

BEES AND POULTRY,

WHO SHOULD KEEP BEES.

BY W. F. CLARKE, GUELPH.

"Everybody" was once the current answer to this question. I have given it myself before now. Ten years ago in my prize poem on "The Honey Bee" I pictured,

"Each household of an apiary possessed,"

It was the general idea then that, in a proper condition of society, a bee-hive out of doors would be considered as much a part of a well regulated domestic establishment as a sewing machine indoors. But we have got bravely over that, and many other crude notions that prevailed, even among bee-keepers themselves, ten years ago, and the time has now fully come for insisting upon it that those only should keep bees who are properly qualified to do so.

Bee-keeping may be justly regarded as having attained the status of a profession or a business. In any correct view of it it requires special natural qualifications and a thorough education. The natural qualifications are not of much account without an education, obtained somehow or other, and the education is a downright impossibility without the natural qualifications.

In a general way it may be safely said that in order to success in this business or profession there must be an aptitude for it. What that is it may be difficult to state in detail, but I am fast coming to think that the true bee-keeper, like the true poet, is born, not made. The great Huber is an example in point. To use a theological phrase, he was predestinated to be a bee-keeper, and not even the loss of sight could prevent the fulfilment of his mission. His devoted wife and trusty man-servant were eyes to the blind apiarian, and with their help he took the foremost place among historical bee-keepers. A degree of that enthusiasm which inspired Huber must influence all who aspire to rank among his disciples. No man succeeds very much in any line of things which does not stir him with lively interest. But this alone is not enough. The true bee-keeper must have keen perceptions, and be at once of an observant and reflective turn of mind. He must be a modern Job for patience, and a modern Bruce for perseverance. No matter what his natural aptitudes may be, he will make serious mistakes at first, and needs to learn that, as Napoleon was wont to say, "he is not the best general who makes no mistakes, but he who repairs them as quickly and as thoroughly as possible." He must not be irascible, for in that quality the bees are more than a match for the most irascible of mortals. He must have perfect self-control, for if a man cannot control himself he may rest assured that he cannot control the denizens of the bee-hive. He must be sanguine and hopeful, for he will see many dark days. His motto must be:—

"Never give up; it is wiser and better,
Always to hope than once to despair."

He must have a mind for details, and regard nothing as trivial that has to do with the welfare of a colony or an apiary. "Unconsidered trifles" have often led to important discoveries and astonishing results, and the man who is naturally prone to be negligent of apparently little things must either conquer that habit or

come to the conclusion that he is not adapted to shine as a bee-keeper.

Lastly, at the risk of being laughed at by certain apiarians who can take bees to bed with them and sleep undisturbed, I shall venture to specify a certain indifference to stings, which is a characteristic of a few favoured members of the human family. There is no denying the fact that some people are highly sensitive to the virus of the bee, while on others it has little or no effect. Some curious experiences have been had in this line, of which truly intelligent bee-keepers will take note. It has been a favourite idea with many that when once you become accustomed to being stung by bees you cease to mind it. I was of that opinion at one time myself. I had become hardened to the thing until I did not mind a bee-sting more than a pin-prick. But on a luckless day I got a sting from a furious Italian just on the middle tip of my upper lip, which resulted in several hours of intense agony and a week's sickness. Ever since then a sting in any part of the body results in a renewal of those painful effects. The virus at once flies to the head, and causes the greatest distress. I am aware that in thus speaking I issue my own death warrant, as a bee-keeper, but I am at the same time stating facts which "nobody can deny." I am precluded from keeping bees except on a small scale, as an amateur, from purely scientific interest, and with the use of precautions in the way of gloves and veil, such as thicker-skinned and more hardened bee-keepers despise. But I lay it down as an axiom that unfortunate people who are keenly sensitive to the effects of stinging had better give bee-keeping, as a business, "a good letting alone."

In addition to the natural aptitude which has been imperfectly sketched, an education in bee-keeping must be obtained. It matters little how this is done, provided it be thorough. Let no one rush into bee-keeping imperfectly equipped with knowledge on the subject. It is positively ridiculous to see how some people act in regard to this matter. They seem to suppose that they have only to get a few swarms of bees and they are completely set up in business. Their next step is to invent a hive or some wonderful improvement that is to eclipse everything in the market. After a little spluttering and flourishing they give up in disgust what they ought never to have attempted.

It is no doubt possible for a tyro in bee-keeping to become self-educated in a sense. With invaluable bee books and excellent bee journals that are available, the theory can easily be mastered. Then comes the practical part, and, "aye, there's the rub." To manage bees with an eye to profit from honey production, is an attainment far beyond mere theory however correct. I do not think this can be gained in any other way so quickly or so well as for the beginner to apprentice himself to some good practical bee-keeper, and happy is he who has the opportunity of so doing. I am inclined to believe that our best bee-keepers will have to start schools of apiculture, as indeed some have already done. It may be so arranged as to be an advantage to them as well as to their pupils. Besides these private schools, apiculture should be taught both in theory and practice in agricultural colleges. The Michigan Agricultural

College has set a good example in this respect, which ought to be followed by every similar institution on the continent of North America. Bee-keeping has now reached such proportions that it ought not to be ignored at those educational establishments which are devoted to the development of rural industries. As a source of national revenue it takes rank with general farming, stock-raising, dairying, and similar out-door pursuits. As a science, bee-keeping covers a large field of research, and as an art, requires instruction quite as extensive as some other rural industries. This meeting will only be acting in harmony with its design and legitimate functions in making a strong deliverance on this subject. Bee-keeping has quite long enough been left to chance and haphazard. It becomes those that are familiar with its wants and possibilities to exalt it to a proper position beside other occupations, and to demand for it suitable educational facilities.

KEEPING ONE HUNDRED FOWLS.

A poultry breeder of twenty-five years' standing, says: "Fancy fowl farmers assert that any owner of land can keep 100 fowls. From 200 birds may be obtained annually 2,300 dozen eggs, and if inclined 1,500 pounds of marketable chickens before the close of August in each year. The product will pay from \$450 to \$500, and leave the original stock for next year. The expenses will not be over \$200 to \$250, thus furnishing an equal sum of profit from every 200 fowls. The cost of keeping them in such quantities as alluded to would not exceed 65 cents per head, if all their food is produced and rated at 70 cents a bushel. With the run of the farm the cost would be lessened. This leaves a handsome profit from the investment."

KEEPING EGGS FRESH.

I saw a very good arrangement for keeping eggs at a friend's house a short time since and it was so simple and practicable that it ought to be generally known. It was a set of four shelves, two feet long and eight inches wide, with a space of five inches between them, made of hard wood planed, and three rows of round holes, bored with an inch augur on each shelf twelve in each row. One shelf would hold three dozen eggs. The eggs were set in with the small end down, so that the yolk could not settle against the shell. The lady said she had kept eggs six months in this manner perfectly sweet; also that the free circulation of air around them was very important and there was no danger of cracking the shell.

Let any one try roasting corn before feeding fowls, and tell you by-and-by if his egg-basket does not fill much more rapidly than usual.—*Queenslander*.

ALL the malice of civilization has been expended upon fowls. Legs so heavily feathered that the wretched birds only walk by a series of fortunate accidents; heads decorated with tufts so enormous that the creatures circle of vision is limited to the ground it stands upon; combs of so wonderful a kind that each cock appears to carry a beefsteak and two mutton chops above its startled visage; these are the results of centuries of scientific breeding.—*St. James' Gazette*.