

dressed in white, with red, green, or yellow ribbons, for those are their favourite colours; on their shoulders they cast a white scarf, let their hair fall loose about their ears, and throw their heads as far back as they can bear it: they are, in fact, exact copies of the ancient priestesses of Bacchus. The orgies of that god, whose worship, under various symbols, was more widely spread over the globe than that of any other divinity, were no doubt performed with energy and enthusiasm by the lively inhabitants of this warm climate. The introduction of Christianity abolished all public exhibitions of these heathenish rites, and the women durst no longer act a frantic part in the character of Bacchantes. Unwilling to give up so darling an amusement, they devised other pretences, and possession by evil spirits may have furnished them with one. Accident may also have led them to a discovery of the tarantula; and upon the strength of its poison, the Puglian dames still enjoy their old dance, though time has effaced the memory of its ancient name and institution; and this Mr. Swinburn takes to be the origin of so strange a practice. If at any time these dancers are really and involuntarily affected, he supposes it can be nothing more than an attack upon their
nerves,