

Queen=Rearing.

THE RESULT OF THREE YEARS' EXPERIMENTAL WORK.

[2071.] In taking up my pen to lay before your readers the results of my experiments in queen-rearing, I for the first time realise the tremendous extent of the work undertaken in striving to render intelligible the multitude of notes I have made for the last three years of the various manipulations carried out, and of making my observations interesting to those who care to wade through them. On looking back to the spring of 1892—when it first occurred to me that the usual rule of queens in our apiaries was not all that could be desired—and the years that followed and have gone: as though all the work, the anxious hours passed in waiting for the result of this or that experiment, the variable weather, the disappointment over failure and the gladness when I succeeded; all this seems like one long pleasant dream spent among the bees and the flowers they love so well; winter came and went, but I seem to remember little for was I not even then, with the bees, either in the mind's eye in futuro, aye, truly.

Now, at the outset I must ask readers to disabuse their minds of the fallacy that first-class queens can be reared by simply cutting up a piece of comb containing eggs or larvae and giving it to bees. Good queens cannot be raised by rule or thumb. Some people, to suit their own ends, will tell you that queens can be raised anyhow, and that their pet method of raising them is the only way, and that any other which they have not tried, or tried and failed in, is wrong and necessarily bad, but most folks know where the proof of the pudding lies, and after raising queens by every known method up to the present time I feel that the experience gained

enables me to a certain extent to speak on this, to bee-keepers—all important matter with some confidence. I say all-important, because if readers would only think it out they would at once realise that "everything tending to successful bee-keeping centres in the queen," and I am fully convinced that the royal road to success in our craft—if royal road there be—is to have our colonies headed by the finest and most perfect queens we can rear or otherwise obtain, and such queens can, in my opinion, only be reared at the proper time—viz., the natural swarming season, which is the only natural season for queen-rearing. Queens can be reared at other times, it is true, but the bees rear them from necessity, not by natural desire, and, as with ourselves, things done unwillingly or through necessity are rarely done well.

To rear queens after the honey or swarming season is over, you have to get them raised in queenless colonies, which, when the honey season has gone, are very loth to take the job on, and will often leave the larvae until it is three days old before commencing to feed it properly, whereas if the task be given them in proper season, and from proper material, the cells are started at once, and upon larvae under thirty-six hours old and fed on the right food from the commencement. Therefore, one great fact to be borne in mind is, that if you want good queens, make sure they are raised in proper season and under proper conditions. Then comes the question, What are the proper conditions? To my mind they are (1) that the stock that raises the new queens should be strong and flourishing, and (2) have a laying queen in the hive while the new ones are being raised. And I maintain that only under such conditions can the best and most perfect queens be raised. Such queens are fine, strong, prolific, and long-lived, and will