CHAPTER XXVII.

DEATH OF AL-MUHALLAB.

Having stayed in Balkh for a while, al-Muhallab resumed his journey to Merv. On the way, however, he was overtaken by death. He died of 'al-shaṣṣa or al-shauka' (1) at Zahhul, a village in Fanjadeh (2) which was a sub-division of the district of Merv al-Ṣāḥib and was situated along the river Murghāb. The death occurred in the last month of the year 82 A.H. although some authorities have also placed it in the same month of the following year (3). The latter year is, however, improbable because it is undisputed that he died on his way back from Kish to Merv. He must have left Kish not long after the death of al-Muḥṣira (Rajab, 82 A.H.) and there is no reason to suppose that the stay at Balkh should have prolonged for more than a year. It is, however, commonly agreed that the age of al-Muhallab was 76 at the time of his death.

(1). Tab. 2/1082, 11-12. Bal. 417, 9 also mentions al-shauka: gross flatus in the sides causing acute pain or an inflammation of the membranes of the ribs.

(2). Also Fanjadeh: Le Stra. 405; Yaq. 1/743.

(3). See Tab. 2/1083; Isa. 3/536; Ist. 4/110; T. 10/330; Yaq. 2/907; I Kh. 2/146. Year 82 is also confirmed in Dh. 42 and T. 322.
Shortly before his death, al-Muhallab is reported to have called together Habib and all the other sons who happened to be with him on the spot and to have addressed a valedictory speech to them. First he presented them with a number of arrows and questioned if they could be broken singly or collectively. Then the sons replied that it was only possible to break the arrows singly and not collectively, he urged that the same was equally true of the community of men. Then he enjoined upon them a few rules of conduct, viz., to keep unity among themselves and to maintain good relations with other kinsmen, to be careful that their deeds should always be in excess of their words, to give everybody his due, to practise generosity, to learn the Qur'an and to show love to the Arabs and to do good by them in recognition of their special virtue of loyal service and fidelity. Adverting to his cherished principle of warfare he exhorted them to practise patience and clever strategy which proved of more avail than mere dash and bravery. He further explained that these methods warded off all blame from the commander, no matter whatever the result. If the result were favourable the credit went to his wisdom and prudence and if it were adverse then it was attributable only to the supreme dispensation of Providence because his excuse stood manifest(1).

(1). For Arabix text see Appendix p. 11 seq.
With these words al-Muhallab announced his decision to appoint Yazid as his successor and to commission Habib to command the army till he joined Yazid. There are reasons to believe that al-Muhallab’s choice of Yazid was not a wholehearted one because the latter was haughty, arrogant (1) and even profligate as his subsequent conduct showed. Habib, indeed, deserved the honour much more than Yazid and al-Muhallab is even reported to have said in his last moments that if he had free choice he would have selected Habib in preference to Yazid(2). He, however, concluded with an earnest appeal to all the brothers not to defy Yazid whereupon al-Mufaddal assured him on behalf of all the brothers that if the choice of a head were left to them they themselves would have chosen none other than Yazid.

The funeral prayer was led by Habib in accordance with the wishes of the deceased father. Later on he proceeded to Merv al-Shahjan at the head of the army where all the brothers acknowledged Yazid as the head of the family. The succession of Yazid to the governorship of Khurasan was later on confirmed both by al-Hajjaj and ‘Abd al-Malik.

3h. records that 430 years after the death of al-Muhallab (i.e., in the year 512 A.H.) a scholar of Fanjadeh dreamt him requesting that his body be removed from his old grave on the bank of the Rūdh Merv because the water had already penetrated beneath it and was about to submerge his body. Thereupon the scholar proceeded to the spot

(1). Yq. 2/330.
(2). Tab. 2/1083, 17-18.
indicated to him in the dream, dug out the skeleton which was found to be intact and shifted it to the cemetery of Madīna, a quarter in Fanjadeh.

Many poets are reported to have composed elegies on the death of al-Muhallab the best known of which is that by Nahār b. Tausi'a.

(Tab. 2/1084; IKh. 2/147).