

THE BEGINNER'S PAGE

Department Conducted by E. G. Hand

Don't buy bees in cold weather, or until all danger of their dying from starvation or many other spring troubles, is past. The beginner is generally in a great hurry to possess his first hive of bees, and if he looks about him at this time of year (March) he can usually find somebody who is just as keen to sell as he is to buy. He may go on a mild day to a man who has bees to sell, and may see the bees flying strongly from the hive. At least, he may think that they are flying strongly, whereas, they may be only flying, and there is a whole lot of difference between flying and flying strongly. The beginner, who has had no experience with bees, may not be able to distinguish the difference, but it is there all the same. To the beginner, any number of bees look like "a lot," because he may never have seen a real lot to know what they looked like. To the beginner, a bee is a bee, and that is all he knows about it. It may be an old bee or a young, a strong, bright, active healthy bee, a weak worn out no good bee, a black bee, a hybrid bee or an Italian bee, but the beginner doesn't know how to distinguish one of these characteristics from another, and it would not avail him much if he did know—not in the matter of buying bees in March, for there is plenty of time between March and safety for all conditions with the bees in the hive to change. The beginner is apt to get the idea that, by the middle of March, the bees' troubles are ended. On the contrary, they are often just beginning, and I think it is no exaggeration to say that more colonies of bees die between the middle of March and the middle of April, in this climate (On-

tario), than in any other month of the year.

The causes are many, and would require several pages to go into fully. Three of the principal ones are starvation, poor queens and what is known as "spring dwindling." The first is the worst stumbling block to the beginner. He has an idea, most likely, that the bees are safe from starvation as soon as they begin working on the willows, elms, soft maples and other early flowers. But they are not unless they have honey left over from last year, and one of the first things for the beginner to learn is that, except in specially favored localities and seasons (and the chances are his locality is not specially favored) bees are not sure of enough new honey to keep them going until the clover blooms. The second cause of spring loss mentioned above—poor queens—is something that has to be attended to late in the summer, for a colony that starts the season with a poor queen, even with an expert in charge to detect the trouble and substitute a good young queen, has a handicap that will put it out of the running as a very good colony when the honey harvest comes.

The trouble known as "spring dwindling" may be caused by any one of a number of things or by a combination of them. A failing queen, a shortage of food (without actual starvation), unfavorable weather, or poor wintering conditions are all fruitful causes. Bees that live through the winter nearly all die very soon after active work begins in the spring, the length of time they live depending on the conditions under which they wintered. If everything was right and the bees came out strong, bright and healthy, with little loss of vitality during their confinement, they will live longer in the spring than bees which have had a "hard racket" during the winter and come out weakened in vitality, even there may be approx-

imately the same for each hive when flight in the spring is the result of the faster than the year and anything y bees to die off f under normal c under normal c retards the rals hive, is conductive en altogether, A for the bees if a son who knows general and his c If you think of March or April wait until May You won't miss doing so.

Comb or E
A question th every beginner i run his bees fo comb honey or e often decides in f because he figure supplies will not tractor, uncapping anything of that k ductions of first-c a profit is a thing only be accomplish thoroughly underst bees, and the mon supers, sections, rates, etc., and th out these things probably half the time it is tried) w such as would sta ssary for the sec honey. Another thi stock of extractin tractor, you have properly cared fo ant to sell out of honey—a lot of it. comb honey, eve pers must be bo ther every year, a