

ANNOYANCES.

Complaint is made from certain regions that in some years wasps become so numerous in the autumn that by sheer numbers they can overcome the inmates of a hive and rob the stores. In all cases of robbing, whether by wasps or bees, narrow the entrance down to a space just wide enough to permit only one bee to pass at a time, so that defence will be very easy. A small bit of wood makes a good entrance block. The wasps that fly round in May are queens, so that every one killed then means a colony exterminated. A death at this time prevents thousands of hives in the fall.

CHAPTER XIV.

Melting Wax.

In an eight frame hive the combs contain about 2 pounds of pure wax, but after several years' use they may weigh as much as four times the original weight. The increase is due to dirt in various forms. The cappings that are removed during extracting are almost pure wax, there being usually about 1 pound of wax to every 50 pounds of honey. Pure wax is always a marketable commodity in a fruit district and in every drug-store. In Victoria the latter pay 45 cents a pound for it. We therefore see that every scrap of comb is worth saving, so that it may be rendered at the end of the season. After making dozens of experiments, the writer believes that for the small apiarist the oven method is the best, and although it produces a little less than half of the available wax in old comb, it is as effective as any other process short of a regular wax-press. To pay the cost of the latter, one would have to work over about 100 pounds of old comb.

Take a bread-pan or similar dish and in one end at the bottom punch a hole a quarter of an inch wide, any length. Fill it with comb and set it on the upper shelf of the oven, with a small stone under the unpunched end to tilt it up. On the lower shelf, so as to catch the drip, place another dish containing water. When the oven gets hot enough the wax will run from the old comb into the pan below. To make a nice cake of the wax, melt all the bits in a dish of water, then set aside to cool. A vessel with sloping sides like a hard-pail is good.

AIDING A WEAK HIVE WITH MORE BEES.

A hive that is strong in bees in early spring will attain great strength early in the season, while one that is weak will make very little headway, possibly may have a hard struggle to live. The laying capacity of the queen is limited by the number of larva the workers are able to care for; therefore, if we can add more bees to the colony the quicker will it develop. The skillful apiarist in the spring often does quite a business in transferring bees from one hive to another, but to be successful he must understand the limitations. In the first place it never pays to rob a medium strong colony to aid one that is weak. A hive that has every frame covered may be drawn upon, but never one that is weaker. Second, it is useless to give a frame of brood without nurse-bees to a weak colony, as the workers there are doing all they possibly can; but, on the other hand, it is risky to give old bees with a frame of brood, as these strangers may attack the queen, at least early in the season. Young bees are less liable to interfere.

To give young bees to a weak colony, go to a strong hive, select a frame containing brood, but be sure the queen is not on it—the only way to be certain is to see her—and shake the bees on to a large board in front of the hive. The old bees will fly home in a few minutes, then shake those that remain on the alighting-board of the hive to be strengthened. They will crawl inside and be made welcome.