

That Comb Crushing.

Reply to D. W. Heise by R. C. AIKEN.

In the November issue of the Journal, page 115, D. W. Heise rather makes fun of my idea of crushing combs to extract them. Friend H. had evidently not read that Buffalo essay, or else there was something wrong with his head.

In the American Bee Journal for November 11th the Chicago markets are quoted, top price, comb 12 cents, extracted 6 cents, wax 27 cents.

Now friend Heise, I suppose you keep bees. Suppose a colony yields you 50 pounds of section honey, it costs you first 50 sections and starters for same, say 50 cents; 2 cases, 30 cents; freight to Chicago, 50 cents; total cost outside of labor, \$1.30. At 12 cents you receive \$6.00 less \$1.30, or \$4.70 for your labor and interest on investment in producing the 50 pounds of comb.

Your extracted will cost you for casing $\frac{1}{2}$ cent, freight to Chicago $\frac{3}{4}$ cent, leaving your net price 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents. You must, then, get a yield of almost 99 pounds to equal in cash value your 50 pounds of comb. Which costs you the most in labor; to remove and case 50 sections, or to remove, extract and case 99 pounds? The sections you take off and put in the honey house till a convenient time to case, the other you must extract while warm, and just at your busiest time.

When producing the comb you carry no permanent investment but the stock of bees and hives; but with extracted you have in addition your combs, extractor, tanks and uncapping can or box, an investment which is dead property (not earning) save in good years. Evidently you prefer to do just as I have done for 5 or 6 years, carry a big stock of combs to occupy room and protect against mice, moth and fire, and get no use of them till the good years come again. See?

In that essay I admitted the low price of extracted honey as a necessity in competition with substitutes, but said not a word about "wax advancing" nor of "converting the honey into wax." Please quote me correctly. I argued for reducing the labor expense, which is the great item of cost of production, and also getting that labor outside of the busy season.

Now, friend Heise, I will take it for granted you have an apiary as large as you can care for during swarming season. Next year just buy another 100 colonies and put them in an out apiary with big

brood chambers and so arranged that they will not swarm. (See that Buffalo essay.) Put on supers, with "bait combs," that you prepared during the winter, with room enough to take all they may gather, then let them run themselves till the honey season is over.

In the fall, or whenever you have the time, bring in the supers. If they have stored much honey there will be a lot of new comb, but no more than was needed. You can cut out and crush these combs just about as quickly as you can uncap as much honey. When crushed it drops into your uncapping can—made larger of course—and extracts itself. This you can do in the middle of winter if you wish, and the mussy, sticky operation is no worse, but a little more of it, than the cappings obtained the ordinary way.

Thus, instead of having your combs to give back to the bees to "dry" and again bring in and store, you make about two pounds of wax and get the use of your money right away. Then if next year is a poor one your money will come handy to use in other ways. Does it not look reasonable to thus save labor, and put the larger part of that labor outside of your busy season; to be able to double or treble your apiaries and still manage all yourself, and have a winter's job as well as a summer one? That is why not do it the ordinary way; and when it is done you have an article of honey superior to ordinary extracted, and wax of most excellent quality.

It is contrary to all my experience that ready made combs will double the honey gathered, as many claim, or even if doubled to be any more profitable; but I have some experience that says if I can sell in my territory five tons of comb honey, that if I produce and sell liquid of good quality, that is good enough to supplant the ordinary sugars and syrups, and as cheap—or nearly so—for equal quality as the syrups, I can sell 10 to 15 tons of the liquid in addition to the comb. Can you see anything in this? The problem forced on us is not how to get paying prices for honey produced by old methods, but how to meet our competitors that are in the field.

Twenty years ago it took 25 pounds of honey to build a pound of comb and therefore ready made combs saved that much for our surplus, less our investment in these ready made combs. To-day many are getting it down to less than half that, and I believe that less than one-quarter would be nearer right. Can you Mr. Heise, or any other Canadian apiarist,