MAKING PROFITABLE INCREASE AND CONTROLLING SWARMING.

(By E. W. Alexander, N. Y.)

This subject has received perhaps as much thought and study as any other one thing connected with bee-keeping, and I will try to show that, with proper management, you can have two colonies, each nearly equal to what the mother colony would have been, for the clover harvest, if not divided, and fully equal for a later harvest.

In calling your attention to this matter I take it for granted that you keep bees (like myself) for the purpose of making the most money out of them that you can, regardless of increase or the number of colonies you may have. Simply make what increase will add to your present season's crop of honey. In the first place, let me impress upon your mind the importance of doing everything in your power, not only to build up all your colonies as strong in bees as you can after taking them from their winter quarters, but to keep them in that condition to the end of the season; for without strong colonies we cannot expect much surplus. As the day is now past when natural swarming is desired by any progressive bee-keeper we will turn our attention to some practical way of making artificial increase.

The most common way of doing this is either forming nuclei and afterward building them up into strong colonies, or dividing a strong colony at once by putting a greater part of the bees with their queen into an empty hive on the old stand, and setting the old hive containing the brood away some distance in a new place. Each of these methods has some serious faults. The nucleus method usually requires so much time that frequently the best part of the harvest is past before they are in a condition to take advantage of it. They also require much work and attention; and the other way of dividing the strong colony is all wrong in every respect. I think I hear some of you say, "Yes, but that is about the same as natural swarming, only the old hive is set on a new stand." I will admit it is something the same, though not half so good; for in natural swarming, the old hive on its old stand retains a part of its working force, and matures all its brood; whereas, if divided, as is frequently done after its queen and most of its working force are left on the old stand, and it finds itself in a new place without its queen, the greater part of the bees that have ever been out to fly will return to the old stand and join the swarm, leaving the old hive with all its brood in a deserted condition Then the few remaining bees will destroy every egg and nearly all the uncapped larvae. Here you lose enough brood, many times, to make nearly a swarm.

After studying on this subject for many years, and trying everything I could think of to prevent this loss of brood in making our increase, and at the same time avoid the loss of valuable time in fussing with nuclei, and at all times keeping every colony in good condition to take advantage of any unexpected harvest that might come, I hit on what I consider the most practical way of making increase of anything I have ever tried or heard of. It is this:

Go to the colony you wish to divide, lift it from its stand, and put in its place a hive containing frames of comb or foundation the same as you would put the swarm in, providing it had just swarmed. Now remove the centre comb from your empty hive and put in its place a frame of brood, either from the hive you wish to divide or some