



## The Present State of Beekeeping in Italy

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Just a century ago, Robert Kerr, an Ayrshire cabinet maker, improved and simplified Geddie's octagonal tiering hive. This, the Stewarton Hive, revolutionised honey production in Scotland. At the Crystal Palace Show in 1874, the honey in Stewarton supers took England by surprise; and John Hunter, the great English authority, in his *Manual of Beekeeping*, 1875, confessed that "the cottagers of Scotland far exceed the English in the ability they display in beekeeping."

About the time of Robert Kerr, there was a peasant in Carluke in Lanarkshire, named James Pettigrew, who was widely known in Central Scotland and far beyond as the "Beeman," on account of the wonderful knowledge of bees and their ways that he possessed, and of the surprising returns he obtained from his hives, even in years when others harvested little honey or none. A son of his in 1870 issued *The Handy Book of Bees*, a practical treatise on their profitable management. He proved conclusively the necessity for large hives, if one desired bumper crops of honey. The results he gave, from his father's experience and his own, showed that in those days with comparatively primitive appliances, large straw hives, and intelligent handling, the native brown bee could produce such quantities of the finest comb honey as are seldom obtained in the standard hive of to-day even by the most intelligent beekeepers. Sixty years ago, William Thomson of Blantyre ("The Lanarkshire Beekeeper") claimed to be the original introducer into Scotland of comb foundation, and in 1862 he had embossing plates made and was ready to supply the British market, before the first German plates had reached this country. He gained the prize offered by the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland for an Essay on Bee Culture, which was a wonderful and worthy production for a man in his position in life. The name was altered to *An Essay on Bees* when it was published in Glasgow in 1882.

The last half century produced a large number of interested and progressive beekeepers in all ranks of life. They have done much to introduce improvements in appliances and to popularise the industry. Many of them have already passed away; and it would be a great advantage if a series of sketches of these worthy beemasters could be obtained, whilst still the memory of the men and their work survives. But those who do survive felt more and more the necessity for the starting of a Scottish Beekeepers' Association to do the utmost possible for the industry and the beekeepers and the country.

In the year 1874 representatives of local beekeeping societies, some of which had been in existence for upwards of a century, met in Glasgow and resolved to form "The Caledonian Apiarian and Entomological Society," Mr. R. J. Bennett, Glasgow, being the first Hon. Sec. In the following year the society had an Exhibition in conjunction with the West of Scotland Horticultural Society. In 1876, an Exhibition was held on the occasion of the meeting of the British Association at Glasgow. In 1877, the Exhibition was held in Edinburgh under the banner of the Highland and Agricultural Society; and since then the Exhibitions have taken place wherever that Society had its Annual Show, and there the beekeeping fraternity used to meet and devise.

The Caledonian Apiarian and Entomological Society, however, having served its day and generation, was in 1912 succeeded by the Scottish Beekeepers' Association, which resolved to confine its energies and operations, as the name implies, to promote in every way the art and practice of beekeeping in Scotland! The first Hon. Sec. was Mr. G. W. Avery, Bee Lecturer at the Edinburgh Agricultural College, and thereafter Messrs. A. A. Blair, J. L. Gibson, Charles Meal, and Henry Crombie, M.A., have held the office. Under the able guidance of these gentlemen, and a worthy succession of Presidents elected annually from different districts of the Country, the association has progressed far beyond expectations. In 1914, an effort was commenced to link up all existing beekeeping associations in Scotland, and, had not the war intervened the results would have been still more gratifying than they are. Almost every part of Scotland is now represented on the S.B.A. either by Associations or Associates; and the good work accomplished has been recognised by an annual grant from the Scottish Board of Agriculture of £100 towards carrying out the objects of the association.

The S.B.A. possesses a very valuable library of beekeeping literature, presented to it by J. W. Moir, Esq., Edinburgh, a former President and the present Hon. Treasurer of the Association. The catalogue contains upwards of 400 different volumes, and these are placed freely at the service of the members. The S.B.A. has a list

of voluntary speakers ready to deliver lectures on beekeeping and to assist in the starting of Associations in any part of the country; and its excellent sets of Lantern slides are available, without any charge whatever, for the use of any of the Association branches or members. In order to raise the general standard of apiculture, the S.B.A. has organised an Examination Scheme and issues certificates in Practical Beekeeping: *The Beemaster* certificate (B.: S.B.A.) and *The Expert Beemaster* certificate (E.B.: S.B.A.) In the first year sixty candidates from many parts of the country qualified as Beemasters and twenty-five as Experts; and of these 13 were ladies.

The Board of Agriculture for Scotland, as we have seen, has in a very practical way encouraged the Scottish Beekeepers' Association, and its Chairman, Sir R. P. Wright, LL.D., is one of the S.B.A. Hon. Vice-Presidents. In conjunction with the Board of Agriculture the S.B.A. is undertaking the compiling of a census of beekeepers and bee hives in Scotland. It also seeks in every possible way to co-operate with the three Scottish Agricultural Colleges, each of which now has two lecturers in beekeeping, and re-stocking apiaries and schemes in full operation. For the courses of lectures of these lecturers the local branches of the S.B.A. in many districts make all the arrangements and seek to make the courses as successful and profitable as possible. As indicating the friendly relationship between the S.B.A. and the College lecturers it may be mentioned that this year the Association has chosen for its President John Anderson, Esq., M.A., B.Sc., E.B.: S.B.A., of the Aberdeen College, who is so well-known in many lands by his interesting articles in the Bee Journals, and by his valuable researches into the causes, consequences and cures of bee diseases.

The S.B.A. also publishes bulletins and leaflets on beekeeping questions of moment and distributes these by the thousand; and there are many who look upon this as one of the most valuable services rendered by the Association. It has also appointed contractors who supply the members with bee goods and appliances at wholesale prices; and its market committee fixes the price of honey from time to time, and has appointed depots where the surplus honey of members may be disposed of at not less than the price so fixed. The Association, however, has no financial or other interest whatever, in the appointing of these contractors and depots, beyond the benefit of the branches and the members.

The Annual Exhibition is still held in connection with the Highland and Agricultural Show, which visits the important districts of the country in rotation. The only disadvantage of this connection is that the Show is held rather early in July for Scottish beekeepers to have a good honey exhibition, unless the season happens to be a particularly early one. But there is a great advantage in having an Exhibition annually, even if often the honey show is comparatively poor, especially if it is held in different parts of the country; for thus every ten years at least, there is the opportunity for every beekeeper to see for himself how his appliances and produce compare with others from the rest of the country. And the Conference held in connection with these gatherings brings together those who have the interests of the industry specially laid on them, and who in time become acquainted with the conditions and the needs of every district. And such friendly meetings of those who have this common interest, many of whom, however, from distance or circumstances cannot take the active part in counsel and administration that they would like, are of immense value in the exchange of experiences and the forming of friendships, and in bringing it about that beekeepers in Scotland, at any rate, are among the most genial, brotherly and hospitable of men. The Scottish Beekeepers' Association has fostered this tendency, as all who have been brought into touch with them gladly acknowledge. In Scotland we have our own problems, and many of us have plans and methods of our own; but Scottish Beekeepers are liberal minded and ready to examine any new appliance or practice, and, on due consideration, to adopt it, if it seems an improvement. And with an open mind all the problems that arise will be courageously faced in the future as in the past by the S.B.A.

## The Present State of Beekeeping in Italy.

By A. ZANINI, general manager of E. Bozzalla's Queen Rearing Apiaries, Crevacuore, Italy.

The disorganisation of most industries caused by the Great War has unfortunately affected Apiculture as well. Whilst in France and martyred little Belgium that which was not directly destroyed

was stolen, in Italy skeps and fixed comb box hives were consigned by the thousand to the Sulphur Pit by the honey profiteers and hoarders, whose energy increased in direct proportion to the price of the only substitute for sugar. The sugar ration was less than half a pound per person per month (enough to sweeten slightly one cup of coffee per day!) during the war. Little wonder then that the bee murderer set to work with renewed zeal. Skep apiaries which before the war comprised several hundred stocks are to-day reduced to a few colonies and in many cases have been effaced completely.

In contrast to other countries like America, France and Belgium whose governments have passed laws for the protection of beekeeping and beekeepers, in Italy apiculture is completely ignored by the government. Were it not for the few enthusiasts, it might be said, with truth, that the useful and industrious little insect is absolutely without a friend. As for the apiarist, the only person who takes an interest in him is the Surveyor of Taxes. This gentleman has heard or read something about the profits to be obtained from bees, and assesses the taxes for the apiarist accordingly. What has been written and done up to the present notwithstanding, it is the firm conviction of Italian beekeepers without exception that they must look to themselves for progress without any hope of government support either moral or material.

It may seem paradoxical to say so, but it is the fact that the Italian bee, sought after and appreciated throughout the world is ignored by those entrusted with the government of "The Garden of Europe." We have, 'tis true, the State Apiaries, but they are in the hands of private individuals and are old decrepit, lifeless institutions and hence worse than useless.

The best organisation in Italy is "**La Federazione Apistica Italiana**" with headquarters in Ancona. This Association, thanks to its active and energetic management, has been able to establish an important and powerful position for itself, and is progressing and developing well under enterprising management. It promises well, although up to the present it has limited its activity to the sale of the produce of its members.

The Central Association for the Encouragement of Apiculture in Italy, after an existence of more than half a century, ceased activities last December under certain impelling circumstances which do scant honour to the Italian Government.

The demand for swarms and skeps of Italian bees principally from France and Belgium, who have to set about restocking is enormous, but the Government on the principle of locking the stable door after the horse has bolted have prohibited the export of swarms, stocks and nuclei. If the Authorities had prohibited the wholesale slaughter of bees during the war, there would be more honey available now for home consumption and bees for export to help the country re-establish itself in its former economic position in Europe. You may callously consign a poor little colony of bees to the fumes of burning sulphur without let or hindrance, but you may not export the bees to help your Allies to re-stock themselves and to help improve your country's foreign exchange. Sic!

A permit can be applied for authorising the export of a stock or a swarm, but if and when the permit is granted the time has long past for the bees to be of any use to the customer. To add to this, the railway service has degenerated to such an extent as to make safe delivery practically impossible.

There are in Italy apiaries devoted to the rearing and sale of Queen Bees second to none in the world. These establishments are conducted on sound lines both apicultural and commercial, some of which, known in all foreign countries where beekeeping is practised on modern principles, are important commercial concerns with a steadily increasing value to their proprietors and to the country. Whilst these apiaries are flourishing the same cannot be said of the country in general. What I.O.W. disease has done for Great Britain, the sulphur pit has done for Italy. It is up to all who have the interest of beekeeping at heart in Italy to do their utmost to acquire the maximum number of skeps possible this summer, save them from destruction and thus do what the Government refuses to do, i.e., prevent the country being further reduced in number of bees. Some of the more progressive apiarists have already made a start, but unless the transport conditions improve, their efforts to save the situation will have been in vain.

In regard to restocking other countries, it is not possible to guess what the Italian Government intend to do, but even should the embargo on export be removed this Spring, there will be very little

to export, and for this year at any rate beekeepers in allied countries will have to content themselves by limiting their requests to queens.

It is to be hoped that in the interests of all, this deplorable state of affairs will soon improve and that beekeeping will come into its own in all the allied countries.

## Research Work in Queen Rearing.

By GILBERT BARRATT.

Recent research work, consisting of experiments in drone egg fertilization, may be of interest to some readers of THE BEE WORLD, considering that they disprove the theory advanced by Simmins and Dieckel, that all eggs are fertilized, and that drone eggs are defertilized by the workers. These experiments afford therefore a final confirmation of the theory of parthenogenesis.

The almost unique nature of the bee's egg lies in the fact that the fertilizing element from the drone enters from the outside of the egg, after it is fully formed, and immediately prior to its extrusion by the queen. This makes the artificial fertilization possible, and without the aid of elaborate and costly appliances.

The writer would here mark his deep appreciation of the work of the great Cheshire, the study of whose wonderful labours made these experiments possible.†

In speaking of worker eggs, the popular term will be adhered to, and whilst most bee books speak of the marvellous manner in which the workers can raise a queen from a worker egg, the reverse is actually the case, and the miracle performed thousands of times oftener, since the queen is bound to reproduce herself each time she lays a fertile egg, and the rearing of workers from queen eggs the more wonderful occurrence. In the experiments here recorded, freshly laid drone eggs from a pure golden queen were secured, by placing a frame of clean drone comb in the centre of a strong stock, and here it may be stated that the use of eggs two, or three days old will always result in failure. The comb containing these eggs was cut down, and pure Punic drones, just arriving in the hive from a flight were squeezed on to a warmed glass plate. The necessity of using drones on a return from flight is shown in Cheshire's beautiful description, when the air sac being fully distended, the expulsion of the male sperm on to the glass plate is rendered a readier and more certain operation. This squeezing of the drone demands some practice before the spermatophore can be ejected. It is necessary that all these operations be conducted at a high temperature, from 95 deg. Fahr., seeing that natural fertilizing occurs at the internal temperature of the queen's body, and whilst the male sperm is possessed of a high energetic vitality, the homologous element in the egg requiring little muscular effort, will not be so full of energy, and therefore more easily chilled, which would result in the imperfect coalescence of the two germs, or not at all. Imperfect coalescence would probably result in the production of hermaphrodite bees, a freak which must have been noticed by most observant apiarists. Hewitt mentions a queen he possessed, furnished with corbiculae, and instances of workers with drone heads, workers with drone legs, and drones with stings are recorded by Cheshire.

The next operation was to touch the large end of the eggs with a camel hair pencil, previously dipped in the male sperm from the glass plate. An eyeglass, as used by watchmakers, is a most useful article in this, and many other operations in the apiary, notably in the transferring of larvae in queen rearing. The eggs were next placed in an incubating chamber, maintained at 97 deg. Fahr., a small poultry incubator answering the purpose very well; the next day, a little royal jelly, slightly thinned with new honey was added with the hair pencil again on the third day, and on hatching, were further fed with royal jelly for two days. The transfer to artificial queen cups, in the manner familiar to all modern queen breeders was then effected, these being given to a queenless and broodless stock of bees. They were duly accepted, capped over, and resulted in perfect queens, proving that the male spermatozoon had entered the micropylar aperture of the egg, and produced fertilization.

Punic drones were used in the foregoing investigations, because, as the Punic is intensely black, and possesses other characteristics, the greater contrast would be provided.

† Cheshire's Scientific Bee-keeping.