

CHAPTER FIVE

PAVING THE WAY

FORTY years had passed since the First Crusade had burst into Asia Minor when Saladin was born. The Christians, or Franks, as the natives called them, had been in full possession of all of Palestine and the coast of Syria, of great cities like Antioch, Edessa, Acre, Tripolis, Sidon and Tyre. And, as they had settled down to normal life, and peaceful intercourse had been forced by circumstances upon the former enemies, the fires of fanaticism had slowly been extinguished. The languorous air of the Orient and its reposeful spirit were not to be resisted. An attitude of *laissez-faire*, of tolerance and indulgence, even of brotherly good will showed itself in the making. There were intermarriages, chiefly of Christian men and Moslem women, and alliances between Christian and Moslem rulers.

Osama, Arab prince of the Fortress of Sheyzar, a poet and picturesque chronicler of the times, tells of being a welcome guest of the Knights Templar at Jerusalem, and of their giving him one of their oratories in which to say his prayers. Surely the dove of peace must have exercised great influence when this most