

History and Nature

(Victoria)

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eight references in the Old Testament, and one in the New Testament. "Wax" is mentioned four times in the Old Testament. Is there another insect, I may ask, with such beautiful similars of reference, either to itself or product, as we find in the following:

We read of Solomon advising the "Son of Man to eat honey," because it was good, at the same time cautioning him not to eat too much.

We find Jacob sending honey with the best fruits of the land as a present to Joseph.

Samson regaled himself with honey out of the lion's carcass, from which incident he gave his famous riddle, which ruined his domestic happiness: "Out of the eater came forth meat; out of the strong came forth sweetness."

We find it was promised that the Christ Himself was to eat butter and honey, "that He might know evil from good."

These passages are quoted to show the value and significance in which honey was held by the early inhabitants of this earth, and the great importance of the bee in connection with the early formation of various vegetable products, for honey-gathering, from a naturalist's point of view, is only a secondary consideration.

Honey ranks in the estimation of the Egyptians with their choicest fruits, spices, myrrh, etc. It is referred to as indicating a beautiful, fruitful country—"flowing with milk and honey"—and it really is so—even in preference to the accompanying milk, for a country may produce grass and milk while being a long way deficient in that serenity of climate necessary to produce flowers and honey; it indicates warmth and moisture, and that fruitfulness not absolutely necessary for the production of milk. Consequently, it has in Scriptures been referred to as something above the average of earthly production.

All the Oriental countries have their native species of this insect, showing that the bee was associated with man in the early settlement of the world, and indicates, I think, that it was designed to fulfil some important work in the vegetating of this earth.

We also find that it follows man in the march of civilization—first in Asia, then in Europe, and lastly in America and Australia.

We have the Egyptian, Assyrian, Tunisian and the Cyprian bees, and as we march northward we have the Italians and Carniolians, and the Brown bee of Germany. The earliest bee-keepers, or people to domesticate the bee, were the Egyptians, who kept the bees in earthenware jars and cylinders, in a most primitive way. They are also kept in hives of bark, just as it is stripped from the tree, formed into cylinders, and placed on the ground in a horizontal position; the ends are stopped up with clay and cow-dung, with a hole for the bees to enter at one end. When the owner wants any honey, he knocks out one end of the cylinder and makes a dense smoke by burning dried cow-dung, letting the smoke drift into the hive, which subdues the bees; the honey is then taken from half the hive, the hole plugged up again and the hive turned round. The bees then start to build up again, and by this method half of the comb is renewed each year, keeping them whiter and of more marketable condition, the same as the native Cubans do to this day. The Egyptian authorities collect a tax of from seven to thirty cents per hive, according to size.

The second part of my paper will embrace the natural history of the subject:

Belonging to the order "Hymenoptera" or membranous-winged insect family, "Apheda," with several types of genera, the genus *Apis Mellifica*, or hive bee, is the one under consideration.