

The Annals of Montecassino, 1189-1195

The Annales Casinenses survive in several different versions, the last of which finishes in 1212. The section from 1183-95 seems to be written by a single author, more or less contemporaneously with the events described, and originally came in the format translated below in two manuscripts, the first (now lost) used by Erasmo Gattula, the Cassinese archivist and historian of the early eighteenth-century, who believed it to have been copied c. 1270, the other (Berlin 296), was written in 1314.

The section here has been translated by G.A. Loud from Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores xix.314-18.

(1189) William King of Sicily died without children or testament. Trouble arose at Palermo between Christians and Saracens; after many of their men had been massacred the Saracens fled and went to live in the mountains. Abbot Roffred of Cassino made provision for the future and came to an agreement with the neighbouring counts and barons.

(1190) Count Tancred of Lecce, who at Troia had with certain others sworn fealty to Constance, wife of King Henry of the Germans and daughter of the late King Roger, was called to Palermo by the magnates of the court and, with the assent and favour of the Roman Curia, was crowned as king in the month of January. Counts Roger of Andria and Richard of Carinola, more mindful of their fealty, along with certain others, resisted Tancred. But with the above-mentioned King Henry delaying his arrival in Italy, Tancred secured for himself nearly all of Apulia and the Terra di Lavoro; the fortresses were indeed induced to surrender to him by the blandishments of his relative Count Richard of Acerra. This same count raised a great army of Romans and [men] from Campania and the *regno* to attack the Capuans and Aversans, and invaded the land of St. Benedict. King Henry sent Henry Testa with an army into the *regno*, who entering through the regions of Amiterno and Chieti destroyed various places through fire and sack. He joined up with the above-said Count Roger, and they entered Apulia, plundering several places; they captured Corneto and forced the inhabitants to flee away. Tancred's army fortified the city of Ariano and neighbouring places against them, fearing to fight an open battle. The Germans besieged them for a

while and then, overcome by the heat of summer and shortages, raised the siege and left the kingdom. Count Richard of Acerra gathered his strength; he deceitfully captured Count Roger by inviting him to a parley and breaking his word. He returned with his army against Capua and Aversa. Capua surrendered on foolish advice, as was always the case, at a time when King Henry whom it favoured was already drawing near. Frederick the Emperor of the Romans, the father of the said King Henry, who was going to Jerusalem with a great army to fight against Saladin who had occupied that land, was drowned in a river. Henry his son entered Italy.

(1191) Pope Clement died in the month of March. The Cardinal Deacon Jaquintus was consecrated as Pope Celestine. The said Henry was crowned by him as Prince of the Romans in St. Peter's in the month of April. Tusculanum was given to the Romans to be destroyed. The Emperor Henry with the said Empress Constance went down into the kingdom through the Campagna and Rocca d'Arce by a sharp attack. After this had taken place, the audacity of his men induced diffidence in ours, so that now fortified places did not think of resistance; hence Sora, Atina and Castrocielo surrendered, conquered more by fear than force of arms. With Abbot Roffred laying sick almost to death at Montecassino, discussions took place between the emperor's envoys and the Cassinese convent, who favoured the emperor. The men of S. Germano were summoned, and on the order of the Dean and convent swore [fealty] to the emperor. The empress next came straight way after the emperor, via Sora and Atina, to Cassino. The convent, apart from the abbot, swore to them, but gave hostages. After a few days they came into the Terra di Lavoro, meeting no resistance except for the city of Naples, in which the above-said Count Richard had taken refuge with his army. The empress was received at Salerno and stayed there. The emperor besieged Naples from the month of May up to the month of August, and then falling ill he abandoned the siege. He returned to Cassino from the Campania. He sent for the empress, but the Salernitans broke their word and detained her, and [then] sent her to the king. The sick emperor, with the greater part of his men dead from the unhealthy climate, took hostages from S. Germano and, leading the said abbot with him, returned to Germany in the month of September. Count Richard marched out from Naples with his army, took the city of Capua through betrayal, and many Germans perished there by the sword. Conrad Muscaincervello resisted for a while in the citadel at Capua, but finally came to an agreement with the count and left

unharmd with his men. The nobles of Capua who were with him were sent to prison. Stultus Paganus struck down with the sword the German castellan of Atina as he was leaving [that place], and occupied Atina on the king's behalf. After recovering the Terra di Lavoro Count Richard besieged Count Roger of Molise in Venafro. On his return he came to S. Germano, and took it through a wicked faction of certain citizens who favoured the king. Atenulf the Dean of Cassino, who had been left by the abbot as his deputy, shut himself up in Cassino and with the monks manfully resisted the count's siege. The count took over the land of St. Benedict and [incorporated] it into the royal demesne, then he returned to the Terra de Lavoro in the month of November. The legates of the Roman Curia laid an interdict on the monastery of Cassino, the dean and the monks; not even this however separated them from love of the emperor.

(1192) In January the dean, with Diepold the castellan of Rocca d'Arce gathered an army from the Campagna and the Romans, descended from the mountain and attacked S. Germano. The king's bailiffs and the royal supporters, both monks and laymen, fled. Others fought back, less to oppose his rule than to protect themselves against a violent sack, and killed many of the intruders, until they saw the dean, and then they surrendered themselves into his hands, after receiving immunity on oath from the leaders of the army. The latter however took hostages and seized foodstuffs. This same castellan took Sora, and then with the dean captured Piumarola and Pignetaro, which they occupied with great bloodshed and totally devastated. King Tancred came to Apulia and went up to Pescara, subjecting the whole of the kingdom to himself except for the Count of Celano and a few [other] barons. Then he returned through the Terra di Lavoro to Sicily, leaving as [his] captain Count Richard of Carinola, who had previously surrendered [to him]. Roger de Foresta, the castellan of Atina, captured the *castrum* of S. Elia. Gathering an army he besieged S. Germano from one side, and with a violent assault fought his way right up to the walls. He destroyed or carried away the crops, and consigned Cairo and other vills to the fire. Meanwhile the said Count of Carinola stayed for a long while at S. Angelo blockading the city. Coordinating their movements, they made simultaneous violent assaults, but the dean, whom the absent Diepold had left to defend the city, though a monk clad in the monastic habit, so animated the warlike spirit in his men that he opened the gates and making cautious sorties, so that it was possible to defend all the gates at the said time,

threw back every attack. This happened in the month of June. Seeing that he could make no headway against the dean's steadfastness and courage, the count ceased his attack, and abandoning brute force turned his hopes towards corruption, trying by blandishments and bribes to gain what he was unable to overcome by warlike means. Moreover the castellan of Atina inflicted various tortures on the dean's brother, who had been captured by the royal soldiers. His freedom was offered to the dean, gold was promised, a choice of whatever office in the kingdom he wished was given; but that faithful spirit yielded neither to avarice nor to ambition, he even pretended to be indifferent to the tortures, swearing that he would much rather see the hanging of his brother before his eyes than abandon his fealty to the emperor and to his abbot. The castellan became furious, and captured and plundered the mountain *castra* of St. Benedict.

The emperor sent Count Berthold with an army into Italy, and with him sent back the abovesaid abbot. Berthold however stayed in Tuscany, and allocated some knights to the abbot. The latter returned with these as far as Ceprano where he had a conference with the empress, who had just been released by the king. The cardinals escorting her had been sent for this purpose by the pope, who wanted to discuss a peace settlement with her at Rome. But the empress declined to enter the city, and was escorted along the Tiber to the Spoleto region. The abbot came up with his knights, and one day he and the dean marched to Atina, destroyed the outworks, plundered and then burned the greater part of Atina, and would have taken the citadel if the counsel of the dean had been followed. But the German fury which had fuelled the attack ebbed away. Next they entered Comino on the same road, and captured and installed themselves at Gallinario; after some days the knights who had come with the abbot departed, and only a few remained. The lands of the abbey favoured the abbot's party, however the *castrum* of Sant'Angelo with its accustomed wickedness violently resisted; it sent out bandits who lay in ambush in woods and other suitable places and returned with their plunder. The castellan of Atina gathered his strength once again, captured the mountain *castra* of St. Benedict, and sacked and burned both them and the *castrum* of Sant'Elia. Along with these unhappy events a famine also developed, so that at S. Germano a bushel of corn was often sold for more than an ounce of gold, a salma of wine for a similar price and a canister of oil for 5 tari. Diepold collected an army with the abbot's help and besieged Aquino, where the

royal knights were. He captured the town when the latter evacuated it. Then he grew so emboldened that he harried and plundered all the area round about, right down to Suessa. The above-mentioned Berethold recaptured Amiterno and Valva in November and suddenly marched into the County of Molise. He captured Venafro at the first assault and remained there until it was sacked. He captured the neighbouring *castra* in which he took prisoner some of the king's knights. While returning from Jerusalem the King of England was captured and handed over to the emperor; after a while he was freed and returned home. The emperor received his fealty, crowned him and increased his kingdom.

(1193) Berthold departed, leaving in the County of Molise Conrad Muscaincervello and Diepold, and took as his wife the sister of Count Berard, who was widow to Count Robert of Caserta. Diepold made a plundering raid into Campania, captured the Count of Carinola who had marched out against him and brought him back to Rocca d'Arce where he held him captive. Flushed with the glory of this raid, he ravaged and plundered in different directions everywhere in the Terra di Lavoro. The abbot gathered an army and recovered Castronuovo and other neighbouring *castra*, after a pact had been made that they would surrender unless help arrived from the king before the designated time. He laid waste the outskirts of the *castrum* of Sant'Angelo. Berthold returned to the County of Molise. King Tancred arrived in Apulia and received the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople as wife for his son Roger, who had already been crowned. Next, gathering an army he came to Montefusco. Against him Berthold moved camp and pitched tents at Paluda. But on the day agreed for the battle, though the king wanted to fight, some of his men drew back. As time went on, however, the imperial army was forced by scarcity to retreat to the County of Molise. The king meanwhile advanced, stormed the *rocca* of Sant'Agata and the *castrum* of Sabiniano and condemned many of the Germans captured there to the ultimate penalty. Berthold besieged the *castrum* of Monterodo which had broken its fealty, but as one day he was supervising his siege engines outside it he was struck by a stone hurled from a machine inside and died. Part of the army melted away, the above-mentioned Conrad was chosen as leader by the others. Encouraged by his growing successes, King Tancred entered the Terra di Lavoro, besieged Caserta until Count William surrendered, and then besieged Aversa. The inhabitants surrendered and gave him hostages. Conrad marched into the valley of Forcone, rebuilt his army

and recaptured the lands which had surrendered to the king. The king came to Teano, hoping to win over the abbot to his cause, but the latter, well-advised, far-seeing and mindful of his just cause, could be moved neither by the king's bribes nor by threats from the Apostolic See. The king fell ill and returned to Sicily. Once he had left Conrad entered and devastated Comino. With the Count of Carinola a prisoner, Diepold recovered the *rocca* of Mondragone. Conrad then marched into Apulia, captured the places which were not fortified, and plundered and devastated [the lands of?] those which were.

(1194) Tancred's son Roger, mentioned above, died. After this, and having crowned his son William, he himself died. After raising an army, the emperor entered Italy in the month of June. He prepared a fleet at Pisa and Genoa, and sending it forth descended into the kingdom. Everywhere surrendered to him except Atina and Roccaguglielmo. The Capuans and Aversans neither surrendered to him nor were besieged. The Neapolitans had already surrendered by agreement with the Pisans. The emperor marched on and stormed Salerno. In revenge for his injury he put some of the inhabitants to the sword, and condemned others to prison or exile, for reasons published and agreed publicly by his army. Then he marched into Apulia, and meeting no resistance came through Calabria to Messina. The new little king, William, left the palace with his mother and took refuge in a fortified *castrum* called Caltebellotta. On seeing this, the people of Palermo acclaimed the emperor. The latter sent messengers to the queen and came to an agreement that she could have the County of Lecce and her son the Principality of Taranto. He then hastened to Palermo, entered it in magnificent style and was received in the palace. Not long afterwards the little king laid down his fortune with the crown and laid himself at the emperor's feet.

(1195) The emperor held a solemn court at his palace, and letters were shown which spoke of a conspiracy hatched by certain of the magnates of the kingdom against him. He cast William the former king, now made prince, and various counts and magnates of the kingdom into chains. The Empress Constance gave birth to a son in the March of Ancona who was called by the names of his grandfathers Frederick Roger or Roger Frederick in the hope that he might acquire their probity. Abbot Roffred of Cassino went in haste to Palermo and received the gift of Atina and Malveto from the

emperor; on his return he besieged Atina. Seeing that he could not hold out, the above-mentioned Roger surrendered Atina to him, and received the *castrum* of S. Pietro in Fine. The emperor returned to Apulia, and joining with the empress held a solemn court there. On its conclusion he returned to Germany, and the empress went to Sicily.