Al-Muhallab was endowed with a good taste for poetry which was shown in his ability to cite verses most appropriate to the occasion (vide supra p. 214) and particularly in his lively discourse with the warrior poets of his army, a typical example of which is fortunately preserved for us (vide Appendix p. 19). A few verses ascribed to him are also recorded (1) which, though they do not warrant our attributing any great skill to him, are yet sufficient proof of his interest in the art of poetry. At least his appreciation of a beautiful verse was quick and spontaneous.

He was particularly generous with poets and made ample rewards to them which sometimes amounted to thirty thousand dirhems (Agh. 14/103). But it was quite characteristic of his personality that his patronage was chiefly confined to the warrior poets among his troops. Being essentially a military chief, he never cared to purchase encomiums from those who would not serve him on the battlefield. His panegyrist were also the veterans of his army who only spoke of things which they themselves actually experienced along with their patron. Thus we find that the poets, while urging their rival claims

(1) Besides the two verses on the loss of his eye (supra p. 29), the following verses are also attributed to al-Muhallab:

(1) Qumma'ana naza'ala' al-adhab fa basani'llah wa'l- 'adhab

(Wat. 207).
on him, also thought it necessary to prove their superiority as regards deeds of gallantry and sufficiency in war (cf. Agh. 11/159).

Apart from material gifts, al-Muhallab showed a very nice regard for poets and was always very careful not to give them any cause for displeasure. He would take to task his own son, Habīb, for having killed a particular dove which had been assured of protection by Ziyād al-ʿAjam in his impromptu verses. The pledge of Ḫabū Lubāba (Ziyād) was as sacred as his own and he was not content till he debited one thousand dinars, equal to the blood-money of a free man, to the account of Habīb and paid the sum to the poet as compensation for the dove (1). On another occasion he severely reprimanded al-Mufaqdīl for having offended the poet al-Mughīra b. Ḫabnāʿ by a derogatory reference to the latter's disease of leprosy and reconciled the poet with a gift of ten thousand dirhems (2).

The most prominent among al-Muhallab's warrior poets were Ziyād al-ʿAjam, Kaš al-ʿAshqarī and al-Mughīra b. Ḫabnāʿ. Ziyād seems to have been attached to him at a very early date. An eulogy composed by him at the time of al-Muhallab's first assumption of command of the campaign against the Azārqiqa is preserved (3). Besides a number of brilliant verses, Ziyād's elegy on the death of al-Mughīra b. al-Muhallab is particularly well-known (4).

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(1) Agh. 14/100; Wat. 20.
(2) Agh. 11/159; Uyun 4/64.
(3) Dain. 2324. ″جَنَّةُ الْعَلَّامَةِ مِنْ بَيْتِ اِلْمَهْدِيِّ ″
(4) I Kh. 2/147. ″الْقُلْبُ إِلَّا غَزَا« زِيَادٍ رَأَيْتُهُ بِحُلَبٍ"
Ka'b al-Muhāqari and al-Mughīra b. Ḥabīb al-Munṣāli are heard of during al-Muhallab's prolonged campaign in Sābūr. Ka'b's eulogies of al-Muhallab were of such a high order that some of them are reported to have even roused the envy of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (cf. Agh. 13/56; 60). Ka'b also proved himself a good orator in his witty replies to al-Ḥajjāj.

The rivalry between Ka'b and Ziyād once flared into open satire caused either by the memory of an old feud between the Ṭāzīd and the ʿAbd al-Qais, the respective tribes of the two poets, or by al-Muhallab's special gift of an eloquent slave to Ziyād in consideration of the latter's physical drawback of incorrect pronunciation and bad dialect. It was in the heat of this quarrel that Ziyād uttered the verses which are supposed to contain a disparaging reference to al-Muhallab himself (vide supra p. 5'). Eventually al-Muhallab exerted his influence to restore amity between the two poets (1).

Al-Mughīra's famous ode on the occasion of ʿAtarī's retreat from Sābūr for which he received a huge reward from al-Muhallab has already been noticed. Al-Mughīra was treated with particular favour when al-Muhallab condoned a serious breach of discipline on his part. While at Sābūr al-Muhallab dispatched an expedition commanded by one of his sons against the ʿAmira in the direction of al-ʿAhwāz. Al-Mughīra, who was included in this expedition, slipped away without permission to his home and stayed there for one month till the army returned to al-Muhallab without him. In consequence his name was struck off the military register. On his return, however, al-Mughīra

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(1). Agh. 13/56-57; cf. also Ibid. 11/159.
tendered his apology to al-Muhallab in the form of an ode in which he said:

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\text{\textit{...}}
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Al-Muhallab accepted the apology and also ordered that al-Mushīra be given his regular pay which had previously been stopped (Agh. 11/158).

Among other poets in the army of al-Muhallab were al-Nu<men b. 'Uqba al-Atakī, Ḥabīb b. 'Aun, al-Šalāṭān al-ʿAbdī and Baihas b. Ṣuhaib whose quality of prudence and cautiousness was so highly prized by al-Muhallab(1). Ḥammā b. Mīzh had also had association with him(2). Similarly Nahār b. õansi's famous elegy shows that he must have had some contact with al-Muhallab during the latter's life-time.

Al-Farazdaq was an exception inasmuch as his relations with al-Muhallab were of a different kind. He was wont frequently to satirise al-Muhallab and the ḤzdʿUmān which tribe had long been opposed to the Tamīm, al-Farazdaq's own tribe. Ultimately al-Muhallab was compelled to ban the admission of the poet to his presence. The ban, however, only provoked al-Farazdaq to compose another lampoon against him(3). Towards the time when al-Muhallab was to start for his campaign against the Ḥzdārīqa, al-Farazdaq made a move to obtain the former's favour through the mediation of Jarīr. Al-Muhallab was ready to 'purchase his honour' from the satirist but Judai, a prominent kinsman, and

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(1) Kam. 673.
(2) Agh. 15/14.
(3) Div. 10.
Khaïra, al-Muhallab's wife, were strongly opposed that the blackmailer should be allowed any approach. Thereupon al-Farazdaq gave further offence to the Muhallabids by satirising Judaiq and Khaïrah (1) the latter of whom also forms the subject of two other satires (2). In later days the Muhallabids continued to be the butt of al-Farazdaq's satires till Yazid b. al-Muhallab was entrusted with the governorship of al-‘Iraq and Khurāsān on behalf of Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Malik when the blackmailer's unscrupulous opportunism impelled him to lavish encomiums on the sons of al-Muhallab and their illustrious father (3).

(2). Diw. 149 and 609.
(3). Agh. 19/29; cf. Diw. 374.