

hydra or monster serpent coiled over and over. Here there seems to be a wide discrepancy. Bear in mind, first of all, that the abbreviated sign of the scorpion is an italic *m*, having a spear-headed tail; that is the cursive or hieratic (Egyptian) rendering of the picture of a scorpion. In like manner the hydra was rendered hieratically by a figure not unlike a combined italic *mv* (*mx*). Next the Egyptians as a nation dwined completely, and the Catholic monks had the monopoly of the scanty astronomy which survived, and this "*mv*" probably suggested to them Maria Virgine, and thus the virgo crept into the zodiac.

We will now leave antiquities and all they suggest to the mud and cross the Nile, back to Keneh, and witness the noise and confusion of a modern Egyptian, or, for that matter, of

A TYPICAL ORIENTAL FETE,

namely, that of Hassan and Hassain. The brutal manner in which a certain Mohammedan sect does penance for the death of these two martyrs, the way in which a whole procession inflicts wounds upon themselves until, through loss of blood, they faint away, and other sights of a similar nature, were some time ago very vividly described by Elder J. Clove, who witnessed the proceedings at Constantinople.

This town at present has, perhaps, ten times its normal population. The strangers or visitors camp on the roofs, in the streets, and in the fields half a mile all around town; some in tents and some in the burning sunshine. To get to the fair grounds we pass through a throng of native Egyptians (fellahin) from distant rural districts, Nubians, Ethiopians and Abyssinians from the upper Nile country, Arabians from Yemen, Jeddah and Mecca, pilgrims from Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, Tunis, Turkey and the Oasis, who have either hastened or delayed their trip to Mecca so as to witness this feast. They all differ in dress and dialect, but cherish one another as brethren for the sake of "the best prophet." I might describe a thousand things, but will confine myself to a few. Through a cloud of dust, painful to eye and lung, and through a throng of swarthy mortals, prancing horses, braying asses and loping camels, we proceed to the "grand square," which, however, is not a square, but a graveyard full of tall, shapely mausoleums, sepulchres and tombs. The pedestrians must ever be on the lookout for life and limb, for the Effendis, Quais, Beys or Pashas on horse or camel have the right of way, and are amenable to no one in case of accident. Through this long-gowned, turbaned crowd, and in the midst of thousands of veiled women, we slowly wend our way through a din and clatter hard to describe. We are surrounded by howling and dancing dervishes, nodding dervishes, dervishes who repeat the litany of Waw, clapping their breasts or cheeks at each alternate word, until they are red and swollen. Here

is a gang of dervishes who in the name of Mahomet, and with tambourine and cymbals work up the zeal of self-mutilating dervishes, who when sufficiently wrought up slowly insert blades of cold steel, iron spits and long needles through the muscles of the abdomen, chest, arms, and through the forehead, the cheeks and the ears, and all for a few paltry copper coins.

Looking at all this we become dizzy, and we march on, trying to observe other things. We notice the buildings which have been improvised for the occasion in this graveyard. Many of the squalid tabernacles are made of reeds, corn stalks, stalks of dura-malze, palm leaves (*phoenix-dactylifera*), and also of acacia (*Mimosa Nilotica*) branches, in which case mats of barley straw are resorted to to furnish a complete awning or shade. Then we come to shanties made of broken boards and rags, next to low, broad tents of goats' and camels' wool, then to something like immense cart wheels on the end of a pole; upon the wheel a mat or gunny sack is spread; it is a sort of immense parasol; next we reach a shebang made of cracked jars, masoned together with slime and dung; then come low, dingy hovels, cabins, huts, etc. At last we reach the

DANCING GIRLS, OR ALMEHO,

whose style of contortions has received the sanction of thousands of years, as is attested by vivid representations of their terpsichorean movements, attitudes and poses upon some of the sacred and most ancient monuments of the Nile country; yet, as I do, so would the reader, look upon their art as more rude than pleasing, more laborious than artistic, more like a peculiar mode of gymnastic than dance, and in all more weird, bizarre and uncommon than interesting. However, a short explanation is necessary whereby to elucidate a description further on, relating to a cruel manner in which Arabian steeds are made to imitate these girls. Let us consider one. She is chastely dressed, bedecked with two hundred gold coins, worth in all \$500; her earrings are of massive gold; on her ankles, above her bare feet, are two heavy silver anklets; around her wrists are bracelets of gold, silver and many of cut glass, which tinkle merrily when she moves her arms in graceful undulatory movements, as though imitating a snake gliding over the water. In her left hand is now a long rod. When the music has abated a little she walks along hurriedly, awaying herself, tinkling small cymbals fastened to her hands, and bobbing with her head continually, as a snake does when captivated by sweet strains of a flute or fife. When the music grows more intense and hurried she adjusts her parure, especially the coins, ever prone to twist about; thenceforth she stands almost on one spot, as though riveted, leaning on the rod; then, to our astonishment, though she does not lift a foot from the ground, we see, as if in a second, from her shoulders to the knees a movement as though she stamped

the ground powerfully with her feet—or more like a momentary shock of paralysis. This she repeats a dozen or more times, ever tinkling and bobbing her head. Next, by a contraction and sudden expansion of the muscles of first one and then the other leg, and of the corresponding arm simultaneously, she causes the flesh of one or the other half of her whole body to tremble and quiver at every alternate beat of music.

Now we go to the dancing horses which are racing along at break-neck speed, and are turned around as abruptly as unexpectedly by a tremendous jerk of a vicious, cruel bridle-bit, and are then again spurred up to the former speed and again so turned around; and the rider, lest he should be almost inevitably hurled off his steed in its sudden whirr, has in his hand a long lance, one end of which he thrusts to the earth at the very moment he so suddenly turns his horse. This exercise is indulged in a long time by twenty or more equines, which, in their furious career dart past six or eight musicians, four or five of whom, with inflated cheeks and bulging eyes, apply strong blasts to squeaking flageolets, fairly kicking and nodding their heads in their endeavors to keep time with one another while increasing the speed of the music. The other two or three artists carry thick pear-shaped, bottomless earthen pots or jars, covered at the wide ends with goat skin. These are beaten alternately with a slender rattan cane and a short thick strap of hippopotamus hide. The panting horses have already been brought up before this noisy but active band.

The excitement makes them snort and neigh; the foam or froth at the lips and mouth is crimson with blood. Under the impulse of the spurs they start with a leap in the direction of the music, which they face, and from which they are not ten feet distant; but the next moment a pull at the bit brings the horse to a halt, standing on his hind legs, pawing the air with his fore legs, as the bridle bit is being continually jerked; if he backs up he is spurred, and thus he totters about on two legs trying with the other two to keep his balance. The rider, like the Almeh with her staff, maintains his equilibrium by the help of his lance, and the horse evermore impatient bobs his head around like the girls; as he is allowed neither to go ahead nor back, he makes continual endeavors while on his hind legs to turn aside this way or that, thus twisting and contorting his flanks and thighs like the girls. During this time the flesh of his whole body twitches and quivers painfully, the crimson lather falls to the earth from his mouth, and the gore trickles down the hind legs from the spur wounds. Five or six horses perform at a time and are led away and doctored, while others succeed them, and this lasts four afternoons, and is a sport indulged in by noblemen and rich Arabian and Egyptian horse dealers.

FIVE DAYS IN THE DESERT.

April 20. I am now in the desert.