

Directly Personal.

The portrait which appears on this first page of our twenty-fifth yearly volume will come as a surprise to some who—along with ourselves—know how persistently the original of it has refused his consent to “appearing in public” in this form. However, the writer—while freely confessing to not a little embarrassment as to the effect of its appearance, under the circumstances, upon his senior—having assumed the responsibility, must perforce face all the consequences of his action.

Whether or not modesty in a public man is recognized as a useful quality, or otherwise, we will not stop to inquire, but, to the writer at least, it has always seemed a remarkable thing that, while men more or less eminent—or even “prominent”—in the world of bee-keeping have been made familiar to all interested in the literature of the pursuit by their portraits, the one among the whole who (it is not too much to say) probably is better known and more universally esteemed the wide world over than any other, has gently, but firmly, withheld his consent to any publicity of this kind for himself.

The unique position held by Mr. Cowan as a bee-keeper is, no doubt, in a measure due first to his being a frequent traveller in foreign countries, and second his power as a linguist. Thus, to be present in the flesh with Russian, German, French, Italian, or we don't know how many other nationalities of bee-keepers is one thing, but to be able to converse with them in their own several tongues is quite another, and gives rise to a feeling of brotherhood altogether beyond a mere hand-shake. This, together with an extensive correspondence with bee-keepers and scientific men who are interested in bees, dwelling in nearly every quarter of the globe, makes Mr. Cowan's position, as we have said, unique. It is also mainly due to our senior Editor's fondness for foreign travel, and the fact of his being at the present time some six thousand miles from King William street, that the writer, having determined to take upon himself the consequences of his present step, is enabled as we do so with the comforting assurance that the mischief—if it comes to be regarded as such—will be done without the risk of a hurried “wire” to “stop press” and “leave out portrait.” Besides, any misgivings we may have are somewhat

modified by the fact that these lines will be first seen and read by the subject of them in far-distant California, most likely amid summer warmth and bright sunshine; and we trust that their import will arouse feelings more in consonance with the surroundings than the testiness usually associated with London fogs and the hard frosts of a British winter.

It has been more than once asked why Mr. Cowan's portrait did not take its place among those of bee-keepers which appeared in this (his own) paper a year or two ago? Well, beyond what is stated in the opening lines of this article, we have never been able to say why. Being, however, already possessed of an excellent portrait in the photo, from which the illustration is reproduced, the present occasion seems to us so appropriate for its appearance that we make no further apology than reminding Mr. Cowan that on leaving this country a few weeks ago for a prolonged absence, he was good enough to entrust the writer with a “free hand” to do as he thought best with the Journal and its affairs. We have, therefore, decided as above, and also to say a few, (very few) words regarding its proprietor. In doing this we shall—to our certain knowledge—add to the interest of the occasion (as we hope) without offending the susceptibilities of the senior editor himself, seeing that no more appropriate opportunity could well arise than the commencement of the volume which will, when ended, complete a full quarter of a century's existence for this paper.

As is known to old readers, the British Bee Journal was purchased from its founder and first editor, Mr. C. N. Abbott, some ten years or so after its inception in 1873, by the Rev. H. R. Peel, a gentleman enthusiastically devoted to the encouragement of bee-keeping as a means of adding to the minor industries of the country, and also of increasing the income of the rural population. Being also at the time determined to make an effort for adding to the usefulness of the British Bee-Keeper's Association—just then somewhat falling in the energy of its leading spirits, from the lack of the requisite funds for carrying out their labors—Mr. Peel thought that this work would be aided by the possession of an official organ, independent and entirely freed from even the suspicion of any trade interest connected with it. He therefore, as we have said, bought the paper outright, and, being possessed of ample means, was well known to have given no thought to profit from its publication. On the death of Mr.