *Ta'rikh*, excerpts trans. J. F. Michaud, *Bibliothèque des croisades*, IV (Paris, 1829), 388.

B. The Capture and Loss of Damietta

A successful Egyptian campaign might well give the crusaders a foothold of inestimable value in the control of the Near East. The operation called for a forceful and united command, planning of the highest order, assurance of continuous supplies of men and provisions, and enough military discipline to prevent the periodic diminution of the armed forces through the whims of individual leaders or groups of crusaders. The events of the preceding year in Syria must have impressed the experienced leaders with these imperatives.

On May 27, 1218, the vanguard of the crusading fleet arrived in the harbor of Damietta, situated about two miles inland on the right bank of the main branch of the Nile which flows northeastward into the Mediterranean, and is usually described as the Damietta branch. After choosing count Simon (II) of Saarbrücken as temporary leader, pending the arrival of the remainder of the fleet, the forces began preliminary explorations. They met little or no resistance, and chose a site for the camp on the west bank of the river just opposite the city, in a region known as Jizat Dimyāt, a roughly triangular island about three square miles in area, surrounded on the west by an abandoned canal, al-Azraq; on the north by the Mediterranean; and on the south and east by the Damietta branch of the Nile. Defensively, the site was ideal: it had easy access to the source of supplies from the sea, and was protected by the Nile against sudden attack from the south or east. Offensively, however, the location left much to be desired: the armies would have to cross the Nile in the face of enemy resistance. Within a few days, the ships of king John of Jerusalem, duke Leopold of Austria, and the masters of the knightly orders arrived in the harbor.⁶⁹ The camp was rapidly fortified by means of a moat and surrounding wall.⁷⁰ The Christians thought it a good omen that the water of the Nile, although so near the sea, was fresh. Also an eclipse of the moon, emblem of the Islamic faith, which took place on July 9, was welcomed as a favorable portent.⁷¹

By now the crusaders had come to recognize the necessity for a superior command: "when the Christians were anchored in the

⁶⁹ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 176 ff.; P. Meyer, "La Prise de Damiette en 1219, Relation inédite en Provençal," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, XXXVIII (1877), 514-515.

⁷⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 468.

⁷¹ For the date of the eclipse, R. Röhrich, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, II (Berlin, 1878), 249.

mouth of the river . . . , and were all assembled, they elected a chieftain, and by common accord king John of Jerusalem was chosen. . . ."⁷² It was to be the greatest misfortune of the expedition, during its operations in Egypt, that the reinforcements arriving from the west during the next two years were so little experienced in large-scale wars of conquest, or so deeply absorbed in their particular interests, that they failed to appreciate the need for maintaining John in authority.

The arrival of the crusaders at first aroused curiosity rather than apprehension among the Moslems, perhaps because they shared al-'Ādil's view that the Christians would not attack Egypt.⁷³ Al-'Ādil was still in camp at Marj aṣ-Ṣuffar, south of Damascus, where he had established himself in 1217. His eldest son al-Kāmil, who ruled Egypt in his absence, was near Cairo, and received intelligence of the enemy movements by carrier pigeon. After three days he was prepared to move out of Cairo, at the same time ordering the provincial governors to assemble the nomads. Meanwhile al-'Ādil dispatched all possible reinforcements from Syria, and sent his second son, al-Mu'aẓẓam, to keep watch on the Syrian coast. Al-Kāmil established his camp on the right bank of the Nile, some distance up-river from Damietta at al-'Ādiliyah, where he was able to maintain contact with the city as well as oppose the efforts of the invaders to cross the Nile.⁷⁴

The crusaders admired Damietta for its beauty as well as for the strength of its fortifications.⁷⁵ Extending to the water's edge on the east, it was protected by a triple wall and by many towers. Fortified at different times in the past, its three walls were of unequal heights, the first one low to protect the navigable ditch which encircled the city on the land sides, the second one higher and reinforced by twenty-eight towers, each with three *tourelles* or protecting pent-houses, and the third, or inner wall, much higher than the other two. In the middle of the Nile, just opposite the city on an island, was the chain tower (Burj as-Silsilah), so called because from the tower to the city walls on the east and probably also to the river bank on the west, there extended huge iron chains which served

⁷² *Eracles (RHC, Occ., II)*, p. 329.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁷⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 468 ff.

⁷⁵ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, chaps. 32 and 38, provides a good description of the city and its fortifications. James of Vitry, *Epist. VI*, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XVI, 79; John of Tulpia, *De domino Iohanne rege Ierusalem* (ed. R. Röhrich, *Quinti belli sacri scriptores minores*, Geneva, 1879), p. 119; the *Liber duellii Christiani (ibid.)*, p. 143; and the *Gesta obsidionis Damiate (ibid.)*, p. 73, offer but few additional details. For the chain tower, see Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil (RHC, Or., II, 1)*, pp. 114-115.

to control traffic in times of peace and to bar the passing of enemy ships in time of war. The tower itself was a formidable stronghold, constructed in 70 tiers and so situated that it could be neither successfully bombarded nor mined from below. It could accommodate a garrison of perhaps three hundred men. Its capture was essential as the preliminary to a siege of the city.

For more than three months the crusaders attacked it intermittently. Though they had eight projectile machines, and poured a barrage of javelins and stones upon the fortifications and into the city, the chain tower held fast. On June 23 the crusaders, in 70 or 80 ships with decks protected by wooden walls and covered with armor, presumably of leather or of hides, approached close to the walls of the city, attacking with extreme violence while simultaneously the ballistae continued to hurl their showers of stones.⁷⁶ But this method of assault, although terrifying to the inhabitants, was not effective against the massive fortifications. The duke of Austria and the Hospitallers now erected two scaling ladders, each mounted upon two vessels known as "cogs", well adapted to the supporting of lofty structures by virtue of their broad bows and sterns. At the same time the Germans and Frisians, under the direction of count Adolf of Berg, prepared another ship (called a "maremme", according to the Arabic sources⁷⁷), with shielded bulwarks and a small fortress attached to its mast. With these vessels a new assault was begun on the tower on July 1, 1218.

The maremme was moved into a position between the tower and the city wall, with its ballistae hurling a shower of rocks into the city from the fortified masthead. But an intense counterbombardment from tower and city forced it to withdraw. Meanwhile the scaling ladders of the duke of Austria and the Hospitallers, although secured against the tower walls, broke under the weight of the soldiers, hurling into the water all who had mounted them. The Moslems witnessed this catastrophe with cries of mingled joy and derision, while bugle calls and the roll of kettle drums informed the townsmen of the successful repulse. Far up the river in Cairo, houses were illuminated and banners bedecked the streets. But the artillery continued the incessant barrage against the city.

Now the scholasticus Oliver, the talented mentor of the German and Frisian crusaders, displayed his gift for strategy and military leadership. Perhaps his modest position as scholasticus explains the

⁷⁶ "Extraits de l'histoire des patriarches d'Alexandrie relatifs au siège de Damiette sous le règne d'al-Malik al-Kamil," *ROL*, XI (1908), 241-243.

⁷⁷ Ibn-al-Athir, *Al-kāmil* (*RHC, Or.*, II, 1), pp. 114-115.

self-effacing manner in which he, in his *Historia Damiatina*, describes the plan for a new assault. Facts which have come to light, however, through other contemporary sources afford abundant evidence of the significant part which he played in the capture of the chain tower. He was favored also in his efforts by the steadfastness of his Frisian and German followers. Long before, while preaching the crusade, he had inspired his followers with a zeal and loyalty which, in the more active phase of the crusade, made of him a respected and revered leader. Though he himself says only, "with the Lord showing us how and providing an architect", James of Vitry reveals that the architect was Oliver himself. With great labor and expense, he constructed an extraordinary siege machine which brought victory to the Christians. His Frisian and German followers, even the poor, made generous contributions in raising some 2,000 marks to pay the cost of construction.⁷⁸ Two cogs were firmly lashed together by means of ropes and wooden beams so that they appeared to be a single structure. Four masts were then erected, with the same number of sail yards. From their tops hung a miniature castle enclosed like a fortified city and shielded with wickerwork. Over its walls and roof, hides were stretched as a protection against Greek fire. Beneath it extended a huge revolving scaling ladder, thrusting forward some 45 feet beyond the prow of the ship and supported by heavy ropes and pulleys.

On August 24, avoiding the dangerous currents flowing west of the tower, the crusaders brought their great machine to anchor to the northeast. While the clergy walked barefoot along the bank praying for the success of the undertaking, the soldiers released the ladder and placed it against the tower. Six Moslem ballistae hurled continuous showers of rocks upon the besiegers; Greek fire streamed down from the chain tower upon the floating castle, and the Christians fought it with salt, acid, and gravel. When at length the Moslem defenders, with fire-brands of burning oil attached to their extended lances, set fire to the ladder, they nearly put an end to the assault.

From his precarious perch the standard-bearer of the duke of Austria was hurled into the river, and the enemy, with cries of victory, fished the banner from the water. The patriarch of Jerusalem, lying in the dust with the fragment of the cross before him and sand covering his head, loudly prayed for divine aid. After an hour of continuous effort crusaders put out the fire, and saved the

⁷⁸ *Chronica regia Coloniensis*, p. 445, says: "ex puris elemosinis pauperum edificium construxit." Also in *MGH*, SS., XVII, 833.

ladder.⁷⁹ Now, a young soldier from Liège was first to reach the tower, while a Frisian, one Hayo of Fivelgo, laying sturdily about him with a flail, cut down the Saracen standard-bearer and seized the yellow banner of the sultan. Other crusaders then hurried over the bridge, gaining a foothold in the upper portions of the tower and driving the garrison down to the lower tiers. As night was falling, the cross was planted on the summit, while the Christians on the river bank sang loudly the *Te Deum laudamus*. But from the lower tiers of the tower the Saracens kindled such hot fires that the crusaders were compelled to retreat across the ladder. Once again, however, the ingenious invention of the scholasticus Oliver proved its worth. The crusaders now lowered the ladder and made it fast to the lower walls, which they attacked with iron mallets, while they kept a raging fire burning all night before the entrance. Many of the Moslem garrison, thus trapped, sought safety by leaping from the tower windows, only to drown or to be fished from the river and taken captive. Next morning at ten o'clock the Moslems asked for negotiations and, on the promise that their lives would be spared, surrendered to the duke of Austria. About 100 prisoners were led before king John of Jerusalem.⁸⁰ The crusaders cut the chains and demolished the pontoon bridge connecting the chain tower with the city. They closed the door of the tower facing Damietta, and constructed a new pontoon bridge to the west bank of the Nile.⁸¹

The loss of the chain tower was a staggering blow to the Saracens; the Arabic sources agree that gloom now descended upon the Moslem world. The sultan al-'Ādil, still in Syria, was shocked by the news, and died soon afterwards in his camp (August 31, 1218). Fearful lest the report of his death should lead to revolts throughout his empire, his followers took his body secretly to Damascus, and disposed of his treasure before announcing his death and summoning the citizens of Damascus to "implore the mercy of God for our lord, the sultan *al-malik* al-'Ādil, and pray for your sultan *al-malik* al-Mu'azzam; may God accord to him a long reign!"⁸²

⁷⁹ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 76: "autem per unam horam."

⁸⁰ Contemporary sources vary as to numbers: Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 186, says one hundred men were captured. James of Vitry, *Epist.* iv, p. 575, gives the number as 112. The *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 76, says "c milites et ccc balistarum." The "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 243, records that three hundred men were originally in the tower, and that one hundred remained to be captured.

⁸¹ "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 243.

⁸² Al-Maqrizi, *ROL*, IX (1902), 470. Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-raudatāin* (*RHC, Or.*, V), p. 170, says his death was caused by a "stroke" which came after hearing of the capture of the chain tower.

Al-Kāmil, the eldest son, succeeded in Egypt with the title of sultan; al-Mu'azzam received as his portion Damascus and Palestine; and a third son, al-Ashraf, governed Akhlat in Greater Armenia.

Although the chief barrier to a direct Christian attack upon the camp of al-Kāmil was removed, the crusaders, says Oliver, "fell into idleness and laziness . . . , and they did not imitate Judas Maccabaeus who 'seeing that the time served him' gave no rest to the enemy." James of Vitry, perhaps more plausibly, reports that the leaders thought it inadvisable to undertake to move the army across the constantly rising Nile, but preferred to await more favorable conditions after new crusaders had arrived.⁸³ Meanwhile the Frisians and many Germans were already making preparations to withdraw during the autumn passage, feeling that they had fulfilled their crusading vows. At the same time the leaders of the crusade had been assured in a letter from the pope dated August 13, 1218, that reinforcements were on the way.⁸⁴ Indeed, during the week following the fall of the chain tower a few ships bringing crusaders from Rome appeared in the Nile, and others anchored in the port of Acre. By the end of September many of the new arrivals had crossed over to Damietta,⁸⁵ including Pelagius, cardinal-bishop of Albano, sent by Honorius III as papal legate and charged, above all, with maintaining peace and unity among the Christians.⁸⁶ With him was his new aide, Robert of Courçon, sent out at the request of the French, as we have already noted, as spiritual adviser to French participants in the crusade. With Pelagius came the Roman crusaders, whom the pope himself had equipped at an expense of some 20,000 silver marks. Shortly afterwards there arrived from England a further group of nobles, including Ranulf, earl of Chester, and Oliver, illegitimate son of king John Lackland. Fewer Englishmen came than were expected because the pope had absolved some, and had allowed others to postpone their departure until the next autumn passage.⁸⁷ About the end of October came a large party of French crusaders, who had sailed from Genoa in

⁸³ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 186; James of Vitry, *Epist.* IV, p. 576.

⁸⁴ Potthast, *Regesta*, I, 5891; *RHGF*, XIX, 666.

⁸⁵ The *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 77, says merely: "mense Septembris".

⁸⁶ Potthast, *Regesta*, I, 4803, and esp. 5810; Richard of San Germano, *Chronicon* (*MGH*, SS., XIX), p. 339.

⁸⁷ *Annales de Waverleia* (ed. H. R. Luard, *Annales monastici*, II, London, 1865), pp. 289, 292. The confusion both in English and French chronicles as to the time of the arrival of the English crusaders, i.e., whether at the time of the arrival of Pelagius, shortly after the fall of the chain tower, or in the following year, appears to arise from the assumption that all who were pledged to go actually accompanied the earl of Chester. In some measure, the *Annals of Waverley* clarifies this, although it leaves some uncertainty as to individual nobles

late August, including archbishop William of Bordeaux, the bishops of Paris, Angers, and Laon, and bishop-elect Milo of Beauvais, together with many prominent nobles.⁸⁸

Far from maintaining peace and unity, the presence of Pelagius appears rather to have fanned partisan differences among the crusaders. Certainly it would be an oversimplification to attribute the quarrels solely to his arrival, or to stress unduly the personal qualities which contemporaries usually ascribed to him. The very tasks imposed upon Pelagius by papal mandate suggest a major inherent weakness not only of the Fifth Crusade, but of all other crusading efforts in the Middle Ages: the absence of a recognized and efficient unified command. Honorius's naive assumption that a common religious motive was a sufficient unifying force inevitably led him and others to ignore more realistic considerations, such as the personal ambitions of individual leaders or the commercial motives of various groups or nationalities. The legate was immediately confronted with these and other distinctly materialistic questions. In order to maintain peace and unity and to further the authentic aims of the crusade, he inevitably had to make military decisions. It was in such matters, requiring cool practical judgment, that his chief failure apparently lay, and in the final analysis, one may argue, this contributed to the disastrous ending of the Fifth Crusade.

Imperious, proud, headstrong, and dogmatic, over-conscious, perhaps, of the lofty position to which he had been elevated by the pope, and literal in his interpretation of his mandate, Pelagius did not hesitate to interfere in the making of military decisions instead of deferring to the judgment of experienced commanders. To him the Fifth Crusade was, above all else, an undertaking of the church — of the whole Christian world. From the outset, therefore, he viewed with suspicion the natural assumption of John of Brienne that the Damietta expedition was a military operation having as its ultimate object the restoration of the kingdom of Jerusalem. It was undoubtedly this that led him, shortly after his arrival, to make clear his position, that the crusaders were subjects not of the kingdom of Jerusalem, but of the church.⁸⁹

who participated in each of the two expeditions, i.e. of 1218 and 1219. For the English crusaders of this time see B. Siedschlag, *The English Participation in the Crusades* (privately printed, Menasha, Wis., 1939), pp. 137 ff.

⁸⁸ Concerning the identity of some of the French crusaders, see J. Greven, "Frankreich und der fünfte Kreuzzug," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, XLIII (1923), 45-46 and note 118.

⁸⁹ Rinaldi ("Raynaldus"), *Annales ecclesiastici*, ad ann. 1218, no 11. There is perhaps overemphasis on this officiousness of Pelagius by both H. Hoogeweg, "Der Kreuzzug von Damietta," *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, VIII

The weeks following the fall of the chain tower proved invaluable to the discouraged and demoralized Saracens. Al-Kāmil was so little interrupted that he was able to construct a huge and costly dyke, not far distant from the Christian camp, up the river from the chain tower. After many fierce conflicts on this dyke the crusaders finally cut it. The sultan then ordered a number of ships loaded with stones and had them scuttled about a mile upstream from the city in such manner as to impede navigation.⁹⁰ Despite repeated Christian attacks, the Moslems blocked the Nile during the greater part of the winter of 1218–1219, and ships could not reach the upper part of the river.⁹¹ Any ship attempting to pass Damietta itself underwent bombardment by rocks and liquid fire from the city walls.

On October 9, 1218, the Moslems crossed the bridge in the vicinity of Būrah. With some fifty ships, about 4,000 mounted troops, and large detachments of archers and other foot-soldiers, they apparently intended to employ the cavalry for an attack on the southern fortifications of the camp, while the infantry, moving by boats farther down the river, made a thrust at the interior of the camp from the northeast. Only the vigilance of John of Brienne prevented the success of the attack. With a small patrol, he went out to reconnoiter along the west bank of the Nile, and found large numbers of enemy foot-soldiers already ashore. The king and his small detachment hastily attacked the Saracen infantry, while the camp garrison coped as best they could with the mounted attackers. But the Moslem cavalry could make no headway against the fortifications, so the crusaders could concentrate their defense against the infantry. Spurred on by the exhortations of bishop Renier of Bethlehem, John and his companions, although greatly outnumbered, succeeded in slaying most of the invaders. Only a few who plunged into the river were able to escape, and many of these, mostly Syrian archers, unable to swim, perished by drowning. The sultan had to order a retreat.⁹²

This action of October 9 discouraged the Saracens, but the crusaders apparently did not win a sufficient advantage to enable

(1887), 205 ff., and L. Böhm, *Johann von Brienne*, pp. 49–50. An interesting interpretation of the position of Pelagius has recently been set forth by J. P. Donovan, S.J., *Pelagius and the Fifth Crusade* (1950), pp. 71 ff.; see also D. Mansilla, "El Cardenal hispano Pelayo Gaitán," *Anthologica Annua*, I (1953), 11–66.

⁹⁰ Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (RHC, Or., II, 1), p. 115; Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 196.

⁹¹ James of Vitry, *Epist. v*, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XV, 580.

⁹² "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 244. The same source explains the drowning of so many of the Syrians by the fact that they had been reared in Syria where there were but few rivers suitable for swimming, and had never learned to swim.

them to carry out a general attack. Although the swift current of the Nile made it difficult to move ships upstream to the east bank of the river near the enemy camp at al-‘Ādiliyah, some of the more zealous tried to reach it. Pelagius equipped a cog which he sent upstream, apparently to discover whether it was practicable to send ships against the current. The cog made the trip successfully, but the expedition achieved no further result. Shortly afterwards James of Vitry sent another cog manned by 200 men on a similar mission, but they encountered serious resistance and returned with heavy casualties. Next, James tried a “barbote”, a smaller and trimmer vessel. Six of its crew were captured, and the remainder perished valiantly while seeking to defend the ship, which was sunk.⁹³ On October 26 the crusaders successfully repulsed a second Moslem attack.⁹⁴ So heavy were the sultan’s casualties that he now devoted his efforts to the constructing of barricades and to the setting up of artillery with which to harass Christians seeking to navigate the river or to cross over to the right bank.

Encouraged by the arrival of reinforcements during October and November, the crusaders accelerated their offensive. To avoid al-Kāmil’s barricades, they conceived the plan of reconstructing the abandoned canal called al-Azraq (“the Blue”) that bounded their camp, by which they could bring ships from the Mediterranean into the Nile at a point well above Damietta. Dredging was completed by early December. Its completion enabled the crusaders to avoid the barriers of the enemy as well as to maintain their camp, but offered few advantages in a direct assault upon the city.⁹⁵ Sometime before the end of November,⁹⁶ moreover, a large ship, equipped by the Templars, attempted to cross the river, but was driven by contrary winds against the walls of Damietta. There the Saracens attacked it, and eventually the ship was scuttled, either by the enemy or by its Christian crew.⁹⁷

The winter weather brought with it many additional hardships and much suffering. The canal of al-Azraq had barely been opened when on November 29 there began a storm that raged for three

⁹³ James of Vitry, *Epist.* v, p. 580.

⁹⁴ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 190–191; see also “Hist. patr. d’Alex.,” *ROL*, XI (1908), 244; *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 77–80; James of Vitry, *Epist.* v, p. 581.

⁹⁵ Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (RHC, Or., II, 1), pp. 115–116.

⁹⁶ The statement of the *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 80: “mensi vero Novembris” is supported by the letter of James of Vitry, v, pp. 580 ff., in which he describes this first expedition as taking place shortly after the expedition of his barbote.

⁹⁷ James of Vitry, *loc. cit.*, says the Templars scuttled the vessel, while Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 194, says: “sive ab hostibus sive a nostris incertum habemus.” Most of the Christian contemporaries describe the conflict, but are not agreed as to the number participating.

days, with violent winds and torrential rains, causing the Nile to rise rapidly and flood the camps of both the Saracens and the crusaders. Quite unprepared, the Christians suffered intensely. Tents were submerged and food supplies swept away by the raging waters. The sick and wounded, unable to escape the torrent, perished miserably. Transport ships and galleys were torn from their moorings and set adrift, many to be lost. The canal helped to draw off the water, however, and the Moslem camp also suffered.⁹⁸

Shortly before the storm broke, the Christians had built a new floating fortress on a foundation of six cogs to aid in the assault on Damietta. The huge structure was driven by the storm to the east bank of the river, where it was boarded and seized by the Saracens. Its small crew of sixteen men resisted valiantly, but fourteen were slain and two escaped by swimming to the opposite bank. Accused of cowardice, however, and of failing to support their comrades, they were hanged by order of king John.⁹⁹ The Moslems, at first overjoyed at the seizure of this prize, soon found they were unable to maneuver the large hulk and decided to burn it lest the crusaders, hoping to recapture it, attack them in overwhelming numbers. In the wake of the storm came disease, and large numbers of Christians perished from cold or from scurvy and pestilence,¹⁰⁰ including Robert of Courçon, so well remembered as the preacher of the crusade in France.¹⁰¹

It was during this disastrous storm also that Pelagius took a more active role as the leader of the crusading forces. In the partisan differences which arose between the supporters of king John and the newly arrived crusaders, it was inevitable that the papal legate should find active support among John's opponents. Pelagius' self-confidence was probably heightened by the "discovery" of a book written in Arabic, prophesying the fall of Damietta, whose author was believed to have foretold correctly many events that had already taken place.¹⁰² Such a find must have served to direct the attention of the credulous more and more to the spiritual leader of the expedition, who freely used it as propaganda. Many of the crusaders who had arrived during the autumn of 1218

⁹⁸ John of Tulbia, *De domino Iohanne*, p. 123: "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 245-246.

⁹⁹ "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 245.

¹⁰⁰ The *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 83, says: "sexta pars exercitus mortua est." John of Tulbia, *De domino Iohanne*, p. 193, says, "quinta pars exercitus mortua fuit." Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 193: "cum patientia multa migraverunt ad Dominum plurimi."

¹⁰¹ *Epist.* v, pp. 581-582.

¹⁰² Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, chap. 35.

were Italians, accustomed from the beginning of their expedition to look upon Pelagius as their leader. Undoubtedly, also, the period of inactivity following the capture of the chain tower and the failure to make appreciable progress against the Saracen camp, followed by the storm, led some to call for new leadership, which gave Pelagius his chance. To the Frisians and Germans, however, who followed the scholasticus Oliver, and had accepted the leadership of John of Brienne, as well as to the close associates of John, who had seen the devastating effects of disunity in 1217, the tension so manifest after the arrival of Pelagius and the new pilgrims must have been more than ominous. As the winter with its winds and rains wore on, discontent reigned among the masses of the troops.¹⁰³ At least Pelagius offered a change in leadership, and employed to the limit the authority of his office. When others had failed to find a way of crossing to the opposite bank, he asserted his authority by proclaiming a fast of three days and commanding his followers to stand barefoot before the fragment of the cross while appealing to Heaven for guidance.

A handful of Frisians and Germans aboard the ship "Holy Mother", which had previously been used as an escort in the attack on the chain tower, now went up the Nile and attacked the Moslems' pontoon bridge, returning safely.¹⁰⁴ But now as before the crusaders made no attempt to follow up the victory. It was in fact not until February 2, 1219, that Pelagius ordered a general confession throughout the army, providing at the same time for a new attack upon the enemy camp. On the next day the Christians in cogs, galleys, and barbotas began the ascent of the river in the teeth of a new storm. The cog of the duke of Austria destroyed the palisades which the enemy had erected along the river bank. Blinded by the rain and hail, under heavy fire from the Moslems¹⁰⁵ the crusaders were compelled to withdraw to their camp on the opposite bank of the river. By February 5 conditions were again favorable for the renewal of the attack.¹⁰⁶ The new storm had in any case made the Christian camp untenable.

Now the fortunes of the crusaders improved, largely as the result of developments on the Moslem side. The death of al-'Ādil, who had kept his sons firmly under control although they ruled with royal prerogatives in their respective provinces, had prepared the way for conspiracies and internal conflicts at the very time of

¹⁰³ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 80 ff.

¹⁰⁴ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 195-196.

¹⁰⁵ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 84.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86; Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 197.

the crusaders' attack.¹⁰⁷ Al-Kāmil, the sultan of Egypt, threatened by the crusaders, had also to face a conspiracy built upon the fears of the people and the discontent of the army (1218-1219). The chief conspirator was 'Imād-ad-Dīn Aḥmad, called Ibn-al-Masḥūb, emir of Nablus, a Kurd who wielded great influence among the Kurdish troops, which constituted a considerable part of the army. He and other emirs plotted to depose al-Kāmil and to set up in his stead a young brother, al-Fā'iz, whom they believed they could control. By the time al-Kāmil got word of the plot, at his camp at al-'Ādiliyah, preparations for the coup d'état had gone so far that he surprised the conspirators in the very act of taking an oath of fealty to al-Fā'iz, the Koran open before them. At his appearance the conspirators were momentarily awed, but al-Kāmil believed that all was lost. He mounted his horse and fled secretly to Ashmūn, apparently with the intention of taking refuge with his son al-Mas'ūd, the governor of Yemen. At dawn the army along the Nile discovered his flight; their widespread panic led to the complete disruption of the defenses on the right bank of the river and the abandonment of weapons and supplies. At first widely scattered, the Moslem forces gradually reassembled on al-Baḥr aṣ-Ṣaghīr near Ashmūn. But it was only after the arrival of al-Mu'azzam two or three days later that order was restored and al-Kāmil reassured. In a dramatic scene, not without comedy, al-Mu'azzam rushed to the tent of Ibn-al-Masḥūb at night, forced him to mount his horse while still in night dress, and sent him under heavy escort into exile in Syria.¹⁰⁸

So it happened that at dawn on February 5, during the heavy wind and rain, a Christian deserter, who had been with the enemy for some time, called across the river to the crusaders to inform them that the Moslem camp had been abandoned.¹⁰⁹ Although king John suspected a ruse, scouts soon confirmed the news.¹¹⁰ The Christian forces then began crossing the river to the abandoned camp. Their horses had trouble obtaining a foothold in the marshy ground, and a few enemy troops came out of Damietta, but were quickly overcome by the Templars. The crusaders took, from the deserted camp, tents, weapons, gold and silver utensils, livestock, grain and fodder, and even women and children. They also seized

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (RHC, Or., II, 1), pp. 116-117.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117; al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 475-476; Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-raudatāin* (RHC, Or., V), pp. 175-176. Arab sources are in essential agreement on the details of this episode.

¹⁰⁹ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 198.

¹¹⁰ *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), p. 336.

ships, both large and small, which were moored along the river bank between the camp at al-'Ādilyah and the city.¹¹¹ The crusaders were now encamped on all sides of Damietta: Pelagius with the Roman, Genoese, and other Italian troops on the bank of the river north of the city; the Templars, Hospitallers, and Provençals to the east; and king John of Jerusalem with the French and Pisan troops just south of the city. Across the river, occupying the old camp, were the Frisian and German troops. A bridge was constructed joining the camps on the opposite banks.¹¹² In February also came reinforcements, especially Cypriote knights commanded by Walter of Caesarea, constable of Cyprus.¹¹³

It seems likely that al-Kāmil and al-Mu'azzam now decided to follow the advice their father al-'Ādil is supposed to have given them on his deathbed, and to open negotiations with the Christians. Though the *Eracles* alone gives February as the date for the opening of the negotiations, the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, in referring to the later discussions in August, makes clear reference to these earlier offers.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, a messenger was dispatched to king John and Pelagius, requesting that ambassadors be sent to discuss terms of peace. When the Christian envoys reached al-Kāmil's camp, the sultan proposed to surrender the kingdom of Jerusalem with the exception of Kerak (Krak des Moabites, al-Karak) and Krak de Montréal (ash-Shaubak), commanding the desert road to Egypt, and offered a thirty-year truce, in exchange for the crusaders' evacuation of Egypt. Representatives of the sultan then returned with the embassy to the Christian camp to receive the reply of the leaders. King John and the French and Syrian leaders favored accepting the offer. They recalled that the Egyptian expedition had been undertaken for the purpose of facilitating the conquest of Jerusalem and argued that the object had now been achieved. But Pelagius, making full use of his powers as legate, and supported by the Italians, as well as by the Templars and Hospitallers, overruled the recommendation of the king. Even when the Moslem emissary returned a second time offering, in addition to the terms already proposed, a tribute of 30,000 bezants as compensation for the two fortresses, he was met

¹¹¹ "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 246-247; Ibn-al-Athir, *Al-kāmil* (*RHC, Or.* II, 1), p. 117. The Arab and Christian sources are in general agreement.

¹¹² Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 199 ff.; *Eracles* (*RHC, Occ.*, II), p. 337. Of the bridge James of Vitry, *Epist.* v, p. 583, says: "pontem etiam fortissimum super naves fabricaverunt."

¹¹³ *Eracles* (*RHC, Occ.*, II), pp. 339 ff.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 338 ff.; *ROL*, XI (1908), 253.

with refusal.¹¹⁵ Had Pelagius now determined to conquer the entire Near East, going far beyond the crusaders' original intentions? Did the Italians support him because of their commercial ambition to establish themselves in the Nile delta? At any rate, the Christian refusal of the Moslem terms sacrificed the attainable to the visionary.

The swift and courageous action of the sultan of Damascus, al-Mu'azzam, had served to stiffen Moslem resistance. Reassembled and reinforced from Syria, the Moslem army took up a new position at Fāriskūr, a short distance up the Nile from al-Ādiliyah. The Christians had barely consolidated their position under the walls of Damietta when they had to defend their camp against these reorganized enemy forces. The sultans also addressed a joint appeal to the Moslem world, especially to the caliph at Baghdad, an-Nāṣir, who was sometimes called by the Christians the "pope of the Saracens".¹¹⁶ The crusaders believed Damietta to be strongly fortified and heavily garrisoned, but al-Maqrizī reports that sickness and death had greatly reduced the garrison, originally some 20,000 strong, and that the survivors were in a weakened condition.¹¹⁷ An attack on Damietta launched immediately after the crossing of the river might well have been successful, but al-Mu'azzam had ended Moslem panic and enabled the sultan to assume a new position threatening to the Christians. The opportunity had been lost. More than nine months were to pass before the crusaders, after repeated attacks by the Moslems, and after disheartening failures in their assaults on the well-nigh impregnable walls, at last entered Damietta.

While engaged in preparations for attacking the city, the crusaders learned that al-Mu'azzam, who feared that the Christians would obtain possession of several strongholds in Palestine, had ordered the destruction of the fortifications of Mt. Tabor, Toron, Banyas, Safad, and even Jerusalem, whose walls had been strengthened and population greatly increased since the Moslem occupation. On March 19, 1219, the terrified and protesting citizens of Jerusalem witnessed the beginning of the destruction of their city walls.¹¹⁸ Al-Mu'azzam hoped to make such vantage points in Palestine untenable in the event the Christians should retake them.

¹¹⁵ *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), p. 339. For an interesting interpretation of the historical significance of the policy of Pelagius and his supporters, see R. Grousset, *Histoire des croisades*, III (Paris, 1948), 235.

¹¹⁶ *Chronique d'Ernoul*, p. 421: "le callife de Baudas qui apostolis est des Sarracens"; and James of Vitry, *Historia orientalis* (ed. J. Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, I), p. 1125: "sextus filius est nomine Mahomet, qui tenet regnum de Baudas, ubi est Papa Saracenorum."

¹¹⁷ Al-Maqrizī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 476-477, 480.

¹¹⁸ Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-raudatāin* (RHC, Or., V), p. 173.

He impressed Egyptians into his service, and exacted heavy tribute from Jews and Christians, who made up substantial elements in the populations of Cairo and Fustat, and who now had to mortgage the sacred utensils of gold and silver from their churches and synagogues.¹¹⁹ As the danger had increased in the delta of the Nile, the beduins on the confines of Egypt had seized the opportunity to block the roads and pillage the countryside, displaying at least as strong hostility toward Moslems as toward the Christian invader.¹²⁰ The Moslems suspected that the Christian population — the Copts and the Melkites of the cities — sympathized with the crusaders, and so Christians fell victim to the fanaticism that mounted among the inhabitants as the threat from the invaders increased.¹²¹

On March 3, 1219, after the arrival of reinforcements from Syria led by al-Muzaffar, son of al-Manşūr of Hamah, the Moslems began a series of harassing attacks upon the crusader camp.¹²² After repelling two attacks, on March 3 and 17, the crusaders tightened their siege by building a second bridge, almost a mile in length, and mounted on 38 vessels, this time below the city of Damietta. Patrol boats also were constantly active in an effort to prevent the enemy from approaching, and two islands in the Nile were fortified and garrisoned.¹²³ At dawn on Palm Sunday, March 31, 1219, the Moslems launched a general attack against both the camp and one of the pontoon bridges, part of which they burned before withdrawing with heavy losses.¹²⁴ A final attack was repulsed on April 7.

Meanwhile many crusaders had sailed for home. In early May duke Leopold of Austria, who, as Oliver says, "for a year and a half had fought faithfully for Christ, full of devotion, humility, obedience, and generosity", departed. Pelagius employed his full authority to induce the returning crusaders to postpone their departure until the autumn passage, offering plenary indulgence not only for their sins, but for the sins of their immediate families.¹²⁵ The departures, however, appear to have been more than offset by

¹¹⁹ "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 249 ff.

¹²⁰ Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (*RHC, Or.*, II, 1), p. 118.

¹²¹ "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 247.

¹²² Al-Maqrīzī, *ROL*, IX (1902), 479-480, places al-Muzaffar's arrival at the beginning of the year 616, which would be early in March of 1219. For details of al-Muzaffar, see especially Abū-l-Fidā', *Kitāb al-mukhtaşar* (*RHC, Or.*, I), p. 93.

¹²³ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 88.

¹²⁴ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 206-207, says: "ad horam fere decimam," while the author of the *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 89-90, says "ante auroram usque ad noctem".

¹²⁵ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 90.

new arrivals. By May 16 large numbers of reinforcements from the west had arrived, bringing with them supplies and horses. Indeed emergency measures had to be taken to supply the newcomers with provisions. Guy Embriaco of Gibelet (Jubail), a Syrian baron, generously provided sums of money to purchase food supplies from the island of Cyprus.¹²⁶

News of these constant reinforcements may well explain the renewed activity of the sultan who, between May 16 and 18, attacked in force. Moslem "corpses filled the trenches of the Christian camp and covered the field of battle."¹²⁷ Evidently in an attempt to prevent the scattering of the enemy during combat, the leaders, employing a well known device of the Lombards, constructed a *carroccio* upon which they placed the standard of the Christians. They instructed the infantry to advance gradually behind it, engaging in combat only when they had attained an advantageous position. During an enemy attack of May 26, the crusaders employed this new device; it bewildered or frightened the Moslems, who abandoned the attack.

Meanwhile the Christians were preparing an assault on the city, constructing battering rams, towers, and other siege machines, and at the same time attempting tunneling operations to undermine the walls. But tunneling was impracticable because of the water in the moat surrounding the outer wall. If the assault was to succeed, it must be made from above, even at the risk of inviting heavy counterattacks from the enemy forces at Fāriskūr. Except for Pelagius the leaders advised against a general attack, saying that they had insufficient troops to assault the enemy camp and the city simultaneously, claiming that the Moslems outnumbered them fifty to one.¹²⁸

Dissatisfied with these objections, Pelagius began a series of direct assaults upon the city from the waterfront. On July 8, 1219, Pisan and Venetian troops, after borrowing anchors, ropes, and other equipment from the various leaders, launched the first attack to the accompaniment of trumpet blasts and the playing of reed pipes and with banners flying. But the garrison sprayed Greek fire upon the scaling ladders and forced the ships to withdraw. At a signal from the besieged garrison, the sultan moved down the river from Fāriskūr, and for two days harassed the Christian camp, so that the defenders could not assist the Italians.

¹²⁶ Grousset, *Histoire des croisades*, III, 221.

¹²⁷ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 91; John of Tulbia, *De domino Iohanne*, p. 127.

¹²⁸ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 93.

After his first blow had failed, Pelagius, not yet convinced of the futility of his plan, and encouraged by intelligence of the impoverished condition of the garrison, struck again two days later, this time with petraries and mangonels near the city walls. But just before dawn, while the Italian guards were sleeping, eight Saracens succeeded in burning the machine nearest the tower and slaying seven of its defenders. Although delayed in his plans, Pelagius again attacked on July 13 and 31, only to be turned back each time by a deluge of Greek fire. During each of these new efforts signals from the garrison set in motion the troops of the sultan at Fāriskūr. The Moslems concentrated their attacks upon the upper bridge connecting the two camps of the Christians and, on one occasion, were on the point of destroying it when the timely arrival of a detachment of troops drove them back. But even more serious was the counter-offensive of July 31, led by al-Kāmil against the camp of the Templars, which forced a retreat of the defenders on a wide front, and penetrated deep into the camp. Only through the skillful leadership of the new master, Peter of Montaigu, aided by the Teutonic Knights, were the troops reformed and the enemy pursued outside the gates until darkness ended the battle. Pelagius, however, persisted in his assault on the city walls well into the month of August, until the waters of the Nile had so receded that it was no longer possible to reach the walls on the river front with scaling ladders.¹²⁹

Tension between the factions of the crusaders had now almost reached the breaking point. The repeated failures had greatly reduced morale, especially of the masses of infantry. With increasing bitterness they charged the princes and knights with betraying the army, with remaining idly in camp while the Italians besieged the city. They hinted that it was cowardice that had prevented the leaders from attacking the sultan's camp.¹³⁰ In their turn, the mounted troops made light of the risks which the foot-soldiers were willing to take in fighting against the Saracens. Mutual recriminations led only to increased bitterness, and mob spirit prevailed, as the disgruntled crusaders muttered their protests at being detained forever from returning home, and clamored for

¹²⁹ The most detailed account of these activities during July and August 1219 is that of the *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 93-96. The *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), p. 340, also reports the signaling between the city and the sultan's camp. The masters of the Hospital and the Temple, Garin and Peter of Montaigu-sur-Champeix, were brothers of archbishop Eustorgue of Nicosia.

¹³⁰ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 101.

an immediate attack upon the Saracen camp.¹³¹ Goaded on by these complaints, the leaders reluctantly yielded to the very ill-advised plan of attacking the enemy camp at Fāriskūr. They divided the army into three units, one to guard the camp, a second to man the ships, and a third to march overland against al-Kāmil's camp.¹³²

On August 29, as the crusaders approached, the Moslems struck their tents and pretended flight, thus leaving the crusaders uncertain whether to continue in pursuit or to withdraw. King John of Jerusalem advised camping overnight, so that in the morning they could better ascertain the intentions of the enemy: there was no fresh water in the region between the Nile and Lake Manzalah, where the Christian forces now stood, and heat and thirst had inflicted heavy suffering on the troops. Many who had clamored loudest to be led to the attack now pleaded insistently to be permitted to withdraw.¹³³ When the Saracens became aware of this indecision, they halted their pretended retreat, and turned to deliver a smashing attack upon the disorganized and faltering enemy. Oliver says the Cypriotes were the first to flee, and were soon followed in disorderly retreat by the Italians. In vain Pelagius and the patriarch of Jerusalem sought to check the retreat and restore order. Only the intervention of king John, followed by the Templars and Hospitallers, the earl of Chester, and other knights, made it possible to cover the retreat and prevent the destruction of the army. But the losses were heavy, perhaps as high as 4,300, including many of the best of the crusading forces.¹³⁴

The sultan made his victory the occasion for reopening negotiations, evidently believing that the chastening effects of the defeat would make the crusaders more receptive to his proposals. He therefore retained some of the noblest of the captives at his headquarters to serve as emissaries to the crusading leaders while their less fortunate companions were being led in chains through the streets of Cairo.¹³⁵ Though the sultan had undoubtedly sustained some losses in the recent battle, and though his own supplies were threatened by the failure of the Nile to rise to its accustomed flood stage during the early autumn, the real reason for his renewal of

¹³¹ *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), p. 340.

¹³² The *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 101 ff., continues to be the most detailed account, although other sources agree in the essentials.

¹³³ *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), p. 340.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 341, estimates the number killed or dead from thirst and exhaustion at 4,000, in addition to 300 knights who constituted the rear-guard. A number of nobles were captured or missing, and at least one galley, with 200 men aboard, was reported lost (James of Vitry, *Epist.* v, p. 586; Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 216; *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 101 ff.).

¹³⁵ "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 253.

negotiations was the suffering within Damietta. With the river closed, and surrounded by the besieging army, the population was in misery. The streets were filled with the neglected dead and dying, while the scarcity of meat, eggs, bread, and many other foods left no hope to the living save death or surrender.¹³⁶ So al-Kāmil sent two of his captive knights, Andrew of Nanteuil and John of Arcis, to renew his former offers of an armistice. In addition to the retrocession of Jerusalem, with the exception of Kerak and Krak de Montréal, the sultan now agreed to pay for the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem, and to permit, or even pay for, the reconstruction of Belvoir (Kaukab al-Hawā'), Safad, and Toron. He also renewed the offer of a thirty-year truce, and agreed to send twenty Moslem hostages of noble birth to remain with the Christians until the fortifications had been restored. In addition, he offered to restore the portion of the True Cross which had been captured many years before at Hattin, together with any prisoners who could be found alive in Egypt and in Syria.¹³⁷

Again king John, the Syrians, the French, and the Teutonic Knights strongly favored accepting the terms. Again Pelagius, most of the clergy, the Italians, the Templars, and the Hospitallers were uncompromising in their refusal. Pelagius' attitude would appear fantastic except for the fact that he was counting on the expected arrival of many crusaders on the imminent autumn passage.¹³⁸ Although large numbers had withdrawn from the army, as Oliver states, "before the accustomed passage", many newcomers arrived almost simultaneously with these departures. Above all, Savary of Mauléon, loyal supporter of the late king John of England, arrived with ten or fifteen galleys, giving new encouragement to the crusaders, as did other English arrivals.¹³⁹

It was probably shortly before the battle of August 29 that Francis of Assisi and a brother of his order arrived in the camp of the crusaders, seeking authorization from Pelagius to visit the sultan. After an initial refusal, Pelagius changed his mind and let the pair go on what must have appeared to all observers as a suicidal

¹³⁶ Al-Maqrizī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 480.

¹³⁷ *Eraclès (RHC, Occ., II)*, pp. 341-343; James of Vitry, *Epist.* VI, pp. 73-74; Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 218; *Le Menestrel de Reims* (ed. R. Röhrich, *Testimonia minora de quinto bello sacro*, Geneva, 1882), pp. 115 ff.

¹³⁸ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 104.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104; *Annales de Waverleia (Annales monastici, II)*, p. 292; *Eraclès (RHC, Occ., II)*, p. 342 (where some of the English arrivals are confused with those of the previous year). Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 219, mentions only "Savericus de Mallion cum galeis armatis et bellatoribus plurimis. . . ." John of Tulbia, *De domino Iohanne*, p. 133, says there were fifteen galleys.

mission. Al-Kāmil probably mistook these extraordinary visitors for emissaries from the crusaders and received them courteously, only to find that they had come merely to expose the "errors" of the Moslem faith. Outraged by this impertinence, the companions of the sultan demanded that the friars be summarily executed. Al-Kāmil, however, with a display of affection for his humble visitors, first listened patiently to their message and then had them safely escorted to the outposts of the Christian camp. Francis appears to have remained with the crusaders until after the fall of Damietta before departing for Acre.¹⁴⁰

Pelagius' opposition did not prevent a protracted discussion of the sultan's offer. Oliver remarks significantly that "during the negotiations we promptly repaired our ramparts and other fortifications." While the negotiations were still in progress, the Moslems, breaking the truce, launched new attacks on the Christian camp and one of the bridges, hoping to get through to Damietta with provisions, but their forces were driven off.¹⁴¹

Now the sultan tried bribery. Nine Christians were induced by offers of money to attempt to destroy the bridge, so the Moslems could relieve the city. But one of the Christians revealed the scheme to Pelagius; the others took refuge in the Moslem camp. On the following night a Genoese, acting alone, tried to destroy the bridge and several siege machines. About the same time, a renegade Spaniard was detected in "black market" dealings with the enemy. Both of these traitors, upon detection, were tied to the tails of horses and dragged through the camp as examples. The Christians likewise used Moslem deserters to learn of an impending Moslem attack, and took new precautions to defend both bridge and camp. Pelagius offered two-year indulgences to crusaders who would transport the necessary timbers from the ships to erect emergency fortifications.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ The visit is recorded by most of the contemporary sources, perhaps in greatest detail by Ernoul, *op. cit.*, pp. 431 ff. G. Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell' Oriente Franceseano*, I, 94, places the date of the visit between Sept. 1 and 26 (?), 1219. This exhaustive assembling of the pertinent documents has been further supplemented by the same author in *Studi Francescani*, XXIII (n.s., XII; 1926), 307-330. Nazzareno Jacopozzi, "Dove sia avvenuta la visita di San Francesco d'Assisi al Sultano Malek el-Kamel," *Congrès international de géographie*, V, 146, says: "La sua visita a Malek el-Kamel il febbraio del 1220. . . ." For a recent detailed study of the visit see also Roncaglia in *Studi Francescani*, L (1953), 97-106.

¹⁴¹ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 218-219; *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 106-107.

¹⁴² *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 108-109. As to the presence of Spaniards see the brief notice of P. Ferdinand M. Delorme, "Les Espagnols à la bataille de Damiette (29 août 1219)," in *Archivum Franciscanum historicum*, XVI (1923), 245. This brief statement of Delorme, based on a bull of Honorius III of March 15, 1219, as well as a remark of Thomas of Celano (p. 149) appears to establish the presence of Spaniards, despite former doubts.

Apparently in desperation al-Kāmil again renewed his offer of peace. In the conference of Christian leaders which followed, king John, who favored acceptance, was strongly supported by the English leaders, particularly by the earls Ranulf of Chester and William of Arundel and Sussex, in addition to his usual following among the French, the Syrians, and the Germans. The partisans of Pelagius argued, not without force, that the sultan's offer was only a crafty maneuver intended to bring about disunity in, and even dissolution of, the Christian army, after which the Moslems would be able, with little difficulty, to regain a Jerusalem whose chief strongholds had already been dismantled. Moreover, they felt, as long as the sultan retained possession of the Transjordanian fortifications of Kerak and Krak de Montréal, he could devastate the surrounding districts at will. The additional offer also to restore the lost fragment of the True Cross must have appeared to others besides Pelagius as essentially fraudulent: Saladin had failed to find the relic many years before when he desperately needed to return it to the Christians in exchange for the lives of his captive subjects.¹⁴³

When these discussions were definitively ended by Pelagius, and the emirs who had come as emissaries had barely departed from the camp, the sultan, in a new effort to supply Damietta, sent a detachment with provisions through the Christian lines November 3, 1219. Passing quietly through the sector held by Hervey of Donzi, count of Nevers, the intruders had actually entered the camp and were moving toward one of the city gates when their presence was detected and the alarm given. Only the swift action of the Templars and Hospitallers, who had risen early for their morning devotions, prevented the complete success of the undertaking. Most of the invaders were slain or put to flight, but a few succeeded in entering Damietta. Charged with inexcusable neglect, the count of Nevers was summarily banished from the camp.¹⁴⁴ For the moment, at least, this incident appears to have created a unanimity of purpose long absent among the crusading leaders. All efforts were devoted to the preparation for a final assault upon Damietta. Severe penalties were ordered for anybody guilty of negligence in the defense of the camp. Guards of the walls and trenches guilty of leaving their posts were to be hanged; recreant knights were to be deprived of horses and arms and banished; while infantrymen, women, and merchant camp-followers assigned to such duty were, if delinquent, to suffer

¹⁴³ James of Vitry, *Epist.* VI, pp. 74-75, and Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 222 ff.

¹⁴⁴ *Eracles* (RHC, Occ., II), p. 345; Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-rauḍatain* (RHC, Or., V), pp. 176-177.

the amputation of a hand and have their belongings confiscated. Failure to bear arms at all times while guarding the tents would subject every culprit, regardless of rank, to excommunication. Orders were issued also regulating the conduct of the crusaders in case Damietta should be captured.¹⁴⁵

By now the garrison of Damietta had become so weakened that it was no longer possible to man all the towers. On the night of November 4, 1219, four Christian sentries, while observing a tower which had previously been breached by the machines of the Hospitallers, suspected that it had been deserted. Climbing a long ladder, they found that both wall and tower had in fact been abandoned. They reported their observations, and a sufficient detachment of crusaders occupied the tower while the Christian army entered the city. Much contemporary testimony is written in the spirit of partisanship, for or against Pelagius or John of Brienne. But the ascertainable facts appear to be fairly summarized by the simple statement of Oliver: "On the night of the 5th of November Damietta was captured without treachery, without resistance, without violent pillage and tumult. . . ." According to the author of the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, however, there were those who said that Damietta was taken only by the treachery of its garrison, who were moved to surrender because of their extreme distress.¹⁴⁶ Seeing the Christian standards flying from the towers on the following morning, the sultan hastily abandoned his camp at Fāriskūr and withdrew to Mansurah. Most of the Arab chroniclers agree that the conquerors either massacred or enslaved the surviving inhabitants. All contemporary sources testify that the few thousands of Saracen survivors, men and women, were all more or less ill. Streets and houses were filled with the dead, whose naked bodies had been partially devoured by ravenous dogs. The dead lay unmoved in the beds of the helpless dying.¹⁴⁷ Oliver says that of the 80,000 people in the city at the beginning of the siege, only 3,000 survived, and of these only 100 were not ill.¹⁴⁸

Some of the survivors were probably sold into slavery, although many, certainly the prosperous, were retained to be exchanged for

¹⁴⁵ *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, pp. 110-111.

¹⁴⁶ *Eracles* (*RHC, Occ.*, II), pp. 345 ff.; Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 224 ff.; *Chronique d'Ernouf*, p. 426; "Hist. Patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 254.

¹⁴⁷ See especially Abū-Shāmāh, *Ar-raudatāin* (*RHC, Or.*, V), p. 177; al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 480; and Abū-l-Fidā', *Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar* (*RHC, Or.*, I), p. 91.

¹⁴⁸ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 236; cf. *Gesta obsidionis Damiate*, p. 113; James of Vitry, *Epist.* VI, pp. 77-78.

Christians held prisoner by the Moslems. Many of the children were taken by James of Vitry or others and baptized, although most of them were so weakened in health that they succumbed shortly after baptism.¹⁴⁹ There is plausible evidence, however, that many of the surviving adult inhabitants of Damietta were permitted to go into voluntary exile, as the city was repopulated by colonists from the west. In some instances also, the survivors were treated with every consideration, as in the case of the shaikh Abū-l-Ḥasan, who was left unmolested as a man of great charity and virtue.¹⁵⁰ There is little disagreement respecting the rich booty taken in the captured city: precious stones, silks, rich ornaments, quantities of gold and silver utensils. Despite the severe penalties previously decreed, much of this booty fell into the hands of individual looters. The amount which found its way to authorized depositories was estimated by James of Vitry at not more than 400,000 bezants.¹⁵¹ The fortifications of the city had been but little damaged during the long siege, and the crusaders could turn their attention almost immediately to plundering the surrounding country and to foraging for necessary provisions. By November 23 they had captured the neighboring city of Tinnis without a struggle. The terrified inhabitants, believing the entire crusading army to be moving to the attack, closed the gates and fled. Although the city no longer possessed its ancient splendor, it afforded an additional stronghold of first-rate importance, while its location on Lake Manzalah, with its abundant fish, birds, and salt works, contributed greatly to the food supplies.¹⁵²

But the taking of the city of Damietta inevitably heightened the tension once more between king John of Jerusalem and Pelagius, who assumed that his position as representative of the church gave him full authority to make final disposition of the conquest. Declaring the city to be the possession of the Christians of the west, whose common effort had wrested it from the Moslems, he rejected all proposals which would give John of Brienne control over it, either direct or indirect. John's adherents, on the other hand, envisaged Damietta as a Christian stronghold in Egypt, comparable to Acre in Palestine, and necessarily subject to the king of Jerusalem. It was soon apparent that the question could find no amicable solution except through papal arbitration, or until after the arrival of emperor Frederick II. Meanwhile the partisanship manifested itself on

¹⁴⁹ James of Vitry, *Epist.* vi, p. 79.

¹⁵⁰ Grousset, *Histoire des croisades*, III, 220. Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-raudatāin* (RHC, Or., V), p. 177, relates this story of Abū-l-Ḥasan.

¹⁵¹ James of Vitry, *Epist.* vi, p. 78.

¹⁵² Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 240 ff.

occasion in actual riots or clashes of arms between the partisans of the king, now including the Templars and Hospitallers as well as the French and Syrians, and the partisans of the legate, chiefly Italians.

In disgust king John equipped three of his ships, and threatened to leave at once. Pelagius at last yielded, and tentatively recognized John's claims to Damietta, pending a final decision by the pope. The Italians, however, insisting that they had been deprived of a fair share in the spoils of Damietta, took arms against the French and all but expelled them from the city. Meanwhile Pelagius, seeking to find a basis for mediation which would prevent the complete demoralization of the expedition, so angered his Italian supporters that they threatened his life. The French, the Templars, and the Hospitallers now, in their turn, routed the Italians. To preserve the peace, however, a redistribution of the spoils, more favorable to the Italians, was made and a semblance of unity restored.¹⁵³ It was not until February 2, 1220, that these partisan conflicts were adjusted and the city sufficiently cleansed to permit a formal ceremony signaling the Christian victory. A solemn procession was led to the splendid mosque, now consecrated as the cathedral of the Blessed Virgin. Individual towers and quarters of the city walls were allotted to the various nationalities participating in the expedition. One tower was reserved for the Roman church and another for the archbishop of Damietta.¹⁵⁴

Despite the tentative agreement, Pelagius continued to act high-handedly, and John of Brienne to find that his feeble claim to the Armenian kingship demanded his personal attention. Oliver asserts and the Chronicle of Ernoul implies that John employed the Armenian situation merely as an excuse for leaving Damietta.¹⁵⁵ John probably knew that Pelagius' actions merely reflected the will of Honorius III. The capture of Damietta amounted to a personal defeat for John. Pelagius' supporters blamed the subsequent difficulties of the crusade upon John's fit of pique and refusal to subordinate his personal interests. Yet this would have required extraordinary self-abnegation. In any case, John had hardly set sail from Damietta when Honorius, in congratulating the crusaders, gave formal approval to the authority of Pelagius in temporal as in

¹⁵³ John of Tulbia, *De domino Iohanne*, p. 139.

¹⁵⁴ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 239-240. G. Golubovich has dealt in some detail with this division of Damietta into quarters according to nationalities, fraternal orders, etc., in his "San Francesco e i Francescani in Damiatina, 5 Nov. 1219-2 Feb. 1220," *Studi Francescani*, XXIII (n.s., XII; 1926), 307 ff. No archbishop was elected before the loss of the city.

¹⁵⁵ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 248; *Chronique d'Ernoul*, p. 427.

spiritual affairs.¹⁵⁶ Far removed from the scene of action, and dependent upon Pelagius' reports, Honorius doubtless felt the capture of Damietta to be a heroic achievement. Pelagius at Damietta personified the church triumphant; he was Joshua before the walls of Jericho, as the pope had long expected him to be.¹⁵⁷

The lack of discipline so apparent throughout the ranks of the crusading army may well explain Pelagius' rigorous, if not tyrannical, rule during the months following John's departure. His regulations drastically restricting the movements of ships and the arrivals and departures of pilgrims were emergency measures intended to prevent the disintegration of the army, rather than deliberate acts of tyranny. But his actions probably prevented the adequate safeguarding of the shipping routes between Cyprus and the Syrian ports and the harbor of Damietta, and Saracen ships attacked and destroyed several pilgrim vessels en route to Syria and Egypt. The statement of Ernoul, who is rarely sympathetic toward Pelagius, that more than 13,000 pilgrims were lost in these attacks is probably an exaggeration.¹⁵⁸

As the crusaders continued inactive in Damietta, dissatisfaction mounted on all sides. The masses of the Christians were convinced that the treasure which had been gathered to pay for the crusade had been misappropriated by various "betrayers, who had kept for themselves the wages of the fighting men." Despite Pelagius' protests and threats, large numbers of crusaders withdrew from the army, and departed for home during the spring passage of 1220, pleading poverty, illness, or other excuses. In their places, however, came many new crusaders, including the archbishops of Milan and Crete, the bishops of Faenza, Reggio, and Brescia, and large numbers of Italian knights.¹⁵⁹

Ibn-al-Athīr, writing of Moslem tribulation during the year of the Hegira 617 (March 8, 1220–February 24, 1221) declares that while Egypt and Syria were on the point of being conquered by the Franks, the Mongols of Genghis Khan, already in Persia, threatened the whole Islamic world. Yet the threat of the Christians appeared more serious than that of the Mongols, and when al-Ashraf, who ruled in Greater Armenia, received almost simultaneous appeals from the caliph an-Nāṣir for assistance against the

¹⁵⁶ Pressutti, *Regesta Honorii papae III*, I, no. 2338.

¹⁵⁷ See the letter of Honorius in September 1219, *RHGF*, XIX, p. 691: "Quare, sicut alter Josue, populum Domini corroborata et confortata, etc."

¹⁵⁸ *Chronique d'Ernoul*, 429–430. However, Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 253, mentions 33 galleys of the "king of Babylon . . . which caused us inestimable loss."

¹⁵⁹ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 246–248.

Mongols, and from his brother al-Kāmil for assistance against the crusaders, he was persuaded, albeit with reluctance, by their other brother al-Mu'azzam to employ his army to assist al-Kāmil.¹⁶⁰ Threatening as the Mongol invasion had at first appeared to the Aiyūbids, and above all to the caliph an-Nāṣir, it had actually served to destroy the power of their enemies, the shahs of Khorezm, and left al-Ashraf free to concentrate his forces against the Christian invaders of Egypt. This helped in the end to check the crusaders' threat to Syria.

At Damietta Pelagius was unable to stir the crusaders to action all through the year 1220, save for a pillaging expedition by the Templars against Burlus in July. Christian inactivity lasted until June 1221.¹⁶¹ As Oliver puts it, "the people were contaminated with gluttony, drunkenness, fornications, adulteries, thefts, and gambling." The departure of king John had left the army without a leader capable of uniting the disparate groups for a common undertaking. Pelagius' efforts to assume such a position met only with rebuffs from the various leaders. At a conference in which Pelagius exhorted them to undertake an attack against the new camp of the sultan at Mansurah, the knights replied that, in the absence of the king, "no other prince was present whom the peoples of different nations were willing to obey."¹⁶²

This long period of inactivity prompted the Moslems to attack the meager garrisons which had been left in the coastal strongholds in Syria. Already, while en route to Syria after the fall of Damietta, al-Mu'azzam had taken the castle of Caesarea, but had failed before Château Pèlerin.¹⁶³ In October 1220 al-Mu'azzam further damaged the fortifications of Jerusalem, laid waste the fields and vineyards, and struck at Château Pèlerin. The Templars had prepared for an extended siege, bringing in supplies and men from Acre, and obtaining support from their master, whom Pelagius permitted to withdraw from Damietta for the purpose. Al-Mu'azzam had to abandon the siege.¹⁶⁴

Moreover, al-Kāmil had ample opportunity, without interruption from the crusaders, to convert his new camp at Mansurah into a veritable city. He employed his soldiers in the construction there

¹⁶⁰ Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (RHC, Or., II, 1), pp. 153 ff.; Abū-l-Fidā', *Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar* (*ibid.*, I), pp. 95-97; see also W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1928), pp. 399 ff.

¹⁶¹ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 252.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, chaps 41, 52-53; Abū-l-Fidā', *Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar* (RHC, Or., I), p. 94.

¹⁶⁴ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 254 ff.

of fortifications, palaces, luxurious baths, and many other buildings. Unmolested through the first half of 1221, he found time to make of the new city a stronghold which might well take the place of Damietta in protecting the interior of Egypt, against which, it was clear, Pelagius hoped to move.¹⁶⁵ Arab sources are in agreement that sometime after the fall of Damietta al-Kāmil raised his offer and proposed to surrender to the crusaders Jerusalem, Ascalon, Tiberias, Sidon, Jabala, Latakia, and all other territory which Saladin had conquered in Syria with the exception of Kerak and Krak de Montréal.¹⁶⁶ Pelagius again imposed his view, that by holding Damietta the crusaders could conquer not only the land of Egypt, but Jerusalem also. They were all the more moved to this decision because emperor Frederick II was expected to arrive soon, bringing ample forces for the undertaking.¹⁶⁷ Again the Christians lost the opportunity to regain at one stroke the whole of the territory for whose recovery the expedition had been planned.

The new decision also would soon expose Frederick to the charge that, by delaying to fulfill his vow, taken at the moment of his coronation, he had caused the loss of Damietta and of Egypt.¹⁶⁸ On December 15, 1220, Honorius III had notified Pelagius that Frederick, on receiving the imperial crown, had pledged himself to send a part of his army the following March and to set out for Egypt in person in August.¹⁶⁹ It was not, however, until May 1221 that the promised troops arrived, together with Louis of Bavaria, bishop Ulrich of Passau, and many lords and knights. After their arrival, Pelagius renewed his efforts to carry out his long planned expedition against Cairo. He received the support of the newly-arrived crusaders, especially of Louis of Bavaria, who insisted that he had come for the purpose of attacking the enemy, at the same time urging that the attack should be made before the river had begun its seasonal rise. Yet Louis was a lieutenant of the emperor Frederick, and a few years later Frederick would declare that he had expressly ordered that no important operation be undertaken prior to his own arrival.¹⁷⁰ The attitude of the duke of Bavaria appears

¹⁶⁵ Abū-l-Fidā', *Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar* (RHC, Or., I), p. 91.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97; Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (RHC, Or., II, 1), p. 122; al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 490. Only half of Sidon was then in Moslem hands.

¹⁶⁷ *Chronique d'Ernoul*, pp. 435-436.

¹⁶⁸ See below, chapter XII, pp. 433-438.

¹⁶⁹ Potthast, *Regesta*, I, 6442; J. L. A. Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia diplomatica Friderici secundi* (7 vols. in 12, Paris, 1852-1861), II, 82-83.

¹⁷⁰ In addition to the statement of Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 257, see the letter of Peter of Montaignu (Roger of Wendover, *Flores historiarum*, Rolls Series, LXXXIV, II, 264), and below, chapter XII, pp. 435-436.

to have diminished the doubts in the minds of those who opposed the legate and, in the words of Peter of Montaignu, master of the Templars, "it was agreed by all to make the advance."

Accordingly, on June 29, 1221, the army moved to its old camp in preparation for the advance up the river. On July 6 Pelagius and all the prelates, bringing with them the fragments of the True Cross, appeared. On the following day king John, acting on the sternest commands from the pope, returned from his fruitless voyage to Armenia, bringing with him large numbers of troops.¹⁷¹ Although still opposing the project, he was too late to change the decision of the other leaders, especially since Pelagius had already threatened with excommunication those who opposed. To every objection John offered, however well founded from the point of view of military strategy, Pelagius turned a deaf ear, allegedly accusing John of treason for his repeated efforts to dissuade him from his plan.

The march of the crusaders, begun on July 17, followed the east bank of the river to Fāriskūr and Sharamsāḥ. Although meeting some slight resistance on the 19th, they occupied Sharamsāḥ on July 21. The sultan was busy at Mansurah, where his own armies, together with those of his brothers al-Mu'azzam and al-Ashraf, were being stationed for resistance. After the capture of Sharamsāḥ, John of Brienne is said to have attempted once more in vain to induce the legate to reconsider his decision. Meanwhile the undisciplined masses, wholly ignorant of the difficulties that lay ahead, and moved solely by the prospect of the rich booty which the city of Cairo would afford them, were not to be denied. A Moslem contemporary remarks that, if king John had not agreed to the continuance of the expedition, the "Franks would have put him to death".¹⁷² Altogether unaware of the hydrography of this area, Pelagius moved his troops on July 24 into the narrow angle where al-Baḥr aṣ-Ṣaghīr separates from the Damietta branch of the Nile, on the opposite bank from Mansurah. Sure of his ability to capture the enemy's stores, Pelagius had neglected to bring adequate food supplies.

No fewer than 600 ships, cogs, galleys, and barbotes had advanced up the river simultaneously with the army, described by Oliver as consisting of 1,200 cavalry, not counting the native Turcopoles and other mounted warriors. The numbers of foot-soldiers were so great that he refrains from an estimate. He speaks, however, of 4,000 archers, including 2,500 mercenaries. From

¹⁷¹ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, p. 257.

¹⁷² "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 260.

intelligence obtained through interrogation of fugitives, he estimates the enemy mounted troops at 7,000. On the right flank, the ships were drawn up so as to form a protective wall, while the infantry constituted the left flank. The mounted troops occupied the center, stretched out diagonally between the ships and the infantry. In this formation the Christians advanced to a point opposite the camp of the Moslems at Mansurah, where it was clear that the fortifications could be overcome only after a long attack. The crusaders therefore began to erect fortifications around their own camp.

The position occupied by the Christians was, under the most favorable circumstances, a dangerous one. Warnings from Alice, the dowager queen of Cyprus, as well as from the masters of the knightly orders, concerning the huge numbers of Moslem reinforcements were in vain. As Oliver wrote, "sane counsel was far removed from our leaders." Pelagius would of course not accept the advice of John of Brienne, who, as Oliver remarks, "had reflected more deeply on the matter," to seize this opportunity to accept the sultan's offer of peace.¹⁷³ Day by day the reinforcements of the enemy multiplied. If we may believe one Egyptian source, the number of horsemen reached no less than 40,000. It is to be assumed that the lesser estimate of Oliver did not take into consideration the forces of al-Mu'azzam and al-Ashraf, recently arrived from Syria.¹⁷⁴ Under these circumstances some of the crusaders showed increasing signs of timidity, and, as the long delay continued, many withdrew from the army to take advantage of the next passage to the west. As the month of August passed, the situation grew more precarious.

As if offering a kind of prelude to the impending disaster, Oliver relates that in their passage along the Nile the crusaders had given little heed to a small canal which enters the Damietta branch of the Nile on the west side of the river opposite Barāmūn. He describes it as "a certain little stream coming from the island of Mahalech" (al-Maḥallah) which, he continues, "is able to bear galleys and other vessels of moderate size."¹⁷⁵ When the Nile was near its crest, as it was in late August, large vessels could navigate this canal. Aided by superior knowledge of the hydrography of the delta area, the emir Badr-ad-Dīn ibn-Ḥassūn brought a number of ships up from al-Maḥallah and moved them in to the Nile by means of this canal opposite Barāmūn. The similarity of this

¹⁷³ Oliver, *Historia Damiatina*, pp. 259-261, 268.

¹⁷⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 482.

¹⁷⁵ *Historia Damiatina*, p. 267.

exploit to that which the Moslems carried out against Louix IX some years later, leads one to assume that on this occasion also the enemy ships were disassembled and transported "on the backs of camels to the canal of al-Maḥallah", where they were launched and then brought secretly into the Nile.¹⁷⁶ In this manner the Moslems were able to block the water route between Damietta and the Christian camp, not only cutting off supplies, but destroying or capturing many vessels.

This was a staggering and unexpected blow to the plans of Pelagius. After numerous consultations with the leaders of the army, he was compelled to order a speedy retreat towards Damietta. Meanwhile the Moslems, employing a pontoon bridge across al-Baḥr aṣ-Ṣaghīr, were able to send considerable numbers of land forces to the rear of the Christian army, blocking their retreat. On August 26 the crusaders endeavored to retreat to Barāmūn by night, but their careless burning of tents and baggage and the great activity in their camp revealed their plan. Many crusaders also, reluctant to sacrifice their supplies of wine, endeavored to consume what they could not carry, drinking themselves into a stupor and falling easy captive to the enemy. Meanwhile the sultan ordered the cutting of the dikes, thus blocking the last hope of escape. In the vicinity of Barāmūn the country had been so flooded that retreat and fighting were alike impossible. Helpless and desperate, Pelagius implored king John of Jerusalem, whose advice thus far he had so stubbornly ignored, to extricate the army from this impossible situation.¹⁷⁷

But the army was hopelessly trapped. Even when the king endeavored to form a battle line, rather "to die bravely in battle than to perish ignominiously in the flood", the sultan, seeing that the Christian army could be destroyed by flood and famine, refused to do battle. Nothing remained to the crusaders but to sue for peace. William of Gibelet was chosen as emissary, authorized to offer the restoration of Damietta in return for the freedom of the Christian army to withdraw. The sultan al-Kāmil favored the acceptance of the proposal, but his brothers urged the complete annihilation of the invaders. The sultan knew that the city of Damietta was still garrisoned, and that the crusaders had strengthened its fortifications. But a still more important consideration, as the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī points out, was the probability that reinforcements,

¹⁷⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 481, 491; and XI (1908), 223. On the later incident, see below, chapter XIV, p. 502.

¹⁷⁷ *Eracles (RHC, Occ., II)*, p. 351.

eager to avenge the humiliation of their fellow Christians, would hasten from the west; al-Kāmil probably knew about the planned expedition of Frederick II. Moreover, the Moslem world was faced with many difficulties arising from unsettled internal conditions and from the Mongol threat. Al-Kāmil's army was weary and desired peace.¹⁷⁸ Accordingly al-Kāmil received the Christian emissary, and later king John himself, with the utmost courtesy, showering upon them many attentions, and sending food and other supplies to the wretched crusaders.¹⁷⁹

An embassy headed by the masters of the Templars and the Teutonic Knights was sent to Damietta to acquaint the crusaders who had remained in the city with the details of the defeat, and with the terms of the proposed treaty. Meanwhile, in the midst of the disaster, the reinforcements sent by Frederick under the leadership of the chancellor Walter of Plear, the marshal Anselm of Justingen, and the admiral Henry of Malta had arrived in the harbor of Damietta. They were bitter in their denunciation of the leaders who had launched the expedition contrary to the express orders of Frederick that no new undertaking was to be attempted prior to his arrival, and many of the German, Italian, and Sicilian pilgrims shared their views, and opposed the treaty with al-Kāmil. But the French, the Templars, and the Hospitallers, as well as the Syrian, Greek, and Armenian forces, moved by the plight of their countrymen, insisted that the terms of the treaty must be accepted.

At length the difference of opinion manifested itself in acts of violence, particularly on the part of the Venetians, who, together with other disgruntled elements described by the *Chronicle of Tours* as the "emperor's people", attacked the houses of John of Brienne, the Templars, and the Hospitallers, and endeavored to gain control of Damietta. Only when the representatives of the captive leaders of the expedition threatened to surrender Acre to the Saracens if opposition continued, did the Venetians and their supporters agree to the terms of peace.¹⁸⁰ The failure of Walter of Plear and Henry of Malta to prevent the surrender of Damietta subjected them to the extreme wrath of the emperor. The chancellor was deprived of his possessions and condemned to perpetual exile, while the admiral, returning secretly to Sicily, was captured and imprisoned and his fiefs confiscated. Subsequently, however, he was pardoned by Frederick, who not only employed him as commander of the

¹⁷⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, "Histoire d'Égypte," *ROL*, IX (1902), 491-492.

¹⁷⁹ "Hist. patr. d'Alex.," *ROL*, XI (1908), 258; Abū-Shāmah, *Ar-rauḍatain* (*RHC, Or.*, V), p. 183.

¹⁸⁰ *Chronicon Turonense* (*RHGF*, XVIII), p. 302.

fleet but also entrusted him with diplomatic missions of the utmost delicacy.¹⁸¹

On August 30, 1221, the fateful terms were drawn up. A peace and armistice of eight years' duration was agreed upon. The Christians agreed to evacuate Damietta, together with all other places in Egypt conquered by them. Mutual surrender of prisoners was to be undertaken without obligation of ransom. The Moslems agreed also to restore that part of the True Cross which had been captured by them at Hattin on July 4, 1187. In earnest of this agreement, hostages were to be exchanged, including king John on the side of the Christians, and al-Kāmil's son aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Aiyūb on the side of the Moslems. These hostages were to be released when Damietta had been evacuated and restored.

The Fifth Crusade had ended in colossal and irremediable failure. Yet, up to the very moment of its catastrophic end, it had held within its easy reach the realization of its goal — the restoration of the Holy Land. The extent to which it failed is perhaps best expressed in the language of the Moslem historian Ibn-al-Athīr, who says: "God gave to the Moslems an unexpected victory, for the acme of their hopes was the recovery of Damietta through restoring to the Franks the cities in Syria which had been taken from them. But God not only gratified them with the restitution of Damietta, but left in their possession also the cities of Syria."¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Richard of San Germano (*MGH, SS.*, XIX), pp. 341, 348.

¹⁸² Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* (*RHC, Or.*, II, 1), p. 125.