

Read at Middlesex Convention.

Spring Management of Bees.

IN talking of the spring management of bees, the ground has been gone over so often that it seems impossible to say anything new or interesting. All I can do is to give you my own experience, and I think it is the duty of every one to do something towards making our meeting together both interesting and profitable. As I winter my bees in a bee-house and cellar, I will have to begin with the setting out, which should not be done too early. Beginners like to set them out the first warm spell in March, but this is a mistake. When I began bee-keeping I used to do that and the first thing I knew the half of them were dead. Since I now understand bees better I am in no hurry setting them out, but wait till pollen can be gathered, which will be from the 6th to the 20th of April or perhaps later. By this time the frosts will be nearly all gone, which will prevent spring dwindling to a great extent. If bees show symptoms of dysentery, any one having a few colonies could set them out for a flight and set back again, but you can't do that when you have 200 colonies or more. If set out before pollen can be gathered they are sure to rob more or less, and this must be carefully guarded against, for if once begun it is very hard to stop. Now to begin with the setting out. Take the first fine day after the pollen can be gathered, the first hive I take to one corner of the bee yard, and the next to another, and so on, never setting two hives near each other, so that when the bees come out to fly they don't get mixed. Those colonies that were light I mark by putting a piece of broken delf on top. Those I fed first by giving them a frame of sealed honey. In my experience I never fed sugar. I always keep enough frames of sealed honey for spring feeding, which I find very handy. The rest of the colonies I examine after sundown, and to any that are short of stores I give a frame of honey. Colonies should never be opened in the daytime as it will perhaps start robbing. Any one who has not honey could feed sugar syrup every evening after sundown, by using an entrance feeder, being sure to take it away next morning. The entrance blocks must be put on as soon as the bees are carried out. I put them about three inches apart till after the bees have had a flight when I go around and close those on the strong colonies to about an inch apart and on the weaker ones about three-eighths or one-quarter inch.

As the bees increase and the honey begins to come in, the blocks should be placed further

apart, and when the honey harvest is fully on they can be taken away. On top of the hive I use a quilt made of strong cottonade, which was not taken off in the fall, and being all glued over with propolis, keeps the heat in. I then put on a top story or surplus case, placing inside a cushion made of cheap factory filled with sawdust. This keeps the bees warm. I place the cover over that, which is made of a seven-eighth inch board, which fits closely. Weak colonies should have all the frames removed that the bees cannot cover and a division board used to contract the brood nest. As soon as the remaining frames are filled with bees and brood give another frame of empty comb and so on till the hive is full of bees and brood. As a general thing weak colonies never amount to much if left to themselves. When bees get robbing, the way I stop it is to close the entrance blocks and put a weight on them, as the bees inside will shove them away. Leave them for ten or fifteen minutes till the robber bees inside get filled with honey. I then stoop in front of the hive keeping the bees back that are outside, then close the hive and leave it there till after dark, when I carry it into the bee-house and leave it there two or three days, when the robbers will have forgotten all about it. Now to insure a good crop of honey it depends mostly on spring management. The bees must be looked after every day to see that nothing is wrong and that they have plenty of stores for breeding purposes until there is plenty coming in from nature. As for queenless colonies, they never amount to much in the spring unless they are given a laying queen. Now there are in every apiary in the spring weak colonies with a handful of bees having a queen, these bees and queen can be given to the queenless colony and so save them. I forgot to mention that every hive must be carefully examined to see that it has a laying queen. You can know this by the presence of eggs in the cells and those that have no queens I treat in the above way. Top stories or surplus cases should not be put on the hives till they are full of bees and honey coming in.

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SPRING MANAGEMENT.

AND PREPARATION FOR THE HONEY FLOW.

AS soon as we set our bees out in spring from their winter quarters, we look over the colonies and put the queenless colonies with the weak which have queens, thus strengthening