

Lizzie E. Mrs. Cotton

*Bee Keeping for
Profit. A New
System of Bee
Management (1891)*

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PREFACE.

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In presenting this work I have no apology to make. After an experience with bees dating almost from childhood, and a careful study of all works published on the subject of bees, and the journals devoted to that particular branch of rural affairs, I find theory, guess-work, prejudice and selfish motives are so prevalent, as to confuse and discourage the beginner, and finally, all who are seeking after information by which they may make bee keeping a source of profit, and who wish to adopt a correct and scientific system of bee management.

In my early efforts at bee keeping, I met with many failures and heavy losses, from being confused by the contradictory teachings of selfish or ignorant bee keepers, and from a lack of that personal knowledge which experience, and a close study of the nature and habits of bees, has now placed in my possession. After many unsuccessful experiments, and careful investigation, and a close study of the natural habits and instincts of bees, I have succeeded in inventing a hive and new system of bee management which completely changes the whole process of bee keeping, and renders the business safe, pleasant and profitable.

The hive and system of bee management recommended in these pages, is entirely original with me and is not patented. I invented the hive and plan of management for my own use, as I am engaged in raising honey for the market, and wish every swarm of bees I keep to produce the

greatest amount of surplus honey, and in the most convenient and attractive marketable form. I am induced to place this work before the public at the earnest and oft repeated requests of friends and correspondents. The work has been hurriedly written, as I had but little spare time to devote to this matter, consequently sentences are not all, perhaps, grammatically arranged. I have made the beautiful of secondary importance to the useful. I have endeavored, however, to make my statements so clear as to be readily understood and comprehended by every person of intelligence, although he may be wholly unacquainted with bee keeping.

Every person, who has a farm or garden should keep bees, at least one or more swarms, to furnish honey for the use of the family. There is no greater luxury than nice honey in clean, snow-white comb in nice glass boxes, such as is produced by my new system of bee management. This best of all sweets is now within reach of every one who has a plot of ground large enough to set a hive of bees upon.

After bees are once located in my hives but very little expense is required to keep them in proper condition, so that they will give a good quantity of nice box honey every year.

Under the old methods of bee keeping, bees required a great deal of care and attention, especially during the summer season. And then the winters were very destructive to them, many often losing their entire stock; or if they were not a total loss, they were so damaged by the winter as to be of no profit, and two severe winters in succession were quite sure to finish them.

This was very discouraging, and many have abandoned bee keeping, entirely discouraged.

On my plan a complete revolution is effected in bee management, as will be shown in this work.

There is in my opinion no pursuit which offers greater inducements than bee keeping, especially to women. There are very many who are confined indoors nearly the whole time, excluded from the air and sunshine, to the great injury of their health; and after this sacrifice they barely succeed in obtaining a livelihood. To such, bee keeping offers great inducements, such as improved health, and a handsome recompense for all labor performed. I am acquainted with many who have commenced bee keeping on my plan, who are meeting with complete success. A lady bought a swarm of Italian bees of me in 1874, and she writes me that from that one she increased her stock to over twenty swarms the third season; besides she got over one hundred pounds of nice honey from the swarm I sent her the first season. Here I wish to be clearly understood; I do not wish to hold out inducements which will never be realized, for the purpose of causing any one to commence bee keeping; yet I believe bee keeping on correct principles should be encouraged, until bees enough are kept to collect all the honey now allowed to go to waste, and which if collected by bees and stored in nice glass boxes, would add millions of dollars to the wealth of the country.

Since the day I introduced my Controllable Hive and New System of Bee Management to the notice of the public, the worthless bee hive swindlers and their tools have been boiling over with wrath against me, lying and slandering me

through the public journals, and especially through the Bee Journals, and all because, that I, a woman, had succeeded in inventing a bee hive and a new system of bee management superior to anything yet produced, and which was fast coming into use on its merits, among bee keepers: consequently the sale of other hives was decreasing in the same proportion. I first perfected the hive and system of management for my own use, with no thought of making it public; but through the kindness of my personal friends and others who have visited me to enquire into the new system, it has become known from Maine to Oregon, and adopted by many of the most intelligent bee keepers in the United States. And in compliance with that command in the good book which reads—"Let your light shine," I am determined to spread the truth, regardless of all opposition from the ignorant and selfish crowd which is constantly attacking me.

Without egotism, I claim a thorough knowledge of the habits and instincts of bees. Consequently I claim a thorough knowledge of the requisites of a hive, and all fixtures pertaining to it, as well as a knowledge required to make bee keeping successful and profitable and all this has been acquired in the school of experience and practice.

Kind reader, I respectfully submit the following pages, and ask for them a candid and unprejudiced consideration. Read carefully and understandingly, and apply to bee keeping, and I feel certain you will realize many times the cost of this book in the increased profits of your bees, managed as here directed.

The statements herein set forth are the result of many years' practical experience with bees with a view of making

the raising of honey for market profitable, and the general management of bees successful.

MRS. LIZZIE E. COTTON.

WEST GORHAM, ME., Aug. 5, 1880.

Since the publication of the first edition of this work, in 1880, and the use of the Controllable Hive for more than twelve years, I find only a very few minor points in the hive which can be improved. I have made a complete revision of the hive and all fixtures, with the view of correcting every imperfection, however slight, and I feel certain that the hive as now arranged is perfect in every particular.

Thanking my patrons for past favors, and respectfully soliciting a continuance of the same, I present the third edition of this work, and invite to it the careful and unprejudiced consideration of every one who may read its pages.

MRS. LIZZIE E. COTTON.

WEST GORHAM, ME., Jan. 1, 1891.



CHAPTER I. HONEY BEES.

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A

A SWARM of bees contains *one* Queen, thousands of workers, and in the summer season a limited number of drones. The queen is the only fully developed female in the swarm. She never leaves the hive except on two occasions —when leading a swarm, and when but a few days old, to meet the drone, or male bee, in the air, for the purpose of fecundation. It appears from close observation that only one impregnation is operative during life, as old queens have never been known to leave the hive for that purpose.

The natural life of a queen averages from four to six years. Queens sometimes become entirely barren before death; at other times the eggs of old queens are found to produce only drones. No matter whether deposited in drone cells, or worker cells, the progeny will be drones invariably. When drones are reared in worker cells, they will be very much dwarfed in size, notwithstanding the worker bees

attempt to overcome the difficulty by lengthening the worker cells to accommodate the monstrosities. The queen has a sting yet she may be handled with impunity, for she will not use it except when in deadly combat with a rival queen. She receives the most marked attention from all members of her family; deprive a swarm of their queen, and they will, as soon as the loss is known, manifest the greatest agitation and alarm, and if the swarm is one just hived, and only a few hours from the parent stock, they will all return at once to the old home. They appear to fully realize the vast importance of a mother, and that with no means to supply her place they must soon perish; and to avoid their impending fate they return to the old hive. With old stocks deprived of their queen the result is different, as will be shown further on. Every one who keeps bees should strive to become familiar with the appearance of the queen, that they may be able to recognize her at a glance among thousands of workers, as it will often be necessary to look her up in my new system of bee management. In looking for the queen in full hives, she is usually found on the brood combs, unless in opening the hive she may have been frightened and taken refuge in some hiding place, at the corner of the hive, at the bottom ends of the comb-frames, or some similar hiding place. After we become familiar with her appearance and movements we are able to find her quite readily, even when the hive is crowded with bees.



The worker bee is much smaller than the queen. On the worker devolves all the labor of the swarm. They collect honey, pollen or bee bread, and propolis, or bee glue. The workers produce wax from honey, and from the wax they build comb, in which to store the honey and bee bread they collect, for their own use in time of need. Wax is produced from honey, as butter is produced from milk. Bees do not collect wax, but they collect honey, which by a natural process in the stomach of the bee is changed, and exudes from between the rings of the abdomen in minute scales of wax, which is detached by the bee and moulded into comb. The worker bee possesses a sting, and is ever ready to make use of it in defending home and treasure. This is a wise provision of nature, for were it otherwise, the other insect and animal tribes would appropriate the treasures of the bee—honey, wax, etc., and this industrious little insect would soon become extinct.

The worker bee possesses an instinct but little inferior to reason in the human family. A few examples will show their wonderful instinct: Twenty hives of bees, placed in a row, but a few inches distant one from the other, all of like size, shape and color; the bees to our perception exactly alike, no difference in size, shape, color or action;—yet every bee of this vast number (which at some seasons of the year would

amount to more than six hundred thousand bees) in these twenty hives knows its own hive, and if let alone will not enter any other, except it be for the purpose of securing the honey therein for its own use, or in other words to plunder and rob its neighbor. There is no intercourse between swarms; each is a separate colony governed by a queen. If through mistake the subjects of one enter the domain of another, a war of extermination is commenced at once. To test this point, I changed two hives so that they were reversed, the one occupying the place of the other. This was done while the bees were out collecting honey in a warm day. The first bees that entered the hive were instantly killed, and this was kept up until the hives were set in their proper places. The ground in front of the hives was covered with hundreds of dead bees. A bee is killed almost instantly by the sting of another.

The young bee on its first excursion from the hive does not leave its home without precaution. With a view to a safe return, it turns its head towards its home, rises slowly on the wing, at first describing a circle of only a few inches in diameter, as it recedes slowly backward, seeming to so mark every object surrounding the hive, as to enable it to return and enter, without the slightest danger of entering any other hive. Bees in spring, in their first flight, mark their location in this manner. After the location has been thus marked, the bees leave the hive in a direct line, and return by their way-marks with perfect accuracy and regularity.