

accuracy of detail, that at a distance they might be taken for living beings, were it not that the vultures hovering round them too surely testify that they are nothing but corpses. At the same time, hundreds of heads are displayed before the royal palace; and the people pass by, totally indifferent to these scenes, which indeed are too common to cause either astonishment or any other strong feeling. Children may be seen amusing themselves near the victims, playing, as it were, with the dead; as for the populace, a hecatomb of human victims is so common a thing, especially since the accession of the new king, that it has ceased to attract even a passing observation.

‘However, there are executions which really do interest them, owing to their extraordinary cruelty.

‘The different modes of immolation prevalent in Dahomey vary according to the caprice and wicked ingenuity of the executioners. One of the most horrible is, certainly, the practice of nailing to a stake fixed in the ground one or more men by the feet, ordering at the same time that no food shall be given them. Exposed to the heat of the sun by day and to the dew at night, they generally die on the third day, while the curious spectators amuse themselves watching the convulsive agonies of the wretched creatures. These atrocious scenes often last several months together.’

### The Tacksman.

THERE are some real gems of descriptive narrative in Dr. Macleod's "Reminiscences of a Highland Parish"—now appearing in "Good Words." Take the following:—

I only know one surviving gentleman Tacksman belonging to the period of which I write, and he is ninety years of age, though in the full enjoyment of his bodily health and mental faculties. About forty years ago, when inspecting his cattle, he was accosted by a pedestrian with a knapsack on his back, who addressed him in a language which was intended for Gaelic. The tacksman, judging him to be a foreigner, replied in French, which met no response but a shake of the head, the tacksman's French being probably as bad as the tourist's Gaelic. The Highlander then tried Latin, which kindled a smile of surprise, and drew forth an immediate reply. This was interrupted by the remark that English would probably be more convenient for both parties. The tourist, who turned out to be an Oxford student, laughing heartily at the interview, gladly accepted the invitation of the tacksman to accompany him to his thatched home, and share his hospitality. He was surprised, on entering "the room," to see a small library in the humble

apartment. "Books here!" he exclaimed, as he looked over the shelves. "Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Shakespeare—what! Homer, too?" The farmer, with some pride, begged him to look at the Homer. It had been given as a prize to himself when he was a student at the University. My old friend will smile as he reads these lines, and will wonder how I heard the story.

It was men like these who supplied the Highlands with clergy, physicians, lawyers, and the army and navy with many of their officers. It is not a little remarkable that the one island of Skye, for example, should have sent forth from her wild shores since the beginning of the last wars of the French revolution, 21 lieutenant-generals and major-generals; 48 lieutenant-colonels; 600 commissioned officers; 10,000 soldiers; 4 governors of colonies; 1 governor-general; 1 chief baron of England; and 1 judge of the Supreme Court of Scotland. I remember the names of 61 officers being enumerated, who, during "the war," had joined the army or navy from farms which were visible from one hill-top in "the Parish." These times have now passed away. The Highlands furnish few soldiers or officers. Even the educated clergy are becoming few.

One characteristic of these Tacksmen which more than any other forms a delightful reminiscence of them was their remarkable kindness to the poor. There was hardly a family which had not some man or woman who had seen better days, for their guest, during weeks, months, perhaps years. These forlorn ones might have been very distant relations, claiming that protection which a drop of blood never claimed in vain; or former neighbours, or the children of those who were neighbours long ago; or, as it often happened, they might have had no claim whatever upon the hospitable family, beyond the fact that they were utterly destitute, yet could not be treated as paupers, and had in God's Providence been cast on the kindness of others, like waves of the wild sea breaking at their feet. Nor was there anything "very interesting," about such objects of charity. One old gentleman beggar I remember, who used to live with friends of mine for months, was singularly stupid, often bad-tempered. A decayed old gentlewoman, again, who was an inmate for years in one house, was subject to fits of great depression, and was by no means entertaining. Another needy visitor used to be accompanied by a female servant. When they departed after a sojourn of a few weeks, the servant was generally laden with wool, clothing, and a large allowance of tea and sugar, contributed by the hostess for the use of her mistress, who thus obtained supplies from different families during summer which kept herself and her red-haired domestic comfortable in their small hut during the winter. "Weel, weel," said the worthy host, as he saw the pair depart, "it's a puir situation that