Al-Ḥajjāj's choice of a successor to the ill-fated Ibn Mikhnaf fell upon ʿAttāb b. Warqāʾ al-Riyāḥī, the wali of ʿIsfahān, whom he ordered to join al-Muhallab and to take over the command of the Kūfān army. It was a very appropriate and helpful choice, indeed, for ʿAttāb was a high and prominent general and had already won his laurels against the Azraqites by killing their leader al-ʿ ubair b. ʿAlī in a protracted battle. ʿAttāb joined al-Muhallab at Sābūr in the month of Jumādā I or II, 76 A.H. (1).

But the hopes of ʿAttāb proving a valuable asset to al-Muhallab foundered on the rock of an overweening sense of self-importance which made him resent his subordination to al-Muhallab. According to Tab. (2/877, 11), al-Ḥajjāj had laid it down that whenever al-Muhallab and ʿAttāb were to launch a joint action, the supreme command would vest in the former and the latter, in his capacity of chief of the Kūfān contingent, would be in duty bound to show obedience to him. The report in Kam. (675, 13-15), however, puts the position of ʿAttāb, as defined by al-Ḥajjāj, on a footing of equality with al-Muhallab. According to it, al-Ḥajjāj had ordered that the supreme command should be held alternately by al-Muhallab and ʿAttāb. When they were in a country

(1) Kam. 675, 15.
which belonged to the original conquests of the Basrans, then al-Muhallab was to hold the supreme command of the whole army with 'Attāb at the head of the Kūfan contingent. Contrarily, when they entered a country originally conquered by the Kūfans, the supreme command was to go to 'Attāb and al-Muhallab was to be the head of the Basran army alone. This latter report does not record that 'Attāb was in any way dissatisfied with this arrangement. But the vehemence of the final breach suggests that it could only have been the result of suppressed rancour and strained feelings before. No doubt 'Attāb may have been reconciled with his position of equality for some time but dissatisfaction must have come very soon when he found that the equality remained only on paper. In actual practice he had all the time to be subservient to al-Muhallab. Throughout the eight months that 'Attāb stayed with al-Muhallab, they seldom moved out of Sābūr which belonged to the conquests of the Basrans. Al-Muhallab, therefore, held the supreme command all the time and 'Attāb could never have an opportunity of being at the head of his rival(1). This could not have failed to be irritating to a man of 'Attāb's temperament. To turn once again to the report in Tab., it explicitly mentions that 'Attāb took keen offence that he should be assigned a subordinate position by al-Ḥajjāj and joined al-Muhallab only under duress because he could neither hope to get al-Ḥajjāj rescind his orders nor had he the temerity to go

(1) Kam. 675, 16.
against them. 'Attāb, however, propitiated his wounded vanity by avoiding to take counsels with al-Muhallab and acting almost independently and arbitrarily. Quite naturally, al-Muhallab could not tolerate such a state of affairs. Haughty arrogance and lack of co-operation on the part of one who was to serve as an auxiliary to him, was bound to affect the smooth working of his plans. Perhaps al-Muhallab may have felt doubtful about the results of a direct formal complaint to al-Ḥajjāj. He, therefore, preferred to host 'Attāb with his own petard. It must be noted that al-Muhallab, to whom war was a contest as much of mind as of body, never had any hesitation to employ a clever ruse for his purpose. He sabotaged the position of 'Attāb by winning over a few men from among the Kūfans and inciting them against their leader. Prominent and vocal among such men was Diṣṭām b. Maṣqala b. Hubaira.

The tension continued till the clouds burst towards the departure of 'Attāb (1). It so happened that 'Attāb went to al-Muhallab with the purpose of asking him to order the payment of annuity to the soldiers of the Kūfan army. It seems that there had occurred no open breach as yet for al-Muhallab received his visitor with every courtesy and

(1). Tab. 2/377,17 seq.
respect and offered him a seat beside himself. But 'Attāb made his request in such a harsh and offending tone that al-
Muhallab could not restrain himself and, in the excitement
of rage, called out to him, "O son of a stinking woman(1)."
Banū Tamīm, the partisans of 'Attāb assert that the abuse
was returned to al-Muhallab in the same coin but according
to others, 'Attāb only refuted it, saying, "By 'Allāh, she
has many paternal and maternal uncles (i.e. she belongs
to a powerful and honourable family). I wish that 'Allāh may
separate us from each other." Further hot words and passages-
at-arms provoked al-Muhallab to stand up to point a rod at
his impudent visitor but was prevented from doing so by his
son al-Mughīra who took hold of the rod and pacified his
father saying that 'Attāb was also a nobleman and a 'shaikh'
of the Arabs and as such a few harsh words from him should
not be taken amiss. Al-Muhallab accepted the sober counsel
of his son and 'Attāb left the place. On his way back he
was met by Bistām b. Maqgala (2) who openly abused and
slandered him. As the report in Kam. has it, the quarrel
between al-Muhallab and 'Attāb soon threatened to develop
into a tribal conflagration. The Tamīm, Kūfīns as well as
Bagrīns, took the side of 'Attāb while the 'Azd, including
those of al-Kūfa, stood by their chief al-Muhallab. The

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(1). In Kam. (677,3-4) 'Attāb is reported to have said to al-
Muhallab, "I used to hear that you are brave but found
you a coward and I used to hear that you are generous but
found you a miser." Thereupon al-Muhallab retorted with the
abuse 'َابن لَكِنْ لَكِنْ إِلَّا َلَكِنْ أَبُو ابْنِكْ".

(2). Thus in Tab. According to Kam. (677,8),
a nephew of Maqgala b. Hubailra.
Bakr b. Wā’il acted with admirable fidelity in this crisis. By virtue of their old alliance with the Ḥāḍid they gave such solid and whole-hearted support to al-Muhallab that he became an ardent champion of the alliance about which he had been very lukewarm so far. A first class tribal war was, however, averted by the intervention of the peace-loving al-Mughīra b. al-Muhallab who had already checked his father from coming to blows with ʿAttāb. Al-Mughīra calmed ʿAttāb by assuring him that his request will be granted and then prevailed upon his father to pay the annuity to the Kūfāns. Thus a critical situation was saved and the peace-making efforts of al-Mughīra won him such popularity that the whole of the Tamīm always spoke very highly of him afterwards. Even ʿAttāb himself said that he fully recognised the superiority of al-Mughīra’s merits to those of his father.

ʿAttāb’s position was now clearly untenable. He wrote to al-Ḥajjāj (1) complaining to him against the behaviour of al-Muhallab in inciting the uncouth people against him, and requesting that he be recalled and attached to al-Ḥajjāj himself. Fortunately for ʿAttāb this letter reached al-Ḥajjāj at a time when he was in dire need of the former’s services.

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(1). Thus in Tab. 2/878,9 seq; 944. The report in Kāmil (676-77) again differs on this point. According to it, ʿAttāb’s quarrel with al-Muhallab only followed al-Ḥajjāj’s orders for his recall. ʿAttāb is reported to have declared that he would not proceed to al-Ḥajjāj unless al-Muhallab paid the Kūfāns.
in order to send him against Shabīb who had already played havoc with the people of al-Kūfa and had defeated a number of expeditions sent against him. Al-Ḥajjāj, therefore, at once ordered 'Attāb to join him, leaving the Kūfan army to al-Muhallab. Accordingly, 'Attāb left al-Muhallab in the beginning (most probably in the first or the second month) of the year 77 A.H. (1). The command of the Kūfan army was again entrusted by al-Muhallab to his son, Ḥabīb.

There is no doubt that the immediate cause of the open breach between al-Muhallab and 'Attāb was the former's refusal to pay the annuity to the Kūfans. But what prompted al-Muhallab to do so? According to the report in Kam. 677 al-Muhallab was guilty of discrimination between the Baṣrāns who constituted his own army and the Kūfans who formed the army of 'Attāb. Al-Ḥajjāj had ordered him to pay the annuity to the whole army but he paid only the Baṣrāns and strongly refused to pay the Kūfans. Thereupon followed the interview and the violent altercation which led even to the verge of coming to blows. As compared with it the report in Tab. does not mention any orders from al-Ḥajjāj nor any attempt by al-Muhallab at discrimination. According to it, apparently without any previous cause for offence, 'Attāb visited al-Muhallab to ask him to pay the Kūfans. But he presented his

(1) Kam. 677, 15. This is also confirmed in Tab. 2/941, 5; 942, 1 where it is stated that al-Ḥajjāj recalled 'Attāb during the three hot months beginning from Dhu 'l-Hijja 76 (in which month 'Uthmān b. Ǧaṭān was murdered) which Shabīb passed at Ḍāh Bahraḍḥān before advancing to al-Madā'īn and threatening al-Kūfa when 'Attāb was dispatched against him.
request in such an impudent way that al-Mihallab flared up and hot words followed. 'Attāb's unseemly impudence can safely be ascribed to a pent-up spite caused by his resentment of al-Muhallab's authority but it is quite plausible that he should have had some provocation in the form of an attempt by al-Muhallab to withhold the pay of the Kūfans. Here the account in IAth. (4/204) is very helpful in ascertaining the cause of al-Muhallab's action. According to it 'Attāb had demanded from al-Muhallab that the Kūfan army should be paid " out of the revenue of Fārs " which the latter refused to do. Thus the stand taken up by al-Muhallab was that the revenue of Fārs should be earmarked exclusively for the main Baṣran army and the auxiliary Kūfan contingent should have no claim on it. Probably al-Muhallab's interpretation of his understanding with the government did not entail any responsibility on himself for paying the annuity to the Kūfans out of the taxes levied from the land wrested by him from the Azraqites particularly when the land happened to belong to the original conquests of the Baṣrans. Thus it becomes clear that al-Muhallab was not guilty of discrimination as such. His past behaviour and his anxiety to respect the susceptibilities of the Kūfans are a sure guarantee that he treated the Kūfans and the Baṣrans equally and fairly. His action, it seems, was motivated only by a desire to conserve the resources at his disposal and probably also to spite the conceited 'Attāb whose attitude had much to do with hardening him on this point as is evidenced by the fact that he acceded to the demand as soon as tension was a bit relieved by the noble efforts of al-Mugīira.
The period of 'Attab's stay with al-Muhallab lasted eight months. During this period also no major engagement with the enemy is recorded. Mere skirmishing seems to have been the order of the day in which 'Attab, despite his dislike of al-Muhallab, played his part though semi-independently as stated above. He is also reported to have led the Basran army on a commission from al-Muhallab. The position at the time of 'Attab's arrival was that the Azraqites held in their grip the region of Karmān and were pitted against al-Muhallab in Fārs, fighting him from all quarters.

This position had not materially changed when 'Attab left.

The only event recorded of this period is the arrival of the fourth mission from al-Hajjāj soon after 'Attab joined al-Muhallab. The addition of an experienced general was indeed a fit occasion for al-Hajjāj to remind al-Muhallab of the urgent necessity of a big battle which to him was long overdue. He dispatched two emissaries -- one called Ziyād b. ʿAbdūr Rāḥmān (of Banū ʿĀmir b. Saʿāda) and the other a descendant of ʿAbū Ṭaqīl, the grandfather of al-Hajjāj, -- with the purpose of exhorting al-Muhallab to launch a bold action against the enemy. Al-Muhallab's method of dealing with such emissaries was almost patent. He attached Ziyād and the Thaqafite to his sons Ḥabīb and Yazīd respectively and asked the emissaries to force the two commanders into full-blooded battle. Accordingly a deadly

(1). Kam. 676, 18.
(2). Mrf. 212, 1.
(3). Kam. 675, 17.
fight took place in which Ziyād was killed and his companion, the Thaqafite, was lost (1). The fighting was continued the next day when the Thaqafite was found. Al-Muhallab called the Thaqafite to his presence at the same time as the morning meal was served to him. Soon arrows began to fall around them and al-Muhallab sat unperturbed while the Thaqafite was amazed at his undisturbed calm. It is obvious what reply the Thaqafite must have taken to his master. (Kam. 676).

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(1). Al-Salātān al-ʿAbdī refers to the incident in the following verses:

[verse references]

(Kam. 676).