

## Might We not Do the Same ?

MAY I venture to trespass upon the valuable space of the CHURCHMAN by referring to a matter that is much upon the hearts of many at the present time? I am quite aware that at the beginning of the War there was a strong feeling against using the word "Humiliation," for various reasons, but have we not arrived at a stage in this world-wide War when it would seem that these feelings should be a thing of the past ?

The other day I came across an extremely interesting incident—more—an historic fact, and because it seems to be at this juncture so much to the point, I will venture to ask to be allowed to quote it in full, in order that it may possibly come as a suggestion to those in authority, and serve as a powerful incentive to us as a Nation to do likewise :—

In parts of America, on several occasions, there have been plagues of grasshoppers—Rocky Mountain locusts. Farms were devastated, and ruin was widespread. Perhaps the worst visitation of this character was in the years 1873 to 1877. In 1873 a few Minnesota counties were affected. In 1874 it seemed to observers as if there were a thousand times as many of the destroying insects. Everything green in their track was destroyed ; trees, fields, gardens all were bare as in winter. A much larger portion of the state was involved.

In the spring of 1875 the locusts again descended on the fields and extended their operations to still other sections until the whole of Southern Minnesota was groaning under the visitation. An ineffective campaign of extermination was conducted. Efforts were made to kill the insects by coal oil, and a bounty was offered to boys who would gather locusts and take them to the appointed official of the county in which they lived.

The effect of the state law authorizing the payment of these bounties was thus vividly described in *The Saturday Evening Post* by one who was a locust-collector at the time :—

"With men and boys by the hundred chasing over the fields in every township in the southern part of the State and catching from a few pounds to several bushels of grasshoppers a day, the sum that the counties were called upon to pay soon became enormous. One county, Blue Earth, was on the rapid road to bankruptcy ; and now, instead of crying for aid to destroy the grasshoppers, its treasurer called for relief from those who were destroying the insects. An appeal was made to the Governor, asking that the law be suspended. He complied, for, although such immense quantities had been destroyed, apparently no headway was being made against the overwhelming hordes that came forth from the ground in increasing numbers every spring. They had so increased that they had covered and laid waste thirty-two counties. They had spread into Dakota, and northern Iowa was also being affected."

The observer who wrote these facts went on to say :—

"By the close of the summer of 1876 the situation was one almost to cause despair. But in the hope that something might result from a wider

discussion of the situation, Governor Pillsbury, of Minnesota, invited a conference of the governors of adjoining and nearby States. Accordingly, in October, 1876, the Governors of Iowa, Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, and Minnesota assembled at Omaha. Some noted entomologists were also present, on invitation, for it was thought that they might advance some plan for the destruction of the grasshoppers. This consultation, however, brought out little that was new. Every remedy that was suggested had already been tried—every remedy but one.

“When the conference was drawing to a close the Governor of Dakota suggested that a Day of Prayer be appointed, for possibly relief to the stricken State would come from a higher power than had yet been invoked. This thought was received lightly by some, though it found lodgment in the mind of Governor Pillsbury. But, apparently, the Council of Governors was profitless.”

In the meantime suffering among the farmers had become so acute that the legislature appropriated money for their relief, and the Governor issued an appeal for aid. That winter six thousand people were fed and clothed by the State.

The wonderful story of what followed is given in the words of the writer already quoted, who wrote after refreshing his memory by conference with the Hon. John S. Pillsbury, Governor of Minnesota at the time. He said :—

“This was the condition that prevailed in thirty-two counties of Minnesota, and which was extending into Dakota and Iowa, when the fourth winter of the plague of locusts came. Every means that could be devised for the destruction of the grasshoppers had been tried, yet they had steadily increased ; the actual suffering in the impoverished districts had been pointed out to the world, and relief had been given ; yet the conditions that confronted the afflicted State were unchanged. Millions upon millions of grasshoppers had perforated the earth the summer before, and therein planted their billions of eggs, which, with the genial warmth of an April sun, would hatch out little, hopping, devouring things, to swarm over the State and the adjoining States—and why not over the country ? As they had spread out from two or three to thirty-two counties, what could stay them from going on and devouring as many States ? Why might there not be 6,000,000 people to feed and clothe instead of 6,000 ?

“Everything else had been tried—would the prayers of the people avail when the work of their hands had gone for naught ? This was a question that the Governor was now asked to deliberate upon. Some ministers of the State began to importune him to issue a proclamation appointing a day for prayer throughout the State. He listened to them attentively and gave their proposition consideration. Finally, towards the spring, he made a proposal to some of the ministers.

“‘Get up a petition,’ said he, ‘setting forth just what it is that you propose, and have it general, and if it meets with my approval I will do as you wish.’

“This was done, and a petition from many of the ministers of the State, requesting that a day be appointed for fasting and prayer, was handed to the Governor.

“Upon this he decided to act, and a proclamation, of which the following is a copy, was issued :—

‘State of Minnesota, Executive Department,

‘St. Paul, April 9, 1877.

‘A general desire having been expressed by various religious bodies in this State, for an official designation of a day of fasting, humiliation, and

prayer, in view of the threatened continuation of the grasshopper scourge, I do hereby, in recognition of our dependence upon the power and wisdom of Almighty God, appoint Thursday, the twenty-sixth day of April, instant, to be observed for such purpose throughout the State; and I invite the people, on the day thus set apart, to withdraw from their ordinary pursuits, and in their homes and places of public worship, with contrite hearts, to beseech the mercy of God for the sins of the past and His blessing upon the worthier aims of the future.

'In the shadow of the locust plague, whose impending renewal threatens desolation of the land, let us humbly invoke, for the efforts we make in our defence, the guidance of that hand which alone is adequate to stay "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day." Let us pray for deliverance from an affliction which robs the earth of her bounties, and in behalf of the sufferers therefrom let us plead for comfort to the sorrowful, healing for the sick, succour for the perishing, and larger faith and love for all who are heavily laden.

'Let us, moreover, endeavour to deserve a new prosperity by a new realization of the opportunity vouchsafed us, and a new consecration to those things which make for the well-being of men and the glory of God.

'J. S. PILLSBURY, *Governor.*'

"Of course, this attracted widespread attention and caused much comment. In the State, the Governor's action was in general heartily endorsed, though a few so-called liberal leagues ridiculed his proclamation. One member of such a society wrote to the Governor and asked him carefully to take note of the condition of the grasshoppers the day before the Day of Prayer, and again the day after, to see the effect of the invocations which would go up from all the churches.

"Among the God-fearing people the proclamation created a profound impression. Though not prepared to hazard an opinion as to the probable effect of their united prayers, they resolved to observe the day in the most devout manner. I well remember hearing one minister read the proclamation from the pulpit, and then in solemn tones exhort his people to assemble in the house of worship on the twenty-sixth day of April, and there lend their voices to the general appeal for relief from an evil against which the power of man was helpless.

"In recalling that day, recently, Governor Pillsbury said: 'I never saw a stiller day in Minneapolis.'

"On this day all denominations forgot their creeds for the moment, and the prayers of Protestant and Roman Catholic mingled in one fervent appeal for relief from the visible enemy that was destroying their State.

"The twenty-seventh day of April, the day following the Day of Prayer, the sun shone clear and hot over Minnesota, and an almost summerlike warmth penetrated the moist earth, down to the larvæ of the myriads of grasshoppers. Quickened by this genial warmth, the young locusts crawled to the surface in numbers that made the countless swarms of the preceding summer seem insignificant; in numbers sufficient to destroy the crops and hopes of half a dozen States. For a day or two the mild and balmy weather lasted, then it grew colder, and one night the moist earth was frozen, and with it the unhatched larvæ and the young and crawling locusts above ground. And though the earth thawed again in a few days, the locusts, with the exception of a scattering few, had disappeared. 'And,' to quote Governor Pillsbury, 'we have never seen any grasshoppers since.'"

May not this come as a clarion call to our Nation?

ARTHUR MERCER.