Combs, Full Sheets or Starters For Swarms

As a rule it does not pay to give a newly hived swarm fully-built-out comb, yet it does not do to be dogmatic and say: "It never pays.", I have employed them this year with, I consider, good effect. Three lots of driven bees, owing to paucity in numbers, went under in early spring, and their combs, all fresh and new, were used to house English swarms, with a distinct saving of valuable time and material for the new swarms, and no loss. So that all over it was pure gain. These bees had consumed all their gorged stores en route, and so were not provided with special material for building. With a new-swarmed lot in the home apiary it is different. Their honey-sacs are full to repletion, their wax-sheet "factory" is in full swing, and the process of construction in the wax-pockets goes on automatically. The bees are hungering and thirsting for combbuilding, and to hinder their desire would be a pure waste of valuable material. All this rules fully drawn-out comb out of court in competition with full sheets or starters. Not only so, but with a full flow on, bees block up the cells with honey as gathered from the fields, and soon start capping the stores, thereby blocking the queen and cramping her egg-laying powers by restricting the cell-area in which she can lay. Super room, although placed on, will generally be neglected, as the bees seem to reason it out that it is a saving of time and labor to store in every vacant cell below, to the detriment of surplus stores, and the lessening of the population of the hive. Therefore, hiving on full frames of comb must come third in order every time.

We are taught-and the teaching is wise-that we can "spare the bees" by giving full sheets of wired foundation to swarms with advantage to all concerned-bees, bee-keepers, large population, finely-built combs, and extra surplus honey. A free use of foundation upstairs and down is to be commended, as a rule,-but there are exceptions. I think the subject is of such importance that I would like to see a full discussion, conveying the results of experience, showing in what, if any, circumstances hiving on starters is a saving to bees and bee-keeper, because I contend, at times, it is.

First.-A strong swarm of bees in the full flush of a heavy flow generally builds so quickly that the cell surface far outruns the queen's powers of occupation. Here the sheets of foundation hurry up matters still further, and capping honey starts in the broodframes as a serious business instead of the surplus being stored above. The queen, if prolific, may force the pace later on, and compel some honey to be uncapped and stored elsewhere, but here we have a large amount of extra work imposed on the bees, which they rather resent, because they frequently sulk and cramp the queen's powers of ovipositing. With starters only she keeps in line and hurries on combbuilding, so that there is no time or opportunity to seal cells in the brood nest. So evenly balanced indeed are her powers of egg-laying and the bees' powers of comb-building that they go on as if part and parcel of one plan, to the mutual advantage of all internal arrangements.

Second.—An average swarm, building comb over the surface of nine or ten frames, has its forces spread out too much for overtaking the best and

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