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THE BEE-KEEPER'S CRISIS.

THE crisis the bee-keeper is called upon to meet in the Spring is the time when the old bees have nearly all disappeared and scarcely enough young ones yet hatched to keep up the requisite amount of animal heat and properly carry on the necessary operations of the colony. Frequently this crisis in the Spring development of the colony is so sharp that a very few days of unfavorable weather, just at the critical juncture, inevitably "fixes off" the doomed hive, unless the bee-keeper comes promptly and intelligently to its rescue. Every attentive bee-keeper who looks systematically after his worthy little wards in the Spring has doubtless noticed how rapidly the old bees will sometimes die off and disappear from the hive, a hive which was perhaps overflowing with bees when recently overhauled and straightened up after having been set out of Winter quarters. Such colonies must be looked after promptly and handled skilfully or they "go up" for sure. Upon making the first examination in Spring, if the bees are strong in numbers the manipulator is very apt to give them too many frames not properly taking into account the rapid depletion by death which may soon follow. In my own experience I notice examples of this kind, more or less, every Spring. In apportioning each colony its space, etc., we of course always take into account the usual and inevitable spring mortality, but these exceptional cases under consideration are not often provided for. In my yard this spring I had two or three of such cases. One colony especially when opened for examination was literally overflowing with bees and the queen had commenced depositing eggs freely. Remaining in that condition a week or so the old bees thereafter so rapidly disappeared that when the young ones began to hatch only a few were scattered over the combs. Nor did they "swarm out" and leave their home. They shuffled off their mortal coil in due course without disease or adverse winds. I can only account for the phenomenon on the theory that the bees were all about the same age, and a pretty old age at that. A young and prolific queen was put in a colony with full frames of comb and some honey during the latter half of August when the honey was coming in freely. She soon filled the empty combs with eggs about which time the honey flow came to a sudden halt for the season. Under such circumstances, when the honey flow is suddenly stopped, and lots of brood in the hive, in all stages, I always feed them regularly until the brood is all safely capped over ;

otherwise the eggs and larvæ instead of being nursed and developed are destroyed and consumed by the bees because of the sudden stoppage of supplies from the fields. This queen I suppose laid no more after the first filling of the frames, hence the almost uniform age of the winter bees ; and hence also their almost simultaneous exit.

It is, therefore, wise for every bee-keeper when fixing up his bees in the Spring to err on the safe side and give his bees too few instead of too many frames and too little instead of too much space.

But what is the remedy when the apiarist finds more or less of his colonies in such a plight in early Spring or indeed in late Spring, when he finds a lot of unhatched brood and only a few scattering bees creeping dejectedly and forlornly over it, more especially if the thermometer is just then sinking down towards the freezing point ? He must "look alive" and act promptly or it will be "all day" with his bees before the weather changes, though it does not take the weather long to change front in this latitude and longitude. He has various remedies, and as to which he may apply depends upon the conditions. The first requisite is to crowd the frames up close together just leaving space for a bee to pass between the combs. A part of the brood—the frames containing the youngest—may be taken out (but none of the bees) and given to strong colonies to nurse. These or others just hatching can be returned to the owner when the cold spell is over and when the colony gets strong enough to receive them, for of course the depleted colony will be gaining in strength all the time as the young bees hatch out. When the frames containing the youngest brood are removed and the remaining ones are crowded up together, additional steps must be taken to make the little household thoroughly warm and comfortable. To this end contract the entrance to the size of one bee, put heavy quilts on top, and pack sides if possible. Another good plan to save colonies in such straits is, if the strong colonies are not foraging to exchange stands with them, exercising care not to take more bees from the strong colonies than they can spare or the remedy would prove worse than the disease. A still safer plan perhaps is to reinforce the distressed colonies with young bees from the strong by shaking them off their own frames on the ground in front of the hives to receive them. I imagine a reader saying, "My bees are already dead, and your advice comes too late." No, not too late for another season, and let no young bee-keeper who has lost his bees get discouraged. The experienced bee-keepers who are readers of