

BEE-KEEPING

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Bee-Keeping by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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BY

"THE TIMES" BEE-MASTER.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON,
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1864.

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189. g. 3.



P R E F A C E .

MY apology for writing a Bee-Book is as follows:—I sent *The Times* an account of a very successful honey harvest about the end of July, containing some observations on the treatment of bees, and the profits that might accrue to the cottager were he to take the right and humane way of taking honey from his hives. This communication appears to have interested many, for in consequence of it, persons desirous of information wrote to the Editor of *The Times*, requesting in confidence the name of the Bee-master, in order that they might correspond with

him. The Editor declined to give it up without my consent, which I felt it expedient to withhold. But to satisfy those who took so warm an interest in the subject, I addressed a series of letters to *The Times*, explanatory of some of the simplest elements of apiculture. These excited so great interest, that I received multitudes of letters addressed to "*The Times Bee-master*," which it was physically impossible to answer. But most of my correspondents complained of the obscurity and complexity of bee-books in general, and earnestly begged me to prepare a work they could understand and translate into practice. I have attempted to do so, strengthening my own observations by valuable extracts from the works of others. I am not, however, insensible to the great value, wide research, and real usefulness of the works I have carefully and long read. The first and most useful, as well as most beautiful modern work on bees, is "*My Bee-Book*," by the Rev. William Charles Cotton, M.A., student of Christ Church, Oxon. It is

profusely illustrated, and is the most genial and instructive work on bees it has been my lot to read. I have felt so great an interest in this good clergyman, that it often occurred to me to try to ascertain where he was and what he was doing. My own communications to *The Times*, among many interesting letters, brought me one signed "An Australian," which, though long, contains amid much interesting matter some notice of the author of "My Bee-Book." The reader will not, I am sure, complain of its length.

SIR,—It may be interesting to you, whose letters in *The Times* have so delighted me, to hear that my experience in *Australia* of the habits, instincts, and affections (if I may so apply the word) of your little favourites is identical with your own. From early childhood I shared my father's interest in his pets; and at one time I could have counted upwards of ninety hives in the two apiaries which he kept for his own amusement, and for the encouragement of those who were willing to keep bees. Everyone was welcome to a swarm who cared to ask for one. I

may give some curious facts as to the sagacity and gratitude of these insects. During the prevalence of the hot winds, it sometimes happens that the delicate comb melts, and the first indication is a stream of melted honey and smothering bees. I have been called to the rescue, and have taken up honey and bees in my hands, placed them in a basin of tepid water, and spread my fingers as landing-stages until all capable of restoration have plumed their wings and buzzed gratefully away, and so on until order and comfort was restored to the disturbed hive. I *never* was stung on any occasion whilst working amongst the bees, and only twice that I remember, and then by meeting an angry bee accidentally in the garden. The buzz of an angry bee is quite well known to their lovers. On one occasion a swarm met my sister, and actually began to settle on her hand and arm. She knew their ways, and walked very slowly on (of course surrounded by bees) until she found what she considered a comfortable bough, under which she held her hand. The queen adopted the suggestion, and after a few minutes' patiently standing amidst the confusion, she quietly retired, and, as *you* will believe, unharmed.

Of course we could not house all our swarms, so they

went off to the woods and found habitations in gum-trees hollowed out by the action of fires through the bush. I recollect one swarm, however, belonging to a neighbour, which preferred its old quarters, and actually built the combs and filled them with honey *suspended* from beneath the shelf upon which the hives were ranged in the open air. Its ultimate fate I do not remember.

Bees have many enemies in Australia ; the greatest is probably the sugar-ant. To protect them from these intruders, we had the hives ranged on shelves, the supports of which stood in wide vessels of water, alike a protection against other foes. The apiaries were built open in front and ends, against a wall, with thatched roof and overhanging eaves ; and there was a space between the shelf on which the hives stood and the wall, where one could sit or stand and watch them ; for most of our hives were square, made of wood, with glass sides and wooden shutters ; and the bees were so accustomed to be looked at, that they kept their side of the glass quite clean, and generally built a smooth surface of comb next the glass, leaving space to move between the comb and the glass ; and I have often seen the queen, surrounded by her admiring subjects (exactly as you describe) making her pro-