

THE STORY OF THE BEES.

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Almost every one has, on some drowsy midsummer day, stood before a hive of bees, as close as he dare, and watched with absorbing interest the small portion of their daily toil he was able to see going on around the hive entrance, and has wondered what operations were carried on within that busy community.

If the hive is of a comparatively modern form—one with movable combs set within wooden frames—it is an easy and safe matter to open the hive, take out the combs, and watch its inmates by the hour. Bees do not know one person from another, except as one learns their whims in order to deal with them peaceably; they are annoyed by persons standing in *front* of a hive and interfering with their flight to the hive. It is not well to wear woolly or black clothes when among bees, because the hereditary antipathy of bees to the bear is aroused if they catch their hooked feet in woolly clothes or hairy wrists; bears, on their part, keep up their traditions by destroying many telegraph poles in searching for bees' nests, on account of the humming of the wires.

Place a veil of leno over your head, get a bee-keeper's smoker, and puff a few whiffs of smoke in at the entrance to the hive. This drives the sentinels, who are looking for robber bees, into the hive; gently lift up the cover and blow half a dozen puffs over the tops of the frames. The smoke causes the bees to go down into the hive; each one dips head first into a cell and fills herself with honey and is then as good natured as a man after a full dinner. Now with a screw-driver pry a frame loose and lift it out. On a warm day all the combs may be taken out and leaned against the hive. One should be careful not to make rapid movements as if inviting a fight, and should avoid crushing the bees or jarring the hive.

One will first notice that it is at the top of the combs that the honey is placed. This is for the sake of convenience in feeding the brood below, just as in a stable, the hay is stored in the loft. Honey, as such, does not exist in flowers but is really *made* by the bees. The bee has a very long under lip of reddish color, which can very readily be seen when in use; and with this she laps up the nectar that is contained in flowers. This nectar passes into a sort of crop and there undergoes a chemical change, which gives it certain medicinal qualities that make it curative of colds. This is honey. The bee gathers a load of twice its own weight. One can easily notice how a loaded bee drops heavily upon the alighting board, almost with a thud, or, missing it, falls into the grass before the hive and pants and struggles for half an hour to reach the hive. Each bee fills one cell at a time. The honey, as it is carried into the hive, is nine-tenths water, most of which has to be removed or the honey will sour. The bees accomplish this, especially at night when they cannot work in the field, by standing in rows before the entrance of the hive; and there, in rank after rank all along the bottom board and up on the combs, their heads all pointed towards the interior, with abdomens thrust