

only men and youths appear in religious plays, and the latter take the female parts dressed in correct costumes. Again we have *iliat* boys of nomad tribes riding on mules, which are also loaded with tents, poles, and household utensils of various kinds; *kalianchis* with water-pipes in the holsters in front of the saddle and other articles hanging down round the stirrups; horsemen in cuirasses with helmet and sword, and soldiers in ancient costumes with lances, flags, and spears with pennants attached. The performance is interesting, and is an unexpectedly brilliant scene. It is astonishing to find such great resources in this small oasis in the heart of the desert. The well-kept garden, the white tent roof, the silent palms, the motley dresses, the life and movement, the animals, all was exceedingly attractive and full of colour.

When I took my place in the niche, the people streamed across towards me and stood close as a shoal of herrings, watching my incomprehensible manipulations of the camera, the stand, and the black cloth. But after a while the priests, dignified and solemn in their white turbans and long kaftans, thought that this had gone on too long, and that it was shameful that an unbeliever should attract greater attention than themselves, and therefore gave orders to the police to drive them over to the other side of the court where the mollah was intoning the legends. Then ferrashes came forward and drove the crowd with switches and silver-studded batons across the court. A boy climbed as actively as a monkey up a high, straight palm trunk to pluck a withered leaf from its crown, and made himself a switch of its hard stem, wherewith he helped the police to dust the jackets of the mob.

On the flat roofs around the arena women sit wrapped up in their veils, and chattering and croaking like jackdaws. Those of higher rank have a white veil before the face with openings for the eyes, just as in the larger towns, but the poorer women have blue veils or rather sack-like wraps which cover the whole head and body. Tebbes is noted for its fanatical Shiitism, and the custom of veiling is also very strictly observed. It is seldom that one catches a glance from a pair of black eyes, but many small girls who