

which he considered himself predestined to proclaim; but he added to this the declaration that their spirits had in turn entered into his own soul, and that he was therefore a great prophet, — the Bâb, who was to bring their gospel to a legitimate conclusion. It became his mission, therefore, to announce that all things were divine, and that he, the Bâb, was the incarnate presentiment of the universal life. To this doctrine was added a socialism which formulated the equality of all, sweeping away social classes and distinctions, and ordaining a community of property, and also, at first, of wives. The new doctrines took hold of the heart of the masses; men and women of all ranks hastened to proclaim their yearning for something that promised to better their condition, by embracing the wild teachings of the Bâb. This success was doubtless due in part to a religious restlessness, which might have turned to something more satisfying and true if only it had been known. But the Government could not long remain blind to the possible results if the movement were allowed to spread unchecked. Therefore, after several serious tumults, the Bâb was seized and executed at Tabreez. This only served to add fuel to the fire. A fierce persecution broke forth; but the Bâbees were not willing to submit tamely to suppression. They offered resistance in many quarters, which culminated in 1851 at Zenjân, a city between Tabreez and Teherân, celebrated for its exquisite work in silver filigree. The place was besieged for several months and finally stormed, the Bâbees fighting from house to house until every man, woman, and child in the city was slain. After this terrible event a conspiracy of Bâbees was formed to assassinate Nasr-ed-Deen Shah, who escaped with a serious wound in the leg. The conspirators were put to death with horrible tortures. Several similar attempts have, it is reported, been made since then, and many Bâbees have, I am told, been sacrificed secretly by poison administered in prison; but I do not vouch for this fact. The

Bâbees are now obliged to practise their faith in secret, all of those in Persia being outwardly of the Shieâh sect. But their activity does not cease, and their numbers are increasing rapidly. The sect has also extended to Turkey. The leader of the Turkish branch resides at Constantinople.

In Persia the title of the present head of the sect is Sob-e-Azêl. As his belief in the Bâb is a secret, his name is not mentioned in this connection. From all I can gather from various sources it seems safe to assume that the Bâbees of Persia now number nearly, if not quite, four hundred thousand believers. They are found among all conditions of society, and, strange to say, adherents are gained among the priesthood as well as the laity. Just now there seems to be unusual activity among the Bâbees; emissaries or missionaries are secretly pervading the country, not only seeking to make proselytes but also presenting modifications in belief. The community in wives is no longer a practised tenet of the Bâb sect, while it is proclaimed with increasing emphasis that the Bâb is none other than God himself made manifest in the flesh.

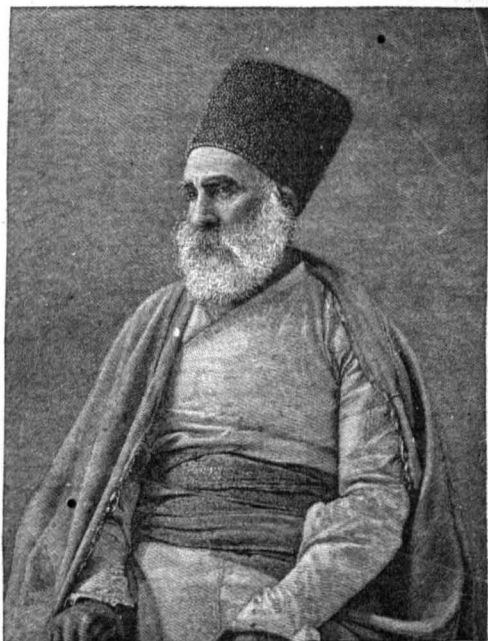
Another class connected with the Sheâh sect is worthy of mention, although it can hardly be called a sect. I refer to the Seyeds, or descendants of the Prophet by Alee and Fatimêh, the daughter of Mahomet. They are distinguished by the black or green turbans they are privileged to wear. Whether all of them can prove to the satisfaction of a genealogical expert that they have a right to claim such exalted ancestry may be doubted; but at any rate they form such a numerous body, and show such a disposition to make the most of their privileges, that during the present reign a special department of justice has been formed to administer the law to Seyeds.

The foregoing observations, although necessarily only partial, are sufficient to indicate a spiritual, intellectual, and civil

activity and restlessness that prove the Persians to be in a developing and transitional rather than a dormant state, and preparing in due time to receive impressions of the truth in a nobler form than any with which they are now familiar.

I have often been asked whether the Persians are still fire-worshippers. Such a question not only indicates the ignorance which continues to prevail concerning the East, but also suggests that poets and historical novelists are responsible for most of the small amount of history which satisfies the general reader. The number of persons who have derived their ideas of Persia from Moore's "Fire-worshippers" is far larger than of those who have gone to serious history for their information. When the Arabs, burning with religious zeal, carried the doctrines of Mahomet into Persia, and forced the acceptance of the Koran at the point of the sword, that country abandoned the so-called worship of fire and the principles taught by Zerdûst, or Zoroaster. The fire-worshippers who survived were mostly driven out of the country by persecution, and became the Parsees of India; a few remained in Persia, and their descendants are found there to this day, but they number scarcely twenty-three thousand. They are most numerous at Yezd, where they weave some of the finest of the silk stuffs for which Persia is famous. Elsewhere they are agriculturists. They wear a peculiar garb, of which a distinguishing color is yellow, and are probably the most upright community in a country where correct principles and practice are scarce. Of course they retain the worship and rites of ancient Persia, including the mystical veneration for fire-light. It is worthy of note that the more intelligent of the Guebres deny that they worship either the sun or fire, but rather the deity or principle symbolized by those objects. This may be true of educated Guebres; but the lower and ignorant classes undoubtedly have not sufficient refinement to make so subtle a distinction. Those who are opposed to smoking, on moral grounds, will be

pleased to learn that no Guebre ever uses tobacco, while to smoke in his presence is almost an affront, because of the sacredness of fire. The head of the Guebres in Persia is a very respectable and intelligent old gentleman named Manookjee; he resides at Teherân, and is in frequent communication with the Parsees of Bombay, by whom, it is said, he is delegated to look after the Guebre interests in Persia. As an English subject he is free from annoyance, and doubtless able to be of efficient service to his co-religionists. The peculiar method of burial followed by the Guebres—leaving the dead exposed to the elements to be devoured by fowls of the air—is due to the belief that to inter them in the ground would be to pollute it. Of course such a practice and sentiment could obtain only in a warm, dry climate. It was partly to this cause that the early Christians owed their persecution by the Zoroastrians, who were bitterly opposed to the modes of Christian burial.



A GUEBRE.

The Armenians, Jews, and Nestorians of Persia also form distinct communities entirely separate from the dominant Persian and Mahometan population, like small islands in the sea, and presenting an immovable front for ages against all the disadvantages of such isolation. These communities number probably from twenty-five to thirty thousand souls each. The

Jews are devoted entirely to trade, and most of the Armenians of Persia follow the same pursuit; and while meeting with oppression and injustice at times, like all the inhabitants of oriental countries, they appear to be scarcely less successful in proportion to their numbers than the Persians in acquiring property and high offices as well. The Nestorians are Chaldean Christians, devoted chiefly to agriculture; they have suffered terribly from the incursions of the neighboring Kurds, a bloody and intractable horde who respect neither God nor man. But notwithstanding these facts, and while it is customary to hear frequent complaints of the injustice meted out to Christians and Jews by Mahometan oppressors, my observations lead me to the conclusion that they are generally treated with much toleration, and are rarely forced to submit to greater injustice and indignity than is awarded to Mussulmans as well. But being subject-races, smarting under the chronic rapacity and misgovernment which have characterized oriental governments in all ages, they feel it more because inflicted by alien rulers of different faith; and hence they assume that they are treated with exceptional severity. It may be the case sometimes, but generally the Mahometans suffer the same results of misgovernment, and accept the burden with the resignation of fatalists. These conclusions may be disputed by some, but twenty-three years' experience in various parts of the East give me the right at least to differ from them.

The work of the American, English, and Roman Catholic missionaries in Persia is among the native Christians and Jews. The time for direct attempts to convert Mahometans to Christianity appears to be deferred to the future, indefinitely postponed until the death penalty is not only legally abolished, but also until popular opinion does not seek to vent fanaticism by furious attacks on proselytes to Christianity. Were the missionaries now to undertake a serious, organized, and public attempt to proselyte

Mahometans they would themselves come into great danger of being mobbed and massacred, and would certainly be required to leave the country as disturbers of its peace, which is already sufficiently threatened. We should not hastily condemn the Persians for feeling so strongly on this point.

These observations are illustrated by a characteristic incident which occurred at Ispahân a year or two ago. His Royal Highness, the Zil-i-Sultân, took a notion to attend service on a certain Sabbath at the English Protestant chapel, which is under the charge of the veteran missionary the Rev. Dr. Bruce. Some days subsequent to this two Persians, encouraged by the example of the Prince, also attended the same service. When apprised of the fact, the Zil-i-Sultân summoned them into his presence and ordered their heads to be struck off on the spot. On being remonstrated with by Dr. Bruce for such inconsistency, the Prince replied: "I have a right to go where I please; and I also went in order to satisfy myself whether Persians attend your services. But if they go to your church they may do it with the intention of changing their religion; and to do that is not tolerated by our laws."

The Prince is himself reputed to be a free-thinker, and in favor of European progressive ideas so far as concerns material improvement. But the above incident proves what I have stated, that even intelligent Persians perceive in open secession from Mahometanism at present an attack upon the only code which can be relied upon to preserve order in Persia. They regard it as a civil rather than a religious question. Of course, proselytism finds far greater obstacles to encounter when Church and State are so inextricably interwoven as they are in Mahometan countries.

The American missionaries have now been laboring fifty years in Persia. There are captious persons who ask, "Well, how many converts have they made? Would they not do

more by staying at home?" Although this is not a strictly fair way to judge of the value and results of missionary effort, yet I have no hesitation in affirming that the missionaries in Persia have made the same number of converts as an equal number of clergymen settled in towns of the United States during the same period. But even if they had been less successful in this respect, it would work no prejudice, nor serve as an argument, against the necessity and importance of missions. For, in the first place, years are required for breaking ground, for acquiring the language, for translating the Scriptures and other devotional and educational works, and for establishing schools.

But the true method for judging the result of missionary effort is that which regards it, not like a prairie fire that sweeps rapidly over the plains devouring all within its range, and as swiftly dying out, but rather as a mighty, silent influence, like the quiet, steady forces of Nature, which carry the seed and deposit it in the soil, nursing it with sunshine and with rain year after year, until an oak springs up and reaches out its growing arms over the sod, and in turn scatters the acorns, until a mighty forest waves its majestic boughs where once were rocks and thistles. Ages passed while Nature was producing this great evolution; and they who judged superficially by the few acorns first produced might have sneered at the slow but sure results that were to come after they had mouldered in the grave. Men do not reason about other great movements as they do about missions. Is it fair, is it just, is it sensible to make an exception in this case? American missions in Persia may be seemingly a slow, but they are an enduring influence both for secular as well as religious progress. Their growth is cumulative, and their power is mighty.

The American Colony in Persia, which consists altogether of missionaries at present, has been in that country fifty-one years.

They number about eighty-five, and are settled at Oroomiah, Selmâs, Heftavân, Tabreez, Hamadân, and Teherân. Several English missionaries are stationed at Ispahân. The necessity of having premises for schools and residences has resulted in the acquisition of considerable property by the American Colony in Persia. Although this is permitted under the "most-favored-nation" clause in the treaty between the United States and Persia, obstacles have been steadily presented to the purchase or rental of real estate by the missionaries, which has given rise to many of the questions brought to the attention of the United States Minister in Persia. Missionaries are a most estimable body of men in general, and in my efforts to extend to them the protection of the United States I have found them highly appreciative of all earnest exertions made in their behalf. From the nature of the case, however, it must be evident that a missionary colony located in a fanatical country like Persia must necessarily require more diplomatic aid than the same number of traders. A merchant arouses few prejudices in an Eastern country; on the contrary, his endeavors to promote trade tend to add to the wealth of all concerned. Persians are as ready to see this as any people. But the moment a missionary arrives in Persia he becomes a disturbing element; the prejudices of fanatics are aroused, and the apprehensions of those who wish to see order preserved are stimulated, not without reason it must be admitted. It is well enough to say that people should not be disturbed by the presence of a body of men whose labors are designed to promote human welfare, but when those labors must necessarily result in agitating families and shaking communities, it is not surprising that they should cause alarm if not resentment on the part of the invaded people; and while those who believe that the missionaries preach the truth desire to see the extension of their work, it is quite another thing hastily to condemn the people who oppose their advent and

progress in a so-called pagan land. It is not difficult to imagine what would be the feelings of a Protestant or a Roman Catholic or a Hebrew father in the United States, who should see a priest of a faith he detests exerting every effort, however honestly, to lead his child from the faith of its fathers. If in this enlightened country we are disposed to resent such invasions of our domestic peace, we must allow that something may be said in palliation of those Persians who view the progress of foreign missions in that country with suspicion and dread. To say that they oppose the truth because they are "sinners" is not enough, — for who shall say what is truth; or who is he that dares to affirm that he or his sect are the sole depository of the truths of the universe, the sole delegates inspired to interpret the tremendous problems of destiny?

Whether rightly or wrongly, the Persians undoubtedly have little love for the foreign missionaries so long settled among them. Although the treaty by inference allows American missionaries to reside in Persia, it is really by sufferance that they do so; and I consider it a very strong evidence of the natural amiability of the Persian character that our missionaries are allowed to remain there with so little annoyance, all things considered. But were they to enter upon a deliberate attempt to proselyte the Mahometans now, and decline to yield to the remonstrances of the Persian Government, there is little reason to doubt that they would be requested to leave the country; and considering the present condition of Persia, I should be very slow to condemn the Shah if he should follow such a course in such a case. But the American missionaries are aware of this, and while burning with zeal to attack the strongholds of Mahometanism, they are generally amenable to reason, and disposed not to precipitate matters by a faith that is not based on practical common-sense; that is to say, while undoubtedly their ultimate aim in Persia is to abolish faith in

the "false" Prophet, they are able to control their zeal, and by working in other directions to spread their influence, inspiring confidence in their intelligence and integrity by every



SMALL HOUSE OF PRAYER AND MINARET.

possible means, and thus gradually to sap the foundations of the dominant faith of the country. If I had remained in Persia it was my intention eventually to combine with the other Legations, if possible, to bring about a wider toleration, such as

exists at least nominally in Turkey. This, of course, must be a preliminary step to the actual toleration which can come only as the result of time. During this interval of waiting and patience, the American missionaries are forced to be content with directing their ostensible labors to the elevation of the Nestorians and Armenians to purer religious practice, and Christianizing the Jews. These efforts have been attended with some success, especially among the Nestorians. But as the Nestorians, or Chaldeans, of Persia are a small, entirely isolated community of scarcely thirty thousand souls, without the slightest present or future intellectual, social, or political importance, the money and energy bestowed in elevating them would be of little proportionate good, were it not that by this means the missionary cause in Persia obtains a point of vantage, whence to watch its opportunity for a direct invasion of the strongholds of Mahometanism.

It must be admitted that the most important factor now at work in the missionary field of Persia is one that is largely secular. I refer to the employment of missionary physicians. Persons who do not care to be instructed in the tenets of a faith other than their own are still in need of physical aid; all may not be in spiritual need, but all soon or later require a physician: If the practitioner be a man of ability, tact, and suavity, he acquires a personal influence that necessarily leads to a modification of the opposition to the progress of the missionaries with whom the physician is associated, and important concessions may thus gradually be obtained from those in power. Fletcher of Saltoun said: "Give me the song-makers of a country, and you may have its law-givers." I would modify this in an oriental country, and say, "Give me the physicians." If the physician be also a missionary, and withal a shrewd man, there is scarce a limit to the influence he can obtain.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SHEĀHS AND THE TAZIÊH, OR PASSION-PLAY OF PERSIA.

THE traveller from Europe who for the first time rambles through the streets of Persia's capital in the sacred month of Moharrêm, will be surprised by a sound which is especially remarkable in the comparative stillness of an oriental city. It is the voice of children singing, in clear tones, snatches of a song he has never heard before. The notes are weird and plaintive, suggesting, in a certain indefinable way, strophes of the "Stabat Mater;" and yet the strain has a distinct individuality of its own, a musical cadence that fixes the attention, and touches the chords of the emotions.

"Is yon child recalling bits of a popular song or a recent opera which has taken the city by storm?" asks the interested stranger from Europe, who knows not that neither popular airs, nor operas, exist in Persia.

"No," you reply to him, "the strain you hear is part of the solemn chant of the Taziêh."

"The Taziêh! What can that be?" asks the bewildered foreigner again.

"The Taziêh," you reply once more, "is the Passion Play of Persia."

But this explanation, instead of satisfying, only stimulates the curiosity of the inquirer; and he who has undertaken to gratify it finds himself bewildered by the attempt to explain in a few words one of the most remarkable religious phenomena of the age. In

order to give an intelligible description of the Taziêh it is first necessary to tax the patience of the reader with the repetition of a few salient points in the rise of Mahometanism. If not altogether fresh to the student versed in oriental history, these events have probably attracted but little attention from the popular mind of Christendom, and no apology is therefore necessary for giving a running account of them here, including a number of facts that have probably never before been related in print.

After the death of Mahomet the succession was disputed, although the Sheâhs affirm that Mahomet had already designated Alee as his successor. The succession appeared to belong by right, as well as naturally, to Alee, who was married to Fatimêh, the only surviving daughter of the Prophet. But it was not until the accession and assassination of Abu Beker, Omâr, and Othmân, that the magnanimous Alee was elected to the caliphate. Even then he was not permitted to enjoy the long-deferred honors without an opposition, which eventually proved fatal not only to himself, but also to the continuation of the caliphate in the family of the founder of the Faith. After crushing two formidable rivals besides Ayesha the evil-hearted wife of Mahomet, who had offered the most bitter opposition, Alee found himself unable to overcome the resistance of Moaviyêh. It was at Damascus that the latter, a crafty and astute chieftain, succeeded in establishing the caliphate in the line of the Ommiades. Inferior to Alee in the field, Moaviyêh maintained his throne by superior adroitness. When Alee was in turn assassinated, his oldest son Hassân assumed the caliphate, to which he was peacefully elected by the people of Medîna or Mediuh. At the head of a powerful army he marched to encounter Moaviyêh. The enthusiasm of his generals and forces promised a decisive victory; but Hassân was a man of peaceable disposition, averse to active life, and preferring the tranquil domesticity of a private citizen.

Conscious of his unfitness to conduct a civil war requiring an arm of iron and a heart of steel, he proposed to abdicate in favor of Moaviyêh, reserving the succession to himself after the death of Moaviyêh, who was much the elder, and an ample revenue during a life of ease and retirement at Medina.

The terms of the pacification were accepted and religiously followed by Moaviyêh. But Yezeed, his son, foreseeing that the approaching death of his father would restore the virtuous Hassân to the caliphate, caused the latter to be poisoned by one of his wives. Although probably ignorant of the nefarious design of Yezeed, Moaviyêh acquiesced in the result; he could not resist the temptation, thus unexpectedly offered, of continuing the line in his family by naming Yezeed as his successor. The accession of the latter was accepted by the various provinces of the now extensive dominions of Islâm, with the exception of Medina and Mecca, or Mek-kêh, and the Persian satrapy, of which Bagdad and Cûfa were chief cities, which gave in their allegiance to the lion-hearted Hosseïn, the brother of Hassân, and, like him, a grandson of the Prophet. Hosseïn was a man of different metal from Hassân. He had opposed his brother's abdication, and he now perceived, after escaping a plot to assassinate him, that the Empire was not large enough to contain himself and Yezeed in peace; he therefore boldly prepared for a final conflict that was to decide the claims of the Aleeites and the Ommiades. Escaping from Medina, whose governor had schemed to entrap him, Hosseïn hastened with his family toward Cûfa. Alee had made that city his capital; he was buried in the sacred shrine of Kerbelâh, near that city, and it was only natural that Hosseïn should now place reliance in the professed allegiance of the people of Cûfa, who warmly invited him to proceed thither, promising him every support in the approaching decision of arms. But the Cufees were proverbially volatile and unstable,

whiffing uneasily from one extreme to another, like a vane whirled alternately by the veering blasts of an approaching storm, — *to-day, one thing; to-morrow, another.*

The inhabitants of Cufa had hardly sent a pressing invitation to Hosseïn to resort to their city, with the offer of a powerful host and their homage, when they allowed themselves to be easily diverted from their purpose by the swift messenger sent by Yezeed, who was ordered to seize Cufa. If not altogether acquiescing in the stern mandates of the new governor, the Cufees at least tamely submitted, and allowed an army to be sent to crush Hosseïn without so much as forewarning the heroic grandson of the Prophet of the danger to which they themselves had exposed him by their earnest profession of zeal in his cause. There was suspicion in the air: the known fickleness of the people of Cufa suggested the utmost caution; the character of Yezeed was well-known; and, on all hands, Hosseïn was urged to delay his departure, or, at least, to leave behind him his wives, children, and kinsfolk. But Hosseïn was a man of courage, and, what was more, a true believer in predestination. "What is written is written," is the doctrine of the Koran; of what worth is faith, if it will not bear the test in the hour of trial? What better occasion could offer for the son of Alee to testify to his descent from the Prophet, and to his unflinching belief in the tremendous fiat of Kismêt? Therefore, accompanied by his family and a score or two of Arab horsemen, Hosseïn went forth unflinchingly to meet his doom. Not alone to the annals and legends of the Christian Church must one look to find true martyrs and heroes of faith. If ever there was a hero that man was Hosseïn, son of Alee. The heroism of Hosseïn was the more remarkable, because from the outset of his journey he was oppressed by a presentiment of death stalking in his path across the desert, and rapidly overtaking the small troop of devoted victims wearily marching to the grave. "To God we belong,

and to God we return," was the utterance of resignation which burst from his lips in the agony of suspense.

On the low banks of the tawny Euphrates, the scene of so many tragedies of the long-forgotten ages, and near the spot where but recently the votaries of Zoroaster had succumbed to the irresistible onset of the hosts of Islâm, on the hard-contested field of Kadesiyêh, the despairing band was brought to a halt by the army which had been sent to intercept its progress. The negotiations which followed proved futile; for the General of Yezeed, the fierce Emir Odbeïd Allâh, would accept of nothing short of an unconditional surrender preceded by an absolute oath of allegiance to Yezeed, while Hosseïn preferred death to life on such terms. His four brothers, sons of Alee by another wife, and all his companions also declined to accept the safe conduct offered to them, choosing to share the fate of Hosseïn. In the mean time the enemy had planted themselves between the camp of Hosseïn and the Euphrates, and to the other horrors of this terrible hour was now added that of thirst in a land quivering with intolerable heat. The last night in the little camp was one of solemn preparation, of portentous dreams and fateful gloom. Zeinêb and Hosseïn, brother and sister, the children of Alee and Fatimêh, held mournful converse on the creeping horror of the morrow, — the day that should see the destruction of the family of the Prophet of God. Around them gathered, one by one, their children and kinsfolk and the small band of faithful defenders. Hosseïn urged them to fly while yet there was time, for the enemy sought only the life of one, — his own. "Allah forbid that we desert you now!" exclaimed Abbass, and all united in exclaiming with him that they would die with Hosseïn. The time for deliberation was past; there remained for them but one thing, — to die. But they would die in such manner that the memory thereof should ring round the globe and become a watchword and an inspiration to generations.

yet unborn. A trench was dug around the camp and filled with fagots and tent-stakes, to kindle when the final assault should come. At daybreak the little band was surprised by the addition of Harro and thirty warriors of Cufa. Conscience-smitten by the perfidy in which with their fellow-citizens they were on the point of joining, they had decided to contribute their own lives to the final defence and sacrifice of the family of Alee.

The attack was begun by Sheimr, a fierce partisan; the combat continued until the hour for noon prayer, when there came a cessation of arms. During the truce Hosseïn chanted the "Song of Fear," which is only recited in moments of extreme peril. The final catastrophe, which was never doubtful, was not long deferred after the resumption of the struggle. Hosseïn fell pierced with over thirty wounds; and his head was struck off by the ferocious Shemr, who carried it all gory to Obeïd Allâh. Among the slain were eighteen descendants of Alee and Fatimêh. But the slaughter suffered by the assailing army far exceeded that of the assailed. Hosseïn sold his life dearly. Zeinêb and some of the women and children were spared, and eventually taken into the presence of Yezeed, together with the heads of Hosseïn and his brothers. Yezeed acted with moderation, and the remaining descendants of the Prophet seemed to have retired from further participation in public affairs, laying aside ambition, and merging themselves into the life of private citizens or of religious teachers and expounders of the Faith.

Not so, however, was it with others, who although not of the house of Alee were firm believers in the rights of the descendants of the Prophet. Among the fanatic adherents of the cause was Al Muchtâr, called the avenger. Assuming the office of vindicator of the growing sect of Sheähs, who cherished the memory of Alee, Al Muchtâr entered on a mission of extermination against all who were concerned in the slaughter of Hosseïn. The story of his persistent efforts and marvellous exploits merits

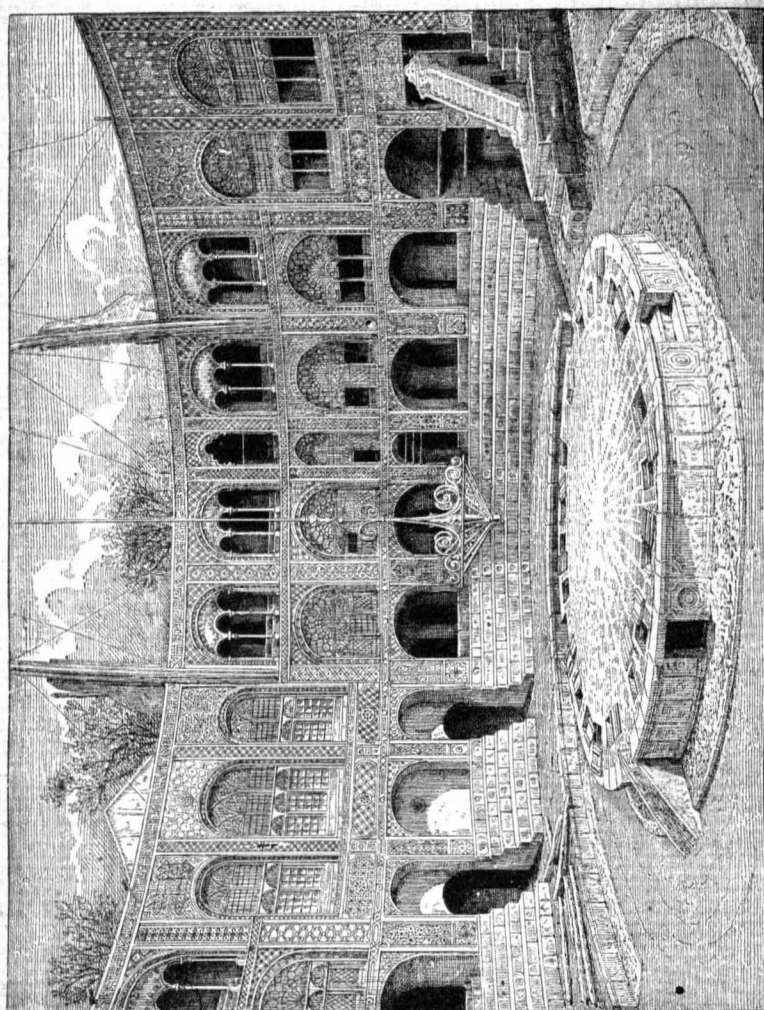
a separate narrative; but it suffices to state here that in the accomplishment of his tremendous task Al Muchtâr succeeded so thoroughly, that besides slaying all the leaders in that great tragedy, and an immense multitude in numerous battles, he slaughtered nearly three score thousand in cold blood before he himself fell under the stroke of the grim destroyer of all. The career of Al Muchtâr was however only an episode in the great drama about to follow, which was destined to involve nations as actors, and to gain in interest and importance for many ages, — a great religious phenomenon, directly resulting from the tragedy on the banks of the Euphrates. Christendom, engaged in its own thousand sectarian conflicts, little recked of the great religious movements that were being evolved in a distant land, — the land of Irân, which had given language to Europe, and developed a magnificent civilization before the rise of Athens; a civilization which had already produced one of the great theistic cults of the world ere the Star in the East pointed the Persian Magi to the lowly cradle-manger of Christ the Redeemer.

The entire Mahometan world from Afghanistân to the Straits of Gibraltar now seemed to acknowledge the sway of the caliphs of the line of Moaviyêh and his successors. The rival claims of Alee and his family appeared laid at rest and forgotten. But not so; in Irân, or Persia, the sectaries of Alee were slowly biding their time. It is not a little singular that not at Mecca, nor at Medina, where the Prophet first proclaimed his doctrines, were the claims of his children accepted, but in a distant land peopled by another race. His children were buried in foreign soil, and the honor accorded to their memory is to be found not in Arabia, but in Persia. This may be due in part to the fact that one of the wives of Hassân was a daughter of Yezdigêrd, the last monarch of the Sassanian line. Her remains were brought to her native land, and her tomb is now shown on the

rocky heights which overlook the extensive ruins of Rheï, the last capital of the Sassanides, where she bade her father farewell. There is no good reason to doubt the legend which marks the tomb of the daughter of Yezdigêrd.

But be the cause what it may, the fact remains that in Persia the memory of Alee and his unfortunate family was remembered with profound veneration by a small and persecuted sect, many of whom sealed their faith with their blood. They called themselves Sheähs, and cursed the caliphs and all other Mahometans who are known by the name of Sunnees. The fathers of this devoted sect were the Twelve Holy Imâms. Other features regarding the Sheäh sect have been mentioned in the preceding chapter.

For many ages the Sheähs of Persia were generally a persecuted sect of enthusiasts receiving scant tolerance from the numerous dynasties, either native or foreign, which succeeded each other with bewildering rapidity, and usually advocated Sunnee doctrines. After eight hundred years of heroic faith and endurance the hour of triumph came to the Sheähs, as it comes to all who wait and believe. In the latter part of the fifteenth century there was born at Ardebeel a child named Ismail. On his father's side he was descended from Mirza Khazîm, the Seventh Holy Imâm, and was therefore in the direct line of descent from Fatimêh and Alee; on his mother's side, singularly enough, he claimed descent by one remove from the Christian Emperor of Trebizond. Ismail proved to be possessed of superior talents. He instigated a revolt in which he succeeded, after several hard-contested fields, in deposing the Kurdish dynasty of the Ak Koyunlû. He mounted the throne of Persia in 1499 and founded the dynasty of the Sufees or Sufavees, the greatest she has seen since the time of Anushirwân the Just. Ismail, as the descendant of Alee, was naturally a Sheäh. He caused himself to be styled Shah Sheäh-ân, King of



THE TAKIEH, OR ROYAL THEATRE.

the Sheähs. Shah Ismail is likewise surnamed, on account of his services to the Sheäh doctrines, *Shah Djennèt Mackhân*, or "the King dwelling in Paradise evermore." Not only did he consolidate Persia once more into a great empire, but he also united nearly the entire population in a common zeal for the faith of the sectaries of Alee. The Mahometan world soon learned not only that Persia was once more a vast dominant power, but also that she presented a united front against all the orthodox Sunnee nations who surrounded her on all sides, and against whom she now breathed potential curses and war.

It is not singular that the brilliant memory of the splendor and power of the Sefavean dynasty, associated as it is with the emphatic influence it gave to the adherents of Alee, should have made the Persians tenacious of a faith to which their country owed so much; nor that, like some European nations, religion and patriotism are with them almost synonymous terms. Inspired with new zeal and national enthusiasm, the Persian Sheähs of the early Sefavean period demanded a vent for their sectarian fervor. Such a vent partially came in the celebration of the anniversaries of the most important events that history and legend recorded in the lives of Alee and his descendants. The idea of thus commemorating the tragical events on which the Sheäh faith is founded appears to have been borrowed from a practice established by Moaviyêh, the first of the line of the Omniades, which it is quite likely was suggested to him by some early custom of the passionate and imaginative tribes of Arabia in the pre-Mahometan period. The circumstances connected with the murder of the third caliph, Osmân, were in the highest degree dramatic. Moaviyêh caused this event, on each return of the anniversary, to be represented at his court in Damascus, whether by recitations or dramatic impersonation or both does not appear. At any rate this very probably suggested to the Persians a similar commemoration of the principal event in the

lives of the founders and upholders of the Sheâh faith. Merely as a matter of hypothesis, I venture to suggest that possibly the Persians may have borrowed the idea of such annual commemorations from a practice which seems to have obtained ages before of celebrating the slaughter of Smerdis the Magian by King Darius, the annual celebration being called by the Greeks the *Magophonia*. What form of celebrating these events was in vogue among the Shieâhs before the Sefavean period we can only imagine from what occurred with more pomp and pageantry during that dynasty.

Tradition states, however, that during the brief Deilamee dynasty, about 933 to 986 A. D., the practice began of commemorating the events in the history of the Sheâh sect by recitations given in the form of exhortations by prominent mollâhs, from pulpits erected in the public squares or (by invitation) in the residences of the chief dignitaries during the three months accounted holy by the Sheâhs. These recitations varied according to the enthusiasm, the imagination, or the talent of the speaker, and were called *rhozêh*. The *rhozêh* recitations continue in full force to the present day; halls called *rhozêh khanêh* are especially constructed for these religious rhapsodies. But the zeal of the Sufavees, aided as it was by an opulence and splendor which has rendered the reigns of Shah Abbass the Great and his successors almost proverbial, quickly suggested more pomp and circumstance in the commemoration of the martyrdom of the saints of the Sheâh faith. Sir John Chardin, in his magnificent and generally reliable work on Persia in the Sefavean period, has given a minute account of the spectacle he witnessed at Ispahân during the holy month of Moharrêm. We are enabled from his narrative to form a conception of the elaborate ceremonies which already in the fifth reign of the Sefaveans had become established at these anniversaries. It does not appear from his description however, nor from anything I

can learn elsewhere, that any attempt was made in that age to give a distinctively dramatic character to the representations of these solemn scenes.

The idea of dramatizing them appears to have come only gradually, and is still in a somewhat nebulous condition, as will be evident in the sequel. Indeed, the Taziêh is the result of a long and gradual evolution, as an intelligent Persian informed me, rather than the inspiration of any single imaginative genius; and it yet lacks a certain rounded completeness or artistic symmetry and finish of detail. There is for all Mahometans alike a sacred month devoted to a terrible ordeal of fasting from sunrise to sunset. It consists of an abstention not merely from certain articles of food, or in taking nourishment in reduced quantities, as in the rather perfunctory fasts of the Christian churches, but is really an absolute abstinence from every form of nourishment or stimulant, including water and smoking, for the entire day. In summer the ordeal is indeed one of the most trying ever invented for the torture of man. This fast is called the Ramazân. In order to sustain the faith and fortitude of true believers at this season, the Sheâhs allow representations of the Taziêh and the exhortations of the Rhozêh during that month. But the true time for these representations is during the two extremely holy months of Moharrêm and Safâr. In these two months the expounders of the Alee sect have contrived to bring closely together a number of important and significant events. It is too much to ask the critical unbeliever to accept so remarkable a coincidence as the occurrence of such harmony in the events relating to the foundation of this sect; it is easier to assume that they were miraculously brought into such juxtaposition, or that the expounders of the Sheâh law, like doctors in some other religions, were gifted with the happy faculty of dreaming what they wished might occur, of creating the revelations with which they profess to have been inspired.

It is true that the lives of Cæsar, of Cromwell, of Napoleon, and of some other distinguished men have presented some startling coincidences, which have been naturally accepted by the multitude as indicating in the most distinct manner the interest taken by an overruling Providence in the career of men raised by destiny to control the march of empire. In the present instance, however, it is easier to believe that the imaginative zeal of oriental fanaticism, rather than a Providence dealing with facts, is responsible for the close sequence of the numerous events that are attributed to the mysterious and extraordinary months of Moharrêm and Safâr. Among these occurrences are the deaths of Hassân and of Hosseïn, the birth of the Prophet, the martyrdom of the Imâm Rezâh, and the death of Fâtimêh, daughter of Mahomet.

It should be stated that a month before Moharrêm occurs the solemn festival of Courbân Baïrâm, or the "Feast of the Sacrifice." The chief ceremony of this occasion is the slaughter of the camel, a ceremony repeated in every city of Persia. At Teherân the animal, gayly caparisoned, is led into a densely thronged square near the palace of Negaristân, and caused to kneel. At the auspicious moment a spear in the hand of a relative of the Shah is thrust into a vital spot behind the neck; but scarcely has the blood burst forth before a hundred knives are thrust into the poor animal by the bystanders, and in a twinkling the carcass is divided into many parts. Each quarter of the city endeavors to seize a portion, which may be kept for good luck during the succeeding twelvemonth. This ceremony seems a fitting prelude to the events of the succeeding month.

One becomes aware that the month of mourning has arrived, by the practical cessation of all but the most important labor. Business in the bazaars nearly comes to a stop, and as evening approaches the wild shout of the processions of fanatics may be heard from all parts of the city. The first ten days of Moharrêm

are especially devoted to the commemoration of the massacre of Hosseïn and his family ; but it is not until the last four or five days of this period that these processions, called *testêh*, become so demonstrative as to prove a disturbing element in the city. In those days a large part of the male population leave the shirt loose in the neck, and the *testêh* parade at all hours of the day, yelling with loud and monotonous cadence, "Ya Hosseïn, ya Hosseïn !" Sometimes they vary this by shouting "Ya Hassân, ya Hassân !" During the last two or three days of this public demonstration of mourning it is considered prudent for all foreigners and unbelievers to attract as little attention as possible, lest, if seen by these excited throngs, they be insulted or even assaulted by some of the mob, now frenzied by religious excitement to an extraordinary degree.

Although the danger is less than formerly, yet even at Teherân it is not wholly imaginary ; at any time there is a liability to renewed outbursts of the scenes of horror which formerly characterized the processions of the *testêh*. In 1884, for example, there was certainly an accession of fanaticism and excitement such as has not been seen at Teherân for several years. One procession which passed my gate on the morning of the tenth day presented a sickening spectacle. Preceded and followed by an admiring crowd of the rabble, a troop of some sixty men hurried by stripped to the middle, and in several cases completely nude. They all with one accord smote their bare bosoms with their right hands with a certain rhythm of sound. Their bosoms were raw from the oft-repeated blows ; all carried naked swords or daggers in their left hands, with which they gashed themselves, generally on the crown of the head ; a number were covered with streams of blood. As they rapidly strode in this fierce manner from street to street they continually shouted or groaned, "Ya Hosseïn !" The impression left on my mind for days by this hideous sight

was like that of a fearful nightmare. It is not uncommon for men to fall dead in these processions, overcome by the loss of blood or the terrible pitch of excitement to which they have wrought themselves. In the provincial cities of Persia the *testêh* sometimes meet, either accidentally or purposely, and hew their way through each other with serious loss of life. In Tabreez during the celebration of 1884 great excitement prevailed, and the troops were called out to quell what threatened to become a disastrous and overwhelming riot. At Teherân the severest penalties are now threatened against any leaders of the processions of the Moharrêm who contrive to encounter each other in the streets. Unfortunately this edict has not been extended to other parts of Persia, and serious disturbances still occur elsewhere.

It is needless to add that it is not the most law-abiding or intelligent people who join in these processions, but usually the more ignorant or vicious classes, who crave excitement or delude themselves into the belief that by such an occasional outburst of fanaticism they may lay up a reserve of piety that shall float them safely through another year of iniquity. Such a delusion is unfortunately not confined to Persia, nor to the sectaries of Alee. The better class of Persians stoutly affirm that this disordered zeal is entirely contrary to the commands of the Prophet, and instead of excusing it they declare that it is the *lutees*, or canaille, who engage in these excesses. Evidences are not wanting that long before the rise of Mahometanism examples of such mob violence were customary in Persia at certain annual festivals, and were winked at by the authorities as affording a vent for popular discontent which might otherwise prove troublesome to the Government. Hence it may be inferred that the excesses which have become attendant on the days of mourning in Moharrêm are practically a continuation of a very old custom, instigated by apparently another motive. One of the most curious facts in the development of civilization and reli-

gion is the lapping over, from one epoch to another, of the same customs under different names and seemingly inspired by altogether opposite causes.

But every circumstance connected with this commemorative period of public lamentation is quite subordinate, and as it were subsidiary, to the great dramatic representation of the tragedy which involved the descendants of Alee and Fatimêh in one common catastrophe. I refer to the *Taziêh*. In all parts of Persia this tragedy is reproduced with more or less power during the sacred months of mourning; but as in former ages, so at the present time, one must see the performance represented under royal patronage, and honored by the Shah himself and the royal family, in order to understand the varied character and significance of a drama in which the combined religious and patriotic fervor of a great sect and people find their most ample expression.

It is not easy for those of other beliefs to gain access to the royal Takiêh, for so the building is called where the drama of the Taziêh is unfolded for ten successive days. Having been specially favored by an invitation from the Zahîr-i-Douîlêh, a son-in-law of the Shah, to witness three scenes of this extraordinary performance, I shall endeavor to give a faithful description of what I actually saw. I am convinced, after careful reflection, that one who has seen the Taziêh has enjoyed the opportunity of forming some conception of the manner in which the dramas of ancient Greece were placed on the stage, and of the effect they produced on the imaginative, more simple and emotional audiences of that period, who needed no factitious scenery or other artificial aids to clothe the ideal with all the actuality of the real.

It may be well to repeat here that the leading purpose of the Taziêh is to represent the slaughter of Hossein, the son of Alee, and his family. But the chief incidents of this event

are not always represented in the order in which they occurred. In several instances episodes are placed on the stage which actually happened after the final catastrophe. The solemnity of the occasion, and the monotony which might occur from twenty successive acts played in the afternoon and evening of ten consecutive days, is also relieved by occasional episodes having apparently but a remote relation to the chief events of the drama. This, I think, is not so much because of the lack of constructive ability on the part of the actors and composers of the play, as it is the result of a distinct intention to secure two ends,—to prevent the vast and generally ignorant audience from losing its interest in the subject of the Taziêh, and at the same time to prevent diversion from the vast importance of the events represented. Thus alternately entertained or aroused to profound emotion, the audience is carried easily along from scene to scene until the tenth day, called the *Gattle*, or “Day of Slaughter,” when Hosseïn is slain, at which time the excitement of the audience, and in fact of the entire city, reaches a point bordering on frenzy.

I was invited to attend on the fifth day of the Taziêh. We arrived at the Takiêh towards noon. On alighting from the carriage I was surprised to see an immense circular building as large as the amphitheatre of Verona, solidly constructed of brick. *Ferâshes*, or liveried footmen, cleared the way before us. Thrashing their staves right and left, they opened a way through the crowd that packed the great portal; and entering a dark, vaulted vestibule, I groped, or rather was impelled by the throng, towards a staircase crowded with servants whose masters had already arrived. Like all stairs in Persia, these were adapted to the stride of giants. A succession of springs upward finally landed me on the first gallery, which led around the building. A few steps in the twilight, and then an embroidered curtain was raised and I entered the box of the Zahîr-i-Doûlêh. It was in two parts,

the first higher than the other ; stepping into the front and lower division, I was invited to recline at the left of my host upon a superbly embroidered cushion of velvet.¹ The walls of the loggia were of plain brick, but they were hung with cashmere shawls of price, and the choicest of rugs enriched the floor. A number of Persian gentlemen of lower rank occupied the back part of the apartment by invitation ; all alike were seated on their knees and heels, a most painful position for one not accustomed to it from infancy ; I was obliged to compromise by sitting cross-legged, Turkish fashion. It is worthy of notice that a nearly life-size portrait of Mahomet hung on the wall. Of course it was an imaginary likeness, and the Prophet himself, who denounced paintings of any object having life, would have condemned its appearance there ; but the Persians, having a marked aptitude for the arts, have, as we have already said, found means of explaining away the precepts of their religious founder when it has suited their tastes and convenience to do so. As representing the oriental conception of the person of the Father of the Faithful, the picture was not unworthy of comparison with the conventional idea of Christ which has been perpetuated by Christian art. The Prophet was represented as a handsome man in the prime of life, with ruddy features and a poetical and sensuous rather than a reflective temperament. On his head was a green turban ; seated cross-legged, a naked scimitar lay across his knees.

Having willingly made a concession to popular feeling by wearing a Persian kolâh, or black conical cap made of stuff imitating sheepskin, I was able to sit at the extreme front of the box and see and be seen without the interposition of a screen of gauze, which is required in the case of foreigners who are permitted occasionally to visit the royal Takiêh, — unless, indeed, they disguise their nationality and religion as

¹ The seat of honor is at the left hand in Persia.

I did. On looking forth over the vast arena a sight met my gaze which was indeed extraordinary. The interior of the building is nearly two hundred feet in diameter and some eighty feet high. A domical frame of timbers, firmly spliced and braced with iron, springs from the walls, giving support to the awning that protects the interior from the sunlight and the rain. From the centre of the dome a large chandelier was suspended, furnished with four electric burners, — a recent innovation. A more oriental form of illuminating the building was seen in the prodigious number of lustres and candlesticks, all of glass and protected from the air by glass shades open at the top and variously colored; they were concentrated against the wall in immense glittering clusters. Estimating from those attached to one box, I judged that there were upwards of five thousand candles in these lustres.

The arrangement of the boxes, or more strictly loggias, was peculiar. The walls nowhere indicated any serious attempt at decoration, except in single string-courses of brick (the only material apparent) and gilded Saracenic cornices over the arched loggias. Nor was there any regularity of design in the plan of details such as gives majesty to the arrangement of the galleries in Roman amphitheatres, like the Coliseum. And yet the general effect was picturesquely grand, as if the architect was so conscious that by merely following the arrangement suggested by the aim in view he would achieve a noble architectural expression, that he disdained to depend on anything but the constructive details to justify his genius. For example, one side of the loggia of the Shah, boldly disregarding symmetry, raised the arch of its broad window to twice the dimensions of the neighboring loggias. Opposite again was a row of loggias associated together by a line of semi-Saracenic archivolts over the windows, which were completely concealed by a green lattice and framed with mouldings painted green

and gold; these were appropriated to the wives of the Shah. Midway between these two divisions was still another group of latticed windows, and opposite to them in turn was a deep arched loggia resembling a reception-room, quite two stories in height, intended for a daughter of the Shah. As she did not occupy it when I was there, the gauze-like drapery was raised, displaying still another likeness of the Prophet. As if intentionally to prevent any monotony from too symmetrical a design, the entrances to the floor or pit differed in width, the widest being some twenty-five feet; the arched roofs extended to a height of thirty and forty feet respectively. These vaulted passages, being of course pierced through the walls, gave a means for gauging the vast solidity of the structure, the walls being nearly fifty feet in thickness on the ground; this added wonderfully to the really grand effect of this stupendous structure.

If this royal amphitheatre of Teherân were of polished marble like the amphitheatres of old, it would scarcely yield to them in the beauty and impressiveness of its interior. Material does really count for something in architecture, even if it appeals to the imagination alone. I could not avoid observing the masterly arrangement of the arches to produce strength and beauty alike. Whether the Persians borrowed the principle of the arch from the Assyrians or not, it is certain that they excelled in managing it before the Romans, to whom the discovery of the arch has been falsely attributed; and they still make it one of the most prominent and successful features of their architecture. In the centre of the arena was a circular stage of masonry, raised three feet and approached by two stairways. On one side of the building a pulpit of white marble was attached to the wall, of the form universally followed in Mahometan countries, being a lofty, narrow flight of steps protected by a solid balustrade on each side, and terminating in a small platform.

The speaker has no other platform than the upper step, which is crowned with a canopy. According as the spirit moves him, he occupies various steps of this scale of pulpit platforms. The spiritual exaltation, or the age and rank of the speaker, suggest from what elevation he shall exhort the people seated on the pavement below him.

But I soon discovered that all the architectural details of this remarkable building were secondary to the extraordinary spectacle offered by the assembled multitude. The entire arena, with the exception of a narrow passage around the stage, was absolutely packed with women, thousands on thousands. At a rough estimate it seemed to me that quite four thousand women were seated there cross-legged on the earthen floor, which was made slightly sloping, in order to enable those in the rear to see over the heads of those before them,—not that any of them could complain of high bonnets to obstruct the sight, for not a bonnet was to be seen, nor ever had been seen there. It was a dense, compact mass of women uniformly dressed in blue-black mantles, each having a white veil drawn tightly over the head and face, the only vent for sight being a small lattice of beautifully worked lace directly before the eyes. This was attached to the back of the head by a glittering buckle, those of the wealthier women sparkling with gold and brilliants. This is the only vanity a Persian woman is permitted to indulge in when abroad; they make up for it at home by a marvellous stratum of red paint and jewels,—at least so it is said by those who have seen them. Four thousand white heads and dark-blue mantles, and not a face to be seen,—that was a sight indeed! It was a spectacle to make one smile, and yet to reflect on the power of fashion and custom. Where except in the Orient, so full of absurdities and contradictions of the dictates of nature, would one find four thousand women, most of them let us hope beautiful, who would be willing to conceal their charms so effectually

from the gaze of mankind? Let no one imagine, however, that the women of Persia have not the power to create a veil-dispelling reform if they so willed: in no country have the women more general influence and power. But they have been brought up in the belief that religion requires that the face of woman must be concealed from public gaze; and the notion remains strong as the motive for chastity.

It is unnecessary to allude to the confused chattering which arose from this multitude of fair ones while waiting for the play to begin; it goes without saying. Now and again a pair of them would relieve the long interlude of expectancy by a wrangle, which in one case degenerated into a fight, resulting in the wrenching of veils and coiffure and a display of features before the entire audience.

An amusing character in the crowd was a quizzical old fellow with a cup and a jug of water, doling out drinks as an act of devotion; this he has done for many years at the Taziêh, in order to remind the people that Hossein suffered in his last hours from the agonies of thirst. As at a Spanish bull-fight, so here venders of refreshments might be seen with lemonade, tea, and kaliâns, the latter smoked by women as well as men. The masculine sex was in but a small minority in the arena; what few men were there stood behind the compact army of women. Most of the men present were in the loggias. When the pit was full and others tried to wedge their way in, the ushers and guards drove them out with unmerciful violence. Refreshments were served in our box repeatedly, and cigars for myself and dragoon, Persians preferring not to invite Christians to smoke their kaliâns. But after the performance began, all smoking and refreshments were banned as indicating a frivolity inconsistent with the tragical events of the drama.

The interval of waiting, although long, was neither tedious nor unprofitably employed, for from time to time some zealot

gave vent to a profound "Ya Alee! Ya Hosseïn!" then many voices would join in; and thus by gradual accessions of fervor expectation was intensified and piety increased to a degree proper to a thorough appreciation of what was to come. The holy zeal of the Faithful was yet further stimulated by the mollâhs, both old and young, — one a mere boy of fifteen, — who ascended the pulpit in turn and exhorted the people with a rhozêh, or religious rapsody, on the virtues and martyrdom of Alee and the Holy Imâms. As in a camp-meeting frequent *amens* are heard, so whenever some especially eloquent period was rolled forth in fervid tones responses were heard from every quarter, — now a loud "Ya Hosseïn!" or anon the sound of some one smiting his bare bosom.

At length a crowd was seen massing in the great entrance opposite the royal loggia, which resolved itself into a procession of nearly two hundred men, who proved to be servants of the Shah's household. Led by the head-steward of the Palace they entered the theatre, two by two, slowly marching around the circular stage. They were all dressed in black mourning livery; each had the breast bare, and with regular cadence, as they marched, they smote their bosoms with their right hands. The skin was crimson, for twice daily during five days they had repeated this extraordinary performance. The reader will remember that at the crucifixion the spectators smote their breasts; it has in all ages been one of the most common of oriental ceremonies for expressing lamentation.

This procession, like all which followed, delayed a moment opposite the royal loggia and saluted the Shah. Directly after them came a confused group of men in Arab costume, who beat their breasts in unison with a force that excited apprehension lest they should kill themselves, smiting over the heart with such continuous violence. After them followed a group nude above the middle; they held in each hand a large block

of hard wood, which they struck together with a sharp, exasperating rhythm. The two latter groups, like the chorus in the Greek plays, were collectively symbolical of a class, representing in this case the wild Arabs of the desert who from afar beheld the march of Hosseïn through their country, and bewailed their inability to assist the martyrs in their final struggle. As the last of the three processions filed out of the building the strains of martial music burst on the ear, solemnly breathing a funeral dirge. It was one of the military bands of the Shah, and was followed in steady procession by six other regimental bands, each in turn striking up a minor strain.

The last band had ceased its music and disappeared, when in the gate through which they had entered another group was seen collecting and forming. In front, facing the audience, were several children dressed in green; at their side warriors gathered glittering in the chain-armor and gold-inlaid helmets of past ages. Suddenly on the solemn silence, like the thrill of a bird at night, came the voice of one of the children, low and solemn, then rising to a high, clear tone indescribably wild and thrillingly pathetic,—a tragic ode of remarkable effect and power. He who has once heard that strain can never forget the impression it made, although altogether different from the minor chords of European music. This song of lamentation was an announcement to the spectators that they were to prepare themselves to behold a soul-moving tragedy,—the martyrdom of Hosseïn and the grandchildren of the Prophet. Other voices gradually joined in the chant, one by one, until a sublime choral elegy pealed over the vast arena with such an agony of sound that it actually seemed as if these actors in this theatric scene were giving expression to their own death-song. Still chanting, the troop gradually entered the arena, and with slow and measured tread marched around the stage and ascended the platform.

There they formed in double ranks, and with low obeisance paid their salutations to the Shah.

There was no scenery on the stage; the only objects it contained were such as to arouse the amusement of one who reflected on what was really the condition of affairs in the far-away little camp by the banks of the tawny Euphrates, where ages ago the group of martyrs surrounded by savage hordes suffered with thirst and perished miserably on the hot wastes of Mesopotamia. One could scarcely repress a smile at the chairs overlaid with beaten gold which were brought from the royal treasury, and the sofa and the uncouth beds covered with canopies to represent the tents. But to those who had never seen elaborate scenery and viewed things through the medium of a lively fancy these chairs, worth four thousand dollars each, seemed to indicate the reference which Persia to-day extends across the ages to the champions of the Faith; and the absurd attempt to represent tents was to them no more absurd than the buskins and tragic masks worn by those who enacted the death of Agamemnon on the marble stage of the amphitheatre of Athens two thousand years ago. It was not things but men that riveted the rapt attention of the vast audience; not material objects, but the achievements and utterances of souls gazing down the vistas of time from the shining pinnacles of moral grandeur. If those Arabian heroes had foreseen, — and who knows that they had not a glimpse of the future? — I say, if they had foreseen that fourteen hundred years after their death their fate would be re-enacted and wept by mourning multitudes with profound honor and love, perhaps they would have laid down their lives with a smile of stern exultation and triumph.

Hosseïn was represented by an actor named Mollâh Hosseïn, who was draped in massive robes of green and cashmere inwrought with gold; his head was covered with a large Arabian turban. During most of the performance of this day he sat with

head bent, wrapped in melancholy reflections on the approaching and inevitable doom. His brother Abbass — by another mother, the son of Alée but not of Fatimêh — was personated by Mirza Gholâm Hosseïn, who wore a Saracenic coat-of-mail of wire links, terminating in a white tunic. His head was protected by a grand helmet of olden time, graced with plumes. He was of a handsome cast and finely shaped, presenting altogether an impressive impersonation of the romantic heroes of whom we read in the picturesque pages of oriental poesy. Shemr, one of the leaders of the enemy, was attired in similar fashion. After Hosseïn, Abbass, and Shemr, the most prominent character of the drama was Zeinêb the sister of Hosseïn, whose part was played by an actor named Mollâh Hosseïn Zeinêb Khan. He.



MIRZA GHOLÂM HOSSEÏN AS ABBÂSS.

spoke in falsetto; of course all the female characters were represented by men or boys.

Zeinêb, at the opening of the scene, appeared shrouded in a thick mantle and seated on the earth, bemoaning her fate. The children of the various families gathered in the camp were also.

grouped on the sand for the most part, representing a feature of the tragedy analogous to the chorus of the Greek plays. The entire performance was directed by a prompter, who walked unconcernedly on the stage, and gave hints to the players or placed the younger actors in their position. At the proper moment also, by a motion of the hand, he gave orders for the music to strike up or stop. But it was curious how soon I ceased to notice him at all; indeed, after a short time I was scarcely aware of his presence. So interested had I become in the extraordinary character of all that was going on before me, that I forgot there was no scenery, and actually seemed to myself to be gazing upon actual events as they once occurred on the banks of the Euphrates. This convinced me that the ancient Greeks, and Shakspeare after them, were right in paying little attention to artificial aids to dramatic representation. There can be no question that in proportion as the imagination is left to supply all the optical details of a drama, the reality becomes more vivid and the emotions are more forcibly aroused. The elaborate and costly details observed in mounting a play for the modern stage may create a curious interest and whet a taste over-stimulated by the restless activity and ceaseless excitement of the present age, but they have proportionately less power to kindle the imagination.

The orchestra alluded to above consisted of a band of performers who were stationed at the top of the building, — fortunately as it proved, for their instruments were kettle-drums and long straight horns, harsh and doleful, and startling enough to awake the dead. It is no marvel that the walls of Jericho fell down terrified by such a tremendous and unspeakable blast, for there is no question that these Persian horns, which are such as have been in use since the prehistoric days of Shah Jemsheed, are similar to those universally employed in Eastern countries from early ages. The evangelist must have had in his

mind such an instrument when he spoke of the last trump that should call forth the dead. A signal from the director at the beginning of each scene of the Taziêh awoke the confused war-din of the kettle-drums, and instantly after followed a startling burst from the horns. At the close of a scene the same fierce music stimulated the glowing enthusiasm of the faithful, and nerved their zeal for events yet more tragic and sublime.

The act for this particular day began with a scene between Zeinêb and Hosseïn. In an impassioned colloquy they lamented their fate, and encouraged each other to the exercise of mutual endurance and fortitude. As the scene closed she sank to the dust, and throwing ashes on her head lapsed into an attitude of impressive silence. Superb in the representation of lamentation and affliction was the scene which followed, when the young Alee Acbâr, son of the dead Hassân, heroically resolved to go forth and fight his way to the river, and bring water for the sufferers in the camp. Clad in armor, the youthful hero submitted himself as a sacrifice, for he never expected to return. Magnificent were the pathetic tones in which he sang as it were his own requiem; the words rang forth like a trumpet to the farthest nook of the vast building, and the response came in united wailings from the thousands gathered there. Beginning in a low murmur like the sigh of a coming gale, the strange sound arose and fell like the weird music of the south wind in the rigging of a ship careening in a dark night on the swelling surges of an Atlantic storm. For several moments sobs and sighs, and now and again a half-suppressed shriek, swept from one side of the building to the other. Strong men wept; there was not a dry eye in the loggia where I was seated, except my own; and I confess that I was not altogether unmoved by this impressive scene.

Foreigners have said sometimes that much of this lamentation must be merely conventional, and as artificial as the

weeping and screaming of hired mourners at oriental funerals. But I cannot agree with them: Grant that the feeling was superficial, to be followed perhaps the next hour by laughter; yet there is no question that the conditions were exactly such as were likely to produce genuine emotion. The scenes portrayed represented incidents of the most tragic character which had actually occurred, and which in the course of ages had become part of the life and thought of the people who on that day were again so weirdly reminded of them. A belief in the suffering of the Sayfour is not more indelibly impressed on the heart of the true Christian than the belief which the true Sheâh maintains in the sufferings of the sons of Alee.

A milk-white Arabian steed from the royal stables, superbly caparisoned, was now led into the arena, and after receiving the moving farewell of Hossein and Zeinêb and the godspeed of the chorus, Alee Acbâr mounted and started forth on his perilous errand. Instantly from several quarters appeared a troop of the enemy on horseback and on foot, armed Arabs of the desert, who crowded after in fierce pursuit. It was wildly exciting to see this mad race around the arena, where thousands of women were crowded down to the very edge of the narrow lane which was thronged with fighting steeds and warriors. But no one flinched; the horses were well-trained, and no accident resulted. Finally Alee Acbâr turned into one of the avenues of exit, and disappeared surrounded by the pursuing host. Nor did he reappear, for soon after he fell covered with wounds. Now followed a savage peal from the wild war-horns, and Shemr, the leader of the beleaguering army, appeared clad in complete armor; summoning the camp to surrender, he proceeded to hold a long colloquy with Abbass, the half-brother of Hossein. Shemr had come to order Hossein to yield, before his outnumbered troops should be annihilated by an overwhelming host. Hossein remained at one side wrapped in

melancholy forebodings, while Abbass, with grand and magnificent eloquence, unconditionally rejected terms which implied the abandonment of the claims of the house of Alee and Fatimêh to the caliphate, and proudly flung defiance at the foe.

After having seen some of the most distinguished actors of the age, I cannot avoid the conclusion that this colloquy between Abbass and Shemr would do credit to any stage; in parts, perhaps, rather too declamatory, it was as a whole a wonderful dramatic episode. In closing, Abbass, as if endowed with prophetic vision, gave vent to a noble apostrophe to the future splendor of Persia, the asylum for the devoted followers of Alee; these eloquent strophes of poetic fire called forth deep murmurs of applause. Waving his mailed hand with lofty scorn, Shemr, with equal dramatic stateliness, hurled at Hossein the responsibility for the disasters to come, and remounting his steed departed.

Now night came on; by tacit consent the decisive conflict was deferred until the following day, and all in the camp slept, most of them for the last time on earth. Overpowered with anxiety and suspense, Hossein and his family were soon wrapped in heavy slumber. But while they slept they were not forgotten. Alee and Fatimêh, the parents of those who were devoted to die for the rights of the Prophet's house, could not rest tranquil in their graves. If they were powerless to avert the doom of their children, for "what is written is written," they could at least bewail their fate together. Sublime was the idea, one probably never before conceived in the drama, — two figures shrouded in the cerements of the tomb conversing in sepulchral accents on the stage. A very difficult scene it was, indeed, to represent without the aid of scenery; but notwithstanding, the effect was solemn and impressive. As Alee and Fatimêh passed out of sight, Shemr and one of his generals appeared from the hostile army to reconnoitre the camp and

make plans for bringing the final assault on the morrow to a successful issue.

The concluding scene of this act, — if each performance can be characterized by a word indicating more of sequence than actually exists in the drama of the *Taziêh*, — represented the beginning of the battle. The resisting force was typified in the person of Abbass, who after a terrifying blast of kettle-drums and horns bade farewell to the little group on the stage, being first invested with a white mantle thrown over his shoulders by Hossein. Immediately on mounting his charger Abbass encountered a numerous troop of Arabs, who fiercely drove him around the stage until he disappeared for a moment in the lobbies, followed by the enemy. When Abbass reappeared he presented the aspect of having been in a severe conflict; one of his arms seemed to be hewn off, and his raiment was reeking with blood. Again the enemy pursued him, and when he once more appeared on the scene both arms were gone, and with drooping form he barely sustained himself on the saddle of the well-trained steed, who also moved with languid and infirm action. When Abbass reached the camp he was lifted by wailing friends from the saddle, and helpless and dying fell on the sand a maimed and bleeding form. As the enemy swarmed on the scene and Shehr raised his glittering scimitar to hew off the head of the prostrate warrior, an extraordinary wail of anguish burst with one accord from the vast audience. At that instant the Shah arose to depart, and at once the scene closed. The wounded man sprang to his feet, the uplifted sword was sheathed, and with a great tumult the audience surged towards the avenues of exit. Many of the women, however, would not leave until forced to move by the ushers, so anxious were they to retain their places for the performance of the evening. To the women of Teherân the *Taziêh* is the one great event of the year. They go early in the morning of

each day, and patiently wait for many a long hour for the entertainment to begin. I was told that before leaving the building the Shah sent a costly garment to Mirza Gholâm Hosseïn, the actor who had personated Abbass, in token of the royal appreciation of the admirable histrionic ability he had displayed on this occasion.

In the evening of the same day, immediately after an early dinner, my courteous friend again invited me to accompany him. Throughout the ten days during which the Taziêh is represented at the royal Takiêh there are two acts or performances each day, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. On the evening in question, we arrived half an hour before the beginning of the play, and were immediately served with refreshments. The audience was even larger than in the afternoon, but the general effect was of course somewhat different, for the immense interior was now brilliant with the splendor of many thousand candles gleaming through colored globes. Unfortunately the electric lights in the chandelier suspended over the stage, which might have diffused almost daylight glow over the most important part of the scene, were so dim as to be of no use; and the performance was therefore but imperfectly visible to those in the loggias, owing to the candles immediately below each loggia, which somewhat blinded the eyes.

The episodes of the drama given on this particular occasion were however interesting and well rendered, although having but a related value in the great drama of the fall of the family of Alee. The reader will remember in the historic sketch presented in the earlier paragraphs of this chapter the episode of Muchtâr the Avenger. The performance of this evening was intended to present the devoted heroism of the implacable Muchtâr and his final triumph over Obeïd-Ullah, the immediate instigator of the slaughter of Hosseïn on the banks of the Euphrates.

The first scene represented Obeïd-Ullah seated in lordly fashion on his divan, giving expression in terms of insolent exultation to his satisfaction that at last the difficult task assigned to him by his master Yezced was accomplished. The tidings had been brought him by a swift messenger that Hosseïn had perished, and the house of Moaviyêh was now firmly established on the throne whose foundations were cemented by the blood of the descendants of the Prophet. Soon the monotonous beat of camel bells was heard, and a train of the ships of the desert appeared; they bore Zeinêb and the children who had been spared from the slaughter. They were preceded by slaves carrying the heads of Hosseïn, Abbass, and the other heroes who had sacrificed their lives with them. Obeïd-Ullah smote the head of Hosseïn, and received the captives with haughty disdain. But Zeinêb replied with the fierce and reckless eloquence of despair, defying him to complete his deeds of sacrilege and blood by murdering the remaining descendants of Alee, who were now in his power. With singular magnanimity the ferocious satrap forbore to take the frantic heroine at her word, but ordered his guards to execute Moslemeh, a man of Cufa whose eyes had been put out by the order of Obeïd-Ullah for adhering to the cause of Alee, and who now, led by his little child, appeared before Obeïd-Ullah once more to curse him for his cruelties and crimes. Lovice, the child, shielded the father from the executioners who sought to hew him down. At last a fatal thrust intended for the father felled the faithful boy to the earth, where he lay dead. Moslemeh missing his child, and now without a guide, sought him hither and thither, calling for him in moving accents, until in his wild groping he stumbled on the lifeless form. He stooped down, and with intense anxiety felt the corpse from head to foot; and when the terrible truth fairly burst on him, he gave an agonizing cry and fell across the bosom of his child. This episode,

which was affecting in the extreme, was acted with consummate ability.

But now came the hour for retribution. Muchtâr the avenger appeared on the scene, entering the stage with majestic strides and stentorian tones. His armed retainers dragged Obeïd-Ullah from the seat of power, and with contumely and abuse hurried him to execution, together with his chief adherents. This part of the play was rather too realistic for the modern stage, two men being actually hanged by ropes suspended from the dome above, and another went through the similitude of being beheaded, while a cauldron was prepared for the boiling of yet another. But at this critical moment it was found that the Shah had left for the Palace, and the performance came to an abrupt termination just in time to save a poor man from a terrible fate. I could not help noticing, however, that the men who had been executed proved to be very lively corpses indeed on the closing of the entertainment, retiring from the stage with very limber steps, considering their narrow escape.

Although of a less connected and more sensational character than the previous performance, the acting of this evening contained some features which were scarcely inferior in quality to the best acting of El Abbass in the previous representation; it was also interesting as showing the scope of the great national drama of Persia.

Not until the second day after this, or the seventh of the Taziêh, did I have an opportunity of seeing it again, when my kind friend once more placed his carriage and loggia at my disposal, and accompanied me with all the graceful courtesy of a true Persian gentleman. As the Taziêh drew near its close the popular anxiety to see it increased with each performance, and long before the hour arrived for it to begin on this day the doors were closed, the building being packed to its utmost capacity. On arriving there we found a crowd surging back and

forth, anxiously waiting for a chance to gain admittance within the immense iron-bound portals. But only to a man of the rank of my companion would these doors now be opened, and then only after beating the gates for several minutes and shouting to the porters within to swing a door open sufficiently for us to pass. This was no easy operation, for the tumultuous masses at our back were obstreperous to such a degree that the porters were obliged to slam to the gate instantly, and there was thus imminent danger of being squeezed to death,—an accident which has repeatedly happened on the last days of the Taziêh. We were on the point of entering at last, when the door was unexpectedly jammed together so quickly that we had barely time to save ourselves by stepping backward. It had become a question whether we should be able to gain admittance at all on this occasion, when the great gates once more showed signs of relenting, and we quickly placed ourselves again where we could spring into the building; to our astonishment the gates flew wide open, and directly behind them loomed an enormous elephant, who with majestic undulating strides now advanced, forcing the crowd to fall back. Overcoming the natural awe inspired by the unwieldy monster, we quickly availed ourselves of the opportunity thus afforded us, and brushing past the mighty bulk found ourselves at last within the building as the gates closed again with a sound of thunder.

The performance opened as usual, with the processions described in the previous pages. The regular recurrence of the funeral music and bands of mourners with each act of the drama, while perhaps slightly monotonous, was however ingeniously contrived to keep before the mind of the spectators that this drama is not a mere spectacle to entertain, but a great commemorative representation, intended to keep alive the events on which the religion is founded which has given vitality to the national life of Persia for a thousand

years. The performance in the afternoon of the seventh day appeared to me to have been designed with consummate art, admirably adapted as it was to the character of the audience. While some of the details might seem to the European of the nineteenth century grotesquely absurd, yet the general *motif* was admirably conceived with a view to divert the attention of the audience and sustain the interest by appealing to a variety of emotions, and thus also gradually to lead up the spectators to the indulgence of the profound and overpowering emotion which would be evoked by the scenes represented on the two closing days of the drama.

It is well known that King Suleïmân, or Solomon, still holds a wide repute throughout the East for his vast wisdom, his skill in dealing with the mysteries of Nature, and the imperial dominion he exerted over the geni and demons of the unseen world. The belief in the magic power of Solomon, of which we have so many proofs in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments" and the legends of Europe in the Dark Ages, still obtains in Persia. Solomon it was, in all his glory, who was represented on the stage of the Taziêh on this occasion. What relation Solomon held towards the House of Alee may appear to the general reader somewhat nebulous and remote. But the poetic fancy of the Persian dramatist seems to have had no difficulty in bringing Solomon into the play of the Taziêh, and that too in a manner which seems natural enough to the oriental mind. The great King was so versed in prevision or second sight, that it is claimed he was master not only of the past but also of the future. Thus it was no extraordinary exercise of power for his eye to pierce twelve centuries into the future, and descry the events that were to transpire on the sands of Arabia ages after he and his glory had descended to the tomb. Before us appeared, therefore, on this day the great and renowned King

Suleimân, radiating power from his throne. As evidences of his influence over the genii and all created things, he now summoned before him demons and djinns, lions and tigers, crocodiles and all creeping things. From all sides they invaded the arena and made their obeisance to the great King. It must be admitted that many of these animals were not strictly shaped after correct models, and indicated only moderate acquaintance with natural history or the mechanics of imitation. But they seemed to interest the people, and therefore served the purpose. Of the demons and djinns I speak with less certainty, having had no opportunities of studying the natural history of the genus.

After giving this exhibition of his power, Solomon now prepared to receive the Queen of Sheba with a pomp suitable to the rank of the "high contracting parties;" for according to oriental legends the Queen of Sheba really visited the King with an eye to matrimony. This scene, while calling for little exhibition of dramatic talent, was very interesting as a spectacular show. To a European it was of special value, for it gave a tolerably exact although partial representation of the marriage ceremonies of an Eastern Court. First came a train of camels gay with elaborate housings; strings of melodious bells jangled on the necks of these stately animals, and tufts of crimson and blue waved on their lofty heads as they marched majestically around the arena with velvet tread. The furniture of the princess, enclosed in iron-bound chests, was carried by the camels and a train of richly saddled sumpter mules. A troop of horsemen magnificently mounted followed next, representing the military escort which attended the Queen. She appeared in truly royal state, seated with her maidens in a houdah of crimson and gold borne on the back of an elephant. This entire procession, including scores of animals any one of which if unruly might have wrought great

mischievous, passed around the arena so close to the densely packed masses of women that the sides of the great beasts sometimes actually touched the women's garments; but no one was harmed or even showed alarm. I could not help marvelling at the intelligence of these animals, which seemed to enter fully into the spirit of the occasion, and while sometimes showing a certain sportiveness exhibited no inclination to employ the power they had to fill the crowd with apprehension.

The Queen of Sheba having arrived in the presence of King Solomon with all the pomp essential to show the grandeur of both the King and the Queen, Solomon again made an exhibition of his necromantic skill by summoning before the audience a scene which represented the marriage of Khassâm the son of Hassân. This event had occurred the day previous to the final attack on the camp. Hosseïn foresaw that he and the larger part of the adults in his band were about to be destroyed. There was danger that the house of Aleë might become extinct unless measures were taken to prevent such a result. Presuming that the younger members of his company might be spared when the general slaughter occurred, Hosseïn was naturally anxious to insure the preservation of the family while he was yet alive. It was therefore agreed that the two branches of the family should be united in marriage without delay; and it was arranged that Khassâm, the youthful son of the murdered Hassân, and Roodabêh, the daughter of Hosseïn, should be married that very day. The event was one of remarkable and touching character owing to the extraordinary circumstances which attended it, and also of great importance in the history of Islamism, and especially of the sect of the Sheähs. By this marriage the house of Aleë was preserved from extinction. It gave to the Sheähs nine Holy Imâms, the great dynasty of the Sefaveans, which carried Persia to an exalted pinnacle of power and splendor, and also a great

multitude of Seyeds, or descendants of the Prophet, whose green turbans are now seen throughout the Orient.

The preliminary colloquy of Zeinèb the sister of Hosseïn, of Leila the mother of Khassîm, and of the young bridegroom himself was of the most affecting and impassioned character. The knowledge of what the morrow was to bring to them gave peculiar solemnity to what under other circumstances would have been an occasion of festivity and joy. The two women gave vent to vehement exclamations of sorrow, while the youthful bridegroom in the most pathetic accents bewailed the approaching doom of his House and the terrible scenes that surrounded his marriage. His eloquence was really extraordinary for one so young. In due time the little bride Roodabêh appeared at his tent-door, brought in a covered litter on the back of a camel led by Arab warriors of the desert. When she entered on the scene her bridegroom clasped her weeping in his arms, while the women also wept over them in heart-rending lamentations; and Hosseïn, aroused from his stupor of despair, also joined in profound but majestic anguish: they all perceived but too well what was to be on the morrow. A great wave of mourning now swept over the audience, and for several moments an awful sound of lamentation was heard from the sorrow and the rage of thousands. Selecting this crisis of emotion as a suitable time for closing the performance of the day, the Shah arose to depart, and immediately the audience dispersed.

I did not see the final scenes of the Taziêh on the three subsequent days. Although sometimes permitted to witness the Taziêh as I did, Christians are not invited to attend the last three days of the drama at the royal Takiêh. The events then presented are of too solemn a nature for the profane eyes of unbelievers. On the final day especially it is not considered advisable for Christians to be seen in the building by the people; for on that day the murder, or *gattle*, of Hosseïn is