

GENERAL.

FOR THE CANADIAN BEE JOURNAL.

Killing Bees and Other Things.

THE question of killing bees in the fall when the honey season is over and replacing them by importation in the spring, has been under discussion of late in the C. B. J., and I, with others, am called upon for an opinion on the subject. My opinion, in brief, is that the policy would be bad and the profits worse of such a course; and were the plan generally adopted it would very soon run itself into the ground. It might, perhaps, be a saving course to those bee-keepers who are unable to carry their bees through the winter and spring without losing half or two-thirds of them; but the bee-keeper who can winter and spring successfully, who can keep down the increase, and who knows enough to kill all second rate colonies in the fall as soon as the honey season is over, and appropriate honey and combs "for his own use and benefit," has no need to do any killing for that purpose. Each one has his own way of managing and doing things, or ought to have, and my way of doing things in this line in the fall has for several years been this:—When the honey season commences I know about how many colonies I want to go into winter quarters with, and I govern myself accordingly throughout the season as to increase, etc.; only taking prime swarms and none at all from some of the colonies. When the honey season is over I cast about the yard and "take stock." Every colony defective in any way is doomed. If the queen is "of age," or an inferior layer, or her progeny lazy or bad-tempered, it will have been recorded during the manipulation, and sentence pronounced, and just as soon as her "usefulness is gone" for the season the sentence of the court is carried out. (The execution will be ethically justified later on.) How is it done? All the brood is taken from such colonies at once, that is, at the cessation of the surplus honey flow—perhaps before. For after the bees are hatched you cannot, of course, separate the young from the old, and it will not pay to destroy young bees in the fall when they can be turned to good account. Take the brood thus removed and distribute it where it is needed—perhaps to colonies or nuclei with fine young queens just beginning to lay, with hardly time or strength to stock up properly for winter. Subsequent to this there will be the casual fall flows of honey, and considerable will be gathered, brooding being well

kept up, in which, of course, the condemned colonies will take their part, such as it is. Finally, in 18 or 20 days, before any of this fresh brood begins to hatch, take it all away again, honey and all, and either dispose of the bees or give them a further lease of life to gather the odds and ends still to come.

Under such a system of management the bee-keeper can go into winter quarters with bees that will winter and that will not spring dwindle, and also with no more than he wants. And furthermore he will have from these condemned colonies a lot of brood combs filled or partly filled with honey which can be used for those deficient in stores either in the fall or next spring.

AN INTERESTING FACT.

To-day (20th Nov.) I have been putting the bees into winter quarters. I found two colonies alive, and well apparently, which had received the final treatment as above the 2nd of Sept. One had been deprived of combs and everything except the hive, the other had empty combs left with it. There is no honey in the one with combs, and none of either in the other. The interesting and important question is, how much honey have they been able to gather to live on since the 2nd of September? Or have they been "hibernating" most of the time? If we could only persuade the whole of our bees to take a long rest like this "after dinner," or after harvest, at their own expense, save an humble domicile, and do the same thing off and on through the winter, the friendship between us and the bee would grow stronger as our pockets grew fuller. But there is another side to this which makes me cautious in building myself up in hope over it. Three other colonies which had been treated in a similar manner, and inadvertently left to their own resources had gone over to the "silent majority" of dead bees. I fear this only proves for the bees what we already know so well about the "higher animal," man, and that is, that "some will live where others will die," and that the fittest will survive.

MURDER IN THE AIR!

It would seem, however, from the ethical clash of arms between Brothers Gates and Demaree that in connection with this bee-killing business there is a "a great moral question"—something like that which came up between the darkey and his dusky pal when they were busy stealing chickens. The darkies differed in opinion, but the difference was not serious enough to stop them bagging the pullets.

There will, no doubt, be a difference of