

CAN A WOMAN RUN AN APIARY?

Indexed

Miss E. Robson, Ilderton.

When Mr. Hodgetts wrote me some time ago, asking me to prepare a paper for the Ontario Bee-Keepers' Convention, he suggested the rather grandiloquent title, "A College Girl's Success With Bees." It had an alluring sound quite like a modern magazine article, but it was scarcely warranted by the facts. Although I have perhaps had the privilege of more educational advantages than most country girls; yet it is as a country girl I come to talk to you to-day, hoping that the story I have to tell may have something in it of incentive or encouragement for other girls who, like myself, have to find some outlet for their energies.

As for my success, if success only meant the doing each year a little better than the year before, and all the satisfaction which this brings, then I might reasonably claim it. Success, however, always suggests the thought of things accomplished, of finality; and to this I have no claim, for I am only a beginner.

As I debated with myself as to a more suitable subject I recalled a conversation with Mr. Pettit in which he had told me that he was often asked by the girls at Guelph if a woman could make a success with bees, it occurred to me that this paper of mine might in some measure, at least, prove a practical answer to the question; hence the title I have chosen. In preparing my paper, I have endeavored to suggest what it is possible for a woman to do rather than to give information as to how to do it. This the woman who determines to take up bee-keeping can get from much more authoritative sources. I am not presumptuous enough to suppose that anything I may have to say can be of much value to our experienced bee-keepers. It may, however, help in a small way to open up a field of healthful and remunerative employment for women.

In considering a woman's chance of success in bee-keeping, we have to take into consideration many of the same conditions which confront her in taking up any line of work, other than the one in which she is universally acknowledged pre-eminent—that of home-making. Although economic conditions have altered greatly in the last few years, and women can now demand a fair remuneration for their work, yet as a class we enter into any business activity under a heavy handicap. In the first place, we are not trained for business. We grow up with no well-inculcated sense of responsibility. Then, public opinion does not demand it of us. If a man fails to make good along some line of industrial activity, we put him down as an all-round failure. A woman is judged by a different standard; her business capacity is incidental; and perhaps, most important of all, it is only in rare cases that women have families dependent on their economic efforts; as a class we lack the tremendous stimulus of home and wife and children dependent upon us. Handicapped in this way, it is not possible for us to successfully compete with men. I rather think it would be a mighty poor thing for the race if we could. Yet this is no reason for sitting back in helpless idleness while there is a possibility of work to be done. Quite apart from the purely commercial aspect, it is imperative for a woman's happiness that she have some employment that will absorb her energies. Luther says of the human mind that, "It is like the millstone in a mill; put wheat under it and it grinds and crushes the wheat into flour; put nothing under it, and it still grinds on and grinds itself away." We have to adjust ourselves to the changing conditions of the last century. Many of the industrial activities that belong almost exclusively to the home, and hence were woman's work, have moved to the factory. The housewife of to-day does not have to be proficient in many things which before were considered essential.

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