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BEEES

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f preserving or

strengthening weak lots of bees, which, if left to winter singly, would succumb to the intense cold, the operation is generally performed during October, as the chances of successfully wintering small lots are slight, and the attention they require the following spring is so great that it is more profitable in many ways to winter them in one lot.

Bees may be united at any time of the year, but for wintering purposes October is the best month, as the cool weather causes the bees to adhere to the combs, and at this time of the year they do not fly much, or to any great distance.

Many novices make mistakes in operating without realizing that a very little more knowledge or trouble would have resulted in an almost perfect union, the whole process, where bar frames are concerned, not taking more than a few minutes.

One of the main factors in ensuring success is to realize that it is absolutely necessary that the bees should be brought to *precisely the same condition and only one queen be left*.

A puff or two of smoke administered at the entrance of each lot will frighten them and cause them to fill themselves with honey, after which open the hives, space the combs so as to admit daylight to the floor board, and lift the combs with the adhering bees, placing them alternately amongst the combs of the receiving hive, or, if preferred, they may be lifted *en bloc*, and placed at one end. Where there are more combs of bees than one hive will accommodate, select those with brood on them, cover them up, and the union is complete, after placing a wide board from the entrance to the ground to make the bees mark the spot, and also to prevent them returning to the wrong hive, thus avoiding fighting.

The most frequent cause of fighting, however, is the manner in which the union is made. A necessary part of

the process is to subdue the bees properly, and where there are no unsealed stores this is almost impossible. It is useless attempting a union until they are properly filled with honey, as hungry bees are never easily united, and if, therefore, there are no unsealed stores, the bees must be fed a day or two prior to uniting, or sprinkled with syrup before operating.

Success lies in having the bees about the same strength, in the same condition, and quite free from irritation.

Where stocks are a distance apart, bring them close together by moving a foot or two at intervals of a day or so, and whilst on this ground it may be as well to correct an erroneous impression that prevails amongst a section of apiarists, who buy driven bees to strengthen weak lots, viz., that these condemned bees can be united to those on combs by running them in at the entrance. The advocates of this plan know as much about the operation as (to use an Americanism) would fill a filbert, as the fact that bees which are not on combs never successfully unite with those on combs, is apparently ignored.

A method by which a union may be accomplished is to remove the oldest queen, shake the bees of the established stock off the combs upon the alighting board, and then, as they run into the hive again, throw the condemned bees amongst them, afterwards replacing the combs. Even this method, with the extra labor, is not always certain, and if fighting ensues, the smoker should be freely used, and the hive sides thumped and jarred, to frighten the bees, which will generally restore order.

If it is impossible to get stocks close together, deprive the stock of its queen and brood. Two days afterwards it can be readily united to any other colony in the apiary which is in possession of a fertile queen, with the certainty that they will stay. The fact that the bees