

Bees and Honey.



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MEMBERSHIP ONTARIO BEE KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION.

Some few of last year's members have not yet renewed. Surely now, friends, THE RURAL CANADIAN and just this little reminder ought to be sufficient to bring up the list to the full former number at least—a word to the wise.

HONEY MARKET NOTE.

Toronto seems overstocked in this particular commodity at present, both in comb and extracted. Times have been hard; and, somehow, most people still seem to class honey as a luxury rather than a staple article of diet. Its real virtues are not sufficiently known. Prices in quantity may be quoted nominal, 10 cents to 10½ cents extracted; and 15 cents to 17 cents in section, with dull demand.

IMMENSE MORTALITY.

Amongst bees not often has there been so disastrous a winter in Canada. Reports from all over indicate extremely heavy losses—in some places a complete "sweep out!" In many instances over half perished, while, however, a few have come through all right. Now ought to be a good time to make the desirable discovery of the proper conditions of safety, especially safety in extra cold seasons. The mode of wintering which has brought bees out this spring in good condition ought to be surely accounted worth knowing and worth telling about. It might also be worthy of record, too—if only properly ascertained the—true cause of death.

It is not sufficient to say the extremely cold winter, for this has been equally intense where the bees are yet alive. Protection, quality of stores, condition of atmosphere in bee-houses and cellars, no doubt, each and all have had influence. Has not the strength, i.e., the bulk of cluster, and so the ability to keep warmth, the most of all to do with it?

But not only a few hives of bees have come through all right. Several bee-keepers report all safe or very nearly so, with only a loss of two or three out of 120. Now surely these really good managers are also good natured enough (at least some of them are) to amply enlighten us all on this all-important point. Theory and practice. We must accept the axiom, effects always have causes. Bees have perished. Bees have survived. How? Why and wherefore.

The eggs of the queen bee are hatched by the heat of the cluster. The bees should be given all possible assistance to maintain the required temperature.

PROSPECTS FOR THE SEASON.

BY P. F. HOLTERMANN, BRANTFORD.

Reports from all parts of the country indicate that the past winter has been a very severe one on bees. A glance at the previous season may in a measure explain this. Our surplus was chiefly from bees feeding on clover. Those strong, this bloom yielded a profit, while bees that had to build upon the nectar from the flower obtained no surplus. Basswood yielded in a few localities fairly for one day, but many gave no yield owing probably to cold weather. July was very cool. Thistle which requires frequent showers and a moist atmosphere to yield honey, not having these favourable conditions, yielded little. Fall flowers were also largely a failure; added to this the sudden atmospheric changes appeared to cause an unusual consumption of stores during the latter part of summer and during the fall. As a result of this we have colonies left to their own resources, as follows: a fair amount of honey in store at the close of clover bloom upon which they had to depend largely until the latter part of May; the following year brood rearing ceased early as no honey came in. Bees were deficient in stores and enfeebled by age when they went into winter quarters, therefore we can expect nothing but heavy losses. On the other hand careful and progressive bee keepers know what they must expect unless they assist their bees and moderately stimulate late brood rearing. They see as soon as possible that the bees have sufficient stores of a proper kind and are in proper condition. Such men do not lose very heavily.

It also appears that box-hive men have suffered terribly, and no doubt it will be a lesson for such to adopt the more modern and improved appliances in bee-keeping. Since commencing this article I have taken a tour amongst bee-keepers and I find cases where some have been almost entirely exempt from loss and others in the same locality have lost as high as half. One-third of the colonies estimated as lost will perhaps be a pretty correct estimate of the loss. Those wintering their bees outside report the heaviest losses. Bees have no doubt been gathering honey and pollen very plentifully, owing to the warm days and nights we have had, but to-day there are slight flurries of snow and the bees are at home. Later on I will try and send in a report with actual figures of losses. Bees appear to have perished in large numbers after March 1.

NOTES FROM THE BIENEN ZEITUNG, GERMANY.

BY JULIUS HOFFMAN.

Dr. Dzierzon says. The quietness or dormancy of bees does not depend on higher or lower temperature, but on the condition of vegetation.

It is therefore quite wrong to suppose that bees must not be kept warm in winter, in order to keep them in quiet repose. Instinct makes them keep quiet when no honey or pollen is to be found, excepting some occasional purifying flights.

Foul air and want of water in connection with cold weather are the principal causes of bad wintering. Cold weather will not prevent bees from too early breeding, as low temperature will condense much moisture, which induces bees to breeding. A warmer and more even temperature will rather retard breeding at unseasonable times.

The best time for the beginning of brood-rearing is when they begin to carry natural pollen. Bees are taken care of in winter in a dark cellar or similar locality, but plenty of fresh air should be admitted into the cellar and hives.

Bees that will winter well out of doors or in

the cellar are those that possess every desirable quality as honey gatherers. The summer stand is a proper place to winter bees, and when the right strain is developed we can winter them as successfully as we can our cattle and with as little trouble. Now, my friends, do not go into the "fancy bees" too deeply; secure those which contain the largest number of the desirable and essential requisites which ensure the best results. When you have secured such a strain which contains the described qualities (and you certainly can produce them by careful selection and breeding) then shall we have solved the winter problem, and have the coming bee.

BUILD UP YOUR HOME MARKETS.

This, we verily believe, is the best advice that can be given to apiarists generally. There should be a steady and growing demand for honey in every locality in America, no matter whether it be a large or small place.

The large markets are well supplied with honey while in the smaller ones it is often a very scarce article. This should not be the case when the honey is produced in the country. Just think of it! The country merchants in all the Western States are continually ordering honey, both comb and extracted, from the wholesale grocers of Chicago, and thus it has to be shipped twice when none would be necessary, if every home market were kept well supplied by the producers near it.

Let every honey producer see to it that all the towns in his immediate vicinity are well supplied with good honey, put up in attractive packages, and this will in a great measure remedy the evil, and keep prices up to a paying basis. The Indiana Farmer has the following which is just to the point:

"We know of persons who dispose of good crops of honey at a fair price among their neighbours, while others do not try to dispose of a pound at home, but seek a large market at a loss to themselves."

The example has been often recorded, how an enterprising bee-keeper has built up a local trade which is not only lucrative, but a steady thing, year after year; and when we think of the saving of freight rates and breakages, does it not pay well to look after the home markets? Just think of it! Five hundred or a thousand leaflets with the producer's name and address on them would sell tons of honey every year in almost any neighbourhood. Try it, and astonish yourselves with the result! The only necessity is to have good honey in attractive packages, and energy enough to push the sale and make the market.

STARTING IN THE BEE BUSINESS.

At the start it will depend altogether on the extent to which you intend to go. If you want only one or a few colonies for honey to be used at home, for study or as ornament to your place, any of the standard works on bee-culture will give you sufficient theoretical knowledge to begin with. In connection with this, you should, if possible, visit some practical bee-keeper, watch him through the various manipulations in the apiary, ask the "why and wherefore" of anything you do not understand. The same course may be pursued if you intend eventually to go into bee-keeping on a larger scale, have at present some other business on which you depend, or to which you are confined, but which you hope some time to leave for the more congenial culture of bees. You should also subscribe for one or more of the principal bee papers. There has, within the last decade, been such a radical change in the management of bees that no sensible man would now think of keeping them as his grand-