

The Month's Work

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April is the month to leave the bees alone. Make this emphatic, Mr. Editor, I fear many will forget it. There may, however, occur seasons especially in the more northern parts of the province and other like places, when it would be impossible to set out bees which were wintered inside before the first of this month, but apart from this, and accidents which may or have occurred, I cannot conceive of a single legitimate exception to this rule.

The whole object of spring management is to have our colonies as strong in bees as possible, and their brood-chamber full of brood, (not honey) when the honey harvest arrives in June, with the opening of the clover bloom. The conditions necessary in the spring for securing this are, (1) good wintering, (2) abundance of stores, (3) good queens, and (4) warmth. Spring dwindling is in short bad wintering, and should be prevented in September, not cured in April. Likewise the matter of stores should be so attended to in September that there is no doubt as to each colony having abundance when April arrives. Every colony wintered having a poor queen means a more or less weak, worthless one when the honey harvest arrives in June, this fault cannot be remedied during the spring, it belongs to the swarming season. As to the warmth and comfort of our colonies, this work belongs to March and is treated in the article for that month.

In practice accidents and oversights

do occur, so if from such causes a colony is known to be short of stores it should be fed. This is best done by carefully opening the hive on the first warm day, removing two or more of the empty combs and inserting full ones in their stead, placing them next to but not between the combs containing the brood. This operation should be performed with as little disturbance as possible, as colonies so opened up and disturbed in April before the honey flow begins, not unfrequently will destroy their own queens, besides being liable to be attacked by robbers.

All unnatural means to hurry and increase brooding such as stimulative feeding, spreading brood, uncapping honey about the brood nest, etc., at this season of the year should not be thought of, but left wholly to those who practice it, and think they are making a success of it. I doubt if such expedients even in May are a success.

Uniting weak colonies in early spring to make strong ones is a mistake. Colonies made by thus uniting weak ones, will be no stronger by the first of June than these same weak ones individually would have been on this same date if they had not been united. This may seem contrary to logic, but it is a fact. Weak colonies should be allowed to develop upon their own resources, and if by the first week of June they are not strong enough to do remunerative work, they can then be effectively united. This may seem a harsh way of dealing with unfortunate weaklings, when to a certain extent they can be helped by contraction, special feeding, giving of brood from strong colonies, etc., but I doubt if it can be done with profit to the apiarist.

For various reasons there are often those, especially beginners, who wish