

Bircham, and had been invited to remain, as he hoped he would be. He found Miss Annie Lowderson in the garden next morning, when she expressed a doubt whether she would ever be able to repay him for his goodness and bravery.

Robert Simpson's reply will be guessed by all our readers. He thought that if he were rewarded by

Miss Annie's heart and hand he would indeed be repaid, and more than repaid, for his action in her behalf. The young lady, after some becoming hesitation, assented. When the Rector of Wittleisleigh came into the study that morning, he found, like the miller of the ballad, that he had "a daughter the less," and he made no objection to the arrangement.

A PERSIAN ORGY IN CAIRO.

BY A. J. BUTLER, M.A., FELLOW OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD.



ALL over the East the Persians celebrate, with strange barbaric rites of their own, the anniversary of the death of Hoseyn, the Prophet's grandson, who was slain in the plain of Karbala; but nowhere is the ceremony performed with more fanatic fury than in Cairo. There,

on the evening of the tenth day of the first Mohammedan month, prayers are held in the Mosque of Hasaneyn, and subsequently a procession of men, clad in white, cutting themselves with swords and knives, passes through the streets to the house of the chief Persian in the city, where the rites are completed. Many people see the procession, but no Europeans are admitted to the house. By exceptional fortune, however, or rather thanks to the Khedive's kindness, I received a special invitation and went, accompanied by an orderly and an officer of the ceremonies, to the residence of the great Persian on the evening of the festival. As usual, no time was fixed; so we arrived, as advised, soon after sunset. Passing across the courtyard we were shown up-stairs, and regaled with coffee and cigarettes by our host. Below we could see the courtyard draped in black; it was roofed over with a large awning, and hung with lanterns; a pulpit also, shrouded in dark green cloth, was erected against the wall, and on the steps tapers were burning, and two large candles in lofty silver candlesticks. Slowly the courtyard filled with Persian figures; ladies in balloons of silk, with closely-veiled faces, flitted across and vanished up-stairs into the harem; our room, too, began to receive the more honoured guests. Four long hours we had to wait and no signs of procession—or of dinner. It was just nine when our host rose from a grave and silent company and bade us to supper. We found a long table laid in a fine room with a beautifully panelled and painted ceiling. Our food was rice—set in large bowls, and prepared in various savoury methods—lentils, and

a sort of cold stewed meat, and a tasteless jelly. It was a real Persian dinner, very good of its kind, and a feast to our fasting palates. Each person had a fork, but the Persians preferred their fingers. Only eight guests were privileged to partake of supper.

When the meal was over, the company returned to the reception-room; but as this was twenty feet above the courtyard, I went down with an Egyptian friend, and was soon placed in a seat of honour on a raised dais, close by the pulpit. A nargileh was brought and we were soon puffing away as calmly as if we had met, unconscious of any coming excitement, solely to dream over the tranquil fumes of tobacco. During the whole evening two Arab sheykhs had been chanting verses from the Koran, and the greater of the two, Sheykh Ali, was sitting so close in front of me now that my knees touched his portly shoulders. When his turn came to sing again he chose a pinch of snuff, and retaining it between his finger and thumb, first swayed his great head, then rocked and rolled his enormous body with ponderous balance, and so, first humming a stave, he lifted up his voice and cried with that mixture of drawl and screech which the Arabs call singing. At every pause the crowd shouted, "Allah! Allah!" and the sheykh whisked his snuff-laden fingers so swiftly across his nose that the one pinch lasted for twenty applications.

During this song the procession had been coming from the mosque. And now a woman, descending from the harem, passed out into the street and quickly returned with a man who carried in his arms a child bleeding and screaming. Both disappeared up-stairs. The child, who had represented Hassan, the brother of Hoseyn, in the procession, had been cut and wounded by its father, though not severely. Soon messengers came running in to announce the coming of the procession; a noise of shouting gathers outside and grows louder and louder; the doors are hastily flung open and three tall banners enter, and men with flaming cressets round them. The noise is now very near—a deep guttural howling like that of a host of angry madmen, changing sometimes to a frenzied yelling and mingled with the clash of swords. A white horse with a long white saddle-cloth enters; a little boy clothed in white is riding him, and carrying a small scimitar, while the blood flows over his cape from some shallow gashes on his head. The trappings of the horse, too, have been dyed with a rude design in blood. The child

represents Hoseyn, and seems calm and quiet as if his wounds did not trouble him. When the horse reached the middle of the court, it was wheeled round to face the east, and all the people shouted.

The clamour reached the gates, and we all stood up in intense expectation, as through the doorway came pouring, in wild disorder, some five-and-twenty wild-looking men waving curved scimitars and brandishing long knives, with gestures of the maddest excitement, while their shaven heads were hacked with wounds from which blood was streaming all over their white linen robes. It was like a charge of fanatics flushed with blood in battle; they seemed as if ready to hack themselves, or each other, to pieces; and though I was the only European in the courtyard, I could not but feel that the slightest impulse might turn their fury even on the friendly crowd around. Nothing, I thought, could better give one the idea of actual battle, though strangely enough one felt none of the horror with which one imagines such scenes. But, after rushing pell-mell together and clashing their weapons furiously in the middle of the yard, the men were formed into a sort of ring round the boy on horseback, who still faced the east; there they shook their swords above their heads, and continued to wound themselves as they shouted, or rather howled, in deep savage tones, "Hassan! Hoseyn!"

In this ring they rushed twice round, brandishing their arms, then stood awhile, and the horse was led away and disappeared through the staircase doorway, and I had leisure to observe them. Their faces were afire with excitement; their heads were shaven in various ways, most with a lane shaved from the forehead to the crown through the hair; others with the crown quite bald, and some with just a tuft of long hair left hanging at the extreme back of the head. Their wounds were chiefly on the top of the head, and not as a rule serious; but only in one case did I suspect a man of having borrowed blood; and some had great gaping gashes laying open the whole cheek, and the clotted blood stood out an inch thick. Two or three men moved about inside the ring, mopping the wounds; the white dresses were dyed with splashes and streams of crimson, and some men had large parts of their robes soaked in blood. It was a ghastly but fascinating spectacle. The shouts continued, and the momentary lull was followed by a fresh outburst as another party entered with two riderless horses, each caparisoned in white, and carrying on his back a helmet and suit of ancient mail. These two horses were led straight across the courtyard through the throng, and disappeared at once.

Now the attendants tried to stop the barbarous sword-dance; some gave up their weapons peaceably; from others they were wrenched and wrested by main force. Then, each man holding his neighbour in front by the girdle, they all rushed and plunged forward, and vanished through the same doorway as the horses before. Then men came and gathered up the curved scimitars and broad double-edged knives and daggers, which had been flung

dripping in a heap on the floor, and one carried them away at an armful. These swordsmen who mutilated themselves were dervishes. In the house they took off their white robes, and those who were not too badly wounded returned and mingled with the crowd, with a calm bearing which showed that they were not worked upon by hashish or any other drug. Throughout the rest of the ceremony they were only distinguished by their blood-stained turbans; but, as far as I could judge, only eight or ten of the whole number re-appeared.

The next scene in the drama was the recital, in Persian, of a solemn litany in memory of the two martyrs. A priest stood at the foot of the draped staircase on the platform and intoned slowly, in a fine clear voice, a very musical chant. At the end of every verse came a refrain or chorus, in which the crowd, now in the centre of the courtyard—that is, almost exclusively people who had taken part in the procession—joined. While they sang the chorus, "Hoseyn! Ah! Hoseyn! Ah! Ah! Hoseyn!" they beat their breasts furiously; some few were stripped to the waist and beat both breasts; but most merely opened their robes and beat the left breast with the right hand. They struck really savage blows with the open hand, that resounded with a loud sharp clap, and after striking they flung back the hand outwards to its farthest reach, to bring it home again with the greatest force. And in the midst of all were three stalwart men, one of negro race, naked to the waist, who wielded scourges made of chains tipped with leather. These men, as the others beat their breasts, raised high their scourges in both hands, and in accompaniment to the refrain, lashed themselves on either shoulder-blade alternately, with a rapid swing from stroke to stroke. The noise of the rattling chains, and the hard thumps as the blow descended on their bare flesh with a force that seemed enough to crush the bones, was barbarously revolting; one saw, however, no worse result than an ugly flush under their dark skins; there was no blood let.

All the Persians in the court-yard joined with various degrees of enthusiasm in the refrain, most merely patting the left breast in rhythm without removing the robe; but all wore a look of intense solemnity. During the whole evening I never saw a single glance cast upwards to the hareem, though there I spied plainly enough, through the Venetian shutters, some beautiful faces unveiled and looking down on the ceremony. When the litany was ended, the men with scourges and the other half-naked men began to belabour themselves more furiously than ever, till at last they were forcibly stopped and sent away in-doors to clothe themselves.

Next there followed a prose recital of the story of Hoseyn's death, in Persian. A sheykh mounted the stairs and sat down upon the topmost step between the banners. In a fine, ringing, impressive voice he told the tale. The audience were now seated on the ground and on the benches, their eyes all fixed intently on the speaker. At the more pathetic parts they cried and sobbed like children, and

beat their foreheads for grief. There was nothing like sham or affectation in it; old men and young men and boys wept in their handkerchiefs, whimpered like whipped babies, or shook through all their frame in paroxysms of inconsolable sorrow. It was very astonishing to witness the passionate personal heart-broken anguish with which men, whom one knew familiarly as quiet industrious workers in brass, calm polite carpet merchants, or wary dealers in antiques, were affected as they listened to the story of a youth slain in battle twelve centuries ago. It showed an unsuspected capacity for passion in Oriental character, and it set me thinking on parallels in our religion and in mythology.

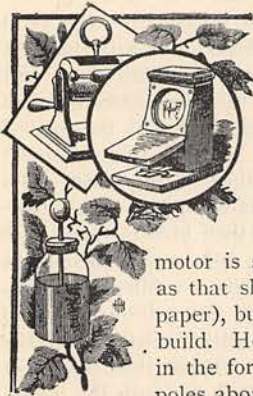
When the recital in Persian was finished, an-

other man mounted in place of the narrator and re-told the story in Arabic. This was followed with the same fervid sympathy and the same expression of hopeless mourning.

The Arabic recital was, as a rule, slow and very pathetic; but it was varied here and there by a few passages of rapid chanting between the prose. At the end the speaker called on all the people to pray; and first, as they sat, they all stretched out both hands and held them uplifted, with their gaze fixed far away above, as they called, "Allah! Allah!" Then all rose up, turned to the east, and murmured a short prayer; the sheikh descended, and the ceremony was over—one of the strangest that the moonlight had ever fallen upon.

HOUSEHOLD ELECTRICITY.

IN TWO PAPERS.—SECOND PAPER.



COMING now to the employment of the current for driving sewing-machines, lathes, punkahs, coffee-mills, churns, pumps, and so on, we have an excellent sample of a small electric engine in the Griscom motor, which is illustrated in Fig. 1. This

motor is simply a little dynamo, such as that shown in Fig. 3 (in the first paper), but differing in size, shape, and build. Here the electro-magnets, M, are in the form of a ring, having opposite poles above and below. The revolving

coil, A, is placed within this ring, and the current is led to it by the terminals, S, and the commutator, C. Soon as the current is passed through the coil it begins to revolve at a rapid rate, turning the pulley, P, at the other end of the shaft with it. A strap, D,

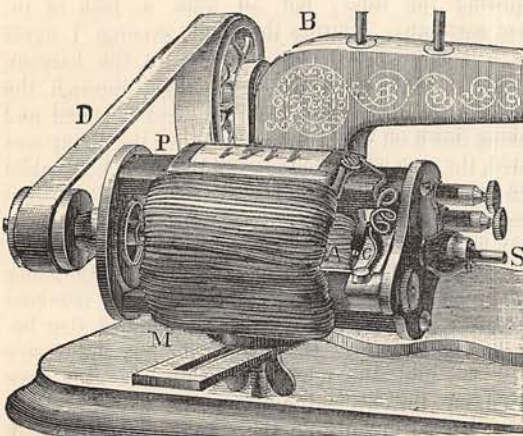


FIG. 1.

from this pulley to another, B, on the driving shaft of a sewing-machine conveys the power to the latter, and keeps it going.

Such a motor can be, of course, maintained by the current from a voltaic battery as well as a dynamo. A useful battery for the purpose is the "bichromate of potash" battery, which is provided with it, and allowing the operator to regulate the speed of the sewing-machine by a pedal which dips more or less of the battery plates into the exciting solution. As, however, we are anticipating the time when the necessary current will be drawn from the general supply "laid on" to a house, we need not linger over this contrivance.

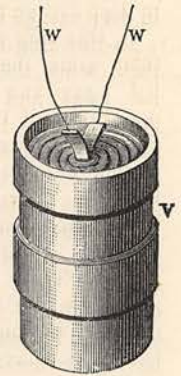


FIG. 2.

The "secondary battery," or accumulator for storing up the current, so to speak, in a kind of reservoir, is more to our present purpose than the voltaic battery, although some very large buildings have been lighted with current from the latter. One of the best accumulators is that of M. Faure, which is illustrated in Fig. 2, and consists of a glass vessel, V, containing a solution of sulphuric acid in water, and the plates in which the electricity is stored. These are two wide strips of lead, each coated with peroxide of lead or minium, and sheathed in a bag of felt or flannel. The two plates are then laid over one another, and rolled up together, as shown. Wires, W, W, run through the cover of the cell to the lead plates, and connect its poles to the wires leading to the generator or the lamp, as the case may be. Such a battery, when charged by a dynamo, retains the current, as it were, in store, and yields nearly the whole of it up again at any future time. No doubt they will be supplied by-and-by to many homes, and charged during the day