

MY EXPERIENCE WITH BEE-POISON.

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IN 1838 I put two colonies of bees in an attic closet; but I made no experiments of any kind with them; they were simply looked at and admired. In 1839 I fairly began my apiarian career, and soon found that to experiment much with bees, meant to get many stings. At first these were not only quite painful, but caused severe swellings. I dreaded to be stung the latter part of the week, for often one eye would close and the other nearly so, and to preach in such a condition was by no means a pleasure. If stung on the hand my arm would swell so rapidly that if my coat was not seasonably taken off, it had to be ripped off. In fact I was a regular martyr to the bee-poison.

My second year's experience was much more favorable, and in the course of a few years I became almost bee-proof. In the pressure of business, and my zeal for studying the habits of the bee, I preferred to be stung occasionally, rather than to lose time by wearing a bee-hat. The pain of a sting was seldom very severe, and not often caused much swelling. My experience was the same with that of most bee-keepers who have persevered in spite of stings, until at last their systems became accustomed to the poison.[†]

[†]The Austrian who came over with Mr. S. B. Parsons' Italian bees, when stung, would leisurely take out of his pocket a vial to anoint the sting with his favorite remedy! Seeing how indifferent Mr. Cary, myself and others were to stings, he soon ceased to produce his vial.

A few facts out of many that might be given: I once agreed to help a farmer to move a hive to a new location. He assured me that the bottom was securely fastened. It fell off before we got more than a few steps with our load—covered with bees, some of which were crushed—and the air at once was filled with the enraged insects. The farmer dropped his side of the hive and ran away; it fell against me, but I held on until I lowered it to the ground, and then made the best of my way into the house. Perhaps a hundred or more stings were pulled out of my face and head! and yet in a few hours one could hardly have noticed that I had been

stung at all. When visiting that great man, Dr. Jared P. Kirtland, of Cleveland, Ohio, he wished me to examine with him a colony of bastard (hybrid) bees. The Doctor was armed with bee-hat and gloves—both of which I declined to use. We quieted them pretty well with smoke, when he began to discuss some point in bee-culture with his usual animation. Soon his gesticulating hand was doing quite a business, the bees became furious, and paid all their respects to me; and how many stings were pulled out of my face and head I cannot tell. As soon as this extracting work was over I said: "Doctor Kirtland, I protest against all eloquence in the vicinity of bee-hives—especially when you are clad in proof armor and I have none!" Although ever so well stung, the pain was soon over, and in a short time no visible proof remained that a bee had stung me.

In 1864, after the death of my son, my health became so much impaired that I sold all my bees. The next spring an entire change seemed to have come over me with respect to the bee-poison. I first noticed it in extracting some stings with the poison sac attached, for a friend who wished to procure the bee-poison in a perfectly pure state. I had noticed at the beginning of each year's work among my bees, that the poison affected me in various ways, and my wife would often have to awaken me when she heard me unconsciously moaning in my sleep. The night after pulling out these stings, this moaning became so pronounced as to awaken the friends with whom I was staying, and alarmed them with the fear that I was dying. Intense dryness of the tongue and fauces, accompanied sometimes by what seemed to be an aggravated form of heartburn, smarting of the eyes, a heavy, drooping sensation of the eyelids, breaking out of fiery spots over various parts of my body, a disposition to almost tear the flesh of my cheeks, dreaming of the most excited kind, full of violent motion—these and many other symptoms were of frequent recurrence at the beginning of each bee-campaign.

After getting the medicinal bee-poison, as before recited, the effect upon me was so severe that I became really