



A VISITATION OF LOCUSTS.



IN his work "Callista," Dr. Newman graphically describes the terrible destruction caused by a flight of locusts in Greece:

"Now they are rushing upon a considerable tract of that beautiful region.

The swarm grew and grew till it became a compact body, as much as a furlong square; yet it was but the vanguard of a series of similar hosts, formed one after another out of the hot mould or sand, rising into the air like clouds, enlarging into a dusky canopy, and then discharged against the fruitful plain. At length the huge, innumerable mass was put into motion, and began its career, darkening the face of day. As became an instrument of Divine power, it seemed to have no volition of its own; it was set off, it drifted with the wind, and thus made northwards, straight for Sicca. Thus they advanced, host after host, for a time wafted on the air, and gradually declining to the earth,

while fresh broods were carried over the first, and neared the earth, after a longer flight, in their turn. For twelve miles did they extend from front to rear, and their whizzing and hissing could be heard for six miles on every side of them. The bright sun, though hidden by them, illumined their bodies, and was reflected from their quivering wings; and as they heavily fell earthward, they seemed like the innumerable flakes of a yellow-coloured snow.

And like snow did they descend—a living carpet, or rather pall, upon fields, crops, gardens, copses, groves, orchards, vineyards, olive-woods, orangeries, palm plantations, and the deep forests, sparing nothing within their reach, and where there was nothing to devour, lying helpless in drifts, or crawling forward obstinately, as they best might, with the hope of prey. They could spare their hundred thousand soldiers twice or thrice over, and not miss them; their masses filled the bottoms of the ravines and hollow ways, impeding the traveller as



A PLAGUE OF GNATS.

he rode forward on his journey, and trampled by thousands under his horse-hoofs. In vain was all this overthrow and waste by the roadside; in vain their loss in river, pool, and watercourse. The poor peasants hastily dug pits and trenches as their enemy came on; in vain did they fill them from the wells or with lighted stubble. Heavily and thickly did the locusts fall; they were lavish of their lives; they choked the flame and the water which destroyed them the while, and the vast living, hostile armament still moved on.

They moved right on like soldiers in their ranks, stopping at nothing, and straggling for nothing. They carried a broad furrow or wheel all across the country, black and loathsome, while it was as green and smiling on each side of them and in front as it had been before they came. Before them, in the language of prophets, was a paradise, and behind them a desert. They are daunted by nothing; they surmount walls and hedges, and enter enclosed gardens or inhabited houses. A rare and experimental vineyard has been planted in a sheltered grove. The high winds of Africa will not commonly allow the light trellis or the slim pole; but here the lofty poplar of Campania has been possible, on which the vine-plant mounts so many yards into the air that the poor grape-gatherers bargain for a funeral pile and a tomb as one of the conditions of their engagement. The locusts have done what the winds and lightning could not do, and the whole promise of the vintage, leaves and all, is gone, and the slender stems are left bare.

There is another yard, less uncommon, but still tended with more than common care; each plant is kept within due bounds by a circular trench round it, and by upright canes on which it is to trail. In an hour the solicitude and long toil of the vine-dresser are lost, and his pride humbled. There is a smiling farm: another sort of vine, of remarkable cha-

racter, is found against the farm-house. This vine springs from one root, and has clothed and matted with its many branches the four walls. The whole of it is covered thick with long clusters, which another month will ripen. On every grape and leaf there is a locust. Into the dry caves and pits, carefully strewn with straw, the harvest men have (safely, as they thought just now) been lodging the far-famed African wheat. One grain or root shoots up into ten, twenty, fifty, eighty, nay, three or four hundred stalks: sometimes the stalks have two ears apiece, and these shoot into a number of lesser ones. These stores are intended for the Roman populace, but the locusts have been beforehand with them. The small patches of ground belonging to the poor peasants up and down the country, for raising the turnips, garlic, barley, water-melons, on which they live, are the prey of these glutton invaders as much as the choicest vines and olives.

Nor have they any reverence for the villa of the civic decurion or the Roman official. The neatly-arranged kitchen-garden, with its cherries, plums, peaches, and apricots, is a waste; as the slaves sit round in the kitchen in the first court, at their coarse evening meal, the room is filled with the invading force, and news comes to them that the enemy has fallen upon the apples and pears in the basement, and is at the same time plundering and sacking the preserves of quince and pomegranate, and revelling in the jars of precious oil of Cyprus and Mendes, in the store-rooms.

They come up to the walls of Sicca, and are flung against them into the ditch. Not a moment's hesitation or delay; they recover their footing; they climb up the wood or stucco; they surmount the parapet, or they have entered in at the windows, filling the apartments, and the most private and luxurious chambers—not one or two, like stragglers at forage or rioters after a victory, but in

order of battle, and with the array of an army. Choice plants or flowers about the *impluvia* and *xysti*, for ornament or refreshment—myrtles, oranges, pomegranates, the rose, and the carnation—have disappeared. They dim the bright marble of the walls and the gilding of the ceilings. They enter the triclinium in the midst of the banquet: they crawl over the viands, and spoil what they do not devour.

Onward, unrelaxed by success and by enjoyment, ever onward they go. A secret mysterious instinct keeps them together,

as if they had a king over them. They move along the floor in so strange an order that they seem to be a tessellated pavement themselves, and to be the artificial embellishment of the place; so true are their lines, and so perfect is the pattern they describe. Onward they go—to the market, to the temple sacrifices, to the bakers' stores, to the cookshops, to the confectioners', to the druggists'—nothing comes amiss to them; wherever man has aught to eat or drink, there are they, reckless of death, strong of appetite, certain of conquest."

THE BARBER OF BAGDAD.



IN the reign of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, of happy memory, lived in the City of Bagdad a celebrated barber of the name of Ali Sakal. He was so famous for a steady hand, and dexterity in his profession,

that he could shave a head, and trim a beard and whiskers, with his eyes blindfolded, without once drawing blood. There was not a man of any fashion at Bagdad who did not employ him; and such a run of business had he, that at length he became proud and insolent, and would scarcely ever touch a head whose master was not at least a Beg or an Aga.

Wood for fuel was always scarce and dear at Bagdad; and, as his shop consumed a great deal, the wood-cutters brought their loads to him in preference, almost sure of meeting with a ready sale. It happened one day, that a poor wood-cutter, new in his profession, and ignorant of the character of Ali Sakal, went to his shop, and offered him for sale a load of wood, which he had just brought from a considerable distance in the country, on his ass. Ali immediately

offered him a price, making use of these words, "*For all the wood that is upon the ass.*"

The wood-cutter agreed, unloaded his beast, and asked for the money. "You have not given me all the wood yet," said the barber; "I must have the pack-saddle (which is chiefly made of wood) into the bargain: that was our agreement."

"How!" said the other, in great amazement; "who ever heard of such a bargain? It is impossible."

In short, after many words and much altercation, the overbearing barber seized the pack-saddle, wood and all, and sent away the poor peasant in great distress. He immediately ran to the *cadi*, and stated his griefs: the *cadi* was one of the barber's customers, and refused to hear the case. The wood-cutter went to a higher judge: he also patronised Ali Sakal, and made light of the complaint. The poor man then appealed to the *mufti* himself; who, having pondered over the question, at length settled that it was too difficult a case for him to decide, no provision being made for it in the Koran; and therefore he must put up with his loss.

The wood-cutter was not disheartened;