

MOVING BEES SHORT DISTANCES.

It is well known that, if we move a hive of bees less than three miles, many of the bees when out at work, will recognize old landmarks, and return to the old location and be lost. Where the winters are severe and the bees confined to their hives for several months at a time, they could, of course, be moved at the end of that time without loss, as they take bearings afresh on the return of warm weather; but here, where the bees can fly all the year round, these conditions do not exist.

I prefer to move during late spring or early summer, when the bees are at their busiest time preparing to swarm. The first thing I do is to draw the hives close together into groups, each group consisting of from two to five hives, according as is most convenient, and requires least handling. I prefer to place three in a group. This moving must not be done too rapidly. I start by moving each hive about one foot a day, of course moving stand and all complete. The two outsides are thus brought nearer to the centre of the group. Sometimes the hives are very scattered, and it takes a long time to get them together. On each visit I move them a greater distance than I had done before, so that they will soon be going at the rate of four or five feet a day. If the distance is far I turn round the hive a little each time, so that the back is looking the way the hive is to go. I do all gradually and quietly, so as not to disturb the bees more than I can help.

After the bees get used to this moving, the distance can be rapidly increased per day. They get educated to following their hive up, and I have often shifted it as much as 25 feet at a time. When they see the front of the hive looking toward the place it was taken from, they follow it up much more readily. On reaching the centre it should be turned round again, and will be looking the same way.

Having accomplished this and got all

the hives into groups, I next come along some day, when the weather is bright and warm, and the bees flying,—preferably in early afternoon. I select the weakest hive in each group and give it a good smoking. This is done to prevent fighting and make them treat strangers with civility. I then remove the rest of the hives that have composed that group, setting them down temporarily, a few yards away, so as to get all away quickly, and not let any fighting start. The flying bees, finding only one hive left, all go into that one. On account of the smoking, the guards will not offer resistance, and there will be no fighting, but all the same I smoke them again after a few minutes to make sure. The removed hives are then taken right away to their new stands, and what was a weak colony will now become a powerful one; and if it does not pile in the honey, it ought to. If increase is desired and all the hives are strong, I prepare a new hive having one frame of brood, and a queen cell, and the rest as for a swarm. I then remove all the hives from the group, leaving only the empty one in their stead. This is a most excellent way to make increase.

The second process has now been accomplished, and we have the majority of the hives removed to their new locations, but there still remains one hive in each place where a group has stood. We now proceed again as in the first case, and draw up the remaining hives into groups, and these groups will again be removed, with the exception of one hive. By this means the entire apiary will soon be reduced to one group, and finally to a single hive. This hive should be left there for several days so as to receive all the bees that may return, when it also will be removed.

By following process we lose only the bees that return from one hive, instead of from, say fifty hives, or every hive in the apiary. Instead of a loss, as is usually the case, the manipulation has resulted in a gain, either in honey, for it will have discouraged swarming or else an increase in the number of stocks. If the last remaining hive is removed in the evening, and taken a distance of three miles or more, we have accomplished our object, and not a bee has been lost.

Fernhill, Napier, New Zealand, in "Gleanings in Bee Culture."