POLLEN.

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All observing beekeepers who take a pride and interest in their apiaries have seen the busy little toilers coming home laden with small pellets of a paste-like substance attached to their legs. This substance botanists call pollen. The question arises, where do bees get pollen? The keen beekeeper's attention is arrested by a bee working, say, on a dandelion. She is very busy, and is practically covered all over with a bright-yellow dust. For a moment she stops delving into the heart of the flower to clean herself, and as we stand almost breathless, afraid to disturb her, watching every movement, we see she is packing the pollen into little baskets called the corbicula, which nature has provided for the purpose.

Having ascertained that pollen comes from flowers, we pull a bloom to investigate it a little more minutely. In doing this some of the pollen settles on one's fingers. By the use of a small magnifying-glass we discover that the flower is composed of a number of smaller flowers, called florets, so arranged as to make a complete and beautiful whole. Turning our attention to an individual floret we notice again it is composed of more parts, each having a function to perform. The anthers, being the male portion, contain small pouches or sacs which, when matured and ripe, burst open, shedding pollen-grains, or the fertilizing dust. As the bee works from flower to flower, conveying pollen on the fine hairs of her body, she comes in contact with the pistil, or female organ, the end of which will be found to be sticky, the pollen-grains being held there by this substance. The tiny grains begin to grow down the tube of the pistil until they reach the micropyle of the ovum, there shedding the favilla. As soon as this takes place inoculation is completed. Flowers then begin to drop their petals, and the plant devotes its energies to the development of fruit in the shape of seeds.

The microscope is again brought into use for the purpose of examining the pollen-grains further, and for ordinary observation purposes we generally use a 1/6 lens. Having made a collection of pollen from several different flowers and mounted them, we find, on looking at them through the microscope, that they are truly wonderful, varying in size, shape, and colour.