

Mr I. Hopkins Transferring and Handling Bees.

The complete subjugation of bees by an expert bee-master affords one of the best illustrations of the power of man over the lower animals. Most of us have learned from experience how readily the bees resent the slightest interference either with themselves or their home, caring nothing for the risk of losing their lives so long as they drive off an intruder. It is, therefore, difficult for the majority of us to understand how it is possible for anyone to exercise such control over them as to make them appear to be the most docile creatures under the sun. It is the more marvellous when such control is obtained without the use of smoke or other extraneous aid beyond the will and power of the individual himself.

One of the best exhibitions of this nature to be seen in any part of the world has been given annually for the past ten years at the Auckland Agricultural Association's Shows by Mr I. Hopkins, the well-known apiarist. So popular has this feature of the show become that people come from all parts of the country to see it. On the last occasion our artist intended to take a series of photos of Mr Hopkins at his work, but being troubled with the common failing of not being able to be in two places at one time, he missed the opportunity. Mr Hopkins, however, at our request, kindly consented to give another exhibition, with the result seen in our illustrations. It is unnecessary for us to give particulars as to the extraordinary manner in which Mr Hopkins controls and handles the bees, as that can be seen in our reproductions.

At the close of the exhibition our artist asked Mr Hopkins a few questions.

"How long, Mr Hopkins, have you been practically interested in bees?"

"Since 1874, but it was in 1878 when I introduced the modern system of bee culture into all parts of Australia that I adopted bee culture as my occupation."

"To what do you attribute chiefly your extraordinary mastery over bees, as demonstrated just now?"

"To my long experience and close intimacy with them, and a knowledge of their language."

"Language! Do you mean to tell me that bees have a language?"

"Most decidedly! They have a language as clearly understandable by the experienced bee master as his own."

"Will you please explain?"

"What is commonly known as the hum of the bee is simply the sound that conveys its thoughts to its fellows—its language, in fact, which, in time becomes familiar to the apiarist. The sound changes with the various moods of the bee. There is the hum of satisfaction, when the colony is prosperous, and honey plentiful,

which is no doubt familiar to most people. There is another, but somewhat similar one, when the bees are swarming, and a most joyful one when they are entering their new home with their queen. A subdued but doleful one on discovering the loss of their queen. A sharp hum when they are plainly warning you off, and a much sharper one when they declare war, and go for you. A very peculiar hum when they realise that they have one dealing with them that is more than their match. These are the chief sounds I can think of just now, and I can assure you they are all as clear to me as my own language. I know at once by

their hum what they intend to do, and I can check in an instant any intention of a warlike nature, hence my mastery over them."

"It has been said that you have no superior in the world at handling bees, is that so?"

"That is a pretty stiff question, but, to be candid, I have done, I think, everything possible for a person to do with bees, and very few attempt to handle them as I do without the aid of smoke or protection."

"Have you had any exciting experiences during your beekeeping career?"

"Yes, one or two."
"Will you relate them?"



PREPARING TO TRANSFER A COLONY OF BEES FROM A COMMON BOX TO A LANGSTROTH HIVE.



A DELICATE OPERATION.



DRUMMING OR DRIVING THE BEES INTO AN EMPTY BOX.



THE BEES UNDER COMPLETE CONTROL.



MR. HOPKINS TAKING A MOUTHFUL OF THEM.



TRANSFERRING THE COMBS TO THE LANGSTROTH HIVE.