

## THE APIARY.

### Uniting Colonies.

THE presence of weak hives in the apiary must be avoided as far as possible. During warm autumn days weak colonies rarely escape the attention of robber bees, and are easily molested. When once they are attacked the beekeeper will find it extremely difficult to save them, and eventually they will get robbed out despite his efforts. It is far the better plan to unite the bees with a stronger colony than to run the risk of unsettling them in the dormant season through the encouragement of wholesale robbing.

### Covers.

With the approach of the rainy season it is advisable to make a complete examination of the hive-covers in use. Altogether too little attention is paid to making the covers watertight, and neglect in this direction leads to winter losses. No amount of labour should be spared in saving the bees from exposure and dampness, and by so doing warding off the large annual losses that occur through neglect. There is no excuse for the beekeeper neglecting to protect his bees, and in the long-run a small expenditure on some suitable waterproof roofing-material doubly repays for itself, and is the means of saving colonies that would otherwise be lost. Bees must be kept dry. An examination made of colonies where proper protection is not provided reveals the presence of large quantities of propolis. Usually this is collected to prevent the penetration of external moisture, and it is noticeable that it is gathered freely in the autumn months. Where adequate protection is provided the bees are to a large extent saved the labour of collecting the propolis, and by providing dry roofs the beekeeper is assisting them. In the case of roofs that are cracked, do not attempt to tinker with them, but cover them entirely with some waterproof material. In the long-run metal coverings are the cheapest and the best. Good zinc or galvanized iron makes ideal covering, and lasts for years.

### Spare Supers.

Where extracted combs have been placed on the hives for the bees to clean these should be removed and the bees confined to as small a space as possible consistent with the size of the colony. It may be necessary to leave some of the supers on during the winter months, and these can be dealt with in the spring. Do not leave the bees more space than they require, as they desert the lower supers and cluster at the top for warmth.

### Mats.

It should be seen that each colony is provided with one or two good mats during the winter months, to keep the bees as warm as possible. Mats should be cut to fit exactly on top of the frames, and may be made from clean sacking or canvas. Sugar-bags or cornsacks make excellent mats and are easily procured. Wood mats are adopted by some beekeepers, and, if desired, may be secured at a moderate cost from dealers in beekeeping material. In districts where the bees do not bring in a great deal of propolis wood mats are effectual. On no account use calico mats, as these afford practically no warmth.

### Weeds.

The hives should be kept clear of all weeds, so that the flying bees may have free access to the entrances. Many bees are lost by striking growing obstacles on returning to the hives. For the next few months, when the air is charged with moisture, plenty of air and as much sunlight as possible should penetrate beneath the bottom boards. In