

SPRING WORK.

—J. E. POND.

To those who are fortunate enough to carry their bees safely through the winter the question of what shall be done in the spring, and how early shall we begin to do it?" arises. In endeavoring to answer the question, I shall simply state in narrative form, the results of my own experiments, and for the benefit of those new to the business, rather than the old timers, though they possibly may lose nothing by a perusal.

If nothing else in bee-keeping is sure and certain, the fact does exist that, no matter how nearly in like condition we leave our colonies in the fall, we shall find them in the spring, varying essentially in condition, and working strength. The reason of this I have not yet been able to determine, neither have I found, that the actual spring strength, is any guide in the endeavor to improve our stock by selection; that is by taking it as an admitted fact, that the colony that comes out the best in a given spring can be bred from, with any certainty that "like produces like" in that direction. But pardon the digression and I'll "resume my muttuns."

The first thing to be done in early spring is to get all the colonies into working condition. The time to do this is as soon as bees can be handled without fear of loss. This time will vary in different localities, of course, but the first yield of pollen will usually give us the key note to it. To get colonies into working condition is a simple matter. The interior of the hives should be examined, and the bees aided in their house cleaning, and the weak colonies strengthened from the strong ones. I do not believe that this can be done by uniting weak colonies. My experience has been, that the so strengthened colony will do no better than both would have done if the union had not been made. In uniting we merely double the quantity of old bees; when what is needed is to infuse young blood.

I don't care for large colonies till the time has come for them to gather honey; then the bigger, the better. The proper way, in my judgement, to strengthen weak colonies, is to draw frames of brood from the stronger, and thus build them up. By so doing we infuse the needed young blood and also stimulate the queen in the strong colony, (if she is good for anything)

to keep the supply of brood constantly increasing. We say twenty-one days from the egg to the worker emerging from the cell: five or six days more for it to gain strength, and become a forager; which gives us from 25 to 30 days to create a nectar gatherer from the newly laid egg. Take this as the first factor in the problem. As a second the knowledge of the time when the flora begin to secrete nectar, and work out the result, viz: You get your bees in the best working condition possible by building them up to working strength, and by beginning so to do in time, so that the new workers will be up and ready for the first honey flow of the season.

No positive rule can be given for this, it is a problem that each will have to work out for himself. It requires but little experience and knowledge to enable one to determine the matter, but this knowledge and experience is an absolute necessity.

One must know the flora of his locality, the time of its budding and blossoming, and the duration of the same, for unless he does know this, his labor will be all guess-work, and as apt to miscarry as otherwise; but on the other hand, knowing this, it will require but little experience to enable him to so work his bees, as to have them ready in season, to do the work of the season, and obtain a good showing at the end of the season. The sections should be put in place as soon as the bees are ready for them. This can only be ascertained by careful watching, but it is better to put them on a day or two too early than to wait till the swarming fever sets in. Judgement and discretion must be used in working bees as in any other business or profession, and he who thinks he can keep bees without taking care of them, or that supplying a hive and sections will alone get a crop of surplus honey, will get badly left.

The beginner should begin to study up the matter now, and as a means to that end should subscribe for the CANADIAN BEE JOURNAL for by this means he will get all the new ideas that are being brought forward, in addition to the knowledge he gains from text books, and without such knowledge, one had better quit the bee business before he begins.

North Attleboro, Mass. Dec 19, 1893.

The C. B. J. has improved beyond recognition, it is now first-class.

G. W. DEMAREE,
March 5th, 1894. Christianburg, Ky.

Allow me to congratulate you on the great success you are making of the Journal.

Wm. McEvoy,
March 6th, 1894. Woodburn, Ont.