

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Keeper of the Bees*

*The bee garden is blue because blue is the 'perfect colour' and bees are the most perfect of any insect in the way they live, and the most valuable on account of the work they do, so blue would be the colour they love best, and it is!*

**T**HE *KEEPER OF THE BEES*, by naturalist Gene Stratton-Porter, is not a new release (copyright 1925); yet it is still in print and available through Indiana University Press. I felt impelled to search for this book, while all the memory I had of it was a sense of something ethereal, which I now perceive as an inhalation of pure Taurean essence.

This is imparted through descriptive passages of flower and bee, earth and sea, and salt-sea air from the Pacific Ocean along the Californian coast. I received the book only days before beginning a journey to California and so was bemused to see it described on the back cover as an “ode to [...] California, and its natural beauty.”

Taurus is the sign of physical form, of beauty as perceived by the physical senses. The importance of physical beauty is not one that should be overlooked by the spiritual aspirant. Beauty is harmony in manifestation, and color is generated by harmonic tones. Striving to build an environment in and around the home which pleases the eye and soothes the spirit is not something to be neglected in the pursuit of a spiritual life.

The story is set in the era following WWI where right and wrong are not questions, transgressions can be cruelly dealt with, the enemy is clear, racial and ethnic groups are yet distinct, and patriotism is taught in schools to blend the varied multitude into one country.

It tells the story of a soldier of Scottish descent, a

son of a minister of the Church who, when called to war, had forgotten the God of his forbears, “...From whence cometh my help,” and answered the call instead of the race spirit in his blood, as he sought revenge against ‘the enemy’.

*There were atrocities that had been committed against men of his race and blood in the beginning of the war that drove all men of Scottish ancestry and sympathies a trifle wild.*

**Beauty is essential to the natural unfoldment of the human soul. The Mysteries held that man, in part at least, was the product of his environment. Therefore they found it imperative that every person be surrounded by objects that would evoke the highest and noblest sentiments. They proved that it was possible to produce beauty in life by surrounding life with beauty.**

—Manly P Hall, *Secret Teachings of all Ages*

Religions of old were “race religions,” each race spirit being an archangel

who would lead his people into battle. The bodies of these beings are made of desire stuff, and they still influence us through our desires, as they are manifest in the blood. It was the purpose of Christ to end race religions, to free man from the influence of the race spirits and inaugurate a period of Universal Love. Yet the struggle continues, as in the case of this young man, who still responded to the ancestral “call to arms” coursing through the blood in his veins.

The story opens following this war, with ‘our hero’ suffering from a shrapnel wound that will not heal, fleeing from a medical facility into the California countryside. There was also another wound that would not heal, one in his heart “which the world could not see.”

So he begins his ‘Great Adventure’, which the author uses to explore many points of moral or ethical consideration, through the reflections of the young man as he finds God again, on a journey where his

welfare rests on the grace of God. He finds himself reverting to the language of his grandfathers in expressing his gratitude "It's unco gude 'o you God."

In moral reflections even the "wee people" are to be considered: *"the father in him said 'Leave what remains for the wee folk as you found it.' And the mother in him said 'Take with you every crumb that remains against the morrow.'"*

Here "the father" represents the conscience, the spiritual side, doing what is right by others, with little thought of self, and "the mother" represents concern for one's material welfare, the pragmatic view or aspect of self-interest. So here, as in occult literature generally, the positive forces, of "right," are represented by the male, while the negative, earthly forces by the female. We know, however, that the gender of men and women is given by their outer, or physical body. While their vehicles are four in number, only the dense

**Paracelsus, when describing the substances which constitute the bodies of the elementals, divided flesh into two kinds, the first being that which we have all inherited through Adam. This is the visible, corporeal flesh. The second was that flesh which had not descended from Adam and, being more attenuated, was not subject to the limitations of the former. The bodies of the elementals were composed of this transubstantial flesh...."Yet," he adds, "the Elementals are not spirits, because they have flesh, blood, and bones; they live and propagate offspring; they eat and talk, act and sleep, etc."**

—Manly P Hall, *Secret Teachings of All Ages*

physical and vital bodies are gendered: In the male the physical body is positive, the vital body is negative, with the reverse for the female.

The question of gender roles, a question of the times, is brought forth to intrigue us again later when we meet the "little Scout," a ten year old child whose gender is not yet clear. According to the little Scout, if you can't tell, then it makes no difference.

In the pre-pubescent child, where the desire body is yet unborn, sex as passion is not yet apparent, and truly, it would seem, "makes no difference." It is not until we are to fulfill the roles of male and female in life, as providers of form for incoming egos, that surely we "can tell."

The story takes us to the home of the Bee Master in the Sierra Madres along the seacoast. There, our forlorn soldier moves from contemplation of his death to encompassing life, from weakness to strength, from

self-pity to selflessness. He arrives as a homeless unemployed and becomes a respected Keeper of the Bees.

He does not make this transformation alone but with the help of the loving embrace of neighbors as he settles into his new home, tending the bees in the Bee Master's absence.

**Will is the male quality of the soul; imagination is the female. When will is the strongest attribute, the soul wears male attire in a certain life, and in another, where the quality of imagination is greater, the female garb is taken. Thus under the Law of Alternation which prevails during the present age of the rainbow, the soul wears a different garment in alternate lives, but whether the gender is feminine or masculine, the organ of the opposite sex is present in an undeveloped state. Thus man is now, and will be so long as the physical body endures, both male and female.**

—Max Heindel *Mysteries of the Great Operas*

Foremost among his new acquaintances is one called the 'little Scout' the Bee Master's partner. The 'business' of the little Scout, when not fulfilling the role of partner to the Bee Master, is playing the role of Scout Master, organizing play for a motley group of children. Leading the Scouts, and ultimately besting them, the Scout Master is called "The Limit."

The little Scout is a most vivacious and mercurial persona, whose physical machinations and mental reflections add much in the way of delight to this book. For example, when accused of "burning the candles at the both ends," the small person replies: "But ah! my foes and my friends! It makes a lovely light!"

How we meet death, one of many threads running through this brilliant weave, is a topic introduced to us through the reminiscences of the little Scout.

On the point of how beautiful death can be, of 'little old Aunt Beth,' the little Scout said:

*She went in the night, you know, in her sleep, with her hands folded on her breast and the strangest little mysterious smile on her face. It was like she knew a beautiful secret that she'd love to tell and she was smilin' over it while she decided whether she would tell or not.*

The Bee Master, a revered gentleman whose precarious health has provided the stage for this saga, inspires much loyalty. On contemplating his death, the

little Scout said: “*I bet all the harps and all the trumpets in heaven would go Zoom! Zoom! and all the angels would come flocking if the Bee Master came through the gates!*”

The Bee Master’s home, and surrounding gardens are intimated to be a reflection of the Bee Master himself.

*There are only a few places where love and artisanship build a house with a welcoming face. There are only a few places where love and good horse sense build a garden half of wildings and half of quaint old-fashioned things that evolved without the help of crossing and fertilization and other makeshifts that produce growth so rambling and sizable that it is difficult to believe the blooms are living things. There are only a few places where the side of a mountain walks down and slides down and jumps down and meanders winding, flowering ways until it reaches the white sands of a brilliantly blue sea, and it is easy to believe that such a location would naturally be the home of tiny round white houses with round roofs where millions of bees make honey to sweeten the food of a world.*

Health and healing through natural means is another prominent theme. How our ailing soldier heals his wounds through the discipline of a health regime is carefully detailed. The value of eating for health, simple and nutritious foods, and in the right combinations, is a concern of every spiritual aspirant.

In *Occult Principles of Health and Healing*, p. 116 we read: “Proper food given at the right time and under the right conditions will not only cure but prevent disease.” The science of food combining, a little known aspect of diet, is touched upon here. Of the neighbor that prepares his own meals he requests a diet in the combination that will go towards the “making of a man” and help to purify his septic blood.

Following his morning routine in the bee garden, he drinks the juice of two ripe tomatoes and follows this with a dip in the healing waters of the salt sea, drying in the rays of the morning sun. Then after his mid-day meal he rests. Upon waking he drinks one glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice.

Of fruits it is said in *Occult Principles of Health and Healing*, p. 117, that they contain “water of the purest and best kind, capable of permeating the system in a

marvelous manner....The increased permeability enables the Spirit to manifest more freely and with renewed energy.” And in the same book the author gives an occult explanation for the benefits of uncooked food:

*There is in the skull at the base of the brain a flame. It burns continually in the medulla oblongata at the head of the spinal cord, and, like the fire on the altar of the tabernacle, is of divine origin. This fire emits a singing sound like the buzz of a bee, which is the keynote of the physical body, and is sounded by the archetype. It builds in and cements together that mass of cells known as “our body”.*

**The bee is more honored than other animals, not because she labors, but because she labors for others.**

—St. John Chrysostom

*The fire burns high or low, clear or dim, according to how we feed it. [...] We replenish this sacred fire partly from forces from the Sun entering the vital body through the etheric counterpart of the spleen and from there to the solar plexus where it is colored and then carried upward through the blood. We also feed the fire from the living fire we absorb from the uncooked food which we eat and then assimilate.*

Note from the above the value of sunlight, in addition to raw foods, for renewing of the body’s energy. An additional point to make here is that the etheric counterpart of the spleen will continue to function even following the removal of the physical spleen, as sometimes occurs following injury to this organ.

The art of keeping bees is learned with the help of the Bee Master’s ‘partner,’ as well as from an extensive library on the subject, which includes writings by Aristotle and Pliny. The little Scout asks: “*Why is the bee garden blue? And I’ll have to tell you the answer because you’ll never guess in a thousand years. Because of God.*”

Max Heindel confirms this statement in *Rosicrucian Philosophy in Questions and Answers, Volume 2*: “*Blue is the color of the Father who rules over the whole universe continually from the beginning of manifestation to the end thereof, omnipresent in everything that lives, breathes, and has it’s being.*”

There is more here, much more, to inspire us to live diligently as the bees and their keepers, leading noble and courageous lives, embracing the beauty of earth and sky. □

—Jamis Lopez