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THE MIRACLE PLAY
OF
HASAN AND HUSAIN,

COLLECTED FROM ORAL TRADITION

BY

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SCENE XXIII.

MARTYRDOM OF HUSAIN.

HUSAIN was slain on the field of Karbalá on 9th October, A.D. 680.

"On the morning of the fatal day he mounted on horseback, with his sword in one hand and the Koran in the other; his generous band of martyrs consisted only of thirty-two horse and forty foot, but their flanks and rear were secured by the tent ropes, and by a deep trench which they had filled with lighted faggots, according to the practice of the Arabs. The enemy advanced with reluctance; and one of their chiefs deserted, with thirty followers, to claim the partnership of inevitable death. In every close onset or single combat the despair of the Fatimites was invincible; but the surrounding multitudes galled them from a distance with a cloud of arrows, and the horses and men were successively slain. A truce was allowed on both sides for the hour of prayer; and the battle at length expired by the death of the last of the companions of Hosein. Alone, weary, and wounded, he seated himself at the door of his tent. As he tasted a drop of water, he was pierced in the mouth with a dart; and his son and nephew, two beautiful youths, were killed in his arms. He lifted his hands to heaven—they were full of blood—and he uttered a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. In a transport of despair his sister issued from the tent, and adjured the general of the Cufians that he would not suffer Hosein to be murdered before his eyes; a tear trickled down his venerable beard, and the boldest of his soldiers fell back on every side as the dying hero threw himself among them. The remorseless Shamer—a name detested by the faithful—reproached their cowardice; and the grandson of Mahomet was slain with three and thirty strokes of lances and swords. After they had trampled on his body, they carried his head to the castle of Cufa, and the inhuman Obeidollah struck him on the mouth with a cane.

'Alas!' exclaimed an aged Musulman, 'on these lips have I seen the lips of the Apostle of God!' In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader."—Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. ix. chap. L. p. 341, Milman ed. 1838.

Husain.—I am sore distressed at the unkind treatment received at the hands of the cruel heavens. Pitiful tyranny is exercised towards me by a cruel, unbelieving army! All the sorrows and troubles of this world have overwhelmed me! I am become a butt for the arrow of affliction and trouble. I am a holy bird stript of its quills and feathers by the hand of the archer of tyranny, and am become, O friends, utterly disabled, and unable to fly to my sacred nest. They are going to kill me mercilessly, for no other crime or guilt except that I happen to be a prophet's grandson.

Shimar (challenging him).*—O Husain, why dost thou not appear in the field? Why dost not thy majesty show thy face in battle? How long art thou going to sit still without displaying thy valour in war? Why dost thou not put on thy robe of martyrdom and come forth? If thou art indeed so magnanimous as not to fear death, if thou carest not about the whistling sounds of the arrows when let fly from the bow, mount thou, quickly, thy swift horse named Zú'l janáh,† and deliver thy soul from so many troubles. Yea, come to the field of battle, be it as it may. Enter soon among thy women, and with tears bid them a last farewell; then come forth to war, and show us thy great fortitude.

Husain (talking to himself).—Although the accursed fellow, Shimar, will put me to death in an hour's time, yet the reproachful language of the enemy seems to be worse than destruction itself. It is better that the foe

* See note, p. 43, vol. i.

† See note, p. 242, vol. i.

should sever my head cruelly from the body, than make me hear these abusive words. What can I do? I have no one left to help me, no Kásim to hold my stirrup for a minute when about to mount. All are gone! Look around if thou canst find anyone to defend the descendant of Muhammad, the chosen of God—if thou canst see any ready to assist the holy family of God's Prophet! In this land of trials there is no kind protector to have compassion on the household of the Apostle of God, and befriend them.

Zainab.—May I be offered for the sad tones of thy voice, dear brother! Time has thrown on my head the black earth of sorrow. It has grieved me to the quick. Wait, brother, do not go till thy Kásim arrives. Have patience for a minute, my 'Alí Akbar is coming.

Husain (looking around).—Is there one who wishes to please God, his Maker? Is there any willing to behave faithfully towards his real friends? Is there a person ready to give up his life for our sake, to save us, to defend us in this dreadful struggle of Karbalá?

Zainab.—O Lord, Zainab's brother has no one to assist or support him! Occasions of his sorrows are innumerable, without anyone to sympathise with him in the least? Sad and desolate, he is leaning on his spear! He has bent his neck in a calamitous manner; he has no famous 'Alí Akbar, no renowned 'Abbás any more!

Husain.—Is there anyone to pity our condition, to help us in this terrible conflict of Karbalá? Is there a kind soul to give us a hand of assistance for God's sake?

Zainab.—Brave cavalier of Karbalá, it is not fitting for thee to be so hurried. Go a little more slowly; troubles will come quickly enough. Didst thou ever say thou hadst a Zainab in the tent? Is not this poor creature weeping and mourning for thee?

The Imam Husain.—Dear sister, thou rest of my disquieted, broken heart, smite on thy head and mourn, thou thousand-noted nightingale. To-day I shall be killed by

the ignoble Shimar. To-day shall the rose be turned out of its delightful spot by the tyranny of the thistle. Dear sister, if any dust happen to settle on the rosy cheeks of my lovely daughter Sukainah, be pleased to wash it away most tenderly with the rose-water of thy tears. My daughter has been accustomed to sit always in the dear lap of her father whenever she wished to rest; for my sake, receive and caress her in thy bosom.

Zainab.—O thou intimate friend of this assembly of poor afflicted strangers, the flaming effect of thy speech has left no rest in my mind. Tell me, what have we done that thou shouldst so reward us? Who is the criminal among us for whose sake we must suffer thus? Take us back, brother, to Madínah, to the sacred monument* of our noble grandfather; let us go home, and live like queens in our own country.

Husain.—O my afflicted, distressed, tormented sister, would to God there were a way of escape for me! Notwithstanding they have cruelly cut down the cypress-like† stature of my dear son 'Alí Akbar; notwithstanding Kásim my lovely nephew tinged himself with his own blood; still they are intent to kill me also. They do not allow me to go back from 'Irák, nor do they let me turn

* "The holy tomb (may the blessings of God and peace be upon its occupant!) lies to the south-east of the sublime mosque. Its appearance is admirable and cannot be precisely described. It is covered with marble of a superior quality and exquisitely carved. Its surface is worn away by the friction with musk and other perfumes which has been in vogue for a very long time. On its southern face there is a silver nail, which is opposite the noble figure (of Mahomet). Here the public halt for their salutations, turning towards the noble countenance, and having the kiblah behind them. After the salutation they turn to the face of Abu Bakr, the truthful, whose head is close to the Prophet's feet. After him, to that of Omar, son of Alkhattháb, whose head rests on Abu Bakr's shoulders."—Translated from the "Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah," vol. i. p. 263, ed. 1853.

† See note, p. 10, vol. i.

elsewhere. They will neither permit me to go to India, nor the capital of China. I cannot set out for the territory of Abyssinia, or take refuge in Zanzibar.

Zainab.—Oh, how am I vexed in my mind, dear brother, on hearing these sad things! May I die, rather than listen to such affecting words any more! What shall we, an assembly of desolate widows and orphans, do after thou art gone? Oh! how can we live?

Husain.—O miserable creature, weep not now, nor be so very much upset; thou shalt cry plentifully hereafter, owing to the wickedness of time. When the wicked Shimar shall sever my head from the body; when thou shalt be made a captive prisoner, and forced to ride on an unsaddled camel; when my body shall be trampled under foot by the enemy's horses, and trodden under their hoofs; when my beloved Sukainah shall be cruelly struck by Shimar, my wicked murderer; when they shall lead thee away captive from Karbalá to Shám;* and when they shall make thee and others live there in a horrible, ruined place; yea, when thou shalt see all this, then thou mayest, and verily wilt, cry. But I admonish thee, sister, since this sad case has no remedy but patience, to resign the whole matter, submissively, to the Lord, the good Maker of all! Mourn not for my misfortune, but bear it patiently, without giving occasion to the enemy to rejoice triumphantly on this account, or speak reproachfully concerning us.

Kulsúm.—Thou struttest about gaily, O Husain, thou beloved of my heart. Look a little behind thee; see how Kulsúm is sighing after thee with tearful eyes! I am strewing pearls in thy way, precious jewels from the sea of my eyes! Let me put my head on the hoof of thy winged steed, Zú'l janáh.

Husain.—Beloved sister, kindle not a fire in my heart by so doing. Take away thy head from under the hoof of

* Syria.

my steed. O thousand-noted nightingale, sing not such a sad-toned melody. I am going away; be thou the kind keeper of my helpless ones.

Kulsúm.—Behold what the heavens have at length brought on me! what they have done also to my brother! Him they have made to have parched lips through thirst, and me they have caused to melt into water, and gush out like tears from the eyes! Harsh severity is mingled with tyrannous cruelty.

Husain.—Trials, afflictions, and pains, the thicker they fall on man, the better, dear sister, do they prepare him for his journey heavenward. We rejoice in tribulations, seeing they are but temporary, and yet they work out an eternal and blissful end. Though it is predestined that I should suffer martyrdom in this shameful manner, yet the treasury of everlasting happiness shall be at my disposal as a consequent reward. Thou must think of that, and be no longer sorry. The dust raised in the field of such battles is as highly esteemed by me, O sister, as the philosopher's stone was, in former times, by the alchemists; and the soil of Karbalá is the sure remedy of my inward pains.

Kulsúm.—May I be sacrificed for thee! Since this occurrence is thus inevitable, I pray thee describe to thy poor sister Kulsúm her duty after thy death. Tell me, where shall I go, or in what direction set my face? What am I to do? and which of thy orphan children am I to caress most?

Husain.—Show thy utmost kindness, good sister, to Sukainah, my darling girl, for the pain of being fatherless is most severely felt by children too much fondled by their parents, especially girls. I have regard to all my children, to be sure, but I love Sukainah most.

An old Female Slave of Husain's mother.—Dignified master, I am sick and weary in heart at the bare idea of separation from thee. Have a kind regard to me, an old slave, much stricken with age! Master, by thy soul do

I swear that I am altogether weary of life. I have grown old in thy service; pardon me, please, all the faults ever committed by me.

Husain.—Yes, thou hast served us, indeed, for a very long time. Thou hast shown much affection and love toward me and my children, O handmaid of my dear mother Fátimah; thou hast verily suffered much in our house: how often didst thou grind corn with thine own hand for my mother! Thou hast also dandled Husain most caressingly in thy arms. Thou art black-faced, that is true, but thou hast, I opine, a pure white heart, and art much esteemed by us. To-day I am about to leave thee, owing thee, at the same time, innumerable thanks for the good services thou hast performed; but I beg thy pardon for all inconsiderate actions on my part.

The Maid.—May I be a sacrifice for thee, thou royal ruler of the capital of faith! turn not my days black, like my face, thou benevolent master. Truly I have had many troubles on thy behalf: How many nights have I spent in watchfulness at thy cradle! At one moment I would caress thee in my arms, at another I would fondle thee in my bosom. I became prematurely old by my diligent service, O Husain! Is it proper now that thou shouldst put round my poor neck the heavy chain of thy intolerable absence? Is this, dear master, the reward of the services I have done thee?

Husain.—Though thy body, O maid, is now broken down by age and infirmity, yet thou hast served us all the days of thy life with sincerity and love; thou must know, therefore, that thy diligence and vigilance will never be disregarded by us. Excuse me to-day, when I am offering my body and soul in the cause of God, and cannot help thee at all; but be sure I will fully pay the reward of thy services in the day of universal account.

The Maid.—Dost thou remember, good sir, how many troubles I have suffered with thee for the dear sake of 'Alí Akbar, the light of thine eyes? Though I have not

suckled him with my own breasts, to be sure, yet I laboured hard for him till he reached the age of eighteen years and came here to Karbalá. But, alas! dear flourishing 'Alí Akbar has been this day cruelly killed—what a pity! and I strove so much for his sake, yet all, as it were, in vain. Yea, what a sad loss!

Husain.—Speak not of my 'Alí Akbar any more, O maiden, nor set fire to the granary of my patience and make it flame. (*Turning to his sister.*) Poor distressed Zainab, have the goodness to be kind always to my mother's old maid, for she has experienced many troubles in our family; she has laboured hard in training 'Alí Akbar my son.

Umm Lailah (the mother of 'Alí Akbar).—The elegant stature of my Akbar fell on the ground; like as a beautiful cypress tree it was forcibly felled! Alas for the memory of thy upright stature! Alas, O my youthful son of handsome form and appearance! Alas my troubles at night-time for thee! How often did I watch thy bed, singing lullabies for thee until the morning! How sweet is the memory of those times! yea, how pleasant the very thought of those days! Alas! where art thou now, dear child? O thou who art ever remembered by me, come and see thy mother's wretched condition, come!

Husain.—O Lord, why is this mournful voice so affecting? Methinks the owner of it, the bemoaning person, has a flame in her heart. It resembles the doleful tone of a lapwing* whose wings are burned! like as when a miraculous lapwing, the companion of Solomon the wise, the king of God's holy people, received intelligence suddenly about the death of its royal guardian!

Umm Lailah.—Again I am put in mind of my dear son! O my heart, melted into blood, pour thyself forth! Dear son, whilst thou wast alive, I had some

* See Sale's "Koran," chap. xxvii. pp. 310 and 311, ed. 1734.

honour and respect, everybody had some regard for me; but since thou art gone, I am altogether abandoned. Woe be to me! woe be to me! I am despised and rejected. Woe unto me! woe unto me!*

Husain.—Do not set fire to the harvest of my soul any further. Husain is, before God, greatly ashamed of his shortcomings towards thee. Come out from the tent, for it is the last meeting previous to separating from one another for ever; thy distress is an additional weight to the heavy burden of my grief.

The Mother of 'Alī Akbar.—I humbly state it, O glory of all ages, that I did not expect from thy saintship that thou wouldst disregard thy handmaid in such a way. Thou dost show thy kind regard and favour to all except me. Dost thou not remember my sincere services done to thee? Am I not by birth a descendant of the glorious kings of Persia, brought as a captive to Arabia† when the former empire fell and gave place to the new-born monarchy of the latter kingdom? The Judge, the living Creator, was pleased to grant me an offspring, whom we called 'Alī Akbar, this day lost to us for ever. May I be offered for thee! While 'Alī Akbar my son was alive, I had indeed a sort of esteem and credit with thee; but now that my cypress, my newly-sprung-up cedar, is unjustly felled, I have fallen from credit too, and must therefore shed tears.

Husain.—Be it known unto thee, O thou violet of the flower-garden of modesty, that thou art altogether mistaken. I swear by the holy enlightened dust of my mother Zahrah's‡ grave, that thou art more honourable and dearer now than ever. I well remember the affectionate recommendations of 'Alī Akbar, our son, concerning thee. How much he was mindful of thee at the moment

of his parting! How tenderly he cared for thee, and spoke concerning thee to every one of the family!

'Alī Akbar's Mother.—O gracious Lord, I adjure thee, by the merit of my son 'Alī Akbar, never to lessen the shadow of Husain from over my head. May no one ever be in my miserable condition—never be a desolate, homeless woman, like me!

Husain.—O thou unfortunate Zainab, my sister, the hour of separation is come! The day of joy is gone for ever! the night of affliction has drawn near! Drooping, withering sister, yet most blest in thy temper, I have a request from thee which I fear to make known.

Zainab.—May I be a sacrifice for thy heart, thou moon-faced,* glorious sun! there is nobody here, if thou hast a private matter to disclose to thy sister.

Husain.—Dear unfortunate sister, who art already severely vexed in heart, if I tell thee what my request is, what will be thy condition then? Though I cannot restrain myself from speaking, still I am in doubt as to which is better, to speak, or to forbear.

Zainab.—My breast is pierced! My heart boils within me like a caldron, owing to this thy conversation. Thou soul of thy sister, hold not back from Zainab what thou hast in thy mind.

Husain.—My poor sister, I am covered with shame before thee, I cannot lift up my head. Though the request is a trifle, yet I know it is grievous to thee to grant. It is this; bring me an old, dirty, ragged garment to put on. But do not ask me, I pray thee, the reason why, until I myself think it proper to tell thee.

Zainab.—I am now going to the tent to fetch thee what thou seekest; but I am utterly astonished, brother, as to why thou dost want this loathsome thing. (*Returning with*

* See note †, p. 77.

† See note, p. 70.

‡ See note, p. 22, vol. i.

* See note, p. 7, vol. i.

a tattered shirt.) Take it, here is the ragged robe for which thou didst ask. I wonder what thou wilt do with it.

Husain.—Do not remain here, dear sister. Go for awhile to thine own tent; for if thou see that which I am about to do, thou wilt be grievously disturbed. Turn to thy tent, poor miserable sister, listen to what I say, and leave me, I pray thee, alone.

Zainab (going away).—I am gone, but I am sorry I cannot tell what this enigma means. It is puzzling indeed! Remain thou with thy mysterious coat, O Husain! May all of us be offered as a ransom for thee, dear brother! Thou art without any to assist or befriend thee! Thou art surrounded by the wicked enemy! Yes, thy kind helpers have all been killed by the unbelieving nation!

Husain (putting on the garment).—The term of life has no perpetual duration in itself. Who ever saw in a flower-garden a rose without its thorn! I will put on this old robe close to my skin, and place over it my new apparel, though neither the old nor the new of this world can be depended on. I hope Zainab has not been observing what I have been doing, for, poor creature, she can scarcely bear the sight of any such like thing.

Zainab.—Alas! I do not know what is the matter with Husain, my brother. What has an old garment to do with being a king? Dost thou desire, O Husain, that the enemy should come to know this thing and reproach thy sister about it? Put off, I pray thee, this old ragged garment, otherwise I shall pull off my head-dress, and uncover my head for shame.*

Husain.—Rend not thy dress, modest sister, nor pull off thy head-covering. There is a mystery involved in my action. Know that what Husain has done has a good

* For a woman to pull off her head-dress and uncover her head, betokens that she is so distracted as to be indifferent to all ideas of modesty and propriety.

meaning in it. His putting on an old garment is not without its signification.

Zainab.—What mystery can be in this work, thou perfect high priest of faith? I will never admit any until thou shalt have fully explained the thing according to my capacity.

The Imám.—To-day, dear sister, Shimar will behave cruelly towards me. He will sever my dear head from the body. His dagger not cutting my throat, he will be obliged to sever my head from behind. After he has killed me, when he begins to strip me of my clothes, he may perchance be ashamed to take off this ragged robe and thereby leave my body naked on the ground.

Zainab.—O Lord, have mercy on my distracted heart! Thou alone art aware of the state of my mind. Gracious Creator, preserve the soul of Husain! Let not heaven pull down my house over me!

Sukainah.—Dear father, by our Lord it is a painful thing to be fatherless; a misery, a great calamity to be helpless, bleeding in the heart, and an outcast! Dismount from the saddle, and make me sit by thy side. To pass over me or neglect me at such a time is very distressing. Let me put my head on thy dear lap, O father. It is sad thou shouldst not be aware of thy dear child's condition.

Husain.—Bend not thy neck on one side, thou my beloved child; nor weep so sadly, like an orphan. Neither moan so melodiously, like a disconsolate nightingale. Come, lay thy dear head on my knees once more, and shed not so copiously a flood of tears from thine eyes, thou spirit of my life.

Sukainah.—Dear father, thou whose lot is but grief, have mercy on me, mercy! O thou my physician in every pain and trouble, have pity on me! have pity on me! Alas, my heart, for the mention of the word separation! Alas, my grievance, for what is unbearable!

Husain.—Groan not, wail not, my dear Sukainah, my poor oppressed, distressed girl. Go to thy tent and sleep

soundly in thy bed until thy father gets thee some water to drink.

Zainab.—Alas! alas! woe to me! my Husain is gone from me! Alas! alas! the arrow of my heart is shot away from the hand! Woe unto me, a thousand woes! I am to remain without Husain! The worshipper of truth is gone to meet his destined fate with a blood-stained shroud!

Husain.—My disconsolate Zainab, be not so impatient. My homeless sister, show not thyself so fretful. Have patience, sister, the reward of the patient believers is the best of all. Render God thanks, the crown of intercession is fitted for our head only.

Zainab.—O my afflicted mother, thou best of all women,* pass a minute by those in Karbalá! see thy daughters prisoners of sorrow! behold them amidst strangers and foreigners. Come out awhile from thy pavilion in Paradise, O Fátimah, and weep affectionately over the state of us, thy children!

Husain.—I have become friendless and without any helper, in a most strange manner. I have lost my troop and army in a wonderful way. Where is Akbar my son? let him come to me and hold the bridle of my horse, that I may mount.† Where is Kásim my nephew? will he not

* See note *, p. 42, vol. i.

† "He mounted his steed Zool-junna, repaired to the field of battle, and thus addressed the enemy: 'O ye tribe of the followers of the faith! Be it known unto you that I am the grandson of the Prophet, and the son of Allie, he whose grandfather's creed (there is no God but the one true God, and Mohummud is His Messenger) ye repeat night and day. Behold, consider who it is of whom Mohummud is the friend. If ye have any fear of God or His Messenger before your eyes, or expect the intercession of my grandfather at the Day of Judgment, then fear and tremble. Ye have already exalted many of my relatives, friends, and companions to the dignity of martyrs! Be it so. I have only one request to make; and that is, allow me and my household to quit Arabia and proceed to Persia. If not, for God's sake give us a little water to

help me and get ready my stirrup to make me cheerful? Why should I not shed much blood from mine eyes, seeing I cannot behold 'Abbás my standard-bearer? A brother is for the day of misfortune and calamity! A brother is better than a hundred diadems and thrones! A brother is the essence of life in the world! He who has a brother, though he be old, yet is young. Who is there to bring my horse for me? there is none. There is none even to weep for me in this state of misery!

Kulsúm.—Because there is no 'Alí Akbar, dear brother, to help thee, Zainab, thy sister, will hold the horse for thee; and seeing 'Abbás, thy brother, is no longer to be found, I myself will bear the standard before thy winged steed instead of him.

Zainab.—Let Zainab mourn bitterly for her brother's desolation. Who ever saw a woman, a gentlewoman, doing the duty of a groom or servant? Who can know, O Lord, besides Thee, the sad state of Husain in Karbalá, where his people so deserted him that a woman like myself is obliged to act as a servant for him?

Kulsúm.—I am a standard-bearer for Husain, the martyr of Karbalá, O Lord God. I am the sister of 'Abbás; yea, the miserable sister of both. O friends, it being the tenth day of Muharram,* I am therefore assisting Husain. I am bearing the ensign for him instead of 'Abbás my brother, his standard-bearer.

Zainab.—Uncover your breasts a minute, O ye tear-shedding people, for it is time to beat the drum, seeing the king is going to ride. O Solomon the Prophet, where

drink. Your cattle, elephants, horses, and camels have plenty to drink, but my family is exceedingly distressed and crying out for water. Among what tribe do ye find it thus? The children's throats are parched with thirst; and for want of water the milk is dried up in the mother's breast."—Herklots' "Qanoon-e-islam," p. 164, ed. 1832.

* Husain was slain on the 10th day of Muharram.

is thy glory? what has become of thy pompous retinue? Where are thy brothers, nephews, and companions?

Husain.—There are none left to help me. My sister Zainab holds the bridle of the horse, and walks before me. Who ever saw a lady acting thus?

Zainab.—Thou art going all alone! May the souls of all be a ransom for thee! and may thy departure make souls quit their bodies! A resurrection will be produced in thy tent by the cry of orphans and widows.

Husain.—Sister, though it grieves me to go, yet I do it; peradventure I may see the face of Asghar and the countenance of Akbar, those cypresses, those roses of Paradise.

Zainab.—Would to God Zainab had died this very minute before thy face, in thy sight, that she might not behold such elegant bodies, such beautiful forms, rolling in their own blood!

Husain.—O poor sister, if thou die here in this land in that sudden way that thou desirest, then who will ride in thy stead, in the city of Kúfah, on the camel's back?

Zainab.—Slight not my pain, dear brother, for Zainab is somewhat alarmed as to the import of thy speech. What shall I do with thy family—with the poor widows and young children?

Husain.—O afflicted one, it is decreed I should be killed by means of daggers and swords; henceforth, dear sister, thou shalt not see me. Behold, this is separation between me and thee!

The nephew of Husain.—Dear uncle, thou hast resolved to journey. Thou art going once again to make me an orphan. To whom else wilt thou entrust us? Who is expected to take care of us? Thou wast, dear uncle, instead of my father Hasan, a defence to this helpless exiled creature.

Husain.—Sorrow not, thou faithful child, thou shalt be killed too in this plain of trials. Return thou now to thy

tent in peace, without grieving my soul any further, poor orphan!

The Darwish from Kábul.—O Lord God, wherefore is the outward appearance of a man of God usually without decoration or ornament? And why is the lap of the man of this world generally full of gold and jewels? On what account is the pillow of this great person the black dust of the road? and for what reason are the bed and the cushion of the rebellious made of velvet, and stuffed with down? Either Islám, the religion of peace and charity, has no true foundation in the world, or this young man, who is so wounded and suffers from thirst, is still an infidel.

Husain.—Why are thine eyes pouring down tears, young darwish? Hast thou also lost an Akbar in the prime of his youth? Thou art immersed, as a water-fowl, in thy tears. Has thine 'Abbás been slain, thirsting, on the bank of the River Euphrates, that thou cryest so piteously? But if thou art sad only on account of my misfortune, then it matters not. Let me know whence comest thou, and whither is thy face set?

The Darwish.—It happened, young man, that last night I arrived in this valley, and made my lodging there. When one-half of the night had passed, of a sudden a great difficulty befell me, for I heard a child bemoaning and complaining of thirst, having given up altogether the idea of living any longer in this world. Sometimes it would beat its head and cry out for water; at other times it appeared to fall on the ground, fainting and motionless. I have, therefore, brought some water in this cup for that poor child, that it may drink and be refreshed a little. So I humbly beg thee, dear sir, to direct me to the place where the young child may be found, and tell me what is its name.

Husain.—O God, let no man be ever in my pitiful condition, nor any family in this sad and deplorable state to which I am reduced. O young man, the child mentioned

by thee is the peace of my troubled mind; it is my poor, miserable little girl.

The Darwîsh.—May I be offered for thee, dear sir, and for thy tearful eyes! Why should thy daughter be so sadly mourning and complaining? My heart is overwhelmed with grief for the abundance of tears running down thy cheeks. Why should the daughter of one like thee, a generous soul, suffer from thirst?

Husain.—Know, O young man, that we are never in need of the water of this life. Thou art quite mistaken if thou hast supposed us to be of this world. If I will, I can make the moon, or any other celestial orb, fall down on the earth; how much more can I get water for my children. Look at the hollow made in the ground with my spear; water would gush out of it if I were to like. I voluntarily die of thirst to obtain a crown of glory from God. I die parched, and offer myself a sacrifice for the sins of my people, that they should be saved from the wrath to come.

The Darwîsh.—What is thy name, sir? I perceive that thou art one of the chief saints of the most beneficent God. It is evident to me that thou art the brightness of the Lord's image, but I cannot tell to which sacred garden thy holy rose belongs.

Husain.—O darwîsh, thou wilt soon be informed of the whole matter, for thou shalt be a martyr thyself; for thy plans and the result thereof have been revealed to me. Tell me, O darwîsh, what is the end thou hast in view in this thy hazardous enterprise? When thou shalt have told me that, I will disclose to thee who I am.

The Darwîsh.—I intend, noble sir, after I have known the mystery of thy affairs, to set out, if God wills, from Karbalá to Najaf,* namely, to the place where 'Alí, the highly exalted king of religion, the sovereign lord of the empire of existence, the supreme master of all the dar-

* See note, p. 241, vol. i.

wishes, is buried. Yea, I am going to visit the tomb of 'Alí, the successor of the chosen of God, the son-in-law of the Prophet, the lion of the true Lord, the prince of believers, Haidar,* the champion of faith.

Husain.—Be it known unto thee, O darwîsh, that I, who am so sad and sorrowful, am the rose of the garden of that prince. I am of the family of the believers thou hast mentioned. I am Husain, the intercessor on the Day of Resurrection, the rose of the garden of glory.

The Darwîsh.—May I be offered a sacrifice for thy blessed arrival! Pardon me my fault, and give me permission to fight the battle of faith, for I am weary of life. It is better for me to be killed, and delivered at once from so many vexations of spirit. Martyrdom is, in fact, one of the glories of my faith.

Husain.—Go forth, O atom, which aspirest to the glory of the sun; go forth, thou hast become at last worthy to know the hidden mysteries of faith. He who is slain for the sake of Husain shall have an abundant reward from God; yea, he shall be raised to life with 'Alí Akbar the sweet son of Husain.

The Darwîsh (addressing Husain's antagonists).—You cruel people have no religion at all. You are fire-worshippers, ignorant of God and His law. How long will you act unjustly towards the offspring of the priesthood? Is the account of the Day of Resurrection all false?

Ibn Sa'd (the general of Yazid's† army).—O ye brave soldiers of Yazid, deprive this fellow of his fund of life. Make his friends ready to mourn for him.

Husain.—Is there anyone to help me? Is there any assistant to lend me his aid?

Ja'far† (the king of jinns, with his troops, coming to Husain's

* See note, p. 39, vol. i.

† See note †, p. 17, vol. i.

‡ "The moment his highness Hosein dismounted from his horse, a man appeared to him, having a human countenance, but the arms, legs, and body of a horse. The figure, after making its obeisance, thus addressed

assistance).—O king of men and jinns, O Husain, peace be on thee! O judge of corporeal and spiritual beings, peace be on thee!

Husain.—On thee be peace, thou handsome youth! Who art thou, that salutes us at such a time? Though thine affairs are not hidden from me at all, still it is advisable to ask thy name.

Ja'far.—O lord of men and jinns, I am the least of thy servants, and my name is Ja'far, the chief ruler of all the tribes of jinns. To-day, while I was sitting on the glorious throne of my majesty, easy in mind, without any sad idea or thought whatever, I suddenly heard thy voice, when thou didst sadly implore assistance; and on hearing thee I lost my patience and senses. And, behold, I have come out with troops of jinns, of various abilities and qualifications, to lend thee help if necessary.

Husain.—In the old abbey of this perishable kingdom, none can ever, O Ja'far, attain to immortality. What can I do with the empire of the world, or its tempting glories, after my dear ones have all died and gone? Is it

Hosein: 'If you will allow me, I shall instantly vanquish all your foes. Hosein inquired, 'Who art thou, that at this season of distress hast in pity come to my succour?' He replied, 'I am Jaffur, the son of Tyar, king of the fairies. I am under infinite obligations to you, for your father rendered mine an essential service at the battle of Beer-ool-ullum. When the whole race of genii were over-ruled and made Moosulmans, he appointed my father king over them.' Hosein observed, 'Thou wilt be invisible to them, though they be visible to thee; such treacherous warfare is not pleasing unto God, nor will I sanction it.' Jaffur entreated him a second time, saying, 'I beseech you, Hosein, for your own sake, to allow me for a couple of *ghurrees* (about an hour) to assume a human form to stand up in thy defence.' Hosein again replied, with his blessed tongue, 'What use is there now in fighting? I am only a momentary sojourner in this transitory world; my relatives and companions are all gone, and what will it profit me to remain behind? I long for nothing now, save my martyrdom; therefore, depart thou, and may the Lord recompense and bless thee.' Jaffur then departed, much grieved, and weeping."—*Herklots* "Qanoon-e-Islam," p. 166, ed. 1832. See also note, p. 24, vol. i.

proper that I, an old man, should live, and Akbar, a blooming youth, die in the prime of age? Return thou, Ja'far, to thy home, and weep for me as much as thou canst.

Ja'far (returning).—Alas for Husain's exile and helplessness! Alas for his continual groans and sighs!

Husain (coming back from the field, dismounts his horse, and making a heap of dust, lays his head on it).—O earth of Karbalá, do thou assist me, I pray! since I have no mother, be thou to me instead of one.

Ibn Sa'd orders the army to stone Husain.—O ye men of valour, Husain the son of 'Alí has tumbled down from the winged horse; if I be not mistaken, heaven has fallen to earth! It is better for you to stone him most cruelly. Dispatch him soon, with stones, to his companions.

Husain.—Ah, woe to me! my forehead is broken; blood runs down my luminous face.

Ibn Sa'd.—Who is that brave soldier, who, in order to show his gratitude to Yazíd his sovereign lord, will step forward and, with a blow of his scymetar, slay Husain the son of 'Alí?

Shimar.—I am he whose dagger is famous for bloodshed. My mother has borne me for this work alone. I care not about the conflict of the Day of Judgment; I am a worshipper of Yazíd, and have no fear of God. I can make the great throne of the Lord to shake and tremble. I alone can sever from the body the head of Husain the son of 'Alí. I am he who has no share in Islám. I will strike the chest of Husain, the ark of God's knowledge, with my boots, without any fear of punishment.

Husain.—Oh, how wounds caused by arrows and daggers do smart! O God, have mercy in the Day of Judgment on my people for my sake. The time of death has arrived, but I have not my Akbar with me. Would to God my grandfather the Prophet were now here to see me!

The Prophet (appearing).—Dear Husain, thy grandfather

the Prophet of God has come to see thee. I am here to behold the mortal wounds of thy delicate body. Dear child, thou hast at length suffered martyrdom by the cruel hand of my own people! This was the reward I expected from them; thanks be to God! Open thine eyes, dear son, and behold thy grandfather with dishevelled hair. If thou hast any desire in thy heart, speak it out to me.

Husain.—Dear grandfather, I abhor life; I would rather go and visit my dear ones in the next world. I earnestly desire to see my companions and friends—above all, my dearly beloved son 'Alí Akbar.

The Prophet.—Be not grieved that 'Alí Akbar thy son was killed, since it tends to the good of my sinful people on the day of universal gathering.

Husain.—Seeing 'Alí Akbar's martyrdom contributes to the happiness of thy people, seeing my own sufferings give validity to thy office of mediation, and seeing thy rest consists in my being troubled in this way, I would offer my soul, not once or twice, but a thousand times, for the salvation of thy people!

The Prophet.—Sorrow not, dear grandchild; thou shalt be a mediator, too, in that day. At present thou art thirsty, but to-morrow thou shalt be the distributor of the water of Al Kausar.*

Husain.—O Lord God, besides Husain, who has happened to be thus situated? Every one when he dies has at least a mother at his head. But my mother is not here to rend her garments for me; she is not alive, that she might close my eyes when I die.

Fátimah, his mother (appearing).—I am come to see thee, my child, my child! May I die another time, my child, my child! How shall I see thee slain, my son, my son! Rolling in thine own blood, my child, my child!

* See note *, p. 96, vol. i.

Husain.—Come, dear mother, I am anxiously waiting for thee. Come, come! I have partly to complain of thee. How is it that thou hast altogether forsaken thy son? How is it thou camest so late to visit me?

Fátimah.—May I be offered for thy wounded, defaced body! Tell me, what dost thou wish thy mother to do now for thee?

Husain.—I am now, dear mother, at the point of death. The ark of life is going to be cast on shore, mother. It is time that my soul should leave the body. Come, mother, close my eyes with thy kind hand.

Fátimah.—O Lord, how difficult for a mother to see her dear child dying! I am Zahrah who am making this sad noise, because I have to close the eyes of my son Husain, who is on the point of death. Oh, tell me if thou hast any desire long cherished in thy heart, for I am distressed in mind owing to thy sad sighs!

Husain.—Go, mother, my soul is come to my throat; go, I had no other desire except one, with which I must rise in the Day of Resurrection, namely, to see 'Alí Akbar's wedding.

Shimar.—Make thy confession, for I want to sever thy head, and cause a perpetual separation between it and the body.

Zainab.—O Shimar, do not go beyond thy limit; let me bind something on my brother's eyes.

Husain.—Go to thy tent, sister, I am already undone. Go away; Zahrah my mother has already closed my eyes. Show to Sukainah my daughter always the tenderness of a mother. Be very kind to my child after me.

Shimar (addressing Husain).—Stretch forth thy feet toward the holy Kiblah,* the sacred temple of Makkah. See how my dagger waves over thee! It is time to cut thy throat.

* See note, p. 168, vol. i.

Husain.—O Lord, for the merit of me, the dear child of thy Prophet; O Lord, for the sad groaning of my miserable sister; O Lord, for the sake of young 'Abbás rolling in his blood, even that young brother of mine that was equal to my soul, I pray thee, in the Day of Judgment, forgive, O merciful Lord, the sins of my grandfather's people, and grant me, bountifully, the key of the treasure of intercession. (*Dies.*)

SCENE XXIV.

THE CAMP AT KARBALA AFTER THE DEATH OF HUSAIN.

AFTER the death of Husain his family wandered about the camp distracted and bewildered. Perplexed and scarce knowing what to do, they at first commence to complain of the cruel fate which had overtaken them; but in the midst of their troubles they began to realise that the enemy still surround them, and they accordingly keep watch over the camp lest a sudden surprise should bring upon them that destruction which had overtaken their chief. To add to their distress Rukkayah, a daughter of Husain, is missing from their number, and the family lament her loss in loud and bitter tones of lamentation, which so affected the soul of the departed 'Alí that his spirit returns to earth and points out to the sorrowing women where the lost damsel can be found. "O thirsty ones," says one of the unhappy family, "Husain's child is lying down in the field of battle; the planet that had been lost sight of is discovered in the vicinity of the moon." Thus far well; but the Scene closes, leaving the women of Husain's camp alarmed and sore distressed, anticipating at any moment an irruption of the enemy, and consequent captivity and shame.

*Zain-ul-'Abid-dín.**—To-night is the night succeeding the day on which Husain was made a martyr, and went from Karbalá to rest in the meadows of Paradise. To-night is the night when, by the injustice of Shimar,† small children

* See note †, p. 96, vol. i.

† See note, p. 43, vol. i.