

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

FORTUNE NO LONGER KINDLY

ACCORDING to an Eastern tale a Mohammedan devotee saw Zenghi in the loveliest part of Paradise and asked him how he came to be so favored, whereupon the Atabeg replied:

“God has pardoned all my sins for the conquest of Edessa.”

Yet what was Edessa compared to Jerusalem? What greater glory could come to any man than to have captured this holy city, the appointed rendezvous of the day of Judgment? Was not its conqueror assured of Paradise in the hereafter as he was the theme of every poet in Islam in the present?

Saladin had now rounded out a half century. He was at the height of his career. With very few setbacks, and none of these serious, he had progressed steadily from the day that the Christian knight had enrolled him in the proud order of chivalry. Manifestly he had won favor in the eyes of God and His Prophet, and none could say he had not won this by undeviating devotion of all his talent and energy to the high cause he had vowed to support. The infidel invader was on the run. There appeared to be every reason to believe he would