

A SIMPLE DIARY.

The bee-year from the apiarist's point of view begins, therefore, in September. But since we have made a little progress with the spring conditions we may as well continue. Every beginner in bee-keeping should keep a diary for the first year, at least as a guide for the future. It need not be in any way elaborate, just a sheet of note-paper lying convenient on which to make brief jottings like these:

February 22—Willow blooms; pollen carried in.
 March 13—A few dandelions; plentiful April 7.
 March 15—First examination of hives; temperature, 65'.
 April 12—Early pears.
 April 18—Early plums; pollen plentiful.
 May 3—Nectar and pollen above immediate needs.
 May 19—Dearth of nectar; feeding.
 June 1—First clover-blossom.
 June 19—Honey-flow starts.

These items are simply suggestive, as the apiarist should make it his business and pleasure to know every plant visited by bees in his locality, also their date of blooming. In most regions there are breaks in the flow of nectar and these should be anticipated, as during a dearth brood-raising will be stopped, with serious loss at the time of the honey-flow unless feeding be done. The end of fruit-bloom often marks the beginning of one of these periods.

MARCH.

Early this month, sooner if possible, lift the hive off the bottom board and clean off the dead bees and other waste matter. The simplest way is to take a spare board, remove the complete hive, place the new board on the stand, then swing back the hive to its place. The operation takes but a minute, so there ought to be no disturbance to the inmates. The old board is now cleaned off and used for the next hive. While lifting the colony one learns roughly its condition as to stores. If light, it must, of course, be fed with as little disturbance as possible, because during this month and next the bees may cluster in a compact ball round the queen—ball her when the frames are disturbed, and a balled queen is apt to disappear at an early date. Smoke is rarely necessary at this time, provided the bee-keeper is gentle and avoids jarring the frames when returning them to the hive. In the south end of Vancouver Island there ought to be brood in three or four frames about the middle of the month, but, of course, the space occupied by the young in the outside of the nest will be very small.

APRIL.

In the coast regions, during the latter half of March and the first week of this month, there is apt to be a cool spell, with cloudy or wet weather which prevents bee-flight. Brood-raising frequently comes to a stop, so that when the warm weather returns there may not be a single egg in the frames. However, as soon as pollen again comes in freely, the queen resumes her duties, laying so freely that by the 20th there is generally brood in as many as five frames. The young bees begin to hatch out about the end of the month, when they are very much needed, as the old ones that carried the colony through the winter are dying off very rapidly. In fact, for a few days at the end of April the low-water mark of population is apt to be reached; then the tide turns, the working force is rapidly added to, and almost as if by magic the frames become covered with bees. During this month the great source of nectar and pollen in most regions of the Province is the dandelion, but in some parts of the dry belt there is