CHAPTER XII.

AL-MUHALLAB RE-CALLED FROM AL-MAUṢIL.

(Events During the Years 69-72).

We last saw the ʿAzāriqa on the march towards al-Ḳūfa which event is recorded in Tab. under the year 68. But it must be remembered that the chronology of this period is very much confused chiefly because of the fact that most of the major events took place about the turn of the year while only one year is given by the reporters. Hence it is quite probable that the activities of the ʿAzāriqa culminating in the march upon al-Ḳūfa should have extended over the early days of the year 69, especially in view of that Anon. places the return of Muṣʿab in the same and not in the previous year.

Having been repelled from al-Ḳūfa, the ʿAzāriqa repaired to their haunt in ʿĪsfahān where they laid a siege to the city of Jayy and engaged in daily skirmishes with the forces of its governor, ʿAttāb b. Warqā, for a number of months (1). But ʿAttāb put up such a stout defence that eventually they gave up the siege and made a dash from ʿĪsfahān to al-ʿAwāz bringing indiscriminate murder and untold misery in their train (2). The arrival of the ʿAzāriqa at al-ʿAwāz was, as on former occasions, the signal for an uproar among the Baṣrāns who rightly regarded the town as the nearest base for an invasion of the city of al-Baṣrā itself. Realising the gravity of the situation, Muṣʿab conferred with the

(1). Anon. 113, 3.

(2). Kam. 648. Here the account in Kam. supplies a gap in the accounts of Tab. and Anon. both of which make no reference to this incident.
people as to the choice of the general who should be commissioned to deal with the menace. Qatari again discoursed with his brethren on the relative merits of the three prominent generals to whom, he surmised, the choice of the Basrans should be restricted. According to him, 'Attâb b. Warqa' was rash and reckless. He was always foremost in the front line but never achieved any great results. 'Umar b. 'Ubaiddullaḥ was a bold and intrepid fighter who was wont to make a vigorous and decisive onslaught which resulted very soon either in his defeat or in his victory. But al-Muhallab was a lasting calamity and an irremovable curse. He would not make a move unless the other party took the initiative and would inflict losses upon his enemy while he himself would suffer none.

Al-Muhallab commanded respect equally from friend and foe. The Basrans were at one with Qatari in their estimation of his transcendent military genius. They demanded with one voice (1) that al-Muhallab should be summoned once again. Mus'ab also fell in with this view and finally decided that al-Muhallab should be sent against the 'Azāriqa while he himself should proceed against 'Abd al-Malik [summer 69-70 (2)].

(1). Kam. 648.

(2). No date is mentioned anywhere. The chronology of this period is very obscure and uncertain. Yet the statement (Kam. 648, 6.) that Mus'ab was intending to proceed against 'Abd al-Malik, is a hint that it must be the summer 69-70 when 'Abd al-Malik first took the field against Mus'ab.
Al-Muhallab’s name had become such a terror to the ‘Azāriqa that no sooner did al-Zubair b. ‘Alī learn of Musa‘ab’s decision than he decided not to face ‘the lasting calamity.’ Forthwith he moved with the ‘Azāriqa to al-Ray(1), a principal city in the north-east of the province of al-Jibāl. Characteristically enough, as the ‘Azāriqa left al-‘Awāz, the Basrans again seem to have relapsed into complacency. They did not bother much as long as the ‘Azāriqa kept away from al-‘Awāz. Musa‘ab, who was very reluctant to remove al-Muhallab from Mausil, also shelved the decision till such time as the ‘Azāriqa again invaded al-‘Awāz.

At al-Ray, the ‘Azāriqa killed Yazīd b. (al-)Ḥarīth b. Yazīd b. Ru‘aim after they had besieged him for one month(2). Then from al-Ray they again marched down to ‘Isfahān (3) and besieged ‘Attāb b. Warqa’ a second time. When the siege had lasted for seven months (4), ‘Attāb made a sortie upon the besiegers with such vehemence as comes only of desperation. Ultimately al-Zubair b. ‘Alī was killed and the ‘Azāriqa were completely routed.

Qatarī b. al-Fujā’a.

The next leader of the ‘Azāriqa was Qatarī b. al-Fujā’a al-Māzinī, once a colleague of al-Muhallab in the army of ‘Abdur Rahmān b. Samura. Wellhausen assumes that

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(1). Anon. 118, 8; Kam. 648. Tab. does not record the raid upon al-Ray and makes the siege of ‘Attāb an uninterrupted one.
(2). Anon. 118, 10.
(3). Anon. 120, 3.
(4). Kam. 649, 9; Iqd 1/110.
his election as Caliph should have taken place at the end of 69(Ency. 2/816). This seems rather based on a misapprehension. In the first place the murder of al-Zubair b. ‘Ali could not have occurred till the year 70 because it came at least eight months ( siege of Yazīd b. Ru‘aim, one month; siege of ‘Attāb, 7 months) after the dash of the ‘Azāriqa to al-Ahwāz which is timed shortly before the departure of Mu‘āshab for Bājumaira in the summer, 69-70. Secondly, there are indications that the election of Qāṭarī did not immediately follow the death of al-Zubair b. ‘Ali. The statement in Kam. (652,7-8) that the leadership was offered first to ‘Abīda b. Hilāl and then to Qāṭarī is a hint that the choice was not a straight one. Further, we do not hear of any activity on the part of the ‘Azāriqa till a short time before the departure of Mu‘āshab for Bājumaira in 71 which may have been due to their not having agreed upon a new Emir for some time. In view of this, the express assertion in Anon. (123,7), which is the only authority recording the date, that Qāṭarī was sworn as Caliph (early) in the year 71, seems quite credible.

Qāṭarī spent some time in ‘Isfahān and Karmān and then, with a reinforced and revitalised army, marched down to Ẓīdhaj, (between ‘Isfahān and Khuṣistān), and al-Ahwāz(1) with the deliberate intention to stab Mu‘ūshab in the back as soon as the latter left al-Basra in order to meet

(1). Anon. 123; Tab. 2/764; Kam. 652.
`Abd al-Malik (year 71). Muṣḥab was now faced with a very difficult situation. For more than a couple of years, he had made it a cardinal point of his military policy to keep al-Muhallab in al-Mausil so as to have his invaluable help at the time of `Abd al-Malik's threatened advance from Syria. But now when the threatened danger did actually materialise, he could not but go without the help he had long set a store by. The untimely incursion of the `Azāriqa completely foiled his cherished plans for he had to divide his strength on two equally important fronts. Still, he would have liked to keep al-Muhallab with him on the Syrian front and place some other general in command of the campaign against the `Azāriqa. But the Başrans would not allow him to leave al-Bağra unless al-Muhallab was first sent to check the `Azāriqa(1). Thus Muṣḥab was compelled to recall al-Muhallab from al-Mausil and to order him to proceed against the `Azāriqa. Accordingly, al-Muhallab came to al-Bağra where he selected soldiers for his army (2) and then set out to take up his old command for the third time.

No doubt, al-Muhallab's new appointment relieved Muṣḥab and the people of al-Bağra of all anxiety about the security of the rear. But very soon (3) there came the news that `Abd al-Malik was preparing for his advance.

(2). Tab. 2/765, 4.
(3). IAth. 4/158,7. Muṣḥab had not yet left al-Bağra.
in right earnest. At no time was al-Muhallab's value felt so much as at this critical time. Al-Muhallab was a guarantee of victory in himself. His presence was indispensable on both the fronts and there was no worthy substitute to replace him. Mus'ab at once turned to him for advice in this difficult situation. In reply, al-Muhallab urged, either personally or by correspondence from the front, that his services could be better used in the war against 'Abd al-Malik. In this connection he, well-informed as he always kept himself, also pointed out that his presence on the Syrian front was all the more necessary because the chiefs of both the cities, al-Basra and al-Kūfa, had already entered into correspondence with the enemy and hence their adherence and loyalty could not be counted upon (1). Mus'ab, however, was compelled to reject this loyal offer by the refractory attitude of the people of al-Basra who would not leave the city if its safety were endangered by the removal of al-Muhallab from the Persian front.

So, leaving al-Muhallab in charge of the campaign against the 'Azāriqa (2), Mus'ab proceeded against 'Abd al-Malik. But any competent observer could foresee his tragic fate. With particular reference to the absence of al-Muhallab and Umar b. 'Ubaidullāh b. Ma'āmer, 'Abdullāh

(1) Ith. 4/158; cf. Anon. 123.

(2) Ith. 4/162,9; Anon. 124,14. The report in Anon. in another place (15,8) and in Tab. (2/807) saying that al-Muhallab was at al-Mausil is incorrect.
b. Khāzīm is reported to have recalled the following verse:

\[
\text{[verse text]} (\text{Anon.15})
\]

Similarly, the circumstance of Mus'ab being deprived of the help of al-Muhallab and other faithful generals evoked the following verse from 'Abdullāh b. al-Zubair (1):

\[
\text{[verse text]} (\text{Kam.430})
\]

In course of time al-Muhallab's warning against the treacherous designs of the chiefs of al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa came out literally true. Mus'ab was betrayed by his own people and was killed at Maskin on the 13th Jumādā I or II, 72 A.H.(2).

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(1). In Anon. 15, 125; Tab. 2/807, this verse is also said to have been recalled by 'Ībūn Khāzīm.

(2). Tab. 2/813, 16; cf. also Anon. 124, 12; Mas. 5/249, 10. Mus'ab's fall is variously reported in 71 and 72. Wellhausen (198), however, has proved conclusively that the latter year is the correct date.