

[A Grasshopper Story]

S - 202 Folkway (Life - sketch)

Mrs. N. W. Thomassen 538 Words

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A GRASSHOPPER STORY(Margaret F. Kelly[“?”]Nebraska Pioneer Reminiscences[“?”]D.A.R.-1916- Torch Press Cedar Rapids -Iowa.

I came to [Fremont?], Nebraska in May, 1870 and settled on a farm on Maple Creek. In 1874 or 1875 we were visited by grasshoppers. I had never [?] an idea of anything so disastrous. When the “hoppers” were flying the air was full of them. As one looked up, they seemed like a severe snow storm. It must have been like one of the plagues of Egypt. They were so bad one day that the passenger train on the Union Pacific was stalled here. I went to see the train and the odor from the crushed insects was nauseating. I think the train was kept here for three hours. The engine was besmeared with them. It was a very wonderful sight. The rails and ground were covered with the [?] pests . They came into the houses and one lady went into her parlor one day and found her lace curtains on the floor, almost entirely eaten. Mrs. George Turner said that she came home from town one day when the “hoppers” were flying and they were so thick that the horses could not find the barn. Mrs Turner's son had a field of corn. [W.A.?] Wilson offered him fifty dollars for it. When he began to husk it there was no corn there. A hired man of Mr. Turner's threw his vest on the ground. When he had finished his work and picked up the vest it was completely riddled by the grasshoppers. I heard one man say that he was out riding with his wife and they stopped by a field of wheat where the “hoppers” were working and they could hear their mandibles working on the wheat. When they flew it sounded like a train or cars in motion. Horses would not face them unless compelled. One year I had an eighty

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acre field of corn which was being cultivated. The men came in and said the 2 words DIST.I.

A Grasshopper Story “hoppers” were taking the corn. They did not stay long, but when they left no one would have known that there had ever been any corn in that field. My brother from California came in 1876. On the way to the farm a thunder storm came up and we stopped at a friend's until it was over. My brother said, “I would not go through the experience again for \$10,000, and I would not lose the experience for the same amount.” The “hoppers” came before the storm and were thick on the ground. It was a wonderful experience. In those days we cut our small grain with “headers.” The grain head was cut and fell into boxes on wagon. After dinner one day, the men went out to find the grasshoppers in full possession. A coat which had been left hanging was completely destroyed. Gardens and field crops were their delight. They would eat an onion entirely out of the hard outer skin. I had a thirty acre field of oats which looked fine on Saturday. We could not harvest it then and on Monday it looked like an inverted whisk broom. Some of the “hoppers” were three inches long. The backs were between brown and slate color and underneath was white. I think we received visits from them for five years.