

## CAPPINGS.

### CUT FROM A VARIETY OF COMBS.

#### Contraction and Comb Honey.

Mr. G. M. Doolittle gives his views on the right and wrong kind in Gleanings as follows :—

"I wish every reader of Gleanings would turn again to page 167 of the present volume and read the first part of C. W. Dayton's article on contraction. It is a rare thing that so much truth is brought out in so little space. I know nothing about his "queen-restrictor," and do not refer to that part. I have been very much surprised to see the grounds taken of late in Gleanings by its managers, to the effect that contraction methods tend to give only a medium force of bees in the honey harvest, while all that I have ever written on the subject, and the most I have seen, has been to prove that the contraction plan, if rightly worked, will give a "rousing colony" during the honey harvest, as Mr. Dayton says, and as few bees at all other times as is consistent with having this rousing colony just when we want it. For the benefit of the younger readers of Gleanings, and to brush up your memory a little, Mr. Editor, let me say a few words as to how I manage bees on the contraction plan to secure a large yield of comb honey. As the older readers of Gleanings will remember, I formerly worked my bees on the side and top-box plan combined, therefore all my hives are two feet long inside, while the brood chamber proper is only  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches inside,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches on either side of this being set apart for the side boxes, which, added to the  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches, makes the two feet. Since I adopted the lateral plan of working for comb honey, as described in a late number of Gleanings, each of these side-box apartments is filled with chaff, or has a chaff cushion in there, so as to shut the bees out and protect them for winter. When spring arrives, the bees in these hives thus fixed are stimulated to rear the greatest amount of brood possible, by one or all of the known plans to accomplish this object, till the nine frames which fill the brood chamber proper, are filled with brood. As the weather is always changeable in the spring and early summer, the chaff packing is a great help to the bees, by way of enabling them to maintain an even temperature, and thus the hives are filled with brood a little earlier in the season than they otherwise would be, as all know who are now recommending chaff-packed boxes or single walled hives as soon as set from the cellar. To digress a little: I must say that I think those who are telling that an air-space is as good as a space filled with chaff or straw are making a great mistake. Let me prove it to you. On several occasions, from ants working in my packing, and for other reasons, the chaff or fine straw was taken out of one side, or perhaps one side and one end during the summer and left out till cold weather came in the late fall or early winter. At this time, when I came to pack these vacant spaces I invariably found the bees clustered up against the side or sides which were packed, and away from those where the packing was removed. If

the packing was removed from one side I would find the bees clustered in a half-sphere against the opposite side; if removed from a side and an end, the bees would be clustered up against the inside opposite corner, lying right up against the wood along the two packed sides as far out as the cluster came. If all four sides were packed, then I found the bees clustered in the centre of the hive in all directions. If this does not show the value of chaff packing, then I was wrong in allowing it to convince me that it were better to have my bees, all of them, in fully chaff-packed hives, as they are now. But to return: When these nine frames are filled with brood, it is generally too early for swarms to issue to the best advantage for the production of honey; and desiring all the bees possible at this season of the year (these bees are in reality our crop of honey), I remove one of the chaff cushions from one of the five-inch spaces, and place three frames of brood, taken from the brood-chamber beyond the slotted  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch division board (which was placed there when I used side boxes, the bees passing through this slotted board to the boxes) when empty combs are placed in the brood nest in place of the removed frames of brood. In a week the other end of the hive is served in the same way, which gives me, as will be seen, 15 frames in the hive, thus securing a large force of bees right at the commencement of the honey harvest, with little disposition to swarm thus far. As the brood in the frames set over in the five-inch spaces should be as nearly all sealed when set there as possible, it will be seen that, in 12 days, the brood from these combs should be all matured; and as the queen rarely goes into these spaces to deposit eggs, I have these combs empty of brood, or nearly so, by the time the wide frames of sections used on the lateral plan need to come out over these side apartments. They can now be taken out and reserved for new swarms, or used for tiering up for extracted honey. If any of the combs I wish to take out still have brood in them, they are just as good for the extracting super over a queen-excluder, or they can be used in forming nuclei or building up those already formed. As the frames are taken out, the chaff cushions are returned, they having been stored in the hive all the while, and the wide frames of sections allowed to go right on out over them, as I gave in my former article. When this hive swarms, the brood, with enough adhering bees to care for it, is set in a new hive on another stand. Six frames of comb foundation, or empty frames, as I think best according to the time of year, together with dummies to take the places of three frames, are set in the brood-chamber, and the swarm allowed to return, or hived back in the same hive (when the queen's wing is not clipped) when the work in the sections goes right along without interruption on account of the swarming. I need not enlarge on this matter. All will see at a glance that colonies treated as here given will far surpass in numbers, *at just the time we want numbers*, those kept in an eight-frame hive, and restrict the "months to feed" after the harvest is past, and yet give us sufficient bees for winter. What we want is a rousing colony *at just the right time*, and I know of no plan that will give such, equal to the contraction plan as outlined above.