

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PREPARATIONS FOR THE HOLY WAR

FROM the moment of his arrival at Damascus in response to the invitation of the emirs, Saladin had kept in mind unceasingly two main objectives. He must be accepted as the successor to the leadership held by Nur ed-din, so that there would remain no doubt in Frank or Moslem mind as to his hegemony in Islam; and he must have the active co-operation of all the independent Moslem princes. Nine years elapsed before these objects were accomplished, nine long years filled with hard fighting, weary waits and exasperating breaches of faith; but, though there were times when his patience appeared to have reached the breaking point, his cool judgment and strong will carried him through without departure from the plan he must have laid down at the beginning, and without the slightest sacrifice of dignity.

Less than half of this prolonged time of preparation had passed when he returned to Damascus from Egypt. Conditions were not propitious. Izz ed-din, at Mosul, and his brother, the ambitious Imad ed-din, newly become ruler at Aleppo, though they had not openly broken the treaty made with their predeces-