

وَجَلَّ الْقَنَصُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالْقَبْرُ وَالذَّبَالَةُ أَنهالَضَعَتْ عَلَيَّ بِاللَّحْرِ فَانضَاعَتْ سَمْعُ مَا رَجَعْتُ  
وَتَشَدُّ لَدَى حَمَلِي إِذَا تَبَرَّعْتُ بِالرَّقْعَةِ دَرَمًا وَنُطْعُهُ وَقَلْتُ لَهَا أَنْ غَبَّتِ فِي الْمَشْرِقِ الْمَعْلَمِ  
وَاسْتَرْتُ إِلَى الرَّقْمِ فَوَجَّيْتُ بِالسِّرِّ الْمُهَيَّبِ وَأَنْ سَبَّحْتُ فِي خَشْيَةِ الْفِطْيَةِ وَأَيْسَرَ حَتَّى



PENGUIN CLASSICS

USAMA IBN MUNQIDH  
*The Book of Contemplation  
Islam and the Crusades*

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MUNQIDH

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*Islam and the Crusades*

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PENGUIN BOOKS

The spear-head, attached to the spear fragment, fell from a great height right through his clavicle and into the ground and killed him.

Khutulkh, a *mamluk* belonging to my father (may God have mercy upon him), related the following account to me:

During the Roman siege, we were sitting in the hallway of the citadel with our gear and swords when suddenly an old man came [114] running up to us, saying, 'Muslims! Your women! The Romans have come in right on our heels!' So we grabbed our swords and went out. We discovered that they had climbed up through a hole that the mangonels had punched into the wall. We beat them with our swords until we expelled them, and then went out in pursuit and delivered them to their comrades. Then we came back and dispersed.

I remained with the old man who had sounded the alarm. He stood there, and then turned about to face the wall to relieve himself, so I turned away from him. Next, I heard a loud crash, turned around and, lo and behold, the old man had been struck on the head by a mangonel-stone, which crushed his skull and pinned him so that his brains ran down the wall. So I carried him away and we prayed over him and buried him on the spot, may God have mercy upon him.

A mangonel-stone also struck one of our comrades and broke his leg. So we carried him to my uncle as he was sitting in the hallway of the citadel. He said, 'Go get the bone-setter.'

At Shayzar there used to be an artisan called Yahya, who was skilled at bone-setting. He presented himself, sat down and began setting that man's leg-bones, in a recess just outside the gate of the citadel. But another stone struck that injured man on the head, smashing it to pieces. The bone-setter returned to the hallway, so my uncle said, 'You've really set his bones quickly!'

'My lord,' he replied, 'a second stone came and absolved him of the need for any bone-setting.'

### § *The Franks March on Damascus*<sup>201</sup>

Here is an example of the execution of the divine will in the fates and lifespans of humankind. The Franks (may God confound them) unanimously agreed to march on Damascus and capture it.<sup>202</sup> So they assembled a large host and the lord of Edessa and Tell Bashir joined them, as did the lord of Antioch.<sup>203</sup> The lord of Antioch encamped at Shayzar on his way to Damascus. The Franks had already haggled between themselves for the houses in Damascus, [115] its baths and its bazaars, and the burgesses<sup>204</sup> had in turn purchased all this from them and paid out their prices – so little did they doubt that they would conquer the city and possess it. At that time, Kafartab belonged to the lord of Antioch, who now selected and removed one hundred horsemen from his army and ordered them to stay in Kafartab to ward off any attacks from us or from Hama. When the lord of Antioch left for Damascus, all the Muslims of Syria assembled to march on Kafartab. They sent one of our comrades called Qunayb ibn Malik to spy on Kafartab for them during the night. He went to the town, had a look around and returned, telling us, 'Rejoice! We can collect our plunder in complete safety.'

So the Muslims marched against the enemy there and met in battle at Mudhkin.<sup>205</sup> God (glory be to Him) granted victory to Islam and they killed all the Franks. Qunayb, who had spied on Kafartab for them, had spotted a large number of animals in the town's fosse. When they defeated the Franks and killed them, he wanted to capture those animals, hoping to obtain the plunder all for himself. So he set off at full gallop to the fosse. But a Frankish soldier hurled a stone at him from the citadel and killed him.

He left with us his mother, an old woman, who was a public wailer at our funerals<sup>206</sup> and who now wailed for her own son. When she would keen over her son Qunayb, her breasts would flow with milk, wetting her clothes. But when she stopped her keening, and her broken heart was quiet, her breasts became again like two pieces of skin without a drop of milk in them.

Glory be to He who permeates our hearts with tenderness for our children!

When the lord of Antioch, who was just then attacking Damascus, was told 'The Muslims have killed your comrades', he said, 'That's not true. I left a hundred horsemen behind at Kafaratb who can handle all the Muslims put together.'

But God (glory be to Him) decreed that the Muslims at Damascus would be victorious over the Franks and would inflict upon them [116] a great slaughter, capturing all their animals. And so the Franks left Damascus on a most miserable and contemptible journey – praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!

#### § *A Kurd Takes his Brother's Head as a Trophy*

One of the marvels that occurred during that battle with the Franks was the following. In the army of Hama, there were two Kurdish brothers, one of them named Badr and the other named 'Annaz. Now, this 'Annaz had bad eyesight. And when the Franks were defeated and killed, some of the men cut off their heads and hung them off their saddle-straps. So 'Annaz cut off a head and hung it from his saddle-strap.

A group of men from the army of Hama saw him and said to him, 'Hey, 'Annaz, what's with that head you have with you?'

'Glory be to God,' he replied, 'for what happened between this man and me – I killed him.'

'Oh, man,' they told him, 'that's the head of your brother Badr!'

So he looked at the head, examining it. Sure enough, it was the head of his brother. And so in his shame before the men, he left Hama. We never knew where he set off for, nor did we ever hear any further news of him. But it was the Franks who killed his brother Badr during that battle, may God the Exalted confound them.

#### § *Tales of Sharp Swords: Isma'ilis Attack Shayzar*

The blow of the mangel-stone upon that old man's head<sup>207</sup> (may God have mercy upon him) has reminded me of the blows

of sharp swords. Here is an example. When the Isma'ilis made an attempt on the citadel of Shayzar,<sup>208</sup> one of our comrades called Hammam the Pilgrim encountered one of the Isma'ilis in a portico in the residence of my uncle (may God have mercy upon him). The Isma'ili had a knife in his hand and Hammam had a sword. The Batinis<sup>209</sup> charged at him with his knife, but Hammam struck him with his sword above the eyes. He cut through the top of his skull and his brains fell out, spattering and spreading out on the ground. Hammam then threw the sword from his hand and vomited up everything in his stomach, stricken with nausea at seeing those brains.

[117] On the same day, one of them came at me with a long knife in his hand, while I had one of my swords. He charged at me with his knife, but I struck him in the middle of his forearm as he grasped the handle of the knife, its blade held back close to his raised arm. A length of four finger-widths was cut from the blade of the knife and his forearm was cut in half, clear off. The traces of that knife-blade remained ever afterwards on the edge of my sword. An artisan in our town saw it and said, 'I can get rid of that dent there.'

But I said, 'Leave it as it is. It's the best thing about the sword.' Even today, when someone looks at that sword they know it is the mark of that knife.

#### § *How the Sword al-Jami'i got its Name*

That same sword has another tale that I will tell. My father (may God have mercy upon him) had a groom called Jami'. Once, the Franks made a raid on us, so my father put on his *kazagband*-armour and left his house to mount up. But he could not find his horse, so he stood there for a while, waiting. Eventually Jami' the groom, who had been delayed, arrived with the horse. My father struck him with this same sword while it was still hanging from his waist in its scabbard. The blade cut through the scabbard-trappings, the silver scabbard-tip and the thick garment and woollen mantle that the groom was wearing, and then through the bone of his elbow. His forearm fell to the ground. As a result, my father (may God have mercy upon him) supported this groom and his children

after him on account of this wound. That sword was named al-Jami'i after that groom.

§ *Another Noteworthy Sword-Blow: The Lord of Abu Qubays*

Among other noteworthy sword-blows is the following:

Four brothers related to the amir Ifrikhar al-Dawla Abi al-Furh ibn Amrun, the lord of Abu Qubays Castle,<sup>210</sup> went up to see him in the castle as he slept and covered him with wounds. There was no one else with him in the castle except his son. They then went out, thinking they had killed him, and went looking for his son. Now, God had granted this Ifrikhar al-Dawla amazing physical strength. So he rose up from his bed [118] all undressed, took his sword, which was hanging there in his house, and went out to get the four brothers. One of them, the most intrepid and courageous of the bunch, came and confronted him. So Ifrikhar al-Dawla struck him with his sword and then jumped to one side, fearing that his opponent might get him with the knife that he held. When he turned around, he saw that his foe was flat on the ground, the sword-blow having killed him. He then went on to the second man and, striking a blow on him, killed him. The two remaining men fled, throwing themselves from the castle. One of them died as a result, but the other escaped.

Once we heard the news about this in Shayzar, we sent a messenger to congratulate Ifrikhar al-Dawla on his safety. Three days later, we went up to Abu Qubays Castle to visit him, since his sister lived with my uncle Sulman and he had children by her. He related his story to us and how the whole thing happened. Then he said, 'The back of my shoulder is itching, but I can't get at it.' So he called an attendant of his to have a look at the spot to see what sort of thing had bitten him. The attendant examined it, and what do you know, but it was a cut in which was stuck the head of a dagger that had broken off in his back. He hadn't even known it was there nor did he feel it until it started generating pus and began to itch.

Such was the physical strength of this man that he could grab a mule by its ankle and bear it without its being able to free its

foot from his grasp. He could take a horseshoe nail between his fingers and drive it into a board of oak wood, too. His appetite was like his strength – no, even greater!

§ *A Brief Exposition on the Franks of Antioch*

So far, I have mentioned something of the deeds of men, so I will now mention something of the deeds of women after a brief exposition by way of introduction.<sup>211</sup>

§ *Roger of Antioch and the Field of Blood*

Antioch belonged to a real devil of the Franks called Roger.<sup>212</sup> This Roger went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, whose lord was Baldwin [119] the Prince.<sup>213</sup> Baldwin was then an old man, while Roger was still a youth. Roger said to Baldwin, 'Let's make a contract between us. If I die before you, Antioch will be yours, but if you die before me, Jerusalem will be mine.' So they agreed upon this and bound themselves to it.

Now God (may He be exalted) decreed that Il-Ghazi (may God have mercy upon him) should meet Roger in battle at Danith on Thursday, 5 Jumada al-Ula in the year 513 (14 August 1119),<sup>214</sup> and kill him, as well as all of his army. Fewer than twenty of their men made it back to Antioch. So Baldwin travelled to Antioch and took control of it.

Forty days later, Baldwin stationed his battle-lines against Il-Ghazi. Now, when Il-Ghazi used to drink wine, he would be drunk for twenty days. And he took to drink after destroying the Franks and killing them, going on a drunken spree from which he never recovered until the day King Baldwin the Prince arrived in Antioch at the head of his army.

§ *Tughdakin Beholds Robert FitzFulk after the Second Battle of Danith*

The second battle between these two was a draw. Some Franks defeated some Muslims, and some Muslims defeated some Franks. A number of men from both sides were killed. The Muslims took captive Robert, the lord of Sahyun, Balatunus<sup>215</sup> and that area. He was a friend of the atabeg Tughdakin, the lord [120] of Damascus at that time, and had been with Il-Ghazi

when he joined with the Franks at Apamea when the army of the East arrived under Bursuq.<sup>216</sup> This Robert the Leper had said to the atabeg Tughdakin, 'I don't know how best to offer you my hospitality. However, I give you permission to use my lands. You may let your horsemen pass through them and they may take whatever they find, as long as you do not kill anyone or take them captive. But animals, money, crops: those they have full permission to take.'

Now, when Robert was taken prisoner – and the atabeg Tughdakin had been present at the battle assisting Il-Ghazi – he set for himself a ransom of ten thousand dinars. So Il-Ghazi said, 'Take him to the atabeg. Maybe he can frighten him into raising his ransom for us.'

So they took Robert to the atabeg, who was in his tent drinking. When Tughdakin saw Robert approaching, he stood up, tucked the hem of his robe up under his belt, grabbed his sword, ran out and struck off his head. Il-Ghazi sent a messenger to the atabeg to reproach him, saying, 'We need every single dinar to pay our Turkoman troops. And this man, who had set his ransom at ten thousand dinars, we sent him to you so you could scare him and he might raise his ransom. And you killed him!'

Tughdakin replied, 'I can't think of a better way to scare someone.'

#### § *Baldwin II Becomes Regent of Antioch*

And so Baldwin the Prince took possession of Antioch. My uncle and father (may God have mercy upon them both) had him under a great obligation to them dating from the time when he was the prisoner of Nur al-Dawla Balak (may God have mercy upon him). After Balak was killed, Baldwin came into the possession of Timurash,<sup>217</sup> who brought him to us in Shayzar so that my uncle and my father (may God have mercy upon them both) might act as middlemen in ransoming him. They both treated him [121] kindly. Now, when Baldwin took control, we owed the lord of Antioch an indemnity, but Baldwin exempted us from paying it.<sup>218</sup> Moreover, we gained a certain influence in Antioch.

#### § *Bohemond II Arrives and Becomes Lord of Antioch*

And so Baldwin was occupying himself with his own affairs – and one of our messengers was there with him – when a ship arrived at al-Suwaydiyya,<sup>219</sup> carrying a youth dressed in shabby clothes. He came into the presence of Baldwin and made him know that he was the son of Bohemond.<sup>220</sup> Baldwin therefore ceded Antioch to him and went out of the city, pitching his tents outside the town. That messenger of ours who was there with him swore to us that he (that is, King Baldwin) bought the fodder for his horses that very night in the marketplace, while the official granaries of Antioch were full of grain. Baldwin then returned to Jerusalem.

#### § *Bohemond II Misses an Opportunity*

That devil, the son of Bohemond, turned out to be a great affliction for our people. One day, he encamped against us at the head of his army and pitched his tents. We had already ridden out to face them, but not a single one of them attacked us. They just remained in their tents, while we remained in the saddle on an elevated spot from which we could observe them, with the Orontes between us. So my cousin Layth al-Dawla Yahya (may God have mercy upon him) left our group and went down to the Orontes – we assumed he was going to water his horse. But he waded into the water, crossed over and headed for a band of Franks standing near their tents. As he approached them, a single knight came down towards him. The two now charged at each other, but they both swerved away from the spear-thrust of the other. Immediately sped towards them with some of my young peers. The rest of the band now came down and the son of Bohemond and his army also took to their horses and poured down on us like a torrent. In the meantime, my cousin's horse had been wounded by a spear-blow.

The vanguard of our cavalry soon met [122] theirs. Now, in our troops there was a Kurdish man named Milka'il, who came fleeing before the vanguard of the enemy cavalry, and behind him was a Frankish knight who was sticking close to him in

pursuit. The Kurd was running right in front of him, howling and screaming at the top of his lungs. So I intercepted the Frank, who turned away from that Kurdish horseman and darted off my path, heading for some horsemen in a group of our men positioned beyond us along the river. I went in hot pursuit, struggling to make my charger catch up with him so I might thrust my spear into him. But I could not catch up. That Frank did not look back at me until he reached our horsemen, although I pursued him, his only desire being those assembled horsemen. My companions now attacked his charger and pinned him down with their spear-thrusts, but his comrades followed after him and they outnumbered us. So now the Frankish knight turned back, his charger on its last legs, and met his comrades and ordered them all to withdraw. And so he went back, accompanied by his comrades. That knight was none other than the son of Bohemond, the lord of Antioch. Being still a boy, his heart had become filled with terror. If he had just left his comrades behind, they would have routed us and chased us all the way back to town.

§ *Deeds of Women: Burayka, the Witch of Shayzar*

As all this was transpiring, an old female servant called Burayka, owned by one of our Kurdish comrades called 'Ali ibn Mahbub, was standing there in the midst of our horsemen on the bank of the river with a jar in her hand, filling it with water and giving it to our men to drink. Most of our comrades who were on that elevated spot, once they saw the Franks advancing in such numbers, rushed back towards the city. But that she-devil just stood there, unafraid of the fearsome events taking place.

I will now mention something concerning this Burayka, even though it's not the place for it, but conversation drifts from one topic to another. [123] Her master, 'Ali, was a pious man and never drank wine. One day he said to my father, 'By God, amir, I do not consider it licit to subsist on an official stipend. I will not subsist on anything other than what Burayka brings in.'

So this idiot thinks that that illicit profit was more lawful than the stipend by which he was employed!<sup>221</sup>

This servant-woman had a son named Nasr, an older man, and he, along with another man called Baqiya ibn al-Usayfir, used to act as the supervisor of some lands that belonged to my father (may God have mercy upon him). This Baqiya related the following to me:

One night, I went into town on my way to my house on some errand I had to do. As I approached the town, I could see between the tombstones some sort of shape by the light of the moon, a shape neither human nor beast. So I stopped and stood a way off, in fright. But then I said to myself, 'I'm Baqiya, am I not? Should I be afraid of some solitary thing?' So I put down my sword,<sup>222</sup> leather shield and javelin and crept ahead, inch by inch. As I did so, I could hear a voice coming from that shape and some vulgar singing. Once I had got close to it, I pounced on top of it, holding my dagger in my hand. I grabbed on to it and what should it be but Burayka, head uncovered, hair all wild, sitting astride a reed, neighing and traipsing about the tombs. 'Shame on you!' I said. 'What are you getting up to at this hour in such a place?' 'I am practising black magic,' she replied. And so I said to her, 'May God abominate you and your magic, and out of all the crafts, may He abominate this craft of yours!'

§ *The Bravery of Usama's Aunt*

The strength of that bitch's spirit reminds me of the events that happened in connection with our women during the battle between us and the Isma'ilis, even though Burayka and our women were hardly of the same sort.

[124] On that day, the leader of the group of Isma'ilis, 'Alwan ibn Harrar, and my cousin Shabib (may God have mercy upon him) encountered one another in the citadel. Shabib was the same age as me and we were born on the very same day, Sunday, 27 Jumada al-Akhira in the year 488 (4 July 1095), though he had not seen battle prior to that day, whereas I had become a master of it.

'Alwan wanted to put Shabib under his obligation, so he said

to him, 'Go back to your home, carry off whatever you can and get out of here. You won't be killed. We've already taken the castle.'

So Shabib returned to his house and said, 'If anyone has any valuable things, give them to me.' He said this to his aunt and his uncle's women. Every one of them gave him something.

As he was doing this, a figure suddenly entered the house wearing a mail hauberk and a helmet, with a sword and shield. When Shabib saw this figure, he felt certain of death. The figure threw off its helmet and behold! It was his aunt, the mother of his cousin Layth al-Dawla Yahya (may God have mercy upon him).

'What is it you are intending to do?' she asked him.

'I'm taking whatever I can carry and then I'll climb down from the castle on a rope and go and make my way in the world,' he replied.

'What a wicked thing you are doing! You would leave the daughters of your uncle and the rest of your household in the hands of these cotton-carders<sup>223</sup> and just take off? What sort of life would you be living, brought to shame in the eyes of your family and fleeing from them? Get out there and fight for your family until you are killed in their midst! And may God do something with you, and do it again!'<sup>224</sup>

And so she (may God have mercy upon her) prevented him from fleeing. After that, Shabib became one of our most noted horsemen.

§ *Women's Courage for the Sake of Honour:*  
*Usama's Mother*

On that same day, my mother (may God have mercy upon her) distributed my swords and *kazaghband*-armour. She came to a sister of mine, an older woman, and said, 'Put on your shoes and covering.'

And so she got dressed and my mother took her to a balcony in my house that looked out over the river valley to the east, and made her sit [125] there while she took a seat at the entrance to the balcony.

God – glory be to Him – granted us victory over the enemy.

But when I came to my house in search of some of my weapons, I found nothing except the scabbards of the swords and the sacks for the *kazaghbands*. So I asked, 'Mother, where are my weapons?'

'My son,' she replied, 'I gave the weapons to whoever would use them to fight for us. I didn't know if you were safe or not.' I replied, 'And my sister? What is she doing here?'

'My son,' my mother replied, 'I made her sit here on the balcony while I took my seat just outside. That way, if I should see that the Batinis had reached us, I could push her off, throwing her down to the valley. For I would rather see her dead than see her a prisoner of peasants and wool-carders.'

I thanked her for that, and so did my sister, who prayed that God would reward my mother on her behalf. Their courage for the sake of honour is more intense than such courage among men.

§ *Women's Disdain for Danger*

On the same day, an old woman named Funun, who had been a servant-girl of my grandfather Sadid al-Mulk 'Ali (may God have mercy upon him), covered herself with her veil, took up a sword and went out into battle. And she kept at it until we were able to climb up and overpower the enemy. So no one can deny that noble women possess disdain for danger, courage for the sake of honour and sound judgment.

§ *The Wisdom of Women: Usama's Grandmother and the Lion*

At some other time, I went out on the hunt with my father (may God have mercy upon him). Now, my father was really passionate about hunting, and he had a collection of goshawks, peregrines, sakers, cheetahs and *zagharyia*-hounds<sup>225</sup> unlike anything anyone else had. He used to ride out at the head of forty horsemen who included his sons and his *mamluks*, each one of them experienced in the hunt, knowledgeable about the chase. He had at Shayzar two preferred hunting-grounds: one day he might ride to the marshes and streams to the west of town to hunt francolin, waterfowl, hare, gazelle, and to kill

wild boar. On another day, he might ride to the hill south of town to hunt partridge and hare.

One day, when we were on the hill, the time came for the afternoon prayers. My father dismounted, so we all dismounted and prayed, each of us on our own. Suddenly, an attendant came galloping up and said, [126] 'There's a lion! I therefore finished my prayers before my father (may God have mercy upon him), so that he couldn't prevent me from killing the lion. I mounted my horse with my spear by my side and charged at the lion. The lion faced me and let out a roar. My horse reared and my spear, because of its weight, fell out of my hand. The lion chased me for a good stretch, then turned back to the foot of the hill and stood there. It was one of the biggest lions I had ever seen, like the arch of a bridge, and ravenous. Every time we approached it, it would come down from the hill and chase after the horses, then return to its place. It never made a descent without leaving its mark on our comrades.

I saw it leap onto the haunches of the horse belonging to an attendant of my uncle called Bastakin Gharza, tearing the man's clothing and leggings with its claws. Then it returned to the hill. There was thus no way of getting at the lion until I climbed above it on the slope of the hill and then rushed my horse down upon it and thrust my spear at it, piercing it. I left the spear sticking in its side. The lion then rolled over onto the slope of the hill with the spear still in it. The lion died and the spear was broken. My father (may God have mercy upon him) was just standing there watching us; with him were the sons of his brother Sulhan, who were keeping an eye on what happened, and they were just boys.

We carried off the lion and entered the town as night approached. In the dark of night, my grandmother on my father's side (may God have mercy upon them both) came to me, carrying a candle before her. She was a prodigiously old woman, nearly one hundred years of age. I had no doubt that she had come to congratulate me on my safety and to inform me of her joy at what I had done.

And so I met her and kissed her hand, but she said to me with annoyance and anger, 'My boy, what in the world brings

you to face these trials where you risk your life and your horse, you break your weapons and you simply add to the bad feelings and ill-will towards you in your uncle's heart?

'My lady,' I replied, 'I have only endangered myself today and on similar occasions to bring me closer to my uncle's heart.'

'No!' she said. 'By God, this does not bring you closer to him, but rather increases his estrangement from you and encourages his bad feelings and ill-will towards you.'

I learned then that she (may God have mercy upon her) was giving me wise counsel with these words and speaking the truth. By my life, these are indeed the mothers of men!

And, moreover, this old woman (may God have mercy upon her) was one of the most upright Muslims in her immaculate approach to religion, her piety, fasting and prayer. Once, I was present on the night of [127] Nisf Sha'ban<sup>226</sup> while she prayed in the home of my father. My father (may God have mercy upon him) was one of the finest chanters of the Book of God (may He be exalted), and he led his mother in prayer. My father was concerned for her and said, 'Mother, if you take a seat, you can still pray from a seated position.'

'My son,' she replied, 'are there enough days left in my life for me to live to see another night like this one? No, by God, I will not sit.' By then my father had reached seventy years of age while she had approached one hundred (may God have mercy upon her).

#### *§ A Courageous Woman Kills her Bandit Husband*

I was a witness to one marvellous example of the courage that women have for the sake of honour. There was a man among the companions of Ibn Mula'ib called 'Ali 'Abd ibn Abi al-Rayda', whom God (may He be exalted) had endowed with eyesight like that of Zarga' al-Yamama.<sup>227</sup> He used to go on raids with Ibn Mula'ib and could spot a caravan coming a full day's distance away.

A fellow member of his gang, called Salim al-'Ihazi, passed into the service of my father after Ibn Mula'ib was killed.<sup>228</sup> He told me:

One day we went out on a raid and sent out 'Ali 'Abd Ibn Abi al-Rayda' early in the morning to act as a lookout for us. He came back to us and said, 'Cheer up, everyone, for soon we'll have some plunder! There's a long caravan headed this way.' We looked, but we couldn't see a thing. So we said, 'We don't see a caravan or anything else.' 'By God,' he replied, 'I'm telling you I see a caravan! At the front there are two horses with black spots on their foreheads, shaking their manes.' We stayed hidden in our ambush until late afternoon. Then a caravan appeared with two horses at the front, with black spots on their foreheads. So we rushed out and captured the caravan.

Salim al-'Ijazi also told me the following tale:

One day we went out on a raid and 'Ali 'Abd Ibn Abi al-Rayda' went up to act as a lookout for us. But he fell asleep, and before he knew it, a Turk from a detachment [128] of Turks took him captive. They asked him, 'What's your business?' 'I am a poor beggar,' he said, 'and I have rented my camel to a merchant in a caravan. Give me your hand in promise that you will return my camel to me and I will lead you to the caravan.' So the leader of the Turks gave him his hand. 'Ali walked along in front of them and led them to where we were, lying in ambush. So we rushed out at them and took them captive. As for 'Ali, he latched on to the Turk that was in front of him and took his horse and his gear. We carried off some nice plunder from them.

When Ibn Mula'ib was killed, that 'Ali 'Abd Ibn Abi al-Rayda' passed into the service of Theophilos the Frank, lord of Kafartab. He used to go out on raids with the Franks against the Muslims and plunder them. He did as much harm to the Muslims as he could, seizing their wealth and shedding their blood, to the point of making the roads unsafe for travellers.

He had a wife at Kafartab, in the hands of the Franks, who objected to what he did and tried to forbid him from doing so, but he didn't stop. In the end, she sent for a relative of hers from some village – her brother, I think – to come to her and

she hid him in the house until nightfall. Then they ganged up on her husband 'Ali and killed him and ran off with all his belongings. In the morning, she was with us at Shayzar. She said, 'On behalf of the Muslims, I was angry because of what this infidel was doing to them.' Thus, she gave the people a respite from that devil. We took special consideration for her, given what she did. She stayed with us and was treated with great generosity and respect.

#### § *A Frankish Woman Fights Back*

There was an amir in Egypt named Nada al-Sulayhi,<sup>229</sup> who had two scars on his face. One went from his right eyebrow up to his hairline, the other from his left eyebrow up to his hairline. I asked him about them and he told me:

When I was young, I used to go out on raids from Ascalon on foot. One day, I was on a raid on the road to Jerusalem hoping maybe to knock off some Frankish pilgrims. We came across a group of them. I encountered one of them, a man carrying a spear, with his woman behind him holding a small rough-ware jar with water in it. The man gave me this first spear-wound, at which point I hit him [129] and killed him. Then his wife advanced on me and struck me with that rough-ware jar in my face and made this other scar. Both of them left their mark on my face.

#### § *Intrepid Women: A Shayzari Woman Captures Frankish Pilgrims*

Here is an example of the intrepid spirit of women. A group of Frankish pilgrims went on pilgrimage and, on their return, they passed through Rafaniya, which belonged to them at the time.<sup>230</sup> They then left it, making for Apamea. But during the night they got lost and wound up at Shayzar, which at that time did not have any town-walls. So they entered the town, and they were about seven, maybe eight hundred people including men, women and children. But the army of Shayzar had already left town in the company of my uncles Sultan and Fakhr al-Din Shafi' (may God have mercy upon them both) to meet

two brides whom my uncles had married. They were sisters of the Bann Sufi family, originally of Aleppo. However, my father (may God have mercy upon him) was in the citadel. It happened that a man went outside the city on an errand during the night and came across a Frank there. So he came back, grabbed his sword and went out and killed him. Then he raised the alarm throughout the town. The populace rushed out and attacked the Franks, seizing what they could of their women, children, silver and beasts of burden.

In Shayzar, there was a woman called Nadra bint Buzurnat, the wife of one of our comrades. She went out with the rest of the populace and took a Frank captive and brought him back to her house. Then she went out and captured another one and brought him back to her house, then went and captured another. So three Frankish captives were collected at her house. After taking what suited her from their possessions, she went out and called for a group of her neighbours, who came and killed them.

During the night, my two uncles and the troops arrived. Now, some of the Franks had taken flight and so some of the men from Shayzar had pursued and killed them in the hinterland of the town. The horses of my uncles' army, [130] in the dark of the night, started stumbling over the dead bodies without knowing what they were stumbling over, until one of them dismounted and noticed the corpses in the darkness. That terrified our men, who thought that the town had been taken by surprise.

*§ Franks do not Mix: From Queen-Mother to Shoemaker's Wife*

That was a source of plunder that God (the Glorious, the Almighty) bestowed upon our people. A number of serving-girls were taken from the ranks of these prisoners and passed on to the house of my father (may God have mercy upon him). But the Franks (God curse them) are an accursed race that will not become accustomed to anyone not of their own race. My father spotted among them a lovely young serving-girl, so he said to the manager of his household,<sup>231</sup> 'Bring this one into the baths,

repair her clothes and get her ready for a journey.' And so she was prepared. My father then handed her over to a servant of his and packed her off to the amir Malik ibn Salim, the lord of Qal'at Ja'bar, who was a friend of his.

My father wrote a message to him, explaining, 'We have captured some plunder from the Franks. I send you a share of it herewith.' Malik found the girl very agreeable, and he was pleased with her, and took her for his very own. In time she bore him a son, named Badran. Malik made him his heir apparent, and then he came of age and his father died. Badran then took control of the town and its populace, though his mother was the real power. She hatched a plot with a group of people and let herself down from the castle by a rope. The group of people took her to Saruj,<sup>232</sup> which belonged at that time to the Franks. So: she married a Frankish shoemaker, while her son was the lord of Qal'at Ja'bar!

*§ A Frank Converts to Islam, Temporarily*

Among those Frankish captives who passed into my father's household was an old woman accompanied by her daughter – a young woman, beautifully formed – and a son who had come of age. The son converted to Islam and was quite a good Muslim, judging from what one saw of his praying and fasting. He learned the craft of working with marble from a stonecutter who used to [131] cut stone for my father's house. After staying for a long time in my father's household, my father gave him as wife a woman from a pious family and paid all the expenses required for his wedding and home. His wife bore him two sons and they grew well and their father was pleased with them.

When the boys were six or seven years old, their father, the attendant Ra'ul, took them and their mother and everything he had in his house and, the next day, joined the Franks at Apamea. There, he and his sons became Christian again after having been Muslim, despite all their praying and fasting. May God (may He be exalted) purify the world of these people!

§ *The 'Wonders' of the Frankish Race*<sup>233</sup>

[132] Glory be to the Creator, the Maker! Indeed, when a person relates matters concerning the Franks, he *should* give glory to God and sanctify Him! For he will see them to be mere beasts possessing no other virtues but courage and fighting, just as beasts have only the virtues of strength and the ability to carry loads. I shall now relate something of their ways and the wonders of their intelligence.

§ *The Franks' Lack of Intelligence:*  
*An Invitation to Visit Europe*

In the army of King Fulk, son of Fulk, there was a respected Frankish knight who had come from their country just to go on pilgrimage and then return home. He grew to like my company and he became my constant companion, calling me 'my brother'. Between us there were ties of amity and sociability. When he resolved to take to the sea back to his country, he said to me:

'My brother, I am leaving for my country. I want you to send your son (my son, who was with me, was fourteen years old) with me to my country, where he can observe the knights and acquire reason and chivalry. When he returns, he will be like a truly rational man.'

And so there fell upon my ears words that would never come from a truly rational head! For even if my son were taken captive, his captivity would not be as long as any voyage he might take to the land of the Franks.

So I said, 'By your life, I was hoping for this very thing. But the only thing that has prevented me from doing so is the fact that his grandmother adores him and almost did not allow him to come here with me until she had exacted an oath from me that I would return him to her.'

'Your mother,' he asked, 'she is still alive?'

'Yes,' I replied.

'Then do not disobey her,' he said.

§ *The Marvels of Frankish Medicine*

Here is an example of the marvellous nature of their medicine. The lord of al-Munayyira<sup>234</sup> wrote to my uncle to request that he send him a physician to treat some of his companions who were ill. So my uncle sent him a native Christian physician called [133] Thabit. He was barely gone ten days when he returned to Shayzar. So we said to him, 'My, you healed your patients so quickly!' He explained:

They brought before me a knight in whose leg an abscess had formed and a woman who was stricken with a dryness of humours.<sup>235</sup> So I made a small poultice for the knight and the abscess opened up and he was healed. For the woman, I prescribed a special diet and increased the wetness of her humours. Then a Frankish physician came to them and said, 'This fellow don't know how to treat them.' He then said to the knight, 'Which would you like better: living with one leg or dying with both?' 'Living with one leg,' replied the knight. The physician then said, 'Bring me a strong knight and a sharp axe.' A knight appeared with an axe – indeed, I was just there – and the physician laid the leg of the patient on a block of wood and said to the knight with the axe, 'Strike his leg with the axe and cut it off with one blow.' So he struck him – I'm telling you I watched him do it – with one blow, but it didn't chop the leg all the way off. So he struck him a second time, but the marrow flowed out of the leg and he died instantly.

He then examined the woman and said, 'This woman, there is a demon inside her head that has possessed her. Shave off her hair.' So they shaved her head. The woman then returned to eating their usual diet – garlic and mustard. As a result, her dryness of humours increased. So the physician said, 'That demon has entered further into her head.' So he took a razor and made a cut in her head in the shape of a cross. He then peeled back the skin so that the skull was exposed and rubbed it with salt. The woman died instantaneously. So I asked them, 'Do you need anything else from me?' 'No,' they said. And so I left, having

learned about their medicine things I had never known before.

Now, I have observed in their medicine a case exactly the opposite of this. Their king<sup>236</sup> named as treasurer one of their knights, called Bernard (may God curse him), one of the most accursed and filthy Franks around. A horse kicked him in his leg and his lower leg started to fester and open up in fourteen different places. Every time these wounds [r34] would close in one place, another would open somewhere else. I prayed that he would just perish. But then a Frankish physician came and removed all the ointments that were on him and had him washed with strong vinegar. The wounds closed up and he was well and up again, like the very devil.

Here is another wondrous example of their medicine. We had at Shayzar an artisan called Abu al-Fath, who had a son on whose neck scrofula sores had formed. Every time one would close in one place, another would open up in another place. Once Abu al-Fath went to Antioch on an errand and his son accompanied him. A Frankish man noticed him and asked him about the boy. 'He is my son,' Abu al-Fath said.

The Frank said to him, 'Do you swear to me by your religion that, if I prescribe for you some medicine that will cure your boy, you will not charge money from anyone else whom you yourself treat with it?'

Our man swore to that effect. The Frank then said, 'Take him some uncrushed leaves of glasswort, burn them, then soak the ashes in olive oil and strong vinegar. Treat him with this until it eats up the pustules in the affected area. Then take some fire-softened lead and soak it in butter. Then treat the boy with this and he will get well.'

So our man treated the boy as he was told and the boy got well. The wounds closed up and he returned to his previous state of health. I have myself treated people afflicted by this ailment with this remedy, and it was beneficial and removed all of their complaints.

### § *Newly Arrived Franks are the Roughest*

Anyone who is recently arrived from the Frankish lands is rougher in character than those who have become acclimated and have frequented the company of Muslims. Here is an instance of their rough character (may God abominate them!):

Whenever I went to visit the holy sites in Jerusalem, I would go in and make my way up to the al-Aqsa Mosque,<sup>237</sup> beside which stood a small mosque that the Franks had converted into a church. When I went into the al-Aqsa Mosque – where the Templars, who are my friends, were – [r35] they would clear out that little mosque so that I could pray in it. One day, I went into the little mosque, recited the opening formula 'God is great' and stood up in prayer. At this, one of the Franks rushed at me and grabbed me and turned my face towards the east, saying, 'Pray like *this!*'

A group of Templars hurried towards him, took hold of the Frank and took him away from me. I then returned to my prayers. The Frank, that very same one, took advantage of their inattention and returned, rushing upon me and turning my face to the east, saying, 'Pray like *this!*'

So the Templars came in again, grabbed him and threw him out. They apologized to me, saying, 'This man is a stranger, just arrived from the Frankish lands sometime in the past few days. He has never before seen anyone who did not pray towards the east.'

'I think I've prayed quite enough,' I said and left. I used to marvel at that devil, the change of his expression, the way he trembled and what he must have made of seeing someone praying towards Mecca.<sup>238</sup>

### § *When God was Young*

I saw one of the Franks come up to the amir Mu'in al-Din (may God have mercy upon him) while he was in the Dome of the Rock,<sup>239</sup> and say, 'Would you like to see God when He was young?'

'Why yes,' Mu'in al-Din replied.

So this Frank walked in front of us until he brought us to an

icon of Mary and the Messiah (Peace be upon him) when he was a child, sitting in her lap. 'This is God when He was young,' he said.

May God be exalted far beyond what the infidels say!<sup>240</sup>

§ *Franks have no Honour or Propriety*

The Franks possess nothing in the way of regard for honour or propriety.<sup>241</sup> One of them might be walking along with his wife and run into another man. This other man might then take his wife to one side and chat with her, while the husband just stands there waiting for her to finish her conversation. And if she takes too long, he'll just leave her alone with her conversation partner and walk away!

[136] Here is an example that I myself witnessed. Whenever I went to Nablus, I used to stay at the home of a man called Mu'izz, whose home was the lodging-house for Muslims. The house had windows that opened onto the road and, across from it on the other side of the road, there was a house belonging to a Frankish man who sold wine for the merchants. He would take some wine in a bottle and go around advertising it, saying, 'So-and-So the merchant has just opened a cask of this wine. Whoever wishes to buy some can find it at such-and-such a place.' And the fee he charged for making that announcement was the wine in the bottle. So one day, he came back home and discovered a man in bed with his wife. The Frank said to the man, 'What business brings you here to my wife?'

'I got tired,' the man replied, 'so I came in to rest.'

'But how did you get into my bed?' asked the Frank.

'I found a bed that was all made up, so I went to sleep in it,' he replied.

'While my wife was sleeping there with you?' the Frank pursued.

'Well, it's her bed,' the man offered. 'Who am I to keep her out of it?'

'By the truth of my religion,' the Frank said, 'if you do this again, we'll have an argument, you and I!'

And that was all the disapproval he would muster and the extent of his sense of propriety!<sup>242</sup>

Here is another example. We had with us a bath-keeper called Salim, who was originally an inhabitant of Ma'arra,<sup>243</sup> and who served in the bath-house of my father (may God have mercy upon him). He told me:

I once opened a bath-house in Ma'arra to earn my living. Once, one of their knights came in. Now, they don't take to people wearing a towel about their waist in the bath, so this knight stretched out his hand, pulled off my towel from my waist and threw it down. He looked at me – I had recently shaved my pubic hair – and said, 'Salim!' Then he moved in closer to me. He then stretched his hand over my groin, saying, 'Salim! Good! By the truth of my religion, do that to me too!'

He then lay down on his back: he had it thick as a beard down in that place! So I shaved him and he passed his hand over it and, finding it smooth to the touch, said, 'Salim, by the truth of your religion, do it to Madame!' – *madame* in their language means 'the lady',<sup>244</sup> meaning his wife. He then told one of his attendants, 'Tell Madame to come here.'

The attendant went and brought her and showed her in. She lay down on her back and the knight said, 'Do her like you did me!' So I shaved her [137] hair there as her husband stood watching me. He then thanked me and paid me my due for the service.

Now, consider this great contradiction! They have no sense of propriety or honour, yet they have immense courage. Yet what is courage but a product of honour and disdain for ill repute?

Here is an example close to that one. I once went to the baths in the city of Tyre<sup>245</sup> and took a seat in a secluded room there. While I was there, one of my attendants in the bath said to me, 'There are women here with us!' When I went outside, I sat down on the benches and, sure enough, the woman who was in the bath had come out and was standing with her father directly across from me, having put her garments on again. But I couldn't be sure if she was a woman. So I said to one of my companions, 'By God, go have a look at this one – is she a

woman?' What I meant was for him to go and ask about her. But instead he went – as I watched – and lifted her hem and pulled it up. At this, her father turned to me and explained, 'This is my daughter. Her mother died, and so she has no one who will wash her hair. I brought her into the bath with me so that I might wash her hair.'

'That's a kind thing you're doing,' I assured him. 'This will bring you heavenly reward.'

### § Another Example of their Medicine

Another example of their wondrous medicine was related to us by William de Bures,<sup>246</sup> lord of Tiberias and a man with some standing among the Franks. It happened that he travelled with the amir Mu'in al-Din (may God have mercy upon him) from Acre to Tiberias, and I accompanied him. On the way, he related to us the following story:

In our land there was a highly esteemed knight who took ill and was on the point of death. We went to one of our notable priests and asked him, 'Will you come with us and have a look at Sir So-and-So?' 'Yes,' he replied and walked back with us. We were certain now that if only he would lay his hands upon him, he would recover. When the priest saw the knight he said, 'Bring me some wax.' So we brought him a bit of wax, which he softened and shaped like a knuckle-bone. Then he inserted one in each nostril and the knight died. [138] 'He's dead!' we remarked. 'Yes,' the priest replied. 'He was in great pain, so I closed up his nose so that he could die and find relief.'

### § Two Old Women Race

*Let this go and bring the conversation back to Harim.*<sup>247</sup>

And let us stop discussing their medical practices and move on to something else.<sup>248</sup>

I was present in Tiberias during one of their feast-days. The knights had gone out to practise fighting with spears, and two decrepit old women went out with them. They positioned the two women at one end of the practice-field and at the other

end they left a pig, which they had roasted and laid on a rock. They then made the two old women race one another, each one accompanied by a detachment of horsemen who cheered her on. At every step, the old women would fall down but then get up again as the audience laughed, until one of them overtook the other and took away the pig as her prize.

### § Examples of Frankish Jurisprudence

I was an eyewitness one day in Nablus when two men came forward to fight a duel. The reason behind it was that some Muslim bandits took one of the villages of Nablus by surprise, and one of the peasants there was accused of complicity. They said, 'He guided the bandits to the village!' So he fled.

But the king sent men to arrest the peasant's sons, so the man came back before the king and said, 'Grant me justice. I challenge to a duel the man who said that I guided the bandits to the village.'

The king said to the lord of the village, its fief-holder, 'Bring before me the man whom he has challenged.'

So the lord went off to his village, where a blacksmith lived, and took him, telling him, 'You will fight in a duel.' This was the fief-holder's way of making sure that none of his peasants [139] would be killed and his farming ruined as a result.

I saw that blacksmith. He was a strong young man, but lacking resolve: he would walk a bit, then sit down and order something to drink. Whereas the other man, who had demanded the duel, was an old man but strong-willed: he would shout taunts as if he had no fears about the duel. Then the *vicomte*<sup>249</sup> came – he is the governor of the town – and gave each one of the duellists a staff and a shield and arranged the people around them in a circle.

The two men met. The old man would press the blacksmith back until he pushed him away as far as the circle of people, then he would return to the centre. They continued exchanging blows until the two of them stood there looking like pillars spattered with blood. The whole affair was going on too long and the *vicomte* began to urge them to hurry, saying, 'Be quick about it!'

The blacksmith benefited from the fact that he was used to swinging a hammer, but the old man was worn out. The blacksmith hit him and he collapsed, his staff falling underneath his back. The blacksmith then crouched on top of him and tried to stick his fingers in the old man's eyes, but couldn't do it because of all the blood. So he stood up and beat the man's head in with his staff until he had killed him. In a flash, they tied a rope round the old man's neck, dragged him off and strung him up. The blacksmith's lord now came and bestowed his own mantle upon him, let him mount behind him on his horse and rode away with him.

And that was but a taste of their jurisprudence and their legal procedure, may God curse them!

On one occasion, I went with the amir Mu'in al-Din (may God have mercy upon him) to Jerusalem, and we stopped at Nablus. While there, a blind man – a young man wearing fine clothes, a Muslim – came out to the amir with some fruit and asked him for permission to be admitted into his service in Damascus. The amir did so. I asked about him and I was told that his mother had been married to a Frank, whom she had killed. Her son used to attempt various ruses on their pilgrims, and he and his mother used to work together to kill them. They finally brought charges against him for that and made him subject to the legal procedure of the Franks, to wit:

They set up a huge cask and filled it with water and stretched a plank of wood across it. Then they bound the arms of the accused, tied a rope around his shoulders and threw him into the cask. If he were innocent, then he would sink in the water and they would then pull him up by that rope so he wouldn't die in the water; if he were guilty, then he would not sink in the water. That man tried [140] eagerly to sink into the water when they threw him in, but he couldn't do it. So he had to submit to their judgment – may God curse them – and they did some work on his eyes.<sup>250</sup>

The man later arrived in Damascus, so the amir Mu'in al-Din (may God have mercy upon him) assigned him a stipend to meet all his needs and said to one of his attendants, 'Take him to Burhan al-Din ibn al-Balkhi'<sup>251</sup> (may God have mercy upon

him) and tell him to order someone to teach the Qur'an and some jurisprudence to this man.'

At this the blind man said, 'Victory and mastery be yours! This wasn't what I was thinking!'

'Then what were you thinking I would do?' asked the amir.

'That you would give me a horse, a mule and weapons, and make a horseman out of me!' the man answered.

The amir then said, 'I never thought that a blind man would join the ranks of our cavalry.'

#### *§ Franks that are Acclimatized are Better*

Among the Franks there are some who have become acclimatized and frequent the company of Muslims. They are much better than those recently arrived from their lands, but they are the exception and should not be considered representative.

Here is an example. I sent one of my men to Antioch on an errand. At the time, Chief Tadrus ibn al-Saff<sup>252</sup> was there, and his word had great influence in Antioch; there was a mutual bond of friendship between us. One day he said to my man, 'A Frankish friend of mine has invited me to his home. You should come along so you can observe their ways.' My man told me:

I went along with him and we came to the home of one of the old knights who came out in one of the first expeditions of the Franks. He was since removed from the stipend-registry and dismissed from service, but he had some property in Antioch off which he lived. He presented a very fine table, with food that was extremely clean and delicious. But seeing me holding back from eating, he said, 'Eat and be of good cheer! For I don't eat Frankish food: I have Egyptian cooking-women and never eat anything except what they cook. And pork never enters my house.' So I ate, though guardedly, and we left.

After passing through the market, a Frankish woman suddenly hung onto me while babbling at me in their language – I didn't understand what she was saying. Then a group of Franks began to gather around me and I was certain that I was going to perish. But suddenly, who

should turn up but that knight, who saw me and approached. He came and said to that woman, [141] 'What's the matter with you and this Muslim?'

'This man killed my brother 'Urs.<sup>253</sup> This 'Urs was a knight in Apamea whom someone from the army of Hama had killed.

The knight shouted at her and said, 'This man is a *bourgeois*<sup>254</sup> (i.e., a merchant), who neither fights nor attends battle.' And he yelled at the assembled crowd and they dispersed. He then took me by the hand and went away. Thus, the effect of that meal was my deliverance from death.

### § Brave Men may Hold Unusual Fears

[142] One of the wonders of the human heart is that a man may face certain death and embark upon every danger without his heart quailing from it, and yet he may take fright from something that even boys and women do not fear.

I have seen my uncle, Sultan (may God have mercy upon him) – who was one of the most courageous members of his household, having taken famous stands in battle and struck renowned spear-thrusts – suddenly, upon seeing a mouse, change the expression on his face, become overcome by shudders at the mere sight of it, and take himself away from the place where he saw it.

Among his attendants was a courageous fellow whose name was Sunduq, known for his bravery and audacity. He was so afraid of snakes that he would practically lose his mind. My father (may God have mercy upon him) said to him as he was standing before my uncle, 'Sunduq, you're a good man, known for your bravery. Aren't you ashamed to be so afraid of snakes?' 'My lord,' he replied, 'what's so surprising about that? In Homs there is a brave man, a hero's hero, who is scared to death of mice,' meaning his master.<sup>255</sup>

And so my uncle (may God have mercy upon him) cursed at him, 'May God abominate you, you dirty so-and-so!'

I also knew a *mamluk* belonging to my father (may God have mercy upon him), called Lu'lu'.<sup>256</sup> A good man, stalwart fellow.

One night I went out from Shayzar, taking with me a large number of mules and other beasts, which I hoped to use to carry some wood that I had cut up in the mountains for a water-wheel that belonged to me. We left the lands surrounding Shayzar, thinking that daybreak was approaching, but we arrived at a village called Dubays before even passing half the night.

So I said, 'Let's set up camp. We shouldn't go into the mountains at night.'

[143] Once we had dismounted and settled in, we heard the neighing of horses.

'The Franks?' we said. So we mounted up in the dark, and I told myself that I would put my spear through one of them and take his horse while they were trying to rustle the animals and capture the men who were tending them.

I said to Lu'lu' and three of the attendants, 'Go ahead and find out what all that neighing is about.'

They went on ahead at full gallop and met some others, lots of people in quite a crowd. Lu'lu' was the first to reach them and said, 'Let's hear it! Or else I'll kill you one and all' – he being an excellent archer.

But they recognized his voice and said, 'Chamberlain Lu'lu'?'

'Yes,' he replied. And what do you know, but they were the army of Hama! They were under the command of the amir Sayf al-Din Sawar<sup>257</sup> (may God have mercy upon him), and had made a raid on the lands of the Franks and were on their way back home. Such was this man's audacity against that crowd. Yet if he should see a snake in his house, he would run out fleeing, saying to his wife, 'The snake's all yours! And she would have to get up and kill it.'

### § The Devil is in the Details

The warrior, even if he is lion-hearted, can be ruined and reduced to impotence by the most trifling impediment, as happened to me before Homs. I rode out, but my horse was killed and I was struck by fifty swords – all through the execution of the divine will and, on top of it, through the sloppiness of my groom in arranging the reins of my bride. He attached the reins

to the rings without sliding them all the way through. So when I pulled on the reins, hoping to escape from the enemy, the reins came undone from the rings and there happened to me what happened.

One day, the alarm was sounded at Shayzar, from the south. We suited up and prepared ourselves. But it [144] was a false alarm. My father and uncle (may God have mercy upon the two of them) went away but I stayed behind. The alarm was then sounded from the north, from the direction of the Franks. I galloped on my horse towards the sound of the alarm and saw our men crossing the ford,<sup>258</sup> some riding on the shoulders of the others, shouting, 'The Franks!'

I crossed the ford and told the men, 'Don't worry, I stand between you and the enemy!' I then galloped up to Rabiyyat al-Qaramita and there were the enemy cavalry, advancing in a large body, preceded by a horseman wearing a mail hauberk and a helmet. He was already close to me. So I made straight for him, taking the opportunity to attack some of his comrades after him. He stood ready to receive me. But the moment I spurred my horse on towards him, my stirrup snapped. And there was no way for me to avoid meeting him. So I confronted him without a stirrup. When we got so close to one another that there was nothing to do but thrust our spears about, the horseman greeted me and offered his services to me, for it was none other than Commander<sup>259</sup> Umar, the uncle of Commander Zayn al-Din Isma'îl. He had gone out with the army of Hama to the territory of Kafarrab, where the Franks made a sortie against them. So they returned to Shayzar in flight, led by the amir Sawar (may God have mercy upon him).

Thus, the best course for the warrior to follow is to inspect the tack on his horse frequently. For even the smallest and most insignificant of things can lead to injury and destruction – all that dependent upon the course of fate and destiny.

#### § *A Lion-Slayer Wounded by a Hyena*

I have witnessed the killing of lions on occasions beyond reckoning. A certain number of these I have killed without anyone joining me in the kill and without any sort of injury befalling me.

Yet, one day, I went out on the chase with my father (may God have mercy upon him) on a mountain close to town, hunting partridges with goshawks. My father – and we with him – and the astringers were on top of the mountain, while some attendants and other astringers were at the foot of the mountain for when the hawks released their prey and to locate the birds' coverts. Suddenly, a female hyena appeared before us and went into a cave. In the cave there was its den, which it entered. So I shouted to an attendant of mine, a groom named Yusuf. He stripped off [145] his clothes, took up his knife and went into that den, while I had a *quntariya*-spear in my hands pointed at that spot so that if the hyena came out I could strike it.

Suddenly, my attendant shouted, 'It's headed out your way!' So I thrust my spear at it, but missed, as the hyena has a slight body.

Then my attendant shouted, 'I've got another hyena here!' And it rushed out on the heels of the first.

I stood up and took position at the door of the cave – which was narrow, but about the height of two men – and looked out to see what our companions in the plain were doing about the hyenas that had come down their way. As I was busy looking at the first two, yet a third hyena came rushing out, knocked me over and threw me down from the door of the cave to the surface of the ground, almost breaking me in two. Thus was I injured by a female hyena, yet never hurt by lions. Glory be to He who determines destinies, who sets all things in motion!

#### § *Faint-Hearted Men*

I have witnessed weakness and faint-heartedness in men that I never thought to see even in women. Here is an example:

One day, I was at the door of the house of my father (may God have mercy upon him). I was just a young boy, not being more than ten years old. An attendant belonging to my father named Muhammad al-Ajami slapped one of the young servants of the house. The latter ran away from him and came and clung to my clothes. The attendant Muhammad caught up with him and slapped him again, even as he clutched at my clothes. So I

struck back at him with a rod I happened to have in my hand and he pushed back at me. I then pulled out a knife from my waist and stabbed him with it. It struck his left breast and he fell down. An older attendant belonging to my father called Commander Asad came, examined him and saw the wound – whenever he breathed, blood spurted out of it like bubbles of water. Asad turned pale, shuddered and fell in a faint. In that state he was carried away to his house – he used to live with us in the citadel. He did not regain consciousness until the last part of the day. But by then the injured attendant was dead and buried.

Here is something similar to that example. A man from Aleppo used to visit us in Shayzar, a man possessing virtue and refinement. He played chess continuously, even when he was away. He was called Abu al-Murajja Salim ibn Thabit (may God have mercy upon him). He used to stay with us for a year, maybe more, maybe less. If by chance [146] he became ill, the physician would prescribe blood-letting for him. And when the blood-letting would appear before him, Abu al-Murajja would turn pale and start to shudder. And when the blood-letting actually bled him, Abu al-Murajja would faint and remain unconscious until the incisions were bandaged up. Only then did he recover.

#### § *Stout-Hearted Men*

Here is an example that contrasts with the above. Among our comrades of the Banu Kinana, there was a black man called 'Ali ibn Faraj, in whose foot there developed a pustule, which just became worse. His toes fell off and the rest of his leg began to rot. The surgeon said to him, 'There is no treatment for your leg except amputation. If you don't have it done, you will die.'

So the surgeon went and got a saw and started to saw his leg until 'Ali fainted from the loss of blood. Once he regained consciousness, the surgeon would start sawing away again until finally he cut his leg off at the middle. They treated it and it was healed.

This 'Ali (may God have mercy upon him) was one of the most enduring and powerful men. He used to ride in the saddle

with one foot in a stirrup and, on the other side, he would put his knee in a strap. In this state he would attend battle and exchange spear-thrusts with the Franks. I used to see him with my own eyes (may God have mercy upon him): no man could match him at arm-wrestling or keep a hold on him.

Yet with all his strength and courage, he was a light-hearted fellow. Early one morning, while he and the Banu Kinana were living in our fortress at the Bridge, he sent a message to some of the leaders of the Banu Kinana, saying, 'It's a rainy day today and I haven't got any flour, bread or wine in the house. Yet all of you have in your homes everything you need for the day. I propose that you send to your homes and have your food and wine brought out – I'll provide the house. Let's get together today to drink and shoot the breeze.'

To this they all replied, 'Fine! Great idea, [147] 'Ali!'

They then sent for and brought out all the food and drink from their homes and passed their day at his place. He was quite a respected man. Exalted is He who created His creatures in various sorts!<sup>360</sup> How can the endurance and stout-heartedness of this man be compared to the weakness and faint-heartedness of those others?

The following is an example similar to that case. A man from the Banu Kinana told me at the Bridge Fortress that there was a man there who had been afflicted with dropsy. But he sliced open his stomach and recovered, returning to health as he was before. I said, 'I would like to examine this man and get some information out of him.'

The one who told me about this man was someone from the Banu Kinana called Ahmad ibn Ma'bad ibn Ahmad. He brought the man before me and I got information from him about his condition and how he did what he did to himself. He said:

I am just a poor beggar, all on my own. My abdomen became afflicted with dropsy and I got so big that I was unable to move, and I grew weary of life. So I took a razor and cut myself with it above my navel, across my abdomen, and sliced myself open. About two cooking-pots-worth of

water (meaning two measures) came out of it. The water continued to seep out until my abdomen shrank back. I then stitched it up, treated the wound and it was healed. In this way my ailment passed.

He then showed me the scar where he had sliced himself open on his abdomen, which was more than a span in length. There is no doubt that this man still had a livelihood on earth that was yet due to him.

In other cases, I have seen people afflicted with dropsy who had their physician bleed their abdomen and extract water from it – just as the water came out of this man who punctured himself – yet who nevertheless died from the blood-letting. Fate is indeed an impregnable citadel.

### § *Only God can Bring Victory in Battle*

Victory in war is from God alone (may He be blessed and exalted), not from organization or skilled conduct, and not from strength of numbers of troops or allies.

Whenever my uncle (may God have mercy upon him) used to send me to fight Turks or Franks, I would ask him, 'My lord, tell me how I should conduct myself when I finally meet the enemy.'

'War conducts itself, my boy,' he would say. And he was right.

[148] He once asked me to take his wife, Khaturun<sup>261</sup> bint Taj al-Dawla Tutush, and his sons with the army and proceed to Masraf Castle, which belonged to him at the time, hoping to spare them the heat of Shayzar.<sup>262</sup> I rode out, and my father and uncle (may God have mercy upon them both) rode with us for part of the way, and then returned, accompanied only by the young *mamluks* to lead the pack horses and carry the weapons. The entire army remained with me. When my father and uncle approached the town, they heard the beating of war-drums coming from the Bridge.<sup>263</sup> They said, 'Something is happening down at the Bridge,' and spurred their horses towards it. At the time, there was a truce between us and the Franks (may God curse them!). Nevertheless, the Franks had

sent some men to scout a ford for them by which they might cross over to the part of town by the Bridge. This was on a peninsula to which no one could cross except by an arched bridge of stone and lime mortar, and which the Franks could not reach. But a scout showed them a place to ford. So they all rode from Apamea and, the next morning, found themselves at that spot that the scout had indicated. They then crossed the water, took possession of the town, pillaged it, took away prisoners and killed some people. They dispatched some of the plunder and captives back to Apamea. They also took possession of the houses, every one of them affixing a cross-symbol to a house and raising his banner over it.

When my father and uncle (may God have mercy upon them both) approached the citadel, the inhabitants shouted, 'God is great!' and gave forth a cry. In this way God, glory be to Him, struck terror and despair into the Franks and so they forgot the spot by which they had crossed. Dressed in their mail hauberts, they urged their horses into the river where there was no ford. As a result, a large number of them were drowned. A rider would plunge into the water, fall from his saddle and sink in the water, only the horse coming out of it. Those of them that survived ran away in flight, [149] without anyone paying heed to anyone else. And although they were a numerous force, my father and uncle had with them only ten young *mamluks*.

My uncle took position at the Bridge, while my father returned to Shayzar. As for me, I delivered the sons of my uncle to Masraf and returned home on the same day, arriving in the evening. I was informed about what had happened, so I presented myself before my father (may God have mercy upon him) and sought his counsel over whether I should go and join my uncle at the Bridge Fortress.

'You will arrive at night,' he said, 'while they are sleeping. Go to them instead early in the morning.'

And so the next morning I went out and presented myself before my uncle. We went riding and stopped at that spot where the Franks had drowned. A group of swimmers had come down to the place and were pulling out some of their dead horsemen.

'My lord? I said to my uncle, 'why don't we cut off their heads and dispatch them to Shayzar?'

'Make it so,' he replied. We cut off about twenty heads and the blood flowed from the dead bodies as if they had been killed that very moment, yet they had been there a day and a night. I believe the water preserved the blood inside them. The local people took many weapons from them as plunder, including mail, swords, *quntariya*-spears, helmets and mail chausses.<sup>264</sup>

Indeed, I saw one of the peasants of the Bridge present himself before my uncle with his hand beneath his clothes.

My uncle said to him, playfully, 'And what is it you've set aside for me as plunder, then?'

He replied, 'I have set aside for you a charger with its tack and horse armour,<sup>265</sup> a shield and a sword.' And he went and brought this all before him.

My uncle accepted the horse's tack, but granted the charger to him, and asked, 'But what's that in your hand?'

'My lord,' the peasant replied, 'me and a Frank got to grappling and I didn't have any gear or sword. So I threw him down and punched him in the face, even though he was covered with an aventail, until I knocked him out. Then I took his sword and killed him with it. But the skin on my knuckles was all torn to shreds and my hand swelled up and was of no use to me.'

He then showed us his hand, which was just as he had said – even the bones of his fingers were exposed.

In the garrison of the Bridge was a Kurdish man called Abu al-Jaysh, who had a daughter named Raful, who had been carried off by the Franks. Abu al-Jaysh became pathologically obsessed with her, saying to everyone [rso] he met, 'Raful has been taken captive!'

The next morning we went out to walk along the river and we saw a form by the bank of the river. We told one of the attendants, 'Swim over there and find out what that thing is.'

He made his way over to it, and what should the form be but Raful, dressed in a blue garment. She had thrown herself from the horse of the Frank who had captured her and drowned. Her dress was caught in a willow-tree. In this way were the pangs of despair of her father silenced.

Thus, the cry that frightened the Franks, their flight and their destruction were all due to the benevolence of God, the Mighty and Majestic, not due to any power or army. Blessed indeed is God, who is capable of whatever He wills.

### § *Overawing the Enemy in War*

That said, overawing the enemy can sometimes be effective in warfare. Here is an example:

In the year 529 (spring 1135), the atabeg arrived in Syria, and I with him, and he continued onward intending for Damascus.<sup>266</sup> When we encamped at al-Qutayyifa, al-Yaghisiyani (may God have mercy upon him) said to me, 'Saddle up and go ahead of us to al-Fustuqa.<sup>267</sup> Take up a position along the road so that none of the troops can flee towards Damascus.'

So I went on ahead and took up my position for a while, when al-Yaghisiyani arrived at the head of a small detachment of his comrades. We could see smoke coming from 'Adhra', so we sent some cavalry to go and find out what all the smoke was. It turned out it was a detachment from the army of Damascus burning the hay in 'Adhra', and they took flight. Al-Yaghisiyani pursued them, with us accompanying him, amounting to maybe thirty or forty horsemen, and we arrived at al-Qusayr, where what should we find, but the army of Damascus in its entirety, cutting us off from the bridge. We were by then at the Khan itself.<sup>268</sup> So we halted, taking cover behind the Khan. [rsr] Five or six of our horsemen would then go out so that the army of Damascus could catch sight of them, and then they would go back behind the Khan, fooling them into thinking we had set up an ambush there.

In the meantime, al-Yaghisiyani sent a horseman to the atabeg to inform him of what we were up against. Soon we saw about ten horsemen approaching us at top speed, our army marshalled behind them. The horsemen arrived at our position and we saw that it was the atabeg leading the vanguard, with the army in tow.

The atabeg rebuked al-Yaghisiyani for what he had done, saying, 'You ran ahead to the very gate of Damascus with only thirty horsemen just to ruin my reputation!'<sup>269</sup> And he cast

blame on him. They were both speaking in Turkish, so I did not understand what they were saying.

When the vanguard of the army arrived, I said to al-Yaghisiyani, 'By your leave, I will take these men who have just arrived, cross over to the Damascene cavalry stationed opposite us and dislodge them.'

'No,' he replied. 'Whoever loyally works in the service of this man is a dirty little so-and-so!<sup>270</sup> Didn't you just hear what he said to me?'

Had it not been for the benevolence of God (may He be exalted), and that attempt to overawe and play with the imagination of the enemy, they would have removed us.

A similar thing happened to me. I had set out with my uncle (may God have mercy upon him) from Shayzar, making for Kafartab. We were accompanied by a crowd of peasants and beggars who were to plunder the crops and cotton in the environs of Kafartab. The people all spread out in plunder, while the cavalry of Kafartab had taken to their mounts and were positioned outside town. But we stood between them and the people spreading out through the fields and cotton. Suddenly, one of our comrades, a horseman, came galloping from the scouts and said, 'The cavalry of Apamea has come!'

At this, my uncle said, 'You take up your position opposite the cavalry of Kafartab, while I go at the head of the troops to intercept the cavalry of Apamea.'

I took up my position with ten horsemen, hidden in the midst of some olive trees. Of these, three or four would leave us to worry the imaginations of the Franks, and then return to the olive trees. The Franks, thinking that we were a large group, would assemble, cry out and urge their horses [152] closer to us. But we remained unfazed and they retreated. We remained in that position until my uncle returned, having routed the Franks who had come from Apamea.

One of his attendants said to him, 'My lord, did you see what he (meaning me) has done? He stayed behind and didn't go with you to intercept the cavalry of Apamea.'

My uncle responded, 'If it were not for the fact that he took his position with ten horsemen opposite the cavalry and

infantry of Kafartab, the Franks would have taken the whole crowd captive.'

Thus, overawing and playing upon the imagination of the Franks was, on that occasion, more effective than fighting them, since we were but a small detachment and they a large group.

I was involved in a similar case at Damascus. One day, I was accompanying the amir Mu'in al-Din (may God have mercy upon him) when a horseman came to him and said, 'Bandits have captured a caravan carrying a load of raw cloth up in the pass!'

'Let's ride after them,' he said to me.

'As you command,' I replied. 'But order the officers of the guard<sup>271</sup> to have the troops ride out with you.'

'What do we need the troops for?' he asked.

'Would it hurt to have them ride with us?' I responded.

'We don't need them,' he retorted. He was one of the bravest of horsemen, but in certain circumstances, such stout-heartedness can be a fatal flaw and a real liability.

We rode out with about twenty horsemen. Shortly before noon, we sent two horsemen out this way, two that way, two yet another way and one horseman some other way in order to reconnoitre the roads. We continued on our way in a small band and then the time for mid-afternoon prayer came. Mu'in al-Din said to an attendant of mine, 'Sawin, go up and keep watch to the west until we are done praying.' We had barely finished the last of our prayers when that attendant came galloping towards us.

'There are men on foot,' he said, 'bearing bolts of raw cloth on their head, down in the valley!'

'Let's ride!' said Mu'in al-Din (may God have mercy upon him).

'Give us a second to put on our *kazabands*. Then when we find the bandits, we can charge at them with our horses and run them through with our spears, and they won't even be able to tell whether we are many or few.'

The amir replied, 'We can put our armour on when we get there!' [153] and rode off as we headed towards them.

We encountered them in the Valley of Halbun,<sup>272</sup> which is a narrow valley where the distance between the two mountains alongside is perhaps five cubits. The mountains on either side are rough and steep and the path is so narrow that horsemen can only pass through one after the other. Yet the bandits were about seventy men, wielding bows and arrows.

When we reached the bandits, our attendants were still behind us with our weapons and unable to get to us. And those bandits: there was a group of them in the valley and a group of them on the slope of the mountain. But I thought that the people in the valley were our men, some peasants from the village who had come out in pursuit of the bandits, and that the men on the slope of the mountain were the real bandits. So I drew my sword and charged those who were on the slope. My horse climbed up that rough slope but nearly breathed its last breath. When I got to them, with my horse stopped still, unable to advance further, one of the bandits nocked an arrow in his bow to shoot me. But I shouted at him and threatened him and he held back. I then made my horse climb down again, hardly believing that I had escaped from them.

The amir Mu'in al-Din climbed to the top of the mountain, thinking he could find some peasants there that he could get to chase the bandits. He shouted at me from the top of the mountain, 'Don't leave them before I get back!' and then disappeared from sight.

So I returned to that group in the valley, having learned in the meantime that they were part of the bandit-party. I charged at them on my own, due to the narrowness of the place, and they fled, throwing down the raw cloth they had with them. I also liberated two animals that were likewise bearing loads of raw cloth. The bandits climbed up to a cave on the slope of the mountain as we watched them, without us having any way to get to them.

The amir Mu'in al-Din (may God have mercy upon him) came back at the end of the day without finding anyone to get to chase the bandits. If we had only had the army with us, we would have struck off all the heads of those bandits and recovered everything that they had with them.

Something like this happened to me on another occasion, too. It was a result of the execution of the divine will and also a lack of experience in warfare. It happened like this:

We set out with the amir Khusrav ibn [154] Talil, making for Damascus to enter the service of Nur al-Din<sup>273</sup> (may God have mercy upon him), eventually arriving at Homs. When Khusrav decided to continue via the Baalbek road, I said to him, 'I'll go on ahead of you so I can have a look at the Church of Baal,<sup>274</sup> until you arrive.'

'Make it so,' he replied.

I mounted up and set out. When I was inside the church, a horseman arrived from Khusrav, with his message: 'Some bandits on foot have attacked a caravan and captured it. Saddle up and meet me in the mountains.'

So I mounted my horse and met up with him. We climbed into the mountains and spotted the bandits in a valley below us, the mountain that we were on being surrounded by the valley in question. One of Khusrav's companions said to him, 'You should go down and get them.'

But I said, 'You shouldn't do that. Let's instead make our way around the mountain until we get right above their heads and we can interpose ourselves between them and their path off to the west and then capture them.' For the bandits had come from the territory of the Franks.

Another person said, 'In the time it will take us to go around the mountain, we could go down and capture them.' So we went down. But once the bandits caught sight of us, they climbed up into the mountains.

So Khusrav said to me, 'Climb up after them!' I tried my hardest to climb up, but I could not do it.

Now, there remained six or seven of our horsemen on the mountain. They went on foot, leading their horses with them, towards the bandits, who formed a large group. The bandits attacked our comrades and killed two of our horsemen. They took their two horses as well as another horse, whose owner survived safely. The bandits then climbed down the opposite side of the mountain with their plunder.

And so we went back, two of our horsemen dead, and three

horses and a caravan captured. This heedless risk-taking was the result of a lack of experience in matters of war.

§ *Risk-Taking: A Warrior's Duty*

As for taking risks in acts of valour, it does not happen because one has renounced life. Indeed, it comes about when a man [155] becomes known for his audacity and is given the label of courage. When he then takes part in battle, his ambition demands that he perform noteworthy deeds that his peers cannot accomplish. His spirit so quails at death and riding into danger that it almost overwhelms him, stopping him from what he wants to do, until he forces his spirit and makes it undertake that which it hates to do. As a result, shudders spread throughout his body and his colour changes. But when he enters into battle, his terror disappears and his cravenness subsides.

I was present at the siege of the citadel of al-Sawr with the King of Amirs, the atabeg Zangi (may God have mercy upon him), someone I have already touched on. The citadel belonged to the amir Qara Arslan (may God have mercy upon him), and was fully manned with crossbowmen. This was after Zangi's defeat at Amid.<sup>275</sup> As soon as his tents were set up, Zangi dispatched one of his comrades, who shouted up underneath the citadel, 'Enemy crossbowmen! The atabeg says to you, "By the grace of the sultan, if but one of my comrades is killed by your arrows, I will absolutely cut off your hands."'

Zangi then set up the mangonels against the citadel, which took down one side of it. But not enough of it was brought down for the men to use the breach to get up into the citadel. However, one of the atabeg's bodyguards, a man from Aleppo called Ibn al-'Ariq, climbed up through the breach and set to striking the enemy with his sword. But they injured him with a number of wounds and threw him down from the tower into the moat. By then, our men had overwhelmed them at that breach and we took possession of the citadel. The representatives of the atabeg climbed up to the citadel and took possession of its keys, sending them to Timurash, and granting Zangi the citadel.

[156] Now, it happened that a crossbow-bolt struck a man

from the Khurasanian troops in his knee, cutting through the cap that is on top of the joint, and he died. The moment the atabeg took possession of the citadel, therefore, he summoned the crossbowmen, who were nine in number. They came with their bows slung from their shoulders. Zangi ordered that their thumbs be sliced from their wrists so their hands became limp and useless.

As for Ibn al-'Ariq, he treated his wounds and recovered after being at death's door. He was a brave man who pushed himself to face all manner of dangers.

I saw something like that on yet another occasion. The atabeg had encamped before the citadel of al-Bari'a,<sup>276</sup> which is surrounded by solid rock upon which tents cannot be pitched. The atabeg therefore encamped in the plain and delegated his amirs to conduct the siege in turns. One day, the atabeg rode over to the siege; it was the turn of the amir Abu Bakr al-Dubaysi,<sup>277</sup> but he did not have sufficient materiel for battle. The atabeg stopped there and said to Abu Bakr, 'Advance and fight them!' So Abu Bakr marched at the head of his comrades even though they were practically unarmed, and the infantrymen from the citadel came out to attack them. At this, one of Abu Bakr's comrades, called Mazryad, who was not then known for his prowess in battle or his courage, came forward and fought furiously, striking at them with his sword and dispersing their crowds. He was wounded many times. I saw him as they carried him back to camp and he was about to breathe his last breath. But then later he got well. Abu Bakr al-Dubaysi presented him and Zangi promoted him and invested him with a robe of honour and made him a member of his own bodyguard.

§ *The Brutality of al-Yaghisiyani*

The atabeg used to say to me, 'I have three retainers:<sup>278</sup> one of them fears God (may He be exalted) but does not fear me [157] (meaning Zayn al-Din 'Ali Kujak, may God have mercy upon him); the second fears me, but does not fear God (may He be exalted) (meaning Nasir al-Din Sunqur, may God have mercy upon him); and the third fears neither God nor me (meaning Salah al-Din al-Yaghisiyani, may God have mercy upon him).'

I witnessed something of al-Yaghisiyani (may God overlook his excesses) that confirms what the atabeg said. One day we marched against Homs. But the night before, such a great rain had fallen on the ground that the horses were unable to manage with the thick layer of mud there, while our infantry were already engaged. Al-Yaghisiyani had hated and I was by his side, and we could see the infantry before us. Just then, one of our infantrymen ran over to the infantry of Homs and hid among them while al-Yaghisiyani watched him. So he said to one of his comrades, 'Go and fetch the man who was next to the one who deserted.' And he went and got him.

Al-Yaghisiyani asked him, 'Who was that who fled from his post by your side and entered Homs?'

'By God, my lord,' the soldier replied, 'I don't know him.'

'Cut this man in half!' ordered al-Yaghisiyani.

At this, I said, 'My lord, you should imprison this man and investigate further the case of that man who deserted. If it turns out that he does know him or is related to him, then you can execute him. If not, then you can deal with him as you see fit.'

He looked as if he was inclined to my suggestion, but a retainer of his standing behind him said, 'If a soldier flees, the man that was next to him is taken and either has his head struck off or is cut in half.'

The retainer's words revived al-Yaghisiyani's rancour and so he ordered him to be cut in half. They trussed the soldier up following the usual procedure and chopped him in two. But no fault can be brought to al-Yaghisiyani except for his obstinacy and his lack of fear of the punishment of God, may He be exalted.

I was in his presence on another occasion after our return from the battle at Baghdad.<sup>279</sup> The atabeg was going to great lengths to give an appearance of endurance and strength and had ordered al-Yaghisiyani to march against the amir Qafiq and [158] take him by surprise. We set out from Mosul for a journey of six days, although we were extremely weak. When we arrived at Qafiq's location, we found that he had perched himself up in the mountains of Kuhistan.<sup>280</sup> So we went down

to a fortress called Masurra and encamped against it at sunrise.

Just then, a woman came up to us from the fortress, saying, 'Have you got some raw cloth with you?'

We replied, 'Is this really the time for buying and selling?'

'We need the cloth', she said, 'to use as your winding-sheets. In five days, you'll all be dead.' By this, she was telling us that the place was stricken with disease.

Al-Yaghisiyani set up camp and planned out an attack on the fortress for the early morning. He ordered the sappers to go in under the walls of one of the towers, since the fortress was built entirely of mud-brick, and the soldiers manning it were just peasants. Meanwhile, we marched on the fortress and climbed up towards its hill. The Khurasanian troops undermined one tower, which collapsed with two men on it. One of these men was killed, but the other was taken captive by our comrades, who brought him to al-Yaghisiyani.

'Cut him in half!' he said.

'My lord,' I said, 'this is the month of Ramadan, and this man is a Muslim. We cannot bear such a sin.'

Al-Yaghisiyani replied, 'Cut him in half so they'll surrender the fortress!'

'My lord,' I said, 'you will be taking possession of the fortress in but a moment.'

'Cut him in half,' he repeated. And they trussed the man up and chopped him in two.

We took the fortress that very moment.

Al-Yaghisiyani then went to the gate, intending to descend from the fortress, a crowd and the victors accompanying him.

He delegated control of the fortress to a group of his comrades and went on down to his tent just for a moment, but long enough for the army that was with him to disperse. Then he took to his horse and said to me, 'Mount up!'

We rode out and climbed up to the fortress, where he searched himself and ordered the intendant of the fortress to be brought before him so that he might find out from him what was in it. He likewise had the women and children brought before him, Christians and Jews.

An old Kurdish woman came and presented herself before

him. She asked the intendant of the fortress, 'Have you seen my son?' and gave his name.

'Killed,' he replied. 'An arrow got him.'

'And my other son?' she asked, giving his name.

'The amir cut him in half,' he replied.

The woman screamed and uncovered her head, her hair looking like carded cotton.

[159] 'Quiet! The amir!' said the intendant of the fortress to her.

'And what more could he possibly do to me?' she asked. 'I had two sons and he has killed them both!'

But they just pushed her away.

The intendant then went and brought forward a very old man, with lovely white hair, who was walking on two canes.

He greeted al-Yaghisiyani.

'And who is this old man?' asked the amir.

'The imam of the fortress,' replied the keeper.

'Come forward, old man,' the amir beckoned, saying, 'Come, come,' until the old man sat before him. The amir then reached out and grabbed the old man's beard and, pulling out a knife that was hanging from the belt of his robe, cut off his beard right close to his chin and dangled it from his hand like a *parcham*-ornament.<sup>281</sup>

So the old man said to him, 'My lord, what have I done to make you do such a thing to me?'

'You have rebelled against the sultan!' he replied.

'By God,' the old man responded, 'I didn't even know you had arrived until just now when the intendant came and told me when he summoned me.'

We then departed and encamped against another fortress belonging to the amir Qafiq, called al-Karkhini.<sup>282</sup> We captured it and found there a treasury full of raw cloth that had been woven as alms for the poor of Mecca. Al-Yaghisiyani also took captive all the Jews and Christians in that fortress, people of the covenant, and plundered both fortresses as if he were plundering Romans!<sup>283</sup> Glory be to God, and may He overlook his excesses.

I will stop in this section at this point, following the example of my own verses:

Stop now from the mention of those whom passion has slain,

Their tale would turn the hair of our newborns white.

### § *Bravery Saves the Day*

I will return now to an account of something that happened to us while the Isma'ilis were in the citadel of Shayzar.

On that day, a cousin of mine called Abu 'Abdallah ibn Hashim (may God have mercy upon him) was walking along [160] when he saw a Batini man in a tower of my father's home, wielding a sword and shield. The door was open and a great crowd of our comrades stood outside it, but no one dared to go in.

So my cousin said to one of those men standing there, 'Get in there after him!' and he did.

But the Batini did not waste any time and struck the man, injuring him, and the man came back out, wounded. Now my cousin said to another man, 'Go in after him!'

The man did so, but the Batini struck him, too, and wounded him and he came back out, just as his comrade had done. So then my cousin said to Chief Jawad, 'Chief Jawad, you go in there after him.'

At this, the Batini shouted down to my cousin, 'Hey, hang-behind! How come you don't come in here? You send everybody else in, but you just stand there. Get in here so's you can get a look!'

Chief Jawad now went in and killed the Batini. This Jawad was a master of combat, a man of courage and an expert fighter.

### § *Night Wanderings: Reflections on Old Age*

Only a few years had passed<sup>284</sup> when I saw Jawad again in Damascus, in the year 534 (1139). He had become a feed-merchant, selling barley and hay. He had grown so old that he looked like a squeezed-out water-bag, one who could barely