



A LOCUST SWARM ON THE HOP TO KING WILLIAM'S TOWN, HAVING EATEN ALL THE GRASS IN THEIR PASSAGE.
From a Photo.

The Locust Plague in South Africa.

BY FRANK A. PYM.



AS if War's desolation were not enough misery to inflict upon South Africa, the periodical visitation of "voetgangers," or locusts in their hopping stage, took place

at the close of last year; and it would seem as if they have come to stay this time, for they absolutely refuse to be exterminated by artificial means.

Various drastic measures have been suggested and employed for their extermination, but, so far as I can learn the consensus of opinion among the farmers, the most successful one to check their inroad is to draw heavy

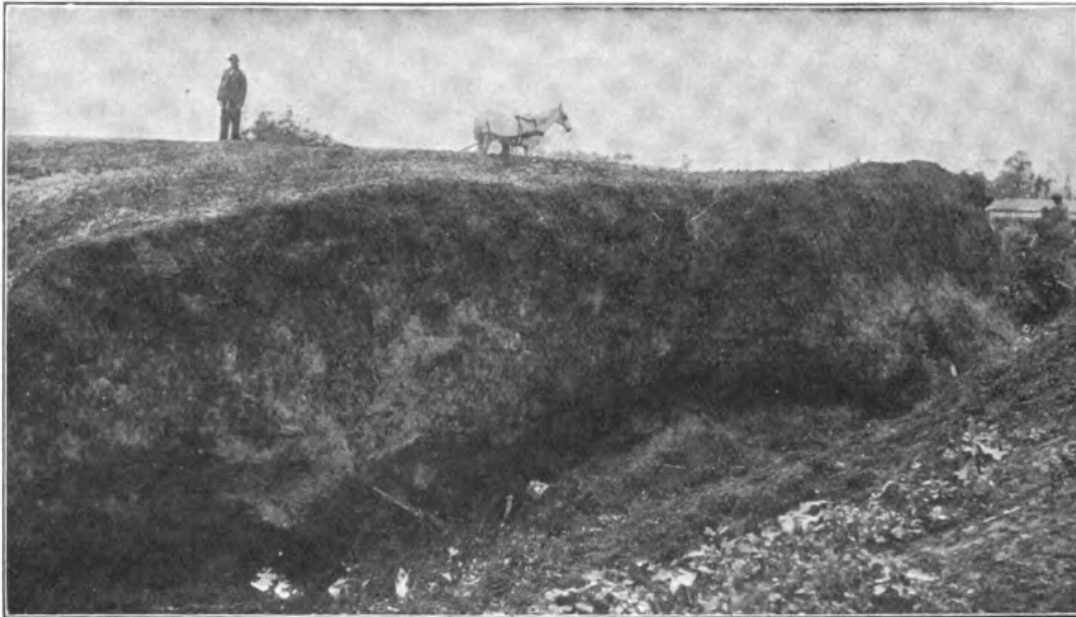
branches over them (as shown in one of the views), after spraying them with a strong solution of soap and water, a process that temporarily paralyzes them. They are swept into pits dug for their reception, and

covered over with soil before they can recover from their paralyzed state. The several views will give our readers some idea of the magnitude of this plague.

We had a swarm in the neighbourhood of King William's Town for about a week, and they did not leave a vestige of vegetation behind them when they set out for pastures new. They are cannibals, too, and when food



From a] LOCUSTS RESTING ON A FENCE (Photo)



DRAWING HEAVY BRANCHES OVER A SWARM. THE DARK CLUSTERS ON THE BANK IN FRONT ARE LOCUSTS.
From a Photo.

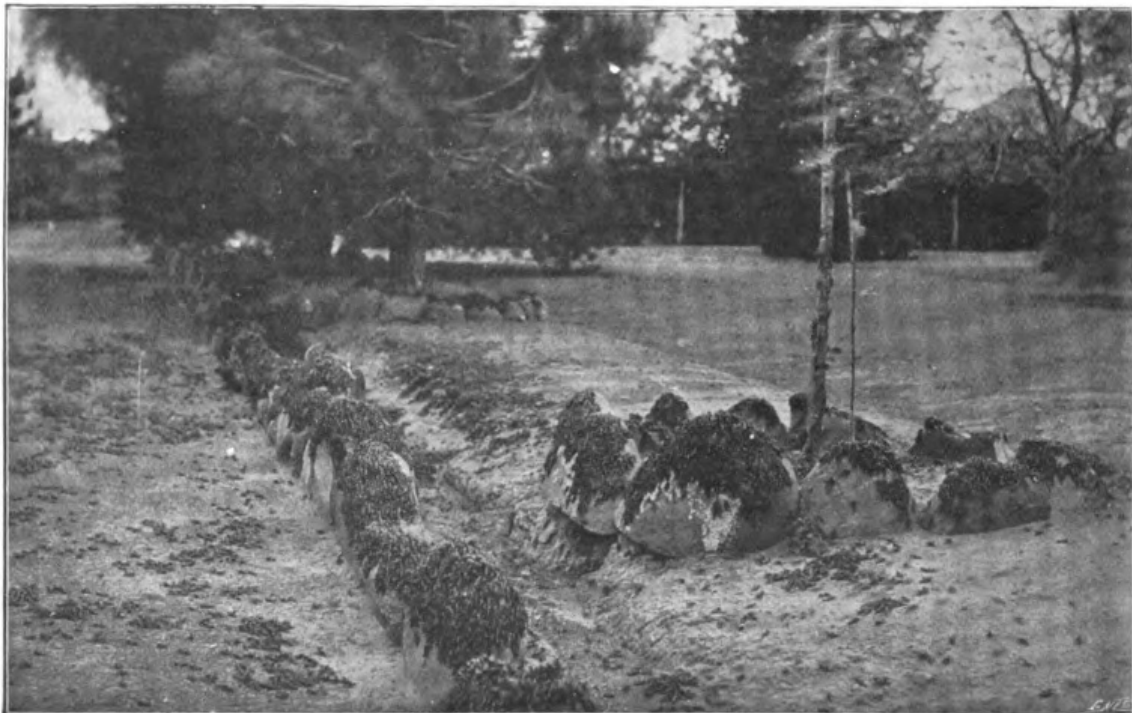
runs short they turn to and devour their dead comrades. They are not wanting in strategical skill, and can double back with as much ease as De Wet.

To illustrate this, I may mention that after the multitude had passed all the fires and arrived in another street they suddenly altered their course and retraced their steps, finally reaching their old ground and marching through the town again.

The locust in the "voetganger" stage is

far more destructive than the adult, as can easily be imagined by the compactness of their swarms and the slow means of progress compared with those in the winged or grown-up stage.

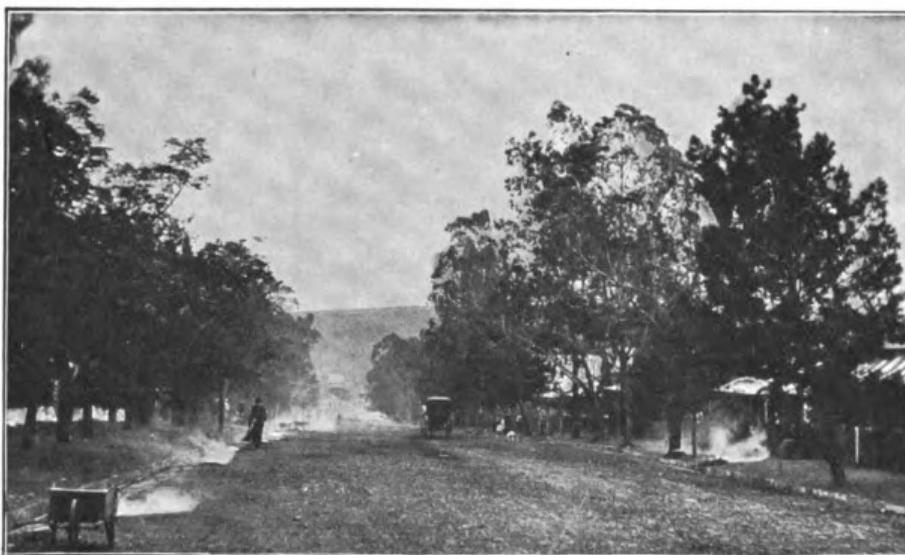
Both the adult locust and the "voetganger" have been experimented upon with locust disease fungus, but it is proved to be of little use for the destruction of the latter, why, nobody seems to know. Small tubes containing the fungus are



From a)

LOCUSTS AT ROOST IN COLD WEATHER.

(Photo.



From a] BURNING FIRES ALONG A STREET TO KEEP LOCUSTS OUT OF THE GARDENS. [Photo.

prepared at the Bacteriological Institute, Grahamstown, and supplied to all applicants, who may also obtain them by application through the Civil Commissioner of their division.

There are various ways of administering the contents of these tubes, but it is almost hopeless in dry weather to get the disease to spread, and hence it is advisable to make the infection just before sunset in moist or wet weather. When a number of winged locusts have been caught and dipped into the fungus they are again released among the swarm, and die within a few days. Their comrades devour them and also become infected and die, are eaten, and so on, until the whole swarm is infected all over with locust disease fungus.

The locust measures about 3in. from tip of wing to top of head, whereas the "voetganger" never exceeds more than $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. until just before its transformation into the real adult winged locust.

Before "voetgangers" become winged locusts they cast off their epidermi several times, and after each change the wing-sheaths are seen to become larger, and the final cast-off skin shows the curled-up wings, which in the course of a day unfurl themselves and attain their maximum dimensions.

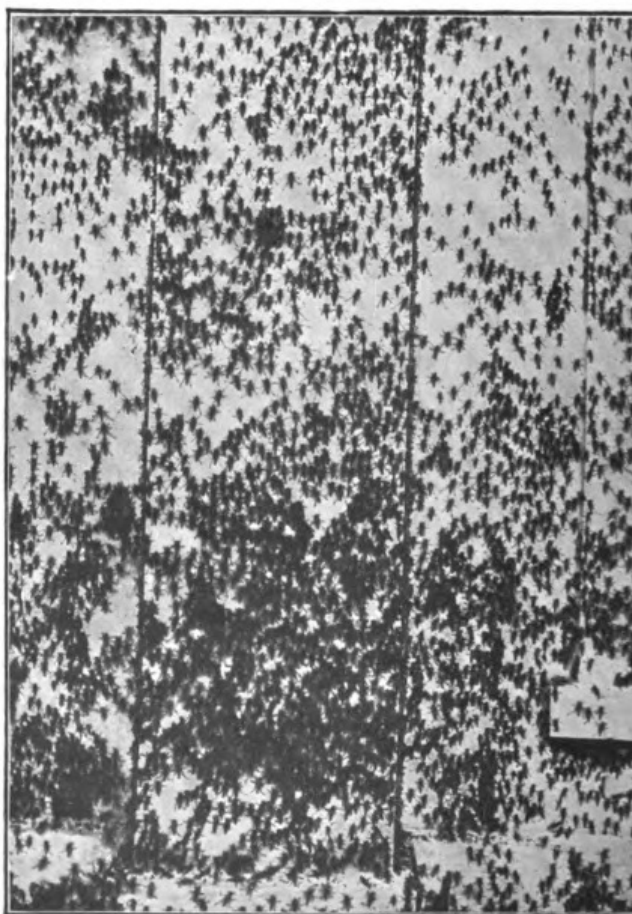
During the first day of their winged life they are not able to fly much, as their wings are too flabby to support the weight of their bodies, but a few hours of tropical sunshine hardens the substance, and then we have to contend with flying locusts which once visited us

as "voetgangers." "Voetganger" is a Dutch name, and means foot-goer.

Locust swarms are very plentiful in the Orange River Colony, and it was at the Battle of Poplar Grove during the war that I saw a swarm rise on the horizon like a large cloud of dust, through which the rays of the sun cast a peculiar gloom over the scenes around. I have

heard of swarms quite obscuring the rays of the sun, but I have never seen one.

There is a fly that deposits its eggs behind the shield on the locust's back, which does far more good than all our artificial experiments, and the locusts are little heard of since the fly became abundant.



From a] LOCUSTS ON A WALL WITHIN THE TOWN. [Photo.