

## THE APIARY.

### SPRING WORK.

FULL advantage should be taken of the mild spring days to overhaul the hives. When the temperature will allow, the work should go on steadily, and notes should be made after inspection of the condition of the colonies. Do not delay the spring examination until brood-rearing has commenced in earnest. By the time of the first inspection small patches of brood should be formed, and under favourable conditions the quantity will rapidly increase, depending largely, of course, upon the amount of stores in the hives and the quality of the queens.

The spring months are the most critical to the beekeeper, as the bees are taking a steady toll of the stores, and if care has not been taken in the autumn to see that each colony contained at least 35 lb. to 40 lb. of honey, cases of starvation may occur. The practice of placing colonies in winter quarters with a short food-supply is not to be commended, for it must ever be borne in mind that the foundation of the next season's crop depends largely, if not almost entirely, upon the condition of the hives when they are placed in winter quarters. Spring feeding is a temporary expedient to evade starvation, and should not be looked upon as part of the regular spring work.

### *Removing Supers.*

Where it was found necessary to leave supers on the hives these may now be removed and the bees confined to the brood-chambers. What constitutes the brood-chamber depends on the beekeeper and his methods of working. Of late years the tendency has been towards increasing the size of the brood-chamber proper, and in place of the usual ten combs a brood-nest of eighteen to twenty frames is now generally accepted to make for large colonies in addition to providing room for expansion as brood-rearing proceeds. In cases where the bees have entered the supers and deserted the brood-combs, place the supers containing the bees on the bottom-board and remove the combs to the storehouse. See that the hives are made snug, and provide each with one or two spare mats to conserve the heat of the cluster.

### *Queen-right Colonies.*

Normally, at this season brood-rearing will be in progress, and an inspection of the hives will determine as to whether or not the colonies are queen-right. The extent of the brood-rearing depends largely upon the weather prevailing, locality, and altitude, and these factors must be taken into consideration. If no eggs or brood be found it may be safe to assume that the colony is queenless, and such a colony must not be tolerated, as there is a danger of its being robbed of its stores by other colonies and an epidemic of robbing started in the apiary.

To unite a queenless colony to a queen-right hive proceed as follows: Prepare the queen-right hive during the day by removing the cover and mat and placing a sheet of newspaper over it. In the evening lift the queenless hive off the bottom-board and place it over the queen-right hive. In the course of a few days the bees in the weaker hive will eat their way through the paper and unite peaceably with the bees in the stronger one. If not required, the surplus combs containing honey may subsequently be removed and stored away for feeding. This method is simple, and rarely causes any fighting between the united colonies.

### *Overhauling the Hives.*

Each hive should be thoroughly overhauled during the mild spring days. There is usually an accumulation of pollen, cappings, and dead bees on the bottom-boards, which matter, if left, becomes mouldy and objectionable, besides acting as a harbour for insects. The operation of clearing the bottom-boards can be facilitated by providing a spare one. Lift the hive on to the spare bottom-board, scrape the dirty one thoroughly, and then replace the hive. Where necessary, each hive should be given a coat of paint, while in damp situations, in order to preserve the life of the bottom-boards, a thin coat of tar applied to the under-surface will be effective. Clear all weeds and grass from the hives: they act as a harbour for insects and keep the bottom-boards damp.