

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MAN HIMSELF

IT WAS the death of his nephew, Ferrukh Shah, whom he had left in command at Damascus, which first suggested to Saladin the necessity of a return to Syria. Ferrukh Shah seems to have been his favorite nephew, and the one in whom he had the greatest confidence. A talented poet, as well as an able soldier, his loss was keenly felt by his uncle, who gave open expression to his grief. Unlike most oriental potentates, who seemed to fear most of all their own and often got rid of them, so that the history of the East bristles with horrifying tales of deliberate murder of father and son, brothers and nephews, wiping out all possible pretenders to the thrones of the slayers, Saladin cherished the ties of blood. From the very beginning of his career in Egypt he is seen drawing about him all the members of his family, and entrusting to them as much power and authority as they could handle.

When he sent word to Nur ed-din after the death of Shirkuh, requesting that his brothers be sent to aid him, the former refused, and it was only when the Franks began their invasion of Egypt that he reluc-