

DOOLITTLE'S LATEST FEAT IN QUEEN-REARING.

Doolittle's Method of Queen-rearing, in a Nut-shell.

BY G. M. DOOLITTLE.

Before me lies the following letter: "I read in November 15th Gleanings, Doolittle's latest feats in queen-rearing. I have his book on queen rearing, 1889 edition. Has he any improvement over plans there suggested? I practice many of his plans; but my experience nine years ago in rearing queens in hives containing queens, was not very satisfactory. I want the latest." R. WILKIN.

Newhall, Cal., Nov. 30, 1898.

The above is a letter written to The A. I. Root Company, and forwarded to me to "draw me out," as there seems to be a thought on the part of many that Doolittle is not now practicing for queen-rearing, just what he gave in "Scientific Queen-rearing" about ten years ago. As the Roots and myself did not think Bro. W. would have any objections to having his letter appear in print they have taken the liberty of publishing it, and I have taken it as a text to tell the readers of Gleanings, and Bro. Wilkin in particular, just how those "600 sealed cells from that one colony, the queen laying all the while," as Dr. Miller puts it in "Stray Straws," were reared. These queens (for every cell hatched out a perfect queen) were reared just the same as I gave in the "1889 edition" of my book, and just as I rear 999 out of every 1000 queens, for I practice no other plan, not even saving natural swarming-cells, for, as a rule, they do not prove as good as those reared by bees in an upper story, with a laying queen below all the time.

Now, lest some one may think this a "puff" for my book I wish to say that I have had nothing to do with the book since it went into the publishers' hands; for at that time I sent it free and broadcast over the world, with the hope that it might do the world some good, not having any pecuniary interest in it since, nor any other, except that it is my "baby." It has been a "loss to know" matter with me for a long time why a few did not succeed with a plan which is so perfect in my hands, and to me seems so simple withal; and all I shall attempt to do in this will be to go over the ground given

in the book a little more minutely, as I have no improvements over what is given. Since I gave the book to the world I have paid very little thought to queen-rearing, my whole life and experiments since then being put into studying about the non-swarming of bees; and if I ever succeed along this non-swarming line, Providence sparing my life, I shall give that to the world in book form also. With this long preliminary I will proceed to tell "just how I rear queens."

When spring opens I select one of the strongest colonies I have in the yard, and one having a queen reared the summer before, as I wish one which is not likely to fail in her egg-laying powers before the season is over, as that laying queen below has very much to do with queens of the best quality, in my opinion.

About the 10th to the middle of May I go to several hives till I find the number of combs of sealed brood that are necessary to take the place of those having no brood in them in the hive I have selected, which is generally from two to four. These combs of brood (without bees) are now set in the hive, when, in a week or ten days I have a colony strong enough to commence operations. Perhaps I should say just here that I use nine Gallup frames in this hive, which is a chaff hive and that I bring from my out-apiary, the fall before, the queen to rule over this hive, which is a mated (or "hybrid") queen, as generally called, for I find that hybrid bees, showing about as many black bees as those with yellow bands, will build and complete nearly double the number of cells as will pure Italians, and seem to take to this line of work better than any other. I usually bring several queens of this class to take the place of those sold, and then select the strongest colony having one of these queens. As soon as the selection is made the rest are used in the out-apiary again. I tell this only as I wish to give everything just as I do it.

As soon as the colony is strong enough to go into the upper story I take two combs from below, having mostly eggs and unsealed larva in them (don't take any drone larva, as drones above a queen-excluder are always a nuisance), and in their places put two combs of sealed brood from other hives, as we wish all the bees possible thus early in the season.

I now put on top of the hive a hive having the queen-excluder nailed to its bottom (if thus nailed we never have to touch the excluder if we wish to remove the upper hive during the season); as it