

Bee-Keepers' Associations and Honey Sales.

(*British Bee Journal*.)

BY A. D. WOODLEY.

Mr. Woodley prefaced his paper by some observations on the letter of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, president of the B.B.K.A., which appeared in the leading papers some time ago, the text of which is given in our issue of June 8th, last, after which he proceeded as follows:—

"It has occurred to me that it might be of some use to the British and County Associations if I laid before them the substance of what the Berkshire Beekeepers' Association has been doing in this matter, and I hope to show you that we have to a large extent, solved this very difficult question—constituting, as it does, a difficulty with which, no doubt, all Associations have to deal, and forming a stumbling-block to their success; and, probably, one important reason for some Associations dying out altogether,

"Unquestionably it is a fact that beekeepers' profits are considerably curtailed to what they were a few years ago, but I am very far from endorsing the opinion that bees cannot be kept at a profit; indeed I would go so far as to say that it is still the most profitable industry the cottager can engage in, providing that a fair amount of care and attention is given at the proper time (not necessarily always meddling and fussing with them), and that he leaves to others the experimenting with the many new fads and theories, and is content to conduct his apiary, be it large or small, on commercial principles, with the maximum of efficiency at the minimum of expense. On such a basis I am certain, from a somewhat extensive experience, that a good return will be obtained for time and money expended.

"But I would ask whether we, as beekeepers, have not ourselves largely contributed to bring prices down below what they might have been.

"A fall in prices is usually brought about by a superabundant supply; and, on the other hand, a short supply produces a rise in prices, but I would venture to suggest that this is not so much the case with honey as with most other produce. If it were so we might admit at once that we are raising more honey than at the present time there is a demand for, but I do not think that such is the case. I firmly believe that the chief and primary cause is that during, and at the end of the honey harvest, what market there is is glutted, and for a short time the supply

far exceeds the demand, and herein lies one of the chief causes of falling prices. I frequently hear from tradespeople, about August or September, that they can buy sections at almost any price, and I know of many instances where the cottager, living in the country, takes his stock of honey into the neighboring town, expecting to find ready purchasers, but is disappointed to ascertain that the shopkeepers are fully supplied, and rather than take it back he sells it to any one who will make any offer whatever for it. As a consequence, the bee-keeper returns home much lighter in pocket than he might or should have done and the shop-keeper is able to sell at low prices; but when, perhaps a month or two later, he wants more to fill up stock, he finds that there is none to be had, and gives up the business in disgust. This is entirely wrong, and ought to be remedied. Honey, unlike fruit and other perishable articles, can, with ordinary care and attention, be kept, either in comb or bottled, from one season to another, and there is no reason whatever why the market should be glutted at one time and empty at another. On the other hand, there should be a steady and regular supply throughout the year. It remains to be seen how far this can be remedied, and I want to ask if, as an Association, we cannot take some practical steps to do so, first, by creating and developing the more extensive use of honey, not only as a luxury or as a medicine, but also as an article of food; and, secondly, by regulating the supply to keep prices up to a profitable range.

"It may be that some may say that this is no part of the work of an Association; that our work is to teach and encourage the cottager to keep bees in a humane and rational manner, and in so doing help him to help himself. As far as it goes this is very good, but I would point out that it often happens that the honey-producer lives in isolated and obscure hamlets, and has little opportunity, after supplying his neighbor's wants, of disposing of the remainder and I maintain that it is very desirable that an Association, after having largely developed a new industry, should bring it to a successful issue by creating a market for the produce.

"In formulating any scheme, there are many dangers and difficulties to encounter, but the aim must be to provide a regular supply, placed before the public in the most attractive manner, and at a price which will make it an article of food, and also profitable to the producer. Some may say this is impossible, but I believe it can be done. In the first place I would suggest that in every town and village in the