The Beginner's Page

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ou ever open a bee-hive, or see ned and the frames taken out, ther that was just a little too be called warm? If you did, iced everything that happened, uld have seen the bees as soon cool air came in contact with ather into "bunches" on the hereas when first taken from they were distributed evenly comb, or a part of it. If any of the bees, from three or as many hundred, fell off the to the ground, they would ly commence to bunch there ame way, whereas in warm would soon take wings rn to their hive. What does ching," or, as it is properly lustering," mean? It means the bees' method of protect- elves from the cold. A bee soon perish in any kind temperature—there must be them so that they can form cluster, for in this way the he middle of the cluster are by the outside "layer" of they, in turn, are kept alive at given off by the inner bees in the hive are alwa's er, though the cluster is di- the combs, and it is the si'e uster—the number of spaces combs that it occupies—that the strength of the colony. It comb or combs in the centre ter that the queen lays her he young bees are hatched place of the old ones which ually dying off, and when o increase the population of the hive, or, we will say, the size of the cluster, until there is not room in the hive for it. Then comes swarming —but that's not yet.

Now, the larger the cluster is, the faster it will grow, because in a large cluster the bees can keep much more comb space warm enough for the raising of brood. The more comb space there is inside the cluster, the more eggs the queen can lay, and conse-- quently the more young bees will be hatched in proportion to the number already in the hive. For instance, suppose there are only enough bees to keep warm a space large enough for the queen to lay eggs in fifty cells. It requires three weeks from the time the egg is laid until the bee hatches. Therefore, the queen lays her fifty eggs, and then has to wait three weeks until the young bees hatch before she can lay any more. In the meantime the chances are that half or more of the bees which were present when the queen laid the eggs have died before there are any young ones to take their places, so that there is no gain in population, or very little at best. Even with a much larger cluster than this, it frequently happens in the spring that the old bees die off faster than the young ones hatch, consequently as the cluster must necessarily become smaller and smaller, the fewer bees there are in the hive, it contracts until some of the comb which the queen laid eggs in, and which contains brood in various stages, must be left uncovered, and the brood, of course, dies. It even sometimes happens, when the weather is bad and kills many of the bees that