

The Portable

Medieval Reader

Edited and with an introduction by

JAMES BRUCE ROSS

and

MARY MARTIN McLAUGHLIN



PENGUIN BOOKS

called Ramleh, they suffered an attack from the Arabs on Good Friday about the third hour of the day.

The Arabs, upon learning of the approach of such distinguished men, had flocked together from every side, in great numbers and armed to seize spoils. Most of the Christians thought it was impious to supply themselves with military aid, and to safeguard with material arms the lives which, upon setting forth into foreign lands, they had consecrated to God; they were immediately laid low, weakened by many wounds, and despoiled of all they possessed, "from a thread even to a shoelatchet." Among these Bishop William of Utrecht, with his arm almost crippled by blows, was left behind, naked and half-dead. By throwing stones, a kind of weapon which by chance the place itself provided abundantly, the other Christians were not so much warding off danger as trying to postpone the death which was upon them.

Withdrawing little by little, they turned aside to a village, which was at a moderate distance from their route itself. They conjectured from the similarity of the name that this was Capharnaum. When they had entered, all the bishops occupied a certain atrium, which was enclosed by a low wall, so fragile that even if no force had been applied, it could easily have fallen down from sheer age. In the middle of this there was a house which had an upper story sufficiently lofty and prepared, as if purposely, to resist siege. The bishops of Mainz and Bamberg, with their clergy, claimed for themselves the upper story; the other bishops the lower story. All the laymen rushed about energetically, trying to hinder the attack of the enemy and defend the wall, and indeed they withstood the first of the attack by throwing stones, as was mentioned before. Then, when the barbarians cast a thick mass of spears into the fortification and most of the Christians, having rushed at them, wrested their

The Near East: Pilgrimage and Crusade

The Great German Pilgrimage

LAMBERT OF HERSFELD

1064-1065

IN THE autumn, Archbishop Siegfried of Mainz and Bishop Gunther of Bamberg, Otto of Regensburg and William of Utrecht, and many others with them, the pillars and heads of Germany, set out for Jerusalem. . . .

Meanwhile, since the bishops who were travelling to Jerusalem indiscreetly displayed their great wealth to the peoples through whose territories they journeyed, they would have brought upon themselves the most extreme danger, had not divine mercy restored that which was lost through human rashness. For the barbarians, who flocked in crowds from the towns and fields to behold such distinguished men, were seized at first by a vast wonder at their strange dress and magnificent equipment, and then, as is often the case, not less by the hope and desire of plunder. Therefore, when, after crossing Licia, they entered the territory of the Saracens and were now one day's journey or a little more from the city

shields and swords from their hands by force, not only were the Christians able now to defend the wall, but they even ventured now and then to make a sortie from the gates and engage in hand-to-hand combat.

Since the Arabs were now unable to sustain the attack in any place or in any line, they finally changed their plan from a disorderly attack to a siege and undertook to subdue by hunger and fatigue those whom they were unable to overcome by the sword. Therefore they divided their multitude, of which they had more than enough, having massed together about twelve thousand, in such a way that, with one part regularly succeeding another in carrying on the siege, they should give little or no opportunity for respite to the Christians, surmising that, because of the lack of everything which could sustain human life, they would not be able to endure the labour of fighting for long.

So the Christians were besieged without intermission all of Good Friday, all of Holy Saturday, up to almost the third hour of Easter Sunday, and the wickedness of the enemy did not grant them even a brief respite in which at least they might refresh their bodies with sleep. For, having death before their eyes, they desired neither food nor drink, and if they had greatly desired anything, they could not have taken it, since they were without everything. And when, on the third day, worn out with exertion and with hunger, they had reached the end, and since their strength, broken by fasting, betrayed the many brave attempts they made, a certain priest cried out that they were not acting righteously, since they put their hope and strength in their arms rather than in God and tried to ward off, by their own power, this misfortune into which He had permitted them to fall. On this account he thought they should surrender, especially since this three-day fast now ren-

dered them utterly useless for fighting. When they had surrendered and had been sent under the yoke by the enemy, it would not be difficult for the God who had so often, even in the last necessity, saved them miraculously when they were hard pressed, now to grant them His mercy. And he also impressed this upon them: the barbarians were not at all raging in so great an effort for the sake of killing them, but rather because they wished to take away their money; if the barbarians got possession of this, the Christians would in time be allowed to depart free and henceforth unharmed, without attack or molestation.

This plan was pleasing to everyone and, turning immediately from arms to prayers, they begged through an interpreter that they be received in surrender. When he learned this, the Arab leader hastened at a gallop into the first ranks, and, indeed, withdrew the others to some distance away because he feared that if the multitude were to be rashly admitted, the booty would be divided in a disorderly manner. He himself, taking with him seventeen of the most honoured men of his tribe, entered the open camp, having left his son to guard the gates, lest perchance someone avid for plunder, who had not been asked to follow him, should break in. And after he and a few others had ascended on ladders which had been moved to the upper story where the bishops of Mainz and Bamberg were concealed, the bishop of Bamberg, to whom before all others, in spite of his youth, but because of the superiority of his courage and the admirable dignity of his whole appearance, the honour had been given, began to ask him that, when they had taken away everything they had, "even to the uttermost farthing," he should permit them to go away stripped.

The Arab leader, both elated by the victory and ex-

cessively furious beyond the inborn barbarity of his manners because of the defeats received in so many battles, said that he had waged war against them for three days now, with great injury to his own army, to the end that he might make his own terms with the conquered, rather than accept those which they themselves established. Lest, therefore, they should be deceived by a false hope, he said that the Arabs, when they had taken away everything the Christians had, would eat their flesh and drink their blood. Without delay, loosening the turban with which, according to the custom of his people, he covered his head, and making of it a lasso, he threw it over the neck of the bishop. Since the bishop was a man with a noble's sense of honour and of almost exaggerated dignity, he did not suffer this ignominy, but struck him such a violent blow of the fist in the face, that with one punch he knocked the startled Arab headlong to the pavement, and shouted that he would first punish him for his impiety, since he, a profane man and an idolater, had presumed to lay impure hands upon a priest of Christ.

Immediately the other clerics and laymen rushed forward and with fetters bound the hands of both the leaders and the others, who had ascended into the upper story, so tightly behind their backs, that the skin was broken in many places and the blood flowed over their fingernails. When the news of this bold deed was brought to those who were standing in the lower part of the house, they did likewise to those Arab nobles who were with them. Then, raising on high a mighty shout and calling to their aid God, the maker of all things, all the laymen took up arms again, occupied the wall, and, with an organized band, routed and put to flight the guard which had been placed at the gates. They fought everywhere so eagerly and with their strength so re-

newed by the unexpected success that you would have thought they suffered no fatigue and no discomfort from the fasting and exertion of three days.

Wondering greatly at the amazing eagerness arising from alarming circumstances and, in fact, from the utmost desperation, and suspecting no other cause for this strange occurrence than that punishment had been inflicted upon their leaders, the Arabs, in a most hostile spirit, rushed into the fight and, crowding together, prepared to break into the camp by force of arms and men. And they would have done so, had not the Christians, acting upon a quickly worked out plan, placed the captive leaders in the place where the most fearful force of the enemy and the thickest rain of spears were falling, and set a scout above their heads, who, with drawn sword in his hands, shouted through an interpreter that, unless they stopped attacking, the Christians would fight against them not with arms, but with the heads of their leaders.

Then the leaders themselves, who, besides the painfulness of their bonds, were also tormented exceedingly by the swords threatening their necks, with great lamentation implored their people to act more moderately and not, by obstinately continuing to fight, to incite the Christians, now that the hope of pardon had been cut off, to torture and murder them. Terrified by the danger to his father, the son of the Arab leader, whom I mentioned above as having been left by his father to guard the gate of the atrium, with swift steps pushed through the crowded ranks of his own men and, chiding them by word and gesture, held back the attack of the raging array and forbade them to cast their spears at the enemy, since not the enemy, as they thought, but rather their own nobles would receive those weapons in their breasts.

Because of this, when the Christians had been little by little freed from arms and attack, a messenger came to them in the fortification, who had been sent by those who, on Good Friday, after losing everything, naked and wounded had pushed on to Ramleh. He brought great refreshment to spirits that had been worn out by bitterness and fear, revealing that the prince of the city mentioned above, although a pagan [Moslem], had, nevertheless, been inspired by what might be thought to be a divine feeling and was coming with huge forces to free them. Nor could the news of the approaching enemy be concealed from the Arabs. Immediately, they all turned their thoughts from attacking the Christians to saving themselves, and everyone disappeared, fleeing blindly whither any hope of escape called. In this confusion, while some ran about caring for other matters, one of the captives escaped, aided by a certain Saracen whom the Christians had used as a guide for the journey, and such was the grief, such the sorrow, of everyone that they could scarcely keep their hands off him through whose negligence the captive had escaped.

Not long afterwards, the leader himself, as had been announced, came with his army and was received peacefully in the atrium by the Christians, who were all, nevertheless, suspended between hope and fear, lest by chance the calamity had not been averted, but only the enemy changed, and because of the strangeness of the thing it was hard to believe that "Satan should cast out Satan," that is, that a pagan should wish to restrain a pagan from attacking Christians. First he ordered all the captives to be brought to him. When he had seen them and had heard in order what had been done, he thanked the Christians very heartily for the magnificent things they had done, and for defeating these most violent enemies of the state, who had now for many

years harassed the kingdom of Babylon [Caliphate of Cairo] with thoroughgoing devastations, and who had often destroyed the great lines arrayed against them in battle. He ordered them to be turned over to guards and to be preserved alive for the king of Babylon. When he had received from the Christians as much money as had been stipulated, he himself took them with him to Ramleh. Then, supplying them with a guard of light-armed youth, so that they would not be in further danger of any attack from brigands, he commanded that they be escorted as far as Jerusalem. They suffered no further difficulty on the journey there, and none in returning, and they reached Licia, giving thanks to God for their having survived so many calamities and for His having preserved them alive and unharmed.

From *Annales*, O. Holder-Egger, ed. (Hanover: 1894); trans. M.M.M.

The First Contact of Crusaders and Turks

1097-1099

IMPRESSIONS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY IN
ANATOLIA

THE first day of our departure from the city [Constantinople], we reached a bridge and we stayed there two days. The third day our men rose before dawn and, since it was still night, they did not see well enough to hold to the same route, and they divided into two corps which were separated by two days' march. In the first group were Bohemond, Robert of Normandy, the pru-