

### The Kabyle Bee.

The April *Revue* contains a description of the Algerian bee by M. Feuillebois, of Beni-Amram. In some English and American papers a correspondent claims to have found in Tunis a special race, which he calls Punic, or *Apis Niger*. We know nothing of such a race, and only know of one race which is found along the whole of the North of Africa (Egypt excepted), and which we call the Kabyle bee, or black race of Kabylia. Why has this name of Kabyle been given to this race? Because it is in Kabylia that the beekeepers on a large scale are found (I know one who has one thousand two hundred hives), and it is from Kabylia that the merchants obtain the bulk of their honey and wax. The inhabitants, who are without doubt the descendants of the Vandal emigrants in Africa, have maintained themselves in these mountains of Kabylia for centuries since their invasion. Therefore I think it is to them that the honor of the name of beekeepers should be given and not to the Arabs, who are only nomads. The Kabyle lives in a stone house, whereas the Arab has nothing but his *gourbi*, which he changes from place to place nearly every year. The Kabyle is very intelligent, and he even practises migratory beekeeping; when he has made a first harvest of honey on the low grounds, he transports his hives to the mountains on the backs of mules, and does not bring them down again until the second harvest has been gathered in, for the purpose of wintering them in the plains. It is the Kabyle who has cultivated bees for centuries.

In the month of April we had the very agreeable visit of Mr. and Miss Cowan; we shall always remember this visit and ask them to come again. We heartily invite them, and will be doubly pleased if Mr. Bertrand would honor us also with a visit. The editor of the *British Bee Journal* wanted to ascertain for himself on the spot if there was any difference between our bees and that of Tunis; he found none. Our bees received him very badly, and he was compelled to say they were vicious.

This is the third year that we have cultivated Kabyle bees here, always having more than 100 hives. I think this is sufficient to know a race thoroughly. Very well! our bee is a good worker; does not fear heat or cold: although the snow in 1890-91 covered our hives for three days, I did not lose a colony. But whether this would be the same in the cold countries of Europe I could not say. They are very prolific, often too much so. If they get the swarming fever, they continue to swarm

persistently, and the last swarms consist of a few hundred bees surrounding a queen. These swarms are not worth anything, and no more is the stock in the end. I have often remarked that in an apiary there are some hives that occupy themselves principally with swarming. Others, on the contrary, busy themselves with collecting honey. But as a rule our bees have a mania for swarming. It has happened to me that I have found hives with twenty-six frames of brood. I correct them of this fault by removing half the brood, and use it for strengthening recent swarms, or to make others. If the brood combs contain sufficient honey, part of it may be extracted, then, the hive containing half the combs empty, the colony will busy itself in hunting for honey, and probably in a few days these industrious workers will supply us with combs fit for extracting.

If the Kabyle bees are inveterate at swarming, they are equally so at propolizing. We frequently require an iron implement to detach the frames. In winter they, of their own accord, reduce the entrance with propolis, and the quilt is firmly fixed to the frames with the same material.

As to robbing, they rival in this respect their sisters of Palestine. In the autumn not more than eight to ten hives can be examined at one operation. Then the work must be suspended, and not resumed for at least half an hour, and it is only in this way that the robbers leave you at peace. In Palestine we wished to continue our work notwithstanding the robbers, with the result that two hives were pillaged and the populations massacred, but we also acquired experience. Very frequently, if there is any robbing going on, it is the beekeeper who is at fault. Moreover, we are in a land of thieves, and people as well as animals try to appropriate what does not belong to them, and what has been acquired by so much labor and fatigue.

The Kabyle bees are vicious, but not worse than those of Palestine, which fly at a man and at once begin to sting, whereas ours commence by biting, and it has sometimes happened to me that, owing to my not moving, they have gradually retired.

I will for a long time remember an attack in Palestine, a short time after my release from military service, when I was terribly ill-treated. A year later two of my brothers were similarly attacked, as were also a camel-driver with his two camels, and two donkeys, who were killed by the stinging.

Let us, however, return to our bees, which are extraordinarily vicious this year. Gentle and docile at times, and easy of management, they become dreadfully savage when honey begins to flow, or