

Dead Bees on the Hive Bottom-Boards.

—By G. M. DOOLITTLE.

Going past a would-be bee-keeper a few days ago, I was called in to see why some of his colonies did not work as strongly as others in the yard. After looking at the entrances of the hives for a moment, noting that some were working strongly while others were doing but little, I asked if the hives had been opened to see what was the trouble.

"No," was the reply I received. I knew this man kept sheep and so I said, "How are your sheep getting on this spring?"

"Oh, first rate," was the reply.

"How do you know the sheep are doing well?" I asked.

"Why, how does any one know anything? I have foddered the sheep three times a day all the winter and spring, and been with them lots beside, even getting up many times cold nights to look after the newly-born lambs, that they need not become chilled and die. And being thus familiar with them, why should I not know when they are prospering?"

"Very well," I said. "How many times have you 'foddered' the bees this spring?"

"Not once," was the reply. "Didn't suppose they needed foddering."

"Have you been up any during cold nights to see that the newly-born bees did not chill, or paid any attention to the hives to see that the bees were made as comfortable as possible, either night or day?"

"No, I had to look after the sheep so much that I had no time left; nor did I suppose that bees needed caring for like sheep; and I am sure that it would not pay me to spend time on them as I do on the sheep."

"How many sheep had you last year?"

"About 60."

"How much did you receive from them for all your work, foddering feed, etc., expended on them during 1898?"

"According to my book, not far from \$325."

"A pretty good showing, but when I tell you that last year from 30 colonies of bees at my out-apiary I sold comb honey

to the amount of \$348.28 you will see that the proper amount of time spent on the bees pays fully double per colony that that you get from a sheep, with only a tithe of the work you spent, and that also without any cost for 'fodder.' But let's look into this colony of bees which did not seem to be flying much."

I had noticed that where the bees were flying the strongest there was quite a number of dead bees out on the ground about the entrance to the hives, but with those not flying as strong there were less dead bees, and what there were showed by their looks that they had been hauled out during the winter. I had also noted that his hives had loose bottom-boards, from some empty ones which were piled up, so stepping to the hive designated I laid a bottom board down beside it and lifted it over from its own stand to the one I had put down. By thus doing I exposed almost a sickening sight from the dead bees that were under the hive, all mouldy in places, and in others all wet and fairly rotten, with worms crawling and working among the rotting bees, while the stench was horrid when this putrefying mass was distributed.

Looking up at the man, I said, "How do you suppose that your sheep and lambs would thrive if you neglected them as shamefully as you have these bees?"

"Not much, I guess," he said, his face showing shame and confusion.

I now set the hive back again, keeping under it the dry, clean bottom-board I had set it on and proceeded to open the hive. There was brood in three combs to the amount of one frame full, with only about bees enough to help cover the brood, which showed that the little colony was doing its level best under such adverse circumstances, for between many of the combs either side of where the brood was, the dead bees came well up between the combs. I looked at two other hives, finding them in somewhat similar shape, though none quite so bad as the first, fixing those looked at in good shape by seeing that they had at least 10 pounds of honey, the combs free from dead bees where such were matted together, and the top of the hive made snug and warm, telling him to go through the rest in a similar way.

When I continued on my way I asked myself, "Is it any wonder that so many tell us that bee-keeping does not pay?" I have often wondered that the idea has so fully obtained with nine out of ten of those who start in bee-keeping, that all