CHAPTER XXIII.

THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE 'AZARIQA.

By his occupation of Qatari's camp, al-Muhallab had acquired a position of vantage from where to strike effectively at his only foe, 'Abd Rabbihî, whose strength had already been frittered away in the wars with Qatari. Frequent engagements took place every now and then but the enemy still showed himself far from being irresolute or deficient in strength. Hence al-Muhallab, true to his policy, concentrated his efforts on a blockade of the city of Jīrafit rather than pressing home an immediate full-blooded attack on his own initiative(1). It did not take very long for the blockade to compel 'Abd Rabbihî to seek a way out of it.

About the same time that the besieged Azraqites were planning a sortie, al-Muhallab received 'Ubad b. 'Abî Rabî'a b. 'Abî al-Qalî al-Thaqafî along with two 'confidants' who came from al-Hajjāj with the same object of urging precipitate action. Even the last letter of al-Muhallab went in vain. Al-Hajjāj, indeed, proved himself so impervious to the arguments of al-Muhallab that it sometimes raises a faint suspicion that he deliberately kept up a

(1). According to Dain. 288 al-Muhallab left Yazîd in charge of the siege operations while he established himself at a distance of five farsakh from the city. In accordance with al-Muhallab's instructions, Yazîd allowed 'Abd Rabbihî an unmolested passage out of the city but as the Azraqite chief advanced further he was closely pursued by al-Muhallab.
pretence of impatience and dissatisfaction. Perhaps, he deemed it necessary to pull up al-Muhallab every now and then lest the latter should fossilize. ‘Ubaid reproached al-Muhallab for having defied the injunction of al-Ḥajjāj and preferring procrastination and prolongation of war. Al-Muhallab only replied that he had spared no pains and was doing his best.

Towards evening the Azraqites appeared out of the city determined to shift to some other place with their women and bag and baggage. Al-Muhallab issued orders to his troops to stand by and to allow the enemy an unmolested passage. ‘Ubaid b. ʿAbī Rabīʿa naturally took it as a sign of slackness of which al-Muhallab had so long been accused and taunted him saying that it was indeed easier for him not to obstruct the enemy. Al-Muhallab would not allow his actions to be misconstrued by al-Ḥajjāj’s emissaries. Forthwith he reversed his orders and enjoined the troops to check the enemy. He also took care to attach ‘Ubaid b. ʿAbī Rabīʿa to Yazīd and one of the two confidants to al-Hugīra so that the two emissaries might satisfy themselves that no effort was spared.

Both the sides plunged into a deadly fight till the casualties mounted high. The Azraqites were so reckless that they did not refrain from a free fight even for such paltry things as a cup, a whip or a lance. About sunset it became a very serious affair and al-Muhallab thought it fit to stop fighting and allow the enemy to pass. Accordingly the Azraqites moved on and established their new camp at a distance of four farsakh (= 15 miles) from
Jīraft. Al-Muhallab then marched into the city and ordered a collection of all that the enemy had left there of luggage and equipment. The booty was carefully sealed jointly by al-Muhallab, 'Ubad al-Thaqafi and the two confidants.

Having occupied Jīraft, al-Muhallab went out in pursuit of the Azraqites and attacked them in their new position. Al-Muhallab opened the attack at dawn and the fighting continued till mid-day when an Azraqite push imposed a set-back on his army and forced it to withdraw.

During the battle al-Muhallab had again attached 'Ubad al-Thaqafi to Yazid and one of the two confidants to al-Mughira as he had done before. When the battle was over, he inquired of al-Mughira about the confidant who had been attached to him and was told that he had been slain. This grieved the other confidant so much that he turned to al-Mughira and exclaimed "You have killed my colleague." The surviving confidant was also terrified to such an extent that a little later he refused to accompany Ḥabīb on a night raid upon enemy camp. Similarly, al-Muhallab also asked Yazid about 'Ubad al-Thaqafi and was informed that he had not been seen since the set-back. As a matter of fact, the Thaqafite had fled and returned only in the evening. It was this flight of the Thaqafite which caused a man of Banū 'Amir b. Sa'āda to address the following verses to him:
These verses may also be taken as an indication of the way in which al-Hajjaj's repeated and persistent demand for a head-on attack was treated by al-Muhallab's warriors generally. As the fourth verse says the grim realities of war could not be realised by those immersed in the luxuries of the court.

There were two interesting incidents during the battle. First, al-Muhallab asked 'Abū 'Alqama, perhaps in remembrance of the latter's action on the Day of Sillā-wa-Sillibrā, to reinforce him with the horsemen of al-Yahmād and to urge them to lend him their skulls for a while. 'Abū 'Alqama replied that skulls were not earthenware which could be lent nor the necks were the raceme which could grow afterwards. Second, al-Muhallab asked Māʿṣan b. al-Mughīra b. Ḥabīb Sufra to attack the enemy but the latter refused to do so unless al-Muhallab promised to give his

(1) Kam. 691-92.

(2) It will be recalled that according to Tab. 'Abū 'Alqama had done the same during the battle of Sillā-wa-Sillibrā. The reply that 'Abū 'Alqama gave to al-Muhallab on this occasion is the same that the former received from the knights of al-Yahmād on the previous occasion. (See Supra p. 90). 'Abū 'Alqama is variously described in Tab. as al-Yahmādī (al-Yahmād being a branch of al-ʿAzd: Kam. 638,1) and in Kam. as 'al-ʿAbdī. The former, however, seems to be more appropriate in view of the fact that on either occasion he is represented as exercising influence over the knights of al-Yahmād.
daughter, 'Ummē Malik, in marriage to him. Al-Muhallab granted the condition whereupon Ma'ān proved his mettle and cleared the enemy.

After this initial engagement, al-Muhallab continued to stay opposite the camp of 'Abd Rabbīḥī (1) as none of the two camps was fortified with a ditch, both the armies had to be perpetually on their guard, so much so that the animals were always kept saddled. This state of continuous dreadful vigilance soon wearied both the parties. But al-Muhallab had the advantage that his army, which numbered nearly thirty thousand, was amply supplied with provisions and other requisites which the other side lacked. Hence it did not take many days for 'Abd Rabbīḥī to give way. On the eve of his murder, he called together his companions and exhorted them to derive reckless courage from desperation. The next morning, he launched a vigorous onslaught against al-Muhallab. Soon the fighting became so vehement and deadly that it obliterated the memory of all the battles before. The Azraqites proved as reckless as 'Abd Rabbīḥī had exhorted them to be. As a mark of their determination to fight to the end, they hamstrung their animals and became on foot so that they might not be distracted by the thought of flight.

Al-Muhallab, on his side, also ordered his troops to be on foot. He also advised his sons to scatter themselves

(1). Dain. 288 makes the engagement last continuously for three days till the murder of 'Abd Rabbīḥī.
among the troops so as to keep up the morale by their presence. The warriors of al-Muhallab proved themselves equally indifferent to death. An 'Azdite is reported to have gone about asking the people to pledge themselves to death. Another zealous knight, 'Abdullāh b. Rizām al-Ḥarīthī, who hailed from Najrān, exhorted his colleagues in such a rash and boisterous manner that al-Muhallab declared him to be a 'mad boor'. 'Abdullāh thereupon rushed single-handed with such vehemence that he penetrated across the enemy line twice. As usual, the sons of al-Muhallab distinguished themselves by their outstanding valour and perseverance. Especially Yazīd achieved some very notable feats under the eye of his father who acknowledged that the battle was the severest he had ever experienced. When the battle had advanced, the Azraqites broke the scabbards of their swords in desperation and soon there followed vigorous assaults on either side. This close fight ended in the murder of 'Abd Rabbihi. 'Amr al-Qanā, along with his Arab followers who had remained mounted took to flight and the rest surrendered and begged for mercy. The casualties on the side of the 'Azāriqa are estimated at four thousand killed and a large number wounded who, on the orders of al-Muhallab, were handed over to the care of their respective relations. Al-Muhallab captured all that he found in the Azraqite camp and also made prisoners of the Azraqites because they themselves were wont to do the same with their enemies(1).

(1). Tab. 2/1007, 15.
Thus ended the last and a very great battle of al-Muhallab's campaign against the 'Azāriqa which began thirteen years ago. The triumph of al-Muhallab was so complete that it meant the virtual extermination of the 'Azraqites. It is impossible to ascertain the exact time of this crowning victory but, no doubt, it must have come about very shortly after the departure of Qatari for Tabaristan.

After the victory al-Muhallab returned to his headquarters at Jīraft and on reaching it, expressed his joy and satisfaction at the successful termination of the hazardous campaign in the words: "All praise be to 'Allāh who has again restored ease and comfort to us after our life had been no life at all."

Even the joy of victory failed to put al-Muhallab off his guard. Just after his return to Jīraft his eye fell on some people who were unfamiliar to him. At once he put on his coat-of-mail and then called the strangers to his presence. The men revealed that they had come to surprise an attack on his life and were put to sword.

References:
Kam. 689-694.
Tab. 2/1007.

(1). It is obviously wrong to say that the campaign lasted 19 years as in I. 109.