

artist seems to be of a kind pronounced impossible by modern champions of the sport. The fresco design shown in Fig. 144 does not, as we shall see, stand alone, and the successive acts that it seems to imply find at least partial confirmation in a clay seal-impression (Fig. 149, below), and in the



FIG. 145. SECTION OF DESIGN SHOWING FEMALE ACROBAT RAISING HERSELF BY THE BULL'S HORN.

bronze group (Fig. 155), where the acrobatic feat is illustrated by the diagrammatic figure (Fig. 156).

But if the feat as thus logically developed would seem to transcend human skill, it is equally true that such scenes as are illustrated by a series of scenes on gems in which the bull wrestler seems to lift the whole mighty

beast,¹ are no less on a superhuman scale. At the same time they can be matched in this by the intaglio type given above,² where the hero, armed as he is with a dirk, grips the lion's neck with his left hand.



FIG. 146. FRAGMENT OF FRESCO PANEL SHOWING FEMALE TAUREADOR SEIZING BULL'S HORN.

All old African hunters know that such personal contact with a lion means nothing less than death.

The apparent action of throwing an arm over a bull's horn rather than actually gripping it is illustrated by another spirited fragment of this group of frescoes of which a restored drawing by Monsieur Gilliéron is reproduced in Fig. 146. The right hand of the female acrobat does not here seize the horn, though thrown over it, but is tightly clenched, as the result of extreme physical tension. An interesting analogy to this is supplied by the fragment of a high relief, where the hand is seen over the tip of a bull's horn similarly clenched.

It is clear that this painted relief fragment, found in the Deposit of High Reliefs described below,³ represents part of an acrobatic figure, in this case, as

¹ Compare, for instance, Figs. 162-164, p. 231 below.

² p. 125, Figs. 78, 79.

³ See below, p. 497 seqq.

the red colouring shows, a man, with his arm thrown over the bull's horn and his hand not grasping it but clenched in a similar way (see Sketch, Fig. 147).

In the delicately executed design, reproduced in the Coloured Plate XXI, about one-third scale¹—the fine lines of which recall the designs on white Athenian *lekythoi*—another female figure is seen in the act of leaping, with flying tresses, one arm held downwards and the other raised. A noteworthy feature in this representation is the strap, wound not only round the wrist but round



FIG. 147. RESTORED SKETCH OF FRAGMENT FROM DEPOSIT OF HIGH RELIEFS.

Use of
Cestus
round
wrist.

parts of the hand. This form of *cestus* obviously had nothing to do with striking a blow, and must have been rather devised to give strength to the muscles and tendons. It recurs on the hand of the youth shown in Fig. 148 who is depicted flying through the air, as if in the act of alighting behind a galloping steer, whose hind legs appear below.² Acrobatic feats of the same kind as the above are still said to be performed in some Portuguese *corridas*.

¹ The original pieces shown in the Coloured Plate XXI and Fig. 148 were given me by the Cretan Government and are now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. The drawing of Fig. 148 was traced under my superintendence from a photographic reproduction and the details minutely checked with reference to the original. The sketch is by Mr. E. J. Lambert.

² There can be little doubt as to the connexion of the three fragments shown in Fig. 148. They were found together, and all have the same blue ground. The white object on the neck and breast represents two necklaces in a heavier style. Some of the strands of hair, of which only faint indications have been preserved, are reinforced in the drawing.

These highly sensational episodes are primarily exhibitions of acrobatic skill. In this respect, as already noted, they differ from the parallel perfor-

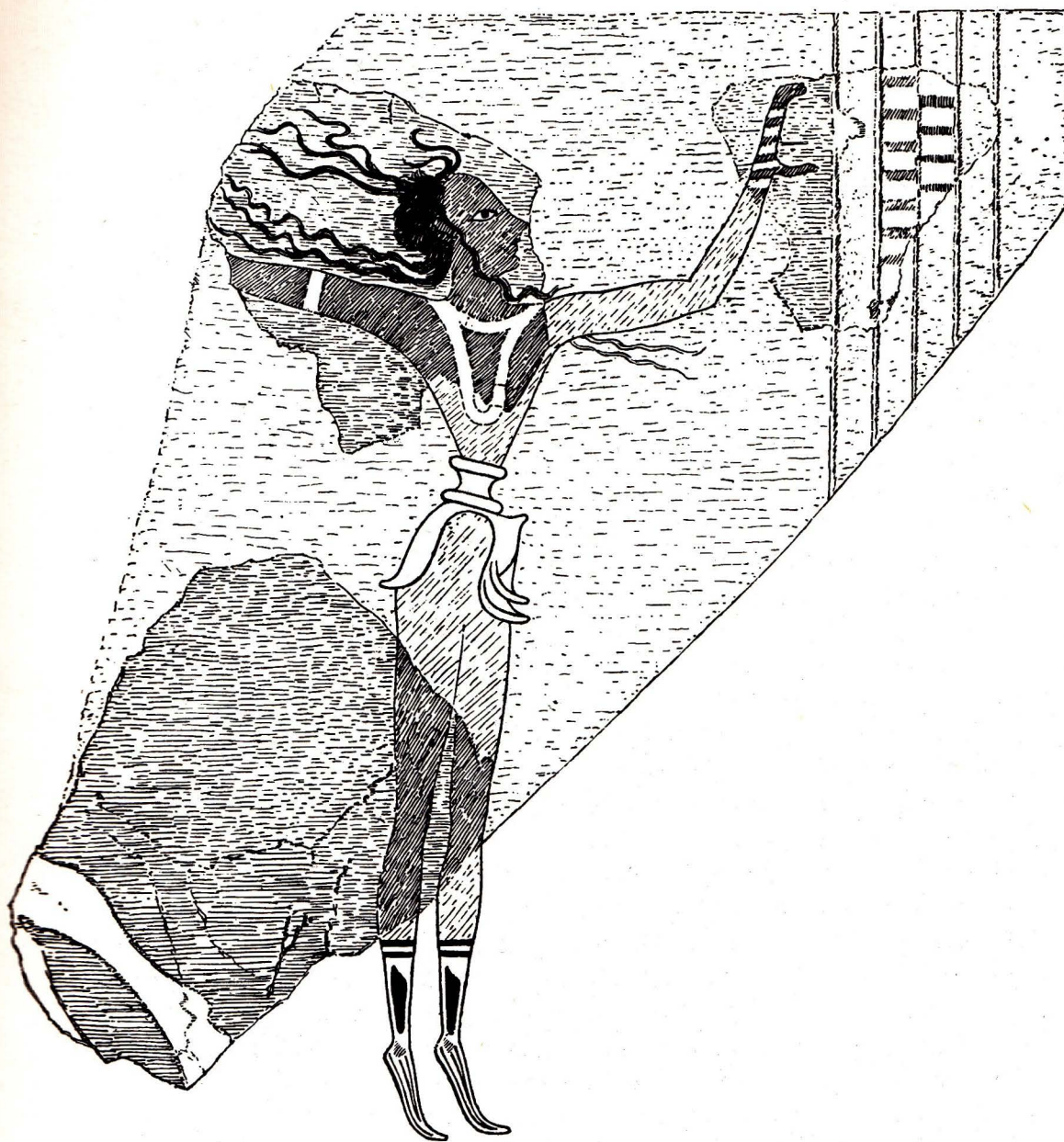


FIG. 148. MALE TAUREADOR IN THE ACT OF ALIGHTING.

mances of the Minoan cow-boys, the aim of which was rather the catching of wild or half-wild animals. That girls actually took part in this more practical