

spark has fled the women of the household announce the death by long and wailing cries. Soon the professional mourners gather like the vultures around a dead camel in the desert, and their strange piercing cry is heard which is compared by Micah to the wailing of dragons and the cry of the screech-owl. (Micah i. 8.) To this reference is also made in Mark v. 38 : Jesus coming to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, "seeing the tumult and them that wept and wailed greatly, said, Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead but sleepeth." Jeremiah also predicted the desolation of Israel in the pathetic words, "For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion. . . O ye women, teach your daughters wailing and every one her neighbour lamentation. For death is come up in our windows and is entered into our palaces, to cut off our children from without and the young men from the streets" (Jer. ix. 19-21.)

With impassioned Oriental fervour the women also tear their hair, beat their breasts and throw dust upon their heads. Often the whole kith and kin of the deceased join in frantic demonstrations of grief. "The practice of tearing one's clothes is a sign of sorrow," says Dr. Vanlennep, "and is strictly adhered to on such occasions. Care is taken, however, not to injure the garment by this operation, for the undertaker, who had immediately assumed the arranging of every detail, goes round to every mourner, and carefully rips the central seam of his kuffan, or robe, three or four inches down the breast ; this is afterwards easily repaired with a needle and thread. Mourners sometimes take off their outer clothing, and cover themselves from head to foot with a piece of brown, coarse sackcloth, such as is worn by slaves while offered for sale ; and occasionally they throw

dust or ashes upon their heads when thus covered, as a token of grief and humiliation." To this practice reference is made as early as the time of Moses. (Lev. x. 6. See also 2 Sam. xiii. 21 ; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27.)

The curious custom still obtains in Persia of bottling up the tears of the mourners as in the ancient times. This is done in the following manner : "As the mourners



EMBALMED HEAD OF RAMESES THE GREAT
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are sitting around and weeping, the master of ceremonies presents each one with a piece of cotton-wool, with which he wipes off his tears ; this cotton is afterwards squeezed into a bottle, and the tears are preserved as a powerful and efficacious remedy for reviving a dying man after every other means has failed. It is also employed as a charm against evil influences. This custom is probably alluded to in Ps.