

**The Deeds of Robert Guiscard**  
**By William of Apulia**

**Translated by G.A. Loud**

*This poem, one of our principal contemporary sources for the Norman Conquest of Italy, was composed between 1096 and 1099. The reference in the prologue to Urban II gives a terminus ante quem, for the pope died in July 1099, and a later reference, in Book III, to 'the Gallic race [who] wanted to open the roads to the Holy Sepulchre' shows that William must be writing after the beginning of the First Crusade, called by Urban in November 1095.*

*Nothing is known of the author except his name. The poem was written in hexameters (epic verse'), although the present translation has been rendered as prose. Despite its title, the poem is not exclusively concerned with the life of Robert Guiscard, Duke of Apulia 1059-85. The first book deals with the arrival of the Normans in southern Italy, and their early campaigns up to 1042. Robert first appears only in Book II, and the discussion of his career is very selective, concentrating on a relatively small number of heroic episodes. The poem, for example, passes almost immediately from his investiture as duke in August 1059 via a brief account of the rebellion against him in the autumn of 1067 to the beginning of the siege of Bari in August 1068. The last two books are devoted almost exclusively to Robert's campaigns against the Byzantines in the Balkans in 1081-5. We are told nothing about his birth or family background in Normandy, about which we are informed in the contemporary prose 'Deeds of Count Roger of Sicily' by Geoffrey Malaterra.*

*William writes generally good classical Latin; he was obviously familiar with the principal Roman poets, and especially Vergil and Lucan, although direct textual references are relatively few. Both of these Roman authors were known in southern Italy during the Norman period; there were, for example, manuscripts in the libraries of the monasteries of*

*Montecassino and Tremiti. William's more contemporary sources are however difficult to identify. He was obviously well-informed about the Byzantine Empire, and there are similarities between his account of Robert's attack on Byzantium and that contained in the later Alexiad of Anna Comnena (completed in the 1140s). It is, however, improbable that they both drew on a 'lost common original' source, as some scholars have argued. William's own work was not well known in the Middle Ages; the only later author known to have used it was Alexander, the author of the chronicle of the Abruzzi monastery of St. Bartholomew of Carpineto, writing in the last decade of the twelfth century. It was, however, also known in Normandy: the only surviving manuscript (Avranches, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 162) is derived from the monastery of Mont St. Michel, another (now lost), from which the editio princeps of 1582 was derived, is known to have been in Bec. The Mont St. Michel MS., which dates from the second half of the twelfth century, was probably a copy of that from Bec. The person responsible for this was almost certainly Robert of Torigni (d. 1186), the Norman historian who was a monk of Bec and then became Abbot of Mont. St. Michel in 1154.*

*The translation below is by G.A. Loud, from Guillaume de Pouille, La Geste de Robert Guiscard, ed. M. Mathieu (Palermo 1963). The introduction and notes to Mathieu's edition are the starting point to any study of this text. However, there are also several discussions of William of Apulia's work in English.*

Emily Albu, *The Normans and their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge 2001), pp. 106-44.

Paul Brown, 'The *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, a Byzantine history?', *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011), 162-79.

G.A. Loud, 'Anna Komnena and her sources for the Normans of southern Italy', *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages. Essays Presented to John Taylor*, ed. I.N. Wood & G.A. Loud (London 1991), pp. 41-57 [reprinted in G.A. Loud, *Conquerors and Churchmen in Norman Italy* (Aldershot 1999)].

K.B. Wolf, *Making History. The Normans and their Historians in Eleventh-Century Italy* (Philadelphia 1995), pp. 123-42.

## Prologue

The poets of old have sung of the deeds of the leaders of old; as a modern poet I shall attempt to publish the deeds of contemporaries. It is my intention to recount by whom the Norman people [*gens*] was led when it came to Italy, why it came to stay there, and under which leaders it defeated the Italians. Pardon your poet who sings of these great deeds as best he can, illustrious Roger, worthy son of Duke Robert; it is my wish to serve your rule which makes me audacious, since pure devotion provides the skill which [natural] talent and art denies. The request of the reverend father Urban forbids me to be slothful, since I fear that I shall sin more by refusing so great a pontiff than by following his benevolent instructions.

## Book I

After it had become pleasing to the Mighty King who orders the seasons as well as kingdoms that the shores of Apulia, for so long possessed by the Greeks, should no longer be occupied by them, the people of the Normans, distinguished by their warlike knights, should enter and rule Italy, after expelling the Greeks. In the language of their native country the wind which carries them from the boreal regions from which they have departed to seek the frontiers of Italy is called 'north', and the word 'man' is used among them to signify *homo*; thus they are called 'Normans', that is 'men of the north wind' [*homines boreales*].

Some of these men had climbed to the summit of Monte Gargano, to you, Michael the Archangel, to fulfil a vow which they had made. There they saw a man clad in the Greek manner, called Melus. They were amazed at the peculiar costume of this stranger, one which they had never seen before, with his head tied up in a bonnet wrapped around it. On seeing him they asked who he was and where he came from. He replied that he was a Lombard, a citizen of noble birth from Bari, and that he had been forced to flee from his native land by the cruelty of the Greeks. When the Gauls sympathised with his fate he said,

'If I had the help of some of your people, it would be easy for me to return, provided that you were willing'. Indeed he assured them that with their help the Greeks could rapidly and with no great effort be put to flight. They promised him that they would swiftly provide this help, along with others from their country, to which they were about to return.

So after they had returned to their native land, they immediately started to encourage their relatives to come with them to Italy. They talked of the fertility of Apulia and of the cowardice of those who lived there. They advised them to carry with them only what was necessary for the journey; for they promised that once there they would find a wise patron, under whose leadership they would gain an easy victory over the Greeks. By such means they persuaded many to go; some because they possessed little or no wealth, others because they wished to make the great fortune they had greater still. All of them were greedy for gain. They started their journey, each of them carrying what supplies they felt necessary, so far as was possible, for the road they were travelling.

After the party of Normans had passed through Rome, unarmed, they made a halt in Campania, worn out by the rigours of their journey. The news of the Normans' arrival spread quickly in Italy. When Melus learned that the Gauls had arrived there he hurried to them. He gave them the arms which they lacked and then ordered them to follow him.

At this time the Italians were astounded by the fall of an extraordinary and up to then unprecedented quantity of snow, which killed the bulk of the wild animals and cut down trees, never to grow again. In the spring following this portent, after buying arms in Campania, Melus led the Normans bravely in the invasion of Apulia. He was the first leader of the Norman race in Italy. All Apulia trembled before the Gauls, whose cruelty caused the deaths of many.

Rumour of the coming of the fiercesome Gauls, led by Melus, came at length to the ears of Tornikios, who was the Catepan of the Greeks, sent from the city to which its founder Constantine had given his name, which was then ruled jointly by Constantine and

Basil. In his rebellion against these two Melus advised the Normans to ravage Apulia. When news of this was recounted to him Tornikios hastened to send Greek troops against the enemy. In the first battle he did not indeed lead them himself, but rather appointed as his lieutenant a man named Leo Pakianos, who led a large Greek force to a place called Arenula on the banks of the River Fortore. This was during the month of May, a season most suitable for making war, and in which kings are accustomed to march to battle. The first encounter gave neither side the victory. Tornikios brought fresh troops to join his subordinates, but then was defeated, turned tail and fled. In this battle Pakianos was killed. This victory greatly encouraged the Normans, for they realised that the Greeks lacked bravery and preferred flight to resistance.

News came to the rulers of the empire that the Normans, with Melus as their leader, were ravaging Apulia. On hearing this the court adjudged him to be an outlaw, and ordered that on capture he should be beheaded. The next year Basil, called Boiannes, was appointed Catepan, and sent out with a strong force of Greeks. He was a man valiant in war. We think that Catepan means, in Greek, 'before all'. Whoever holds that office among the Greeks acts as the people's governor, arranging everything and dealing 'before all' with each person as they deserve.

The two sides met in battle near Canne, where the River Ofanto flows, towards the beginning of October. Melus, with only a small force, could not prevail and fled, losing most of his men. After this defeat he was ashamed to remain in his native land; he went to the Samnite territory and stayed there for a time. After this he sought the help of King Henry of the Germans. The latter received his plea with his accustomed kindness, promising to give him speedy help. But Melus died unexpectedly and thus could not return. King Henry buried him in a manner fit for a king, he followed the funeral procession to the graveside, and had his tomb decorated with a royal epitaph.

After the death of Melus, from whom they had been expecting help, the morale of the Gauls collapsed and they returned downcast to the Campania. But they did not pitch their

tents in any one place, for they were terrified of their numerous and powerful enemies, so small were their numbers. Nowhere seemed to them safe, neither the mountains nor even remote valleys. They could indeed hope for no assistance, for everyone seemed to be hostile to those who had been conquered, while fortune itself is believed to help those victorious. As wanderers, tramps, they went from place to place, possessing no fixed abode, until finally a dispute among their neighbours gave them the opportunity to stay. For they attached themselves to the Lombard whom they knew to be the most powerful, and they stayed faithfully in his service, that by supporting him they might be protected from others; and by their success in battle they would acquire a reputation. For this reason they pitched their camp in a most agreeable spot, well-supplied with water, pasture and trees, which provided all that their people might need. They chose as the leader of their troop one of their bravest men, Rainulf, to whose orders all were obedient. But as they started to fortify the site of their first base, the croaking of a crowd of frogs from a dense marsh nearby stopped their work. Not far from there they found another site suitable for their camp, which they tried to render secure through erecting defences, without the help of any of the natives of the country.

Once they had fortified this place they happily joined the man who was Prince of Capua. He was then the most powerful and prominent of the princes of Italy. Under his protection they hastened to plunder the neighbouring places and to harass his enemies. But since human thoughts are inclined to greed and money always triumphs in the end, from time to time they abandoned him, always supporting the one who paid better, serving most willingly him from whom they gained the greatest advantage. They were a people who preferred battles to peace treaties. They sold their services as they could, according to circumstances, offering most to him who gave most. A great desire for rule among these princes gave rise to wars. Each wished to be the most powerful, and one strove to seize the rights of the other. From these disputes came arson, battle and murder; the major part of the evils which arise among mortal men. Alas, the miserable men! What they attempted in this world was in vain; after doing all sorts of deeds in the pursuit of vainglory, they suffered all the more when they left earthly things. The Normans never desired any of the Lombards to

win a decisive victory, in case this should be to their disadvantage. But now supporting the one, and then aiding the other, they prevented anyone being completely ruined. Gallic cunning deceived the Italians, for they allowed no one to be at the mercy of a triumphant enemy. So the quarrels of Italy restored hope to the demoralised Normans, in whom it had previously been extinguished. Thus their wealth and power began to grow. If any malefactor from the neighbourhood fled to them, they freely received him. They taught their own language and customs to those who joined them, thus creating a single, seemingly united, people.

Some years later the army of the Gauls, secure in Rainulf's leadership, founded the city of Aversa. This was in a most suitable spot, rich and fertile, lacking neither crops nor fruits, meadows nor woods. There was nowhere in this world more pleasant. This noble leader chose most wisely. From this distinguished kin came Richard, who later succeeded him, than whom nobody was braver or more generous. He begat Jordan, who was no less gallant than he, who had [as son] Richard. This last, though now only a young man, already shows courage worthy of an adult.<sup>1</sup>

After surrounding Aversa with walls Rainulf sent envoys back to his homeland to recruit Normans to come there. These envoys recounted how delightful and fertile Apulia was, promising wealth to the poor, and to the rich that their wealth would be still further enhanced. Hearing this, both poor and rich flocked there, the poor man that he might relieve his poverty through plunder, the rich seeking to become richer still. Meanwhile a long time had elapsed since the Catepan Basil had defeated Melus, the empire's enemy, and forced the Normans to retire. The Gauls no longer inspired fear throughout Italy. Suddenly a north Italian [*Lambardus, sic*] called Arduin came to Aversa, there recruited many men, and spread terror to all in Apulia, from which he wished to drive out the Greeks. I shall explain why he hated them and why he led the Gauls.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard I, Count of Aversa from 1050, and later Prince of Capua (1058-78), Jordan I (1078-90), Richard II (1090-1106).

While Michael the Epileptic held the imperial throne,<sup>2</sup> he ordered troops to be sent against its Sicilian enemies who were continuously raiding the coasts of Calabria. He sent Michael Dokianos to lead this expedition, and the latter, after raising a large force of cavalry and infantry from all sorts of different places, defeated these Sicilian foes. Among the men enrolled was Arduin, whose followers were partly Lombards, as well as Gauls who had survived the defeat by the Greeks and who had fled from the battle against Basil. Returning after his triumph over the enemy Dokianos had distributed the booty to his Greek troops at the city of Reggio, but Arduin had received nothing and the poor man had remained unrewarded. He angrily summoned his men and denounced the Greeks for their sordid avarice, who gave to cowards the booty due to men - since the Greeks were like women. Michael was angry at these insults and ordered him to be stripped and flogged, as is the custom of the Greeks, to shame by this punishment the man who has been flogged for committing such a crime. Furious at the indignity of this treatment, and determined not to leave the wrong which had been done him unrevenged, Arduin and his men left the camp of the Greeks in secret. A band of Greeks sent in pursuit caught up with him in open country, but when they engaged in battle the Greeks were defeated and fifty of them killed.

He hurried to Aversa and told the Normans all that had happened to him, blaming them sternly for permitting the effeminate Greeks to possess a land as valuable in so many ways as Apulia, when the latter were a cowardly race lost in drunken debauches, who often fled before a handful of enemies and even whose dress, he claimed, was unsuitable for battle. Although they had previously been forced to leave Apulia by the valour of the Greeks, with this encouragement the Normans were now prepared to return there once again, with larger and more powerful forces. They all met together and chose as their leaders twelve noblemen distinguished by their descent, good character and age. The others raised these to the rank of count: the name 'count' was given to them. They divided all the lands everywhere among themselves [which would be theirs] unless ill fortune prevent them, proposing which places should belong to which leader and to whom tribute should be rendered. After settling this they hurried to do battle.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael IV, the Paphlagonian, emperor 1035-41.

There was at this time no imperial army in Italy, for all was quiet among the Greeks, and at this time of peace the only war spoken about was that against the Sicilians. The Normans entered Apulia and Melfi was swiftly captured. Whoever secured some booty brought it to that city. Basil, whom I mentioned above, had realised that this was a place of unusual strength and had constructed some modest buildings there. With people coming in to settle it is now a notable city, very well-known in Italy, and rich in a fertile and pleasant countryside, lacking neither wheat nor water. It belongs to the ducal honour of the region in which it is sited.

Hearing that Michael had returned from Sicily the Normans prepared themselves for battle, although the forces of the Greeks were many and their own people few, for they had an army of but five hundred infantry and seven hundred knights. Only a few were protected by hauberks and shields. The footsoldiers were advised to station themselves on the left and right flanks; a few horsemen were posted with them to provide a reinforcement to stiffen the footmen. They were absolutely forbidden to leave the field. If they were forced to retire by the enemy they were to regroup. After these troops had been thus instructed and placed on each flank, a column of cavalry advanced a little way forward. A column of Greeks was sent out against them, for it is not their custom to engage all their forces at the first shock, they rather send another troop after the first, so that while the enemy weakens their own strength increases and their troops are emboldened. So, when their cavalry commander sees the enemy resisting, he makes a sudden attack with the bulk of the remaining crack troops, thus restoring the morale of his own men and usually driving the enemy back in flight.

The two armies faced each other, and a great battle was fought next to the fast-flowing River Olivento. The Greeks were defeated and the army of the Gauls pursued them vigorously. Many dead bodies lay on this Apulian plain, but more were engulfed by the river. Some of the Greeks were seized by panic and fled quivering with fear, neither rough ground nor the river's flood stopped their headlong flight. More of the Greeks drowned in the river than died by the sword. The Gauls speared some and cut down others with their

swords, and in various ways a huge number of Greeks were killed. Michael escaped with a few men and went to a mountain, from the summit of which one could overlook the neighbouring hills. This victory greatly strengthened the morale of the Gauls, and from now on they no longer feared to fight the Greeks. In the same way a hawk which is accustomed to seize small birds hesitates to attack one bigger than itself, but if it should succeed in conquering a crane then henceforth it no longer fears [even] a swan nor is in awe of any big bird.

Raising a new Greek army, Michael led all the men he could collect with him to the river of Canne, which is called the Ofanto. The Gauls returned to the fight. Michael was defeated by them as he had been before. The Greeks were conquered and many of them were killed. Dokianos was thrown from his horse during his flight and his life was only saved through the assistance of his groom. His horse rushed madly into the river and Michael all but fell into the hands of his enemies, but for his servant giving him his own horse. With their good fortune in battle becoming even greater, the Normans grew more confident still. Michael retired to the heights of Montepeloso, from where he sent a message to the army which the Greeks had then in Sicily, telling them to come and replace the troops which he lacked after his defeat at the enemy's hands.

The victorious Normans decided to return to Melfi. They remained there for a while in peace and quiet with the booty which they had gained from the Greeks. Twelve squares were laid out, one for each of the counts, and the same number of houses were built for them in the city. But since earthly honours always incite humans to envy, the fierce Gauls [soon] refused to obey the orders of the counts whom they themselves had selected. They preferred rather to have as their head a native Italian rather than one of their own race. He was called Atenulf, Prince of Benevento. He had perhaps given them gold or silver and thus led them to renege on a prior agreement. What will a desire for money not compel men to do, for it can change the mind of the trustworthy and overturn the bond of the law-abiding?

After the Sicilian army had received the messages from Dokianos demanding reinforcements, and realised that he was in need of their help, they hastened to recruit men from every part of Calabria, that they might revenge their men whose bodies lay unburied in field or river. With the Greeks were some madmen who profess the dreadful error, from which they derive their name, of saying that the Father had suffered with the Son, and they make the sign of the Cross on their forehead with a single finger. They teach that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same person. These hastened together to battle, all driven by one thought, to replace the forces which Michael had lost. However the ruler to whose care the Roman Empire was entrusted forbade Michael any more to lead his army, since he had been unable to secure any sort of success against the Normans. The Emperor ordered Exaugustus to undertake this office and to lead the Greeks in battle. It was said that his father was the victorious Basil, who had forced the Gauls to flee when Melus had led them. Michael Dokianos meanwhile returned to Sicily.

Exaugustus addressed the troops who had been entrusted to him as follows: 'Lads, have pride in your manhood, and don't allow yourselves to have the hearts of women! What cowardice makes you always run away? Remember your forefathers whose courage made the whole world subject to them. Hector, the bravest of men, fell before the arms of Achilles. Troy was reduced to flames by the Mycenaean fury. India knew of the gallantry of Philip. Did not his son Alexander through his bravery make the strongest of kingdoms submit to the Greeks? The west and indeed every part of the world was once in fear of us. What people, hearing the name of the Greeks, dared to stand before them in the field? Towns, fortresses and cities could scarcely render their enemies safe from their power. Be valiant, I pray you, remember the courage of your ancestors, and don't disgrace them by placing your trust in your feet [alone]! He who dares to fight like a man will overcome the strength of the enemy. Try to follow in the footsteps of your ancestors, and abandon now any idea of flight. All the world should know that you are men of courage. One should not fear the Frankish people in battle, for they are inferior both in numbers and in courage'.

With these words he kindled the Greeks' spirits, ordering them to march down from the mountains and pitch their camp in the plain. After they had done this the Gauls sent out scouts to see what the Greeks were doing. They reported that they were ready for battle, but that while the general had changed the people had not; [so] they feared nothing. The Greeks had left many allies in the mountains, to the safety of which they could return if it should be necessary. These natives came down to help them. The two peoples encountered each other in the plain. There was then heavy fighting. Both strove to be the victors. First one, then the other, fled and then forced the enemy to flee. After the Gauls had resisted for a long time the Greeks made a fierce attack and had come close to victory, when Walter rushed forward into the midst of the enemy, encouraging the retreating Normans to return to the fight. He was one of the counts who had been elected, the son of a distinguished man, Amicus. The Greeks had certainly never suffered heavier losses, most of their soldiers were killed and many nobles perished as well. The wretched Exaugustus was led in chains to Atenulf's city, walking before the victor's horse, since his enemy wanted to emphasise the scale of his triumph.

This was the third victory in a year secured by the Gauls. The Greeks were routed and had no further hope of victory. All the fortified towns of Apulia, Bari (the most important), Monopoli, Giovenazzo and several other cities abandoned their alliance with the Greeks and came to an agreement with the Franks.

God being unwilling that he should reign longer, Michael now died, and was succeeded by his nephew Michael, who was also called by the name Constantine.<sup>3</sup> He sent one Sidonios to bring help to the people of Apulia. The latter arrived and disembarked at Otranto, from where he sent envoys to those cities which had allied with the Franks, asking them to receive him. They refused to agree to this. He sought to rebuild his army, but many of the soldiers had been killed or fled and he was able to raise only a few. Because of this Sinodios remained within the city walls. He was then recalled on the emperor's orders.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael V (1041-2).

At this time the Norman race received many promises from Prince Guaimar of Salerno and [some of them] abandoned the service of Atenulf. But only the inhabitants of Aversa recognised Guaimar's authority; those who held land in Apulia preferred to serve Argyros, the son of Melus, for his father had been the first to lead the Gauls in Italy and had there rewarded them. Argyros, who although brave and generous was poor, at first refused to lead so great a race [*gens*], since he had neither silver nor gold to give them. They however declared that it was not gold that they loved but him, since his father had been their benefactor. He gave way to the people's request; one night he brought the oldest and wisest among them to Bari and took them to the church of St. Apollinaris, and he spoke to them as follows:

'Since I have no money with which to reward you, I am surprised that so great a people as yours should wish to have me lead them, for I know that you are lacking in all sorts of things which I cannot give you, and I am unhappy because I cannot provide them'.

They replied to him: 'If you should be our prince, then none of us will be poor or in need. With you leading fortune will favour us, and you as our prince will guide us in the ways of good counsel, as we were accustomed to be guided by your father'. After saying this they immediately and unanimously raised him on high and with one voice made him their prince.

Meanwhile Maniakes, a man full of wickedness who had been ordered by Michael to take command in Italy, arrived at Otranto accompanied by a large army of Greeks. Nothing in him was worthy of praise except for his handsome appearance. He was proud of mind, and overflowing with fearsome cruelty. He left his fleet at Otranto, and encouraged his evil army to attack the towns which had made agreements with the Franks. His forces first invaded the Monopoli district. Maniakes had many people executed, having some hanged from trees, and others beheaded. The tyrant dared [even] to commit a hitherto unheard of crime; he buried captured infants alive, leaving only their heads above ground. Many perished like this, and he spared no one. After this Maniakes marched on Matera, which

was the site, so it was said, of the camp of the Punic general Hannibal, when he made Italy subject to the Africans. Maniakes in his anger murdered two hundred peasants who had been captured in the fields there. Neither boy nor old man, monk nor priest, was safe - this wicked man gave mercy to none.

Meanwhile Michael, who had sent out Maniakes, was arrested, blinded and dethroned on the orders of the sisters Zoe and Theodora. The former had been the wife of Michael's uncle, whom he had succeeded. As he had refused to share the empire with her, and intended to disinherit her despite the Senate's opposition, he was seized and deprived of the light [of his eyes]. Zoe then married Constantine Monomarkos.<sup>4</sup> Maniakes was an enemy to him, and he to Maniakes, because one had violated the other's mistress. The accession of the jealous Monomarkos to the imperial throne filled the tyrant's mind with terror. Remembering the outrage he was carried away by his hatred and rage. He ordered the Greeks under his command not to obey Monomarkos but to make him their prince. The traitor took the imperial garb for himself, and did not hesitate to usurp the sacred name of emperor.

After Monomarkos had received the imperial title he ordered that Argyros should attempt to suborn the Gauls and do his best to make them obedient to himself. He promised that they would be given huge rewards. Not wanting to lose the emperor's favour, Argyros led the Normans away from the siege of Trani, the only town which supported the Greeks' cause, and stopped them ravaging the surrounding area. Meanwhile an imperial emissary had arrived, bringing with him rich gifts. This unfortunate man was captured by Maniakes, who inflicted various tortures upon him and then had his nose, ears and mouth stuffed with horse dung, and thus had him put horribly to death in a stable. Once Maniakes saw the amount of gold that he now had in his possession. he became very bold indeed. He returned to Taranto, and distributed much of the gold to the Greeks to ensure their loyalty to him still further. He assumed the imperial purple, and clad his right foot in the red leather which is the sole prerogative of those who rule the empire. Then he came to Bari, accompanied by a

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<sup>4</sup> Constantine IX, emperor 1042-55.

large army, hoping to suborn Argyros with promises to join him in his revolt against Monormarkos. He also tried to come to an agreement with the Gauls, hoping that with their help his forces would be enough to defeat his enemy, and that he would easily be able to seize Constantine's crown and keep it for himself. His hope was in vain, for he was unable to influence either the Normans or their leader, and on their refusal he retired. Full of anger at being thus repulsed, he divided his troops into four groups and sent them out to pillage. They spread out over the land, and brought back a large number of both men and of animals to Taranto.

At this time Argyros gave the Normans many talents of gold and silver which had been sent to him by Constantine, requesting their assistance, that with their help he might destroy Maniakes, the enemy of the sacred empire. He promised them great rewards for their loyalty once the enemy had been conquered. However what rendered most of the Normans hostile to Maniakes was not the prospect of gain but their love for their leader Argyros. The counts from Aversa also came to join him with many of their men. Of these the man of whom they hoped most was William, son of Tancred, a most skilled warrior, and along with him there was Radulfus Trincaocte, who became count of the city after the death of Rainulf. William's great reputation terrified the Greeks; for his mighty bravery and strength had led him to be called 'the Iron Arm'. He was the brother of Robert, who later became duke, known as Guiscard, the cunning. With such mighty counts in his company Argyros hastened to meet the enemy. Maniakes had at this time advanced to the River Tara and pitched his camp there. But, hearing of the arrival of this great army which he could not resist, he took refuge in Taranto. The Gauls reached the river and found the Greek camp deserted. They advanced as far as a bridge which crossed the water to the other side. But the route across the bridge which led to the city was overlooked by high cliffs, and although the distance there would have seemed short to a traveller, it appeared long to those who had to go round along the coast. For Taranto is almost entirely surrounded by sea, and would indeed very nearly be an island if there was not a little hill opposite it.

William challenged the Greeks who were hiding behind their walls to battle. But they kept their forces safe and never went forth from their defences. A river in flood could not inspire greater fear in anyone than the lance of this mighty chief. It was as if a snake charmer eager to catch an asp was trying in every conceivable way to make him rise up from the bowels of the earth in which he dwelt safely hidden. But the snake blocks one ear with his tail and presses the other to the ground, that he might hear nothing. [So it was that] the Greeks refused to hear the Gauls summoning them to battle, and remained in the city behind closed doors.

Once the Gauls saw that the Greeks refused to come out and fight, and that there was no real hope of capturing the city since it was so strongly sited, they withdrew. Maniakes remained in the town for a little while and then went once again to Otranto. On the emperor's orders Argyros and Theodore set out once more to attack him, the former with a substantial army and the latter with a large fleet. Their enemy's resolution was shaken by a number of fears; his mind fluctuated irresolutely between one plan and another. Finally he was forced in his fear to leave the city and placed his camp in a position hidden among the steep crags overlooking the sea, which was inaccessible by land. He had his ships tied in rows to these rocks. To calm the sea which he was to cross he had some witches, who were believed to have stirred up the waves, burned. Then, without waiting for the rolling waves to calm down, he took ship and set sail. However this voyage brought no profit to this wretched man. He was attacked by the armies of Monomarkos, defeated and killed, thus paying for his crimes with his life.

## **Book II**

When Maniakes left Italy, Argyros went to Otranto with a strong army. The city surrendered to him and the citizens rejoiced in him as their ruler. From there he went back to Bari and allowed the Gauls to depart. They went to Salerno to serve Guaimar. Trusting in their prowess Prince Guaimar led them to Bari and besieged it. He ordered Argyros to

surrender to him, leave the city and retire to the Greeks. Argyros refused to obey these instructions; but with his forces too weak to fight he did not dare to give battle and shut himself up in the city. Guaimar ravaged the fields and suburbs of Bari and then retraced his steps to the walls of his own city.

Constantine, who was at that time ruling the empire, ordered Argyros to hasten to him. He obeyed these imperial orders. Crossing the waves of the Adriatic he reached the imperial capital. That gentle man who ruled over the city received the arrival with great ceremony and honour.

Meanwhile the people over whom he ruled associated themselves some with Count Peter, and some with Drogo the son of Tancred, since the latter's brother, William, known as the Iron Arm, had died young. Had life been permitted him no poet would have been able [adequately] to celebrate his praises, such was his steadfastness of mind and mighty courage. All the people of Italy feared Drogo and his brother Humphrey, although at this time Peter, their blood relative, was richer than they. He founded Andria and Corato, and fortified Bisceglie and Barletta on the sea coast. His fame surpassed that of the other counts. But Count Humphrey with his brother Drogo humbled his proud spirit, for, while he made preparations to march against them, the unhappy man saw his luck change, was defeated and captured. The wheel of fortune had turned and began to raise up the sons of Tancred.

The ruler of the empire, mentioned above, questioned Argyros as to how he might drive the Gauls from Italy, for he knew that it was now impossible to do this by force. So he conceived other plans to remove them. Since he knew them to be expert at war and unconquerable by force, he hoped to trick them with promises. He had heard that the Norman people [*gens*] was always prone to avarice, loving greatly that which greatly benefited them. He ordered Argyros to bring them great sums of money, silver, precious vestments and gold, that the Normans might be persuaded to leave the frontiers of Italy [*Hesperiae*], hasten across the sea and mightily enrich themselves in imperial service. He

also ordered that if they refused to depart then those bribes destined for them should be given to others, with whom he should launch a savage attack on the Gauls.

Argyros obeyed. He returned to Apulia, summoned the counts of the French and promised to give them rich gifts if they would leave Italy and cross over to the land of the Greeks, who were locked in combat with the Persians. He swore to them that the emperor would receive them joyfully and promised that the latter would endow them with great wealth. The astute promises of the Greeks did not deceive the [equal] astuteness of this people, who, wishing to conquer Italy, replied that they would not leave Apulia until they had conquered it, unless an army mightier than theirs should come to defeat them and drive them out.

During this time of crisis an admirable man, Leo, ruled over the Roman see. Hearing of the arrival of this great pope, the people of Apulia started to bring all sorts of grievances to him and accused the Gauls of many crimes, mixing together both truth and falsehood. Argyros sent emissaries to the pope, beseeching him with frequent prayers to grant Italy its lost liberty, and to force that wicked people who were crushing the Apulian coast under their yoke to leave its shores.

At this time Drogo and Guaimar, the leaders of the Normans, died; the latter treacherously killed by the citizens of Salerno and his own relatives, the former murdered by the local people at Montilari, whom he trusted too much. The Gallic people lamented the loss of their chief.

When they heard that the pope had arrived with a large force of Italians, supported by innumerable Swabians and Germans, ready for battle, they came to meet him with as many cavalry and infantry as they could raise. Although famous for their deeds of arms, the Normans were, on seeing so many columns, afraid to resist them. They sent envoys who requested a peace treaty and who asked the pope benevolently to receive their submission; they all declared that they were ready to obey the pope, that they did not wish to offend him,

but to hold title to what they had acquired from him. They requested that he be willing to be their lord and that they might be his vassals [*fideles*].

The Germans, notable for their long hair, good looks and height, mocked the Normans, who seemed small [to them], and disdained the messages of a people whom they considered their inferiors both in numbers and strength. They surrounded the pope and arrogantly addressed him, 'Command the Normans to leave the land of Italy, to lay down their arms and return to their native land. If they refuse this, we do not wish to receive their peace overtures nor should you pay any attention to their messages. They have not yet experienced German swords. If they do not leave willingly they should be forced to go, and failing that they will perish by the sword'. Although the pope opposed their boastfulness with a variety of counter-arguments, he was unable to calm the minds of this proud people. He [also] relied on the dregs of Italy, an most unworthy people, the men of the Marches, rightly held in low esteem by the Italians. Many of the Italians pretended great courage, but fear, trembling and decadence were their basic instincts, for the Germans were not present in great numbers. The Normans returned upset at the rejection of their peace proposals and reported the arrogant response of the Germans.

Harvest time was now approaching. But before the farmers could gather in their bundles of crops, the French, who lacked bread, had dried the green corn over the fire and eaten the burnt grains. Such was the life they led because the rebel *castra* everywhere helped the Germans and gave them no provisions or material help.

Humphrey, who had survived while his brother Drogo had died, was one of the overall commanders of the French, then there was Richard who had been chosen a little time before as Count of the city of Aversa. Robert, who had followed his brothers out a little while earlier and who surpassed them in his mighty courage, was also present at this battle. He was called Guiscard, for his cunning was greater than that of Cicero or the crafty Ulysses. Among the others present were Peter and Walter, the illustrious sons of Amicus, Aureolanus, Hubert, Rainald Musca, and Count Hugh and Count Gerard, who commanded

respectively the Beneventans and the men of Telesse. They were accompanied by Count Radulfus of Boiano, distinguished both by his wise counsel and skill at arms. These leaders were followed by almost three thousand horsemen and a few infantry. After three days without bread they resorted to arms, all preferring to die honourably in battle rather than that so many of them should perish miserably through hunger.

The German people were accompanied by numerous allies, and trusted (wrongly) in the help of the cowardly Lombards, believing that the Normans would either turn tail or perish at the first onslaught. But victory in battle rests not on numbers, horses, people or arms, but on whom it is conferred by Heaven. There was a small hill between the Germans and the Norman squadrons. All sorts of people had come to help the former; from Apulia, Valva, Campania, Marsia and Chieti. However the German leaders, Werner and Albert, had only brought seven hundred Swabians. There were proud people of great courage, but not versed in horsemanship, who fought rather with the sword than with the lance. Since they could not control the movements of their horses with their hands they were unable to inflict serious injuries with the lance; however they excelled with the sword. These swords were very long and keen, and they were often capable of cutting someone vertically in two! They preferred to dismount and take guard on foot, and they chose rather to die than to turn tail. Such was their bravery that they were far more formidable like this than when riding on horseback.

Their Italian allies had for their leaders two brothers, Counts Transmund and Atto, and the sons of the noble family of Burrell. Along with them marched Malfredus, from near Campomarino, Roffred (lord of the *castrum* of Guardia), the father-in-law of Radulfus of Moulins, and many others whose names I don't know. The Romans, Samnites and Capuans had also sent troops, nor had Ancona denied its wealth. People from Spoleto, Sabina and Fermo had joined them. I cannot calculate in my verses how many enemies had appeared, resolved to destroy the name of the Frankish race. All these had fixed their tents with the Germans on the bank of the River Fortore. Nearby was the city which has its name from its citizens. [*i.e. Civitate*].

The Normans abandoned any hope of peace, and refused to flee - anyway there was nowhere to which they could escape. They climbed the hill to inspect the enemy camp. After doing this they armed themselves. Count Richard of the Aversans was placed on the right wing facing the Lombards. He commanded the first, picked, squadron of knights. Humphrey was chosen as the leader of the centre force, facing the warlike Swabians. Robert was instructed to take the left wing with his men from Calabria, ready to charge to the help and reinforcement of his colleagues when he judged it necessary. The Germans had set out their right wing opposite these two forces. The Italians stood all crowded together on the other side because they neglected to draw up a battle line in the proper manner.

Richard was the first to open the battle, against them. He charged gallantly and, unable to resist, the Italians were driven back. Fear filled them all, and they turned and fled across hill and dale. The impetus of their flight led many to fall to earth, who were killed by lance or sword. They fled like doves with a hawk in pursuit, at top speed towards the rocky summits of a mountain peak; but those whom he caught were unable to seek further flight. So the Italians fled before Richard, but flight did not help those whom Richard and his companions caught up with. He killed a large number of Italians there, although the majority fled.

The Swabians drew up their line of battle against the arms of the valiant Humphrey. First Humphrey attacked them at long-range with arrows, he in turn was harried by the arrows of his enemies. Finally both sides charged sword in hand, and their swords inflicted some incredible blows on each other; you could see human bodies split down the middle, and horse and man laying dead together. Then Robert, seeing his brother so fiercely attacked by enemies resolved to yield not an inch, charged fiercely and proudly into the midst of the hostile ranks, aided by the troops of Count Gerard and followed by the Calabrians whose leadership had been entrusted to him. He speared them with his lance, beheaded them with his sword, dealing out fearful blows with his mighty hands. He fought with each hand, both lance and sword hit whatever target they were aimed at. He was

unhorsed three times, thrice he recovered his strength and returned more fiercely to the fray. His fury merely increased, as does that of the lion who roars and furiously attacks those animals less strong than himself, and if he meets resistance becomes more ferocious and burns with greater anger. He gives no quarter, he drags off his prey and eats it, scatters what he cannot devour, bringing death to all. In such a way did Robert continue to bring death to the Swabians who opposed him. He cut off feet and hands, sliced heads from bodies, ripped into breasts and chests, and transfixed those whose heads he had cut off. Cutting off the heads of these huge men he made them the same size as those smaller, proving that the greatest bravery is not the prerogative of the tall, but often rests with those of shorter stature. After the battle it was known that none, victor or vanquished, had inflicted such mighty blows.

Richard returned after having inflicted terrible slaughter on the Italians, part of whom had fled while the other part who remained had perished by the sword or lance. When he saw the Germans still resisting his companions, 'alas', he exclaimed, 'we believed that by winning this fight we had won the battle, but that victory is yet to be secured'. Without hesitation he charged into the midst of the enemy. The latter, with no hope either of flight or of safety, fought back bravely, but great were the numbers surrounding them that this defiance gained them nothing. The glorious army of Richard the victorious joining them was the primary cause of their enemies' catastrophe. The unhappy men perished in various ways, and of all these men not one survived.

The result of the battle filled the pope with grief, and greatly lamenting he took refuge in the city. But the citizens did not receive him as was proper for they were afraid to displease the victorious Normans. The latter humbled themselves on bended knee before him, begging pardon. The pope received those prostrate before him kindly, and they all kissed his feet. He admonished them piously and blessed them, and lamenting greatly that he had spurned their offers of peace he prayed tearfully for his dead brothers.

The news of this great Norman victory greatly alarmed Argyros, for he realised that neither trickery nor fighting could accomplish what the emperor had ordered him to do, to persuade or force the Franks to leave Italy. The forces which he had at his disposal were not large enough to drive them out by force, nor was Argyros able to persuade them to seek other lands through promises or influence them through bribes. Thinking on this, he left the city of Bari and sailed off to his lord. On the latter's order he recounted how this fierce people had responded and what deeds they had accomplished in the recent battle against the Germans. Constantine now withdrew his favour from Argyros, who ceased to be, as he had once been, the intimate counsellor of the emperor. He went into exile and for a long time lived in hardship; it is said that he died weighed down by physical suffering.

Victory greatly raised the spirits of the Normans. Now no Apulian city remained in rebellion against them. All submitted and paid tribute. Count Humphrey then took revenge for the murder of his brother. He savagely punished all those who had been involved; he mutilated some, put others to the sword, and hanged many. Remembering Drogo's death he refused to grant mercy to anyone. The deep and burning grief which had descended upon him with his brother's murder remained strong, to the detriment of all. He subdued many cities. The inhabitants of Troia paid tribute to the count; those of Bari, Trani, Venosa, Otranto and the city of Acerenza obeyed him.

He granted Calabria to his brother Robert, for him to conquer. Robert was a young man innured to hard work, prudent and ingenious, ready to turn his hand to anything that needed doing, always seeking advancement and rejoicing in honour and praise. He was just as ready to seek success by strategem as by force if this was necessary, because a sharp mind can often achieve what violence cannot accomplish. He was distinguished by his eloquence and when consulted he gave a speedy and most pertinent reply. If he was asked for advice he knew how to give it wisely. He rejoiced in the grant of the land of the Calabrians. He had previously recruited for himself a number of knights, plundering where he could far and wide, but especially in those regions which belonged to his brother. He shared what had been captured equally among all his followers, cherishing each of them

equally and himself being cherished by all. Humphrey had him arrested while they were dining together. Robert wanted to hurl himself on his brother, sword in hand, but Joscelin grabbed him and prevented this. he was consigned to the guards, but his brother released him after a little while, granted him the Calabrian region with its cities and *castra*, and furnished him with a force of knights.

Desiring to conquer this region he showed himself affectionate towards all, no lord had ever shown himself more affable or humble. The name of the Norman people was everywhere renowned. But the Calabrians, who had not experienced their valour before, were terrified by the arrival of such a fierce leader. Supported by no small number of soldiers, Robert ordered them to burn, pillage and ravage all those lands which he had invaded, and to do all they could to instil terror in the inhabitants. He allowed his brother's knights to return home and remained with a less numerous but very warlike force which continued to vex the Calabrians.

While he plundered hither and thither, he was unable to capture any *castrum* or city, and so he resorted to a stratagem to enter a certain place, which was very difficult of access since there were many inhabitants, and the monastic community which was living there would allow no stranger to enter. The cunning [Robert] thought up an ingenious trick. He told his people to announce that one of their number had died. The latter was placed on a bier as though he were dead, and on Robert's order was covered with a silk cloth which concealed his face (as it is the custom of Normans to cover bodies). Swords were hidden on the bier under the 'body's' back. The 'body' was carried to the entrance of the monastery to be buried there, and this pretended death deceived those who could not be taken in by living men. While a simple funeral service was being conducted the man who was about to be buried suddenly sprang up; his companions seized their swords and threw themselves on the inhabitants of the place who had been deceived by this trick. What could those stupid people do? They could neither fight nor flee, and all were captured. Thus, Robert, you placed your first garrison in a fortress! He did not however destroy the monastery, nor did he expel the monastic community from it. Robert gathered a very powerful force in this

*castrum*, and became even more beloved by his men since he was both mighty in war and wise in counsel. He was called the count of this region, and considered as such especially by those who were accompanied by their own following of knights. One of these was called Torsten, another Hareng, and [there was] the warlike Roger. To these he gave towns in the area which had been conceded to him.

At this time Humphrey, Prince of Apulia, fell ill and ordered his brother to come quickly to him. Robert hastened there. When he saw his brother ill, he cried with compassion. For the sick man the arrival of his brother was a great consolation. He asked him to be the ruler of his territories after his death, and to be the protector of his young son who was not yet of an age to rule. His anxious brother promised faithfully to execute all his wishes. The sick man could not recover the health of his limbs. Humphrey died. All Apulia cried, lamenting the death of a father, He, the father of his country, had ruled peacefully and benignly; honesty had graced his life. He had never sought to oppress his people under a cruel tyranny. Loving justice he had preferred to spare many guilty men rather than inflict punishment. He was buried next to those of his brothers who had died before him at the monastery of Venosa.

After celebrating his funeral ceremonies Robert returned to Calabria. He immediately besieged the city of Cariati, that by its capture he might terrify the other cities. Then he learnt of the arrival of Pope Nicholas II; he abandoned the siege [himself] along with only a small escort, leaving there the greater part of his cavalry. He went to Melfi, and there the pope was received with great honour. He had come to this region to deal with ecclesiastical affairs. For the priests, levites and all the clergy of this area were openly joining themselves in marriage. The pope celebrated a council there, and with the assent of a hundred prelates whom he had called to that synod, he exhorted priests and ministers of the altar to arm themselves with chastity; he told them and [indeed] ordered them to be the husbands of the church, since it is unlawful for priests to be addicted to indulgence. He thus drove away from those parts all the wives of priests, threatening those who disobeyed with anathema. At the end of the synod and on the request of many, Pope Nicholas gave to Robert the ducal

honour. Alone among the counts he received the ducal title. He swore an oath to be faithful to the pope. Thus Calabria and all Apulia was conceded to him, and rule over the people of his native land in Italy.

The pope went back to Rome, the duke, with a large force of cavalry, returned to the siege of Cariati, where the bulk of his horsemen who had been left before it had faithfully remained. The people of Cariati, discouraged by the return of the duke, were unable to resist, and surrendered themselves and their city to him. These people were the first to call him duke and to salute him with the ducal title in Calabria. Then he went on to other places. Mighty Rossano, warlike Cosenza, then wealthy Gerace surrendered to him, and so nearly the whole of Calabria was made subject to him.

As his reputation for power and bravery grew, he sent envoys who carried his words to the excellent Gisulf, son of Guaimar, requesting marriage with his noble sister, for he then lacked a spouse, having repudiated his first wife because of consanguinity. From her had been born Bohemond, a mighty offspring, who was later to become powerful and be distinguished for his courage. To begin with Gisulf disdained Robert's message, not that he could marry his sister to a greater or more noble man, but because the Gauls seemed to him a race fierce and barbarous, cruel and inhuman in mind, and the repudiation of his first wife imposed a pause before one gave a second! Finally the prince assented, and gave his elder sister in marriage to you, Duke Robert. She was called Sichelgaita, and the younger, Gaitelgrima. Gaitelgrima afterwards married his nephew Jordan, the Prince of Capua, who equalled in his virtues both the duke and his father. A marriage of such grandeur much augmented Robert's noble reputation, and people who had previously had to be constrained to serve him now rendered to him the obedience due to his ancestors. For the Lombard people knew that Italy had been subject to his wife's grandfathers and great-grandfathers. She gave him three sons and five daughters, these children of both sexes will in the future distinguish themselves.

Robert's glory, which had been so greatly increased, began to invite not a little envy, where there should instead have been praise. His virtues were envied by those elected counts by the people, who numbered twice six, and they wickedly conspired together to murder him when they could find a suitable opportunity. The principal authors of these conspiracies were Geoffrey, Joscelin and Abelard son of Humphrey, who sought his father's heritage. The duke was informed of this plot made by the counts and declared war - he was mightily enraged against them. Some he captured, others he exiled, and on some he inflicted various bodily punishments. Fearing his anger Joscelin fled to the Greeks. Geoffrey fled in stupefaction to take refuge in the *castrum* of Montepeloso. Unable to take this fortress by force of arms, the duke captured it by a trick; he corrupted by his blandishments the fortress's custodian, Godfrey, giving him bribes and promising him more, including a fortress more powerful than the one he had. (The lordship of Montepeloso did not belong to Godfrey alone, he had conceded half of it to Geoffrey). But the duke had promised him full lordship over a more noble fortress, Uggiano. Desiring to rule alone over this, he advised Robert to raise the siege and feign a retreat; but as soon as he knew Geoffrey to be absent to return and he would enter the fortress in safety with the keys which he had been given. Then he would confer Uggiano upon him. Thus Godfrey handed over this fortress to him by a trick, and so he received Uggiano, but who would trust him thereafter? All the people of Italy called him traitor. So the astute and prudent duke would often conquer by strategem what he could not overcome by force of arms.

His enemies entirely subdued and all their fortresses captured, he prepared to besiege the people of Bari. There was no city in Apulia which exceeded the opulence of Bari. He besieged it, wealthy and strongly-defended, that by overcoming the rulers of so great a city he might therefore terrify and subject the lesser towns, for of all the cities along the Apulian coast Bari was the greatest. The duke furnished his camp with soldiers and filled the sea with ships brought by the Calabrians. The citizens begged the help of the holy empire; those who were sworn [to help them?] along with the citizens sent envoys there, they all jointly implored imperial assistance. The duke ordered the citizens to hand over to him the house of Argyros. Since he knew that it was higher than the neighbouring houses, Robert hoped

that by obtaining it and from its elevation he might control the whole city. The Bariots made a disdainful response to the duke.

He attacked the city bravely. The inhabitants, by no means reluctant to fight it out, resisted valiantly. He carefully prepared mantlets by the gates under the protection of which he placed armed men in ambush; he prepared a wooden tower to overtop the walls, on each side of which he placed stonethrowers, along with every sort of siege engine which might knock down the walls. Nonetheless the citizens continued to defend their city, nor did they simply remain inside their defences, but went outside the walls to fight the duke. They put his soldiers to flight and their blows cast them down. As is the custom in war, they made the enemy flee and [in turn] fled from the enemy, attacked and were attacked, returning to the fray struck out and were struck. Fighting like two wild boars with with their projecting tusks, they covered one another with the saliva flowing from their mouths, sharpening their tusks to inflict deeper wounds, each striking sharp and heavy blows on the other's body, now being injured in the foot, now in the side, both resisting fiercely and neither willing to give way, until eventually one of the boars, tired, wounded and crying out, shows that it wants to flee and retires defeated.

The Normans charged fiercely, and no less fiercely did the citizens resist. Various machines were used against the walls, to knock them down and open up a breach, since entry was impossible along the narrow causeway, with sea on both sides (Bari is not an island). It was on this flank that the duke had planted his tents. On the other side he filled the sea with ships, to prevent the Bariot ships leaving. He built a harbour for his ships, and a bridge on which a tower was placed, so that it was impossible for the inhabitants to make a sortie. The Norman fleet kept the harbour safe. However the citizens of Bari captured the tower and demolished most of the maritime bridge. The Bariots protected their city by land and sea. Afterwards, when Robert despaired of taking the walls by assault, he started to make extravagant promises to the nobles of the place, who formed the most prominent and powerful party in the city. He felt that once he had won over the more important men, he would be able also to sway the lesser with promises and bribes. He also often made threats,

to strike terror into the citizens, working in every possible way to secure the surrender of the city which he so greatly desired to capture.

A rumour arose that Joscelin was sailing to the help of the city with an imperial fleet. The cunning duke sent out scouts to capture him. Stephen, called Pateranos, had been appointed governor by imperial edict, a loyal and free-spending man, worthy to be praised in every way except that he tried to have the duke murdered. There was in Bari a knight from foreign parts on whom the duke had previously inflicted a grave affront, a fickle man, daring and savage, ready for every evil. Stephen ordered him to trick his way into the duke's camp, catch the duke by surprise at nighttime and stab him to death. He promised him a great deal of gold if he should kill the duke. Anxious for the reward and remembering the injury he had received, the knight went at night, inspected the camp thoroughly, and seeing nothing to hinder him, reached Duke Robert's quarters, which had been roofed with thatch and walled with branches to be protected from the winter's cold. It was evening and the duke was at dinner. He saw the chair on which the duke was sitting down to eat his dinner, and parting the fronds he flung his spear towards him. But Robert, feeling an abundance of phlegm in his mouth, had ducked his head under the table. The spear's target was empty, and the blow it struck was fruitless. The knight raced away. Rumour of the duke's death spread throughout the city. The citizens rejoiced and the noise of the people's celebrations rose to the heavens. But while they were shouting the duke arrived, demonstrating that he was safe and well, and he shouted to the citizens that their carolling was in vain. As his voice rang out, the noise died down and his words put an end to their rejoicing!

### **Book III**

In the meanwhile Michael ruled the Roman Empire together with his brother Constantine. Their rule was disastrous for the Greeks for they neglected warlike matters, preferring always to lead a life of idleness. They were made prisoners by the deceitful charms of self-indulgence and a shameful laziness disgraced them. At this time the Christian people who inhabited the delightful lands of the Roman Empire fled in terror

from the Turks who came from the east. A large number died under the swords of the evil Turks, all the cities were taken and the conquered people served and paid tribute to them. These cowardly rulers sent no troops out against them, and in consequence, by the decree of the Senate, their mother was married off to a distinguished warrior, Romanus, [although] she, Eudocia, loved him rather for his courage than for his birth. He was called Diogenes because he had a forked beard.<sup>5</sup>

On undertaking the government he left leisure to his stepsons and concerned himself with warlike matters, setting out to do battle with the Persians who were raiding the unfortunate Greeks. The fortunes of this war varied; often he was the victor and put the Persians to flight, but the battles were frequently indecisive. Finally he sent out innumerable counts to defend the towns which had surrendered to him as a result of the reputation for valour which he had everywhere acquired. He himself remained in camp with a small number of his best troops. Suddenly a huge force of Persians, led by their king, surrounded him and attempted to break into the camp. In their efforts to seize this they launched some massive assaults. The first and second of these were repulsed. Eventually Romanus became anxious, realising that the camp was indefensible, and sensibly took steps, not for his own safety, but to save the lives of his men, whom he saw to be gravely weakened both by the battle and by hunger. He ordered whatever money there was, and all the precious vestments and gold or silver ornaments to be scattered about the camp so that if the Turks should manage to force their way in they might, on seeing these, break off the pursuit of the Greeks. The valuables were collected by the servants who had fled from the fighting - then the Greeks were forced to pass an unhappy and sleepless night. At dawn the huge Persian army came and surrounded the camp. Spears flew from all sides and a host of arrows filled the air. The Greeks were unable to resist, and the Turks broke down the defences and forced their way in. But more intent on plunder than cutting down the [enemy] soldiers the Persians allowed many of them to escape.

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<sup>5</sup> Ρομανυς Ις Διογενες, εμπερορ 1067-71.

The lord of the Greeks was recognisable by the golden eagle which was fixed to his hauberk and shone more than other armour. He defended himself unceasingly, striking down the enemy spears with his sword. A flying arrow wounded an unprotected limb and so he was finally captured, as were some of his men. After plundering the Romans' camp the Persians led him to their own, and gave him the seat of honour, next to their king. The latter asked him what would have happened if he had been Romanus's prisoner. The latter replied that, 'If you had been at my mercy or that of my men I would have ordered you to be beheaded or hanged from a gallows'. The other said that *he* would never commit such an evil deed, but rather he wished henceforth to establish the lasting peace which his ambassadors had already often requested, and that he would give his daughter to be baptised and married to the emperor's son to ensure that the peace was more secure. They concluded a treaty with these conditions, and then the ruler of the Persians sent Romanus home loaded with gifts, and set all the men who had been captured free. He honourably accompanied them for some distance, and then gave the emperor permission to depart.

But the favourable terms of the peace which had been concluded did not please the latter's stepsons, unable as they were to protect the Greek armies. They decided that Romanus should not return to the imperial throne. When Diogenes learned that they had become his enemies he prepared to wage civil war against them, trusting in the help of the Persians. Seeing that they were unable to resist him, his stepsons tried to trick him through a treacherous peace. They sent to him carrying messages of peace twelve bishops, who were themselves ignorant of the deception, as well as Joscelin, for whom Romanus had many times showed his love, and whom he had no hesitation in trusting as a friend. Romanus believed Joscelin and the bishops, being reassured when they swore an oath and gave him the assurances which he sought. He believed, in vain, that he would return as emperor; however, as soon as he had come to Heraclea he was seized and then blinded. Thus it was that this man of noble repute who had been emperor became a monk.

The two brothers were now safe and held the reins of the empire in peace. Their tyranny did not however remain unpunished. For Romanus's son took as his allies the

Armenians and Persians and deprived the empire of its eastern lands, which he ravaged with fire and sword. From this time onwards the wicked Persian race began to invade the Roman Empire, slaughtering and robbing. The land could not indeed have remained until now subject to imperial rule had not the Gallic race, more warlike and powerful than any other people, and encouraged by divine command, defeated the enemy and given it back its freedom. Inspired by God they wanted to open the roads to the Holy Sepulchre, previously and for a long time blocked. The wretched men by whose advice this great man had been blinded were arrested, expelled from the court and made to submit to well-merited retribution. They ordered that those who had formerly punished the innocent should themselves be punished for their guilt with a variety of torments.

An ambassador from Bari was sent to Constantinople and begged the emperor to aid its wretched citizens. On his order pirate ships were suitably prepared to transport grain, and arms [also] by which the fleet could be protected during the voyage to the city. (Hence the sailors would be freed from fear and the city from want). The emperor ordered that Joscelin be put in command of this fleet. He had fled from Italy in fear of the duke, who hated him because he had conspired against him. Joscelin came in haste with his warships to encourage the tremulous citizens. He was already close to the city, hoping to enter it in safety during the night, when suddenly Robert's fleet encountered the Greek fleet which had come to strengthen his enemies. The duke's ships willingly entered on a night action, thinking that this was more favourable to them than to the enemy since they knew these waters while their opponents did not. After a great deal of effort Joscelin's ship was defeated and captured, and he himself brought prisoner before the duke. Another Greek ship was sunk, the rest just managed to escape.

The Norman race had up to this point known nothing of naval warfare. But by thus returning victorious they very much enhanced their leader's confidence, for he knew that the Greeks had been unable to carry enough help to the citizens of the town to hinder the siege. At the same time he greatly rejoiced at the novelty of this naval victory, hoping in consequence that he and the Normans might in future engage in battle at sea with more

hope of success. Joscelin led an unhappy life shut up in prison for a long time; he went through many travails and his sufferings continued until the end of his life.

The town underwent its third year of siege. Finally it was overcome, worn down by many woes, but above all by hunger. The leading citizen of the town was at this time Argyritzos. When the duke convinced him that the city must be surrendered, he did not [then] face a difficult task in overcoming the rest of its inhabitants, for the leading men were able to influence the minds of the lesser to persuade them to do as they wanted. Robert showed kindness and favour to the citizens, and since he always cherished those whom he had made his subjects, he himself was loved by all of them. The duke returned to the townspeople most of what had been taken from them by force or ruse: fields, estates and farms. He restored what had been lost, and made no impositions on the citizens, nor did he permit others to inflict burdens upon them. He now gave peace and freedom to those who had been accustomed to pay tribute to the Normans of the surrounding areas. He pitied the white hair of Stephan, and was unwilling to treat him as an enemy; rather he forgot that the latter had tried to have him murdered and was anxious to treat him kindly. To the surprise of many of the Greeks, when he was captured along with Bari the duke left him free and unpunished, although under surveillance. After remaining in the city for some days the conqueror ordered the Bariots to prepare arms and supplies, and to follow him to wherever they saw him go. He [then] led them with his own troops to the city of Reggio.

Rumour has it that in the waves of the Adriatic, not far from the shore, there was a great fish, horrid of body and incredibly shaped, of a type not seen before by the people of Italy, and that the springtime wind had induced it to come there because of the warm water. The duke's cunning, using a number of methods, led to its capture. The fish swam into a rope netting and sank to the bottom of the sea along with the heavy iron weights which had been attached to the nets. Finally, after being wounded by the sailors from a number of high places [in the boats], the monster was dragged ashore to be gazed at by the populace. Then, on the duke's orders it was cut into pieces on which he and his men fed for a long time, as

did the people who dwelt in Calabria. Even the people of Apulia far and wide shared in this. The dorsal spine, when it was cut off, measured four palms in circumference.

After remaining here for a little while Duke Robert set off for the city of Reggio. While he was staying there a bridge was built, and as a result the whole area is now called *Pons Guiscardii*. The Bariots carried out his orders, and he prepared everything that had to be made ready within the walls of Reggio. After gathering together knights, supplies and ships, the duke crossed the sea to Sicily with a large following. This sea, although narrow, is difficult to cross. Scylla and Charybis here present different sorts of danger; the one turns boats over, the other shatters them on the rocks.

In Sicily the assistance rendered by his brother Roger, who had already conquered a substantial part of the country raised the duke's spirits. Roger was younger than him, but no less valiant. None of his brothers, excellent though they were, entered upon so noble a war, for wishing to exalt the Holy Faith in which we all live, he fought continually against the Sicilians, enemies of the Divine Name, and dedicated his youth largely to this work until the time when the submission of the Sicilian race would allow him the right to rest.

Confident of his assistance, and in the great army which he had brought with him, the duke was not without hope of laying siege to and conquering Palermo, which he had heard was the most noble of the Sicilian cities. Surrounded by Robert's many soldiers the city grew fearful. The inhabitants reinforced their walls and towers, prepared arms and men, closed the vulnerable gates and placed a numerous sentries on guard throughout the city. The duke ordered his well-armed knights to approach the gates, that by doing this they might provoke the enemy within to battle. He astutely intended to do all in his power to cause the citizens damage and difficulty. Unable to stand this the Sicilians sortied out from the gates and once outside fought back bravely; they were unable however to resist the fierce Normans. The people of the Agarenes held their own for a while but could not overcome the followers of Christ. They fled, followed by our men who slew many of them with their swords and lances. Javelins and arrows flew everywhere from the top of the

walls, and they [also] tried to injure our men with rocks and spears. Driving them back within the city defences, our troops returned joyfully to camp.

The Palermitans then approached the Africans asking for their help, and joining their forces together they undertook on the sea the battle that they did not dare to attempt on land. They believed that this element would be more suitable for waging war. Drawing up their ships according to the rules of naval warfare and covering them all over with red canvases as a protection to ward off the impact of stones or javelins, they sailed bravely to battle, ready to act as men and heedless of whether they lived or died. The duke ordered the Normans, Calabrians, Bariots, and Greeks whom he had [previously] captured, to strengthen themselves with the Body of Christ, and after they had received this and the Blood to engage in battle. Under the protection of this nourishment the forces of the faithful went forward to battle, their ships furnished with all the gear needed for success. The unbelievers filled the whole sea with the sound of their trumpets and clarions and with their shouting. The Christians by contrast sought the help only of the Eternal Ruler, on Whose Flesh they had fed. They were not a bit frightened by the noise and resisted their enemies fiercely, manfully dealing out blows. At first the African and Sicilian ships fought back; but finally and by Divine aid they were forced to retire. When they did seek to flee, some of them were captured and others sunk. Most narrowly escaped through rapid use of their oars. After their return to port they immediately raised the chains with which they were accustomed to close the entry channels. The Christians however broke through these chains, captured some of their ships and set fire to most of the others.

This victory made the duke very confident. He now devoted all his attention to force an entrance into the city, employing a number of schemes to secure its capture. He had the infantry furnished with slings and bows, and ordered the armoured cavalry to follow him. The infantry came close to the [city] wall and bombarded the ramparts with stones and arrows. The infidels came out from the city to oppose them and the footsoldiers, unable to withstand them, fled. When the duke saw them give ground and scatter all over the plain he gave the signal to his whole force for an immediate attack, encouraging them by voice and

gesture as an energetic general should. The Sicilians remained for a little while after battle was joined and then, terrified by the sight of the duke, turned tail. The duke cut them down, and encouraged his men to strike the unbelievers in the back, nor did he cease to kill his enemies until he had reached the city gates. The duke's people inflicted all sorts of different wounds upon the enemy, some with swords, others with the lance, many with shots from slings, most of all were caused by arrows. Passing over the bodies of the slain, he tried to enter the city gates along with the fleeing Sicilians, [hoping] to capture it and put an end to his labour. But the city was so filled with terror by the enemy attack that its inhabitants closed and bolted the doors, leaving a large number of their men outside, all of whom were massacred.

Seeing his cavalry discouraged by the long battle, Robert asked them to persevere with what they had begun. 'Men, your courage has stood up to a number of tasks, but it will', he said, 'deserve either praise or blame. This city is an enemy to God, and knowing nothing of the Divine worship it is ruled by demons. Deprived of its old strength, it now trembles as though it is broken. If it sees you continue bravely, it will not dare to make further resistance. But, if you cease your efforts, then tomorrow, with its strength renewed, it will resist you more fiercely. Hurry, while you have the chance! This town is hard to take, but, with the mercy of Christ, will be open [to us]. Christ makes difficult work easy. Trust in His leadership, let's put an end to this conflict, and all hurry to storm the city'!

With these words Robert heartened his men. They rushed to climb the walls with scaling ladders, promising to fulfill the duke's wishes. In a similar manner a good charioteer who realises that his speedy horses are giving up the race spares them and allows them a breather. Then, when they are rested and their wind is restored, he makes them return to the track, urging them on with regular spurring until they finish the course. So, under the guidance of a wise driver, those who seem beaten pass the ones who are used to victory.

When the duke saw his men all toiling to seize the walls, he himself was at pains to labour carrying the ladders. Then he ordered his men to climb up. Together they rushed to

scale the walls, and against them the people of Palermo manned those walls, spread out along the ramparts. Both peoples made the same effort, but for very different reasons - one to take the city, the other to defend it. One side fought for themselves their children and their wives; the other wished to conquer the city to please the duke. As both sides struggled with such effort, fortune favoured the duke and was cruel to the city, for suddenly a group of knights climbed up the ladders and reached the top of the wall. The Sicilian defenders turned and fled. The new town was captured, and they took refuge in the old city.

Seeing that their forces were exhausted and losing all hope of safety, the Agarenes begged the duke to take pity on their sad fate and not to take revenge on them. They surrendered unconditionally to the duke, asking only that their lives be spared. By this surrender (and their pleas) they secured mercy and favour from the duke. He promised them their lives and his grace. Nobody was made an exception to this, and keeping his word, even though they were heathens, he was careful not to harm anyone. He treated all his subjects equally. [However] to glorify God he destroyed every vestige of the temple of iniquity, and where there had previously been a mosque he built the church of the Virgin Mother, and what had been the seat of Mahommed and the demon he made the house of God and the gate to Heaven for the just. He had castles with strong walls built where his army could remain in safety from the Sicilians, and he furnished them with wells and ample supplies.

After building these fortresses and taking some hostages, Robert returned victorious to the city of Reggio, leaving a knight of the same name at Palermo whom the Sicilians were given as their emir [*amiratus*]. He allowed all the Greeks who had been captured at Bari to leave with Stephen Pateranos. So the most kindly duke allowed his enemies to depart unpunished, for [rather than this] he preferred them to become his loyal supporters. Accompanied by the Bariots, the Calabrians, the hostages from Palermo and his knights, the duke went to the walled city of Melfi. This town was the capital of all the Apulian region. The counts and leading men from this whole area flocked here; everyone wishing once again to see their prince's face. Only Peter, son of that Peter of whom I have already spoken,

refused to come there. On the death of his elder brother Geoffrey he had inherited the rights of his father and nephews, up to the time when the Richard, the son of his brother, should reach the age of legal majority. The duke did not trust Peter since he had previously refused to send help to him in Sicily. However after calming Peter's fears, he summoned him to him. The duke then told him that Taranto had been given to him by his [the duke's] brother and he now demanded back his brother's gift. Peter refused to render to him what his father had conquered by force of arms. This was the reason for the grave quarrel which arose between them. Going to Andria, Peter began in all sorts of ways to make ready for war; he ordered new weapons to be prepared, recruited troops, sought everywhere for help, and strove to preserve the safety of all his property.

The duke meanwhile decided to besiege Trani, a town of illustrious name, filled with riches, arms and a large population. Peter led a dozen picked knights to the city, to encourage the citizens to stay loyal to him and to reassure them by his presence. While he addressed them in a lengthy speech, Robert and his army suddenly appeared and spread over the plain. The citizens were besieged for fifty days, and Peter was shut up with them inside the walls. They begged the count to consent to the surrender of the city, for they could no longer put up with the damage that was being inflicted upon it. At first he was gravely offended and refused. Finally they forced him, and he tearfully requested that he and his companions might be allowed to depart freely; on this condition he consented that the town be surrendered to the duke. He left the city without letting the duke see him, nor did he wish to see the duke, so hateful did he find the sight of the duke's face.

On the capitulation of the renowned city of Trani, the inhabitants of Giovinazzo and Bisceglie also surrendered. Bisceglie belonged to Peter and Giovinazzo to Amicus, whose father was Peter's uncle. The duke hated him because he had given help to his brother, and because he had tried to go to Dalmatia without his permission. On receiving this news, and anxious to secure Peter's surrender, the duke began the blockade and siege of Corato. Peter heard that this *castrum* was surrounded by siege-castles and, not daring to make a stand there, escaped safely to the walls of Andria. But while he was absent from Andria, having

gone to Trani with a following of fifty knights to carry off some booty, on the duke's order Guido, his wife's brother, introduced forty knights to the city. Then, making a sudden sortie, they spread out across the fields and captured Peter, bringing by force before the duke the man who had previously refused to see him. His capture put an end to the duke's toil. But after being bound by an oath of fealty Peter was eventually set free and recovered all that he had lost. He departed a free man, deprived only of the lordship of Trani.

Meanwhile, the people of Amalfi, who for some time past had been paying an annual tribute to him, several times asked for the great duke's help. They claimed that Gisulf's attacks were perpetually troubling them both on land and sea. In answer to these peoples' request Robert ordered Gisulf to cease vexing the Amalfitans, who had been accustomed to pay tribute to him. He did not wish to break their old treaty of friendship, and love for his sister might make him desist [his attacks]. He promised that he would recompense him. Gisulf returned a haughty answer to the envoys who brought him this message. He said that he would not grant peace to the duke unless the latter rendered him the service which he owed.

Refusing to tolerate such an insolent reply, the angry duke marched on Salerno with a gigantic army and besieged it by land and sea. After this siege had lasted for some four months, the inhabitants of the unhappy city were afflicted by terrible famine and the population was barely able to survive by eating dogs, horses, rats and the corpses of donkeys. One of the citizens escaped from the city, in which he had left his father, and reached the camp. His dog, which lived in his father's house, searched for and found him thanks to its keen nose. He gave it food, and after its appetite had been satisfied by the meal he used to attach a sack to its chest filled with enough bread to feed someone for a day. Amazing to relate, the dog ran back without stopping and carried it straight home, and in this way the wise animal secured nourishment both for himself and for his master. In the eighth month the citizens went out and, making a breach in the walls on the side offering the easiest entry, threw the town open to Duke Robert. Gisulf was terrified by Robert's capture of the city. He fled to the tower built on top of the mountain overlooking the city,

access to which had been made difficult both by nature and by [human] art. There seemed to be no more defensible stronghold in the whole of Italy. Robert besieged this citadel with a strong force. But one day the duke was struck on the breastplate by a stone thrown with great force from on high, and a piece unluckily chipped off and injured his noble chest. Not long afterwards however, with the help of God, his wound was cured and he was restored to health. Once recovered he pressed the attack on Gisulf even harder. The latter saw his fortunes become desperate, and, with no hope of relief, surrendered himself and all he possessed to the duke's mercy. He asked only that he himself might have liberty to depart, and in this way, leaving all his possessions to the duke, he left a free man. Deprived of the honour of Salerno he went first of all to Pope Gregory. On his arrival the pope received him kindly and entrusted to him rule over the Campania.

Robert rejoiced in having overcome both the city and the citadel. He garrisoned the upper citadel with trustworthy guards in case there should in the future be a revolt by the populace. He [also] built an impregnable fortress in a lower spot to secure the safety of his subjects. There is not a city in Italy more delightful than this one, filled with fruit, trees and wine, and with abundant water. It lacks neither apples nor nuts, nor fine palaces, nor indeed beautiful women and honourable men. Part of it is sited in the plain and part in the mountain, and whatever one could wish for is furnished by land and sea. At the same time he acquired Amalfi, a wealthy city seemingly filled with people. None is richer in silver, gold and textiles from all sorts of different places. Many sailors live in this city who are skilled in the ways of the sea and the heavens, and many different things are brought here from the royal city of Alexandria and from Antioch. Its people cross many seas. They know the Arabs, the Libyans, the Sicilians and Africans. This people is famed throughout almost the whole world, as they export their merchandise and love to carry back what they have bought.

After these people had been made subject to him and he had finished everything that had to be done, the duke returned to Troia. While he dwelt within the walls of that city there came to him a noble north Italian [*Lambardus, sic*] margrave called Azo, who was

accompanied by many nobles from his country. He brought with him his illustrious son Hugh and requested the duke to grant the latter his daughter in marriage. The duke summoned his counts and barons to the town to discuss what should be done about this. On their advice Robert gave his daughter to Azo's son, and they celebrated the marriage as was customary with feasting and giving many presents. After all the marriage celebrations had been completed, the duke demanded that the counts and all the other powerful men there give presents to the husband and wife, to send them away rejoicing. However, when previously his other daughter had entered the house of Michael's son, they had not given an aid [*auxilium*]. They were all of them saddened and amazed that the duke should demand such a levy from them. But they were unable to resist, and offered mules, horses and other presents. The duke gave these to his son-in-law and added other presents of his own, then he sent him and his father back to their own land with great honour on the fleet which had been prepared for them.

The Norman counts frequently complained amongst themselves of such bad and infuriating behavior by the duke towards them, but for a long time they kept their anger and disloyalty concealed. But finally they admitted Jordan son of Richard to their plans, and at the same time they revealed all to the latter's uncle Count Rainulf. Trusting in their assistance, Peter and Geoffrey revealed their treachery and made war on the duke. The latter's nephew Abelard son of Humphrey, mindful of the loss of his lands, tried with all the means at his disposal to harm the duke, allied with Gradilon to whom he had given his sister as wife. Nor did they lack the aid of Baldwin, a most eloquent and warlike man. Among their other associates were Counts Henry and Amicus, and the clever Count Robert of Montescaglioso - who was Geoffrey's brother, both of them being sons of the duke's sister. His wish to rule over them inflamed the anger of his nephews against him, and they all did their best to deprive him of the ducal honour.

This revolt was not confined only to Apulia but sprang up in Calabria and Lucania and even in Campania. The enemy was everywhere to be feared and the ravages of brigands struck all over the place. A host of thieves sprang up all over Italy. The Normans were split

into different factions. But although the duke's enemies were more numerous than his own forces, the most warlike men remained consistently faithful to Robert. The city of Trani surrendered to Peter and Argyritzos, whom Robert had entrusted with the great city of Bari, gave it to Abelard to whom he married his daughter. However, while these cities fell away during this crisis, the faithful people of Giovinazzo did not desert the duke. Argyritzos summoned them to surrender the town to Amicus, who was to have it, threatening them that if they refused to surrender he would give Amicus as hostages their sons, whom the duke had confided to his charge. They did not however sacrifice their loyalty to their paternal feelings, declaring that they would always serve the duke. Amicus marched to seize the city with Count Peter and a large army. Argyritzos too joined in the siege, along with the people of Bari, Trani and Corato, as well as those of Andria and Bisceglie. The people of Giovinazzo remained steadfast, deterred neither by the siege nor by the arms [of their enemies]; they took every precaution to defend their walls, posted guards, and fiercely repulsed those surrounding them. The latter attacked, but the defenders drove them off, and although the siege was pressed both by land and sea it did not succeed in capturing the city.

An envoy was sent from the city of Bitonto under orders to spread false rumours, a scheme astutely devised by William Fitz Ivo to whom the duke had granted the city. The envoy said that, 'Look, Robert's son Roger is coming with a huge force of knights and infantry which the duke has entrusted to his command'. Thinking that this army was drawing near, all the troops whom Amicus had brought to besiege the city in the hope of taking it then fled.

Although he had heard that a great many rebels had joined together, the duke was not a bit afraid. He overcame them all either by force of arms or by cunning, attaching some to him by soft words and defeating others in battle. Astute and brave, he knew both methods. He seized the castles of some and with honeyed words persuaded others, who would never have yielded to force, to surrender. Thus he left his cavalry at the River Bradano and went with part of his forces to Calabria. There he pacified the people of Cosenza, who were particularly good infantrymen, and then returned bringing them along with him. But before

he left with this escort he gave these people everything that he possibly could. He was in haste to fight all those who were disloyal. The faithful city of Giovinazzo was sent some knights. He sought first to make a powerful attack on Bari, where he knew Abelard was. The people of Bari trusted in their numbers and in their leader, who was a mighty warrior, and engaged the duke in battle. But Abelard's hauberk was pierced by a lance and failed to protect him. Wounded by this thrust in the chest he was unable to continue amid the shock of battle, and his troops fled back to the city walls.

After this victory Robert set off immediately for Giovinazzo. The faithful citizens hurried out to meet him. Who could describe all the thanks that he addressed to them? He praised them all for placing their sworn fealty above even their dear children. He embraced them all and then said, 'Don't be afraid. Amicus will not harm any of your lads, because he is begging to be allowed to return to my good graces'. The people replied as follows: 'You may rest assured that we are ready to follow your orders, and to entrust the fate of our children to our lord, for no [other] love is strong enough to deprive us of your love. We ask only that in return for our love you be our preserver and a kindly ruler'. Hearing the people's prayers the duke agreed to what they asked. He remitted all the tribute that they owed for three years, and half of it in perpetuity.

Once this was done he left them and returned in haste to Salerno. On his way there he gave rebel villages and *castra* which had been surrendered to his knights. He fought quite a number of battles at different places. Luck was on his side, for while he was attacking rebellious Ascoli Baldwin was captured in a cavalry engagement. He stormed a *castellum* called Vico. There Gradilon was captured, and deprived both of his eyes and his testicles. Baldwin was allowed to survive unharmed, though as a supporter of Abelard he was kept in prison under guard.

After accomplishing these deeds during his journey the duke arrived at Salerno. Envoys from Jordan met him there asking for a peace treaty. The duke felt that unless the discord was ended he might very soon lose most of the advantages which he had gained,

and so he answered the legates kindly and benevolently. He called a truce, arrangements were made for a meeting and the duke fixed a day for this. The envoys returned home very much elated by the gracious way in which he had received them, and reported the good news. Jordan was very pleased by what they told him. At the same time the duke sent some picked knights to Giovinazzo, ordering them not just to help his own men but to work to injure the enemy and to damage them in every way that they could find. These arrived at Giovinazzo after a long detour travelling by side roads, for the direct route was impossible and their adversaries numerous. Once there they began to attack the duke's enemies with vigour. Those who had previously been used to go out plundering now complained that they were the victims and were unable to venture forth in safety.

On the day appointed the duke and Prince Jordan both went eagerly to Sarno. A peace was concluded between them, and agreed with Rainulf on the same terms. He was Jordan's paternal uncle, the duke his maternal one. After dealing with these matters, the duke returned to the fortresses of Apulia. he captured the *castrum* of Spinazzola, which Amicus had fortified and stocked with arms and in which he had stationed his son with a large force of knights, all of whom the duke captured. Only Amicus's son was able to run away and escape. Fearful of further losses Amicus begged for peace. The kindly duke granted him this and recovered the hostages. Grieving fathers were made joyful by the return of their children and the mothers of Giovinazzo stilled their weeping.

The conclusion of these treaties terrified the duke's proud nephews, Counts Robert and Geoffrey. And when they asked for pardon their uncle indulged them, forgetting the harm that they had done him and his own anger. Counting on their alliance, the duke besieged Bari with a large force of knights. Argyritzos, father-in-law of that Abelard who was the only one to avoid making peace, welcomed the duke to the city and was restored to his favour. His son-in-law was excluded from the peace and expelled from the town. Since he would not make peace with the duke, Abelard abandoned the possessions which he had inherited from his father and went as an exile to the land of the Greeks, then ruled by the Emperor Alexius. The latter, a kindly man, received him graciously, treated him honourably

and gave him many gifts. But envious death, which spares no one, infected his youthful limbs; and he who believed that he would one day return in triumph to power, bearing the symbols of office [*cum fascibus*], by contrast died in exile among the Greeks and was buried there.

With his army reinforced by the people of Bari who had now joined him, the duke, irritated by Peter's rebellion, besieged Trani. He left his wife at this siege while he himself with many of his knights went on to Taranto, which he invested by land and sea and very soon captured. After this victory he pitched his camp outside Castellaneta and laid siege to that. Count Peter was by this stage a prey to terrible anxiety, and since he saw that fortune favoured the duke and was hostile to him he now sought pardon and peace. The duke despatched envoys who informed him that he must hand over Trani and Castellaneta to him. Should he fail to do this, he would not be granted peace. Peter went to the [duke's] camp with his garments in disarray, entered, and asked for pardon and a peace treaty. He summoned the guards of the fortress and ordered them to leave their towers - on his instructions they handed the walls over to Robert. He also surrendered Trani to secure his return to the duke's good grace, and he swore obedience to him and became his *fidelis*.

Thus it was that the brave and clever duke made the stiff-necked bend [before him] and knew how to put an end to conflict.

#### **Book IV**

At this period Michael was cast down from his throne and became a monk. He was the man who had treated the innocent Romanus so cruelly and unworthily. His brother, who was associated with him, was also driven out. Robert's daughter lamented the downfall of her spouse. This wretched man was forced into exile.

After making the towns and *castra* everywhere subject to him, the duke left Apulia and started to travel to Salerno. Raymond, the distinguished count who ruled over

Barcelona, came to the city from Spain, seeking a daughter of the duke in marriage. He was given the eldest of these. Another married a distinguished and well-born count of the French called Ebulus, a man who never knew defeat by the enemy. Experienced in leading troops to battle, he was also eloquent, as skilful with his tongue as with his hand.

At this time Pope Gregory came to Benevento, a city which was subject to the jurisdiction of the Roman pope. The pope had taken offence because the duke had besieged the city. Robert hurried to the town to seek the pope's pardon for his offence. He was received (such a mighty man seemed worthy of this honour) and as a suppliant kissed the pope's feet as he sat in judgement. They discussed matters for a long time, out of the hearing of everyone else present, then the pope summoned his *fideles* and revealed what had been secretly discussed. A Gospel book was brought, and the duke swore to the pope that while life was left him he would observe his oath of eternal fealty to the Holy Church to which all the world is subject. It was said that the pope had promised him the crown of the Roman kingdom, since King Henry had been damned by him because of the numerous sins he had committed, for he was not afraid to sell holy churches, following the perverse doctrine of Simon, and he would only confer the episcopal dignity on those who had brought him large presents. He had also dared to indulge in wicked incest and adultery. He led a life of iniquity, sacrilege and debauchery, shunning the society of decent men, but choosing always the company of the wicked. The virtuous pope Gregory hated these vices and judged him deposed from his kingship. He ordered the Saxons not to obey the king further, but rather to resist him with all their might, and he sent instructions to Dukes Welf and Rudolf telling them to fight Henry on behalf of [Saints] Peter and Paul, against whom another Simon had arisen. It was believed that he granted the crown to Rudolf. The latter, joined by the Saxons and with a large army, declared war on the venerable pope's enemy. Many of the people remained faithful to the damned king, remembering his hereditary right and reluctant to install anyone else as heir to the kingdom. There was a great battle between the two. This race is a stern one and unwilling to give ground, [and so] mighty blows were exchanged, Lotharingarians on one side and Saxons on the other, both attacking fiercely and rendering wound for wound, standing their ground and striving to resist the other. They

claim that thirty thousand men were slain here. But although neither people were defeated, both sides retired exhausted and Rudolf was killed. After he had heard of Rudolf's death Henry rejoiced as though he had won a victory. He strove to attack the pope whom he knew to have deposed him from his kingship, and marched with a huge army to besiege Rome. Learning of this, the wise pope sought aid from the duke, [asking] that the latter take up arms to assist him and destroy the forces of his enemy.

After concluding their treaty of perpetual peace at Benevento, Gregory had returned to Rome and the duke to Salerno. He constructed a church of marvellous beauty for you, Matthew, in this city, and for himself built a magnificent palace.

The duke's heart was much grieved by the outrage done to his son-in-law and daughter who had been driven from the imperial throne. Many felt this to be a grave injury done to the duke, and he wished to take vengeance for it. An old man called Nikephoros had undertaken the reins of government. He was ignorant of war, and although cunning, ingenious and watchful for hidden dangers, he was cowardly and more fearful than to be feared. He was supported by the commander-in-chief Alexius, a mighty warrior and a man of great astuteness, distinguished both by his courage and by his illustrious ancestry. He had from the first flower of his youth passed most of his life under arms, and never failed to undertake any enterprise, however difficult, if the holy empire ordered. This general had defeated the empire's enemies Basiliakos and Bryennios, illustrious Greeks distinguished by their courage and wealth, over both of whom he had been victorious. Bryennios had fought a pitched battle with him not far from the city, and been defeated and captured. Basiliakos had been defeated by a trick of Alexius. As the two advanced to meet in battle, they pitched camp late in the day very close to each other. That night the cunning Alexius simulated flight. He abandoned his camp, but without taking all his baggage and leaving some of the tents standing. Next morning the abandoned baggage and tents, and some horses left behind, made it seem that he was in flight. Seeing nobody arrayed for battle against him and the camp unpeopled, Basiliakos sent out his men to scout around and report back to him if they found any noise from horses or men. But no voices from troops talking, no sound or

neighing of horses could be heard. Basiliakos thought that everything was safe and believed that his enemy had been terrified by his forces and fled. He dined and fell into a drunken sleep, and his whole army lay quietly in their camp. Alexius arrived secretly and fell upon his enemies who were terror-stricken. Since they were [also] hindered by the darkness of the night, nowhere appeared safe to them and they had no hope of flight. They were captured and killed. Sleep and over-indulgence in wine made them slothful, and they were unable either to run away or stand to arms. Basiliakos was blinded and sent to you, Nikephoros, against whose rule he had dared to rebel, to see him who was now unable to see. So Alexius was through his energy and cunning victorious over the empire's many enemies, either through force of arms or by trickery.

Wishing to cross the sea, the duke instructed weapons to be made ready and ordered his soldiers to muster at Otranto. He had ships built, while he himself stayed at Salerno, levying contributions everywhere and unceasingly sending on recruits. He requested his trusted troops to come with him on the ships which had been prepared. It seemed to many that this expedition was an unfair and burdensome matter, and in particular those who had wives and much-loved children at home were reluctant to fight such a war. But the duke reinforced his gentle persuasions with threats, and forced many to go. All mustered as he ordered at Otranto. The duke chose the transport vessels from Dalmatia, which the people there had, on his request, sent to assist him. He filled these with arms, horses, supplies and men, and despatched them to Corfu, an island not far from the city of Otranto. The journey was speedy thanks to favourable winds. The duke's knights disembarked on the island and made a ferocious attack, striking fear into all who dwelt there.

At the same time the old man mentioned earlier was driven from the imperial throne. The gallant Alexius, who had so strengthened the empire and secured so many victories over its enemies, drove him out, furious over the injury which had been done to his brother. Accompanied by all the imperial forces and finding the City ungarrisoned, he had an easy task in overcoming the old man who was forced to become a monk. For three days the general allowed the invaders to plunder the City. The fierce Persians dared to violate holy

places with their impious hands (Alexius had brought them to the City that he might be the more feared). Once he had seized the government of the empire by force of arms, this suave soldier showed no little honour to Robert's daughter, for he had heard that the duke wanted to come there and he strove to pacify him and to turn his mind away from such schemes. But the duke was sternly resolved and refused to abandon his plan.

He remained for some time at Otranto awaiting the arrival of his wife and of many of the counts whom he expected to accompany him on the forthcoming expedition. An imposter claiming to be Michael had arrived claiming to have been unjustly deprived of the imperial power and tearfully lamenting his flight. The duke received the wretched man and treated him honourably, showing him favour and kindly respect. The credulous populace rushed to him and bowed to him in greeting. The duke welcomed this associate and took him with him when he set off, the better to justify his expedition.

A little while before his crossing he received messages from that king whom the pope had declared deprived of his kingdom, requesting him to assist him against the pope and those proud citizens who had unreasonably rebelled against him (for the king had at this time come to besiege Rome). Although the duke gave a kindly and favourable reply, the envoys returned without any concrete result. He made known to Pope Gregory, whose sincere supporter he was, all the messages of the excommunicated king. He assured him that he would never have set this expedition in motion if he had foreseen the enemy's attack, but he said that since the preparations were now so far advanced it would be impossible to abandon the enterprise.

Meanwhile his wife arrived, and the counts who had been summoned. With a great crowd looking on, Robert called his fine son Roger and, in the sight of all, designated him as his heir and placed him in charge of all over whom he ruled. He was a most worthy heir of his great father, showing the good qualities of both his father and of his uncles. His character was such that from an early age he had shown his love of virtue. The duke gave Roger full authority [*ius proprium*] over the whole of Italy: everywhere in Apulia, as well

as Calabria and Sicily. He entrusted him to Count Robert and to Gerard, the former was his brother's son, the latter his most faithful friend - both were lovers of virtue and probity. He requested them not to deny the pope what aid for him that they were able to provide. He himself was in haste to undertake the expedition which had been prepared. He crossed the Adriatic with fifty ships. The island of Corfu trembled at the arrival of this great prince accompanied by his picked troops. The men who had gone before him had taken the town of Butrinto, he himself received the surrender of Corfu, a city strongly furnished with both natural and man-made defences. Hostages were given and the whole island paid tribute. His sailors stormed Vonitza and plundered it.

The duke placed Bohemond, his other son, born of his first wife, a knight of great bravery, in command of the force of cavalry and infantry which he had brought with him. He ordered all his men to obey the latter's orders. They besieged Durazzo, the father on one side and the son on the other, seeking to overcome it by siege from land and sea. George had often urged the duke to come there, because he had heard that Nicephoros, who had entrusted the town to him, had been dethroned. But during the summer the duke's journey was interrupted by shipwreck, and the ship in which he was travelling was holed all over by the stormy seas. It was only with difficulty that he survived. The bread carried for the men's sustenance was ruined, soaked by the water and crumbled to pieces, and the corpses washed up by the sea lay rotting on the shore.

The duke was depressed at being unable to accomplish the journey which he had undertaken, but with the sea and sky still wracked by storms there was a long delay [during which] Paleologus led many Greeks to Durazzo, from which George was expelled through a stratagem. Alexius rejoiced to have his enemy sent to him. The duke was however reluctant to abandon his enterprise now he knew that the moment had come. The island of Corfu had already surrendered. After capturing Avlona and other towns along the coast, he laid siege to Durazzo [even though] he knew this to be well-fortified. This was a city which had once been very wealthy, and was surrounded by walls made principally of brick. Pyrros, the king of the Epirots, had ordered this to be called Epidamnos. He did not hesitate to

wage a fierce war against the citizens of Rome [*Quirites*] in alliance with the people of Taranto. The city then suffered from a number of conflicts and other disasters and was deprived of inhabitants and reduced to nothing. Later Zetus and Amphion rebuilt the destroyed city on a reduced scale and ordered it to be called Durazzo. The duke invested it on all sides. The citizens of the besieged town were very much afraid, but they posted sentries, placed reliable guards throughout the city and notified the emperor that the duke had laid siege to it, sending envoys to request his help. The duke strove with all his might to storm the city. He had a very ingenious wooden tower constructed, on which he had a huge catapult placed, which hurled great rocks to batter down the city walls. Seeing his camp growing ever larger, everything round about being plundered and vast booty being brought in, as well as houses being built to ward off the winter's cold, the citizens began perforce to abandon the vain hope with which they had been deceiving themselves, that their enemy would retire. They realised that the duke would stay and not willingly withdraw until he had forced their town to submit to him as he had made others surrender to him. They sent envoys to him who asked why he had come there. The duke replied that he had come to restore Michael to the throne from which he had been so unjustly driven. They promised that they would not deny him the entry to the city which he sought if they might see Michael. The man who pretended to be Michael was brought out, crowned as emperor, to the sound of horns, trumpets and lyres, surrounded on every side by chanting crowds. But when they saw him all the citizens burst out laughing, and mocked him saying, 'this man used to wait on tables with jugs of wine - he was one of the butlers, of the lowest rank!'

When Alexius learned that Robert had seized his towns, and fearing that he would also capture Durazzo, he prepared to march against the duke with a big army. He summoned a people to whom he was allied, to fight against him and engage [his forces] in combat on the sea. These people were brave and well-versed in naval warfare, for the imperial request was sent to Venice, a coastal city both rich and populous, which is washed by the last northern waves of the Adriatic. These peoples' walls are entirely surrounded by sea; they cannot move from one house to another without going by boat. They live always on the water, and no people surpasses them in naval battles and in navigation at sea.

Alexius urged them to bring help to the besieged citizens and send their ships to fight with those of the duke, so that by defeating his enemies at sea and thus weakening the duke's forces they would make it easier for him to fight a land battle. They obeyed the emperor's instructions and hastened to attack the duke's fleet with their ships. However evening was approaching. The duke's ships sailed forth, but since night was falling the two sides avoided combat. Next morning, as dawn dispersed the shadows, both fleets prepared for battle. The Venetians, who were much more experienced in this sort of warfare, attacked impetuously. The duke's fleet was terrified and fled back to port. The battle thus ended. Three days running the Venetians attacked the harbour at daybreak and challenged Robert's ships to battle. The men from Ragusa and Dalmatia who accompanied the duke covered the sea with flights of arrows, but did not dare to take their ships very far from the harbour. The port was protected by the nearby camps. The Venetians cut the cables of some ships and dragged them away from the shore, but this did not affect the duke's undaunted courage. He thought of another plan, and decided to make more effective preparations for battle than hitherto, by bringing other ships here of greater size which would be able to inflict more damage [on the enemy].

Alexius rejoiced when he heard of the exploits of the victorious fleet. The islands which had previously paid tribute to Robert rose in fierce revolt when they heard of the damage which his ships had suffered, and acclaimed the emperor. At the emperor's orders all the river crossings and mountain passes were guarded to prevent the enemy being forewarned of the coming danger and taking steps to meet the attack. Alexius hoped thus to surprise his enemy and to defeat the invincible duke by an unexpected offensive. He brought a vast number of troops with him, for he was accompanied by a huge force of barbarians as well as Greeks.

In addition he ordered Basil Mesopotamites to lead the advance guard of two thousand picked cavalrymen to reconnoitre Duke Robert's camp. Mesopotamites was a battle-hardened veteran, and carried out the orders he had been given. He was close to the

city of Butrinto when it was rumoured that the duke's cavalry were riding nearby, bearing with them a lot of baggage. Although a large number had already been wounded by arrows from the Turks whom Basil commanded, all resolved rather to die in battle than to retreat in cowardly fashion from the Greeks. Drawing up their ranks as best they could, they turned towards their enemies. The Turks were terrified by the sight of their enemies turning on them, resisting fiercely and striking hard. They fled, and Basil was unable to prevent this. He himself was captured as he fled. The Norman forces hastened to bring their prisoner to the duke. Robert questioned him thoroughly, about what Alexius planned against him and wanted to accomplish, and how many troops he was bringing up for battle. Learning that the enemy's arrival was imminent and that Alexius would attack him with very substantial forces, the duke summoned all his leading men, told them everything he had learned and discussed with them what should be done. The most warlike of them wanted to launch an audacious sortie from the camp and make a resolute assault on the advancing enemy, to terrify them by this attack. The duke replied that it would be better not to go too far from the camp until the imperial forces were seen to be close, and declared that it was vain to seek to triumph through a strategem when there could be no victory except through [the favour of] heaven. Although he knew the bravery of his soldiers, he wanted no rash undertakings. Not only had he been told of the vast numbers of the enemy but he knew nothing of the sort of men they were. So he sensibly counselled his people to be cautious, and prepared for every possible eventually. He did not want to wait for the enemy troops very far from Durazzo.

The latter suddenly arrived, covering the hills and plains like locusts. The sun was already sinking down to the sea, and so neither side wanted to start the battle then. They abandoned themselves to sleep.

Alexius ordered the people of Durazzo to attack the enemy in the rear, that they might be safe neither in the front nor behind. At daybreak the the duke prudently burned his camp, to prevent anybody attacking it once he had marched out. He was the first to lead his troops out to battle. Alexius moved out a great many units and attacked him. The Calabrians and

Lombards were terrified and almost all the sailors the duke commanded took flight. Even the duke's knights were scared by the first attack of the enemy crashing down upon them. After crossing the river they came heedlessly into an area where space was very restricted. (The duke had had the bridge demolished to prevent anyone from the town making a sortie against him or anybody entering the town). The narrowness of this area hindered his men's advance, and a furious cloud of missiles covered them from every side - it was said that nobody had ever seen a greater storm of arrows. Since there was no place of safety, for they could neither fight nor retreat, they tried to deploy, and threw themselves into the sea because the press was such that the Normans were getting in the way of their own men and hindering them just as much as the enemy was. So perilous a position seemed to panic the Normans. Thinking them to be vanquished and retiring, and with the Venetian fleet cruising nearby and hoping to capture the defeated, the imperial army, eager for booty, started looting. They captured the horses and other baggage which the duke's army had abandoned when they had rushed out to fight.

Meanwhile a crowd [of Normans] managed to wade out of the sea and rejoined the duke who had, being in the lead, been among the first to escape from this very dangerous spot, albeit with considerable difficulty. The original deployment which he had laid down for his troops had disintegrated, for the appalling constriction of the field had changed everything. But the duke rejoiced that his men were present and he promptly gave them a few words of encouragement, telling them that they would find safety only in their weapons, and threatening them that if they turned their backs on the Greeks they would all be slaughtered like sheep. He told them that a prisoner's life was just the same as death. With these exhortations he fired his men's courage. Even though he saw the vast numbers of Alexius's army coming [towards him], he trusted in the banner given him by the pope in honour of Peter, the prince of shepherds, and in the merits of St. Matthew, for whom he had built a church. He charged boldly on the enemy and engaged in a ferocious battle not far from the besieged city. Alexius was defeated and his men turned tail, for more than five thousand of the Greeks were killed in this engagement. A huge number of Turks perished with the Greeks. All sorts of splendid arms, horses and standards were captured from the

Greeks. Barely thirty knights from the duke's army were reckoned to have been killed. Alexius wept to have been defeated by an enemy inferior both in numbers and in wealth. He himself was wounded and retired. The man who had vainly hoped to celebrate a spectacular triumph was forced instead to make a tearful and inglorious return.

During this battle Robert's wife had been wounded by a chance arrow. Terrified by her wound, and with no hope of assistance, she had very nearly fallen to the enemy and, afraid that she was in imminent danger of death, had wanted to embark on one of the ships. But God, who did not want to embarrass so noble and worthy a lady, had rescued her. Constantine, who had previously been stripped of his royal rank, died in this battle. He was buried with the proper ceremony. The Greeks lost many of the leading men of Durazzo, whose bodies lay unburied and rotted on the battlefield.

The duke was careful not to remain very long in Alexius's camp because of the stench of corpses there. The faithful Venetians garrisoned Durazzo on the emperor's orders. The duke moved away from the city and came to a river, called the Di(e)valis. There he built a castle and established the men with him in a number of different places where they could remain in shelter during the winter frosts. The Venetians inflicted all sorts of punishments on those who had crossed with the duke but then deserted rather than following him into battle. These they condemned to servitude; some they sent back home where they were cast into prison, others they handed over to the Greeks.

There was at Durazzo a distinguished man who had come from Venice, called Domenico. He hated another man, said to be the son of the Doge of Venice, because he himself was not allowed to be part of his council, entry to which was given to many other people there. Domenico sought to deprive him of his command. He summoned one of the deserters to him, a man from Bari who was dear to him and in whose good faith he trusted. He instructed him to go to Robert's camp by night and inform the duke that he wished to reveal to him certain things to his advantage, and tell him to come to a place called Petra,

which was near the church of St. Nicholas. Robert went there with a small escort. [Meanwhile] the deserter had returned and summoned the Venetian, who came to the duke and promised that he could easily surrender Durazzo to him if the latter would give him what he sought. The duke swore on oath to grant him what he wanted and to give him his niece in marriage. Both went home in secret after this meeting, having previously decided when the duke would return and Domenico then hand the city over to him.

When the day that they had both decided upon came, the duke chose the men of Cosenza, whom he knew to be fleet of foot, and to accompany them some picked knights, then in the stillness of the night he marched on the town. He took the precaution of sending the deserter on ahead, to tell him from the town what needed to be done. The Venetian had been watching for him for much of the night and had fallen asleep, but the Bariot deserter promptly woke him up and told him of the duke's arrival. The Venetian told him to bring his trusted men into the city, and not to be afraid. The messenger returned and had the duke's infantry go in first, and to them he handed over the walls of the tower, which was unguarded. During the night they made not a sound. At daybreak the whole town realised from all sorts of noise that their enemies had gained entry. All the Venetians seized their weapons, except those whom the fifth columnist had brought over to Robert's side. With their enemies on the ramparts all the inhabitants dug a ditch inside the walls, to make it difficult for the enemies to climb down into the city. The duke had ordered his troops to leave camp on the double. When he heard their voices he ran to them, and despatched them through every gate. Seeing themselves attacked both from within and without the inhabitants loudly denounced the treachery of the Venetians, and as a result the whole Venetian garrison fled. Some were killed, others captured, while some of them fled to the sea, boarded their ships and thus escaped across the Adriatic. Every Venetian who stayed to fight was made prisoner during the city's capture, including the Doge's son, while their fleet sailed away. So the duke secured Durazzo for himself. Being unable to conquer it by force of arms alone, he secured victory through a stratagem. The Venetian rejoiced, because after the surrender everything that had been promised to him was fulfilled.

Meanwhile the people of Troia and Ascoli revolted, the former refusing to pay the customary tribute, the latter lamenting the destruction of their walls. They combined together to attack Roger, the duke's noble heir, who was distinguished for his good sense and skill at arms. Trapped in the citadel at Troia, he defended himself as best he could, until at last some of his and his father's allies hurried to his aid. Leaving the citadel he threw himself furiously on the rebellious townspeople and inflicted all sorts of punishments upon them. He had one man's hand cut off, and another's foot, a third lost his nose, another his testicles; he deprived other men of their teeth or ears. Thus a captive tigress is accustomed to hide her anger while she is a prisoner and unable to give vent to her rage, but if she happens to break out of her cage and escape then she shows a quite unusual fury, seizing and devouring all whom she sees. Even a lion avoids the ferocious beast, although she is the smaller and he the stronger of the two.

Robert returned to Apulia once more after a year away, crossing the Adriatic with two ships, and entrusting his men to his eldest son, called Bohemond, and Briennus. Learning that Cannae had rebelled against him the duke besieged it, and after its capture he raised it to the ground. Hermann had ruled this town. He was born of the same mother as Abelard, son of Humphrey, but they did not however share the same father. Both brothers were distinguished soldiers, but they both yielded to the power of Robert, to whom scarcely anyone in the world was equal.

After the destruction of Cannae he set out for Rome against Henry, the enemy of Gregory, the Roman pontiff. Henry had been besieging the city for some two years with a great crowd of barbarians. He had breached the high walls with his stonethrowers and destroyed many of the undaunted city's towers. The Trastevere district had already surrendered to him, and Gregory was trapped in a citadel, which was however well-protected. Indeed so excellently was it constructed that it was impregnable, and the pope had provided it with a faithful garrison.

When King Henry learned of the great army with which Robert was preparing to march against him, he fled, terrified of the duke's bravery and power, already renowned throughout the world. Fearing to wait for him he retreated to safety. Robert hastened to Rome and stormed the walls of that famous city, with the aid of just a few of Gregory's partisans. He fired some of the buildings, violently freed the pope who had been under siege for so long, and brought him most honourably back with him to Salerno. After the duke's departure the greedy citizens yielded once again to Henry. He had given to them as pope Guibert of Ravenna, a man who had wickedly risen up against the Holy Father and dared to seize the Apostolic See, being known by the mob as Clement. Returning to Salerno from the city of Romulus the duke dismissed his troops. Never had he possessed an army such as this for he had led to Rome six thousand knights and thirty thousand infantry. So it was that he defeated at one and the same time the world's two greatest rulers, the German king and mighty ruler of the Roman empire. The latter had rushed to battle and there been vanquished, the other had been conquered merely by fear of his reputation.

## **Book V**

When Alexius learned that Robert had crossed the sea, he strove to regroup his battered forces and to destroy the camp of the absent duke, which was guarded by the latter's son Bohemond and Briennus, two men who were mighty both in battle and in counsel. Alexius's army established its camp not far from Janina, a city of no little renown. He protected it with several rows of wagons drawn up on the side facing the plain, which was the easiest way of approach. He obstructed all the access routes with iron caltrops to pierce the hooves of their enemies' horses as they charged along with the reins loose. But the Greeks' vision was ruined by fog, and the Normans arrived there unseen through difficult paths filled with vines and dense with sedges. Alexius came to grips with them and for a while fought back, but could not resist their attack for very long. He sought flight and retired defeated. Vanquished in a second battle, he retired to a famous town in Thessaly, called Salonika by the vulgar. However, since he knew that the fortunes of war are changeable, he prepared to return once more to the fray.

Bohemond rejoiced at having an army more brave than numerous, and exulted in the capture of Tziviskos. He besieged Larissa, a celebrated place, which he knew to be filled with riches since the imperial treasury had been brought there. It was the birthplace of Achilles, the destroyer of Troy. The siege of this town worried Alexius, and he came there with a very large force and valiantly gave battle to the Normans. The troops of Briennus resisted him but were defeated. Seeing the hills swarming with this great army, Bohemond realised that the empire's ruler was present in person. He charged [against him] and pursued his craven enemies, as a hawk does larks. The Greek army turned tail in the face of his men, but a dust storm enveloped both sides so thick that neither could see where the other was. The defeated Greeks sought refuge in the depths of the forest, while the conqueror, after killing some of them, returned to the mountains, there to wait in case further battles were to be levied against him.

Learning that his enemies had moved off, Alexius went to the camp at Larissa with a large force. The infantry who had been left in the camp were unable to fight off the enemy who so outnumbered them. Most of them were killed; a small number managed to flee. Alexius captured the booty which the victorious army had brought there from all sorts of places. A messenger hastened to the hills to bring news of the disaster to Bohemond, who (having believed himself the victor) lamented the destruction of part of his army. However, he was not the least afraid and strove to rally his disorganised troops. No setback could sap this man's courage. But he was annoyed to have to raise the siege of a town which was almost conquered and ready to submit. Night fell and reminded men tired out by battle to compose their limbs for sleep. Bohemond went to a sheltered valley not far from there which furnished all that was necessary for him and his men, and there they abandoned their bodies to sleep.

After three days two noblemen led out a very large force of Greeks ready to do battle against Bohemond; one of these was the emperor's brother Adrian, the other his brother-in-law Melisianos. Recovering their usual courage the Normans rushed to their arms; the

Greeks, accustomed to run in coward flight, hastily returned to the walls of the city of Larissa, where Alexius had taken refuge. They had been defeated so many times that they did not dare to stray far from these. The Turks too took flight and were trapped in the city. But the Normans could not remain besieging them for very long since the land there had been so ravaged that it could no longer feed them, and their supplies had been lost when their camp had been captured. Dividing his army, Bohemond went to Valona to find food, while Briennus went to Castoria. Alexius left most of his troops at Salonica, but he himself returned to his capital city which bears the name of its founder, Constantine.

Meanwhile, after repairing their ships, the Venetians returned to the city of Durazzo and gained entry there without resistance. Indeed hardly anybody remained in the city, for a terrible famine had led the citizens to migrate to all sorts of other places. The Venetians remained at Durazzo for fifteen days and looted it of anything which might be of use to them, but the citadel, in which the duke had left a garrison, resisted them. Once they realised that it was impregnable, and hearing news of the arrival of the duke's son, they withdrew. Boarding their ships, they all constructed roofs over them, and made a sort of small city. They built a wooden fortress, and as a precaution furnished it with all the war-engines of their fleet. So they remained at sea throughout the winter, protected from the cold and damp by their little houses. Once winter was over and the gentle breezes of spring blew, they hastened with all their ships to Corfu (a destination agreed by everyone). Mabrica, the commander of Alexius's fleet had [already] arrived there.<sup>6</sup> Many of the sailors then wished to return to Venice, It was agreed that their fleet should withdraw and that everyone should go home. They decided this because Robert had been away for such a long time, and matters were dragging on to such an extent, that all their property was being neglected in their absence.

Throughout this period Robert had been very busy, above all in waging war against Jordan. He did not want to return from Italy leaving anything there undone. Prince Jordan had been terrified by news of Henry's arrival, and had not taken up arms to resist him in

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<sup>6</sup> Μιχηαελ Μαπρικασ.

defence of his territory and of his own person. He had instead submitted to him, concluded a peace treaty and surrendered his son as a hostage. Along with his son he had given him a large sum of money as a present. He had done this because he was afraid that if the king should enter southern Italy he would be deprived of the lordship inherited from his father. Because Jordan had capitulated in this manner the duke ravaged his lands with fire and sword. His nephew then sought peace [from him] and was granted it.

After peace had been re-established, and before he once again sought the shores of Greece, the duke begged Pope Gregory to dedicate the church which he had built in honour of St. Matthew. That gentle man granted his request. When that had been done, he turned his attention once more to fulfilling the plan which he had long had in mind. He therefore ordered picked sailors and the men whom he knew to be most fit for military service to go with him to Taranto. There he gathered his entire as well as his army. Both fleet and army were prepared on a magnificent scale; the ships were filled with weapons and supplies. He and his forces then went to the port of Brindisi which seemed to be safer. They were reluctant to set off from Otranto, from which the crossing was shorter, since autumn had already arrived and the good weather of summer had finished. Because of this he was afraid that if his ships stayed at Otranto they would be damaged by storms, which could blow up quite suddenly. Thus he transferred his fleet to a more sheltered port, where it could stay in safety until the winds were more favourable. Then, saying farewell to his wife and to those who remained on shore with her, he set off from the land of Italy, to which he would not return. He crossed the Adriatic with one hundred and twenty warships, accompanied by his son Roger who made every effort to imitate his father's courage in war as well as his affability and kindness towards all. The duke also brought merchant ships, filled with horses, supplies, arms and all those things needed at sea. The fleet crossed the sea and joined the army commanded by the mighty duke's other son. They spent nearly two months on the coast, forced to refrain from warlike activities by furious storms.

Once good weather had reappeared, they left port and prepared for a naval battle against the ships of the Venetians and the galleys [*kelandia*] of the Greeks. The duke

commanded five triremes, he placed five more under Roger's command, and the same number each to the latter's brother Robert and to Bohemond. These were accompanied by smaller ships in a supporting role. The Greeks brought a very large number of galleys to this battle. The Venetians put their trust in nine tall triremes which they knew were ideally designed for combat. When they saw the lower freeboard of Robert's ships, they joined battle with them and put up a very gallant fight. Supported by the Greek galleys, they showered arrows from on high onto their enemies, and threatened them with heavy iron weights which were hurled down upon them to stop them getting too close. In the ship carrying Roger during this battle scarcely a man could be found unwounded. Roger himself, wounded in the arm but unwilling to surrender, remained fighting the enemy, his wound forgotten. The desire for the honours given to those victorious in battle spurred him on. His father, who was so often himself decorated by the insignia of victory, summoned him and ordered him to separate the [Greek] galleys from the rest of the fleet. He hurried energetically to execute his father's instructions, and with the five triremes which had been entrusted to him attacked these galleys. The Greeks were quite unable to resist this attack and fled in confusion, as do birds who dare not resist a hovering eagle, or hares which are forced to sprint away in terror, lest they be seized in its talons and become food for its voracious beak. After their flight the Venetian fleet remained alone. Seeing that the Greek ships had fled and that the triremes were unsupported, Robert and his sons attacked them fiercely with their ships. So savage was the impact of their attack that the Venetian fleet could not hope to escape. Seven ships were sunk, and the two which remained were unable to continue the battle on their own. All [on board] were forced to surrender to the enemy, and the duke was as usual triumphant. He and his victorious fleet brought back two thousand of the bravest warriors, who had posed the fiercest resistance, to port, along with five hundred others who had [also] been made prisoners. During this battle seven Greek ships were taken as they fled.

Those who had faithfully guarded the citadel of Corfu for him were freed from the siege which they had undergone while the duke whom the enemy feared was away. He then placed all the ships, both his own victorious one and those which had been captured, in

sheltered moorings to protect them from the cold of winter, which was approaching. It was for this reason that he prudently brought them into the River Glykys, stationing the boats and sailors there, and instructing them to remain until the fine weather of summer returned. He led his cavalry to winter at Vonitsa, and stayed there with them himself.

An unusually cold winter led the people quartered near the River Glykys to sicken. A great many of them suffered from cold and hunger, and disease spread so rapidly that almost ten thousand men died in less than three months. Nor did the rest of the army escape this deadly peril. In a very short period disease killed five hundred knights; and a large number of the common people also died. Neither knight nor sailor nor anybody else could avoid death striking them down.

However no misfortune could depress the duke, who remained brave and resolute whatever the circumstances. His son Bohemond fell sick and requested his father to allow him to return to Italy, a country where doctors and medicines were to be found in abundance. The duke reluctantly allowed him to go, since he wanted his distinguished offspring to recover his health. He gave him everything he needed for the journey. After his departure the duke ordered Roger to go with his troops to Cephalonia, to conquer and tame this island, which had been in rebellion for a long time. He knew that when this island had been captured all the other Greek cities would be terrified. Roger obeyed his father's orders, hastened to the town with the duke's forces and laid siege to it.

The duke [meanwhile] returned to the ships stationed in the River Glykys. He wanted to refloat these, for he was anxious to tame the proud Greeks at sea as well as on land. He worked ferociously to prepare both his cavalry and his fleet for battle, to terrify the islands by bringing out his ships and to force them to pay the tribute owed to the empire into his ducal fisc. With the return of summer the water level was very low, and the river was too shallow for the sailors to refloat their ships. The duke's ingenuity made a difficult task easy. When he saw that the river lacked its usual flow of water - in fact only a trickle ran through a narrow channel - he ordered a large number of stakes to be brought up and fixed to both

banks of the river, joined together with osiers. Then he had a lot of branches cut and [from them] built hurdles which were filled from above with sand, and the water which had been widely spread was concentrated together in one pool. The river became fuller and deeper, and thus a navigable channel was created through which the ships could return unharmed to the sea.

It was at this time that Pope Gregory died in Salerno. He was a venerable man, never influenced in any way by either personal considerations or love of gold, but always acting with just severity. Good things never made him rejoice unduly, nor did unhappy events render him downcast. He was the consolation of the afflicted, the way of light, the teacher of the honest, he restrained the proud with his laws and protected the humble. He was the terror of the impious, but the shield of the just, and scattering the seed of the Saviour's Word, and never ceased to summon the faithful away from evil and towards that moral behaviour which leads to Heaven. His life was led according to [Holy] doctrine, nor was he unstable and swaying like a reed. Hearing of this great man's death the duke could not restrain his tears. He could not have cried more for the death of his father, nor if he had seen his son or his wife about to breath their last. His grief at the pope's death was great, because in life great love had bound them together. Once their mutual peace treaty had been confirmed, neither of them had cast away their love for the other.

The pope was buried in the church of St. Matthew, and enriched the city with the great treasure of his body. Since the translation of the Apostle Matthew had already given this town a great reputation, and this was further enhanced by the pope's burial there, the duke had chosen it [as his residence] in preference to all other cities, if life had been granted to him. But in fact after the death of Pope Gregory he was not to return to the Italian lands which he had left.

While this had been happening, his noble son Roger had continued unceasingly to threaten Cephalonia. Robert intended to go himself to that island which he had sent his son to capture. He took ship there, but before he could catch sight of the camp he was stricken

with fever. The burning flux [*canicula*] began to rage, whose fearful heat is in the summer time usually fatal to men. His wife had come from Italy not long before and was present in her son's camp. When Robert arrived, she went out [to meet him], leaving the army and fleet behind. When she realised that Robert, her great husband on whom all her hopes were based, had the fever, she rushed to him, weeping and tearing her garments. Seeing that her husband was dying and that his end was near, she tore her face with her nails, ran them through her uncombed hair, and cried out.

'Oh horror! What have I done, unhappy woman, that I could be left so unfortunate. When the Greeks learn of your death, will they not attack me and your son, and the people for whom you were the sole glory, hope and strength? Your presence protected them when things were desperate. When you were there none of them feared the threats of the enemy, or to meet them in battle. Your leadership made them safe, and they dared to enter battle even though the troops opposed to them were greatly superior in numbers. Seeing you no mortal courage could ever resist. Now your wife and son are left the prey of wolves, and will never be safe without you. When our people loses your courage, they will lose their own as well. What can exceed the cowardice of the mob? Unholy death, I beg you to spare this man, whose death will cause so many others to die too! But if you are unwilling to grant my prayers, wait at least until he has led us back to our homes, so that there is a safe place for us after his funeral. Oh, miserable one! My prayer is in vain; such prayers are ignored for death never spares anyone'.

Roger mourned no less tearfully than his mother, his lamentations and groans rising to the heavens. He cried for the loss of a father before he fully knew how to defend what he had or to acquire new possessions, or to follow the example of his father's brave deeds. Who could look with a dry eye on the tears of those present? Who could be so unyielding, so iron-hearted, not to share the grief suffered by so many? Amidst all these tears he received the Body and Blood of Christ, and died, ending his life loved by all. So, in exile, the soul of this mighty prince left his body. The man who had never allowed his men to

show fear in his presence and who had been accustomed to raise the spirits of others now rendered up his own spirit.

Not wishing her husband's body to remain on Greek soil, his wife tried to return to her own lands. She embarked on the galley which she knew to be the fastest, placing Robert's corpse on board, and crossed the sea, so that, although he had not been allowed to come back to his kingdom alive, Italy might [at least] have the consolation of the the return of his body.

Roger went to his father's camp, sadly announced his father's death to everyone there, and asked their advice. For he said that if he did not speedily return home then he would be deprived of his rightful lordship, to which his father had designated him the heir. They all promised that they were ready to serve him faithfully as they had served his father, and then they begged him to help them to return across the sea. He agreed to what the people asked. However he pleaded with them to wait until he had gone to the island of Cephalonia, where he had left their comrades. 'The people', he said, 'remaining at the siege would be right to call me faithless if I left without returning to their camp and telling them (as I did you) the news of my father's death, and of my own departure'. After saying this he returned to his siege camp, announced that his father had died and that he intended to withdraw. Everyone there said that they would do what he wanted, and would continue to obey his orders, on condition however that a suitable agreement was concluded with him.

While Roger was thus absent visiting his camp, the men in the other camp became absolutely panic-stricken, and abandoned all hope of escape, thinking that life and safety were to be denied them. If all the Greeks, Persians and Arabs [*gens Agarena*] had attacked them, and all the peoples of the world flocked together, armed themselves, and come upon them while they were themselves unarmed, they could not have been more afraid than they were now. The death of this one man made all these people fearful. Those who, when the duke had been alive, were accustomed to defeating innumerable peoples were now, once he was dead, afraid to resist [even] a few. It is well-known that one man is often more valiant

than ten thousand, and a thousand men can put two thousand to flight. Fearing the enemy's arrival, and with the bigger ships already burned, the terrified people did their best to prepare the smaller ones, so that they could cross the Adriatic and thus put an end to their fears. So afraid were they that they gave no thought to money or clothing; they abandoned it all and humbly begged the sailors to carry their bodies alone in the ships. When the ships were some way from the shore a group of men mounted their horses to ride out to them, and then, abandoning their mounts, climbed on board without them. Another group swam out to embark on the ships. However most of them were unable to return with the fleet, and being left there surrendered to the Greeks. They were all so afraid that they forgot their native valour and remained timidly to serve the Greeks.

The ships were already close to the shores of Apulia when a terrible storm stirred the sea to a fury. Most of the sailors were drowned, and part of the army perished with the fleet. The ship in which his noble body was being transported was dashed to pieces by the storm. The corpse fell into the sea and was only recovered with difficulty. Afraid that it would then start to smell unpleasantly, his wife (who always showed good sense) had the duke's heart and entrails buried at Otranto, then had the rest of the body embalmed with many sweet-smelling things and carried to the city of Venosa, where the tombs of his elder brothers lay. The duke was buried near them in great state. The city of Venosa is made resplendent by such burials. Since the time of Charlemagne or Caesar never has the earth produced such brothers as these. They are buried in the church built on their orders, the beauty of which illuminates the town. May the Heavenly King three and one give pardon to them.

You know, Roger, that I have written this song for you. The poet has joyfully done his best to fulfil your instructions. Authors always deserve kindly benefactors. You, my duke, are worthier than the Roman duke Octavian. So I ask you to give me hope of reward, as he did to Maro [*i.e. Virgil*].

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