LOCATING AN APIARY—POLLINATION, ETC.

[Prof. A. Cook, in American Bee Journal]

There is no one question that ranks in importance, or which should receive more thoughtful consideration by one just starting in bee-keeping, than that of location. Of course, one's surroundings of people, scenery and climate are important, but one can hardly go amiss of pleasing prospects in these lines anywhere in our favored country, and so we have only to look to it that we secure the conditions that make for success in our chosen line. At the present time we have knowledge that makes it possible to select wisely in relation to this crucial point.

We now know that excessive rains and, even more, drouths are inimical to nectar secretion, and so make against any large production of honey. In nearly all sections where we depend upon natural honey plants, like white clover, tulip, linden, sage, mesquite, etc., we are always more or less dependent upon the rainfall, and so can have no surety that we will have favorable seasons and get a crop. But even supposing that the rains are rightly gauged, and we have everything just to our liking, yet the cold of the spring and early summer, especially if attended with harsh winds and heavy fogs, will stay the secretion of nectar and work of the bees, so that we will still lament the absence of honey. In our quest, then, of the ideal honey location, we must seek some section where both these handicaps are wanting.

In Nevada, Central California—the great San Joaquin Valley—Arizona, Colorado, the County of Imperial and the Coachella Valley in Riverside County, California, we have our honey plants in cultivated crops, like alfalfa, beans, melons, asparagus and various kinds of fruits. These are not dependent upon the rains at all, but are kept in full vigor by irrigation. Thus we are sure that we will have the conditions for full nectar-secretion, and we have gained the first essential point.

Again, these sections are inland valleys, where the cold and damp, and the blighting winds, are not prone to come, and so the nectar-glands are not blighted, and the bees are not forced to stay in the hives. have we not, then, in these locations the best sections for a sure honey-production of any section of the world? I have long thought so, and the experience of the last years seem to make this surmise a certainty.

Bees and Pollination

Despite the many excellent articles in our agricultural press, regarding the necessity of pollination of plants, and the valuable service of bees in this work, I am sure that the importance of the subject is not at all appreciated at its real magnitude. We do not practice intensive agriculture as they do in Europe. Our rich virgin soil, and general thrift as a people, make it unnecessary, and so we are content to get the half loaf. when the full-sized one might as well be secured.

Who has not seen far too often the dwarfed and deformed strawberry and blackberry, and even the pear and apple, and has rightly divined the cause? Do we realize, as we should, that this imperfection, and the more frequent entire absence of fruit, is the result of failure of bees or other insects to cross pollinate the fruit? I am persuaded that many fruits will not bear at all without this important function on the part of insect pollinators, and the great part of this work must be done by the bees of the hive, as there are by no means enough of the other pollen-carrying insects to do the work.

Other plants will bear when all conditions are favorable, but will refuse to do so when weather or climate lays a heavy hand on the growth and vigor. Such plants will not refuse when the flowers are cross-pollinated. In some cases a part of the bloom will be fertile to its own pollen, while other will be seterile. The deformed berry is the result of only partial pollination. Gnarly apples and pears