

CHAPTER NINETEEN

FIGHTING AT ACRE

SITUATED on a bay of the same name, Acre had been a town of importance, particularly from the military point of view, for more than two thousand years, and had therefore been the object of attack by conquering monarchs from the days of the Pharaohs! Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Jews and Romans had fought for it. Here Cleopatra had entered in triumph and here Herod had entertained Caesar. But never before had it been subjected to so long or so bloody a siege as was now about to begin.

A double rampart of walls, strengthened by many towers, guarded the land side, while a tongue of land, on the extremity of which rose the famous Tower of Flies, so called from an ancient legend that these pests had been drawn there by the human sacrifices of the cannibal aborigines, afforded partial protection to the harbor. This was further defended by a great chain and another wall. In times of peace this harbor was the best in Palestine and served as a port for Galilee and also Damascus. The city had become the landing place for pilgrims from Europe and was supplanting Jerusalem as the royal residence before the conquests