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GETTING BEES TO WORK IN SECTIONS

By Dr. C. C. Miller.

The ignorance regarding bees among people otherwise intelligent is something amazing. In the dead of winter I have been asked whether bees at that time were not making honey. Some years ago a man sojourned in my home town who taught that comb grew in a hive in winter without being built by the bees, perhaps somewhat as toadstools grew, and he actually made and boomed a hive specially built to favor such growth. He found believers!

The average beginner in bee-keeping is far from being so ignorant, but in some cases not so very far. More than once I have been asked for the proper time to put on supers, and the question has been asked in such a way as to indicate that the questioner did not think that the condition of the colony or the harvest need be given much consideration, but that it was simply a matter of the almanac.

When to Put on Supers

The beginner should know that two items must be earnestly considered: First, that before anything is stored in a surplus apartment there must be a surplus of honey to be stored, and, second, that there must be a sufficient force to do the storing. To have work done in sections, there must be more honey coming in than the bees need for their daily use—a big lot more—and the hive must be “boiling over” with bees.

But it is not the easiest thing for a beginner to know just how strong a given colony is, nor how much honey it is gathering. A rule, respectable for its age, if for nothing else, is to give supers when bits of white wax are found stuck on the top bar. But these bits of white wax show that the bees are unduly crowded for room, or they would not be disposing of wax in that wasteful manner. To be sure, that crowding means that they may be thankful for extra room to store their surplus gatherings, but the same crowding may also suggest to them the desirability of “hiking” to some new place where there is more room, and bee-keepers in general are agreed that swarming interferes sadly with the harvest.

So the extra room should be given at least a little **before** it is needed. If given too early, it interferes with brood-rearing, by making the bees keep warm so much empty room. In white clover regions a good way is to put supers on the hives when the very first clover blossom is seen. That is likely to be about ten days before much more honey comes into the hive than is needed to use in the brood-chamber and to fill up the vacant cells that may be found there.

When the bees begin to feel crowded in the brood-chamber, they may turn their attention to the surplus apartment. Also, they may, as already intimated, turn their attention to swarming. This makes it desirable to offer them some inducement to begin work in the super sooner than they other-