

but he refuses to accept anything—a most unusual thing in Persia.

More shouts are heard. The crowd of spectators becomes closer, and they are packed together everywhere. After the horsemen in cuirasses come forty men who testify their grief at Hussein's death in a loathsome manner. Their dress consists only of a pair of wide white trousers, and their bodies, heads, and feet are bare. They walk in couples, not straight forwards as usual, but turned towards each other, taking side steps round the course. Those with their backs to us put out the left foot sideways along the course and then draw the right foot up to it. They are covered with blood, partly clotted, partly streaming over the face, breast, and white trousers. In their hands are sharp-pointed knives with which they cut vertical wounds in their heads and foreheads. Some have deep, long, and hideous wounds in the head, others cut themselves also in the breast and arms.

Walking face to face they incite and egg on one another, and stimulate their eagerness for self-torture. And when they are opposite my *eivan* and have thus completed half the circuit, they are wild, idiotic, and inspired by uncontrolled passion in their religious fanaticism. They keep time, smacking their soles against the pavement, and in time with their feet they plunge the knives into their heads and yell out their heartrending raucous "Ya Hussein." Their features are distorted, their looks frenzied and dreadful, they open their eyes wide to see better through the blood that is running over them. This bloody cortège reeks of blood, it leaves bloody footsteps behind, and those who come after tread in the blood of their predecessors.

The wild troop is attended by men on either side, whose duty it is to keep an eye on those who seem likely to lose control of themselves altogether, and may kill themselves by a too powerful blow. Then they interfere and forcibly remove the crazy man from the performance. The procession moves slowly round the arena, and it is wonderful if they all complete the circle alive. Not one comes off with a whole skin—that much is certain.