For The Canadian Bee Journal.

Preservation of Combs for Future Use

THIS is a good subject, and one that is being pretty well handled in the C. B. J. at present. Still there is room for further discussion. Now, I consider a superfluous quantity of combs the best stock a bee-keeper can have in his apiary. The subject, as I understand it is, "How to take care of them;" for my part, I find it much easier to care for them than to get them. The plan I have followed during the last five or six years is as follows: Just as soon as I am done extracting, the combs are returned to the colonies to be cleaned by the bees, and at this time all combs in the brood chamber not required by the bees to winter on, containing small quantities of honey, should be removed and extracted; or uncapped and returned with extracting combs to be emptied by the bees, and there they remain until I wish to prepare the bees for winter; by this time all the combs will be dry and clean. My super and brood chamber are same size and made exactly alike. I take a hive or super, place it on a bottom board, fill with comb, spaced about one inch apart, or a little less will do, and another one on top, and so on, until there are three storeys; I then put on a hive cover and close all entries so that no bees or mice can get in. I let them stand in this way in the yard all winter. None of the hives will fit so closely that there will be no air to ventilate the hives. Some have asked me if the frost does not crack the combs, but my experience has been that it does not, but remember you must not handle them in cold weather; those that have pollen in them seem to be just as fresh in spring as when put away. As for moths, I have never had any bother with them.

A. E. Sherrington.

Walkerton.

For The Canadian Bee Journal.

Honey, Swarming and Brood Chambers.

DEAR SIR,—The clover honey season is upon us, but where is the honey? There is around Branchton, where my bees are, a considerable amount of natural clover; it looks fine and thrifty, but the honey does not come The bees bring in considerable clover pollen, but carry themselves light so far as the sweet itself is concerned. Owing to bad catches the last two seasons, a field of cultivated clover, red or alsike, is a rare thing around here.

The bees are getting just enough of a dark honey and honey-dew to keep up brood rearing; but there is no great effort required to prevent the swarming fever. The theory that swarming takes place immediately on sealing of the first queen cell, gives a rule by which the bees are no longer governed in these unfavored parts. They seal the cells, and await further developments till the time of hatching. My only two cases of preparation for swarming this season are after that fashion. From the first I took the old queen away and placed her elsewhere, just as the first young queen hatched out, and the latter now reigns in the hive midst evident contentment. In the other case I purpose to follow a similar line of procedure, as with so little honey coming in the swarming fever don't amount to much. Were there lots of honey it would be entirely different.

G. A. Deadman, in his article on "The production of extracted honey," in the C.B.J. of the 15th inst., refers to the evils of extracting from the brood chamber, and under ordinary circumstances I think his conclusions are quite correct, and that extracting from the brood combs should be avoided; but where there is honey-dew around either in spring or fall in these northern latitudes, it will be necessary, by whatever process it is managed, to see that it is not left on the combs on which the bees are to be wintered, else the following spring there will be an unpleasant necessity for guessing at the cause for so many weak and empty hives.

Yours respectfully,

R. W. McDonnell.

Galt, Ont., 22nd June, 1892.

The theory that bees swarm as soon as they get queen cells capped over, if weather is favorable, is correct; but there are exceptions to almost all rules in bee-keeping. It seems that you have had two cases where the old queen remains in the hive until young queens hatch out. This indicates the old queen was about to be superceded—and in that case it is usual to allow her to remain until after the young queens hatch, and, in rare instances, long after that until she dies; but when the weather is favorable and the colony strong, the next day after the queen cell is capped over they will usually swarm—sometimes the same day—and we have had them swarm before the queen cell was capped—have also known them to swarm when no preparation in the way of queen rearing appeared. The lack of honey seems scarcely likely to be the cause of your bees not swarming when queen cells were capped, as it is not an uncommon thing for them to tear down queen cells if they decide not to swarm; and you removing the old queens after the young ones had hatched, indicates that she was about to be superceded.