Hints for Beginners

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This is the season of the year when the bee-keeper (and the more so if he is a specialist) has but little spare time. So far with us strong colonies have gathered a fair amount of honey, about one 12-frame Langstroth extracting super and a second super has been put on to give ample room for the present, and keep the bees from being crowded. All hives are upon loose bottom boards and wedges 7-8 in. at the front running to a taper at the back have been placed between the bottom board and the brood chamber, thus enlarging the entrance to the hive 7-8 of an inch the entire width of the entrance. This adds greatly to the comfort and contentment of the bees at this season. By accident I have stumbled into something pretty good. Moving about much, we find it inconvenient to take with us regular hive stands, and I had blocks made out of 4x6-inch scantling, each block tapering 2 inches making them at one end 4x4 in. and at the other end 4x2 in. Three of these are used to each hive, one at each side to the front, and one at the back. The reason for this is that it would not do to put one at the front centre of the bottom board on account of the entrance having no support like the rear has through the back of the hive body. The wedge-shaped pieces allow adjustment on uneven ground, and three wedges will do their work better than four. By this means the hives are up from the ground and yet not much, just enough to keep them dry. We clip both wings on every queen pretty short so she cannot fly. Now, if a swarm issues, the queen attempts to follow but cannot fly, it means to walk and that on ground more or less uneven with grass, so she does not make much headway. The swarm finding the queen absent returns and the queen hears them. She turns towards the hive, and re-enters with the swarm, or, at least, we find she has done so in a large proportion of cases. There was a strong tendency to swarm about June 8th or 10th, but queen cells were broken down, and with more work, the majority of those previously inclined to swarm have given up the idea for the present, and we are in hopes they may be kept together. Up to date, June 24th, there have been no "shook" swarms in our apiaries. Beginners often think bee-keeping works by rule of thumb, but their are many remarkable and confusing exceptions. I went to an outyard and was told that a certain hive had swarmed and returned two days ago. As a rule the queen cells do not hatch until the eighth day, the day we usually expect second swarms, if any. However, we found a cell just hatching and the virgin queen piping, as we took out the comb. We also had an instance this week where in a strong stock the old queen was upon the comb laying and a queen cell had recently hatched in the same hive. Again I am quite sure bees sometimes move eggs, for in three instances we have found a queen cell on the bottom edge of a honey comb or comb honey in the super. If the queen had deposited the egg, she must have passed through the queen excluder and if she had she would not have stopped with the one cell (there was no other brood in the super). This condition is one very dangerous for the bee-keeper who goes through the brood chamber at regular intervals and breaks down queen cells.

No doubt the majority of bee-keepers know that when a brood, during the swarming season is put in the super the bees are very liable to start queen cells upon this brood; this may also interfere with the calculation of those breaking down queen cells for the prevention of swarming.

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