

THE BEE

PRIZE ESSAY.

WRITTEN BY MISS KATE RICHMOND, OF POOLE, ONTARIO.

WHAT enterprising newspaper editor ever before asked for an essay on the bee. But "keep a thing for seven years and you will find a use for it," or for seventy times seven for that matter; but, oh! ye shades of my ancestors! to think that one of the purposes of the preservation for thousands of years, of that insect, small and insignificant in stature, albeit mighty in action, should be to furnish a theme for the versatility and eloquence of a modern nineteenth century student, and if the student in his essay shall succeed in relegating himself as well as the bee to the dungeon of literary oblivion, what matter? I suspect the essayist at least will go down "unknell'd, unconfined, and unsung."

In point of antiquity at least the bee is deserving of honor, since it in all probability, was a native of the garden of Eden. I wonder, in those halcyon days of the early purity and innocence of man, when the long and beautiful days must have seemed to the two human inhabitants an endless paradise of glorious summer, if the beautiful silence was ever displaced, or perhaps, made more restful, by the "humming and the thrumming" of the bee, as it winged its drowsy flight from blossom to blossom gathering the honey that must have been spread with such a lavish hand in that queen of gardens.

But, besides the insect, there are other kinds of bees clamoring for notice. There is the missionary or church sewing bee, where noble-hearted women assemble to fashion, with loving hands and prayerful hearts, garments for the inhabitants of benighted lands, and when every fold of the garment is perfumed with the prayers of the mothers of the land, that the Giver of all good may be gracious to their own sons and daughters, who may be breaking the bread of life, and speaking of the beautiful garments of immortality, to the recipients of those mortal garments.

Then there is the common, every-day sewing and quilting bee, where the younger ladies of the community gather, and stitch into their work the same sweet fancies that were stitched by their mothers, a score or more of years before, and that is all now. I am a woman myself, and I am not going to libel my sex by admitting that there may be bitter fancies and rivalries woven into the meshes of the quilt, or that the most fortunate in the neighborhood, that day, are the ones present at the bee, so as to be able to defend themselves should occasion offer. Then, what pioneer of this country has not a vivid recollection of the logging and chopping bee, which the people from miles around gathered, with kindly hearts and willing hands, to help the new settler make a home for himself in the wilderness?

I don't know to what family the above mentioned bees belong, but I sincerely trust that the insect bee, whose name is indicative of loyalty, royalty, patriotism and thrift, has no occasion to feel ashamed because its name has been given to those gatherings. The insect bee, to which I purpose directing your attention, is a member of a very large family of the order *Hymenoptera*, and is found in all parts of the world. Naturalists tell us there are two hundred and fifty species of bees known as natives of Britain alone, and I presume that means 250 different kinds of torture for the inhabitants thereof.

Amongst the ancient Egyptians, the bee was the hieroglyphical emblem of royalty. I do not know whether it became the emblem of royalty to them from the fact that something analogous to a monarchy, has frequently been mistakenly supposed to exist in a bee hive. True, there is one of the members of the hive known as the queen, who, at certain seasons, is the object of particular regard on the part of all the other members of the hive, but only because the instincts of all its members, are variously directed towards her, at that time, as one indispensable to the objects for which the bee community exists, but beyond the fact of having this attendance upon her, those who make a study of the subject tell us there is no evidence whatever, of anything like authority exercised by the queen.

To modern nations the bee furnishes an example of all that is inspiring and patriotic. The patriotism is there at any rate. You don't find the members of a bee community taking exception to the way in which the affairs of their kingdom are managed. There is no clamoring for promotion, but each in-

sect fills the place for which it was intended, without questioning. They all co-operate towards the common benefit of the community, and agree that "Union is strength," since in repelling invasion, or avenging aggression, the whole community become as one, inasmuch as their several energies are directed to the one object of the preservation of their hive. And as to the inspiration, no one can deny that an interview with a bee, that means business, is decidedly and intensely inspiring. The interviewed is inspired with feelings of—well, they need not be recounted here, as every one who has had the pleasure (?) of an interview with the bee, can supply the ellipsis to suit himself.

There are different orders or classes in a bee hive, all the divisions being with a view to the permanent good of the members. There are the workers, who are formed for the part they are expected to perform, viz., to collect and carry the food for the community, and for this purpose their bodies and legs are partially covered with feathered hairs which serve for the purpose of collecting the pollen which adheres to them. In addition to these hairs they are supplied with a sort of feathery brush, with which they brush the pollen adhering to them into a hollow in the outer surface of the hinder pair of legs, so that the pollen is thus safely carried to the hive for food for the bees. The drones and queens, who form the other two orders in a hive, are never employed in collecting pollen, and are, consequently, not adapted for that particular kind of work. The drones of a hive evidently understand and appreciate the fact that they are not expected to labor, since they are the most delightfully graceful idlers in the universe, (some human drones excepted) though their bird-like pleasure is short lived, since after swarming the greater part of them are massacred by the workers of the hive—a lesson, surely, to us, that there is no rightful room in the busy hive of life for the lazy drones of society, though, I certainly would not altogether countenance the deliberate massacre of the human drones.

As a mathematician, the bee can prove Euclid mistaken, when he said "There is no royal road to learning" since it is a geometrician par excellence, and reached that state, too, without any of those weary interviews in which the human student questions the advisability and accuracy of the great mathematician's geometrical plans, but, in which the student invariably comes out second best. Look, for example, at the mathematical ingenuity exhibited by the bee in the formation of the cells in the comb of the hive. They are hexagonal in form, the shape which, as every mathematician knows, will combine the greatest economy of space and material, since the hexagon being perfectly regular, there can, therefore, be no interstices between, and consequently every atom of space is economized. Besides the hexagon, the bee constructs other mathematical figures of various forms that are necessary to the strength and continuance of the hive. And then in respect of the construction of these mathematical figures, the bee is away ahead of the human student again, for it never makes mistakes. All its proceedings are founded on sure and infallible principles, and you never find a bee unwise enough to question those principles. The bee furnishes a lively testimony to the proverb "Familiarity breeds contempt." With what supreme and wholesome contempt for the insect are you permeated after an interview, in which the bee, to say the least of it, has been decidedly familiar; and how feelingly you remark to yourself that you will keep it at a distance evermore.

What a lesson is furnished to us, too, in the provident industry of the bee. Observe, will you, how instinct, which is merely a blind impulse as far as the bee is concerned, leads it to provide for a possible future, to care for its young, to provide, in fact, in every way for the healthful continuance of the community; while man, whose superiority over the insect is asserted in the fact that he is provided by the Creator with reason, the noblest of all God's good gifts to man, will look upon to-day only as the day before to-morrow, and defer being prudent to old age, looking forward to a promise of wisdom as a patron of his latter years, and who when he arrives at old age finds that his years have far outstripped his wisdom, and that he has now neither the opportunity nor the capability for the wisdom that might have been his portion had proper prudence been exercised in his earlier years.

In studying the habits and work of the bee, we cannot help referring the instinct shown in their work to a higher power, which makes the insect subservient the highest ends for which it was created, and we must conclude also,

that the Creator in showing his perfect work in the bee has also shown his perfect love to man. May we have in a measure the true philosophy displayed by that wise insect.

"Wiser far than human seer,
Yellow breasted philosopher:
Seeing only what is fair,
Sipping only what is sweet,
Thou dost mock at fate and care,
Leave the chaff and take the wheat.
When the fierce north western blast
Cools sea and land so far and fast,
Thou already slumberest deep:
Woe and want thou canst not sleep:
Want and woe which torture us,
Thy sleep makes ridiculous."

Autumn.

WRITTEN FOR THE BEE PIONEER NUMBER.

Now Autumn brings the golden days
That fill the air with smoky haze;
She brings for us the lisp'ing breeze,
And gentle murmur in the trees.
Upon that bough a vacant nest,
Forsaken by its feathered guest,
No more we'll hear the sweet refrain
Until the birds come back again.
The gray leaves flutter all around,
Beneath your feet a rustling sound;
The leafless boughs no beauty bring
Till they sprout forth in bud in spring.
The waving fields of golden grain,
Made ripe by sunshine and by rain,
Are waiting now the farmers scythe,
The piteous crop makes him so
blythe.

Behold! the harvesters are here
To gather in the golden ear,
And as Christ taught while here below,

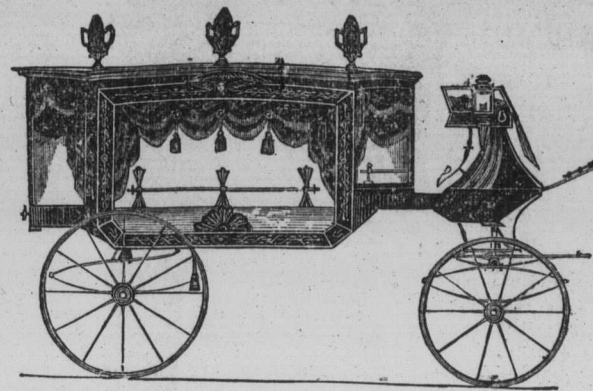
The fragments all away to stow.
Now to the orchard wend your way,
And gaze upon the rich display:
The loaded boughs bend to the root,
Displaying all their luscious fruit.
The ripest lie upon the ground,
Scattered in rich profusion round;
The sky looks wan and dreary now,
The clouds, they pass, they fly, see how
Each one in swift pursuit does go,
Casting a shade on all below.

The waving, moaning Autumn trees,
They weave right royal robes of leaves,
Then why, Oh wherefore do they sigh?
It must be sweet, so sweet to die.

But lovelier things, Oh Autumn trees,
Than thy rich dress of brilliant leaves,
Do wither, fade and droop and die,
'Tis only meet that you should sigh.
One glance at nature in decay,
Reminds us life is but a day.
Too short to spend in foolish strife,
In living out an aimless life.
We want an object great and grand,
An ideal not built on sand;
And may we strive to attain,
Although our brightest hopes be slain.
Too high we cannot fix the mark,
O may Christ be the central spark;
And pressing forward in the name
Of Him who was for sinners slain,
We'll conquer and at last rejoice
We harkened to that still small voice.

—Violet Snow.

Berlin, Oct. 14, 1890.



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