

# NOVEL EXPERIMENT IN HONEY PRODUCTION

## BEES FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA

### WORKING TWO SUMMERS A YEAR

(By Telegraph.—Special to "Times.")  
AUCKLAND, November 11.

The proverbially busy bee is to be kept busier still, if the idea of James Ballantyne, formerly of Clydesdale, Scotland, works out successfully. Ballantyne arrived in Auckland by the Niagara with a shipment of live bees.

The bees were obtained from four hives in Nelson, B.C., and had already during the summer there produced a good crop of honey. The object in transporting them across the Pacific is, of course, to take advantage of the reversed seasons; in other words, to secure inside twelve months two summers and two honey harvests. Permission to import bees was previously obtained from the Minister for Agriculture, and the bees were shipped with a certificate of health from the Inspector of Apiaries in British Columbia. As the importation of entire stocks of colonies, including brood and honeycombs, is prohibited, the bees were shipped like swarms; that is, without any combs or honey. This rule is a safeguard in order to minimise the chances of disease known as "foul brood" being introduced.

### AN EXPERIMENT

The shipment just made is in the nature of an experiment, and the fact that one method of shipping has proved satisfactory now opens up quite a big field for future development. Advantage was taken of cool storage room on the Niagara, and as a cargo of Canadian apples was being shipped at a controlled temperature of about 40 degrees Fahrenheit, the bee cages were put in the same room. One of the cages was provisioned with sugar syrup, and the other eight with soft sugar candy. There were in all about 30lb of live bees, with ten queen bees, and as there are about 4500 bees to the pound the shipment contained 135,000 units.

# NOVEL EXPERIMENT

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To begin with, the members in only one of the cages have survived. The bees in this colony were fed on sugar syrup, a liquid consisting of about 10lb of ordinary refined cane sugar in seven quarts of water. Eight colonies which perished en route were all fed on sugar candy, which is made with about the same quantity of sugar in a much smaller measure of water. It should be moist, buttery kind of candy, but actually, owing to the hastiness of the preparations in British Columbia, it turned out too hard and dry. The result was that colonies so provisioned died. Members of the ninth and surviving colony were landed in good order, and apparently are quite happy. They have been given temporary quarters in a garden in Belgium street, near good foraging grounds, such as Symonds street cemetery and Albert Park. Later, Ballantyne expects to obtain employment with a North Island beekeeper and give his hive a chance to harvest the white clover honey that is so greatly appreciated on the London market.

### TRANSPORTATION COSTS

"A first impression of the matter is that transportation costs, involving two overland journeys and an ocean voyage, would be too great, but such is not the case," said Ballantyne, in discussing the commercial side of his venture. "It has to be remembered in this connection that there is a considerable saving of honey usually left with bees for winter stores, and the value of this is more than the cost of transportation, but if the apiarist travels with the bees his rail and ocean fares have to be reckoned. If that expense, which, of course, will be variable, according to the class of transportation purchased, is to be deducted from the value of the second crop of honey, it will reduce the net profits considerably, but for a while it is probable that these expenses can be met independently of the additional honey crop."

Provided good queens are maintained and annual re-queening is practised, it is quite feasible to expect that a doubled breeding season and doubled natural increase of stocks due to two summers will twice a year result in such an addition of stock that, either out of the proceeds of the sale of such swarms or their product in honey, the costs of rail and ocean fares of the apiarist can be defrayed. "Obviously good pasture locations at each end will be of the utmost importance to enable swarms to re-establish themselves quickly on combs and build up to harvesting strength." As Ballantyne remarks, the matter of the low-

they through the tropics and the confinement of the bees for fully three weeks having been tested and proved, beekeepers of both Dominions will be greatly interested in watching the subsequent working out of the methods indicated. The idea has never been tried over such distances before, although it is not quite unknown on a smaller scale. Thus bees in this province are asked to work among the white clover of Hauraki Plains in the spring and in manuka scrub around Silverdale in the autumn. In Scotland the thrifty beekeepers take bees to the highlands for the flowering of the heather, but if the summer months have thus been kept crowded, the bees have still been allowed winter for leisure.

Ballantyne's plan is more ambitious. There would be no winter for bees, but two working summers each year. Twice a year, however, the hives would have three weeks' holiday during their ocean voyage across the Pacific, with sugar syrup provided free, and an even climate set dead at 40 degrees F.

### NO TRADE UNIONS

Some people will maintain, of course, that it is sweating the bees, but so far these industrious creatures know nothing of labour unions, arbitration court's awards, or eight-hour days. When such a movement is started, no doubt the slogan will not be a 44-hour week, but a six-months' working year, and if the bees go on strike they generally carry their stings with them. Meanwhile, Ballantyne's novel enterprise will be watched with keen interest by apiarists everywhere.