

Bees and Bicarb.

Recently, two of us were staying with friends on the Isle of Wight. We had glorious weather. We spent most of our time relaxing in their beautiful garden. They own four acres of land rising up a hillside, from which the views over the Medina valley were peaceful and tranquil. Below was the little village. Occasionally we wandered past the vegetable patch to view the hens! Of course, we tasted the eggs – delicious. There were also bee hives. In the kitchen we watched the honey being poured into sterilised jars. The husband, who was the beekeeper, was stung twice in the hand but accepted it with the countryman's indifference to such things. The most we saw of a bee was the odd one venturing near while taking nectar from the sweet-smelling flowers. In fact, we see more in our own garden at West Kirby. It seemed that nothing could spoil this rural idyll.

One day the bee-keeper realised that some of his bees must have swarmed. He spent a



fruitless evening looking for them, especially on the branches of trees. The next day he was joined by a friend, a novice, and, in their white suits, they went to put the hives in order. The bees were not happy. Unfortunately, one of us decided to take some photographs and, wandering down the hill encountered the angry

bees. There were screams of, "Get off, get off!" They had no intention of doing any such thing.

She had been stung by three bees and arrived back at the house with one caught in her hair. Consternation reigned – was it bicarb for bee stings and vinegar for wasps, or the other way round? The internet solved that one. We resolved to remember in future that bee begins with b, and so does bicarb as an aid to our memory. Having applied ointment and bicarb, peace was gradually being restored, when there were shrieks from the kitchen door; one of the bees, a determined creature, was still pursuing its quarry. It stung the bee-keepers wife. Out came the bicarb, again! We waited for the cause of all this to appear for his tea, if he dared to face us!

Sometimes, it is good to look for the spiritual lessons in things that happen to us. It is amazing how often the Lord can speak to us in this way. The one with the multiple stings

began to reflect on what had happened. To her surprise, the next morning she read a rabbinic quote, from Debarim Rabba, in her devotional book, “As the bee brings home honey to its owner, but stings others; so it is with the words of the law”. Reflecting on what had happened, she felt that it was an attack by the powers of darkness on her spirit. She linked it with something that had happened the previous day.

We had taken away with us the manuscript of a book that we had written. Going through it, we were checking for mistakes and alterations that needed our attention. We had decided that one chapter should be on deliverance from evil. Many years ago, there had been a serious incident with a deranged man. The one who had been stung (who was also, humanly speaking, the heroine in the violent situation) saw afresh how important it is to pray protection from the Lord, each day, before a situation arises. When it happens, there is hardly time to pray. She had rarely spoken of what occurred and it was costly to recall it. There is an Enemy and if we are on the front-line, as Christians, he will attack us, outwardly and inwardly. .

The bee-keeper added his own thoughts to this when he remarked that perhaps, the Lord was also saying, “Don’t go into enemy territory unprotected”. That speaks for itself – just don’t do it! Jesus spoke about the Prince of this world and he is still around. Guard the peace that the Lord gives in the heart, don’t stray from his Presence.

When we were shopping for thank-you gifts for our host and hostess, we came across a small, stuffed, cuddly bee. We bought it to show there were no hard feelings against these lovely insects that give us delicious honey, or against the bee-keeper! One of us remarked blithely to the shop-assistant, “I am the only one in the house who hasn’t been stung”. He replied darkly, “I hope the bee-keeper has a sense of humour, giving him this!” He did, he loved it. Perhaps that is another lesson, a sense of humour which is kind, tends to help anchor us in God’s camp.