

crime of race or social suicide. Referring to the birth-rate in various countries, our esteemed contemporary (basing its remarks on an article by M. Arren, in 'Le Correspondant', Paris) says in part regarding the falling birth-rate:—

'In Europe this decline is to be thus noted: Italy within the past decade shows, with Sweden, a decline of 7 per 100; Bavaria and Scotland, of 10 per 100; Prussia, of 11 per 100; France and Denmark, of 15 per 100; England, of 17 per 100; New Zealand, of 18 per 100; Belgium and Saxony, of 24 per 100. Within the past decade the birth-rate of the United States has fluctuated between a decrease of 7 and 13 per 100'.

'It is to be seen, therefore', says the 'Freeman' in the course of a lengthy article, 'that no country is exempt from the presence of a decreasing birth-rate, if we except Austria, French Canada, and Ireland—all three countries remarkable for the intensity of their devotion to the faith. Even poor France has not lost in the proportion of the losses sustained by England and Prussia within the past half-score years'.

In his ode to Malthus, Hood suggested the importation of cholera morbus to England, as (in the former's notion) the world wanted 'a deal of thinning out'.

'There are too many of all trades,
Too many bakers,
Too many every-thing-makers,
But not too many undertakers—
Too many boys,
Too many hobby-de-boys,
Too many girls, men, widows, wives, and maids—
There is a dreadful surplus to demolish'.

Well, as we now know, worse visitations may befall—and have befallen—nations than the importation of cholera morbus. And in the case under consideration, disregard of the God-given moral law is made to bear its penalty, even in this passing life, in personal and social degradation and national decay. The crown and sceptre of the future are with the people who follow the God-ordained path of personal morality and a sanctified family life.

A Locust Plague

In one of his whimsicalities, Hood pictured two criminals on the scaffold awaiting public execution by the common hangman. Below, a ferocious steer was careering past, tossing some of the onlookers and scattering the rest in terror. 'Isn't it well for us, Bill', said one condemned man to the other, 'that we're up here?' Even the most disconsolate New Zealand farmer might have said as much to his 'doppelganger' on reading the stories of locust invasion and of drought (now happily broken) that during the past fortnight came to our shores from the Commonwealth. Said one cable-message:—

'Swarms of grasshoppers at Narrabri (351 miles north-west of Sydney) blocked a train of empty trucks. After running some of the trucks back to a station, the engine returned for the balance of the trucks, but grasshoppers smothered the brakes, which refused to act. The engine consequently collided with and smashed some of the trucks.'

Towards the close of last week there came the following further scrap of news:—

'Grasshoppers devastated the crops in the Trangie district, and then invaded the town. They died in the streets in myriads.'

A correspondent from South Canterbury suggests to us, in effect, that the senders of these particular messages have been performing the feat of archery known as 'drawing the long-bow'. We do not think so. The writer of these lines has a vivid recollection of the locust plague which settled down over a wide area of New South Wales and Victoria in November and December, 1890. We recall the manner in which, near Glenorchy and in various other places, the myriads of

them that were crunched beneath the locomotives made the rails so slippery that the wheels could not grip and some of the trains had for a time to come to a standstill. The air was filled with locusts as with snowflakes, and the curious glinting of the sun upon their gauzy wings presented a singularly weird effect of scintillating light, akin—though on a vaster scale—to the flickering points that were observable upon the old kinematographic pictures. The smart blows delivered by the flying insects made it difficult to drive restive horses through the dense flight. Green things were devoured by the swarming creatures. Sparrows, crows, domestic fowls gorged upon them to absurd repletion, and the present writer viewed the curious spectacle of brown hawks capturing the locusts upon the wing. The capture was effected in every case in true hawk method, with the claws, from which the locusts were immediately picked by the beak in awkward and ungainly fashion—still in mid-air. The vast swarm passed on day after day to the south-west, and myriads of the creatures were carried out to sea, drowned, and cast on shore along the South Australian borders in great masses. And the odor thereof was not the odor of Araby the Blest.

The Melbourne 'Argus' of December 6, 1890, gives a description of the plague as it appeared in and around Barnawartha (Victoria). A brief extract may serve to make some of our farmer-readers rejoice that, whatever disadvantages they may labor under, they are not afflicted with the voluminous fecundity (if we may so call it) of insect pests that periodically prey upon vegetation in tropical and sub-tropical lands:—

'In some places the wheels of the vehicle were completely embedded in masses of young caterpillars and grasshoppers, which, on many extensive areas, literally covered the whole surface, to a depth of about four inches, like a gigantic and undulating coat of green paint. Where the country presented any depressions it was found utterly impossible to pass with a buggy, and in several favorable localities, such as low-lying lanes, etc., the insects were surging about in masses some two or three feet deep. Not a vestige of grass or other herbage is to be seen where the pest is found in quantities. The ground in their wake is as destitute of grass as the centre of Collins St'. (Melbourne).

We have seen in operation many methods of destroying locusts in the egg, or in the young and non-flying stage in which (on account of their movements) they are in many places called 'hoppers'—a term which is not to be confounded with 'grasshoppers'. Here are some of the methods referred to: Scarifying the egg-infested ground to a depth of two or three inches; 'ringing' a 'mob' of sheep round and round over it, with the aid of dogs; spraying the non-flying creatures with insecticides dissolved in hot water; burning them with straw, brushwood, etc.; crushing them with rollers, chain-harrows, and brush-harrows; beating them with bushes, branches, and corn-bags; treating them with kerosene emulsions, soap solutions, Quibell's compound, etc. Both the 'fledgelings' and the 'old birds' used to congregate together (presumably for warmth) in the late afternoons; and in the small hours of the morning great masses of them would be together, sluggish and benumbed with cold. This was the time to 'lay' for them with best results. It is, indeed, all things considered, a happy circumstance that the locust plague is only an occasional incident, and not a standing institution, in the life of the Australian farmer, pastoralist, and gardener.

The Catholic bazaar at Gisborne, which was brought to a close on October 29, realised £800.

At the Trinity College musical examinations held recently in Wellington the gold medal awarded by the local centre for highest marks in intermediate grade pianoforte was gained by Miss Ethel M. Williams. At a former examination Miss Williams, who is a student at St. Francis Xavier's Academy, Seatoun, gained the Martha Meyers Memorial Medal in the junior grade.

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