

CHAPTER TWENTY

SALADIN AND RICHARD

AS THOUGH Fate had meant to cast a high light upon the character of the Moslem chieftain, it brought Richard the Lion-Hearted into the forefront of the opposition. At the climax of the Sultan's career these two champions of opposing faiths and contrasting civilizations were brought into direct conflict and, though they never met personally, from that moment, until Richard left the Holy Land, it was the personal contest between them, a matching of wits as well as arms, which controlled the varying issues of the war between Islam and Christianity. Philip of France and other great nobles played their part on the side of the Cross, as did el-Adel and Taki ed-din, for the honor of the Prophet, but theirs were minor roles, after all.

Admittedly, Richard was the beau ideal of the Christian knight. His tawny head — “his hair was half way between red and yellow” — suggested his sobriquet as much as his headlong valor supported it. A giant of a man, with long arms to swing a mighty sword, and long legs to carry a weighty body, he “far surpassed other men in the courtesy of his manners and the vastness of his strength.” The admiring chron-