

the Fâtiha. Immediately afterwards the sheikh pronounces the words "Lâ ilâha ill' Allah!" and repeats them incessantly; to which the Dervishes repeat "Allah!" balancing themselves from side to side, and putting their hands over their faces, on their breasts and their abdomens, and on their knees.

The second scene is opened by the Hamdee Mohammedee, a hymn in honour of the prophet, chanted by one of the elders placed on the right of the sheikh. During this chant the Dervishes continue to repeat the word "Allah!" moving, however, their bodies forward and aft. A quarter of an hour later they all rise up, approach each other, and press their elbows against each other, balancing from right to left and afterwards in a reverse motion, the right foot always firm, and the left in a periodical movement, the reverse of that of the body, all observing great precision of measure and cadence. In the midst of this exercise they cry out the words "Yâ Allah!" followed by that of "Yâ Hoo!" Some of the performers sigh, others sob, some shed tears, others perspire great drops, and all have their eyes closed, their faces pale, and the eyes languishing.

A pause of some minutes is followed by a third scene. It is performed in the middle of an Ilahee, chanted by the two elders on the right of the sheikh. The Ilahees, as has already been said, are spiritual cantiques, composed almost exclusively in Persian by sheikhs deceased in the odor of sanctity. The Dervishes then hasten their movements, and, to prevent any relaxation, one of the first among them puts himself in their center, and excites them by his example. If in the assembly there be any strange Dervishes, which often happens, they give them, through politeness, this place of honor; and all fill it successively, the one after the other, shaking themselves as aforesaid. The only exception made is in favor of the Meveves; these never perform any other dance than that peculiar to their own order, which consists in turning round on each heel in succession.

After a new pause commences the fourth scene. Now all the Dervishes take off their turbans, form a circle, bear their arms and shoulders against each other, and thus make the circuit of the hall at a measured pace, striking their feet at intervals against the floor, and all springing up at once. This dance continues during the Ilahees chanted alternately by the two elders to the left of the sheikh. In the midst of this chant the cries of "Yâ Allah!" are increased doubly, as also those of "Yâ Hoo!" with frightful howlings, shrieked by the Dervishes together in the dance. At the moment that they would seem to stop from sheer exhaustion the sheikh makes a point of exerting them to new efforts by walking through their midst, making also himself most violent movements. He is next replaced by the two elders, who double the quickness of the step and the agitation of the body; they even straighten themselves up from time to time, and excite the envy or emulation of the others in their astonishing efforts to continue the dance until their strength is entirely exhausted.

The fourth scene leads to the last, which is the most frightful of all, the wholly prostrated condition of the actors becoming converted into a species of ecstasy which they call Halet. It is in the midst of this abandonment of self, or rather of religious delirium, that they make use of red-hot irons. Several cutlasses and other instruments of sharp-pointed iron are suspended in the niches of the hall, and upon a part of the wall to the right of the sheikh. Near the close of the fourth scene two Dervishes take down eight or nine of these instruments, heat them red hot, and present them to the sheikh. He, after reciting some prayers over them, and invoking the founder of the order, Ahmed er Rufâ'ee, breathes over them, and raising them slightly to the mouth, gives them to the Dervishes, who ask for them with the greatest eagerness. Then it is that these fanatics, transported by frenzy, seize upon these irons, gloat upon them tenderly, lick them, bite them, hold them between their teeth, and end by cooling them in their mouths. Those who are unable to procure any seize upon the cutlasses hanging on the wall with fury, and stick them into their sides, arms, and legs.

Thanks to the fury of their frenzy, and to the amazing boldness which they deem a merit in the eyes of the Divinity, all stoically bear up against the pain which they