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# NEGLECTED ARABIA

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Missionary News and Letters

Published Quarterly

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION AMONG THE FRIENDS OF  
THE ARABIAN MISSION

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## Locusts

DR. C. STANLEY G. MYLREA.

“THE same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.” Matt. 3:4. “Did John really eat locusts?” is an enquiry one often faces. There seems to be an impression here in America that locusts are not edible, so that the gospel narrative has had to be explained and interpreted in order to meet this difficulty. The common interpretation is to the effect that Palestine produces a kind of bean, called the locust, and it was this bean, together with honey, which furnished the prophet’s sustenance. Here, however, as is so often the case, the Scripture means exactly what it says.

In the first place, the locust is recognized by the Levitical code as lawful food. Compare Lev. 11:21: “These may ye eat of every creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth . . . the locust after his kind.”

Further evidence that John actually ate the insect and not some hypothetical bean is the fact that the locust is eaten today in large quantities, and whenever there is a locust visitation and for many months afterwards, baskets of locusts, previously boiled and dried, may be seen for sale all through the bazaars of Arabia. The Arab, in matters of eating and drinking, follows the Jewish law, and the locust therefore comes under the list of “things ye may eat.” In truth, it is not unpalatable and tastes rather like a chestnut.

The Bible is full of references to the locust, from the time when (Exod. 10:15) “they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened, and they did eat every herb of the land,” to the time when in Rev. 9:7 occurs the fine passage “And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle. . . . Their teeth were as the teeth of lions. . . . The sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.”

The Bible’s classic on the subject, however, occurs in the Book of Joel, where in Chapters 1 and 2, a plague of locusts is described as