

"Shook Swarms"

By A. BOOMER.

This is perhaps the latest fad introduced to the bee keeping world. It is not claimed as a new discovery, as many bee-keepers have practised it on a small scale for different reasons, for years in the past. Having all the colonies I want or have room for, and not desiring increase, I have carefully read up all that a number of writers have had to say on the subject, and from my own experience and judgment I would advise bee-keepers to "make haste slowly along that line." There are always some enthusiasts cropping up who think they can beat nature, and are very zealous in pressing their opinions upon others.

It is not always the most populous colony that casts the first swarm, in fact, it is mostly the "unexpected" that happens, that is, colonies will swarm that you had no expectation of whatever, at least for some time to come. I have had colonies so populous that if supers were not put on the whole front of the hive would be covered with bees, and yet upon examination I could find no queen cells. Now, to be constantly opening hives at the swarming season and looking for queen cells to determine the proper time to shake out a swarm is to my mind hurtful to the proper working of the colony, has a tendency to make them cross and troublesome, and where you have a hundred or more colonies, would involve an amount of labor that I am not ready to undertake, for at this season the supers should be on and at least partly filled; these with the excluders

would have to be removed, the colony quieted by smoke, and their work for that day greatly retarded—especially if the result of the examination proved that the time had not come and the apiarist might not be able to determine just how many days would be required to bring the colony to the condition when it would be proper to shake out a swarm.

Then again, they one and all about agree on giving the shook swarm only starters. This may do if you are running for comb honey and have sections already partly filled to put out at same time, but in following this latter course my success, as set out in my last letter, has not been such as to encourage me to try it again, and if it will not work well with natural swarms, I see no reason why it should work better with artificial or shook swarms.

Some years ago I reported my experience in a small way with reducing the size of the brood nest and using starters. In one case the bees positively refused such accommodation, and swarmed out several times. In the other, after building some comb, not much and mostly drone at that, they built some 24 queen cells and swarmed out in just sixteen days, and did no good afterwards.

I am somewhat conservative and feel like making haste slowly in adopting all or even any of the newfangled ideas that interfere with the natural instinct of the bees. There are other methods well known to most bee-keepers for limiting their natural propensities, and that have worked very well, and I would therefore advise practising, to a very limited extent only, until more and better evidence of its advantage have been adduced than has yet been. Cases will arise in every large yard, such as abortive attempts at swarming, and other evidences when