

Uniting Bees for Wintering.

(A Conversation.)

"Good evening, Doolittle. As the evenings are getting quite long now I came over to have a little talk with you about uniting bees, so as not to bother you during the day, as I know you are very busy getting your honey ready for market."

"For what reason do you wish to unite your bees, neighbor Smith."

"I have several weak colonies and young after-swarms which I thought would, by placing two or more of them together, make a less number strong enough for winter; and I believe that such strong colonies can stand the winter, while the weak ones, if left to themselves, would most likely perish. Am I right in this matter?"

"I think you are; and if more of our bee-keepers so understood things we should hear of less loss of colonies in the spring than we do now. The novice is quite apt to think that, the greater the number of colonies he goes into winter with, the greater number he will be apt to have the next May; but a careful looking into things shows that such reasoning is, in nearly every case, fallacious. Two or more colonies placed in one hive, with the right amount of stores, stand quite a good chance of coming out in the spring one good working colony; while, if left separate, the chances are that empty hives and combs will be all that will remain of the two or three the next May."

"That is my mind exactly. But you have not told me how to unite my bees."

"Well, I will tell you of a plan I have used successfully for a score or more of years. The first thing to do is to place an empty hive where you wish a colony to stand; and if you can allow that to be where the stronger of the weak colonies is now standing, so much the better, as in this case the

bees from this one will not have any desire to go to any other place, as this is where they have marked their old home."

"But how can I set an empty hive there when the stand is already occupied?"

"If you do this work as you should, on some day when the bees are not flying, and yet when it is not cold enough to chill bees generally, when the mercury stands at from 50 to 55 degrees, you will have no trouble in setting this stronger colony to one side of its stand, and taking your time in arranging the empty hive thereon."

"Yes, I see now. But go on."

"Having the empty hive arranged, go to the several hives having the colonies which are to be united, to form one colony, and blow quite a volume of smoke in at the entrance of the hive, at the same time pounding with the doubled up hand, or with a stick, on top of the hive."

"What do you pound on the hive for?"

"This pounding on the hives causes the bees to fill themselves with honey, upon which filling depends the successful uniting of bees."

"How long should I pound?"

"I pound on them for about a minute; sometimes two if it has been cool for some time before, so the bees are quite compactly clustered, as in this case it takes them some time to uncluster and fill themselves."

"Do you keep on smoking all the time you are pounding on the hives?"

"I smoke only enough to keep the bees from coming out after the first few voluminous puffs. As soon as you are through with the last one, take a wheelbarrow and wheel the hives to where you wish your united colony to stand, which wheeling helps, by its jarring, to augment the fear of the bees, thus causing them