

kidnappers who walk the 'Change and other parts of the town in order to seduce people who want services, and young folks crost in love, and under an unsuccessful mind to go beyond the seas, getting so much a head of masters of ships and merchants who go over for every wretch they trepan into this misery.'

Others, too, there were among these 'white slaves' sharing their hard fate and fare, their desperate and hopeless condition, men who had been in their time in a good social position in England, but who, by some strange and unexpected reverse of fortune, an unsuccessful conspiracy, a lost battle, had been placed at the mercy of the ruling powers. Nor these alone; many others, upon whom sentence had been passed, found themselves doomed to the life-long misery of the plantations; and the gallant soldier, the desperate adventurer, the deluded emigrant, the hardened criminal, all met a common fate.

There was also a regular trade in ordinary household servants, whose condition was superior to that of the Redemptioner, in that it was to some extent regulated by special enactments. Conditional servitude, indeed, under indentures or covenants, had long existed in Virginia. Men were transported there at an expense of eight pounds or so, and were sometimes sold for forty, or fifty, or even sixty pounds. The supplying of 'white servants' became a regular business; and a class of dealers arose in England, nicknamed 'Spirits,' who sought to persuade young people to embark for America as for a land of plenty. In fact, they were sold in England, to be resold in Virginia.

In the colonies, the average price, about the year 1672, for white servants bound for five years was ten pounds or so; but for negroes, twenty to twenty-five pounds. According to the Virginia State Laws, these servants, after their term had expired, could not legally leave their employment without their masters' certificate. If, however, they did so, any one harbouring them or giving them shelter was fined thirty pounds' weight of tobacco for every day and night they were so harboured.

Any pursuit after runaway servants was made at the public expense. If the master would not pay the charges, the local authorities sold or hired out the servant, when captured, to recoup themselves.

Another regulation was that no minister should marry any servants unless he had a certificate from both masters that they fully consented. If he disregarded this prohibition, and performed the ceremony, he was liable to a penalty of ten thousand pounds' weight of tobacco.

Time went by, and at last, though very gradually, public opinion in America took a healthier and a higher tone. The condition of the Redemptioner and his fellow-sufferers began to be inquired into, and in some respects ameliorated. It was enacted in Maryland, in 1817, that there should be in future an official in every port to register the apprenticeship of servants, or the engagement of Redemptioners and other emigrants. Unless drawn up and secured by this official, no agreement was considered binding. Minors were not allowed to be sold, excepting by their parents or next of kin, an exception that seems odd, to say the least of it. Certainly,

the 'incurrigible' lads and lasses of those days must have been much more readily dealt with than they are at present. There is, in fact, a *cause célèbre* upon record in the year 1743, in which one James Annesley claimed the earldom of Anglesey from his uncle, who, he alleged, had caused him to be kidnapped and sold at thirteen years of age. He gained the case and the estates, but did not press for the title, a barren honour, which the uncle continued to hold until he died.

The new regulations were in the main beneficial, though they were, of course, often evaded in various ways, chiefly by bribing the Government official. Failing this, they were now and again openly broken through.

As with the later trade in negroes, the profits were too large for the traffic to be lightly relinquished, and it was not till the beginning of the present century that it eventually died out through the spread of free emigration.

Black slavery has always had its defenders, and no doubt white servitude was not less fortunate. Yet it seems amazing that such a state of things could ever have been permitted in a civilised country, and that custom and law, both in England and America, could ever have promoted and sanctioned the institution of the Redemptioners.

#### CURIOUS SHOWERS.

IN August last year the inhabitants of Bjelina, in Bosnia, were treated to a rather unusual meteorological phenomenon in the shape of a shower of fish which accompanied a severe thunder-storm from the north-west. The strangest part of the occurrence was that the fish were alive and resembled whittings, and that they were caught in the gutters by the children, and brought in by wondering peasants from the fields, meadows, and high-roads. Possibly, had there been scarcity in the neighbourhood, this curious shower would have been hailed as a direct intervention of Providence on behalf of the inhabitants; but, as there seems to have been no distress, there is no knowing what they thought of it, though it goes without saying that they attributed it to any cause but a natural one. As a matter of fact, the visitation, though comparatively rare, is explicable on perfectly natural grounds. The fish were undoubtedly taken up into the air by a water-spout, carried along by atmospheric currents, and dropped, as it happened, over the village of Bjelina. They had not been held 'in suspension,' so to speak, for long, because the fish were alive when they fell to the ground.

But mere distance from a large expanse of water does not count, for these fish-showers are known to have occurred many hundreds of miles away from the nearest coast. In South America, some years ago, a tract of country forty-three miles square was found thick with fish; and—to omit a host of other such instances abroad—in England on at least one occasion some pasture-land a considerable distance from the sea was found strewn with bushels of small fishes. We know ourselves of a shower of fish-bones which

fell only last year in the heart of Wales. Such showers are frequent enough at sea, and every sailor can tell of their occurrence. Mariners can also tell of showers of dust, of small animals, or of plants falling upon their vessels thousands of miles out on the ocean. These are explained on much the same principle as the fish-showers on land, with the substitution of a sandspout for a waterspout.

Mud-showers and frog-showers, of which we hear rather frequently, are caused in the same way. M. Peltier has put a frog-shower on record as having happened within his own experience. He speaks of seeing the frogs fall on the roofs of the houses, and rebound from thence on to the pavement below. A mud-shower occurred along the Union Pacific Railway at Onaga on the 4th of April 1892. The rain, we are assured, commenced early in the day, and soon the south and east sides of all the houses were covered with yellow clay. A Union Pacific train which ran through the storm had its windows covered; and the headlight was so completely plastered that the light was shut in, and the train ran in darkness into Rossville, where the mud had to be scraped off. As far east as Topeka the windows showed that the edge of the mud-storm had extended this far. It is said to have been even more severe fifty miles north-west.

Blood rain and black rain are only varieties of this phenomenon. Of the latter, we hear nothing worth speaking of nowadays; but an almost historic shower of this sort fell at Montreal in the earlier part of this century, and enveloped the then youthful city in a black pall, which must have been worse than a prime London fog, seeing that it gave the inhabitants the idea that the last day had come, or was at least on the point of coming. 'Blood' rain is caused by the presence of infinitely little plants, animalcules, or minerals in the globules. In one instance of a shower that fell at Bristol and in the Bristol Channel, the analytical examination showed that the red colour was due to ivy-berry seeds. In medieval times, blood rain was a prodigy; in the East it was connected with the belief that man was produced from blood that fell from heaven.

It was a portent as remarkable as the 'bloody host,' which, while it flourished, probably caused the death of more Jews in this country than any other individual superstition directed against that people. It is described as 'an appearance of blood flowing from bread when bitten;' but it manifested itself in other articles of food besides bread, and sometimes seemed to drop from the air. It will be remembered by historical readers that while Alexander was besieging Tyre, this prodigy and the other one of 'blood rain' occurred in one day, much to the consternation of the soldiers.

More curious than blood rain in regard to the mere colour was the red, violet, and grass-green shower which fell in the south of France many years ago, and made a patchwork of the big lake, whereon its manifestation was the more noticeable. This shower, again, was caused by untold myriads of differently-coloured animalcules.

Spider-showers are another curiosity worthy of mention in this connection. The spiders are gossamers; and all those who have read White's

*Natural History of Selborne* will call to mind his description of the showers he observed. One of these, he tells us, continued for nearly a whole day, and the gossamers descended from a surprising height; for when one gentleman ascended a hill near at hand, some three hundred feet high, he found that the spiders were dropping from a region in the atmosphere that was still beyond the reach of his gaze. Dr Martin Lister named this aerial spider 'the bird,' from the facility with which it can traverse the air; and upon one occasion, when he observed a shower of them at York, he ascended to the top of the Minster, and found that even at that altitude he was still below their level—that they were descending from some region above that standpoint. Darwin, another observer of spider-showers, describes one which he saw in 1832, when on board the *Beagle*, at the mouth of the La Plata River, when the vessel was some sixty miles from land; and he seems to have been the first to notice that each parachute of gossamer carried a spider aeronaut, for he not only observed them arrive on board the ship, but he also saw them reproduce a new parachute, and on this frail bark launch forth again 'on the bosom of the palpitating air.'

These gossamer showers are great mysteries, and once seen, cannot very readily be forgotten; for the air on these occasions becomes literally crowded with the tiny parachutes mentioned, which are composed of a few threads of almost invisible gossamer, with a small but lively spider attached. This may be regarded as the most beautiful thing in strange showers.

The most marvellous, perhaps, is manifested in the way of hail-showers—that is, if we are to take for truth all we hear on this head. There is no reason in the world to doubt the assertion that hailstones, like rain, have been known to fall from a perfectly cloudless sky. But those of little faith may very well doubt the stories that have been told about the size of the stones themselves. Bluish hailstones weighing one hundred pounds each are said, by Count de Mezeray, to have fallen in Italy in the year 1510. Hailstones 'as big as a man's fist' are almost as common as potatoes. A storm that occurred in 1809 is said to have broken over two hundred thousand panes of glass in London alone; and in Hertfordshire, another storm is reported to have caused the death of several people. Blocks of ice weighing four and a half pounds fell at Cazorla, in Spain, on June 5, 1829; and in the south of France, in October 1844, other blocks fell which turned the scale at eleven pounds.

#### THE CHINESE BARBER.

THE services of the *teto-yen*, or Barber, are in constant request in China, and a much more extended and complicated process is gone through than is the case at our English hair-dresser's, whose operations are generally limited to hair-cutting and clean-shaving. Having settled his customer comfortably in his chair, the Chinese barber commences by scraping, not only the cheeks and chin of his victim, but also the whole of his head, with the exception of one spot