

For the Canadian Bee Journal.

The "First Book" of the O. B. K. A. Library.

THROUGH the courtesy of our Secretary, Mr. Wm. Couse, I have enjoyed the privilege of reading a little book, inside of which I found a slip of paper, with the following memorandum on it: "Amateur Expert has great pleasure in forwarding this, the first response to his appeal in the columns of the *British Bee Journal*, for the O.B.K.A. Library." In his address at the recent annual meeting, Ex-Pres. Pettit said, "The foundation of an Association Library has been laid, the first book of which was a present from our good friend, T. W. Cowan, Esq., F. G. S., F. R. M. S., etc." Two queries arise in view of the quotations just made: Are "Amateur Expert" and T. W. Cowan, Esq., one and the same person, or have we a start of two books instead of one, towards the library?

If this is the first and only bee-book as yet in the library, the start is a truly modest one, as the volume only contains 48 pages. But it is proverbial that "from small beginnings great results do spring," and let us hope this may come true in the present instance. This little work is entitled: "A Bee-keepers' Experience in the East, among the queen-raisers in the North of Italy and Carniola." The author is Thomas B. Blow, Esq., F. L. S., of Welwyn, Herts., a noted English bee-keeper, and supply dealer. This is the kind of book our friend D. A. Jones might have written after his Oriental tour, but he didn't do it, the more's the pity.

As I am to forward the book to Mr. McKnight for his perusal, I presume the intention is that it shall "go the rounds" among those members of the Association who may desire to read it. So I will give some brief account of its contents, and a little taste of its quality. Mr. Blow started on his journey, Dec. 11th, 1881. He touched at Algiers, but did not stay long enough to investigate the bees of North Africa. The next port was Malta. Here he found that the bees were black, which raised a suspicion that the bees of South Italy and Sicily were black,—a suspicion confirmed by Mr. Benton in the *British Bee Journal*. The bees of the Eastern shores of the Adriatic are black, and Mr. Blow is of the opinion that the yellow Ligurians of North Italy, were originally from the extreme East, and were imported long ages ago by the Romans, and have become a distinct local variety.

Cyprus was visited, and some time spent with Mr. and Mrs. Benton at Larnaca. Then follows an account of a journey inland for the purchase

of bees, during which a variety of incidents and adventures befel the traveller. Between fifty and sixty stocks were bought, about twenty per cent of which were lost on the voyage to England. In Cyprus, bees are kept in long narrow cylinders of baked clay, which are piled one on top of the other to the number of 60 or 100, the entrances not being a foot apart. Mr. Blow scores a point in favor of bee-houses, in view of this; or rather, takes the opportunity of rebutting one of their supposed disadvantages. He says: "I bought between fifty and sixty stocks, and in no case was a stock queenless. The great disadvantage of a bee-house is supposed to arise from the queen mistaking the entrance. If the eastern queens can find their entrances thus readily in a pile of 50 to 100 hives, they must either have better discernment (a point in their favor,) than English queens, or this objection to bee-houses is unfounded."

Mr. Blow is of opinion that the Cyprians and Syrians are almost identical. The queens are very prolific, and the brood is raised in compact, solid masses, no patches of comb being left empty. He considers the bees better workers, more active and strong than the common English strains, though just a trifle smaller. He admits their irritability, and considers the Syrian the worse of the two, but says that an experienced bee-keeper can handle them readily enough, without gloves. Most readers will be surprised at the following sentence: "When these bees are angry, they seem to be cautious in stinging, but attempt to bite in preference." I don't think I have ever seen any true Cyprians or Syrians, if the statement just quoted is correct. Those I have met with were very incautions about stinging, and I never knew one that preferred to *bite* rather than *sting* me.

Mr. Blow thinks a great many inferior queens have been imported, and that those bee-keepers have secured the best results who have carefully bred from the choicest specimens, instead of constantly importing queens. He traces the prevalence of dysentery and even foul brood to careless importation. He cites the case of one "unsuspecting British bee-keeper," whose apiary was utterly ruined by the introduction of foul brood in this way. He found that many dealers in queens on the continent were only agents who bought indiscriminately from country folk and knew nothing whatever about bees themselves. The moral is to import sparingly and only from competent and trustworthy breeders. Though Mr. Blow visited a large number of apiaries, he says:—"I can count on the fingers of my right hand all those who know anything about their business, and there are 'less than five' who take