

BYRON HAMS PREPARATIONS FOR THE HONEY HARVEST.

"What is the best way to build up colonies to prepare for the honey harvest?"

There is nothing that I can say that will be new to those of you who read the bee-literature of to-day. However, old ideas on the subject will bear repeating.

My time to commence building up colonies for the next season's work, is in September

I would see that all colonies had good, young, prolific queens, and that they had ample room to deposit eggs at that time, to rear plenty of vigorous young bees to keep up the vitality of the colony through Winter and early Spring, and at this time I would see that each colony has honey enough to carry them through not only Winter, but at least until May.

If a colony is populous in bees, I have yet to see that a single ounce of honey is wasted by leaving it with the bees. They want plenty of room for brood, then if there is room for it, 50 pounds of honey will do no harm. I think it was A. D. Ellingwood that said the more honey a colony had the better it wintered, and I agree with him, if other conditions are right.

Now, we are ready for Winter, and here is how I winter my bees: I winter them on the summer stands, and run my bees for extracted honey. I use the simplicity hive with hanging frames. I mention the above so that you will the better understand details.

First, I raise the rear end of the hive two inches higher than the front. Now take off the cover; take out the extracting frames, or combs, and four inches from the back end of the hive place a lath or strip of any kind across the frames on top; now take shingles (or boards of any kind will do), and fit closely over the brood-frames, having them fit up close in front. If there should be two or three inches of open space left at the back end of the hive, it will be all right; in fact, I prefer it that way.

Over the shingles and the open space at the back end of the hive spread an old burlap sack or old castoff clothing, chaff cushion, or anything that will be warm; cover the boards enough to keep the moisture arising from the bees from freezing on them. Herein lies the success of the plan. The moisture accumulating on the boards, finds its way down and out at the front end of the hive, leaving the bees dry and warm, and consequently healthy.

The opening or space at the back end allows a little ventilation, all that will be needed.

So much for Fall and Winter. Now we come

to Spring management, and if the above has been done right, the bees will almost do the rest themselves.

Messrs. Doolittle, Hutchison, and others recommend an outer case for Spring. Perhaps in their latitude it would be best, but south of latitude 40° I do not think it would pay to use them. What does the convention say about it?

I would leave the top covering on until the latter part of April, or, if cool, until the middle of May. We have too many warm sunshiny days to allow our bees to be shut up in a double-walled hive. The direct rays of the sun on the single-walled hive in our sunny State, warms our bees up, and warns them to be up and doing ere the fields are white with clover; in other words, it makes them "hustle."

The all-important item in Spring management, is plenty of good, wholesome food for brood-rearing. This they must have, or our flowers will bloom in vain, and when a brother bee-keeper asks us about our honey crop, we will only greet him with a shake of the head and a sickly smile.

Just as soon as the weather will permit, every colony should be examined, and combs of sealed honey given to those that need it. Weak colonies and those that are queenless should be united.

How to feed bees that are out of stores, is an unsettled question. A great many believe in daily stimulative feeding, but where one has 100 or 200 colonies, oh, my! It would be too much of a job for me.

Mr. Doolittle says a frame of honey hung outside of the division-board; and the bees allowed to carry it around, is best. We do not all have division-boards, or a hive so constructed that we could use them; then what? I say it is best to see that enough honey is given in the Fall to last to the middle of May.

If some colonies should run out of honey before there is any to gather, by all means feed them. Give them honey if you have it; if not, give sugar syrup. I prefer to fill combs with either honey or syrup, and hang them in the hive. Do this late in the evening to prevent robbing.

A great many bee-keepers object to spreading the brood. In the hands of an experienced apiarist it is only second in importance to feeding, but I would say to beginners, "go slow," I know whereof I speak. I would spread it if the weather is favorable. Just as soon as I found from four to six frames of brood I