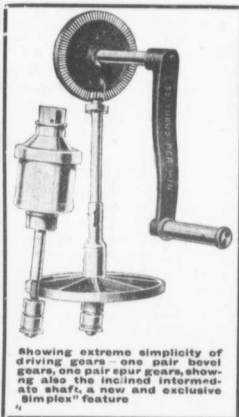


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APICULTURE

Bees Compared with other Stock

R. F. Hüttermann, Brant Co., Ont.

My attention has been drawn to an article under the above heading in Farm and Dairy, page 10, April 6th. The ideas here enunciated are on a line with similar statements that have been flooding the province. As this article bears upon it the recognition of the Ontario Department of Agriculture inasmuch as it has the name of the Provincial Agriculturist I thought it only just and fair to all to challenge some of its statements.

I have been identified with bee-keeping for over 30 years. I have been in intimate touch with Ontario agriculture in all its branches. My knowledge of farming is not only what can be learned on one farm but through Institute work I have come in contact with some of the best farmers in Canada. I do not hesitate to say that there is no branch of the farm that is as dangerous, or at least more dangerous, to embark in without ample experience than bee-keeping. There is no line of stock raising in which so large a percentage have utterly failed as in bee-keeping and in which, when the failure was recognized, as little saved from the wreck. I know, many others know, bee-keepers, yes farmers, by illustrations in our midst, how many have had colonies in the fall of the year and in the spring they have been practically a total loss or at least a large percentage were lost and perhaps another winter would make a complete sweep of the bees, with very little obtaining from the old combs, hives and other fixtures.

LITTLE ATTENTION MISLEADING

The statement is made that they (the bees) require only a little attention. What one man calls a little another calls much. The term is very indefinite but it is only correct when it means more than that it would convey to the average reader of Farm and Dairy. Bees in comparison with other stock require less physical attention than most of it, only when the owner is an expert and knows when and what to give at a glance. Bees however require a man's mental attention and interest over a large portion of the year. Even the expert to know when bees require his physical attention must constantly keep in touch with what they are doing. Even I, after many years of practical experience, am often deceived as to what they are doing in harvest unless I am with them and examine them.

A man with many departments on the farm cannot give the attention and interest to all to attain a success of all. And the smaller the branch the more costly the needed attention. For the bee-keeper to know what bees need now and in the future he must size up correctly the present condition of the mature bees, the brood in the hive, the stores, the condition of all put together, the future prospects of the bee pasture and if possible judge future weather and also the moisture of the soil.

In the same article the work with the bees is called "this bit of work." These statements will be misunderstood. Too many have gone into the bee business on the strength of such statements.

The comparison with other stock as to the having to clean their stables or fumigate their coops, or give them a ball or a drench is singularly unfortunate. Many colonies die and have perished in this province of dysentery. A stable can be cleaned out with a fork and shovel and the animal is there well and alive but dysentery generally results in death and the

combs and hives can be carefully cleaned only with brush, knife, etc. Then as to fumigating and the ball or drench. It is well known that there is a great deal of foul brood in this province. It is a contagious disease. It is transmitted, amongst other methods, by robbing. Bees once carry it on the wing and once a drop of diseased honey is fed to the larva in the hive the colony left to its own resources is doomed. Many bee-keepers who get a ball, a drench or a fumigation would cure the disease but none will. The only remedy is taking all the combs and their contents away from the bees and incinerating the wax out of them, which is much safer, destroying them by fire.

And where I have had a case I have generally burned the bees as well. This is the safest course for anyone not an expert. We do not give a drench or a ball but some of us wait to give the hive in which the diseased colony lived a good fumigating.

Bee-keeping is not learned by reading, or by hearing. It is learned by practical experience and a lot of it, combined with reading and teaching followed by years of experience. Varying seasons need varying management.

There is room for bee-keepers. Bee-keeping has lots of hard physical work. It has abundant scope for mental ability and activity, as all farming operations have. The work is crowded into a comparatively short time and that at a time when a farmer's mind and work is already very busy taxed. Bee-keeping has tremendous risks. Everything may be promising and a combination of circumstances set in as temperature, moisture, etc., which sweep the fairest prospects away and leave the bee-keeper with a stack of empty cans which he provided for a possible crop.

Bee-keeping, however, has an opening for many adapted to that line who will work hard in the summer and who understand the work. If the Ontario Government will adopt that line of teaching there will be less disappointed would-be bee-keepers, more success of some sort at the end and they will not discredit themselves. Also if our government will spend more money and energy in stamping out foul brood and thus save present beekeepers from losing their all they will in the end have more bee-keepers than by telling them that in bee-keeping there is only a "bit of work."

I say thoughtfully with abundant evidence to prove it, that the department is not even following up known cases of foul brood to see that they are not the cause of infection, to say nothing of following up possible infected flocks from known cases. I am not criticizing their policy I simply state facts and let the people judge.

Eastern Live Stock Show

The directors of the Eastern Ontario Live Stock and Poultry Show at their annual meeting in Ottawa on Friday last re-elected the old slate of officers, the President being Peter White, Pembroke; vice-pres., John Bright, Mettler; secretary, D. T. Eberkin. The names of several who were recommended by various breeders' associations were added to some of the committees. The executive remains the same as last year with the exception of Mr. Allison, who was elected to succeed Mr. B. Rathwell in the horse interests. James Bryson, of Brysonville, Que., will have the same as last year as Dairy Superintendent.

Other matters of business were left to the executive.

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