

hands horses' tails, which they flourished as they spoke, while a deafening music served as accompaniment. But it must not be supposed that the recital of their poem was gone through without interruption. As the deeds which formed the subject of the drama was fresh in the memory of the audience, it occasionally happened that the honour of the victory would be attributed to the female troops or to the male army. Whereupon, those among the spectators who thought themselves reflected upon by the remarks of the poet, would rise up in fury to appeal to the king, while the opposite party pressed forward in their turn to defend their rights thus called in question. In the midst of the uproar the chanters came to a full stop, and the scene assumed an aspect of stormy vivacity and indescribable animation; thousands of disputants raised their voices and expressed their sentiments with the liveliest gestures, without, however, stirring from their places while the prince and those about him, as well as the disinterested spectators, awaited in tranquillity the subsidence of the tumult. When the king had been sufficiently amused by this storm of words, he made a sign, and on an instant, at the sound of a drum, order was restored. If after that anyone proceeded to raise his voice, a beat of the drum was sufficient to impose silence upon him, and the chanters resumed their recital at the point where the interruption had occurred.

The representation over, the king made presents to the poet and the chanters. Subsequently the grand cabeceras ranged themselves before the monarch, leaving between themselves and his majesty a semicircle of about ten metres' extent; and kneeling there, they addressed discourses to him during another two or three hours. At last the king broke up the assembly and retired to his palace.

He gives a minute and harrowing description of those scenes of human sacrifice, which have excited so much deep and just indignation in the civilized world:—

It so happened, one day towards the end of December, that I took a rather long afternoon excursion through the deserted part of the city. On our return, passing close by the royal palace, we found the roads blocked up by reason of a fete given by the king to the people. King Greer was having a great exhibition of his riches. Nearly fifteen thousand women, all in new dresses, carried in procession round the palace the treasures of the monarch. The procession lasted from morning till night, and the roads through which it passed were closed to the public. Having gazed for some hours at this extraordinary spectacle, we wanted to return home, but found ourselves obliged to go round the palace to gain the shortest road.

As we entered the parade ground, I perceived at a distance what appeared to be a

number of forked gibbets, from which hung bodies I supposed to be animals, never dreaming they might be men. In this uncertainty I drew nearer, and when I noticed that the legs were as long as the bodies, I comprehended that they were men who had been sacrificed. I cannot tell you what a shudder came over me at the spectacle. My first impulse was to clench my trembling hands and cry out with indignation, "Where is the vengeance of God that it slumbers so!" Then turning angrily to my guide, "Why," said I, "have you brought me here? I never thought I should see so horrible a sight!" "Nor I either," he replied, "for I knew nothing about it; but there is no other way for us to go." We continued our route, getting along as fast as we could, but the hideous spectacle was constantly recurring. Drawing near one enclosure, we were nearly suffocated by the stench of the dead bodies heaped up there, which they had not taken the trouble to bury. Vultures in thousands, dogs, pigs, and wolves, roamed around, allured by the hideous banquet prepared for them. The roofs of the houses are covered with the relics which the birds of prey have deposited on them. Strange to say, my guide, who was quite aware of the customs of Mahomey, and had nothing to do but idle about the streets all day, was not aware that these bodies, which had been killed two days ago, were still there, he was certainly ignorant of the fact, for he had positive orders not to let me go near any place wherein the dead were left exposed. And so, for the length of a week, I did not pass again before the royal palace, because decapitations were taking place every night.

"Possibly, you think I have already delayed you too long amidst this fearful charnel house; but truth compels me to lay aside all consideration for the delicacy of your feelings, and I must say one word more on the subject of human sacrifices. During the night these butcheries take place, no one is allowed to go through the streets from evening till next morning; if any one is found doing so, he is beaten with clubs. Only companies of musicians wander about singing doleful songs. Towards midnight, a discharge of artillery announces the beginning of the executions. The victims are led up to the square, twenty-four or thirty at a time. Every avenue of respiration is closed, and they are deprived of life by pressure on the breast. The termination of the slaughter is notified by cannon-shots. Some of the dead bodies are hung by the feet to the gibbets already mentioned between two sacks filled, it is said, with mangled limbs; whilst others are dressed up in symbolic costumes by parties skilled in the business, and placed on triumphal arches, standing or sitting, according to the part they have to represent. Some appear to be playing musical instruments, others are made to assume a soldier-like bearing, others are theatrical in their attitude; but all is arranged with such