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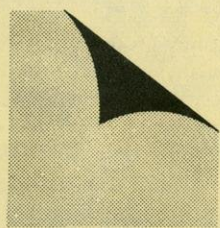
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The Messenger

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Number 18, April 1985

Beekeeping in History and Literature

by Kenneth L. Frazier

(The author is head of the Information Services Department at Steenbock Memorial Library. This article is the introduction to a 225-copy limited edition of a beekeeping calendar printed at the Silver Buckle Press, a part of the Memorial Library. Illustrations accompanying the article are taken from books in the Miller Collection. Copies of the limited edition of the calendar may be obtained for \$25 each (checks payable to the University of Wisconsin) through the Administrative Office of Memorial Library. Offset copies for \$4 each (checks payable to the UW Foundation) are available from Steenbock Library.)

"It is not surprising that there have been persons who have made bees their exclusive study; Aristomaches of Soli, for instance, who for a period of fifty-eight years did nothing else; Philiscus of Thasos, also surnamed Agrius (the 'wildman'), passed his life in desert spots tending swarms of bees. Both of these have written works on the subject."

Aristotle ca. 340 B.C.

Early Beekeeping Literature

The illustrations for the 1985 Beekeepers Calendar are reproduced from books in the Charles C. Miller Collection of Steenbock Memorial Library. The oldest illustration is a woodcut which was originally printed in 1502, and the latest dated work is from a German book published in 1834. Much of the content and inspiration for the first printed bee books were derived from the literature of a far earlier time. The early bee book authors were keenly aware that they were contributing to the development of a craft which had been practiced for thousands of years. They paid homage to the ancient authorities while struggling to apply the new tools of the scientific method. The illustrations selected for the calendar are woodcuts or engravings of a scale which could be successfully reproduced using the letterpress

printing technique. With the exception of the cover illustration, all of the artwork is reproduced in its original size. While the calendar may not necessarily include the best or the most historically important artwork in the Miller Collection, the illustrations do capture some of the charm and spirit of these fine old books.

It is impossible to identify a beginning date for beekeeping or beekeeping literature. Like other forms of animal domestication, beekeeping has its origin in neolithic times. Perhaps the earliest depiction of honey-gathering is found in the rock paintings of the Cuevas de Arana in Spain (ca. 7000 B.C.). In Egypt, references to bees are prominently featured in the earliest efforts at recorded history. The hieroglyph of a bee is incorporated into the cartouche containing the names of the Pharaohs of the

First Dynasty. The bee sign represented Lower Egypt, or literally "Bee-land," while the reed signified Upper Egypt, or "Reed-land." These symbols, combined with the name of a person, gave the title of King of Upper and Lower Egypt until Roman conquerors discontinued the practice some three thousand years later.

With the exceptions of China and Persia, there is evidence that honey-gathering was practiced wherever the species *Apis mellifera* was able to survive in significant numbers. The Bible refers to the "land of milk and honey" and the Vedas, India's oldest literature, contain numerous allusions to bees and honey. Many of the earliest references are undoubtedly to the product of wild bees, but whenever human settlement allowed for sustained husbandry, beekeeping was quick to appear. Egyptian

A Message from the President

Once again it is the duty of the president—and the pleasure of a fellow-member—to invite you to join the Friends of the UW-Madison Libraries.

The importance of the libraries to the University requires no argument. Without them the University would be seriously hampered in its chief endeavor, that of promoting the welfare of the individual and society through education, and find its continued existence difficult indeed. While the libraries are in no danger of extinction—none in the foreseeable future at any rate—they are, and have been, particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of man and the economy. It will therefore come as no surprise to any of you that the value of the Friends to the UW-Madison libraries is greater than ever and the potential for assistance in a variety of ways almost without limit.

Our membership is very small and simply must be strengthened in numbers if we are to provide any meaningful help. Whatever form the assistance takes, whether in monetary grants, purchases of special books and equipment, or of volunteer services, an enlarged membership is essential. How can this be effected? Short of wrestling

to the ground and hog-tying likely candidates, the only means the Board sees as feasible is providing a program so attractive and appealing that all those interested in the future of our libraries will elect to become Friends. To that end we have put together a program outline elsewhere in this newsletter that goes beyond anything previously attempted and is of a quality guaranteed to please.

Perhaps the next most important step taken recently to ensure future success has been the expansion of the Board. In addition to those live-wires from within the University who joined us in the autumn of 1984, Kaye Gopen and John Tedeschi, we welcome three new members from the community at large: Jean McKenzie, Faith Miracle, both from Madison, and Joan Jones from Fort Atkinson. All three are well known for their activities in the University and Madison communities and their devotion to the well-being of both. The Board has been strengthened—no doubt of that—and we look forward to rewarding days ahead.

We need new members; we welcome new members; we ask you to become a new member. For those tried and true Friends, may we remind you to renew your memberships for 1985.

Frank Horlbeck
President

colonists introduced true beekeeping to Cyprus, Crete and Palestine at a very early time. Phoenician traders carried the craft much farther, perhaps to England and parts of northern Europe.

The ancient Greek writers regarded beekeeping as a venerable craft when they first turned their attention to the subject. Zeus was said to have been raised on honey by the Cretan nymphs, Amalthea and Melissa. In another Greek creation myth, Zeus is given over to the care of the Horae, goddesses later identified with the seasons, who teach him the fundamental arts of agriculture: the planting of olive orchards, the making of cheese, and the construction of beehives. The list of writers of classical antiquity who wrote about beekeeping is impressive. Of those whose works have been preserved, the most famous are Aristotle, Varro, Virgil, Pliny and Columella. There were many others, most of whose works have vanished. The first beekeeping library known was assembled by Hyginus, Superintendent of the Palatine Library in the first century, who reportedly collected all the beekeeping works of his contemporaries and predecessors.

Most ancient writers on the subject were primarily concerned with the operation of the apiary rather than with the bees themselves. They gave their closest attention to the arrangement of hives, the availability of shade and water, and the cultivation of honey plants. When ancient writers did comment on the biology and life history of the honeybee, they were often wrong. Aristotle is unique in suggesting that the rulers of the hive may be "mothers," and he is the only ancient authority who declined to report the myth that bees can be spontaneously generated from the decaying carcasses of oxen. Virgil presented both the rotting ox recipe in grisly detail and an equally miraculous theory for the origin of honey, which was said to be condensed out of the air in dewdrops and gathered by the bees. The ultimate origin of honey was in the stars and most particularly from Sirius, the brightest star in the constellation Canis Major. He and others freely stated, without evidence, that bees carried small pebbles for ballast in the wind, that echoes are injurious to bees, and that swarms may be called back with a ringing sound. However, despite their errors, the ancient writings, and especially the works of Virgil, are beautifully expressed. The combination of fable and practical knowledge gave beekeeping a poetic flavor which still lingers. These early works reflect the admiration and affection for bees and the deep love for garden landscapes characteristic of cottage beekeepers of every age.

Early Printed Bee Books

From the time of Pliny in the second century A.D. to the beginning of the seventeenth century, beekeeping practice remained virtually unchanged. Most early books contain little more than repetition of the received wisdom of the ancients. The illustrations in the calendar are reproduced from books published from 1502 to 1834. Although it was a period of great intellectual ferment and the first flowering of scientific inquiry, most writers on the subject of bee culture continued to be profoundly influenced by their ancient predecessors. They quoted Virgil and Pliny in support of their own contentions and to refute their opponents in much the same manner that Biblical scholars cite scripture in theological disputes. Fresh scientific insights are found in the context of the sheerest nonsense.

It is as if these early investigators felt honor bound to support the dogma of the ancients even when it contradicted their own careful observations. One of the first indications of real progress in the knowledge of bee culture was the willingness of some authors to refute the established ideas of the ancient classics. Charles Butler, in the *Feminine Monarchie* (1609), offered the following criticism of the very old idea that a drone was a worker bee that had lost its sting:

"The general opinion anent the Drone is that he is made of a hon-eybee which had lost his sting; which is even as likelie as that a dwarfe, having his guts pulled out, should become a giant."

However eccentric and quaint these authors must seem to modern readers, they did manage to achieve progress in the knowledge of bees. The life history



of the beehive gradually came to be understood in biological rather than mythological terms. Agricultural and beekeeping societies were founded providing for the exchange of better ideas on managing bees. By the beginning of the nineteenth century beekeepers had established sound practices for uniting colonies and gathering honey without killing the bees. However, the scientific and technical discoveries which would

revolutionize the honey-producing industry did not come until the 1850's when the invention of the movable frame hive and scientific queen rearing began to gain worldwide acceptance. In the period covered by the examples in the calendar, romance and science are continually interwoven. These books were written by people who saw themselves as students of nature rather than impartial scientists, and they held a view of nature which was anything but dispassionate.

For most of these writers, nature abounded in moral lessons. Perhaps the most persistently advanced ethical theme was the wisdom, intelligence and industry of the bees. The beehive was regarded as a society in miniature, and the early bee book authors were quick to use the hive as an example or cautionary tale for humans. Present day entomologists cannot be blamed for wondering at their ability to explicate almost any deeply held belief, secular or religious, by citing the example of the bees. Some early works were in fact undisguised political and religious broadsides. One does not have to read past the title of a satire by Phillips van Marnix to understand his real message:

"The Behive of the Roman Church, wherein the author, a zealous Protestant, under the person of a superstitious Papist, doth so drierly repell the grose opinions of Popery, and so devinely defend the articles of Christianity that there is no book to be founde sweeter for thy comforte." (1579)

There are numerous other examples. Moses Rusden, Beemaster to Charles II and a reactionary on virtually all subjects, missed no opportunity to put in a good word for the restored monarchy. He decided to ignore the established fact of the gender of the queen bee lest this anatomical detail give offense to the King. Reverend Butler may have seen the queen laying eggs some fifty years before Rusden, but the idea of a "feminine monarchy" had more credibility with Queen Anne on the English throne.

The calendar project was undertaken with sentimental bias in favor of this exotic mixture of myth, folklore, politics and scientific discovery. The illustrations chosen for the calendar communicate some of the delight which was to be found in examining these extraordinary records of one of our oldest agricultural professions. For all their errors and prejudices, the writers were people who saw themselves as the heirs of ancient scholar-craftsmen. They were the sort of beekeepers who, like Virgil, prepared for honey-gathering with a ritual washing and a glass of wine or small beer to sweeten the breath. We believe that

such people still exist and hope that they will recognize themselves in the calendar.

Miller Memorial Collection

Extensive collections of beekeeping literature are found in the United States, Europe, and throughout the world. In the United States, large collections are held by the National Agricultural Library, the University of California-Davis, Cornell University's Everett Franklin Phillips Memorial Collection, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Wisconsin's Miller Memorial Collection at Steenbock Library ranks among the finest historical collections of beekeeping literature to be found anywhere in the world. Professor H. F. Wilson, custodian of the Miller Collection for twenty-five years, was able to make the following claims for the collection in a letter to University President Glenn Frank dated July 3, 1930:

1. It is the most extensive collection of bee literature in the English language.

2. It contains the most complete collection of German bee books outside the Berlin Zoological Museum.

3. It contains the most complete collection of bee literature in the French language outside the Paris Museum.

4. It is a more complete library of American beekeeping literature than is to be found in any other single library.

5. There are several important and rare books of which only two or five copies are known to exist.

Since active development of the Miller Collection ceased with Professor Wilson's retirement in 1948, it is likely that these claims to pre-eminence may no longer be true. Still, the quality, depth and scope of this collection is obvious from even a cursory examination of the materials. It is a State and, indeed, a national treasure.

The man for whom the collection was named, Dr. Charles C. Miller (1831-1920) of Marengo, Illinois, was one of the most popular writers on the subject of bee culture of his time. The announcement of his death in beekeeping journals prompted an immediate call for a fitting memorial. The idea of establishing a library was popular, but it was more than two years before enough money was raised to support the project. A committee composed of associates and admirers solicited funds, purchased Miller's private library, and presented it to the University of Wisconsin together with a trust fund. Most of the moneys were contributed by beekeepers who agreed to donate the cash equivalent of a ten-pound pail of honey from each year's harvest.

Dr. Miller's personal library was not extensive; its value was chiefly in sentimental association with the former owner. Much of the credit for the development of the collection belongs to Custodian H. F. Wilson. Not only was he active in the efforts to bring the Miller Library to Wisconsin, but over the years he was able to add several very fine private collections to the library. Some of the most valuable individual items were purchased by Wilson out of his personal funds. The most important of his acquisitions was the purchase of the collection of Lt. Col. H. J. O. Walker of Devon, England. The nucleus of the Walker collection consists of 19th century books previously owned by Alfred Neighbor, a manufacturer of apiary supplies and an author of several bee books. Walker purchased the collection from Neighbor's estate in 1890, and from that time until the sale of the collection in 1929, he devoted much time to extending the list of rare books. Funds for the purchase of the Walker collection were donated by Sigurd Odegaard of Madison, Wisconsin, with the stipulation that if ever the trustees of the Miller Memorial Collection decided to move the library to another university, the Walker material would remain at the University of Wisconsin.

Only those materials which are considered rare are housed separately in Steenbock Library. The majority of the Miller Collection, principally journals and standard apiary works, are integrated into the general collection of the library. Although the most valuable portion of the collection is intact and in generally good condition, some of the materials are in need of repair. In the past several years, efforts have been made to improve both the physical condition of and bibliographic access to the collection. Some of the books will be rebound; very fragile materials are being stored in acid-free envelopes. Card sets are being revised and filed in the library's public card catalog. The principal barrier to the effective use of the Miller materials is that the Rare Book Room is in a storage area of the building and is not readily accessible to the public for browsing and casual inspection. The library hopes to eventually be able to move the Miller Collection and other rare materials to a more public area. The long term objective of providing full bibliographic and physical access to the collection will depend on continuing interest in and support for the collection.

Hall and Nielsen Gifts

The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections received two major

gifts during 1982-84 which will significantly strengthen its holdings in continental history and literature. The first consists of the library of Vernon Hall, professor emeritus of comparative literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who taught here from 1946-1983. The Hall collection concentrates on the Renaissance, with special strength in Italian authors. Almost all the books are in beautifully preserved original bindings. We find early editions of Pietro Bembo's *Prose* (Florence, 1548); Lodovico Castelvetro's famous commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* (*Poetica d'Aristotile vulgarizzata et sposta* (Basel, 1576)); the *Dialoghi d'Amore* of Leone Hebreo and the *Dialoghi* on language and rhetoric of Sperone Speroni, both published at Venice in 1558. The collection represents in part the diffusion of culture and contains many translations, among them a French version of works by the Milanese physician, Girolamo Cardano, *Les livres . . . intitulez de la subtilite* (Rouen, 1642), an important addition to our history of medicine holdings. Another notable area of concentration consists of Renaissance editions of classical authors, including a handsome small folio edition of Diomedes' *De arte grammatica* (Venice, 1518), which also contains excerpts from the writings of twenty-five other ancient and medieval grammarians; Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* (Strasbourg, 1688) edited by Isaac Casaubon, one of the greatest French classical scholars; and several works by Sallust and Cicero edited, among others, by Aldus Manutius, and published at Lyons in 1576.

The Hall gift adds to other existing areas of strength in our collections with a beautiful pocket edition of Erasmus' *Colloquia* (Leyden, 1643), a product of the noted Elzevier Press, and an emblem book, *Pia desideria emblematis* (Antwerp, 1628) by the Jesuit Hermann Hugo. The title page is adorned with several ex libris, including one signed "Jo. Manley, bought of the Rector of Irish Dominicans of Lisbon."

Our holdings in the works of a Renaissance scholarly dynasty, Julius Caesar Scaliger and his son Joseph Juste Scaliger, both eminent philologists and classical scholars, took a quantum leap with additions of several new titles. The father is represented by his Latin handbook, *De causis linguae latinae* (Lyons, 1540); his *Epistolae et orationes* (Hanover, 1603) and, finally, by his *Poemata omnia* (In Bibliopolio Commeliniano, i.e., Heidelberg, 1600). Of the son, J. J. Scaliger, there are three seventeenth century editions of his *Scaligeriana*, his observations on a variety of events and personages from history and mythology arranged in dictionary form,

as well as an edition of the works of Julius Caesar (Amsterdam, n.d., but 17th century). As a counterbalance to these scholarly works is a modest little book which recounts the prodigious tale of a Parisian boy who had learned to speak Latin perfectly as if it were his native language without benefit of instruction or rules of any kind, *Examen de la maniere d'enseigner le latin aux enfans per le seul usage* (Paris, 1668).

The second major gift, made in 1984, came from Appleton when Mrs. Edmund K. Nielsen donated the library of her son, the late Edmund B. Nielsen, in his memory. Nielsen, an art historian, was a graduate of the College of William and Mary and also studied at the University of Florence and the Warburg Institute in London. In his short but distinguished career he held research and curatorial positions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Isaac Delgado Museum in New Orleans and the Milwaukee Art Center. Nielsen passed away after a long illness in September 1981 at the age of fifty-seven.

Among the high spots in the Nielsen gifts are an Italian manuscript dated 1621 describing a voyage to the Levant made by six galleys of the Grand-Dukes of Tuscany; a collection of papal biographies, Marino Barletta, *Compendium vitarum summorum pontificum* (Rome, 1555); early editions of the Bible, including a handsome volume printed in red and black in its original leather binding, *Biblia cum concordantiis Veteris et Novi Testamenti* (Venice, 1519); several items profusely annotated in contemporary manuscript hands, among them a law book, the *Communes conclusiones* (Venice, 1570) of Antonio Gabrieli and an important item of local history, Spinello Benci's *Storia di Montepulciano* (Florence, 1641?), with a handsome full-page portrait of Lars Porsena (the alleged founder of Montepulciano) by Andrea Sansovino. The place of honor in this rich collection of books may belong to a rare guidebook to the religious monuments of Rome by the celebrated architect Andrea Palladio, *Descrizione delle chiese, stationi, indulgenze e reliquie de' corpi sancti che sonno in la citta di Roma* (Rome, 1554). Ours, it seems, is the only copy of this work in an American library.

These and many other interesting books from the Hall and Nielsen collections will be on exhibit in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, fourth floor, Memorial Library, from July through September. The public is cordially invited.

John Tedeschi
Curator of Rare Books and
Special Collections

News of the Friends

To the Friends

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to say hello to all the Friends of the Library. Having been here only seven months, there are many of you I haven't met yet, but I hope that will be remedied by the time of the Annual Dinner. You are very important people to our libraries. I see us as sharing the same concern and serving the same purpose—the best interest of the General Library System.

With your help, the Friends can be more actively involved in bringing the Library to the attention of a wider community. This newsletter is an important step in that direction. Having a new Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections who is exceedingly knowledgeable and experienced will undoubtedly add zest to the work of the Friends.

I am fully supportive of and totally grateful for your efforts on behalf of the Library. Greetings to you all and best wishes for a most successful year.

D. Kaye Gapen, Director
General Library System

An Open Letter to the Friends

Dear Friends,

The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections is launching a pioneer volunteer program designed to help Memorial Library and its hardworking staff. The new Friends' Bookworkers Group has begun by assisting the Department with such engrossing projects as creating chronological and geographical files of its holdings, transferring early imprints from the general stacks to the rare book vaults, helping with background research for exhibits, and preparing bibliographies.

To anyone with a few hours a week to donate to Memorial Library, the Friends' Bookworkers extend an enthusiastic invitation to join us. All are welcome, no special experience is necessary. If you would like to see the Department of Rare Books and hear more about this program, please contact Deborah Reilly, Associate Curator, at 262-3243 during the day, or myself, evenings at 233-3270. Please come to see and stay to help!

Anne C. Tedeschi, Coordinator
Friends' Bookworkers Group

Spring and Summer Exhibits Scheduled

The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections will mount an exhibit on the theme of "Popular Religion in Counter-Reformation Europe" in late March to coincide with the annual Burdyck-Vary Symposium sponsored by the Institute for Research in the Humanities, March 28-30, 1985. The exhibit will be on display through the end of June.

"Notable Acquisitions, 1982-84," will be the focus of the Department's summer exhibit and will feature highlights from collections donated by Professor Vernon Hall and Mrs. Sally Nielsen, among others. The Hall and Nielsen gifts are discussed in this issue of *The Messenger*.

Friends' Annual Meeting

This year's banquet will be held on Thursday, April 18. We are delighted to have as our speaker Professor William Ashworth, Department of History, the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Ashworth, who is a UW-Madison graduate, will talk on "Emblematic Warfare in the Age of Galileo," an illustrated lecture which will rely heavily on the title pages of books in Memorial Library's collections. The presentation promises to be of great interest to historians, collectors, and bibliophiles. Please reserve the date; times and locations will be announced soon.

