

arms and legs are bare, with large bangles; a light band of gauze half covers the breasts. Their eyes are lively and bordered with kohl, and stand out sharply against their mat complexion. A diadem of gold pieces circles the forehead and in the black hair which falls around their shoulders there are numerous little pieces of the same metal threaded in. The generosity of the spectators is always adding to this dazzling jewellery. The dances and some of the costumes are identical to those in the paintings of the ancient hypogeums, and no doubt they have been kept up by tradition.

When the dancers are called to a private house they never appear before men and women together. For the men, the dance usually takes place in the *mandarah* (a room on the ground floor). A small orchestra composed of string instruments, the *tar* and the *darabouk*, which are used to mark the rhythm, is placed in a corner. The dancers occupy the part of the salon called the *dounqah*, and the spectators silently sit on the divans and enjoy the pleasure of the show which is taking place. The artists, who are generally young and pretty women, begin their choreographic exercises by moving around the room with slow and measured steps and graceful arm movements. They accompany themselves with copper castanets (*sagat*) fixed to the thumb and middle finger of each hand, which they play with marvellous dexterity. The clinking of the *sagat* responds to a jerky movement of the hips. After going around two or three times undulating the body in all directions, and assuming more provocative poses, their legs stop moving, as well as the upper part of the body, except the arms which they move following the lewd feelings which seem to animate them. Agitated by the incessant trembling which they accelerate with audacious energy or slow down languidly, their bodies develop a suppleness beyond belief, trembling like a leaf, caused by an unambiguous nervous impulse. It is impossible to imagine a more lively and realistic pantomime, more voluptuous and stirring movements, or contortions expressing with less discretion all the physical sensations; the quivering hips, falling down and lifting up again with unimagineable speed, give the impression of an indescribable amorous frenzy. . . .

There are several varieties of dances which are basically very similar; they are all executed with grace, lightness and extraordinary passion. One of the most popular is the dance of the bee (*el-nahleh*). The *ghawazi* pretend to have been stung by a bee which they search for inside their costume, uttering little cries, trying to catch hold of