

CHAPTER FOUR

CITIES OF SPLENDOR

WHILE Jerusalem was the goal of the Crusaders they took many other cities on the way, and all of these they found far advanced in comforts and attractiveness. To be sure, conditions had changed since the death of Nizam ul Mulk and his master some seven years before. The sons and the widow of Malek Shah had not his wisdom and his body was not yet cold when dissension had appeared in the palace. The widow, Turkan Khatoun, had tried to secure the throne for her son, then four years old, by concealing the death of the Sultan, and his body was denied all the usual honors while she caused the army to pass in review and swear fealty to the child. But the fruits of this stratagem did not ripen, for the little monarch died shortly after. Then the eldest son of Malek Shah, Bec-Yarok, and his brother Mohammed fell to fighting for the crown, and the great empire so carefully built by the father, fell apart. Soon the whole of Islam was in uproar and split into small sovereignties. The governors of provinces, usually mamelukes — that is, slaves whose ability and fidelity had induced the Sultan to place them in high positions of trust, which they