

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### A PASSION-PLAY IN MOHARREM

MARCH 1. After a temperature of  $37.9^{\circ}$  in the night the morning is warm, but a strong north-north-east wind cools the air and mitigates the heat of the sun. With two of my men and two of the Governor's ferrashes to keep too inquisitive persons at a distance, I go out along the *khiaban*, the long avenue; it takes us nineteen minutes to pass through it, and according to the inhabitants of Tebbes it is 3000 paces long. Then we cross the meidan and make for the gate in the wall which encloses the bazaar town, and through which we come into the bazaar's tunnelled street situated in the prolongation of the avenue. This tunnel is 325 paces long, and at its farther end we turn at right angles to the left up to the fortress (*ark*), the gate of which is now closed. If one walks straight on in a line with the bazaar one comes to the front of the Meshid-i-Juma, the principal mosque of Tebbes. There also stands the old minaret with its elegant Kufic inscriptions; it is built of burnt bricks, leans a little, and is about 130 feet high. In consequence of a new crack in the spiral staircase it is quite impossible to ascend to the top of the tower, where the view of the flat oasis must be fine. Near at hand is a *medresseh*, or theological high school, with two old minarets, low but really handsome. As I always carried with me my large camera on my walks and made use of it, I was surrounded by a mob of boys and idlers, which gradually increased and could not always easily be kept at a proper distance. But by degrees the Tebbes folk became accustomed to see me in the streets and market-place, and at last left me in peace.