

From the American Bee Journal.

THE POETRY OF BEE-KEEPING.

THE past season has been for me the busiest of my life. Five hundred colonies of bees, a business larger than ever, students to instruct, a large and varied correspondence, increased and interesting experiments and inventions, have all contributed to overwork, yet have made life seem of more importance, and better worth living. I offer the foregoing facts as an excuse for my delay in expressing my thoughts upon reading Rev. W. F. Clarke's little poetical work devoted to our chosen pursuit, and recently presented to the public.

Although I had the honor of reading it in manuscript and proof, it was not until this week that I could command the time to read it in its complete, corrected, book form. As is stated on the cover, the reading is "lively," "entertaining," "practical"—ay, and more, it is spicy and replete with wit and wisdom. But this is not all; Mr. Clarke's "Bird's-Eye View of Bee-Keeping" is not only terse, plain, vigorous, and pointed, but being all in rhyme, it makes the strongest impression upon the reader in the fewest possible lines. In the preface the author asks if the poetry has all gone out of bee-keeping. Allow me to answer that question by asking how poetry could desert a pursuit so beautifully and closely connected with nature, that is

"In every charm supreme!  
Whose votaries feast on raptures ever new.  
O for the voice and fire of seraphine,  
To sing the glories with devotion due!  
Blest be the day I 'scaped the wrangling crew,  
From Pyrrho's maze, and Epicurus' sty;  
And held high converse with the god-like few,  
Who to th' entraptured heart, and ear, and eye,  
Teach Beauty, Virtue, Truth, Love and Melody."

Is there not always as much poetry in the works of nature as the observer is capable of receiving from it? In other words, is not the poetry in the brain that looks upon the scene? Next to field sports I have found bee-keeping best calculated to arouse the poetic sentiment within. Who can stroll over the fields during this month, watching

"The pollen-dusted bees  
Search for the honey-les  
That linger in the last flowers of September,  
While plaintive morning doves  
Coo sadly to their loves,  
Of the dead summer they so well remember,"  
without a heartfelt gladness that the poetic sentiment is in the world, and that he has received a share.

Mr. Clarke has well claimed that in apicultural literature there is room, yes, a demand for thoughts delivered in rhyme, for is it not true that

"Sages and chiefs long since had birth,  
Ere Cæsar was, or Newton named;  
These raised new Empires o'er the earth,  
And those, new Heavens and systems framed:  
Vain was the chief's, the sages' pride!  
They had no poet, and they died.  
In vain they schemed, in vain they bled!  
They had no poet, and are dead!"

I consider the book uncommonly instructive and correct in its teachings, considering its brevity and that it is written for beginners.

Without attempting to eulgeize all of the many well-put assertions that I consider correct, nor criticize the few that do not agree with my experience, I will not pass without merely mentioning my pleasure at noting Mr. Clarke's truisms, wherein he states that beginners should seek a location clear of other bees; should not expect to get rich in a minute; and should not urge every one to embark in bee-keeping. I endorse what he says about the treatment of angry bees, and scores of other things too numerous to mention here.

I cannot agree with him about the fitness of bee-keeping for ladies; I fear his great gallantry has led him astray. We do not agree on hibernation yet, and I think few will agree with his statement (on page 15 of his book) that hybrid bees show greater tendency to swarm than pure Italians. The German bees from whence came the cross, are, I believe, conceded to be the most non-swarming race.

I cannot agree with him on page 20, that any honey-producer should wear gloves of any kind. I believe such would be left far behind in the race. I know of no more appropriate place to apply the old adage, that "Cats with gloves on catch no mice." I would hardly want queens reared in the manner mentioned on page 29; yet this may be only a matter of prejudice. We all know that Mr. Clarke

"Sometimes raises scruples dark and nice,  
And after, solves 'em in a trice;  
Like one who purposely had 'catched'  
The itch, in order to be scratched."

On page 10, he speaks about arbitrary prohibition of persons keeping a few bees, as though this prohibition was of man's rather than nature's law. That the specialist can produce honey at a price that the dabbler cannot, is a law of nature that no one can change.

Taken all in all, looked at from my standpoint, I find, as compared with other books, very little to criticize as compared with the much to commend. I have placed the little work in my apicultural library, with a feeling of pride and satisfaction, and it is with perfect assurance that I say that it is worth many times more than the 25 cents asked for it, to any bee-keeper, as well as to many that never expect to keep a bee.