

From American Bee Journal.

#### A "Find" of Beeswax.

**W**E have received from H. C. Farnum, of Aristotle, N. Y., the following concerning a mine of beeswax on the Californian coast. We know nothing of it, but perhaps some of our correspondents on that coast will be able to give us some light on the subject. We are inclined to think it a *fishy* yarn, but there may be some foundation for it:

No one has ever been able to give an authentic account of how such enormous quantities of beeswax came to be deposited on the beach near Nehalem, Calif. Specimens are found along the beach in various places, but it is most plentiful near the mouth of the Nehalem.

As the sea shifts the bars, pieces of it are washed ashore, and large quantities are found by plowing in some of the low land near the beach. There are spots where the sea has never reached in the memory of the oldest settlers, and which are covered with a good sized growth of spruce, where deposits of the wax may be found by digging.

Specimens of the wax may be found at the house of any settler on the beach, and to all appearances it is genuine beeswax. Several tons have been unearthed, and one man shipped a large amount to San Francisco once, for which he received \$500.

In quality it is as good as any in the market, and has retained its familiar odor through all its rough usage and age. It is supposed by some, and so stated, that it came from the wreck of a Spanish vessel over a century ago. Others say it came from a wrecked Chinese junk.

These traditions in regard to the wrecks came from the Indians, and are not reliable. It is possible that this beeswax is really a "Lost Treasure" which the people are digging for on the Nehalem.

If there is anything in the latter part of the story, the product is probably what is known as "Chinese wax" (*ceryl cerotate*), which is a substance bearing a physical resemblance to refined beeswax, and is also known as "white wax."

It has hitherto been supposed to be the inspissated exudation of certain species of trees in China; but an investigation conducted on behalf of the British Government by Alexander Hosie, 1890, shows it to be a secretion of an insect, *Coccus pe-la*.

According to the report made by Mr. Hosie to the science department of his Government, the Chien-Chang valley in the Chinese province of Sze-chuen is the principal breeding place of the *Coccus pe-la*.

These insects appear first in March in great numbers; they are of almost microscopic size, and are inclosed in pea-shaped excrescences called "scales," on the branches of a species of privet, the *Ligustrum lucidum*.

What the further history of the insects would be, if left to themselves, we have no means of knowing; but for commercial production they are transported, toward the end of April, before leaving the "scales" to the district of Chiating 200 miles from their native valley.

These insects and the wax product was fully described on page 775 of the Bee Journal for June 11, 1891.

The value of the wax is due to its high melting point, 160°, Fahr., as opposed to 95°, for tallow. The introduction of kerosene has much reduced the sale and production of this wax in China.

We think some of our Canadian friends would like very much to strike a beeswax mine similar to the above, as beeswax is very scarce.

#### A Curious Ceremony

**A** CURIOUS ceremony is mentioned by a clergyman who lives upon an estate in Switzerland, as having been lately performed there with the bees. He says:

The proprietor of a large domain not far from the mouth of the Rhine died. As soon as life was extinct, one of the relatives went to the beehives and attached a piece of crape to each hive, saying to each, "The master is dead."

On the day of the interment the same relative again visited the hives; took off the crape, and carried to each hive some cake and some wine, which had remained from the collation.

Dipping a piece of cake in the wine, he placed some at the entrance of each hive, each time repeating, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

He said that if it had not been done, the bees would not have recognized their new master, but would have left.

A Swiss, however, informs me, that the custom is general among bee-keepers, but the belief is that if it were neglected the bees would die instead of migrating.

We do not have to go as far as Switzerland to find similar instances. I well recollect when this was a common occurrence with a certain class of people in Canada, who kept bees, and we believe there are some who practise it yet.

We find as a query in the A.B.J., page 444. (1) Do bees carry propolis on their