

An Observatory Hive.

A SEASON'S "OBSERVATIONS" OF BEES
AT WORK—FROM BRITISH BEE
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Concluded from page 197.

When the queen wearies of looking for suitable cells, or has exhausted the supply of eggs at her immediate command, she leaves the brood nest and would fain rest awhile. But no! Then, more than ever, a circle of young bees, from thirteen to eighteen of them, surround her, and she knows no peace, not even when she gets her head and throat into an empty honey cell. I have often seen her lifting up one leg after another impatiently under their assiduous grooming, as if she had been a fidgety horse. And yet a good many of the encircling bees do not touch her, even with the ends of their antennæ, although these feelers are constantly being waved around her. It seems impossible to doubt that by means of their antennæ, and either by the sense of smell or by some sense unknown to us, these young bees experience an acute pleasure in being near their queen. Perhaps it may be the same sense of proprietorship that a dog enjoys when he smells his owner's legs; a sort of feeling that all is well and the universe satisfactory; in any case I believe that their attendance gives them more pleasure than it does the mother bee.

Every now and then a bee will be seen to run round and round in an excited manner, stopping occasionally to shake itself like a dog just out of the water. It will continue to do this for several minutes, and the effect is very comical, for the proceeding never fails to excite the interest of the neighboring bees. They follow the excited worker round and round, rushing in when it leaves off shaking itself and scuttling away when it begins again. It has all the

appearance of a game of play. The shaking seems to be an endeavor to get rid of pollen dust, which probably obstructs the spiracles, for those bees who have obviously been after pollen are most addicted to it. When, as often happens, the shaking bee's hind legs are loaded with pollen, the bright colored lumps seem to be irresistible to the bees that are "chiveying." They make for the hind legs every time. But the odd thing is that when the bee at last desists from its antics, the others cease at once to take any interest in it. The pollen bearer then begins to roam about the combs, with no apparent system. It wanders to and fro, and after traversing several combs very likely deposits its load in a cell which it passed by long before. The unloading is quickly done without assistance. The pollen is tumbled in and the bees take no further notice of it. I never once saw a bee attempt to pack its own pollen.

To watch the young bees biting their way through the cell capping and finally struggling through is very interesting. Seldom do they get any outside help. A passing bee may give a nibble at the comb on its way but very rarely. On the other hand it very likely stands on the poor young thing's head and keeps it back. But out the bedraggled little creature comes, and the sudden plunge into the busy throng of hive life does not seem in the least to disconcert it. It smooths its damp hair down, makes its way briskly to a honey cell or puts out its tongue for food to the nearest bee and is soon indistinguishable amongst the crowd.

My observatory hive was double glazed, and had wooden shutters lined with baize, so that it never got to be cold; but perhaps owing to its position in a sitting-room the temper-