



THE WHIRLING DERVISHES.

AMONGST the Mohamedans are certain men who are supposed to give themselves up to religious contemplation, and to live very saintly lives. In some parts, as in India, they are generally what are called Fakeers, about whom you have often heard. But in other Mohamedan countries, and especially in the great Turkish Empire, these devotees have a very different appearance, and are called Dervishes. There are a great many sorts or orders of them, all differing, chiefly in their mode of worship, and distinguished by their peculiar dress.

The Dervishes profess, that by going through certain religious exercises of the body, and

repeating certain words or prayers a great number of times, they are brought into very close communion with God, and enjoy a sort of ecstasy, which, for a time, raises them above all earthly things. Some of these exercises are very strange; but none of them are more remarkable than those used by the *Mevleves*, or, as they are generally called, the Whirling Dervishes.

In our picture, you have a portrait of a *Mevlevee*, just beginning his wonderful worship. The curious cap worn by all of this order is made of felt, of camel's hair, or wool. The reason given for the shape is this: Before their prophet, Mohamed, was born, his soul was kept in heaven in a crystal vase; and in this form the *Mevleves* make their caps to this day.

In their services, these Dervishes assemble in their own place of worship, in which is a small gallery occupied by the musicians, of whom there are very few,—two or three playing on reed-pipes, as you see in the picture, and two or three beating on little drums or *tomtoms*.

Some orders of Dervishes make loud and frightful noises in their

religious ceremonies; but the *Mevleves* conduct theirs in silence. They make obeisance to their Sheikh, and remain in meditation for a time, listening to the music of the pipes and *tomtoms*; then they slowly walk round in a circle, occasionally turning as they go. Presently, with their arms outstretched, their right hand open towards heaven, and the left towards earth, they stand on one foot and turn themselves with the other, at first slowly, but then faster and faster, until they spin like tops, with their long woollen skirts sticking out all round them. This they keep up for a surprising length of time.

How wonderful it is that anyone should believe that there is anything well-pleasing to God, or of use to man, in such a performance! Nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ can set them free from their error and delusion.