Having consolidated his position in the border districts of Ta’takhr and Darābjird, which, by the way, were to remain under him in order to supply him the means of maintaining his troops, al-Muhallab had cleared the whole of the province of Fārs of the Azraqites (1). He was now strong enough to follow the retreating enemy into the adjacent province of Kārmān. At al-Sarajān, the old capital city of Kārmān not far from the boundary of Fārs, the Azraqites put up resistance but were overwhelmed and defeated. Thenceforth they were all along fleeing before al-Muhallab who followed them closely and energetically till they entrenched themselves in Jīrafl, a city in the heart of Kārmān. Here again the strategic position of the stronghold did not allow of a direct assault. Al-Muhallab, therefore, pitted himself at a short distance and decided on tiring the enemy with his old waiting game. Fortunately enough, soon the Azraqites broke out among themselves and within a few months their final extermination was an accomplished fact.

The Azraqites were at Jīraft, although it cannot be ascertained how long they had been there, when a revolt

(1). During the course of the flight from Fārs, an Azraqite is reported to have said:-

حتى متى بتيتنا الحمد لسيرينا في الأزمنة عشصرب
ولا إنسنا ورُن أمن المزمع

(Dain. 236).
broke out against the leadership of Qatari towards the middle of the year 78(1). The ringleader of the revolt was the same 'Abd Rabbihi al-Ṣaghir (2) who had for some time past been inwardly opposed to Qatari's leadership as a result of al-Muhallab's clever intrigues.

(1) It is impossible to determine precisely the chronology of events subsequent to the departure of Ṭāṭāb early in the year 77 A.H. This much, however, is almost certain that the violent rift among the Azraqites and their final end at the hands of al-Muhallab which followed closely upon it, were events of the year 78. Tab. has mentioned them under the year 77 but that is impossible according to the evidence of Tab. itself, if not for any other reason. The other version (Tab. 2/1032,5) which places the events in the year 78 is the more credible one. According to Kam. (677,16) the open cleavage between Qatari and his opponents occurred eighteen months after the departure of Ṭāṭāb, i.e. towards the middle of the year 78. [Tab. also mentions the same words 'eighteen months' (2/1006,7) but the context is so vague and confused that it is difficult to determine the event from which the period is dated.] This assumption also agrees very well with the report that the death of Qatari, which seems to have followed not more than a few months after his falling out with 'Abd Rabbihi, occurred at the far-end of the year 78 or perhaps even in the year 79 (Ikh... 1/430). The poet Kā'ab al-'Aghqarī also hints that the concluding phase of al-Muhallab's war must have lasted 'three years' (vide infra p. 247,1.3

(2) Kam. throughout gives the epithet 'al-Ṣaghir' ( the Less ) while in Tab. It is invariably substituted by its antonym 'al-Kabīr' ( the Great). It is remarkable that the role assigned to 'Abd Rabbihi is identical in both the authorities and each of the two refers only to one 'Abd Rabbihi, al-Ṣaghir and al-Kabīr respectively, without advert to the existence of any other person of the same name but with the opposite epithet. Yaq.(2/329), on the other hand, expressly mentions that there were two individuals called 'Abd Rabbihi who were distinguished by the epithets al-Ṣaghir and al-Kabīr, which is also the view of al-Shahristānī(39). These two individuals are said to have led two separate groups of the mawali which broke off successively from Qatari and were disposed of by al-Muhallab one after the other. (See also Ency. under Katari). It is difficult to adduce any argument in favour of one or against the other version. On the whole, however, the assumption of the author of Raghba (5/98) that the real name was 'Abd Rabbihi al-Kabīr and that the same individual was also ironically called al-Ṣaghir, seems to be quite plausible. Even if there were two individuals of that *
The revolt was the cumulative result of numerous incidents which eventually led to the climax of a violent rupture. The real fundamental cause, however, was the extreme puritanism and rigid dogmatism of the Azraqites. It was their peculiar habit of continually impeaching and discarding all authority which ultimately recoiled upon themselves. The account in Kam. (684, 16 seq) deals at length with the process of disruption and mentions as many as three incidents:

1. ʿAbīda b. Hīlāl al-Yaṣḥūrī, the prominent Azraqite lieutenant, was suspected of illegitimate relations with the wife of a blacksmith whose house he used to frequent and enter without formal permission. When the people referred the matter to Qāṭarī he pointed out the high position held by ʿAbīda both as regards piety and as regards services in war. But the people were adamant; they categorically declared that they would not tolerate him despite his immoral conduct. Qāṭarī understood the mentality of his followers full well. He called ʿAbīda in private and, on the latter’s denying the charge and seeking his advice, suggested to him that while answering the charge in public he should neither show himself weak and submissive like a guilty person nor should he adopt the arrogance of an innocent one. This was sound advice indeed for in the former

*name then there seems to be no reason why they should not have united in their revolt against Qāṭarī. In all probability the supreme leadership should have belonged to one of them while the other one should have been his chief collaborator and lieutenant. It must be noted that Yaq. gives the name as ʿAbīda b. Masfūr (Masfūr) and Mas. (5/350) as which apparently are errors of orthography and transmission.
case the Azraqites would have found an excuse for disowning and deposing him and in the latter case his arrogance would have only provoked them to persist in their allegations. Accordingly, when 'Abîda met the Azraqites in the presence of Qatari he answered the charges in the following words of the Qur'ân:

"Verily, those who have come forward with a false charge are your own people. Do not take it as an evil to you; rather it is good for you." (1)

The words were very cleverly chosen, indeed. They were most appropriate for the occasion because while denying the charge they also laid stress on generosity towards opponents which went a long way in appeasing them. The sanctity attaching to the words of the Qur'ân must also have been a factor in carrying conviction. The effect was that the Azraqites wept in repentance, embraced 'Abîda and begged him to pray for forgiveness of their sin which, of course, 'Abîda was too ready to do. Still, 'Abd Rabbihi was dissatisfied and declared that 'Abîda had only taken them in through a clever ruse. There were many people who thought like 'Abd Rabbihi and these men promised allegiance to him although they dared not declare because they possessed no proof to substantiate their allegation.

2. Qatari had appointed as his agent a dihqân who was later on found to possess immense wealth. The Azraqites lost no time in rushing to Qatari and urging upon him that

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(1). Cf. Qur'ân.
'Umar b. al-Khattāb did not tolerate his agents in like cases. Qatari silenced them by personally testifying to the fact that the dihqān owned lands and business even prior to his appointment. Still the people were not satisfied and they nursed it in their hearts that Qatari had connived at the gross misconduct of his agent.

Al-Muhallab had already shown by his words and conduct what a great store he set by internal differences among the Aziraqites. When he heard of the growing disaffection against Qatari he said, "Verily, their discord will prove harder for them than myself."

3. The third incident is the most trivial and consequently the most amusing of all. The people urged Qatari to launch an attack against the enemy. At first Qatari rejected the suggestion with a 'no' but later on changed his mind and decided to move. This brought upon him the odium of his fanatical followers who accused him of 'lying' which crime was sufficient to shatter their faith in him(1). Feelings against him were so intense and widespread that Qatari must have lived in constant fear of his followers. One day he found himself shadowed by some of them and, at once apprehending some evil design, slipped into a house nearby along with a number of his companions. The people thereupon called out to him "Ω 'dābba', (2) come out to us."

(1) This incident is also hinted at in Yqb. 2/329.

(2) Ω any animal on earth including both rational and irrational creatures. Originally however it was applied to irrational creatures and its predominant signification is a beast that is ridden. (Lane: Arabic-English Lexicon).
Qatari was hurt by the disregard thus shown to him and, on coming out, chastised his impudent followers by saying that they had turned apostates. The people argued that they had done no wrong by calling him a 'dābbā' because even in the Qur'ān the word was used to include him. They further hoisted him with his own petard and counter-charged him with apostasy on the ground that he had unjustifiably accused them of the same crime. They demanded from him a frank declaration acknowledging his repentance to 'Allāh. In his embarrassment, Qatari turned to 'Abīdā b. Hilāl for advice as the latter had turned to him on a former occasion.

'Abīdā repaid Qatari his advice almost in the same coin. He pointed out that a declaration of repentance was not going to be acceptable to the people and suggested to him to plead that he had meant not an assertion but only an interrogation. "Have you turned apostates?"

This was just the proper answer for the quibblers that the recalcitrants were; they accepted the plea and allowed Qatari to return to his house. Such incidents were sufficient to thrust upon Qatari the painful realisation that he had forfeited the confidence of his followers. He, therefore, proposed to appoint al-Muqaṭṭar al-‘Abdī, a veteran lieutenant, to the command and himself to swear allegiance to him. But this intended change of command, far from restoring unity in the 'Azraqite ranks, only hastened the final disruption. The 'Azraqites as a whole were

(1). Vide Qur'ān: "'اَن نَفَقَ أَوْلَدَيْنِي فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا لِيُرِيدَنَا مِنْهَا ""
vehemently opposed to al-Muqaṣṭar and through their spokesman, Ṣāliḥ b. Mīkhrāq, positively refused to acknowledge allegiance to him. Ṣāliḥ b. Mīkhrāq is reported to have plainly told Qāṭarī that the people were prepared to submit to any one but not al-Muqaṣṭar.

The account in Kam. is silent as to what this strong and popular opposition to al-Muqaṣṭar was due to. Surely, the character of the 'Azraqites coupled with the universal nature of the opposition suggest beyond doubt that there must have existed some genuine grievance against him based, of course, on conscientious objection to some act of his which must have gone against their strict orthodox canons. Here Tab. mentions an incident concerning al-Muqaṣṭar which furnishes us with the cause of his disgrace and thus, to all appearances, supplies a gap in the otherwise full and detailed narrative of Kam. There is, however, some difficulty in identifying the al-Muqaṣṭar of Kam. with the al-Muqaṣṭar of Tab. because the former describes him as an "ʻAbdī" (i.e., belonging to the tribe of ʻAbdu 'l-Qais) while the latter calls him a ʻQabbī" (i.e. of the tribe of Banū Ḍabba). Yet it is more than probable that the discrepancy may only be due to some error because all through the annals of the Azraqites we hear only of one individual bearing that name who occupied in their hierarchy a high and notable place along with ʻAbīda b. Hīlāl, ʻAmr al-Qanā and others(1). It seems

somewhat improbable that the account in Tab. should refer
to another al-Muqaʻtar, otherwise obscure and unknown,
because he is described as 'a man of great merits and
long services' so much so that Qataři thought it rather
rash and inadvisable to take any step against him.

According to Tab. (2/1006) al-Muqaʻtar (al-Dabbī)
had been appointed by Qataři to be his agent in some part
of Karma̲n. While on an expedition he killed a Khārijite
knight of proven valour and strength who had previously
been assured of protection. This gave rise to a storm of
protest from the general body of the Azraqites who insisted
upon Qataři to hand over al-Muqaʻtar to them so that they
may take their blood-revenge from him. Qataři refused to
comply with the demand on the ground that it was simply an
error of judgment which did not justify the execution of a
man of dignity with a long record of services behind him.
The demand grew more and more persistent but Qataři
remained adamant.

Now Tab. makes this incident the immediate cause of
the final breach between Qataři and ʻAbd Rabbihi. But the
narrative in Kam. is profuse and coherent enough to warrant
the assumption that this episode only strained the allegiance
of the Azraqites to Qataři to breaking point. The last
straw on camel's back was the issue of submission to al-
Muqaʻtar.

To turn again to the narrative of Kam., Qataři met
the protests of Șāliḥ b. Mikhraq with admonitions that
time had altered him and his followers and made them
insensible of the supreme necessity of closing in their ranks in the face of the enemy. In reply, Ṣalih cited the precedent of ʿUthmān who had thought it fit to submit to the demand of the Kufans for the deposition of Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣi and argued that the Imām should not impose on his followers any thing which they would not fain accept. Qaṭārī was still unyielding and refused to rescind his order. The Azraqītes thereupon took the extreme step of throwing off the yoke of allegiance to Qaṭārī and openly set up ʿAbd Rabbihī as the rival Emir. The schism became doubly formidable when racial distinctions came into play. The majority of the non-Arab mawālī, who numbered eight thousand and were classed as 'al-Qurra', flocked round ʿAbd Rabbihī, himself a client of Banū Qais b. Thalaba, whereas Qaṭārī retained the allegiance of the Arabs. Four hundred Arabs under the leadership of the prominent lieutenant ʿAmr al-Qanā, however preferred to join ʿAbd Rabbihī. Qaṭārī could only retain a following estimated at about one-fourth or one-fifth of the whole(1). When the division was actually complete, Ṣalih, to his great regret, realised its dangerous implications and in all earnestness made a last appeal to Qaṭārī not to insist on al-Muqaṭṭar and to advance against

(1). Tab. 2/1006. The statement in Yāb. 2/329 that Qaṭārī had a following of twenty two thousand when he departed for Tabaristān seems highly exaggerated and incredible.
their common enemy with a united front. Qatari, however, proved as implacable as ever.

The signal for a clash of arms came when a young Arab adherent of Qatari, provoked by Zalih's refractory attitude, transfixed a spear into the latter's body and killed him. Immediately there was some skirmishing, the following day a full-blooded battle raged fiercely resulting in two thousand killed, and on the third day the non-Arabs scored a triumph over the Arabs and before it was noon drove them out of the city of Jiraff. 'Abd Rabbih was now the undisputed master of the city where he established himself firmly. Qatari, having been forced out of the city, took up a position outside it and on the advice of his chief lieutenant, 'Abida b. Hilal even entrenched himself with a ditch near the city gate in order to continue the fight (Kam. 686).

Al-Muhallab wrote to al-Hajjaj informing him of this new favourable development which, he hoped, ' would prove to be the cause of their (the 'Azariqa's) ruin.' (1). Al-Hajjaj must have sorely missed any mention in al-Muhallab's letter of his intention to launch an attack upon the enemy while he was divided. He was afraid lest al-Muhallab should let this unique opportunity slip and defer an offensive till the enemy was again united when, as far he could judge from a distance, it would be as difficult to subdue him as it was before. So he hastened to write to al-Muhallab enjoining him to open operations the very moment he received the letter. Al-Muhallab thereupon revealed his

(1) For Arabic text see Appendix P. D.
strategy in the following letter. He replied to al-Ḥajjāj(1):

"I received the letter from the Emir and studied all its contents. I am not of the opinion that I should fight them (the Azāriqa) so long as they are fighting among themselves and their own different sections are reducing the strength of each other. If they go on like that then it is but what we desire and through it will come their destruction. And if they unite they will do so only when the different sections will have greatly weakened each other. At that seasonable time when they will be in a state of utmost weakness and insignificance, I will advance against them."

The assurance must have impressed al-Ḥajjāj for he did not think it wise or expedient to press his own plan any further.

Al-Muhallab left the Azraqites free to fight among themselves for one month. He did not want to distract them from internecine warfare by advancing against them during that time. Then after one month he moved forward and took up a position at a night's distance from them.

Al-Ḥajjāj's emissary was still with al-Muhallab. He urged him not to delay an attack 'till they (the Azāriqa) reunited.' Al-Muhallab, with his characteristic foresight, confidently asserted: "Verily, they shall never reunite. Better leave them alone for soon they will be reduced to a condition in which they can never prosper."

One month was a sufficient time for the two sections of the Azāriqa to weaken each other's might considerably.

(1) For Arabic text see Appendix p. 8.
and irreparably through daily fighting. Still both the sections were persevering enough to continue the fight to the last man and al-Muhallab knew that if he looked for the total extinction of one of them at the hands of the other he would have to wait for an unlimited and unknown period. He was now anxious to strike but was sober and calculating enough to face one enemy at a time. He, therefore, drew upon his ingenuity to get rid of Qatari. At his behest, a man went into the camp of Qatari and talked that Qatari, who always acted wisely, had erred conspicuously in taking up the position which he held at that time. He was dangerously placed between al-Muhallab on one side and ‘Abd Rabbihî on the other and thus had to face two enemies at the same time. These words spread and reached the ears of Qatari who at once fell into the trap. He forthwith decided upon a move arguing that it will enable him to meet al-Muhallab with full strength if the latter chose to pursue him. On the other hand if al-Muhallab preferred to stay behind against ‘Abd Rabbihî then it was all that could be desired.

Qatari, therefore, left the place for Tabaristān along with his followers. On receiving the news of his departure, al-Muhallab commissioned Huraim b. ‘Adî b. ‘Abî Tâhâma al-Mujâshi‘î to ascertain whether Qatari had actually left because, he said, he was afraid lest this withdrawal should be a mere ruse. Huraim in a party of twelve horsemen proceeded to the camp of Qatari. There was none to be found in the camp except a slave and a boor who confirmed that Qatari and his followers had left the place in search of some other site
for encampment. Having thus satisfied his scrupulous regard for vigilance, al-Muhallab entrenched himself in Qatari's camp which, as stated above, was fortified with a ditch.

Al-Muhallab then dispatched Yazid to inform al-Ḥajjāj of the new position that he had acquired and to ask him to send an expedition commanded by a valiant chief to pursue Qatari and do away with him. Al-Ḥajjāj expressed great satisfaction and joy at the favourable turn of events but it only whetted his impatience for a head-on attack against the enemy. He was so obsessed with distrust of al-Mihallab's go-slow policy that he, instead of complimenting him for the magnificent results, which he probably attributed to mere chance, thought it fit to discharge a broadside against the methods of the steadfast commander.

As another attempt to rush al-Muhallab into precipitate action, al-Ḥajjāj dispatched ʿUbaid b. Mauhab, his own mawla and secretary, with a letter alleging that al-Muhallab deliberately held back from action till such time as he was goaded to it by al-Ḥajjāj's envoys and that the reason why these envoys returned invariably with a testimony of al-Muhallab's honesty of purpose and the advisability of his line of action in the light of their personal observation, was that the attacks were few and far between. A long interval between two onslaughts, the letter continued, provided the enemy with a sufficient respite to recover from the effects of the past attack and to prepare to meet the new one with fresh vigour and
unimpaired strength. On the other hand it also caused al-Muhallab's own troops to lose zeal by damping their ardour for vengeance for the losses sustained by them. That was why the enemy showed himself equally strong and unbending whenever al-Muhallab was goaded to attack him at intervals by al-Ḥajjāj's emissaries. Hence, it was urged, the advisable course was to force a continuous and uninterrupted offensive rather than restricting one's self to a halting and intermittent one. In conclusion, the letter reminded al-Muhallab that he had definitely better resources and stronger incentives to war than his enemy and that half-hearted measures will never achieve victory.

Al-Muhallab's reaction to this letter was the same with which we are already so familiar. He addressed his troops reminding them how 'Allāh had rid them of the four great enemy chiefs, — namely, Qatārī b. al-Fujārā, Ṣāliḥ b. Mikhrāq, 'Abīda b. Ḥilāl and Sa'd al-Ṭalā'ī — and exhorted them to fight 'Abd Rabbīhī, the only foe that remained, with courage and confidence because his following was a mere 'rabble of Satan'. The troops thereupon moved and fought the enemy constantly and vigorously with remarkable sang-froid. It is related that when al-Muhallab's soldiers returned from the battle-field with wounds on their body, it looked as if they were coming back full of mirth and liveliness from a pleasure party.

(1). For Arabic text see Appendix p. 11
But the enemy was still undaunted and unimpressed. This trial demonstrated once again the utter futility and the folly of a rash attack so strongly urged by al-Ḥajjāj and evoked from ʿUbayd b. Mauhab the spontaneous remark that al-Muhallab's excuse was quite manifest. Al-Muhallab then wrote a detailed reply to al-Ḥajjāj which, apart from the excellence of its literary composition, is also remarkable for the fact that it embodies a clear exposition of his tactics from his own pen.

Al-Muhallab's reply began with the retort that the favourable opinion of al-Ḥajjāj's envoys represented their genuine impression of what they actually saw and that he had never sought to influence them by any unfair means such as canvassing or bribe. Next he controverted the suggestion of al-Ḥajjāj by asserting that a pause was advisable and beneficial both for a victorious and a vanquished army so that the former may take the necessary rest and the latter may think out a new plan of action. It could not have the effect of damping the troops' ardour for vengeance because it was impossible for them to forget their losses. Further, al-Muhallab explained that his attitude was governed by the attitude of his opponents which in turn varied according to changing circumstance. The opponents attacked him when they hoped to gain an advantage over him; they kept back when they felt disgusted and they retired when they lost all hope. Vis-a-vis this, the best policy for him was to fight them when they launched an attack; to be on his guard when they held back; and to pursue them when they retired. In conclusion, al-Muhallab
declared that he was confident of the success of his policy only if he were left to his discretion and that if it was sought to rush him into precipitate action he would rather give up the command than obey or disobey the orders imposed upon him

This was indeed a fit reply, as regards both the contents and the tone, to the letter of al-Hajjāj which was rather strong in tone and contained some definite arguments against al-Muhallab's policy. Al-Muhallab refuted them all, one by one, and justified his own position convincingly. He then put forth boldly and candidly the cardinal points of his strategy of which he was so sure and which he understood so well. Faced with equal, if not superior, odds he would seek no head-on clash but at the same time would avoid none if the enemy took the initiative for it. He would never relax his vigilance and would be quick to press an advantage whenever the enemy showed the least sign of weakness. This frank exposition of policy was followed by an impressing assertion of his unshaken faith in its wisdom and efficacy. The concluding words of the reply constitute an undeniable testimony of his courage of conviction and independence of judgment combined with a keen sense of discipline. A weaker man in his place would have long before submitted to the pressure of his stern overlord. The retort that he would give up the command rather than act against his own discretion was almost overdue in view

(1). For Arabic text see Appendix p. 7
of al-Ḥajjāj's refusal to be amenable to arguments of reason or practical demonstration testified by his own emissaries. It is also very remarkable that al-Muhallab never thought, even for a moment, of revolting against his superior authorities. He would only give up the command if it were made impossible for him to act according to his independent judgment.

Perhaps the arguments contained in the above letter had some effect on al-Ḥajjāj. According to Dein (287) he wrote back to al-Muhallab allowing him full discretion in the conduct of the campaign.

The threat of resignation contained the concluding lines of al-Muhallab's last letter is a clear indication that the frequent reproachful messages from al-Ḥajjāj had severely strained patience and had already become irritating. It was on one such comparatively later occasion that an episode involving Ka'b al-Ḥāqarī, al-Muhallab's poet and warrior, took place. Then al-Muhallab had explained to the messenger of al-Ḥajjāj that 'a man on the spot knew better than him who was far away from it', Ka'b, who happened to be present at the moment, stood up and recited the following verses notwithstanding the presence of the messenger:

(Alḥ, 13/58).
The verses bring out very vividly the anomaly of an impatient overlord seeking to dictate the method of war from his distant and luxurious home in the capital to a high military commander engaged in actual warfare on the front who justifiably claimed for himself the credit of having a better estimate of the exigencies of the situation.

But the most objectionable feature of the above verses was the reference to al-Ḥajjāj's alleged former profession of tannery. On his return the messenger mentioned the verses to al-Ḥajjāj who took so strong exception to them that he at once wrote to al-Muhallab to send Kaʿb to his presence. Al-Muhallab, however, first sent Kaʿb to 'Abd al-Malik with the request that the poet be assured of protection on behalf of the Caliph. Kaʿb impressed 'Abd al-Malik so much that he at once gave him a letter asking al-Ḥajjāj to show forgiveness to him. With this letter Kaʿb arrived at the court of al-Ḥajjāj who questioned him about his derogatory reference to tannery. Kaʿb must have thought that he could propitiate al-Ḥajjāj with a similar derogatory remark against al-Muhallab. He, therefore, replied that he often wished he could be a tanner or a weaver (professions associated with the Azdites) rather than face the terrors which he sometimes had to run through under al-Muhallab during the course of warfare. Al-Ḥajjāj, however, declared that these words would have been of no avail had not Kaʿb brought with him the letter from 'Abd al-Malik and then dismissed him.
In this connection, 'Abd al-Malik is also reported to have written to al-Hajjāj not to interfere with al-Mihallab's conduct of war and to trust his discretion (1).

(1). Algh. 13/57-58; cf. IN. 90.