

= William the Carpenter =

William the Carpenter ( fl . 1087 ? 1102 ) , viscount of Melun , was a French nobleman who participated in the Reconquista in Spain and on the First Crusade . He was notorious for defecting from the army both in Spain and on the crusade , but he was also known for his strength in battle , whence he earned his nickname " the Carpenter . " He returned to the Holy Land after the crusade , and nothing further is known of his life or death .

= = Life = =

= = = Succession = = =

His specific origins are unclear ; according to the seventeenth @-@ century genealogist Père Anselme , he was the son of Ursio I , viscount of Melun , a town about 50 kilometres outside Paris in the Brie region of the French Vexin , which was later known as the Île @-@ de @-@ France . Anselme believed William succeeded his father in 1084 , and was later succeeded by his own son , Ursio II . However , in the nineteenth century , Adolphe Duchalais showed that Anselme misread the charters he was using ; all that is known for certain is that Ursio was viscount in 1085 and William was viscount in 1094 . There is no definite record of an Ursio II , and after William there is no viscount known until Adam , who married the daughter of the previous , unnamed viscount in 1138 . William was presumably related to Ursio but his specific relationship to him and the other viscounts is unknown .

According to twelfth @-@ century chronicler Robert the Monk , William was " of royal stock " and was related to Hugh I , Count of Vermandois and Hugh 's brother King Philip I of France .

= = = Military exploits = = =

According to twelfth @-@ century monk Guibert of Nogent , William was " powerful in words , but less so in action ... a man who set out to do things too great for him . " William was a member of the French contingent which marched into Spain in 1087 to assist Alfonso VI of Castile with the siege of Tudela against the Almoravids . He may have been one of the leaders , along with Eudes I , Duke of Burgundy , who was the nephew of Alfonso 's wife Constance . The French army never made it to Tudela and withdrew with little success . Guibert says that William " retreated like a wretch , leaving countless men stranded by his flight . " William 's actions in Spain may have been the inspiration for the character of Ganelon in the *Chanson de Roland* , which was possibly written in the early twelfth @-@ century , based on similar events that had occurred during the reign of Charlemagne centuries earlier .

In France , Guibert says he engaged in petty warfare against other nobles and " criminal looting " of the countryside , in contravention of the Peace and Truce of God . In 1096 he joined the First Crusade , and " took from his poor neighbors the little that they had to provide himself shamefully with provisions for the journey . " He participated in the attacks on Jews at Mainz , led by Emich of Flonheim . Emich 's army later battled against the Hungarians , during which William " beheaded the chief of the Hungarian army , who was a member of the [ King Coloman 's ] counsel , a distinguished man with dazzling snow @-@ white hair . " After the dispersal of Emich 's army following this battle , William and the other French leaders joined the army of his relative Hugh of Vermandois . Hugh 's army marched south into Italy , and at Bari , Hugh sent William across the sea to Dyrrhachium as an ambassador to the Byzantine governor of the city . William then travelled to Constantinople with Hugh , and he was among the men who came to meet Godfrey of Bouillon when Godfrey arrived at the city later in the year .

No further mention of William is made until the Siege of Antioch in 1098 . The crusaders had successfully taken the city , but were then besieged themselves by a large Muslim army led by Kerbogha of Mosul . The crusaders suffered from lack of supplies , and there were many desertions

; William fled Antioch in January 1098 , along with the French monk Peter the Hermit , who had led his own army to Constantinople before the main crusaders arrived there . William was probably a member of Bohemond of Taranto 's army at this point , because Bohemond sent his nephew Tancred to find them , and they were brought back to Bohemond 's camp . Robert the Monk assumes that William fled because " he had never before experienced such suffering from hunger . " William " spent the whole of the night ... in Bohemond 's tent , lying on the ground like a piece of rubbish . " Bohemond rebuked him as a " wretched disgrace to the whole Frankish army " , and mentioned his desertion of the French army in Spain in 1087 . The other leaders asked Bohemond to spare him and William suffered no further punishment . However , William was so ashamed that he deserted the army again .

Albert of Aachen says William 's second desertion occurred in June 1098 , along with William of Grand @-@ Mesnil , a relative of Bohemond . On the road away from Antioch , they joined Stephen of Blois , another leader of the crusade who had also fled the siege . They travelled back towards Constantinople , but on the way met Emperor Alexius I Comnenus , who was advancing to Antioch with a relief army . They convinced him of the futility of the crusader siege and the emperor turned back to Constantinople .

William apparently returned to the Holy Land in the Crusade of 1101 . The First Crusade had successfully conquered Jerusalem , and those who had returned home before completing the journey were often shamed into going on crusade a second time ; some of them , like Stephen of Blois , were killed on their second journey . William , however , survived to participate in the politics of the newfound Kingdom of Jerusalem ; he was among the men who petitioned King Baldwin I to restore Daimbert of Pisa as Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem . He was also present at Baldwin I 's siege of Ascalon in 1102 . William may have settled in the north , in the crusader Principality of Antioch as a vassal of Bohemond , because he appears as a witness in a charter from Antioch in 1101 .

= = Nickname = =

William 's actions at the Siege of Antioch are known from the *Gesta Francorum* , an anonymous chronicle written by an Italo @-@ Norman eyewitness . The *Gesta* was very popular in Europe after the crusade , but was considered crudely written by more refined readers . It was later rewritten and expanded by more educated writers , including the French monks Robert and Guibert , both of whom were eager to add information about French crusaders like William . According to Robert , William " acquired the name of ' Carpenter ' because nobody wanted to take him on in battle ? -there was no breastplate , helmet or shield which could withstand the shattering impact of his lance or sword . " Guibert says that he " was called the Carpenter , not because he was a craftsman in wood , but because he prevailed in battle like a carpenter , by cutting men down " , and has Bohemond ask : " what kind of Carpenter did we have , who , like a construction @-@ worker with a pick @-@ axe , hacked away , with lances and swords , at the backs of the Gentiles ? " Christopher Tyerman interprets this as William 's " skills as a battlefield butcher " . Edward Gibbon , apparently misunderstanding Guibert , thought the nickname came " from the weighty strokes of his axe " .