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BEE KEEPING

BY MR. UDO TOPPERWEIN, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

A Prominent Member of the Texas Bee Keepers Association.

PROGRESSIVE civilization and increasing population make their demand upon the natural productiveness of the earth, and we who are informed stand amazed at the natural resources of that great empire known as the State of Texas. Oil in inexhaustible quantities has awaited for centuries the magic touch of the driller's hand to burst forth, filling the multifarious channels of usefulness. Gold, silver, iron, zinc, lead and nearly all other metals known to science have been discovered within our confines; and they only await the necessary preparation for their extraction to enrich the world. The virgin soil of our northern tier of counties only needs the plowshare's tickling process to yield of all the known cereals a quantity sufficient to support a population as dense as that which finds a livelihood in Europe's most crowded section. The southern part is composed of soil that produce rice enough to feed more people than at present call themselves Americans, while the cotton that comes from this same section is more than is needed to clothe them.

These statements are simply facts, and it is a source of great pride to us that we are thus supplied with all the staples of life. In fact, such a condition may be regarded as the sure foundation for any exultation we may feel when our attention is called to the possibilities of our State as a producer of any article or commodity that may be called among the luxuries. Especially is this true when one of those luxuries may be produced in such abundance as to be entitled to classification among our staple products; and this may be said of honey. Demonstrated results have already placed it almost in a class by itself, while the possibility of its further development promises to make of it one of our chief sources of revenue. Indeed and in truth is Texas like the Canaan of old, a land that flows with milk and honey.

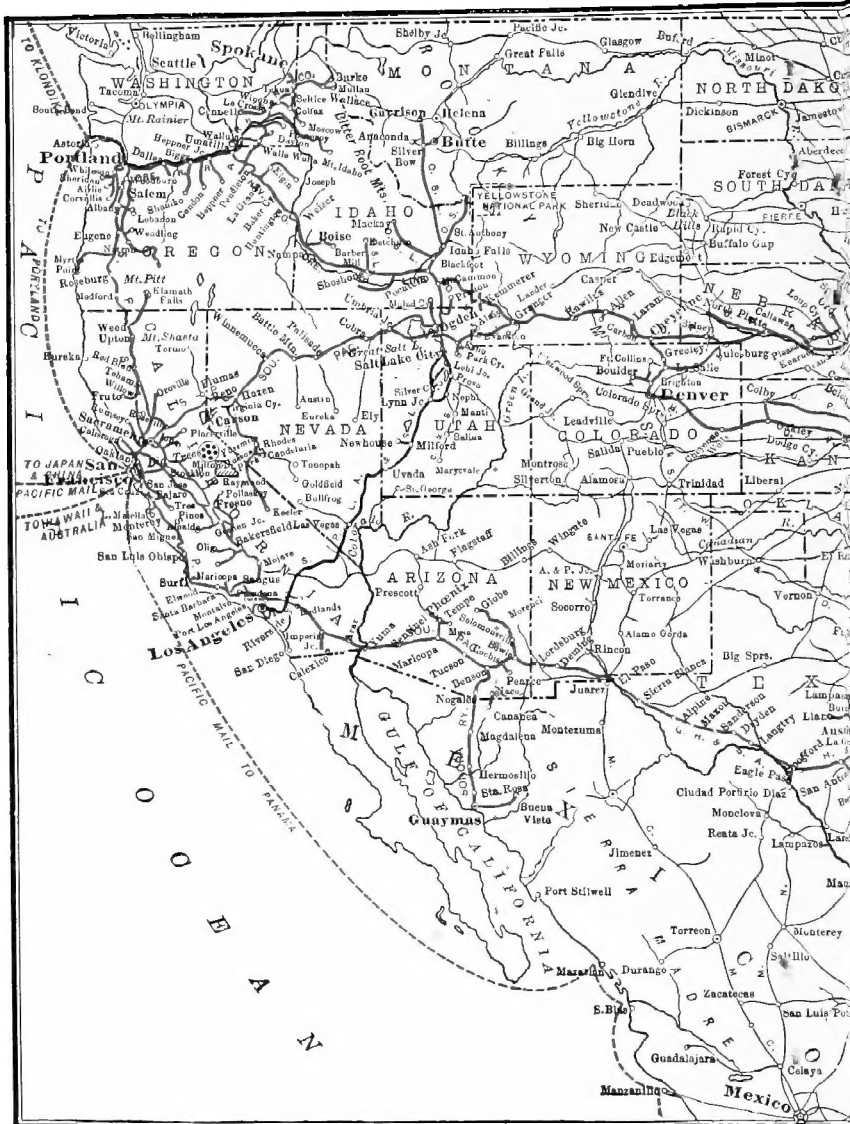
The vast number of wild bees that were found in Texas attracted the attention of naturalists from very early days, but the raising of bees and the harvesting of honey on scientific principles is of recent inauguration. The im-



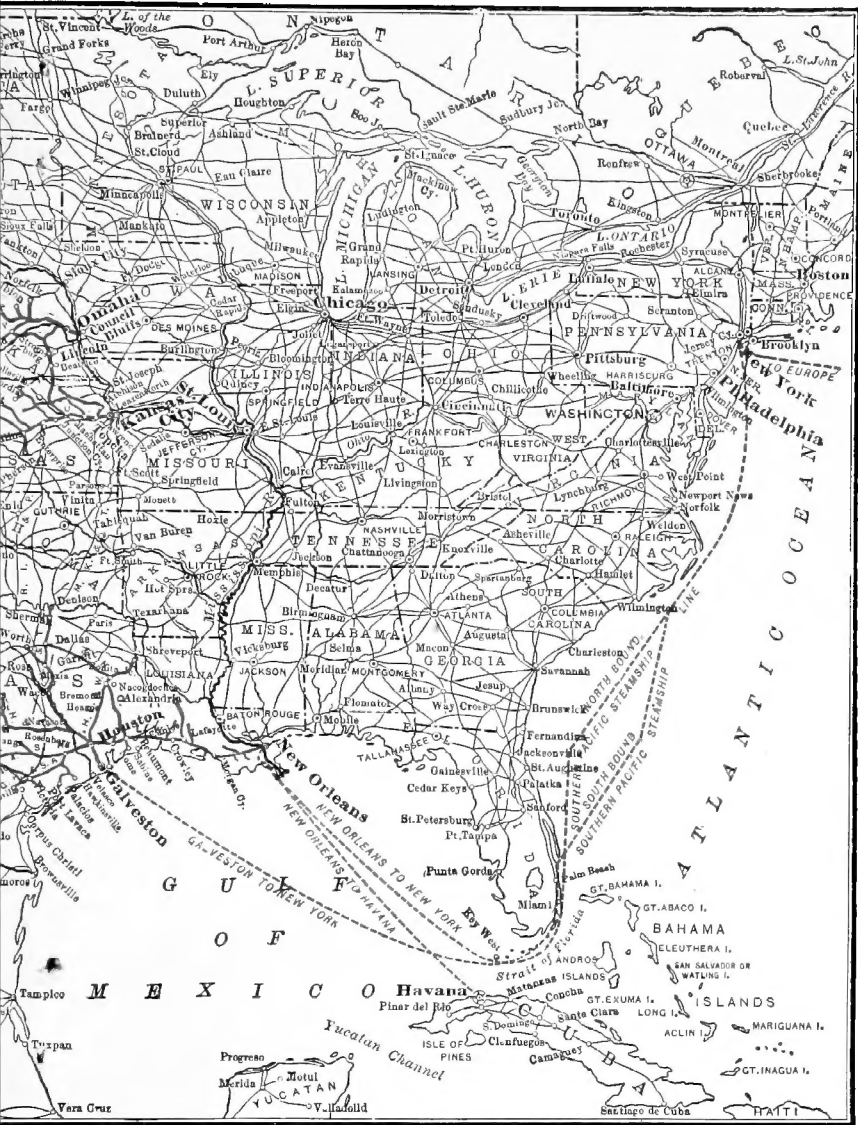
portation of the large Italian bee, that seems to have found its natural home in Texas, was an experiment that has proved a blessing. Her product probably is not superior to that of the native little black bee, but it is greater in quantity, and she is found to adapt herself more readily to domestication and the improved methods for saving the result of her tireless energy. The result has been that nearly all of those who have made bee-keeping a business have the best bees, and have prepared themselves to conduct their business in order to reap the greatest financial benefit from it, and their success has been greater than they anticipated. As evidence of this, it may be stated that according to the most recent and most reliable statistics, in fact, nothing less than the last Federal census, Texas produced during 1899 nearly \$500,000.00 worth of honey, taking the first place in the sisterhood of States as a producer of that very necessary as well as luxurious adjunct of a well regulated menu.

The above figures are nearly four years old, and since that date bee-keeping has kept on developing at a rate that makes it safe to say that the value of the product for 1907 will be over \$1,250,000.00, and promises to progress until it becomes one of the chief industries of the State, rivaling in its financial returns any of the staples of which we boast so much.

The charm of the proposition to go into the bee business is the fact that it requires very little capital, and the further fact that the application of the most scientific methods really requires but very little time of the farmer who is sufficiently up to date to take advantage of every means to increase his income, and at the same time diversify his sources of revenue to such an extent that he has no fear that his farm will fail to reward him for his labors from year to year. All he has to do is to furnish his numberless little workers with a properly equipped home; they will board themselves while hoarding up a valuable store for their owner. Every bud in this flower-bedecked region is dripping with nectar awaiting the busy bee in order to be saved for man's benefit. The time will never come when there will be enough of the energetic workers to put a stop to this waste; and there will never come a time when the supply furnished forth by these dew-kissed blossoms will be of such magnitude as to preclude the possibility of a good price being paid for the delightful fruit of the efforts of the unselfish little laborers. Probably the story of bee-keeping, its prospects, and the present advantages it offers, could best be told by one actually engaged in the business. I, therefore, take the liberty of quoting from a friend with



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whom I had a conversation the other day. He is a man who has had wide experience in the business. He is, too, a man of close observation and of most excellent business judgment. He was quick to recognize the profit promised in the culture of bees, and the natural advantages that were plainly to be seen on every hand. My own experience warrants me in indorsing every word that I have seen proper to quote from him. He said:

"Beekeeping is developing very rapidly in Texas, and it is owing to the fact that this State is the natural home of the honey bee. Nearly every plant that we lay our eyes upon produces nectar, and there is no time of the year, from February to December, even during drouths, when the ground is not practically covered with flowers; and in the winters, which are always mild in Southern Texas, there is scarcely a day when bees are not busily engaged in their store-gathering. The attention of every passenger who has ever ridden on the Sunset Route in its course through South Texas has been attracted by the variegated beds of flowers as they stretch out mile after mile; and those who are familiar with the sound recognize at once the hum of the bees whenever a stop is made at any station. The question is natural: 'Where do all these bees come from?' and the answer is truthfully made: 'The woods are full of them.' There is hardly a hollow tree or cave in all this section that has not its colony of bees; and I have often seen bees building long combs and rearing their broods on limbs of trees. It is nothing unusual to find caves with several barrels of snow-white honey stored in them. Kendall, Kerr, Bandera, Edwards, and a number of other counties are noted for their bee caves, and hunters have great sport locating and robbing them. These facts have attracted attention, and the number of people who are going into the business in a scientific way is daily increasing; and yet, in the light of present conditions, it is safe to say that it is utterly impossible for there to be too many bees, or that the supply of honey will be greater than the demand. As it now stands, there are hundreds of carloads of the delicate food going to waste every year, which could be saved and marketed at a good price if the number of high class bees were increased and received the proper attention.

"Uvalde is now shipping honey by the trainload, and the bee-keepers there, as well as in a number of neighboring counties, are actually getting rich at the business. It will not be many years before all the hollow trees are cut, the caves are robbed and the bees put into up-to-date hives; and then we may expect the producing of honey to be one of our chief industries. It may surprise some to know that

even now there are in Texas, bee-keepers who own over a thousand colonies of bees. Within a few years such a number will not be an unusual thing.

"It may be asked, how is the market for honey, and what about freight rates on supplies? These are natural questions, and were anticipated so long ago that they have been satisfactorily settled to meet present conditions; and that very fact has assisted materially in developing the business to its present proportions. There are several large honey buyers in the State, and they pay a good price for all the honey offered, and they in turn ship it to distant markets. We raise what we call bulk comb honey. This is simply comb honey packed in cans and extracted honey poured over it to fill the space. We use three, six and twelve-pound friction-top cans and sixty-pound square cans. The friction top cans are round in shape, and twenty three-pound cans are placed in a case, while ten of the six and twelve-pound cans and two of the sixty-pound cans constitute a case. The friction top cans make very nice shelf packages, and are becoming very popular. We honey dealers contract our whole crop in the winter and early spring at the following prices, f. o. b. our nearest railroad station: The sixty-pound cans, $8\frac{1}{2}$ cents; twelve-pound cans, $9\frac{1}{4}$ cents; six-pound cans, 10 cents; three-pound cans $10\frac{1}{2}$ cents. All we have to do is to haul the honey to the depot, take the bill of lading to the bank and get the cash.

"In the matter of supplies, it will be gratifying news to all those interested in the business to know that the A. I. Root Company have established a large branch house in San Antonio, where they sell everything a bee-keeper needs at factory prices.

"As those who are informed know, according to the last census, Texas is the leading State in the production of honey and the value of apiarian products. It 1899 there were produced here, 4,780,254 pounds of honey, and 159,690 pounds of beeswax, valued at \$468,527.60. We produce nearly a million more pounds of honey than any other State, and bee-keepers from other sections, who are aware of our advantages, are locating every year in our midst. In nearly every portion of Texas bee-keeping pays, but it finds its best place in South and Southwest Texas, where the flora is so extensive and so well adapted to the production of honey. Texas has never known an entire failure of the honey crop, which is something that can not be said of any other State in the Union. For these reasons I believe South and Southwest Texas to be the best bee country in the world, and a section in which entire confidence can be placed in the production of a honey crop every year, thus

making it a staple and certain source of revenue to those engaged in it. As yet there are millions of acres in this section where no bee has ever yet made its appearance, and the opportunities and prospects for developing are unlimited."

The above conversation proved very interesting to me, and, as can be easily imagined, I took copious notes of it for future reference, and they have herein served me a good purpose. To the remarks quoted I have very little to add. I will state, however, that while bee-keeping is remunerative, it is at the same time very interesting and it costs very little time and money to conduct it, even where it is depended upon for a livelihood. While you are resting or asleep your thousands of little workers are busy in your interest, and all they ask is to be let alone in their determination to serve you. Their hives can be left on the summer stands the whole winter through and chaff hives are unknown to the Texas bee. The fields from which they reap are co-extensive with the power of their flight, and hardly a plant grows in Texas that does not yield nectar fit for the gods to sip. For this reason I will not undertake to name those that are best adapted for honey-making. The list of those plants not laid under tribute by the bees would be short indeed as compared with that of those that almost drip with honey throughout the year.

Indeed and in truth is Texas a thrice blessed State. The husbandman has only to tickle the surface of the earth to reap this reward; the miner goes down a few feet to be paid in the gushing stream of oil, or to bring forth the valuable metals; while the bee-keeper has only to make a few inexpensive preparations to find a flow of honey in sufficient quantity to fill his stomach, clothe his back and furnish all the other necessities of life. Allow me to repeat, Texas is the promised land, and, like the Canaan of old, a land that flows with milk and honey.

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