

PRESERVATION OF BEES IN WINTER.

Mr. Fixter has reminded me of one thing I had forgotten to mention. That is that we are carrying on an interesting series of experiments on wintering bees. One of the great difficulties of keeping bees is the winter, and we are carrying on, this year, a series of experiments in wintering them, in addition to the other to which I alluded. There are some 8 or 10 experiments with bees out of doors and in the cellar which are all detailed in the annual report, and which, I think, will be of interest to the bee-keepers. Of course I need not say here to any of the Members of Parliament that we are always very much pleased to see any one that will come and visit the different departments. During the past summer a great many people showed their interest in bee-keeping by visiting the apiary and seeing for themselves what is being done. They have given us suggestions and we have been able to give much information in return.

By Mr. McMillan :

Q. How do you preserve the bees during the winter?—A. We are trying several experiments with regard to that. I am afraid I am rather a heretic among the bee-keepers, but it may be that I do not know anything about it, but I think it is worth following up an idea I have. The method of wintering the bees in the past has been to keep them as warm as possible. They say: "You must keep your bees indoors in winter and keep them nice and warm and comfortable," and all that sort of thing. Of course, my opinion may be very far wrong, simply because I do not know much about bees, but my idea is that the right line is quite in the opposite direction. All the efforts of bee-keepers in the past have been to keep the bees warm. Now, I am trying to keep them as cold as I can. I know that I have had in my office two bees which stood 20 degrees below zero without any protection at all. They crawled out of the combs which had been put in a cold open shed to destroy bee-moth grubs. These combs were put in a very cold dry shed for this special purpose and these two bees it was found had crawled into the combs. They must have been kept in that shed for about a week, during which the thermometer was below zero all the time, and for two days touched 20 below zero. When the combs were brought in they were noticed and pulled out with a pair of forceps. I kept them in my office, where it was, of course, warm. The next day they were sufficiently recovered to sip honey and water from my fingers. From that circumstance, I am led to the conclusion that bees will stand much more cold than is supposed, and I think the nearer we can bring the conditions of our hives to those in which wild bees pass the winter, the more successful we shall be.

By Mr. McGregor :

Q. They will hardly stand the cold, if the Chairman's Bill, now before the House, prevents us from feeding them with sugar in the fall?—A. We will feed them with honey then. I think our bees have been very successfully wintered by Mr. Fixter. As to other things, I have followed the general methods. As to weight, I have tried to get them as near as possible to 50 pounds per hive or colony when put in the cellar for the winter, and we have had no trouble in wintering them. Last winter we lost only one colony, and we could not find out what the cause of this was. It was probably a weak colony or may have had no queen. Mr. Fixter, who has the practical management of the apiary, is here to-day, and I am sure he would be glad to give you any further information that members might ask for with reference to this matter.

Q. We have been keeping our bees for some years in the house?—A. Yes; that is a common practice.

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