

Grasshopper Invasion

By M. M. MORRIS

Eye witness stories of untimely grasshopper invasions in early Iowa which are quoted in a paper called *Home Missionary*, published in 1874, give us a graphic picture.

Says one observer, "An army of them is passing over my house going eastward. The air is filled as far as you can see. The lower strata look like snow flakes in the air. Higher up, they look like dust sprinkled in the sky. As soon as they strike, they begin to eat. They have excellent appetites and a wide range of diet. Pungent articles are their favorites, but when these fail, they thrive well on corn, grass, leaves or fruit or forest trees, and corn stalks as the hard-tack of the campaigning.

"The corn fields of the prairies melt before them as you look—orchards and forests exhibit the baldness of winter, and the whole country looks as though a fire had passed over. The sound of the grasshopper's eating was as if a drove of cattle were in the field."

Another eye witness described dramatically, "Clouds of grasshoppers seemed like black clouds of smoke as if our prairies were on fire. Soon we heard a sound like the rushing of many waters and then drop! drop! against the window panes and house, and lo, a shower of grasshoppers—leaving our beautiful corn fields rows of ragged bean poles."

Finally, a witness sees a repetition of the old Bible scenes as he observes, "The second chapter of Joel might literally be applied to our western plains today. These insects come like a strong people in battle array with a noise of chariots up on a mountain of fire, that devoureth the stubble. They march every one his own way and do not break ranks. Before them the Garden of Eden; behind them, a desolate wilderness."

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