

# JERUSALEM AND JAFFA

## 1191-1192

DURING September and October 1191 the Franks settled down to rebuild Jaffa and enjoy the comforts of the town and its surrounding orchards.

There was great wealth of pasture ground  
And there did grapes and figs abound,  
Almonds, and pomegranates too  
Which in such great profusion grew  
And which so copiously did fill  
The trees that all might eat at will.

Ambroise was less happy about the women who travelled down from Acre to entertain them:

Back to the host the women came  
And plied the trade of lust and shame.

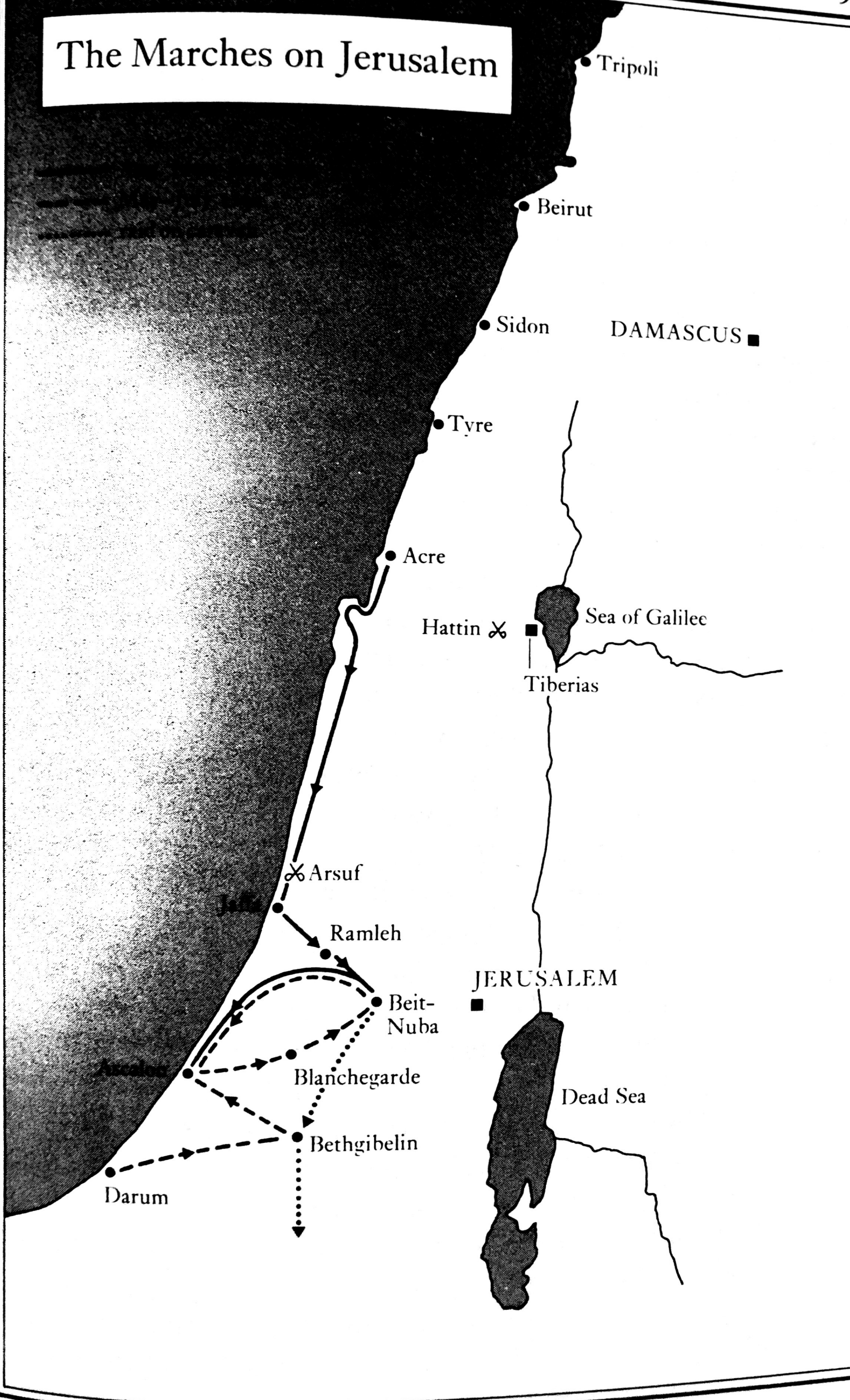
Jaffa, however, was a small town and, after a while, some of the soldiers hankered after the more hectic excitements of Acre. Richard himself was forced to go to Acre and haul them back to their duty. When he returned, he brought with him Berengaria and Joan. Despite the relaxed atmosphere at Jaffa, the enemy were never far away and on one occasion Richard was very nearly captured. He had ridden out with a handful of knights on a reconnaissance and hawking patrol but was then lured into a Turkish ambush. Several members of his escort were killed and Richard himself only escaped because one knight, William de Préaux, had the presence of mind

and courage to pretend that he was the King. Thinking they had captured Richard, the Turks broke off the fight and made off into the hills. Arab writers were impressed by the loyalty of a man who was willing to sacrifice himself for his lord. On the Frankish side people were alarmed by the narrow escape and did their best to dissuade the King from taking part in skirmishes, but apparently in vain. The patrols continued, and if Richard saw a fight nothing could stop him from rushing into it.

But if this kind of behaviour was rash and short-sighted Richard was at the same time thinking ahead and on a much grander scale. Floating through his mind was not just the recovery of Jerusalem but also the conquest of Egypt. Throughout the twelfth century this had been a favourite scheme of the Kings of Jerusalem – and possibly a mistaken one, since the end result of their attacks on Egypt was the unification of Egypt and Syria under one ruler, Saladin. But once this unification had been achieved there could be no doubt that the project made good sense: Saladin's hold on Jerusalem was made possible by the wealth of the Nile Valley. In the thirteenth century the maxim that 'the keys of Jerusalem are to be found in Cairo' became the principle on which crusade strategy was based. Richard mentioned his plan for an Egyptian campaign the following summer in a letter he sent to the Genoese in October 1191. His policy up until then had been one of alliance with the Pisans, since this had been the line taken by Guy of Lusignan, while Conrad of Montferrat and Philip of France looked to the Genoese. But difficult though it was to persuade those old and bitter rivals, Pisa and Genoa, to co-operate, it was also obvious that any significant military advance such as an attack on Egypt would require maximum maritime support. So, in October 1191, we find Richard both confirming and offering privileges to the Pisans and Genoese on his own behalf and persuading his protégé, Guy of Lusignan, to do the same.

In the meantime he had once again opened negotiations with Saladin. Baha ad-Din's account of an exchange of views between Richard and Saladin gives a useful insight into the attitudes of the two sides. Richard began by pointing out that 'the Muslims and the Franks are bleeding to death, the country is utterly ruined and

# The Marches on Jerusalem



goods and lives have been sacrificed on both sides. The time has come to stop this. The points at issue are Jerusalem, the Cross, and the land. Jerusalem is for us an object of worship that we could not give up even if there were only one of us left. The land from here to beyond the Jordan [*Oultrejourdain*] must be consigned to us. The Cross, which for you is simply a piece of wood with no value, is for us of enormous importance. If you will return it to us, we shall be able to make peace and rest from this endless labour.' In reply Saladin explained that 'Jerusalem is as much ours as yours. Indeed it is even more sacred to us than it is to you, for it is the place from which our Prophet made his ascent into heaven and the place where our community will gather on the day of Judgement. Do not imagine that we can renounce it. The land also was originally ours whereas you are recent arrivals and were able to take it over only as a result of the weakness of the Muslims living there at the time [i.e. of the First Crusade]. As for the Cross, its possession is a good card in our hand and could not be surrendered except in exchange for something of outstanding benefit to Islam.' On another occasion Saladin claimed that even if he wanted to cede Jerusalem, popular indignation would make it impossible. (And it is true that when Jerusalem was restored to the Christians in 1229, it was immediately – if only temporarily – recaptured by a host of poorly armed Muslim peasants.)

In most of the negotiations of October and November 1191 Saladin was represented by his brother al-Adil Saif ed-Din, whom the Franks called Safadin. He was a diplomat of consummate skill and, after Saladin's death, it fell to him to hold the empire together. Like the rest of the crusaders, Richard liked and admired al-Adil, and in mid-October he put forward some apparently startling peace proposals. If Saladin would grant Palestine to his brother, then he, Richard, would arrange for al-Adil to marry his sister Joan. As a dowry he would give her the coastal cities from Acre to Ascalon. The happy couple could live at Jerusalem, to which the Christians should be given free access. Al-Adil was intrigued – or amused – by the idea and passed it on to Saladin, who accepted it at once, somewhat to the surprise of his advisers. But Saladin believed that the whole thing was just a joke of Richard's and he did not want

to spoil it. Sure enough, when al-Adil's envoy next saw Richard, the King told him that Joan had flown into a towering rage when she heard of her brother's plan, swearing that she would never consent to being an infidel's wife. Perhaps, Richard continued in the same vein, the best way of solving the problem would be for al-Adil to turn Christian. Later on, Richard had the idea of substituting one of his nieces in place of the reluctant Joan. Unquestionably these negotiations were not to be taken at face value. Richard was not the man to be caught in a fog of romantic optimism. He was mustering an army ready to move out of Jaffa and in the meantime was becoming acquainted with the enemy, whether by skirmishing with him and exchanging blows or by meeting him and exchanging compliments and gifts. All contacts, however light-hearted, were ways of assessing the mood in Saladin's camp. And Saladin's camp, of course, was by no means united. The setbacks of the last few months had brought tensions and rivalries to the surface. It is possible that the death of Saladin's nephew, Taqi al-Din Umar, on 9 October 1191 had already precipitated a quarrel over the succession to his lands between al-Adil and Saladin's eldest son, al-Afdal – a quarrel which prefigured the succession dispute which followed the death of Saladin in 1193. Certainly, if the *Estoire d'Eracles* is anything to go by, there was a school of thought among the Frankish baronage of Outremer which believed that Saladin was at odds with al-Adil and feared that his brother might actually marry Joan and set himself up as an independent ruler. Conceivably then Richard's proposals may have been intended as probes to investigate and widen splits at Saladin's court.

But if this was the game which Richard was playing, then it is clear that he was on a poor wicket. For al-Adil and Saladin were playing the same game – and to greater effect. By ostentatiously negotiating separately with both Richard and Conrad of Montferrat, they gave the Franks good cause to fear that the split in the Frankish camp might soon become irreparable. Ever since the end of July Conrad of Montferrat, dissatisfied with a compromise which left the crown in his younger rival's hands, had held aloof from the crusade. Despite repeated requests he had refused to give Richard any help. Indeed he had told Saladin that he would break with the crusaders

if he were given Beirut and Sidon. But since he had, in effect, already broken with them, Saladin saw no reason to give away two valuable towns for nothing. To have any hope of obtaining Beirut and Sidon, Conrad would have to take up arms against Richard, and even Conrad did not dare to go quite as far as that. In these circumstances Saladin was perfectly happy to talk peace, but he had no intention of making peace. There were no peace terms, he believed, which would prevent the crusaders from treacherously launching an attack as soon as he was dead; it was better for him to carry on the Holy War until he had expelled them from Palestine or dropped dead in the attempt.

On 31 October 1191 Richard left Jaffa and began the last stage of his journey to Jerusalem. The advance was extremely slow. Throughout November – while continuing to negotiate – and December he concentrated on rebuilding the castles on the pilgrims' road from Jaffa to Jerusalem – castles which Saladin had dismantled. Saladin withdrew to Jerusalem, contenting himself with sending out patrols to raid Richard's lines of communication and to attack any foraging parties which were not properly guarded. In one such attack a foraging party was heavily outnumbered and even when Richard sent the Earl of Leicester and the Count of St Pol to reinforce it, the Franks were in great difficulties when the King himself arrived on the scene. Quickly weighing up the situation, his companions advised him not to intervene: 'You will not succeed in rescuing them. It is better that they die alone than that you risk death in this attack, and so endanger the whole crusade.' But, although Richard was familiar with the argument and doubtless appreciated it, he was also moved by another code of values: 'I sent those men there. If they die without me, may I never again be called a king.' Once again Richard charged into a skirmish, and emerged unscathed. Indeed, since the elaborate courtesies of his negotiations with al-Adil were giving rise to rumours that he was going to betray the army, Richard liked to ride back from adventures of this kind carrying the heads of Turks as a public demonstration of his devotion to the cause of the crusade. By 22 November the main army had reached Ramleh and there they stayed for six weeks while the winter rain beat steadily down. The difficulties of campaigning in

this kind of weather meant that winter was traditionally the season when armies were disbanded and soldiers went home. Saladin kept his army together until 12 December, but he was at last compelled to give way before the pressure of his emirs and their troops and the threat of deteriorating morale. When he learned that the bulk of Saladin's army had dispersed, Richard moved his headquarters up to Latroun. Here he spent Christmas and then ordered the main crusading army to advance up to Beit Nuba, only twelve miles from the Holy City.

The weather was appalling; heavy rain and violent hailstorms; mud everywhere. Their food was soggy and rotten, their clothes wet through, and their arms and armour rusty. Yet the soldiers were in jubilant mood, and they gave thanks to the God who had brought them so far:

God may we now our voices raise  
In thanks, in worship and in praise!  
Now we shall see Thy Holy Tomb!  
No man felt any grief or gloom,  
Or any sadness or distress,  
For all was joy and happiness.

But not everyone was so optimistic. Those who knew the country, and who were sufficiently far-sighted to see what would happen if Jerusalem were captured, took a wiser and sadder view. Foremost among these men were the Templars and Hospitallers. They pointed out that if Richard laid siege to Jerusalem, he would almost certainly be caught between the garrison and a relieving army. What hope was there of escaping from that trap when they were so far from the sea? (In fact, the morale of the troops who still remained with Saladin in Jerusalem was so low that the city might have fallen fairly soon.) But if they did take Jerusalem, what then? The enthusiastic crusaders, pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre, would all go home, their pilgrimage completed, their vows fulfilled. How many could be persuaded to live in Jerusalem and defend it? As they could see, it was not exactly a land flowing with milk and honey. The answers to these questions were obvious. Despite the mounting difficulties they had never quite abandoned their dream of saving Jerusalem,

but now that they had at last arrived at their destination there could be no escape from the realities of the situation. They could no longer decide to press on and hope; there were no more corners to be turned. At a meeting of the army council held in January 1192 the inevitable decision was taken: Richard gave the order to retreat. To most of the ordinary soldiers, the pilgrims, it was a bitter blow. The weather conditions, which had been bearable while they were marching forward to the Holy City, were now intolerable. Even the elements seemed to be mocking them:

When they were burdened with a load  
Of goods and through the thick mud strode,  
They stumbled to their knees and fell.  
Then to the devil down in hell  
Men cursing gave themselves. My lords,  
Think not that these are idle words:  
Never was goodly company  
So deeply sunk in misery.

And to these men Richard, the conqueror of Cyprus and of Acre, the victor of Arsuf, was now the general who turned back from the gates of Jerusalem.

The council which had voted to retreat had also decided that the most sensible course was to take Ascalon and rebuild it. This was sound military strategy but it was not for this that many soldiers had crossed the sea. Most of the French contingents, who were said to have been in favour of laying siege to Jerusalem, retired to Jaffa – some even to Acre. It was with a much diminished army that Richard reached Ascalon on 20 January 1192. For the next four months Richard's forces remained there, making it the strongest fortress on the coast of Palestine. They received no help from Conrad of Montferrat and precious little from anyone else. The Duke of Burgundy rejoined them for a while in early February but then went back to Acre as soon as Richard announced that he could not afford to lend him any more money.

Acre was in chaos. The Genoese and the French tried to seize control of the city and were joined by a flotilla of galleys under the command of Conrad of Montferrat. But in a three days' battle



the Pisans defended the city against this coalition. Richard was on his way north when he received their appeal for help. He reached Acre on 20 February to find that the news of his approach had forced Conrad and Hugh to beat a hasty retreat to Tyre. Richard managed to bring about a temporary reconciliation between the Pisans and the Genoese; then he went north to see Conrad. The two men met at Casal Imbert on the road to Tyre. Conrad again refused to join the army at Ascalon and, on both sides, angry words were spoken. Richard then presided over a council meeting at which Conrad was formally deprived of his share of the revenues of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. However, since the Marquis of Montferrat had the support of most of the local baronage and the French, it was extremely difficult to put this judgement into effect, even though Richard himself remained at Acre for six weeks in an effort to keep control of the situation. The rebuilding of Ascalon, meanwhile, went on under the watchful eye of its new Count, Geoffrey of Lusignan. Most of the building costs were met out of Richard's pocket, but some profitable raids on caravans travelling between Egypt and Syria suggested that the fortress would soon be self-sufficient.

On 31 March 1192 Richard returned to spend Easter with his army at Ascalon. While he reconnoitred Gaza and Darum and planned a further advance down the coast, the French, according to Ambroise, were enjoying themselves at Tyre:

Those who were present there assured  
Us that they danced through the late hours  
Of night, their heads bedecked with flowers  
Entwined in garland and in crown;  
Beside wine casks they sat them down  
And drank until matins had rung;  
Then homeward made their way among  
The harlots . . .

Throughout the spring both Richard and Conrad continued their separate negotiations with Saladin. From Richard's point of view, the need for a settlement became urgent as a result of news which reached him on 15 April. His brother John was making trouble in England and King Philip, unmindful of the oath he had sworn, was

threatening the borders of Normandy. Richard would have to return to his ancestral lands. But what would happen in Outremer when he was gone? Conrad was not prepared to co-operate with Guy of Lusignan; if the feud continued, Saladin would almost certainly be able to recover the ground he had lost in the last twelve months. The kingdom desperately needed a king who could rule effectively – which meant a king whose authority was undisputed. Compared with this harsh fact the question as to who had the better legal right was a matter of secondary importance.

With this in mind, on 16 April Richard called a meeting of the army council at Ascalon – within twenty-four hours of the arrival of the messenger sent by the chancellor of England, William Longchamp. He gave the assembly a choice of kings: Conrad or Guy. Unanimously the council opted for Conrad. Richard's biographers and historians of the crusades have always said that this decision came as a shocking surprise to the King, but this is hardly likely. It is true that up till then he had consistently taken Guy's side. In practice, however, this had simply meant that Richard had been King of Jerusalem, not Guy. If Richard had wanted Guy to take over the direction of affairs, there would have been no need to call a meeting of the army council and offer it a choice of kings. Richard's army already recognized a king, Guy, and this meeting only made sense if a policy change was being considered. In all probability Guy's formidable brother, Geoffrey of Lusignan, had already decided to renounce the lordships of Ascalon and Jaffa and return home to Poitou. Once Richard left, Guy's position would become even more vulnerable. Naturally he could not be dropped without a word of regret and so, very properly, Richard expressed his sorrow at what had happened before announcing that he would abide by the decision of the council. While Richard was king in reality, Guy could perfectly well be king in theory. But not even Richard had been able either to defeat Conrad of Montferrat or to secure his co-operation, and left to his own resources Guy had little or no chance against this clever and totally unscrupulous opponent. If Guy had succeeded in recapturing Acre it might have been different but, as it was, in the eyes of the barons of Outremer he was still the man who had lost the Battle of Hattin. All this

must have become crystal clear to Richard during the six weeks he spent at Acre – if not earlier. Fortunately Richard was in a position to compensate Guy in magnificent style. He had earlier sold Cyprus to the Templars for 100,000 besants. So far they had paid only forty per cent of the purchase price and their attempt to raise the money by imposing a tax on the Greek Cypriot population had provoked a rebellion. It looked as though Cyprus was going to be more trouble than it was worth. Thus they were easily persuaded to sell out to Guy in return for 40,000 besants. Richard did not press Guy for payment of the balance of 60,000 besants and it was, in fact, never paid. The Lusignans were to rule Cyprus for the next three hundred years, until 1489.

Meanwhile, Conrad of Montferrat had to be told of his good fortune, so Richard sent Count Henry of Champagne to take the news to Tyre. Count Henry was a distinguished crusader who had already been in the Holy Land for nearly two years. As the nephew of both King Richard and King Philip, he was in a good position to heal the divisions between the Angevin and French forces. For this reason indeed he had acted as commander of the army besieging Acre from the time of his arrival in the summer of 1190 until the coming of the two Kings in 1191. In the last few months he had become clearly aligned with Richard's party, preferring to remain at Ascalon rather than withdraw to Tyre with the Duke of Burgundy. (It is possibly this which accounts for the description of Duke Hugh in Joinville's *Life of St Louis* as 'bold but sinful, enterprising but unwise', since Joinville was the hereditary seneschal of Champagne.) When Count Henry reached Tyre and told his news, Conrad fell on his knees and thanked God, praying – or so Ambroise heard – that he should not be permitted to be crowned if he were not worthy to be king. There was great urgency, so it was agreed that he should be crowned at Acre within the next few days. Count Henry left, in order to make preparations for the coronation. But no one had reckoned with the assassin's knife.

On 28 April Conrad had expected to dine at home with his wife Isabella. She, however, took so long over her bath that he eventually gave up and went round to the house of his friend, the Bishop of Beauvais, in the hope of dining there. Unfortunately the Bishop had

just finished his dinner so – doubtless reflecting that it was not his lucky day – Conrad headed home again. Turning a corner, he was met by two monks, one of whom seemed to have a letter for him. As Conrad went to take the letter, they stabbed him and he died soon afterwards.

Who were the killers? And why had they chosen to kill Conrad? Before he was executed, one of them confessed that they had disguised themselves as monks in order to worm their way into Conrad's confidence. In reality they were both followers of Rashid ed-Din Sinan, a legendary figure in the Near East and popularly known as 'The Old Man of the Mountain'. From 1169 until his death in 1193 Rashid was the leader of the Syrian branch of a revolutionary religious movement which had been founded in Persia at the end of the eleventh century. The orthodox Muslims who ruled Persia looked upon the followers of the new teaching as heretics and tried to suppress them. But these heretics did not submit meekly to persecution. They created a secure base for themselves in the great mountain fortress of Alamut, and they struck back at those who attacked them. Their chosen weapon was the assassin's dagger. In the early twelfth century the new teaching, together with its terrorist techniques, was carried into Syria and it was here that its devotees were given the name by which they are remembered: assassins. The word 'assassin' comes from the Arabic *hashish*. Their enemies accused them of taking hashish; to outsiders it seemed the easiest way of explaining why they acted the way they did. There is no good evidence to prove that they really did take hashish, but there is no doubt at all about the fact that they used murder as a political weapon. Thus, in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a new word entered the languages of Europe: assassin, a dedicated killer.

The description of the Assassins given by the late twelfth-century German chronicler Arnold of Lübeck, illustrates very well the impact which the Old Man of the Mountain made on the European imagination:

This Old Man has by his witchcraft so bemused the men of his country that they neither worship nor believe in any God but him. He entices

them with promises of an afterlife in which they will enjoy eternal pleasure and so he makes them prefer death to life. He only has to give the nod and they will jump off a high wall, breaking their skulls and dying miserably. The truly blessed, so he tells them, are those who kill others and are themselves then killed. Whenever any of his followers choose to die in this way, he presents them with knives which are, so to speak, consecrated to murder. He then gives them a potion which intoxicates them, plunging them into ecstasy and oblivion. Thus he uses his magic to make them see fantastic dreams, full of pleasures and delights. He promises them that they will live in such dreams for ever if they die when killing at his command.

Because many of their deeds were done by stealth, the power of the Assassins was easily magnified. There was no way of knowing where they would strike next. A story involving Saladin tells us much about the nature of the power attributed to Rashid ed-Din. According to this tale the Old Man of the Mountain sent a messenger to Saladin with instructions to deliver the message only in private. Naturally Saladin had the messenger searched, but no weapon was found. Then Saladin dismissed everyone but a few trusted advisers. The messenger refused, however, to deliver his message. So Saladin sent everyone away except his two personal bodyguards. Still the messenger was reluctant, but Saladin said: 'These two never leave my side. I look upon them as my sons. Deliver your message or not, as you choose.' Then the messenger turned to the two bodyguards and said: 'If I ordered you in the name of my master to kill Saladin, would you do so?' They said they would, and drew their swords saying, 'Command us as you wish.' The messenger ordered them to sheathe their swords and then all three left the Sultan's camp. Saladin was dumb-founded. Rashid ed-Din Sinan's message had been delivered. We have to remember that Saladin was the champion of Muslim orthodoxy and was prepared to order the crucifixion of heretics. He was therefore in much greater danger of assassination than were most Christians, though in 1176 he seems to have reached an accommodation with the Syrian Assassins. But before that date there were at least two attempts on his life. At one stage he is said to have been able to sleep only in a specially constructed wooden tower.

But why should the Assassins have wanted to murder Conrad of Montferrat? Nobody really knew the answer to this and all kinds of rumours spread rapidly. Some said that Saladin had bribed Rashid to kill both Richard and Conrad, but the Old Man killed only one of them because he knew that, with both out of the way, the Sultan would have a free hand to deal with the Assassins. Others blamed Richard. The Assassins' own confession was said to have implicated the King of England, but even if such a confession was made, it would not be very reliable evidence. It was a normal part of the Assassins' technique to provide the murderer with a 'cover story' of this kind in order to spread mistrust and suspicion in the opposing camp. Richard was the obvious man for the Assassins to implicate: he and Conrad had always been political enemies, and an observer, even if he had heard the news of their recent reconciliation, might well have thought that there was something suspicious about so complete a reversal of Richard's attitude. Only someone who understood the situation in England and Normandy could make sense of Richard's sudden switch. There were many French crusaders who were prepared to believe anything that was said against Richard, particularly when it became clear that the man who had most obviously gained from Conrad's death was Richard's nephew and political associate, Henry of Champagne. Fortunately for Richard, however, he was explicitly cleared of the charge in a letter written by the Old Man of the Mountain himself and sent to Leopold of Austria. At least the letter was intended to look as though it had been written by Rashid. In fact it was a forgery. Someone was trying to dispel the rumours. But useful rumours never die and to accuse your enemies of hiring Assassins to murder you became a standard tactic in European propaganda warfare in the 1190s. A hundred years later a piece of Capetian propaganda masquerading as a historical poem actually turned Richard into another Old Man of the Mountain, describing how he trained young English boys to be assassins, indoctrinating them with the belief that they would go to heaven whenever a successful mission ended with their own death.

At this distance in time it is no easier than it was then to know what really lay behind the murder of Conrad. Everything we know

about Richard and Saladin (at least after the 1171 *coup d'état* by which he seized power in Egypt) suggests that they would not have stooped to assassination. The most straightforward explanation is that offered by the chronicles of Outremer – which reflect neither a Capetian nor an Angevin nor a Muslim point of view. They say that Conrad had offended Rashid by an act of piracy and this was the Old Man's revenge. It was not the kind of explanation to appeal to amateur politicians. It was far too simple for that. They preferred to look for deeper causes and for plots of Machiavellian subtlety. None the less on the evidence available it seems that this is probably what happened.

Conrad's death threw the political situation into a state of total chaos. The Duke of Burgundy tried to seize the town but Isabella, claiming to be following her dead husband's instructions, shut herself up in the castle and said she would hand over the keys to no one except Richard or the duly elected King of Jerusalem. But who might that be? Was Guy of Lusignan now King again? There were some who feared that, with Pisan support, he might renew his bid for the throne. Where did Isabella's first husband, Humphrey of Toron, stand now? If the marriage to Conrad had been invalid, was she still married to Humphrey? (There was yet another version of Conrad's death which made out that it had been plotted by Humphrey.) Or could Isabella, the twenty-one-year-old, twice-married heiress to the kingdom, find a third husband? Henry now became Richard's candidate for the throne and they both realized that in this confused state of affairs, when almost anything might happen, speed was essential. The best way of ending the political uncertainty was for Henry to marry the lady before anyone else did – and then let the lawyers argue the question of the legal validity of the wedding at their leisure. So although there are signs that both Richard and Henry shared the lawyers' doubts, this is what happened. On 5 May, after a week's widowhood, Isabella married Henry. Ambroise took a rather more romantic view of the Count's motives:

The French delayed not in the least  
But sent straightway to fetch the priest  
And caused the Count to wed the dame.

My soul, I should have done the same,  
 For she was fair and beautiful  
 And so, may God be merciful  
 To me, the Count, unless I err,  
 Was well disposed to marry her.

After the wedding Henry and Isabella were installed in the royal palace at Acre:

The Count is richly lodged. Ah, would  
 That I had anything so good.

In the last twenty days events had moved with bewildering speed. On 15 April Guy had still been King of Jerusalem. By 5 May he was lord of Cyprus, while the Kingdom of Jerusalem was welcoming its third ruler in as many weeks. Henry, however, never assumed the title of king – either because he could not be crowned in Jerusalem or because of worries about the validity of his marriage. After Richard's departure he became the effective ruler of the Kingdom until 1197, when he accidentally stepped backwards through the open window of an upper room and was killed. Isabella then married, as her fourth husband, Guy of Lusignan's brother, Aimery, who died of a surfeit of fish in 1205. Thus by the time she was thirty-three, Isabella had been divorced once and widowed three times. When she herself died soon afterwards, the world must have seemed a safer place for husbands.

From Richard's point of view, the accession of Henry of Champagne meant that, for the first time, he had all the forces of the kingdom at his disposal. He decided to seize the opportunity to add to the length of the coastline in Christian hands, and increase the pressure on Saladin's line of communication between Egypt and Syria. Summoning Henry and the French army to join him he ordered an attack on the fortress of Darum, twenty miles south of Ascalon. In fact, after five days of fierce fighting, Darum fell on 22 May 1192, one day before Henry and the Duke of Burgundy arrived. But, in a fine gesture, Richard at once handed the captured town to the new lord of Jerusalem. Now that there was a new spirit



of co-operation among the Christians they would surely succeed. This time, moreover, they would not be hampered by the winter mud and rain. But on 29 May Richard received another messenger from England, the vice-chancellor, John of Alençon, with yet more disquieting news about a conspiracy between John and Philip Augustus. Richard was now caught in a terrible dilemma: which mattered most – Jerusalem or the Angevin Empire? It would have taken John of Alençon about eight weeks to travel from London to Jaffa. What had happened in those weeks – and, if he left now, what would happen in the next two or three months? Jerusalem at least was near at hand. Should he try again to take it? It was a forlorn hope, if ever there was one, but did he want to be known as the King who did not even try? If by some miracle he took Jerusalem there would be no one in Europe who could stand against him, the conqueror who had restored the Holy City to Christendom. But suppose he failed, and then came home too late?

The army council met and decided that, whatever Richard did, they would attack Jerusalem. When this news was leaked to the soldiers their joy was so great

That they went not to bed, but danced  
Till after midnight, still entranced.

Only Richard was unable to join in the general celebration. He withdrew to his tent and stayed there for several days, troubled and despondent. Finally one of his chaplains, William of Poitiers, managed to talk to him and revive his spirits. He reminded the King of all the past triumphs which God had allowed him to enjoy, of all the dangers which he had, by God's grace, escaped. Now that he had been brought to the verge of the ultimate victory, it would be a shameful thing to retreat.

Now it is said by great and small  
Who wish you honour, one and all,  
How unto Christendom have you  
A father been, and brother, too,  
And if you leave it without aid  
'Twill surely perish, thus betrayed.

My soul, I should have done the same,  
For she was fair and beautiful  
And so, may God be merciful  
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That I had anything so good.

In the last twenty days events had moved with bewildering speed. On 15 April Guy had still been King of Jerusalem. By 5 May he was lord of Cyprus, while the Kingdom of Jerusalem was welcoming its third ruler in as many weeks. Henry, however, never assumed the title of king – either because he could not be crowned in Jerusalem or because of worries about the validity of his marriage. After Richard's departure he became the effective ruler of the Kingdom until 1197, when he accidentally stepped backwards through the open window of an upper room and was killed. Isabella then married, as her fourth husband, Guy of Lusignan's brother, Aimery, who died of a surfeit of fish in 1205. Thus by the time she was thirty-three, Isabella had been divorced once and widowed three times. When she herself died soon afterwards, the world must have seemed a safer place for husbands.

From Richard's point of view, the accession of Henry of Champagne meant that, for the first time, he had all the forces of the kingdom at his disposal. He decided to seize the opportunity to add to the length of the coastline in Christian hands, and increase the pressure on Saladin's line of communication between Egypt and Syria. Summoning Henry and the French army to join him he ordered an attack on the fortress of Darum, twenty miles south of Ascalon. In fact, after five days of fierce fighting, Darum fell on 22 May 1192, one day before Henry and the Duke of Burgundy arrived. But, in a fine gesture, Richard at once handed the captured town to the new lord of Jerusalem. Now that there was a new spirit

of co-operation among the Christians they would surely succeed. This time, moreover, they would not be hampered by the winter mud and rain. But on 29 May Richard received another messenger from England, the vice-chancellor, John of Alençon, with yet more disquieting news about a conspiracy between John and Philip Augustus. Richard was now caught in a terrible dilemma: which mattered most – Jerusalem or the Angevin Empire? It would have taken John of Alençon about eight weeks to travel from London to Jaffa. What had happened in those weeks – and, if he left now, what would happen in the next two or three months? Jerusalem at least was near at hand. Should he try again to take it? It was a forlorn hope, if ever there was one, but did he want to be known as the King who did not even try? If by some miracle he took Jerusalem there would be no one in Europe who could stand against him, the conqueror who had restored the Holy City to Christendom. But suppose he failed, and then came home too late?

The army council met and decided that, whatever Richard did, they would attack Jerusalem. When this news was leaked to the soldiers their joy was so great

That they went not to bed, but danced  
Till after midnight, still entranced.

Only Richard was unable to join in the general celebration. He withdrew to his tent and stayed there for several days, troubled and despondent. Finally one of his chaplains, William of Poitiers, managed to talk to him and revive his spirits. He reminded the King of all the past triumphs which God had allowed him to enjoy, of all the dangers which he had, by God's grace, escaped. Now that he had been brought to the verge of the ultimate victory, it would be a shameful thing to retreat.

Now it is said by great and small  
Who wish you honour, one and all,  
How unto Christendom have you  
A father been, and brother, too,  
And if you leave it without aid  
'Twill surely perish, thus betrayed.

Richard listened in silence and even after the chaplain had finished, he still said nothing, but next day he announced that he would stay in Palestine till the following Easter and that all should at once prepare for the siege of Jerusalem.

On 6 June the army, in cheerful mood, marched out of Ascalon. Five days later they reached Beit Nuba without encountering any opposition. Their only losses were two soldiers who died of snake-bites. Henry of Champagne had gone to Acre to fetch reinforcements and Richard ordered his men to wait for their arrival. Saladin had withdrawn to Jerusalem. Apart from the usual skirmishing between foraging and reconnaissance patrols the main army was left in peace. Ambroise reports that in the course of one skirmish the King rode to the top of a hill from where he had a clear view of Jerusalem: this may well have been the hill known as Montjoie, the spot from which the men of the First Crusade first saw the Holy City. It was the nearest Richard ever came to Jerusalem. In thirteenth-century legend this moment was given a more dramatic turn: when the King realized that he was within sight of Jerusalem he flung up his shield to cover his eyes and, weeping, begged God that he might not have to look upon the city if he could not deliver it.

To the soldiers kicking their heels at Beit Nuba, Count Henry seemed an interminable time coming. As so often in the history of the crusades the convenient discovery of a relic helped to keep up morale. Apparently a fragment of the Holy Cross was in the neighbourhood, buried in order to keep it out of infidel hands. Richard and his knights were led to the spot by the man who had hidden it:

Abbot of Saint Elias, who fed  
On nothing more than roots and bread.  
With his great beard that grew untrimmed  
A very holy man he seemed.

Finding this piece of the Cross was a comfort. Comfort of another kind was provided by a resoundingly successful raid on a rich caravan, with the result that an immense quantity of booty ranging from chessboards to camels was distributed among the soldiers. But

exciting though these episodes were, they were no substitute for a siege of Jerusalem. Eventually Count Henry arrived and by 29 June the entire force was encamped at Beit Nuba. Baha ad-Din gives a graphic picture of the alarm at Saladin's headquarters – the emirs blustering bravely but in reality ready to abandon the city at a moment's notice, Saladin himself perplexed and unable to sleep. Yet as far as the leaders of the crusade were concerned nothing had changed. They were back where they had been six months earlier, except that this time Saladin had a larger army and would be able to cut off the supply line to the coast if they committed their forces to an attack on Jerusalem. Moreover Saladin had blocked up or polluted all the springs around Jerusalem, so the army would be in a waterless region in midsummer. Richard, however, had put forward an alternative plan: an attack on Egypt. A combined fleet of Pisan and Genoese ships had already played an important part in the capture of Darum – an ideal starting-point for the march across the Sinai Desert – and, so Richard assured his fellow-commanders, it was now lying moored at Acre, ready to transport all their supplies to the Nile Delta. He himself was ready to lead an army of 700 knights and 2000 men-at-arms, paid out of his own resources, along the coast road into Egypt. It was agreed that the two alternatives – the siege of Jerusalem or the attack on Egypt – would be put before a committee of twenty (five Templars, five Hospitallers, five barons of Outremer and five nobles of France) and that the whole army would abide by whatever the committee decided.

The committee opted in favour of an Egyptian campaign – as Richard undoubtedly knew it would, since fifteen of its twenty members were local experts and Richard was always careful to work in close consultation with them. Here, it seemed, was the fruition of the idea which had been in the back of Richard's mind since he opened negotiations with the Genoese in the previous October. The Duke of Burgundy and the French contingent, however, refused to co-operate. For them it was Jerusalem or nothing. Richard was prepared to go to Jerusalem, he said, if the army insisted, but he would not lead them there. He would go as their comrade, their fellow-pilgrim, but not as their commander. He would not lead them into a trap. But the army did not insist, could not. It was hopelessly

split into two camps and therefore condemned to ineffectiveness. Hugh of Burgundy composed an insulting song about Richard, and his troops relieved their feelings by singing it loudly; Richard replied in a similar vein. However, apart from this minor contribution to the troubadours' art the army achieved nothing. On 4 July the withdrawal began. For Richard it must have been a day of misery. In agreeing to stay on in the Holy Land he had risked far more than the rest. He knew now that he had failed to liberate Jerusalem or to conquer Egypt; and for all he knew he might already have succeeded in losing the Angevin Empire.

By various routes the army returned to the coast. Richard reopened negotiations with Saladin and they were quickly able to come close to a settlement. Saladin agreed to allow pilgrims into Jerusalem and to cede the coast to the Christians, provided that they demolished Ascalon. Richard, however, refused to consider the demolition of a fortress on which he had spent so much time and money. Indeed he chose to strengthen it by reinforcing its garrison with troops drawn from Darum. Darum, no longer required as a base for an attack on Egypt, was dismantled to prevent its falling into Saladin's hands and being used as the supply depot in a siege of Ascalon. While the argument about Ascalon continued Richard moved to Acre, arriving there on 26 July. He had for a while been contemplating a strike to the north, against Beirut.

But Saladin moved first. On 27 July his army appeared outside the walls of Jaffa. After resisting bravely for five days, the town surrendered and was sacked. The garrison withdrew into the citadel, but their position was hopeless and they could do no more than buy a little time. They came to terms with Saladin. They would capitulate if they were not relieved by three o'clock next day, 1 August; naturally they had sent a message to Acre as soon as they saw Saladin's army, so they hoped that by now Richard was well on the way. He had in fact received the news at Acre on the evening of 28 July and had at once set off to the rescue. Henry of Champagne with a force of Templars and Hospitallers took the land route, but was halted at Caesarea by a report that the road was blocked by a second Muslim army. Richard's company, together with the Pisans and Genoese, went by galley but were held up by contrary

winds off Mount Carmel. As a result it was not until late on the night of 31 July that his fleet reached Jaffa. When dawn came, it looked as though Richard had arrived too late. The whole town and the shoreline were swarming with Muslim soldiers. The beleaguered garrison must have signalled their presence to the fleet, but Richard did nothing; presumably he feared a trap, knowing that Frankish banners could be waved by Muslim hands. As the hours went by and still nothing happened the garrison began to give up hope; some of them laid down their arms and left the citadel.

At this point, just when Jaffa seemed well and truly lost, a priest jumped from the citadel into the harbour below, his landing cushioned by shallow water and sand. He swam out to the galleys. As soon as Richard realized that a remnant of the garrison was still holding out, he hesitated no longer. The red-painted royal galley under its red flag shot forward. Leaving off his leg armour, Richard jumped into the water and waded ashore, followed by his men. This charge, preceded by crossbow fire, cleared the shore. Once they had established a beachhead, some of the troops were detailed to seize all the timber they could lay their hands on and put up a barricade. The others, led by Richard, pressed forward and entered the town. The Turks were in a state of complete confusion: some still had their minds bent on plunder rather than war, while others believed that the garrison had already surrendered and were taken by surprise when it sallied out in support of Richard. In no time at all they were either dead or in flight. On that day, says Ambroise, the King's prowess exceeded Roland's at Roncesvaux.

Saladin's attack on Jaffa had been a brilliant and unexpected thrust. If it had succeeded it would have effectively cut the coastal strip of the re-born Kingdom of Jerusalem into two separate parts, and it had come within inches of success. It had failed because Richard had arrived in the nick of time; and against him, his knights and his crossbowmen there were no Muslim troops who fought in expectation of victory. Had he arrived eighteen hours later, however, he would have found Saladin securely in control of Jaffa. More important still, having seized the initiative in this dramatic fashion, Saladin would have been well on the way to winning back his reputation of 1187 and to re-asserting his authority over his emirs.

Ironically it may be that Saladin had moved too fast. Throughout it had been a war in which both sides knew a great deal about their opponents' plans. Fought in a country where the overwhelming bulk of the population either was Muslim or spoke Arabic and dressed in Arab fashion it was, at the 'civilian' level, impossible to tell friend from foe. Scouts and spies moved freely from one side to the other. Thus Saladin had learned of Richard's intention of besieging Beirut as early as 23 July; and he had moved at once. If he had not been so well-informed his attack on Jaffa might have come when Richard was at Beirut rather than at Acre, and Richard then might have arrived too late – unless, of course, his voyage had been helped by a following wind. It is possible to speculate endlessly, but it is clear that it had been a close-run thing and that the Frankish gains of the last twelve months had been placed in great jeopardy.

From Jaffa Saladin withdrew about five miles inland and at once resumed peace negotiations – or rather truce negotiations since for an orthodox Muslim there could be no peace to end the Holy War, only a truce. As before, Ascalon proved to be a stumbling-block. Saladin therefore decided to try a surprise attack on Richard before his land army had had time to link up with his amphibious force and while he was still desperately short of horses. By pitching his camp outside the battered town walls Richard had challenged Saladin to battle and Saladin decided to take up the challenge. During the night of 4 August the Turkish cavalry moved quietly forward. Luckily the King received just enough warning of their approach to be able to get his troops into battle array, though some of his soldiers were only half-dressed. The front rank knelt down, each man protected by his shield and pointing a lance at the enemy. Behind them were the crossbowmen, working in pairs; while one discharged his bolt, the other wound a second crossbow. The Turks charged but stopped and veered away as soon as they saw that this formidable defensive hedgehog would not break and run. In the end it was Richard and his ten mounted knights who went over to the attack against an enemy that was reluctant to fight now that it had lost the element of surprise. In the eyes of some of his followers the day was won by the King's personal courage and prowess:



The King was a giant in the battle and was everywhere in the field, now here, now there, wherever the attacks of the Turks raged most fiercely. On that day his sword shone like lightning and many of the Turks felt its edge. Some were cloven in two from their helmet to their teeth; others lost their heads, arms and other limbs, lopped off at a single blow. He mowed down men as reapers mow down corn with their sickles. Whoever felt one of his blows had no need of a second. He was an Achilles, an Alexander, a Roland.

These were the qualities which made him a legend. In reality the day was won by the professional competence with which he arrayed his troops and by the poor morale of the Turks, still suffering from the effects of their ejection from Jaffa and critical of Saladin's leadership.

This marked the end of Saladin's counter-attack. Both sides were now completely worn out, and Richard himself fell seriously ill. (It was said that he began to recover from the moment when he heard that Hugh of Burgundy had died at Acre.) For him it was time to make peace and go home. Aware of Richard's anxieties, Saladin was still attracted by the idea of prolonging the struggle and driving the Franks out before he died, but his emirs had had enough:

Look at the state of the country, ruined and trampled underfoot, at your subjects, beaten down and confused, at your armies, exhausted and sick, at your horses, neglected and ruined. There is little forage, food is short, supply bases are far away, the necessities of life are dear. All supplies have to come from Egypt, confronting the murderous perils of the desert.

(This last sentence shows why Saladin cared so much about Ascalon and the threat it posed to the road from Syria to Egypt.) According to Imad ad-Din, the emirs also argued that if a truce were agreed, the Franks would go back to Europe. Thus when, after a period of recovery, Saladin decided to renew the war, there would be almost no one in Palestine to stand against him. Faced by his troops' reluctance to fight, Saladin could not help but see the force of these arguments. But in his negotiations with Richard he remained adamant on the subject of Ascalon.

Eventually Richard gave way, worn down by an illness which

made him feel a physical as well as a political need to return. He insisted only that the newly-built fortifications should be razed to the ground before Ascalon was handed over. On these terms, on 2 September, Richard's and Saladin's representatives agreed to a three-year truce. From Tyre to Jaffa the coast was to remain in Christian hands. Jerusalem, of course, was kept by the Muslims, but pilgrims were free to visit the city. Many of his followers took advantage of this opportunity, but Richard did not. He would enter Jerusalem as a conqueror, but not on conditions laid down by unbelievers. Instead he travelled to Acre to recover his health and make arrangements to leave. He freed William de Préaux in exchange for ten Muslim prisoners. Finally on 9 October 1192 he set sail. The Third Crusade – his crusade – was over. In that it had not taken Jerusalem it was a failure, but given the political and military problems with which Richard and his fellow-commanders had to cope, it is amazing that they achieved as much as they did. Certainly Saladin feared that the coastal towns might be used as bases from which the rest of Palestine would be conquered. While Saladin was alive there was not much chance of that, but after the great Muslim leader was gone, who could tell? Saladin himself had grave misgivings. It was already obvious that his death would be followed by a struggle for power within his family. Had Richard stayed in the Holy Land until the next Easter – as he had once said he would, and as he nearly did since 9 October was just about the latest date in the year at which it was safe to sail – he might have achieved his ambition. By one of the ironies of history, Saladin died on 4 March 1193, more than three weeks before Easter. But by that time Richard was a prisoner in Germany.