

Where half-depth combs are used for extracting, as the custom of some is, it does not make so very much difference whether they are of the worker or drone size of cells; and in this case I would allow the bees to build their own combs in the frames."

"But suppose the apiarist is working for comb honey, then which is best?"

"That will depend on whether he is going to allow swarming, or whether he is going to keep his bees from swarming. If the latter (I very much doubt about his success in this matter, however), then he will have as much need of foundation when combs are being built as he would were he working for extracted honey, as strong colonies building combs under any system of non-swarming will give a drone size of cell more often than otherwise."

"But I work my bees on the swarming plan. How would it be with me?"

"If you use full sheets of foundation in the sections, and such use of full sheets is considered right by the larger part of our practical comb-honey producers, then I would say that it would pay to allow the bees to fill the brood frames with natural comb. Each new swarm seems to go prepared for a start at comb-building in its new home, and such building seems to give them a greater activity than they show if the hive is supplied with empty combs or foundation; and I have often thought that, where the hive is contracted so as to hold only about two-thirds of the number of frames needed to fill the whole hive, and the sections put on at the time of hiving, this number of combs will be built by the bees without the loss of a single pound of honey to the apiarist, while the cells will be nearly or entirely of the worker size, unless an

old or failing queen is used, in which case little besides drone comb will result under the most favorable circumstances."

"Do you have the most of your comb built in this way?"

"Well, no; although I have had very many perfect combs built in this way, and know it to be a good plan."

"How do you have them built?"

"Really the nicest way, where we decide to have our combs built by the bees, is to set apart each year all the colonies we may happen to have when the honey-flow commences, that are not strong enough to do good work in the sections, or upper stories of hives for extracted honey; and as soon as the honey-flow commences, take away all their combs, except perhaps one having a little brood and some honey in it, giving the brood to other stronger colonies to make them still stronger, when just the number of frames these little colonies can work on to the best advantage are given to them, each having a starter of working comb or comb foundation in it, say from half an inch to an inch in depth. In this way I succeed in getting the nicest of combs built; and by taking them out in such a way as to keep the bees desiring only worker brood, I am quite sure a worth of combs can be obtained greater than the value of honey which it would be possible for them to produce were they allowed to have their own way. At least, this is the way I think I have proven the matter in my case."

"Do you think I could do as well as you?"

"I do not know why you should not; but if you fear otherwise, it will be easy for you to test the matter for yourself; and if this does not prove your hands as it does with me, then you can change to what seems best for you, or use foundation."