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Notes and Comments

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The Alexander Plan of Caring for Weak Colonies in the Early Spring.

This spring I have received several reports from bee-keepers who have tried the Alexander system of tiering up weak colonies over strong ones. While these reports have been somewhat contradictory, it is noticeable that where success is reported, the bees were pure Italians, and where failure attended the plan, in most cases the bees were blacks and hybrids. While I have not tried the system, I have an idea that Carniolans would be all right to use, as well as Italians, as I have always found the former race of bees very tractable and very ready to accept queens by any of the well-known introducing plans. No question about where there are a number of weak stocks, if the tiering-up method can be made to succeed, that many colonies can be saved that would otherwise perish. However, the plan is pretty much limited to cellar-winterers, as it is almost impossible to do this tiering-up with colonies packed for winter on the summer stands. To offset this disadvantage, I have an idea that outdoor winterers do not usually have as many

weak colonies as do our brethren who winter in the cellar. While I may be mistaken in this matter, observation in our own immediate locality convinces me that it is true in the majority of cases. Personally, I rarely have very weak colonies, unless old, failing queens are in the hives, and in such cases, of course, such colonies will make no headway even if helped by being put over strong colonies. Even this year, when I have lost so heavily at two of my yards, all that are left are, with the exception of a half-dozen, quite strong, and these few weak ones are headed by old, falling queens.

Speaking of my winter losses reminds me of what advantage there is in having bees in different localities. In the two yards near home not only has the loss in bees been heavy, but the clover is badly damaged, and prospects are poor for a honey crop. At Altona, only eight miles away, the bees all wintered perfectly, and as the land there is more rolling and somewhat lighter than here at home, the clover wintered good, and at present, although backward, is in splendid condition. To be sure, "prospects" do not always mean honey, yet while we sometimes fail to get honey when we have clover, we always come short of a crop when we have no clover.

Clipping Queens in March.

Friend Holtermann tells in "Gleanings" about clipping queens, overhauling brood nests, etc., in March this