

more effectually to fill themselves with honey. After thus wheeling them together, do not delay in opening the hives, else the bees may discharge their load of honey back into the cells again."

"Would not an assistant be good at this time?"

"One would do no harm; but I generally do this work alone. Having all near together by the hive they are to go in, open the hives, and take a frame of comb and bees from one hive and place in the empty one; then take a frame from the next hive, placing it beside the first, and so keep on alternating the frames from the different hives till the empty hive is filled. In doing this select such combs as you desire, either for brood, honey, all worker comb, etc., thus putting the united colony on the best combs. Having the hive filled with comb, close it, when you will next take a frame from the first hive, open it, and shake the bees off from it down in front of the entrance, holding close down so the bees are in or as near the entrance when leaving the combs as possible."

"Why this close holding and shaking?"

"So the bees will take wing as little as possible, and so that none need fall far from the hive but that they can readily run in with the majority. Having them off the first frame, next shake the bees off from a frame of the next hive, and so on, alternating the shaking the same as in filling the hive, thus mixing the bees from several hives all up."

"Why do you wish them mixed?"

"The mixing of the bees takes the disposition to fight and kill one another all out of them when filled with honey as above; for when each bee meets another it is a stranger, so the individuality of each colony

is lost, and the combined two, three or four colonies unite within two or three hours to make one individual colony again, which will protect itself from all intruders, the same as the separate colonies did before."

"Is that all there is of it?"

"Not quite. As soon as the bees are all shaken off their combs, gently blow a little smoke on the outside bees to make them all enter the hive, should any be slow in doing so; and as soon as all are in the hive, place a board about half as wide as the hive against it, standing the bottom out a piece from the entrance so it stands slanting up over it."

"What do you do that for?"

"This is done so that the next time the bees fly they will bump against it as it were, this causing them to know that it is a new location they occupy, when they will mark the place the same as a new swarm does, after which they will adhere to it instead of going back to the old location they used to occupy before uniting. And to help in this matter further, it is always best to remove everything from the old stands so that nothing home-like remains to entice them back."

"What about the queens?" Do you put them all together?"

"If there is a choice of queens in any of the colonies to be united, hunt out and kill or dispose of the poorer ones, so that the best may be preserved. This hunting out of the queens is better done some day before the uniting, for in the smoking and pounding process the queens will not be where they are readily found when uniting. If there is no choice in queens, and the extra queens are of no value the bees will attend to the matter, killing all but one of them."

—Conversation with Doolittle in Gleanings.