

cause I will have no more nasty lessons to learn.

'Do not flatter yourself, Ralph,' replied his mother: you will still have lessons to learn.—The only difference will be that you will say them to me, instead of to Miss Woods.'

The children retired into a corner, and talked over this wonderful news in low voices, while their mother prepared tea; she had already dismissed the little maid-of-all-work who had been wont to share her labours. Then, when all was ready, the family assembled quietly round the table. The children ate with their usual appetite, and a mirthful word or laugh would occasionally break out, notwithstanding the shade of gloom which the manner of the parents threw upon them. Mrs. Curling poured out a cup of tea for her husband, which he drank almost unconsciously, but tasted no food. She herself took nothing.

As the evening advanced, joy-bells filled the frozen atmosphere with music, and people hurried to and fro, making their purchases; but the bankrupt's shop remained dark and joyless, and in the neat parlour behind, the parents, their little ones soundly asleep in their beds above, sat together over the warming fire, and imagined all manner of dismal objects in its red recesses. Yet it was a night on which the general world is glad—it was Christmas Eve!

(To be continued.)

## NEW WORKS.

Autobiography of James Silk Buckingham; including his Voyages, Travels, Adventures, Speculations, Successes, and Failures.

### SPANISH SERENADE.

One of the most interesting incidents which I remember during our stay at Santiago di Compostella, was that of a Spanish serenade, one of the last relics of the old romantic days of Spanish gallantry and intrigue. Not far from our place of lodging was a spacious mansion, evidently the abode of some person of note, the front of which was perfectly visible to us from our windows. About midnight, when most of our party were buried in profound sleep, the sound of a fine voice accompanied by a guitar awoke me from my slumbers. I hastened to the window where I was soon joined by others, and we were richly rewarded for this interruption of our vigils by the sight we beheld.

Before the front of this mansion was a party of minstrels and choristers, about a dozen in number, all in the ancient Spanish costume, the principal one of the group being dressed in white satin (for it was bright moonlight which enabled us to see the picture in detail) with slashed hose and jacket in scarlet relief, a broad-brimmed slouch hat, turned up in front by a diamond loop and a graceful plume of white feathers, having round his neck, suspended by a light blue ribbon, a guitar, and over his shoulder and waist a blue scarf, with a steel-hilted dress sword. It was this hero of the party whom we heard singing in a fine voice and with rich accompaniments, and ever and anon the choristers joined in to repeat the refrain.

Presently there appeared at one of the upper windows an elderly looking dame, such as we should picture as a duenna; and after certain apparent scoldings and threatenings, to some one within as well as to the serenaders without, she vanished. In a few moments afterwards a young lady with a black veil thrown over her head, but without cap or bonnet, opened the casement, and kissing her hand to the innamorato below, let fall a rope-ladder, three or four feet of which rested on the ground, so that the musicians speedily pulled it out a little distance from the front wall of the house, fastened its ends into the ground, by some means with which they were already provided; and in a minute or two of time, the lover, unsinging his guitar, and handing it to one of his companions, mounted by the ladder with wonderful agility, gave the young lady in the window several hearty kisses, and descended still more rapidly than he had gone up; when the whole party suddenly dispersed, as if apprehensive that some pursuit would be made, or some vengeance inflicted. With the exception, however, of considerable scolding and vituperation within the house, and a number of persons moving about with lights in their hands, all went off quietly, there being scarcely any persons walking in the streets at this late hour of the night, so that soon after the silence was profound. The whole scene was perfectly dramatic, and such as I have subsequently witnessed on the stage; but since then—now "sixty years since"—the costume and manners of the Spaniards have greatly changed, and in Spain, as in most other countries of Europe, the most striking characteristics have generally disappeared.

### THE LOCUST SHOAL.

The easterly gale at length moderated in force, but continued to blow from the same quarter for several days, so that our progress in beating windward, always at the rate of the slowest sailors in the fleet, was very slight. At length the wind shifted to the south east, and then south, with a suffocating heat, this being the sirocco of the Levant; and blowing over the great Libyan and Numidian deserts, comes charged with hot and sulphurous vapours, causing a most disagreeable sensation of a trifling and oppressive kind. On the third day after this

shift of wind, and when we were well up abreast of Sicily, but nearer to the African shore, we were surprised one morning at seeing all the headmost vessels of the fleet arrested in their course by some obstacle which impeded the progress of each ship as she came up with it, till the entire convoy formed an almost straight line. On looking over the ship's side, there was seen a mass of thick brown matter, which it was difficult to sail through with all canvas spread, it appearing to be between consistency of oil, and tar, or melted butter and honey. Buckets full of it were drawn up on deck for inspection, but all we could perceive was that it was some animal matter in a state of decay, and emitting a most disagreeable odour. Sending the buckets deeper and deeper, however, by attaching weights to their bottom, so as to bring up some of the lower strata, we perceived the legs and wings and half-putrid bodies, of brown locusts, in a less advanced stage of decomposition than the brown oily mass of the surface; and we concluded of course that the whole mass was composed of the same materials. Desirous of ascertaining the extent of the space occupied by it, I went to the fore-topmast cross-trees with a glass, and sweeping the horizon ahead and on each side of us, I perceived that it extended as far as the eye could reach, east, north and south, which presented one solid and unbroken mass of smooth brown surface, while to the west the open sea presented the deep blue which distinguishes the waters of the Mediterranean. The conclusion was, that some vast flight of locusts, passing from Africa to Europe, had encountered a contrary wind in their passage, and had fallen, exhausted, into the sea, and were there gradually decaying in the state in which we found them.

Such flights of locusts have from time to time been recorded in history, as marking the devastation everywhere caused by their numbers. In the year 593, a famine was caused in Turkey and Persia by their consumption of the fruits and grain of the fields. In 677, Syria and Mesopotamia was overrun with them. 852, immense swarms of them took their flight from the eastern regions into the west, flying with such a sound that they might be mistaken for birds: they destroyed all vegetables, not sparing the bark of trees or the thatch of houses; and they devoured the corn so rapidly as to destroy on a computation, a hundred and forty acres in a day. Their daily progress was about twelve miles; and their movements appeared to have been regulated by kings or leaders, who flew first and settled on the spot which was to be visited the next day at the same hour by the whole legion; their movement always commencing at sunrise. After traversing the continent of Europe, they were driven at last into the Baltic Sea, where, being thrown back on the shores, they caused a dreadful pestilence by their putrefaction. In 1271, all the corn fields around Milan were destroyed by locusts; in 1339, all those of Lombardy; and in 1541, such incredible hosts of them afflicted Wallachia and Moldavia, that they darkened the sun by their numbers, and ravished all the fruits of the earth. Volney gives a striking description of their numbers, and the devastation they committed in Syria and Palestine; but the most remarkable account on record, in modern times, is that of a gentleman of Poonah, who was witness to an immense army of locusts which ravaged the Mahratta country in India. The column they composed was said to have extended five hundred miles in length; and so compact was their body when on the wing, that like an eclipse they completely hid the sun, so that no shadow was cast by any object, and some lofty tombs at a short distance were rendered quite invisible.—What added the horror of the scene was, that they were of the red species of locusts, so that clustering upon the trees, after they had stripped them of their foliage, they had turned the verdant green into a bloody hue. The second chapter of the book of the prophet Joel, describing these hosts, says emphatically:—"the land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness;" and again, "The sun and the moon shall be dark before them, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."

And, among his adventures, a gallant and hard-fought battle with

### THE PIRATE.

At length the pirate came within hail, stem on towards us, as we lay with our courses up, and all sail furled except the topsails, jib, and spanker, just to keep the ship under steerage way. The Greek pilot hailed the pirate, and made him drop astern or be prepared to receive a broadside. No answer was returned, though his decks were crowded with men. A second challenge was given but with no effect—when the pirate, luffing up his vessel under our lee-quarter, with an evident intention to board us, we fired a broadside of round, grape, and canister right into his decks, with a volley of musketry as the same time. His mainmast instantly fell by the board, with a horrible crash and killed and wounded in its fall perhaps as many as our broadside had done—the screams and cries of the dying and wounded were most pitiable to hear. After a moment's pause, the remaining part of the pirate's crew got out their sweeps, and came so close to us that their grapnel irons were twice hooked in our main-chains; and but for the intripidity and vigilance of the carpenter, who stood at the gangway with

his well-sharpened axe, prepared for such an emergency, and who twice cut away the lanyards of their grapnels, so as to render them useless, our decks would have been swept by their overwhelming numbers and all hands perhaps butchered.

The excitement of the scene entirely restored my strength, and I jumped from the capstan, where I had been held fast until the first broadside was discharged; and I felt as if I had the strength of twenty men—so that I had all my faculties perfect for the command. Foiled in his attempt to board us alongside the pirate dropped astern, and was now joined by another vessel of about the same size and number of men, who came up fresh to the combat, while our own crew was greatly exhausted, by perpetual watching before the contest began. A couple of broadsides followed up quickly, caused her so much damage as to induce her to sheer off also, and we were beginning to hope for the conquest; but at this moment, a twelve pound shot; fired from the second vessel, entered between the timbers in the state room, in which my wife and child had taken shelter below, and cutting away the lanyards of the cot in which the child was lying, the shot, cot, and child came rolling together at her mother's feet!—She caught the infant in her arms, with a piercing shriek, which I heard with great dismay on deck, as I thought one or both must have been killed; but upon going down I found them terrified but not hurt. My wife however, immediately recovered her presence of mind, and, finding I was myself safe, thanked heaven for our deliverance. I returned immediately to the deck, and found the first of the pirates now assuming a new position, and using her sweeps to approach us under the stern, for the purpose of boarding us over the taffrail. Fortunately instead of this being our weakest point, as it too often is in merchant ships especially, it was our strongest, for we had here two long nine-pounders, stern-chasers, which were charged to the muzzle with round, grape and double-chain shot; and superintending myself the discharge of these, we poured their contents right down on her crowded deck, and must have committed great slaughter, from the cries which immediately rose from the wounded. Unfortunately, in the discharge, one of the guns leaped out of its carriage, and in its recoil gave me so severe a wound in the thigh that I was completely disabled from moving, and had to assume my original position on the capstan as before. The pirate retaliated by a volley of musketry, the greater part of which entered the cabin windows, from her being so close under our stern; but just at the moment of this discharge, my wife was in the act of removing herself and her child from the state room where the cannon-ball had entered, to the after cabin, which she had to cross; and though we counted sixteen musket-balls in the bulkhead by which they passed, not a hair of the head of either of them was hurt! In the meantime, the pirate under our stern had received so much injury in her hull from the discharge of our stern guns, the shot of which had gone through her bottom, that she sunk immediately under our quarter, and all the crew perished by drowning; for it was impossible to attempt to save them without harbouring the very men who would have cut our throats the moment they were in safety.—The second pirate then put out her oars, and swept away from us with the utmost speed, leaving us the victory, but in a state of such exhaustion and helplessness, that we were quite unequal to any new evolution.

The Crimea: its Towns, Inhabitants and Social Customs. By a Lady.

### SERFS IN THE CRIMEA.

The condition of serfs in the Crimea, as well as other parts of Russia, differs, of course, according to the character and disposition of their masters. Many are ruled with an iron hand; harsh words, threats, and even blows, being of no common occurrence. Others again, seem to be perfectly happy in their servitude; and having no ideas beyond their own home, are quite contented with their lot. As soon as children attain the age of eight or nine years, the master decides what trade they are to follow.—Some of the smallest boys are fixed upon as lacqueys, coachmen, or postillions; and the rest are brought up to be stable-boys, cooks, carpenters, gardeners, or any useful employment about the property. In many large establishments, where the families of the household servants are too numerous for these occupations, some of them learn shoemaking; and many are allowed to hire themselves out to others, upon paying a certain sum annually to their master. With the exception of some of the superior household servants, whose ideas are a little more refined, the style of living of the Russian peasant is little removed from that of the brute beasts. Men, women, and children occupy one room, and eat out of one dish; they never take off their clothes, from one week's end to the other, except when they go to the bath; and they sleep on the top of their stoves, on the floor, or in the open air, according to the season or as chance may require. Their chief food consists of a sour soup, called Borshtch, made of sour salted cabbage and a bit of fat bacon; a thick pudding of millet, which they eat with milk; and coarse black bread, made of rye.—During their feast, which they zealously keep, and which extend over a great portion of the

year, they substitute linseed-oil for the bacon and milk. Butcher meat is a delicacy only very rarely enjoyed. Drunkenness is a vice very common, both among men and women; and during their holidays, all their little savings are spent on wine, or the brandy of the country, called Votka. You hardly ever meet with one who is able to read, nor do their priests, who are themselves ignorant men, help to improve their condition. The Russian peasant is gay and light-hearted, sings and dances whenever he has an opportunity, and takes his floggings as a matter of course. He has great imitative powers; and, in proper hands makes a skillful and active workman. I have often looked with astonishment at the masterly way in which he uses the axe, of all instruments the most unwieldy; yet he can accomplish with it alone, what most of our carpenters would require a whole box of instruments to do as neatly.

The condition of serfs in Russia is very different from that of slaves, as they formerly existed in the West Indies, and still exist in the Southern provinces of the United States; and if the laws in their favour were strictly put in execution, they would be in a condition equal, to say the least, to that of the free peasants in many of the countries of Europe. The serf cannot be sold separately from the land to which he is attached;—thus families cannot be broken up or dispersed. Again the master does not possess the right of punishing his serf according to his caprice, but must apply to the local police, stating the offence of which he has been guilty, and chastisement is then inflicted according to the nature of the case. In years of scarcity, and in case of disease or old age, the master is obliged to support his serfs, who are thus freed from all anxiety about the future.—Unfortunately, there are many ways of evading, to a certain extent, these laws; and the master, from his social position and by means of his superior wealth, is generally able to influence, in favour of his own interests or wishes, the very persons who are charged with the duty of putting the law in force. In short, as I have remarked before, the condition of the serf depends, in a great measure, upon the character and disposition of the master, modified, to a certain extent, by the influence of public opinion.—When a proprietor does not himself reside on his property, but places it under the management of a steward the lot of the serf is sometimes the most unfortunate of any, which can befall him. The steward, or overseer, who is rarely sufficiently paid for the work he has to do, after forwarding to his employer the regular income derived from the estate, seldom fails to put aside a considerable sum for himself, nor does he scruple much as to the means he uses to wring this extra portion from the peasants.

The Golden Colony; or, Victoria in 1854. By George Henry Wathen.

### BUSH FIRES—THE SIMOOM, &c

I have already alluded to the wild country of the Cape Otway Promontory; to its steep shelving valleys, its beetling precipices, its dense forest of gigantic trees, its sun-proof shades and tangled mazes: this is the district traversed.—The journey was commenced about a fortnight after this forest, and indeed almost the entire colony, was desolated by the most terrific fires ever known in Victoria, which committed such ravages that the day (February 6, 1851) has ever since been memorable in the annals of the colony under the name of "Black Thursday." "Brush fires" are very common during summer. They originate from the spread of a camp-fire, from a lighted match carelessly thrown on the dry grass, or some other accident. Once kindled, the fire advances till it encounters a road or river, or is beaten back by the wind.—To avoid such dangers, the settlers burn a circle around their huts and homesteads; so that when the fire reaches the burnt ring, it ceases from want of fuel. These conflagrations generally occur when the North, or hot wind, is blowing from that great natural furnace, the central Australian desert. The hot wind is in fact the simoom of Australia, and results apparently from the same cause as that of Africa, namely, radiation from the scorched lands of the interior. It rarely lasts an entire day, and is always followed by a cool South wind. Sometimes there is a mere momentary pause between the gale from the North and that which follows from the South. The approach of the hot winds is indicated many hours before it arrives by a rapid fall of the barometer. It usually commences between 7 and 10 in the morning, and lasts till the afternoon, commonly subsiding at sunset, if not previously. During its prevalence, the cloud of dust that hangs over Melbourne may be seen from the mountains thirty miles distant. In winter the North becomes a cool wind. The fatal "Black Thursday" occurred after a long season for heat and draught had rendered everything dry and combustible. The hot wind blew a hurricane.—The flames swept far and wide, leaping over all ordinary barriers. Every forest was on fire at once. Firebrands were blown over wide rivers and kindled new conflagrations on the opposite shores. During that day many hundred square leagues were devastated by flames which travelled with incredible speed and resistless fury.—The progress of such fires are exactly described by the vivid imagery of the Hebrew Prophet:—"The land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolated wilderness."