

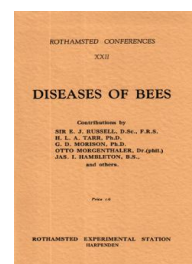
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Diseases of Bees

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Introduction

Sir E. J. Russell

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INTRODUCTION

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THE Conference at which the following papers were read was the third of its kind held at Rothamsted. The Reports of the two previous ones proved so acceptable to beekeepers that the editions were soon exhausted ; a larger edition is being printed this time so as to avoid this possibility. This Conference is in several ways far more important than its predecessors : it gives the results of Dr. Morgenthaler's wide experience on the subject, which he himself came over to present ; it gives also the results of Scottish experience, presented by Dr. Morison, and of American experience, kindly contributed by Dr. Hambleton, who, although he could not be here in person, sent his paper on to be read and printed. Finally it sets out the results of an investigation made here on Brood Diseases of bees by Dr. Tarr, in general consultation with Mr. Morland and Dr. Williams, during the past three years. The work was made possible by the co-operation of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Council on the one hand, with the Beekeepers' Associations working through the British Bee Keepers' Association on the other : the first time such collaboration has been possible, and a great tribute to the organising ability of the officers of the various associations concerned.

As a result of this work Dr. Tarr has been able to establish a clear distinction between American Foul Brood and European Foul Brood ; he has isolated and studied the organism (a bacterium) responsible for the former and is well on the way to clearing up the complexities of the latter ; he has shown that a third disease, the so-called Addled Brood, is very prevalent, and has worked out its cause and indicated a remedy.

The work has been supervised on the beekeeping side by the expert Bee Advisory Committee at Rothamsted and on the scientific side by Dr. Williams and by Dr. Schütze of the Bacteriological Department of the Lister Institute. All the experts who have examined the work agree that it is unusually good and that the results can be accepted as trustworthy.

It is hoped therefore that the investigations can be continued and extended to other diseases of bees, particularly of adult bees.

There is every reason why the work should go on. Interest in beekeeping is undoubtedly increasing. There are no definite figures, no census having been found practicable, but the increase is undeniable. The reason is clear : beekeeping is a very interesting activity for the amateur and a promising line for the professional.

It adds greatly to the pleasure of gardening ; it gives a new interest to the man who has retired from a busy life in the town to a quieter life in the country ; it is an indispensable adjunct to the growing of fruit—which is considerably increasing in this country. Further, it caters for a healthy and growing public demand ; for honey is a healthy food, supplying in a very agreeable form something not easily obtainable elsewhere, and which more and more people are learning to appreciate and desire.

Further evidence of the interest now being taken in beekeeping and in honey production is that a National Mark has been established for honey. Owing to certain difficulties of definition it was found necessary to carry on investigations into the properties of honey ; these have been started at Rothamsted under a grant provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Research Council. It is not unreasonable to suppose that these official bodies were influenced in their decision to bear the whole cost of this work by the fact that the beekeepers were already showing the reality of their own interest in the matter by providing funds for the study of bee diseases.

The Conference, having heard the papers, unanimously carried the resolution moved by Dr. Gregg and Dr. Thompson urging that the work should be continued. It was very gratifying to the Rothamsted Staff that two such well-known authorities should have thus supported their work. We at Rothamsted are prepared to carry on the work : it remains only for the Beekeeping Associations to do their share. With co-operation and good will, success is bound to come.