

# POETRY OF MOTION.

## Exhibition of Dancing in the Midway Plaisance

### MORE OR LESS GRACEFUL.

#### Fatima, the Premier, and Her Grotesque Work.

#### The Oriental Idea of What Constitutes the Proper Rhythm in Movement.

Romantic people who like to think of dancing as the poetry of motion can get a liberal education in muscular poetry by making the rounds of the Midway Plaisance at The Fair. They may see sonnets in double-shuffle meter, doggerels in hop-skip lambies, and ordinary newspaper "ponies" with the rhythm of the St. Vitus dance. Slices of pandemonium will be thrown in by the orchestras for the one price of admission, and if the visitor objects to taking his pandemonium on the installment plan he may get it in job lots down at the Dahomeyan village.



SAMOANS.

At home the Dahomeyans go about clothed only in lion strings and deep thought, but out of deference to the absurd prejudices of the queer Americans they have submitted to warmer costumes. They look like a comic opera troupe stranded in the first flush of new costumes, mad Prince Morocco, of "Masco" fame, may get information of his lost army by calling at this office and paying for this notice.

Their legs are both rocky and reeoco, but their dancing is not giddy enough to require the guidance of a French master. They take a step forward with the right foot, and drag the left after it. This is repeated until they stub their toes on the orchestra, when they swarm back and go through the difficult feat of advancing by a series of hops on one foot.

The guide and the philosopher of the black 400 varies the monotony with a simple shuffle, a la Billy Blee, and concludes by making a round of the encircling spectators with the crook'd elbows and mocking gait of a cock-of-the-walk. Ward's superior culture is apparent. He has chosen the green and yellow stripes of South Clark street, and attired himself in a modest blue overall, cut deolette at the knees and paneled in white at the seat. Like our own Ward, he believes in French modes, and wear a ballet girl's skirts. A sly joker is this African gentleman, and he displays his exquisite humor by wearing an enormous wooden mask fashioned in the likeness of an ancestral gorilla. All of this is to the discordant pounding of drums and scrap-iron, where tune could not be discovered with a search warrant.

This is the simplest of the dances. Over in the Cairo theater may be found the other extreme. The performance is begun by a dusky beauty in a peacock blue skirt with gold fringe about the bottom, and old gold ribbons hanging from the top. She wears a waist to match, but it has only two points in front, just enough for a fastening. The skirt hangs upon the hips, and the betting man offers three to one the dancer will lose it, but it looks like a cinch, and he can get no takers. The skirt and the waist are made of speaking terms, and the yawning breach is bridged by an unmentionable netter garment, which permits a free play of the abdominal muscles. This garment also covers the decolette charm in the bodice. There are bracelets about the dancer's ankles, strings of beads hang from her neck, and a flock of brass beer checks have made a nest in her hair.

The music is furnished by a tired tambourine, a gourd fiddle with a severe cold and a tom-tom that is sorry about something or other. At the end of the first bar the tambour player is asleep. He automatically repeats and his fellows kindly follow suit. This is monotonous for the audience, but it reduces the disorders about ten percent.

Fatima, the girl in blue, doesn't prance up and down the stage, or go into mad gyrations, or try to kick a hole in the ceiling. She keeps time in timid little steps, and occasionally sidles about the stage in slow, gliding circles. It seems to be her pet ambition to disjoin herself at the hips, though a man in yesterday's audience thought she was suffering from an overdose of green apples. At any rate, her anatomy below the waist and the knees performs a series of violent tremors, spasms and contortions. She literally humps

herself in this wild agony, and occasionally turns her back to the audience to give ocular proof. Tiny cymbals fastened to the dancer's fingers like castanets keep up a clanging accompaniment. It is longer after the audience is weary of the monotonous performance before Fatima shows signs of exhaustion. The cymbals stop to take breath, the eye-lids drop, a languorous tremor sweeps thro' the swaying body and the dancer is about to drop asleep. Unfortunately the tambour player wakes up at this inopportune time and starts a new bar of music. That banishes sleep, and the poor girl has to do it all over again.

Sensibilities Are Shocked. This is the dans du ventre. It might fracture Anglo-Saxon susceptibilities even to name it in English. Many ladies seem to get their money's worth before it is half over, for they leave the theater. The dans du ventre is quite a strain on American sensibilities, but many want to see it as one of the oriental curiosities of The Fair. It is not likely to become popular in this country, and yet it may be well in our virtuous dignity to remember that this was said a few years ago of the cancan, which is now familiar as the skirt dance.

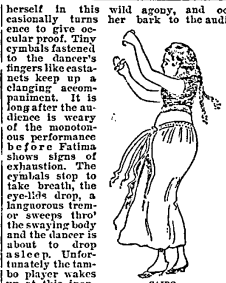
Several varieties of this dance are given in the street in Cairo, but the distinctions are too subtle for American perception. They appear in differently colored dresses. In one example two girls in team work, which seems to be a scheme to take a mean advantage of the ignorance of the audience and let a novice practice on it. The oriental orchestra gets weary on the slightest provocation. At the end of each dance it sneaks out to see a man and take a nap, and a new band files in. The sword dance is done by two Egyptians in baggy trousers. They carry hungry scimitars in their right hands, and the left are little metal shields that were picked before they were ripe. These dusky swordsmen swagger about the stage with indignant chips on their shoulders and make an exaggerated pretense of keeping away from each other. Suddenly they jump into the middle of the ring. The air is filled for about forty seconds with shining steel, jumping Cops and the resounding blows upon the bucklers, and then—the performers are making a grinning bow. The orchestra hark up a din, but it is not apparent why this harmless stage duel should be called a dance.

The Algerian theater offers several novelties, and its performers show the result of contrast with Europe. Most of the women are in attire that might pass for gaudy house gowns in America, and all the dancers salute the audience with the conventional platform bow. A girl with a bright gown, a silver belt, a spangled red veil, and laughing eyes does a sword dance with two rusty blades that might have been dug up from the ruins of Carthage. She skips and whirls to the agonies of the tom-tom and the pipe, slashing out chunks of atmosphere, jabbing the swords at her breast, and putting the points into her eyes. She escapes without a scratch, and laughs at the joke she has played upon the audience.

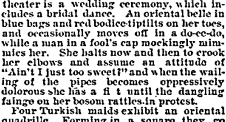
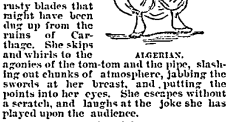
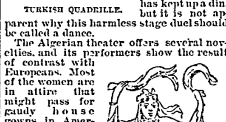
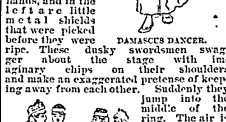
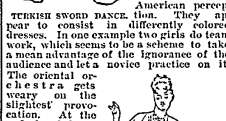
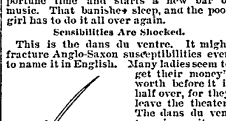
Nubian Kabye. A family of Nubians give the kabye. First a woman as black and as jolly as an ole Virginny mammy, with two and does a simple shuffle. She is in a blue dress with a riot of grape vines on it, and green and yellow tassels of low head dress make a chromatic trio that are heard above the alleged music. The band this time consists of one red-black Nubian basting an innocent drum with a shiny stick. The woman is followed by the old man and the boy, both in baggy white trousers and with duplex tin cymbals tied to the fingers of each hand. They do a hippity-hoy go down on their knees, jump into the air and spin around in a mad whirl, their bags following; them like inflated balloons.

Pretty girls in flowered silks made up in bags instead of skirts do a rankle dance. With a gay kerchief in each hand they float about in graceful circles with flying banners. The other girls punctuate the affair with Gomanch yellies, and the excited Nubian drummer adds a few frenzied whoppers.

The underlined feature of the Turkish theater is a wedding ceremony, which includes a bridal dance. An oriental belle in blue bags and red bodice-tiptails on her toes, and occasionally moves off in a do-do-do, while a man in a fool's cap mockingly mimics her. She on its now and then to crook her elbows and assume an attitude of "Ain't I just too sweet?" and when the wailing of the pipes becomes oppressively dolorous she has a fit until the dangling fango on her bosom rattles in protest. Four arab maids exhibit an oriental quadrille. Forming in a square they go teetering around two sides, then reverse



CAIRO.



and repeat. This movement is varied by a right and left, the dancers snapping their fingers and washing their hands in invisible water. The orchestra creaks and groans, and the whole company expresses its joy by slinging a dirge. "He never goes out doors without those weapons," explained the lecturer, when a Syrian named Simon came on. Simon looked something like a Scotch Highlander with his belt stuck full of saber and horse pistols. He trotted around awhile, stabbing his toes, and then beckoned a woman to his side. As she glided back and forth he skipped around her in jerky circles, and in pantomime asked her for a kiss. The coquette refused. Then the gay cavalier offered her money, and went down on his knees, but the maid threw the stage cash in his face and fled the scene. Simon drew his sword, but it was too late. One of the quartet of girls presented the Damascus dance. She stood on one foot and swayed back and forth. She clasped her hands and snapped her fingers. She folded her arms and sidled across the stage. She placed her hands upon her heart, started to faint, and backed off into the files.

Albanian and Asia Minor dances are somewhat similar in their general methods, except that in the latter the dancer concludes with a long whirl that makes the audience dizzy. By permission of the Sultan of Solo ten Japanese women will show the dances of their distant isle, and the Samoans will show how the South sea islanders make merry.

A SLANDER AGAINST BRAVE MEN. New York Press: At the Memorial day exercises held at the Art Institute in Chicago ex-United States Pension Commissioner John C. Black is reported to have made this statement: "The pension rolls are polluted with the names of cowards, deserters, and impostors, and no true soldier of 1861 to 1865 would object to measures calculated to remove the disgrace."

This assertion was uttered in response to the declaration of Major Warner, past commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, that the men who were the friends of the soldier and who had enacted the pension law should be held upon to deal justly with pension matters, and that it belonged to the friends of the soldier to remedy any evils which may have crept into the pension system. It amounted to a charge that the pension roll is a roll of dishonor; it was intended to convey the impression that wholesale corruption had been practiced in securing pensions; it was an insult, open and malignant, to the great host of disabled veterans and dependent widows toward whom the Nation has manifested its imperishable gratitude for the valor and self sacrifice they saw fit to deal justly with pension matters, and that it belonged to the friends of the soldier to remedy any evils which may have crept into the pension system. It amounted to a charge that the pension roll is a roll of dishonor; it was intended to convey the impression that wholesale corruption had been practiced in securing pensions; it was an insult, open and malignant, to the great host of disabled veterans and dependent widows toward whom the Nation has manifested its imperishable gratitude for the valor and self sacrifice they saw fit to deal justly with pension matters, and that it belonged to the friends of the soldier to remedy any evils which may have crept into the pension system. It amounted to a charge that the pension roll is a roll of dishonor; it was intended to convey the impression that wholesale corruption had been practiced in securing pensions; it was an insult, open and malignant, to the great host of disabled veterans and dependent widows toward whom the Nation has manifested its imperishable gratitude for the valor and self sacrifice they saw fit to deal justly with pension matters, and that it belonged to the friends of the soldier to remedy any evils which may have crept into the pension system.

If there are evils in the pension system they should be righted; if there are men drawing pensions who are not entitled to them they should be deprived of their unjust incomes. No loyal veteran desires to see a single pension dishonestly paid. But there is not the slightest reason to credit the charges made by Democratic politicians and Democratic papers that the pension system as a whole is "polluted" by fraud. The campaign which the Bourbons and Mugwumps are waging is not a campaign against "cowards, deserters, and impostors;" it is a campaign against the great mass of the veterans and against the principle of pension payment for loyal service during the civil war. The weapons used in this unmanly war are those that naturally lend themselves to such a cause. They consist of outrageous charges without an atom of evidence, and of persistent efforts to persuade the American people that the pensioners are greedy and unprincipled persons. The Nation will not be deceived by slanders. It will not cease to honor and protect the men who made the magnificent American Republic of to-day possible. It will not believe that the heroes who carried the flag of freedom to victory through four years of privation and peril have become unworthy of respect and confidence in their old age.

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