

if they abandon their habits on any one day in the year, it is on the 10th of Moharrem, when their fanaticism is at its height, and their religious passions are roused; when the death of Hussein, represented by clever actors, appeals to their hearts, and their imagination so carries them away that they fancy they can see the holy martyr offering his life for the sacred cause. Then they become wild, lose their self-control, and the sight of much human blood upsets their minds. Something may happen to cause their passions to overflow, only a spark is required to fire the train, and a European who happens to be present may become a victim for their knives. Therefore the Governor had surrounded me with a stronger guard than usual, and had warned me to see that the Cossacks of the Shah kept their powder dry.

Fifty-four women have taken up their position in front of my *eivan*. They see me, but I cannot see them. I sometimes catch a fleeting glimpse of a pair of dark eyes, cold in expression and warm in colour, at any rate mysterious, and bound by the strict rules of Mohammedan etiquette. Some go away when they have gazed long enough, and others take their places. They are dark blue like swallows, and presumably they twitter beneath their veils like swallows, audible only to their neighbours and not to others.

We had seen in the meidan a caravan of gaily decorated camels, hung with red and blue cloths and tufts, and bells which rang just as they do in the great deserts outside; it showed what was coming.

Now it begins! Now all eyes are turned to the arena, to which a passage is kept open by ferrashes. The caravan comes marching in from left to right. It consists of ten camels. On the first sits a rider who beats incessantly a pair of drums, and on the others men and boys of the people. Then follow the mules we have seen on our first visit, and then a crowd of men crying out the name of Hussein in regular time and all together. The whole company passes twice round the arena. An interval follows during which the Governor sends me a bouquet of flowers, fruits, and sweets. I wish to tip the messenger,