

CHAPTER NINE

ENTRY INTO SYRIA

DISSENSION among the leading emirs of Damascus resulted in some of these sending an invitation to Saladin to come and rescue that city from the threatened domination of Gumishtikin S'ad ed-din, Emir of Mosul and guardian of es-Saleh, both of whom were then in Aleppo. It required no second urging. The Sultan, looking for just such an opportunity to enter into Syrian politics, did not even stop for an efficient escort. There must be no delay to permit of a change of heart on the part of the petitioners. With but seven hundred chosen horsemen he took the risk of being caught by the Franks as he emerged from the desert and arrived before the gates of Damascus long before he was expected. There was no opposition to his entry. On the contrary, he received a royal welcome in the city of his youth, and went at once to his old home.

Conditions in Syria and in Palestine were almost identical at this moment. Through the death of Amalric the throne of Jerusalem had descended to a mere boy, Baldwin IV, who was moreover a leper. While Raymond of Tripoli had been selected to be governor in his name, there were cliques and jealousies among the other Christian lords which practically paralyzed