

Handling Bees.

By Elliott J. Reiss, M. H. A. C.,
Wyee, N. S. W.

Handling bees? Time was when handling bees consisted in catching a swarm, and placing it in an old box, and when the box seemed to be full of honey and comb, getting a fire shovel, and with a handful of sulphur killing the bees. Then the honey was taken, and the brood thrown away, or else the bees were smoked with old rags, cow dung, &c., the combs cut out, honey taken, and brood destroyed, the box being put back for the bees to return and fill again, and so on.

The latter plan is still carried on in parts of this country, but such methods will not do if the bees are to take their proper place as farm stock.

Handling bees has been reduced to quite a science, so that as a general rule, there is little danger of making acquaintance of their "hot foot," if you know how to go about it. The fact requisite is CONFIDENCE. There is little to be feared, and usually you can take a handful of bees from a cluster, and shut your hand on them, squeezing them if you like, and let one fly out at a time, and you will be surprised to find that they do not sting, or attempt to do so.

The second requirement is KNOWLEDGE. There are times when it is unsafe to handle bees unprotected, i. e., when the honey flow ceases abruptly, when the swarm is queenless, or have been disturbed, or when there are animals about with strong odours, or when you are perspiring

freely, when robbers (bees) are around, &c.

Again, with proper knowledge, you can always tell the temper of the bee by the sound which they make, or by their posture. Of course, there are times when the apiarist has to handle his bees, knowing full well that he will receive a "reception," but not often, and even this may be avoided if he does not mind risking loss. So that, taken all around, there is no more danger in handling bees than other farm stock. True, the bees sting, but the horse kicks, the cow uses her horn, &c., and all when least expected.

The tools required are—first, a smoker, then a bee veil. I consider a bee veil a nuisance, and seldom use one, as they obstruct the vision, and also, are close and stuffy on a hot day. Some people rig themselves up in a bee dress, which is much worse still. Bee gloves are made of gutta percha, and are only in the road for work. A lady, whom I instructed, used mittens, made of linen, starched, and found them effective. So, then, summing up the tools, I say the bee veil is a necessary evil, useful to have, but the bee smoker is an absolute necessity. There are people who profess not to need a smoker, but their movements are necessarily slow, and they must kill more bees, so that I have no patience with them. Because you have a smoker, there is no need to send a blast like that of an engine furnace amongst the bees, or to suffocate them with smoke; but, judiciously used, you can quieten down the roughest swarms, or drive or handle bees just as you like.

I will go through the modus operandi. Here stands a hive, which it is desired to examine.

First
at the
guards
the en
bees j
—at t
gently
in on
drive
a quilt
across
puff s
across
blowin
ward
smoke
hear t
hum.
all yo
jars b
pays
work
both f
next t
examin
left h
around
the rig
frame
down
you t
with h
are yo
and th
with t
in thi
examin
comb
out th
procee
well t
alight
bees b
of sm
The b
Almos
I never
do sati
Muc
by ca