

MR. F. ADAMS ON QUEEN-REARING

In answer to the questions asked in December C.B.J., I will take up the matter of queen-rearing in this issue.

Nearly every bee-keeper has tried to raise a few surplus queens at some time or other. A few have been successful, but in the majority of instances the work has been abandoned, either because the apiarist found that he could not give this part of the business the necessary time and attention, or because he has become discouraged, through want of success in his first attempts.

Now there is nothing difficult in raising queens, but it does require very close attention to details, and only one who has the time and patience to attend to the smallest detail of the business can hope to carry it to a successful issue.

Most beginners commence operations too early in the spring. They have heard too much about early queens, and the desirability of getting young queens for the honey crop, that they seem to consider there is some special value in queens reared out of season—like early-raised cabbages, they are worth more at this time of the year! Of course, if there should be a lot of old, failing queens in the yard, which will not last until the honey crop, a man may be forced to break up colonies for nuclei in order to make up a few queens to replace them, in the same way that he would break up some of the furniture rather than freeze to death; but with proper precautions at the right time of the year, this will be unnecessary in either case.

The time to commence queen-rearing operations in any part of Canada, we venture to say, is during June. Before this time every bee is needed in the hive to take care of the maturing brood, and withdrawals are made at the expense of the vitality of the colony. Apart from the injury to the colony is the difficulty of making up nuclei at this time of the year, strong enough to care for the newly-hatched queens until they are

mated and laying. There are several different methods of doing this, all practicable at the proper season of the year, but each method has its limitations, and in the early spring each method is subject to its own particular objection.

We will suppose, then, that fruit bloom is over and nothing is coming in from the fields. The whole yard is in good shape, apparently. Most colonies have their combs nearly filled with brood, and a few have been enlarged by the addition of upper stories. "Surely it is time now to get a few queen cells started," you think. But before you commence, just make an examination of the yard. Don't examine the hives, but examine the combs. Look into the cells, and what do you find? Hatching bees, capped brood, old and young larvæ, and eggs. Examine the young larvæ. Most of it looks all right, although some of it seems a little dry. But here is one that clearly is suffering; instead of a pearly white, it has turned to a sickly yellow and lies uncured in the bottom of the cell. What is the matter? Is it foul brood, do you think? Not likely, my friend, but your brood is starving—starving in the midst of plenty! The hives still contain honey, but the bees, with the natural instinct of their race, are saving that honey. They have the true miser's dread of poverty. They are husbanding the principal when they cease to draw interest.

The effect of short rations is observed in the brood; it is seen in the decreased laying of the queen. Her Royal Highness, even, is being stinted, and if any queen cells are present in the hive they also will suffer from the lack of proper nourishment. Will a colony in this condition raise good queens? The answer to this question is decidedly "No!"

The remedy, then, is to feed. Feed thin sugar syrup every night, or every other night, at least. If there is much honey in the hives, this can be uncapped, a little at a time, in place of feeding the syrup; but between fruit bloom and clover there is not likely to be much honey

T. O'HARA,
Deputy Minister.
1908.

to the C.B.J.
lustry. We are
something that
lar is well in
d to you many