Clipping Queens' Wings: Self-Hivers.

COULD you give a paragraph in the Journal upon the subject of clipping queens' wings, with the object of preventing the loss of swarms? I ask this because I am a sufferer from this cause, and have lost several swarms last season, and am rather surprised that the article at page 332, July 23rd, 1891, has not received more attention from bee-keepers in the Journal than it has. Would not the present be the best time of the year for clipping the wings? I may mention that I keep my bees a mile away, and I have no facilities for watching them in swarming-time.—EXPERT, Blackheath Hill.

[The custom of mutilating queens by partially destroying their wings is a cruel practice, and one we do not care to advocate, because, though the removal of the wing of a bee may appear to us a painless operation, to the insect it is not so; in fact, it is only a short remove from cutting off their legs to prevent walking. Under the circumstances in which you are placed we would far rather try the 'self-hiver.' In an early number we shall be giving an illustration of a new and improved form of this contrivance, which seems likely to answer the intended purpose well. —EDS.]—British Bee Journal.

What is Hibernation?

THE BEST TEMPERATURE FOR BEE-CELLARS.

A CORRESPONDENT writes. "At what temperature should bees be kept so that they will hibernate?"

Well, that depends on what is meant by "hibernate." If that word is to be so turned from legitimate meaning that it means getting quiet, then experience, in my case, proves that a temperature of about 42 to 46° is as near as I can come to it. If it means a sinking into that torpid state into which ants, wasps, woodchucks, and such like things go, then if such a state were possible with the bees, which I can not accept, they would repuire a very low temperature, and said low temperature would not only be required outside of the cluster, but the same or nearly so would obtain inside of the cluster also. That I never found the temperature lower than 60° inside of any cluster of bees, in all my experience to ascertain the temperature of the cluster of bees in winter, even where the temperature was as low as 16° below zero outside, proves conclusively to my mind that bees never hibernate in the true sense of the word. Ants, wasps, and hornets, freeze up solid, and often stay so for months at a time, in which case they can be truly said to be hibernating; but all know that, if any colony of bees ever come to this point, even for a single day, they would never revive with the warming breath of spring.

The correspondent next asks, "Is it advisable to keep them at such a temperature that they will hibernate?" In the above he will see that, if true hibernation is meant, only loss can occur if the bees do hibernate, even if for only a short time. But if he means a state of quietude instead of hibernation, then I should say that it is advisable. The more quiet bees can be kept during winter, the better; and I find that the temperature as above given is the one in which bees are the most quiet; but under conditions different from those existing with me, a temperature varying from this might be the best. Actual observation in any case will be found of far greater value then set rules from a different locality. Try for yourself; and when you have found the temperature in which your bees are the most quiet; then stick to that till experience points out something better. Seasons sometimes vary, and you may find that the temperature of a previous winter will not work equally well the next. One thing is always to be borne in mind, which is, that bees are inclined toward an active state in the spring. Bees go into a state of rest in October, and remain more or less in this condition, in any temperature varying from 65° above to 30 below zero, until interrupted by some disturbance, or aroused to activity by the commencement of brood-bearing, which occurs anywhere from the first of January to the first of April, in all well-regulated colonies according to the climate they are in. After brood-bearing has commenced, more or less uneasiness will prevail from this time until the bees have the benefit of warm weather and frequent flights. A mild temperature in preserving animal vitality is to be desired, and a uniform temperature is the most congenial, the disturbance of sudden changes being avoided as much as possible.

That the reader may know a little more explicitly regarding the matter, I will say that, where a colony is wintering just as I should like, they will not be disturbed at once by the rays of light from a candle or lamp falling upon them. When I go into my bee-cellar and hold the candle so the rays of light fall upon the cluster where the bees are to be seen at the bottom of the combs all that is to be seen of the bees is a row of pointed abdomens standing out in all directions, all quiet and motionless, they remaining so for a moment or two, if no jar is made nor heat from the candle or my breath allowed to reach them. After a time, if the light is held steadily upon