

hour, offered to convey to Palestine as many as still desired to continue their pilgrimage. The tears and disappointment of those weary and deluded children had awakened sympathy in all hearts, and had prompted these two men—their names are still preserved—to perform this deed “for the cause of God and without price.” Only five thousand, however, were willing to embark in the seven ships provided. As the ships set sail upon the unknown sea, the little pilgrims, a company on each, assembled upon the elevated “castle,” or stern of the vessel, and chanted that old hymn, sacred with the associations of centuries, “Veni Creator Spiritus.” On the cliffs crowds had assembled to watch their departure. Soon the songs grew fainter and fainter as the ships glided away. A little longer the white cross banners gleamed against the blue, and then the snowy sails faded from view like sea-birds in their flight.

After the seven ships sailed away that memorable August night they were not heard from again for eighteen years. In castle and cottage the unknown fate of the five thousand children was bemoaned by many an aching heart, as worse than death. The day of judgment alone would raise the veil from the sad mystery.

The year 1230 had come, when one day an aged priest, worn with toil and travel and years of slavery, arrived in Europe. He

was one, he said, of those who had sailed from Marseilles in 1212. The little crusaders who set forth so happily that summer's day eighteen years before had met with a dolorous fate. Off the Isle of Falcons, to the south of Sardinia, two of the ships were wrecked and more than one thousand children were swallowed up by the sea or dashed upon the rocks : not one escaped alive.*



CRUSADER'S CASTLE AT TRIPOLI.

The children in the other five ships met with an even worse fate. Instead of being carried to the

* In memory of the shipwrecked children a church was erected on the island of San Pietro and named “The Church of the New Innocents.” Here for three hundred years worship was maintained and it became a pilgrims' shrine. During the wars of the sixteenth century it was abandoned, fell into ruin and was quite forgotten. In 1867 it was re-discovered, roofless and in ruins, a symbol of the futile crusade of the innocents whom it commemorates.