

ACRE AND ARSUF

1191

To understand the problems which were to face Richard on his arrival in the Holy Land we have to go back to September 1187. In that month Saladin, having already captured nearly all the cities and castles of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, chose to lay siege to Jerusalem itself. As a result his army was able to enter the Holy City on 2 October, the anniversary of Mahomet's ascent into heaven from Jerusalem. It was a brilliant stroke of propaganda skilfully utilized by Saladin's chancery in the jubilant letters which they circulated throughout the Muslim world. After Mecca and Medina Jerusalem was the most holy place in Islam and its recovery ensured that Saladin's name would never die. For his army it was the emotional climax of the campaign of 1187. But though the climax it was not the end. Saladin pushed his weary soldiers to lay siege to Tyre. Apart from a few isolated inland castles this great coastal fortress was now all that remained of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. But the defenders of Tyre, under the energetic command of Conrad of Montferrat, had made good use of the breathing space granted them. By November 1187 the city's fortifications were in first rate shape and Saladin's army had to face the tedious and uncomfortable prospect of a long-drawn-out blockade. If Tyre could survive the winter then it could serve as a beach-head for Christian reinforcements. In terms of military strategy it was a much more important city than Jerusalem, for once the Franks had lost the coast they could not hope to keep or recover the Holy Sepulchre. In later years there must have been moments when Saladin regretted that he had made a political rather than a military decision in September, but it is easy to be

wise after the event and in the autumn of 1187 his momentum must have seemed irresistible.

Tyre survived. On 1 January 1188 Saladin called off the siege and Conrad of Montferrat became the hero of the hour. This ambitious, ruthless man, who had earlier had a narrow escape when his ship put in to Acre not knowing that it had already fallen, sensed that his star was in the ascendant and began to behave as though he were the real ruler of the kingdom. But in June 1188 Guy of Lusignan was released by Saladin on condition that he took no further part in the fighting. Guy, of course, had no difficulty in finding a clergyman who would release him from the oath he had sworn to Saladin. Good Christians were not expected to keep the promises they made to the infidels – ‘the pagan cattle, the unbelieving, black-faced brood’, as Ambroise called them. Unfortunately for Guy, Conrad refused to hand back Tyre so he found himself in the position of being a king without a kingdom and, in Conrad’s eyes indeed, not even a king any more. As the months went by Guy’s position became increasingly difficult. Then suddenly, in August 1189, he seized the initiative. He did what nobody, not Conrad, not Saladin, could possibly have imagined him doing. He marched south with a few followers and laid siege to Acre. Until its capture in 1187 Acre had been the chief port and the largest town in the Kingdom of Jerusalem. An army the size of Guy’s had no hope of taking it. When Saladin arrived on the scene Guy would be trapped between the Acre garrison and the might of the main Muslim army. On the face of it, it was an act of incredible folly. His political opponents liked to write Guy off as a simple man but not even they had thought he could be as stupid as that. And yet it worked, as in Guy’s apparently hopeless position nothing else could have worked. Guy set up camp on the hill of Turon, a mile east of Acre, and although he was unable to take the city, Saladin was equally incapable of dislodging him. It was a brave gesture which won him a good deal of sympathy and some political support; in April 1190 even Conrad had to recognize him as king. With each month that went by more reinforcements streamed into the Christian camp until eventually Guy was able to complete the landward blockade of Acre. The occasional Muslim supply ship got through, however, and this

enabled the garrison to hold out. Thus a position of stalemate was reached. The Christians besieged Acre and Saladin besieged the besiegers. The stalemate was not broken until the arrival of the Kings in the spring and early summer of 1191.

But while the military stalemate continued, the balance of the political scales tipped again in favour of Conrad of Montferrat. Guy was King of Jerusalem by virtue of the fact that he had married Sibylla, the heiress to the kingdom. In the autumn of 1190, however, Guy lost both his wife and his two daughters, victims of one of the epidemics which were a normal part of life in the unhealthy atmosphere of an army camp. As in most wars disease did more damage than the weapons of the human enemy. With Sibylla dead, could Guy still claim to be king? Guy believed that as the anointed King he should retain the kingdom, but in legal terms the circumstances of his anointing and coronation in September 1186 were highly dubious. In that case perhaps Sibylla's younger sister, Isabella, should inherit her rights. It seemed to Conrad that Isabella ought to be queen and that he was just the sort of man to be her husband. True, it was rumoured that at least one of Conrad's two previous wives – one Italian, one Greek – was still alive, but then army gossip was notoriously unreliable. It was true also that Isabella had a husband already, Humphrey of Toron; he was unquestionably alive, indeed he was there in the camp. But then there were churchmen in the camp too and wherever there were churchmen, there marriages could be broken. If the Archbishop of Canterbury would not annul the marriage – and Baldwin, who arrived in October 1190, did in fact refuse to do so – then Conrad could try the Archbishop of Pisa. A Pisan after all would be attracted by the possibility of securing an extension of his home town's trading privileges in Outremer. So Isabella was abducted from her tent outside Acre and persuaded – by her mother – that her marriage to Humphrey was invalid. Despite Humphrey's protests, the marriage was annulled. On 24 November Isabella was wedded to Conrad. In canon law the marriage was both incestuous, because Isabella's sister had once been married to Conrad's brother, and bigamous, because her marriage to Humphrey was wrongly dissolved – as was later established by a papal commission. Legally a farce, the proceedings were none

the less thought to make good political sense on the grounds that the kingdom needed a rough ruler with the skills and driving force which Humphrey of Toron clearly lacked. An open confrontation and the danger of an armed clash between Conrad and Guy was avoided because Guy remained at Acre while Conrad and Isabella went back to Tyre. But there were now two candidates for the throne. Thus Richard would have two problems to tackle on his arrival at Acre: first the beleaguered city would have to be taken and then the much more difficult question of the quarrel between Conrad and Guy would have to be faced.

On 5 June 1191 Richard set sail from Famagusta. He made his first landfall near the great castle of the Knights of St John at Margat. This castle was to be Isaac's prison. Then Richard sailed south, reaching Tyre on 6 June. The garrison of Tyre, however, acting on instructions from King Philip and Conrad of Montferrat, would not give him permission to enter the town. So Richard spent the night encamped outside the walls and next day continued on his voyage to Acre. Outside Acre his fleet intercepted a large supply ship flying the flag of the French King. On closer inspection it proved to be a blockade-runner, laden with supplies and reinforcements for the garrison of Acre. (In an earlier, successful attempt to run the blockade, not only had Saladin's sailors shaved off their beards and put on Frankish clothes, they had also ostentatiously kept pigs on the ship's upper deck, relying on the Christian patrols' knowing that the Muslims would never eat pork.) Richard's galleys closed with the supply ship and, after a fierce struggle, the blockade-runner was sunk. According to a Muslim account, when the ship's captain saw that defeat was inevitable, he scuttled his ship rather than see valuable supplies and siege equipment fall into enemy hands. A rumour prevalent among the Franks said that this equipment included a stock of two hundred snakes which the Muslims, with characteristically evil cunning, had planned to release in the camp of the Christian army. After this triumph Richard was given a joyous welcome when he joined the army besieging Acre on 8 June. The celebration lasted well into the night as the army danced and sang by the light of torches and bonfires. Observing the scene from the hills around Acre, Saladin's men

gloomily noted the vast amount of siege equipment which Richard had brought with him.

For two years all eyes in the Muslim, as well as in the Christian, world had been focused on Acre. Baha al-Din Qaragush, one of Saladin's most experienced commanders and his outstanding military architect, had been placed in charge of the defence of the city. If it fell it would be a tremendous blow to the prestige of the victor of Hattin and liberator of Jerusalem. Richard's arrival stimulated the besiegers to greater efforts and put fear into the hearts of the enemy. His reputation had preceded him. The wooden castle of Mategriffon was raised again, this time outside the gate of Acre. By contrast Philip had made little impact on the state of the siege in the weeks since 20 April. According to Muslim sources he had brought with him six galleys to Richard's twenty-five. He had contented himself with setting up his siege-machines, chiefly stone-throwing mangonels, and bombarding the city walls, though according to Rigord of St Denis he did this so effectively that Acre would have fallen into Philip's hands like a ripe fruit had he not courteously chosen to delay the final assault until after Richard's arrival. The bombardment was intensified when Richard brought up his siege-machines to join those already erected by Philip, Hugh of Burgundy and the Templars and Hospitallers. Philip's best mangonel was given the traditional name of *Malvoisin*, 'Bad Neighbour' while another machine built with funds from the crusaders' common chest was called 'God's Own Catapult'.

The defenders of Acre directed their own artillery fire against the Frankish siege-machines. Being made of wood they were particularly vulnerable to the dreaded Greek fire. This was a naphtha-based mixture which was put into pottery containers and then hurled from catapults. The impression it made was vividly described by Joinville, the chronicler of St Louis's crusade in 1250: 'In appearance this Greek fire looked like a large tun of verjuice with a burning tail the length of a long sword. As it came towards you it made a thunderous noise – like a dragon flying through the air. At night it gave so great a light that you could see our camp as clearly as in broad daylight.' Then on impact the containers shattered and the mixture burst into flames. Since Greek fire could

not be extinguished by water it was particularly devastating in sea-battles, but even in land warfare it was effective enough, and to counter it wooden structures had to be covered with hides or other materials soaked in vinegar or urine. Richard also had a belfry built, a moveable tower, with stations for crossbowmen and archers on each floor and with its top floor higher than the city walls to permit the lowering of a drawbridge on to the battlements across which a storming party could launch their attack. This was an extremely expensive item of siege equipment, but it is clear that even at the height of the struggle against Saladin the two Kings were also contending against each other and that in this contest Richard's greater wealth gave him the upper hand. Philip had offered pay of three besants (gold pieces) a month to any knight who would join his service, only to be outbid by Richard who offered four. Presumably for the same reason Richard's siege-machines seem to have been better guarded than Philip's and, as a result, to have suffered less from Muslim attack. In any event, under their joint bombardment, the walls of Acre were slowly but surely battered down.

Every now and then a section of wall collapsed as a result of being undermined. Undermining was the most efficient method of bringing down a wall. The miners tunnelled their way beneath the foundations, which they underpinned with timber props. The mine was then filled with brushwood, logs and other combustible material. When all was ready, this was set alight and the miners beat a hasty retreat. The props were burned through, the masonry above collapsed – and a party of assailants was ready and waiting to storm through the breach. Military architects tried to meet this threat by protecting exposed walls with a *glacis*. The broad base of this ponderous pyramid-like structure rested on the bottom of the moat and meant that any tunnel had to cope with heavy static pressure from above even before it reached the walls. But if the sappers did their job well enough then the only way to deal with a mine was by digging a counter-mine. That meant tunnelling into the mine from the defenders' side and then capturing it. The fate of a besieged town or castle would sometimes hinge upon the outcome of these desperate hand-to-hand struggles which took place in the darkness below ground. At one stage, having under-

mined and bombarded a tower until it was tottering on the point of collapse, Richard was so anxious to finish the job that he offered two besants to anyone who could bring him back a stone: at some stage all of these techniques of siegecraft involved crossing the – normally dry – moat and to do this the ditch had to be filled in, with earth, rubble and all kinds of rubbish. One favourite story among the besiegers of Acre was of a woman who was so enthusiastic that, when mortally wounded, she begged that her body would be thrown into the moat so that even dead she could continue to be of some use.

Shortly after Richard's arrival both he and Philip fell ill. The chroniclers called their illness *Arnaldia* or *Léonardie*, a fever which caused their hair and nails to fall out. It was probably a form of scurvy or trench mouth. At one point Richard's life was thought to be in danger, but as soon as his condition began to improve he insisted that he should be carried to the front line in a litter so that he could continue to direct siege operations. At regular intervals, when the Kings judged that the artillery and sappers had sufficiently softened up the target, they gave the order for an assault against some weak point in the city walls. When they saw the Franks advancing, the defenders of Acre beat their drums as a signal to Saladin. He immediately launched an attack on the camp of the besiegers, who were thus forced to fight on two fronts. Time and again the assault was beaten back. None the less the sustained pressure was taking its toll. Inside Acre the beleaguered garrison was running short of food and war materials. The arrival of the Angevin and French fleets meant that Muslim supply ships could no longer hope to get through. The garrison kept in touch with Saladin by using carrier-pigeons and occasionally a messenger was able to swim through the Frankish lines. But after nearly two years of siege the defenders of Acre were exhausted and they needed something more than messages of support. Their courage was tremendous and compelled admiration even in the Christian camp: 'What can we say of this race of infidels who thus defended their city? Never were there braver soldiers than these, the honour of their nation. If only they had been of the true faith it would not have been possible, anywhere in the world, to find men to surpass them.'

But courage alone was no longer enough. On the night of 4 July Saladin made a last bid to take the besiegers' camp by storm. When this failed the capitulation of Acre became both inevitable and imminent. By now large sections of its walls were in poor shape and much of the moat had been filled in. On 12 July besiegers and besieged agreed on terms of surrender. The lives of the defenders were to be spared in return for a ransom of two hundred thousand dinars (gold coins), for the release of fifteen hundred prisoners now in Saladin's hands and for the restoration of the Holy Cross. When he heard of the conditions Saladin was horrified, but it was too late – Frankish banners were already waving over the city. Acre had fallen at last.

But, as the Christian army moved in to take possession of the city there occurred a fateful incident which was to have far-reaching consequences. Duke Leopold of Austria planted his banner by the side of the standards belonging to the Kings of France and England. For a brief while it stood there in triumph, but then some of Richard's soldiers tore it down and threw it into a ditch. Leopold was naturally offended. A few days later, having tried in vain to obtain satisfaction, he left Acre and returned to Austria. He held Richard responsible for the insult, undoubtedly correctly. The soldiers must have acted with, at the very least, their lord's tacit approval. Leopold had good cause to hate the King of England and two years later, when Richard fell into his hands, he took his revenge. What was it that lay behind the incident of the standard? Why did Richard humiliate Leopold? So far as the German chroniclers of the time are concerned Richard was simply an arrogant and overbearing man who wished to keep all the glory for himself. But to understand what it was all about we have to look more closely at Leopold of Austria's position in the crusader camp.

Leopold had reached Acre in the spring of 1191, somewhat earlier than the two Kings. From the moment of his arrival he found himself cast in the role of leader of the German contingent. This was because Frederick Barbarossa had never reached the Holy Land; in June 1190 he had been drowned in a river in Asia Minor. After his death the great German crusade broke up. Only a pitifully small remnant of Barbarossa's army managed to struggle on to Acre. They arrived in October 1190, carrying with them some bones from the

body of the dead Emperor – bones which they hoped would one day find a fitting resting place in Jerusalem. In command of this contingent was Barbarossa's second surviving son, Duke Frederick of Swabia. In January 1191, however, Frederick's name was added to the long list of those who had succumbed to the diseases of the camp. Thus, when Leopold arrived, he found himself the most important German noble present. But despite his splendid family connections – he was related to both the Hohenstaufen and the Comneni – Leopold did not have the resources to make his presence felt in the Frankish camp. There were not many Germans at Acre; Leopold's own retinue was tiny; and he did not have the cash to attract other men to his banner as Richard had been doing ever since he reached Marseilles. Indeed, according to one English chronicler, Leopold could afford to stay in Outremer only because he was subsidized by the King of England. The Duke of Austria remained an unimportant outsider in a camp which had split into two factions. For him to raise his standard in Acre was totally unrealistic.

If the two Kings had allowed Leopold's standard to remain there they would, in effect, have publicly acknowledged that the Duke of Austria was entitled to share the plunder with them. Yet right from the start of the crusade, Richard and Philip had acted on the assumption that they would each take one half of their conquests. Only recently indeed, while they were both lying sick beneath the walls of Acre, the two Kings – who were never too sick to quarrel – had again quarrelled over booty. Philip had demanded a half of Cyprus and Richard had countered by arguing that either the arrangement applied only to Outremer itself or, if its scope was wider, then Philip should hand over half of Artois, for Count Philip of Flanders had died at Acre on 1 June and by the terms of a treaty he had made with Philip of France in 1180, his death meant that the French King could claim to be the new lord of Artois. Though neither King gave in to the other, the argument shows that they were still thinking in terms of a fifty-fifty division of the spoils. The two Kings were not simply being acquisitive. For some years now the barons of Outremer, faced by a succession of political and military crises, had made it plain that if a king from Western Europe came to their aid he could expect to be able to wield power within

the Kingdom of Jerusalem – and to wield power he would have to be able to draw upon the Kingdom's financial resources. Since these resources now had to be reconquered, the agreement between Richard and Philip fitted perfectly naturally into the prevailing framework of political and legal custom. The problem arose partly owing to Leopold's awkward position in the crusader camp and partly owing to the fact that the two Kings were late-comers to the siege of Acre. The Duke of Austria was certainly not the only one to resent the way in which the newly-arrived Kings monopolized the rewards. There were many barons and knights who, having endured the rigours of the siege for months or even years, now found themselves out in the cold. Robbed of their just reward they were too poor to do anything but return home. Naturally they complained bitterly of the greed of the French and the English and, in a sense, Leopold had been acting as their spokesman. Undoubtedly, throughout the whole of this affair, Philip had taken the same line as Richard, but it was Richard who acted – and acted in a characteristically direct and high-handed fashion. Acre had fallen. It was a great triumph, but in the moment of victory the seeds of trouble had been sown.

With Acre once again a Christian city, the first task of the crusaders was to reconsecrate the churches. Their religious duty done, the crusaders turned to politics, to the thorny question of the crown of Jerusalem. Guy of Lusignan and Conrad of Montferrat formally submitted their claims to the judgement of Richard and Philip. On 28 July the two Kings delivered their verdict, which was a compromise. Richard's protégé, Guy, was to remain King until his death, but then the crown was to pass to Conrad and Isabella and their descendants. Meanwhile Guy and Conrad were to share the royal revenues; Conrad was to hold a large northern county consisting of Tyre and – if he could recover them – Sidon and Beirut. Guy's brother, Geoffrey of Lusignan, whose knightly skills had been much in evidence during the siege, was granted the lordship of Jaffa and Ascalon in the south. Now that his nephew Hugh IX *le Brun* was a grown man there was less scope for Geoffrey at home in Poitou, especially while Richard maintained his policy of excluding the Lusignans from La Marche. Jaffa and Ascalon,

however, would be more than sufficient to compensate Geoffrey – if they could be reconquered. A few days later Richard announced that he was going to lead the army to Ascalon.

King Philip had already made it plain that he wanted to go back to France and on 29 July he finally made up his mind. He had never wanted to be a crusader; he had been ill and an army camp in the Middle East was a hypochondriac's nightmare. Moreover he had a very good reason for wanting to be back in France as soon as possible. His share of the inheritance of Count Philip of Flanders meant more to him than the chance of entering Jerusalem in triumph. If he wanted to be sure of Artois then to Artois he must go. In vain Richard pressed Philip to join him in a declaration of their intention to stay in the Holy Land for three years or until Saladin had returned the Kingdom of Jerusalem in its entirety. In vain the leading men in the French army, tears in their eyes, begged their lord to stay. But on 31 July Philip left Acre. He was accompanied as far as Tyre by Conrad of Montferrat, to whom he had given his share of Acre, including half of the prisoners. Conrad had no wish to remain in an army dominated by the lord of the Lusignans. On 3 August the King of France embarked at Tyre and sailed for home. Richard, of course, was well aware that once Philip was in Paris he might try to occupy Gisors and the Norman Vexin as well as Artois. To an unscrupulous and angry politician it was a crusade-sent opportunity, a temptation not to be resisted. Before he left Acre Philip once again promised to leave the Angevin lands in peace; but he may well have reflected that Richard had many times promised to marry Alice. In these circumstances it would have been naïve of Richard to put any faith in Philip's promise and clearly he did not. A group of Richard's men quickly caught up with Philip's galleys and coasted back to Europe in their company. There can be no doubt that they were going back to give warning of the inevitable attack and ensure that preparations were made to receive it.

Among these men was Roger of Howden. Fortunately the historian can now call upon new sources to fill the gap created by the departure of this excellent guide. From the moment of his arrival in Acre, Richard's activities were observed and commented upon by Middle Eastern writers, both Christian and Muslim. There is

the old French chronicle known as the *Estoire d'Eracles*, which was begun by Ernoul, squire to Balian of Ibelin, one of the leading barons of Outremer. This was written to explain the disaster of 1187, a disaster in which the Ibelin family was deeply implicated. Since it throws the blame on Guy of Lusignan and therefore favours – as did Balian of Ibelin – Conrad of Montferrat's claim to the throne, the chronicle is frankly hostile to Richard. The latter's admirers returned the compliment. 'There was Balian of Ibelin,' Ambroise wrote, 'Falsar than any friend of sin.' The *Estoire d'Eracles* emphasizes Richard's cunning, ruthlessness and subtlety – but it also cannot help appreciating these qualities. After all, as the conqueror of Cyprus Richard was very much the saviour of the baronage of Outremer, for it was on the island that many of them found rich estates safe from the ever-present threat of Muslim invasion which was their lot on the mainland.

But above all, there are the accounts written by Arab historians, particularly Baha ad-Din and Imad ad-Din, both of whom were members of Saladin's household and very close to the master they loved and whose name they praised. The comparisons they made between the Kings of France and England make interesting reading. In Imad ad-Din's descriptions of the arrival of the Kings at Acre Philip cuts a very mediocre figure, while Richard is like a torrent sweeping all before him. For Baha ad-Din, Richard was 'a man of great courage and spirit. He had fought great battles and showed a burning passion for war. His kingdom and rank were inferior to those of the French King, but his wealth, reputation and valour were greater.' Richard's dignity seemed to be less than Philip's because they knew that he did homage to Philip, but it is clear that they feared the English King more. Elsewhere Baha ad-Din refers to his 'wisdom, experience, courage and energy' and to 'the cunning of this accursed man. To gain his ends he sometimes uses soft words, at other times violent deeds. God alone was able to save us from his malice. Never have we had to face a subtler or a bolder opponent.'

The Angevins, of course, looked upon Philip's departure as a traitorous desertion, a cowardly failure to fulfil his pilgrim's vow. And even in Capetian France, despite Philip's immense contribution to the extension of royal authority, his crusading record remained a

permanent slur upon his reputation. In his life of Philip's grandson, St Louis, Jean de Joinville harked back to the contrast between the rival Kings: between Philip who 'returned to France, for which he was greatly blamed' and Richard who 'remained and performed great feats of arms' so that his example was held up to St Louis as that of 'the greatest king in Christendom'. Philip's early biographers, Rigord and William the Breton, did their best to defend their lord and explain his departure. According to Rigord Philip suspected Richard of treachery because he was exchanging gifts and envoys with Saladin, and this fact, together with his illness, made him decide, reluctantly, to leave. However, since he had the best interests of the crusade at heart, he took only three galleys with him, committing the rest of his army and treasure to Duke Hugh of Burgundy. William the Breton says that he left money to pay 500 knights and 1000 foot for three years. In fact what he really left behind was his share of the ransom of the prisoners of Acre and this had yet to be received. Thus in order to tide Hugh of Burgundy over until the ransom had been collected Richard had to lend him 5000 marks. Yet Richard must have felt that Philip's going was not all loss. In the vivid phrase of the Winchester chronicler, Richard of Devizes, Philip was to Richard like a hammer tied to the tail of a cat. Though his responsibilities and the demands made upon his treasure chest were now increased, at least there could be no doubt about who was in supreme command. It was, for example, now up to Richard to see that Saladin implemented the terms of the treaty made by his officers at Acre.

This was not going to be easy. The first step was to secure the return of the Muslim prisoners who had been moved to Tyre. Conrad was obstinate, however, and only when the Duke of Burgundy went to Tyre in person did he agree to hand them back. Apart from this Conrad would do nothing to help Richard, even though he was fighting to win a kingdom which Conrad could expect to inherit. To Ambroise, of course, Conrad was

The false marquis who had sought
By wealth and dealings underhand
By wile and cheat to rule the land.

Saladin also had his problems. The terms of the Treaty of Acre had shocked him. It is possible that after making so many financial and military demands upon his emirs in the years since 1187 he was simply incapable of bringing together so much money and so many prisoners by the stipulated date, a month after the fall of Acre. Some of the details of the treaty itself and of the subsequent negotiations between Richard and Saladin are obscure; not surprisingly there are differences between the Christian and Muslim accounts of what happened. It seems that because it took longer than expected to recover the prisoners who had gone to Tyre, Richard had to agree to interpret the treaty flexibly. Saladin was to be allowed to pay the ransom in instalments: the first – and by far the largest instalment – was due on 20 August. But neither side trusted the other. It became clear that Saladin was still having difficulties in raising the money and, in Richard's camp, men believed that he was spinning out the negotiations as a delaying tactic. The longer he could pin Richard down in Acre, the harder the crusaders' task would be. As the due date approached suspicions mounted and tempers became increasingly frayed. Skirmishing between the armies continued and, on 19 August, a rumour – possibly deliberately manufactured – spread through the Frankish camp: Saladin, it was said, had killed his prisoners. By noon on 20 August Saladin's envoys had still not appeared. In the afternoon Richard marched his army out of Acre. Then nearly 3000 prisoners were led out and, in full view of Saladin's helpless troops, they were massacred. According to Ambroise the Christian soldiers delighted in the work of butchery, seeing it as revenge for the deaths of their comrades who had been killed during the siege. Only the commanders of the Acre garrison were spared; they might fetch large ransoms or come in useful later should an exchange of distinguished prisoners be desired.

Of all Richard's deeds this is the one most bitterly criticized. It has been called both barbarous and stupid and has been cited to show that there were no depths to which he could not sink in order to relieve his frustrations. But it is not enough simply to condemn. Of all wars those fought in a crusading spirit are the nastiest. Even Saladin, by reputation the most courteous and civilized of

enemies, chose to massacre, two days after the battle of Hattin, all the Templars and Hospitallers who were in his hands – without giving them any chance of being ransomed. According to Imad ad-Din, he watched the slaughter with a joyful face, and looked upon it as an act of purification. Baha ad-Din indeed suggests that the Acre garrison may have been killed as a reprisal. In the eyes of the twelfth-century church the lives of unbelievers were of no account. They were, in any case, doomed to hell. There was even some virtue in accelerating the process. ‘The Christian glories in the death of a pagan,’ said St Bernard of Clairvaux, ‘because thereby Christ himself is glorified.’ In this world, if the lives of the Acre garrison had any value, it was as bargaining counters. So Richard deprived himself of a bargaining counter and, as a result, the money which had been collected for the ransom Saladin now distributed among his troops. But Richard had to move on; a bargaining counter which tied him to Acre was hardly an asset. Saladin was delaying things – even Baha ad-Din admits that – and to this extent he must share the responsibility. So too, though doubtless more willingly, must the Duke of Burgundy. All the leaders were, in some way, involved. According to Ambroise, when Richard realized that he was being tricked

And how Saladin would do naught
 Nor give to those men further thought
 Who had guarded Acre in his stead,
 Richard a council summonèd
 Of nobles, and to them confided
 The case. They took thought and decided . . .

If the crusaders were to leave Acre what else could they do? Baha ad-Din believed that the prisoners should have been led away into slavery. Although this seemed a natural solution to a Muslim, living in a society which kept slaves, it was perhaps less obvious to late twelfth-century Western Europeans who, through no particular virtue of their own, happened to live in a society which did not. Initially the prisoners taken at Acre had been offered freedom if they would accept baptism into the Christian faith. Many of them apparently took up this offer – but as soon as they were released,

they crossed over to Saladin's lines. After this Philip and Richard said that there should be no more baptisms. Could the crusaders afford to march away from Acre leaving only a garrison to guard nearly 3000 Muslims? Merely to feed so many men would be difficult enough since, on Saladin's orders, the countryside around Acre had been thoroughly devastated. By mid-August, in fact, the prisoners had become an embarrassment rather than an asset and Richard and his fellow-soldiers had no compunction in ridding themselves of them in a fashion that was brutally efficient.

Two days later Richard led the army out of Acre. It had not been easy to persuade the soldiers to leave. After two years of grim struggle Acre had become a safe haven of pleasure. Saladin's secretary, Imad ad-Din, described in characteristically ornate language the activities of the prostitutes who had flocked to do business with the crusaders:

Tinted and painted, desirable and appetising, bold and ardent, with nasal voices and fleshy thighs . . . they offered their wares for enjoyment, brought their silver anklets up to touch their golden ear-rings . . . made themselves targets for men's darts, offered themselves to the lance's blows, made javelins rise towards shields . . . They interwove leg with leg, caught lizard after lizard in their holes, guided pens to inkwells, torrents to the valley bottom, swords to scabbards, firewood to stoves . . . and they maintained that this was an act of piety without equal, especially to those who were far from home and wives.

These ladies, however, had to stay behind in Acre. Washerwomen were still the only camp-followers whom Richard would allow to accompany the army on its march.

The goal of the march was Jerusalem, but it would have been foolhardy in the extreme to try to go there direct from Acre: the land was hilly and the supply line from the coast would have been impossibly long. So Richard decided to make for Jaffa. From there he would strike inland to Jerusalem. Whatever route he chose, he was now going to face the Turkish cavalry – the elite troops of Saladin's army – in open country. At Acre the besiegers had been safely entrenched behind their own line of fortifications and the renowned Turkish cavalry had never had a real opportunity to

demonstrate their skill. At Acre the Franks had faced military problems no different from those they would have faced in any siege of a similar town in Europe. But now Richard would have to cope with an unfamiliar style of warfare. He was to pass the test with flying colours because he knew how to make the best use of local advice and local experience.

The very different cavalry tactics employed by the Turks and the Franks make a fascinating contrast. The Turks were essentially mounted archers, though they each carried a small round shield and a lance, sword or club as well as their bow. All their weapons, however, were lighter than those used by the Frankish knights and in hand-to-hand fighting between equal numbers, the Franks held the advantage. The Turks therefore used the speed and agility of their horses to stay at a distance while sending in a rain of arrows upon their enemies. They used the bow while riding at speed with such dexterity that even in retreat they could turn in the saddle and shoot at their pursuers. They used their mobility to encircle the enemy and assail him from all sides at once. Only when their archery had reduced the enemy to a state of near helplessness did the Turks shoulder their bows and ride in for the kill.

The chief tactical weapon of the Franks was the charge of their heavily armoured knights. Holding reins and shield in his left hand, the knight held a lance rigid beneath his right arm, using the horse's forward momentum to give power to the blow delivered by the lance. If his lance shattered on impact the knight carried on the fight with his sword. The weight of the charge was such that no body of troops could stand up to it. It was said that a Frank on horseback could make a hole through the walls of Babylon. If the Franks succeeded in delivering a charge against the main body of their more lightly-armed enemy, they won the battle. It was as simple as that – or as difficult. If the timing of the charge were fractionally wrong, the elusive Turkish cavalry was able to scatter, leaving the Franks beating against thin air. And once the charge had been delivered the Franks, having lost their tight formation, became vulnerable to counter-attack. The Turkish horse-archers swarmed all round their enemy like gnats round a man's head. To try to drive them away with a charge was all too often like using one's hand

to beat off the gnats. The only observable result was a temporary agitation in the swarm:

When to pursue them one essays
Their steeds unrivalled like a swallow
Seem to take flight, and none can follow.
The Turks are so skilled to elude
Their foemen when they are pursued
That they are like a venomous
And irksome gadfly unto us.

The Turks would turn repeatedly and harass the ponderous knights to their doom. Thus the charge had to be held back until exactly the right moment – and dashing knights did not always find it easy to be patient when under non-stop fire. Except at close range the light Turkish bow did not have the power to fire an arrow capable of piercing a coat of mail and wounding the body of the wearer, but it could penetrate far enough to stick in the mail, so that knights under Turkish attack were often thought to resemble hedgehogs or porcupines. More serious than his undignified appearance was the fact that the knight was liable to have his less well-armoured horse killed under him. It was in this situation that the foot-soldier came into his own. The knights and their horses had to be protected until the moment to charge came. The job of protecting them was given to the infantry, both spearmen and archers. They were drawn up in a defensive screen, surrounding the knights like a wall and forcing the Turks to stay out of effective archery range. This meant, of course, that when on the march the speed of the army's advance was dictated by the pace of the infantry. The Turkish horse-archers had the advantage of superior speed and mobility. If the Franks were to survive in this kind of warfare then the qualities they needed were steadiness and discipline – not the qualities popularly associated with the medieval knight, but qualities which he none the less possessed as much as any other well-trained soldier. In the judgement of a twelfth-century Syrian, Usamah, 'the Franks – may Allah's curse be upon them – are of all men the most cautious in warfare'.

Richard's march south to Jaffa was a classic demonstration of

Frankish military tactics at their best. He marched close to the sea-shore. Thus the army's right flank was protected by the sea and Richard's fleet. When Acre surrendered, a large part of the Egyptian fleet had been captured at anchor in the harbour so there was nothing to fear from that quarter. The knights were organized in three divisions with their left flank protected by infantry. Since this meant that the foot-soldiers had to bear the brunt of the ceaseless Turkish attack, Richard divided them into two alternating halves: one half marched on the left, while the other took things easy, marching beside the baggage train between the knights and the sea.

Saladin, too, marched south, on a parallel course, keeping the main body of his troops at some distance from the Franks and sending in bands of skirmishers to harass them continually. Richard's men were under orders to ignore all provocations and to keep marching in close formation. No one was to break ranks. Saladin naturally concentrated on the rearguard, where the infantry was sometimes compelled to face about and fight off the Turkish attacks while marching backwards. On the very first day of the march the line became too extended, the rearguard under the Duke of Burgundy lagged behind and the Turks swooped in, breaking through the line and attacking the wagon train. Richard himself rushed back from the van and saved the situation. But it was a useful lesson. From then on Richard's orders were rigidly obeyed and rearguard duties were normally performed either by the Templars or the Hospitallers – the soldiers with most experience of this hard school of warfare. Baha ad-Din was particularly struck by the discipline of the infantry. 'I saw some of the Frankish foot-soldiers with from one to ten arrows sticking in them, and still advancing at their usual pace without leaving the ranks . . . One cannot help admiring the wonderful patience displayed by these people, who bore the most wearing fatigue without having any share in the management of affairs or deriving any personal advantage.' One other happy result of that first day was the healing of an old enmity. The French knight William des Barres fought with such gallantry that Richard decided to forget the grudge he had borne for so long.

Day after day the army toiled on, past Haifa, over the ridge of Mount Carmel, and on past Caesarea. Everywhere they found that

Saladin's men had been there before them, razing fortresses to the ground and burning crops. But the presence of the fleet enabled Richard to keep his men supplied and give them occasional rests aboard ship. The heat was intense, and the Franks, heavily armoured, suffered badly. Sunstroke claimed many victims. And every day the arrows of the Turks claimed many more. Richard himself was wounded by a spear-thrust in the side, not very seriously. Yet still the army, in close formation, moved doggedly on. It was not to be harassed into defeat. By early September Saladin realized that his only hope of stopping it lay in committing a much larger proportion of his troops than he had risked up till now. He picked as his battleground the plain to the north of Arsuf. On 6 September the Franks were relieved to be unmolested as they marched through the forest of Arsuf; there had been a rumour that the forest would be set ablaze while they were in the midst of it. But as they emerged from the cover of the woods they saw why they had been left in peace. Saladin had spent the day drawing up a vast army – as it seemed to the crusaders – in battle array. The Franks, of course, had no choice but to advance. On 7 September, Richard took even more care than usual in organizing his line of march. In the van he placed the Templars; next came the Bretons and the men of Anjou; then King Guy with the Poitevins; in the fourth division marched the Normans and English guarding the dragon standard; after them came the French contingents, and bringing up the rear, in the position of greatest danger, the Hospitallers. They were drawn up into such a solid and tight formation that it was impossible to throw an apple into the ranks without its hitting a man or a horse. Richard and the Duke of Burgundy, with a retinue of picked knights, rode up and down the line of march observing Saladin's movements and checking and re-checking their own formation. As always the infantry had their vital defensive role to play. The only difference between the Battle of Arsuf and the fighting of the last two and a half weeks was that, by committing his main force to the attack, Saladin would be giving Richard a chance to deliver one of the famous Frankish charges, and if Richard could seize the moment, victory would be his.

In the middle of the morning Saladin made his move. The sight

and sound of the Turkish cavalry as it swept towards them was something which Ambroise would never forget:

With numberless rich pennons streaming
And flags and banners of fair seeming
Then thirty thousand Turkish troops
And more, ranged in well-ordered groups,
Garbed and accoutred splendidly,
Dashed on the host impetuously.
Like lightning sped their horses fleet,
And dust rose thick before their feet.
Moving ahead of the emirs
There came a band of trumpeters
And other men with drums and tabors
There were, who had no other labours
Except upon their drums to hammer
And hoot, and shriek and make great clamour.
So loud their tabors did discord
They had drowned the thunder of the Lord.

Although the spears and arrows of the Frankish infantry took heavy toll, the Turkish forces, supported by Bedouin and Nubian auxiliaries, seemed to be everywhere, their horsemen charging in, then wheeling round and charging again, pressing closer and closer. The rain of arrows was so thick that even the bright sunlight was dimmed. In the rearguard the Hospitallers came under terrible pressure. Several times during the day, the Master of the Hospital begged for permission to charge. Each time Richard said no; they must wait until he gave the signal for a general assault – six clear trumpet blasts, two in the van, two in the centre, two in the rear – and that would not be until the Turkish army was closely engaged and their horses had begun to tire. The Hospitallers held on grimly. As the day wore on, the heat became more and more oppressive; so did the dust and the deafening noise of drums and cymbals. The Hospitallers began to feel that the signal would never come and that they would be branded as cowards for submitting so patiently to the unending onslaught. Moreover they were losing horses at an alarming rate. Goaded beyond endurance, two of the knights, the

Marshal of the Order and Baldwin Carew, lost their nerve and charged. At once the rest of the Hospitallers and the French knights galloped after them, scattering the infantry screen, which was unprepared for the rearguard's sudden move. This was the critical moment. The Hospitallers' counter-attack, premature though it was, had to be supported at once otherwise the rearguard, having lost contact with the main army, would be gradually smothered by the superior numbers of the Turks. Without hesitation Richard and his own knights charged too, ordering the Bretons, Angevins and Poitevins to join them. The massed Frankish cavalry drove all before it.

Their soldiers stood aghast
For we descended on the foes
Like thunder, and great dust arose.
They suffered a most fearsome rout
So that for two leagues all about
Fugitives filled the countryside,
Who once were boastful in their pride.

But under an experienced captain like Saladin it was at precisely this moment that the Turks were most dangerous. If in their excitement the Franks pressed the charge too far, the knights, having lost their close order, could find that they had galloped headlong into a trap. Richard was well aware of the danger. The Normans and English had been held in reserve; the royal standard was to act as a rallying point. Thus when the Turks counter-attacked in their turn there was a basis upon which the Franks could re-form their lines. Then in a fierce struggle which marked the climax of the battle, with both sides having thrown in their reserves, the day was won by a series of charges led by Richard and William des Barres. Saladin withdrew and the army continued on its southward march, though that night many returned quietly to the battlefield to plunder the bodies of the slain.

Saladin's prestige had suffered a second great blow. First Acre, now Arsuf. The legend of his invincibility had been destroyed. His troops were demoralized and though the skirmishing continued unabated they were unwilling to face the Franks again in pitched

battle. 'We were all wounded,' wrote Baha ad-Din, 'either in our bodies or in our hearts.' By contrast Richard now stood at the height of his fame. Although the Hospitallers had anticipated his signal, Richard's swift reaction and masterful handling of the next few minutes had conjured victory out of imminent confusion. Naturally his soldiers praised – and doubtless magnified – Richard's own part in the hand-to-hand combat. 'There the king, the fierce, the extraordinary king, cut down the Turks in every direction, and none could escape the force of his arm, for wherever he turned, brandishing his sword, he carved a wide path for himself, cutting them down like a reaper with his sickle.' Richard's bravery and prowess inspired the loyalty and admiration of his followers, but it was his superb generalship which really counted.

Three days later, on 10 September, the Frankish army reached Jaffa. In destroying its walls, Saladin had done so much damage that the army could find no lodging within the town; so they camped in an olive grove outside. Richard now held the port nearest Jerusalem. The obvious course was to march inland and head directly for the Holy City. But did Richard have enough troops to lay siege to Jerusalem and protect his supply line? If Saladin succeeded in cutting his communications, Richard would be in serious trouble. In his march from Acre to Jaffa, Richard had had one flank protected by the sea and for supplies had relied heavily on his fleet; inland the Turkish harassing tactics might be far more effective. The main Turkish army, moreover, although it had been defeated, was still intact. It lurked at Ramlah, while Saladin himself took a contingent to Ascalon further down the coast. The great harbour fortress of Ascalon was the key to the vital road which linked Egypt and Syria. Saladin wanted to defend both Jerusalem and Ascalon but in the opinion of his emirs he did not have enough troops and they forced him to choose between them. Saladin opted to hold Jerusalem. This meant that he had to dismantle Ascalon to prevent a useful base from falling, intact, into Christian hands. On the day on which Richard entered Jaffa, Saladin began to evacuate the population of Ascalon.

What would Richard do now? Sensing the strategic importance of Ascalon, he had no wish to let Saladin demolish the town

unhindered. He sent the lord-designate of Ascalon, Geoffrey of Lusignan, in a galley to reconnoitre the situation from the sea. On his return, a meeting of the army council was held. Despite Richard's wishes, the majority argued in favour of staying where they were and re-fortifying Jaffa, on the grounds that it was the most convenient port for Jerusalem. As always there was a divergence of views between those who saw the need to think in terms of military strategy, of holding terrain as well as winning it, and those who were pilgrims and who wanted, above all, to enter the Holy City and fulfil their vow. Reluctantly Richard gave way to the majority view. At least to stay at Jaffa for a while would give the soldiers the rest they badly needed after the exertions on the road to Arsuf. The decisions made in September 1191 are a useful reminder that neither Saladin nor Richard was an autocratic ruler; both were forced to take account of the feelings of the men on whose co-operation they relied if they were to achieve anything.

But Richard was still confident of success. A letter written on 1 October reveals his optimistic frame of mind: 'With God's grace we hope to recover the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre within twenty days after Christmas and then return to our own dominions.'