



A MALAY KALIFA AT CAPETOWN



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SOME European visitors were allowed to be present at one of these peculiar Mahomedan ceremonials which took place recently in the house of a leading Malay citizen of Cape Town.

The guests were politely escorted to their seats in a spacious square-built room of the Dutch type. In front of them was a gorgeous piece of framework, surmounted by the crescent and crossed scimitars, and decorated by some large flags from Mecca. This shrine is termed a Prabou, and behind it was seated, cross-legged, a Hadji, who was also a Gatiep, or elder of the Church. In front of him was a formidable array of daggers, swords, and long skewers. Along the two remaining sides of the room were seated some twenty or thirty Malays, while the doorways were thronged by others of the Mahomedan faith.

Then began the ritual. Incense was burnt, tambourines were beaten, and a series of inspiring choruses were sung. While the noise was at its height, four Malays sprang up, and each seized a couple of daggers, with which they apparently stabbed themselves in the arms, body, and legs, dancing meanwhile like dervishes. After this a man walked backwards and forwards over a row of naked swords, held up horizontally by twelve Malays, steadying himself on the shoulders of the holders. He afterwards exhibited the soles of his feet, which were neither cut nor lacerated, although the swords were genuine blades. More singing and tambourining followed, after which another devotee stepped in front. A skewer was run through the lobe of each ear, and two more were passed from his mouth through both cheeks. Thus trussed, he bowed to the visitors and—made a collection. Another performer seemed to gouge out one of his eyes with a sword, others placed their arms in the flame of a torch. How it is done, we cannot say. Nobody was hurt, yet we think Kalifas are most pleasant to those who take no part in them.

The ceremony ended with a hospitable handing round of coffee and biscuits. We abridge the foregoing from an article in the *Cape Times*.—Our engraving is from a sketch by Lieut.-Colonel H. G. Robley, 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.