

Bees or Honey,

Which, in Spring Management ?

Paper by D. W. Heise read at the U. S.
B. K. A. Convention at Philadelphia.

If I were allowed to construe the above title according to my own ideas, I would have it read as follows: Should the bee-keeper's spring management be along the line of securing a large force of bees at the "expense of honey," or vica versa? If this, then, is a proper interpretation of the title, I would unhesitatingly answer, BEE, BEES, FIRST, LAST, and all the TIME. It would be just as consistent for the dairyman to expect the production of a large quantity of butter without first securing the cows, and the poultryman eggs without first having the fowls, as that the bee-keeper could expect a large crop of surplus honey without first securing a large force of workers to gather the nectar from the flowers.

Knowing, as we do, that the inventive genius of man has not yet devised any means by which the nectar can be extracted from the blossoms, stored in our hives, and transmuted into honey without the intervention of the busy bee, it follows as a natural consequence that we are still dependent upon the bees to carry out this important work. This, then, being the case, it follows that our prime object in spring management should be the securing of a large working force of the proper age before the main honey harvest opens. If, then, we agree on this point (and I feel confident there can be but one opinion in regard to it), it also follows that this important object in spring management can only be secured at the "expense of honey."

My paper is before an intelligent

body of practical bee-keepers, who are cognizant of the fact that though a hive may be well filled with bees that have come through the winter safely, and though there may be a dollar queen in that hive—yes, and though every other requirement has been successfully met—yet, if there is not a continual supply of honey and larval food, slow progress in brood-rearing must be made in that hive. Not only is it enough to know that there is a sufficiency of food, but we should also know that it is in a proper condition, and in a convenient position.

There are invariably days in early spring-time, and sometimes several in succession, when the bees are unable to gather from the outside: and if at such times there should be considerable brood in the hive (in different stages of development), I would consider even a liberal quantity of sealed honey in the hive as being in a very improper condition for the most profitable advancement in brood-rearing.

Experienced bee-keepers know well the difference in a colony where the supply of liquid honey surrounding the brood has been continuous, and one where famine has at times existed even with sealed honey in the hive. In the former the larvæ will be found a pearly white, and fairly swimming in the food that has been supplied them; while in the latter the brood will be found destitute of food, of a deathly yellow color, and destined to develop into a sickly and short-lived generation, if indeed they even mature, and will be found of very little value as honey-gatherers.

Many experiments have been conducted by men of extensive apicultural knowledge, with the object in view of stimulating the queen to greater activity in egg-production early in the season; and various have