

The Beginner's Page

Department Conducted by E. G. HAND

Don't extract your honey until it is ripe. Ripe honey is honey that has been in the hive until the bees and the temperature and general conditions of the interior of the hive have brought it to perfection, when it is sealed over with an airtight covering of wax. The nearer a comb of honey is to having every cell sealed, the better—the more nearly perfect the honey is. As it is impossible for man to bring about by artificial means, conditions exactly as they are in a bee-hive, so it is impossible to obtain perfect honey in any way, except by letting the bees themselves do the perfecting. While it is not practicable to have every cell in all the extracting combs sealed before extracting the nearer to this condition we can get the better our honey will be. The beginner may have only one super of extracting combs for each of his hives, perhaps less, and be tempted to extract too soon. It will pay him better to have his bees draw out enough foundation so he will have two supers or more for each hive. Then he need do no extracting until the season is over, and can get the whole of the work finished up at once.

In the actual work of extracting, more time is lost through trying to work with a dull uncapping knife, and leaving the honey too cold, than in any other way. Have the knife just as sharp as you can make it, do your extracting on a warm day, taking the combs from the bees only so fast as they can be extracted, that is, don't take off the hives more than you can extract before it has time to cool off, and you will find the uncapping and

extracting can be done in half the time that will be necessary if the honey is taken off the hives and allowed to stand over night before commencing to extract. The question whether it is necessary to have a pan of hot water beside you to dip your uncapping knife, in to keep it from sticking to the combs, will settle itself when you get your combs and knife as they should be. With a dull knife and cold combs, the knife will pull the combs to pieces unless kept wet, but with a keen knife and warm combs, you will soon forget to wet the knife, for it won't be necessary. Have a good big cheesecloth strainer—big as the whole top of your store can, and fasten it on with a good stout strap and buckle. You can pull this so tight the strainer won't slip from under it, which is more than you can do with a piece of rope tied with a knot.

And get your honey into the cans it is to be sold in just as quickly as possible, and seal them up tight. The less the honey is exposed to the air the less flavor and aroma it will lose.

Honey continues to improve if left on the hive after sealing up, but the appearance of the comb is marred by the "travel stain" or traffic of the bees over it. It is therefore important to remove section honey, or comb honey, as it is properly called, from the hives as soon as possible after it is all sealed up, to preserve the snowy whiteness of the comb.

Save out a few full combs at extracting time, as you may need them in September or October to put in hives that are not up to winter weight,