

Importance of Apiculture At Experiment Stations.

(R. L. Taylor.)

There seems to be no inconsiderable difficulty in getting for apiculture a foothold at our experiment station, and when that is secured, its tenure generally, so far as I know, seems to be of a very uncertain character. Why this should be so, if the importance of the pursuit is considered, appears to be somewhat of a marvel.

To be sure the business is not overly popular, for which state of things two reasons may be assigned. The first reason is that the bee will defend its abode with its sting. To the skilled apiarist this reason has no force; do not cattle use their horns to defend themselves? Indeed, do they not often use them to gratify wanton anger? But no one thinks of assigning that as a reason why the production of cattle should not be encouraged. But ignorance sees in the honey bee one whose hand is against every living thing, and in its sting an arrow ever ready at the string and ever laden with fatal poison. The other reason is that the bee is a free commoner. There are no limits or restrictions as to its pasture, but time and the endurance of her wing. She gathers as freely from the clover and the apple tree of the envious neighbor, or the mortal enemy of her owner, as she does from his own. The neighbor and enemy behold it with envy or anger ever magnified by their apparent helplessness. They see in the tons of honey piled on her owner's hives the measure of the depletion of their own mows and bins. The light that reveals the bee getting little but giving much in the fertility of the tree and the clover, that shows her owner receiving little, or nothing, of value to them, but often heaping up their baskets and bins, has not yet found their eye. So ignorance again would welcome the absence of the bee. These reasons give rise to a third, and that is the small estimation in which the business is held, and therefore the low degree of its importance. Some even look upon the bee-keeper as little better than a freebooter—as one who would steal if he had the courage and skill.

It is hardly worth while to argue to beekeepers the invalidity of these reasons, but as to one point already mentioned—the importance of bee-keeping—a few suggestions may not be without their use. I need not dwell on the magnitude of the business of bee-keeping in itself. Most intelligent bee-

keepers appreciate that in some degree. But, perhaps, it would be well to jog our memories, even on that point. What other specialty calls together so many and such wide-awake conventions as does bee-keeping? or supports so many class journals? or is adapted so generally to all localities? or whose product is so purely from what would otherwise be only waste? It creates a finished product—a food of the highest value both for sustenance and health out of what is otherwise without value and must be an entire loss. Bee-keeping ought surely to stand well with the people in view of its direct product alone as compared with other rural pursuits.

But great as is the gain to the country in the product of bee-keeping, no doubt the advantage arising from the ministry of the bees in causing fruitfulness to follow bloom is immensely greater. Anyone who gives even a little attention to this matter in the time of fruit bloom, comparing the fruitfulness and perfection of fruit of those plants and trees which have been frequented by the bees with that of those which from location or inclemency of weather have been deprived of their visitations during the time of bloom, will readily see that this ministry, in a great country devoted everywhere to fruit-growing, must be of almost incalculable value. Many striking instances proving the truth of this might be adduced, but that is unnecessary here, as the readers of apicultural publications are familiar with the subject.

What shall we do with these facts, clothed as they are with such grave import?

In spite of them Apiculture has received as yet but meagre recognition at our experiment stations, or, oftener, no recognition at all. It is not to be wondered at, then, that it is unpopular. Let a man, however worthy he may be, be persistently slighted and treated with neglect by a few of his prominent acquaintances, and how his reputation will wane! Why should not apiculture be placed on an equal footing at our stations with potato-growing and the manufacture of cheese, with the production of strawberries or seed corn? The experiments carried on in all these things to gain new knowledge calculated to secure higher success, are invaluable, but they should not be heard to deny the validity of apiculture's claim to equal recognition.

Perhaps beekeepers have themselves principally to blame for the condition of things. Their claim will certainly not be allowed until they themselves feel its justness and assert it with a vigor and firmness which can only come from a consciousness of its