Queens for Comb Honey.

How long a queen should be kept and bred from has been a subject of much discussion and disagreement. We believe from our experience, and that of many others, that no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Queens vary. One may be prolific and show no signs of failing for four or five seasons—we have seen this to be the case in our own yard—while another will deteriorate in two or three. A beekeeper must observe keenly and use his judgment in the matter. A correspondent writing to J. M. Doolittle along this line says: "I have decided that every colony that is intended to be run for comb honey during 1902 must contain a queen of this year's rearing. I desire good queens, that my stock may not deteriorate. In view of the foregoing, what plan can I follow in order to produce the best results for a series of years? Please tell me through the columns of the American Bee Journal." To which Mr. Doolittle replies as follows:

In answering this, I must say I do not conceive what line of argument could have been used to bring the questioner to a decision that he should not allow a queen over a year old in his apiary, which was to be run for comb honey, and cannot help thinking that when his experience accumulates, he will find that his decision is not well-founded; for queens which are in their second year do fully as good work as younger ones, where the colony is worked for comb honey, and often are equally good the third and fourth year. Those who have read the Canadian Bee Journal for February, 1901, and have gathered up what is found there about queens, will have a "feast of fat things" to revel in for some time to come, along this matter of queen-rearing. There, Mr. J. B. Hall, than whom the world can not boast of a greater apiarist or more practical comb-honey producer, has things to say about prolific queens which it would be well for all those to heed who have considered that prolficness in queens was the ne plus ultra. Among other things he said was this:

"I want longevity in my bees; I want that first and foremost; that is why I don't want to replace my queens every year, because if I do I must kill them, and I don't know what to kill. If I keep them three or four years and they have done good work for four years, wintered well, given me comb honey and in good shape, that is the kind of queens that I want to rear others from." And in reading that, from the foremost practical comb-honey producer of the world, I said right out loud, "Amen." Working along that line means a constant improvement in our bees, while resolving that each colony must have a new queen every year, has not a single element of improvement in the whole "shooting match." Besides the above I find, as a rule, that the bees will supersede their own queens as soon as they begin to fail to any appreciable extent; and when the bees undertake this work it is done much more satisfactorily, all things considered, than it is when the apiarist attempts to say, "This shall be," or "This shall not be."

But if our correspondent thinks he must have his own way, then there probably is no better plan than to follow what is given in "Scientific Queen-Rearing," or that given by W. H. Pridgen, during 1900, in the bee-papers. If you think this too much bother, or consider it "fussy," as some claim, then you can rear pretty good queens in th's way:

Kill the old queen and let each colony rear one from her brood. In five days from the time you killed