

# A Chance of the Road.

Twilight was falling, the rain came down in sheets, the wind was rising to a gale, and Writton Hall lay close on twenty miles distant. But it had been a day to remember, and Richard Lawford was not the man to forget it. It was among the boulders that strewed the slope of One Tree Hill that the hounds had lost their fox and the Squire's horse its shoe; but the scent had been perfect, the line straight, the pace terrific.

Lawford crushed his hat on his head, bowed his face to the blast, and shouted to his companions.

"My nag won't take me to Writton to-night, Tom, nor will yours see Saxby till 12 has struck. What say 'ee to a bed at the inn at Malham?"

"With all my heart," cried Sir Thomas Ewing, cantering up to his friend's side. "So hey for the 'Green Dragon' and the best that it holds, and I'll be single again for these few hours."

The other laughed. Sir Thomas had been wed but a twelvemonth, and rumor had it that the youthful pair had scarce found their married state a path of roses.

A day in the open air will secure justice for the worst fare that ever was cooked, but that evening the host of the "Green Dragon" had surpassed himself, and his guests had little to complain of. Moreover, the cellar of the Malham Inn was famous, and before supper was ended the wine had mounted to Ewing's head. Lower and lower he sank in the chair wherein he sprawled out before the blazing faggots, till at last, with a clatter, his outstretched feet slipped against the firebricks on the hearth.

"What, asleep and snoring, Tom?" cried Lawford, who had himself been nodding, "and at this hour, too; it's only just 9."

His companion drew himself up blinking.

"My eyes are like lead, Richard, and I have not been in bed these four-and-twenty hours. There was I and Clavering, George Hale and Oliver Derrick, and we supped at Old Peckell's at Thrapstone, and played right through the night till the grooms brought out our nags soon after dawn. Why, I all but fell asleep as the gray took Horford Brook."

"Not been at home, then, Tom? What will thy wife say?"

Ewing shrugged his shoulders.

"She'll say such as she has said these twenty times before, Dick. I never see a friend at his house but I get a sermon on dice and drinking. Why the woman married me, heaven knows! I never was one to hide my light 'neath the bushel. She did it with her eyes open."

"Why didst thou marry her, say rather?" objected Lawford.

"Why? Well, crush me, I scarce can tell 'ee," said the other. "But this I'll say, Dick. Hang me, if I were single, I'd marry her and no other, for all the life she leads me. She's a squamish wench, and has her airs, but by the time our hairs are gray I'll wager a thousand guineas that we'll be c'en better friends than we were the day I brought her home to Saxby. Here's to her health. Why, the liquor's run out. Here, landlord, a couple of bottles."

Though each was possessed by a passion for the chase, the two friends had little else in common. Richard Lawford, a tall, heavy shouldered, athletic man, had seen much of the world, and in his youth having bought experience at a high price was now, in early middle age, making the best use of his purchase. Besides being the possessor of a large estate, an honored name and polished manners, the Squire of Writton was famous for his skill in every field sport, for his nerve and his fearless daring. His temper, it must be confessed, was hot, his courage akin to recklessness, his actions oftentimes the result of the caprice of the moment; but not a man could deny that his heart was right and his wits a match for any in the country.

Sir Thomas Ewing, on the other hand, had seen but little of life save what a brief career at the University of Cambridge had afforded. He was young, but just four-and-twenty, and, being rich himself, had married a wife with a fortune, who was some three years his junior. Fair complexioned, boyish of face, blue eyed and brown haired, he was as good looking, light hearted a baronet as ever cheered on a hound, drained a tankard or snored through a sermon.

By the time Lawford had finished his second bottle Sir Thomas was asleep again.

"Let's to bed," said the elder man, yawning; "thou art but poor company to-night, Tom."

Staggering to his feet, the other blinked his assent, and with a hand upon his friend's shoulder, followed the landlord upstairs.

Their bedchambers, the best in the house, lay side by side overlooking the village street. No choice was between them, and Squire Dick, having bidden Ewing goodnight, was in bed and asleep within ten minutes of locking his door.

An hour later Richard Lawford was sitting up in bed, sleepy, yet wide awake, and in no uncertain terms giving vent to his opinions on belated and noisy travelers. Half awake, half asleep, he had been conscious of

the rumble of wheels as a coach drew up at the inn, and now its occupant, the landlord and the postboys were discussing in tones that could be heard above the howl of the wind the possibility of proceeding further that night.

The postboys, it seemed, had made up their minds that so much as another mile was out of the question, urging that the horses were spent with the gale and the heavy roads. That the traveler was equally averse to any delay was apparent, though Lawford could not catch his words, and the landlord, after the manner of his kind, in one breath gave it as his opinion that the storm was passing, in another that the roads were likely to be bad beyond Malham.

Then it was that the Squire, losing all patience, saw fit to intervene. Out of bed he sprang, and, tearing the curtains aside, flung open the window. In the rain a coach was standing. The landlord was at the door, four travel stained horses were pawing the muddy road and their dripping riders had already dismounted.

"Landlord!" cried he, as the wind caught the casement and swung it back with a rattle against the wall, "is that gentleman going to pass the night beneath this window? Let him come inside, or bid the rascals drive on. Must every guest in thy inn be roused by this pother?"

The innkeeper stepped into the light of the coach lamps and looked up.

"I am sorry, sir," said he, "but 'tis a lady. She says she must go forward, and the men say it is impossible."

To clinch the matter the postboys were about to loose the traces.

"Hold, knaves," cried Richard Lawford, wide awake in a moment, "or as sure as I am a justice of the King's peace, ye shall rue it. Landlord, give the lady my service and say that within ten minutes I shall esteem it an honor to drive her myself."

Into his clothes he hurried, and, half dressed, broke into the room where the baronet was snoring.

"Rouse 'ee, man," cried he, shaking the sleeper, "here's a lady at the inn with a couple of rascals who, for the gale, swear that they won't take her coach a mile further. I have vowed to find her postboys, so bestir thyself, man, and in ten minutes thou shalt be astride the near leader."

Tom Ewing blinked.

"Ecod, Dick, what mad freak has seized thee at this hour of the night?"

The Squire was as good as his word. Lightly he sprang down the stairs, followed by the staggering baronet, who had spent but little time in dressing, since he had fallen asleep in his boots. The postboys had made themselves scarce, and the landlord stood by the horses as Lawford went to the window of the coach. A shadowy form was but faintly outlined in the darkness, as a soft-voiced stammerer a few words of timid thanks for the service he did her.

"To Stretton, sayest thou, madame?" said he. Stretton was little short of fourteen miles westward.

"To Stretton, sir, if it please you," answered the woman, "and from my heart I thank you and your friend for this courtesy."

The Squire turned from the window; he had done his best to catch a glimpse of the lady's features, and had failed. He was puzzled. What could a woman be doing alone with hired servants at that hour of the night?

With a glance at the axles he swung himself into the saddle, slackened the stirrup leathers by two holes and called to Ewing, who was astride the near leader, that he should start.

An hour's sleep and the sudden excitement had sobered the baronet, but he had need of all his wits, for the night was pitch dark. The horses were tired; the road was deep in mud; it was fortunate that the near wheeler was a stout, raw-boned beast, for the Squire was above post-boy's weight. So high blew the gale that Ewing would now and again look backward o'er his shoulder to satisfy himself that his comrade and the coach were with him, and that he was not only a postillion in the land of dreams, after all.

As for the Squire, ne'er had he felt so light of heart; 'twas an adventure such as he loved; not a shadow of regret for the bed he had left behind troubled him, nor thought of the lodging that might be their lot at the journey's end. Sir Thomas, on the contrary, had been speculating upon the chances of the latter, and congratulated himself upon having solved the problem.

"A cousin to my wife lives at Stretton," shouted he to the Squire. "If the inn is full, we can beg a bed o'f him, though, I' faith, I will not answer for his welcome at this hour of the night."

As mile followed mile the night improved, though the going was as bad as ever. The rain had ceased and the moon shone in a sky that was almost cloudless.

"Have a care—hold 'em up!" shouted Lawford to his friend, as, having made some ten miles, they gained the crest of Foresby Hill.

The road wound downward, shadowed on either side by a growth of young beeches, and, as luck would have it, hardly had the Squire's warning passed his lips when the off leader

shied at a fallen branch, lurched against the saddle horse that, stumbling, flung its rider into the mire. Fortunately, the baronet fell wide of the coach and the horse recovered itself ere the wheelers were upon it.

As Lawford brought the team to a standstill a head was thrust from the coach window.

"What has happened?" gasped the woman.

"My friend's horse stumbled," answered the Squire, dismounting. "He lies yonder, madame. Wilt thou step into the road, in case the horses should not stand?"

He helped the woman from the coach and lifted a lamp from its socket, and together they turned their steps up the hill. He would have glanced at the woman at his side, but the sight of a huddled form beneath the hedge drove all else from his mind.

Amid a mass of dripping sedge, face downward in the ditch, lay the baronet, with one arm outstretched and the other beneath him. Down on his knees, lamp in hand, went Lawford. Gently he raised the young man's head. Blood was trickling from a cut beneath the temple; very pale was the upturned face.

At that instant a cry broke from the woman at his side.

The Squire turned, and as he did so this lonely lady sank on her knees on the wet grass beside him, sobbing, "Oh, Tom!"

Then it was that "Dick" Lawford saw the face of her whom he had aided. Very beautiful it was, with every feature clearly defined in the brilliant moonlight, but very sorrowful.

"My Lady Ewing!" gasped the Squire, in surprise.

"Is he—is he hurt, Mr. Lawford?" faltered she, clutching at the man's arm.

"'Tis but a swoon, madame," answered the other reassuringly. "See, his eyes are opening!"

"The woman's arms were about her husband's neck in a moment, her eyes were looking into his. "Thank Heaven!" she murmured, as she wiped the blood from the bruised forehead. "Tom, dost thou see me? I am here."

A faint smile flickered on Ewing's face.

"Thou here, sweetheart? Why, this is strange; but glad am I to see 'ee, Molly! How long have I been lying here? Give me thy hand, Dick."

Lawford raised the man in his arms. Had it not been for one hand upon his friend's shoulder, the other upon his wife's, he could scarcely have kept his feet.

"How art thou now, Tom?" said Lawford. "No bones broken, eh?"

"As well as ever I was," answered the younger man, "save that my head is swimming. But, Molly, tell me—"

"Oh, Tom, come to the coach," interrupted his wife, with a tremor in her voice, "and thou must rest by me and I will tell thee there."

She turned toward the coach, and Lawford followed with Ewing in his arms. Lightly stepped the lady through the doorway, and helped her husband to the seat beside her.

"Canst thou take 'em to Stretton, Dick?" said the baronet. "'Tis at most five miles."

"I'll take 'em, never fear; thou art in thy wife's care, and I will answer for 'ee both, though what thy cousin Rufford will say at our visit I know not," cried he, closing the door.

Softly laughed the Squire as he rode alone in the moonlight. Softly whispered Molly Ewing, with her arm about her husband's neck. Aye, and she was sobbing, too, though it was many a day since she had known such happiness.

"Oh, I was a fool, Tom," murmured she, nor would she suffer the man at her side to stay her, "but, oh, I was so lonely, and so unhappy, Tom. And I had it in my mind to go to my brother Roger, so I set out just as I was. I meant to pass the night with the Ruffords, but though I was at my wits' end at the time, how glad I am that at Malham the postboys deserted me, and that the Squire—I knew his voice—came to my aid. And to think that thou wast with him and I not to know it. And then, when I saw thee in the ditch. Oh, Tom—"

Her words were choking her, but at last her sobbing was hushed and silent, though with hearts o'erflowing, husband and wife sat hand in hand in the swaying coach while Squire Dick still smiled as he bowed his face to the cutting wind.

Richard Lawford tugged at the bell of Stretton Manor for close on ten minutes. It was Jasper Rufford himself who opened the door, gun in hand, with a deerhound at his heels.

"Why, 'tis Molly, as I'm a sinner," cried he in amazement, "and Tom and Dick Lawford. A pretty hour to choose for a visit, but right glad am I to see 'ee. But where have 'ee all come from?"

Lawford had slipped back to the horses. Tom Ewing was silent; it was the woman that answered.

"Oh, cousin Jasper, I had it in my mind to see my brother Roger. But the postboys failed us, and Tom has come by a mishap, and such strange things have happened. All our plans are changed, and so we are here."

"And go to Roger Brooke's upon the morrow?" said he.

"Nay, Jasper," answered Lady Molly, flushing. "I tell thee, our plans are changed. On the morrow Tom and I ride home together."—The Graphic.

Steel ties exclusively are to be used on the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railway hereafter, according to an announcement made by Chief Engineer Porter.

# Hunting the Wild Honey Bee.

By DAVID ALMON.

Honey, or a colony for an apiary, is the usual object of bee hunting; but, even if one is not particularly desirous of these things, the outdoor exercise, the necessity of keen perceptive powers and a little excitement now and then, should prove sufficient recommendations.

Autumn is the best season for the sport, for then the supply of nectar runs low in the flowers, and the bees will be quick to take our bait. This consists of a pint bottle filled with honey that has been diluted with an equal quart of warm water. For its use we have a specially prepared wooden box about four and one-half inches square; it is bottomless, but at the top there is a piece of glass that slides in grooves. Fixed in the box so as to leave open spaces on two sides is what bee-keepers call a feeder, being an arrangement containing little troughs from which the bees can sip their syrup without danger of falling in.

Many hunters, it is true, use for this purpose devices less elaborate (your farmer's boy is generally content with an ordinary glass tumbler and a piece of honeycomb); but it is always well to use the best possible equipment.

The necessity for some kind of a trap containing sweets becomes evident when it is considered that a bee will not make a line for home until its honey sac is full, which means, when nectar is flowing the freest, a visit to seven or eight flowers and frequently in the fall to more than a hundred flowers—this, too, despite the fact that its honey sac has room for only a tiny drop, being less than one-seventh of an inch in diameter when extended to its limit.

So, with our bait and hunting-box and a binocular field glass, we sally forth. There are many other things we shall need when we have found our bee-tree, but, until we do, it would be foolish to encumber ourselves with them. It is a fine fall morning. The trees are beginning to robe themselves in their fiery foliage, and although the country is bathed in a flood of genial sunshine, there is enough snap in the air to make walking a treat. Up the road we go, and then across country to the fields near the woods in which we have reason to suspect the existence of many colonies of bees.

As we approach we see quantities of the little honey-makers flying around among the goldenrod, the plant from which, in most localities throughout the north, they draw their chief supplies during the fall. The time for action has come. We stop to pour a little honey into the feeder, then sneak up to a tree that is hovering on a flower and cautiously clap the box over it. Immediately you close the bottom of the box with your other hand, and the bee, not a little startled, buzzes up against the glass. Soon, however, it smells the honey in the feeder, and, forgetting everything else, settles quietly down to sip. This gives you the opportunity to catch another bee in the same manner; and you soon have four or five prisoners in the box.

So far so good. But the crucial moment approaches. We look hurriedly about for an eminence upon which to set the box. There are no stumps convenient, but that little knoll will do. You kneel down on one side of the knoll, with your head close to the box, and the glass slide is withdrawn. Watch closely now what direction the bees take when they come out. If possible, keep the sky for a background, and it will help you to discern their line.

One has taken wing. It circles about the box in order to fix the location firmly in its "mind" so that it may find it again without trouble—after working so hard to get a respectable load of nectar from the flowers the honey in the box must seem to it like a little gold mine. It is said that each circle the bee bears more to one side, in the direction of its home; but its oscillations are so eccentric that, with our limited experience, it is almost impossible to follow it.

It disappears just as another bee issues from the box, and neither of us is sure of the line, but the failure of our first attempt does not discourage us. Two bees are now circling about the box. We are getting cross-eyed trying to keep track of them. A moment more and another is gone. Again we missed it. Then the third one goes. This time we got the line, but, strange to say, instead of leading to the woods, it passes over a hill to the left. Perhaps the bee-tree stands comparatively alone. If so it will be all the easier to find.

Closing the slide over our empty box, we hurry to the hill and eagerly ascend it. And then what a sad surprise! In an orchard behind a farmhouse we see eight or ten hives of an up-to-date apiary, which means that we have been dining domesticated bees. We should have been sure we were a mile or two away from the nearest apiary, bees ordinarily ranging that far from home.

However, our only chance is to put a safe distance between us and the apiary we have stumbled across. As we force our way through the underbrush and go crunching over dead leaves, I venture the remark that the owner of the apiary would not thank us if he knew we had caught some of his bees. There is always danger of bees demoralizing their comrades when they obtain honey as easily as those we caught did. In spite of the reputation they have of always improving the shining hours, bees

are like men in the respect that they are prone to wander from the path of honest industry when the possibility presents itself of gaining wealth without rendering a due equivalent.

If we had waited where those we caught took wing we should doubtless have seen them return with scores of others. It is not to be supposed that bees can directly communicate to one another anything save the simplest ideas such as joy, sorrow, anger, etc.—which ideas are associated with particular notes produced by the whirring of their wings—but in some mysterious way, possibly by their excited actions, those that get our honey let their comrades in the hive know that something good had been discovered.

If the matter ended there it wouldn't be so bad; but the mischief is that, having had a taste of graft, bees, for all the world like humans, are likely to take to out-and-out robbery; which is to say that they are likely to go prowling around the apiary until they find a colony that has been weakened by the loss of its queen, its brood-comb, or by some other cause, and then proceed to overpower the sentinels stationed at the entrance, rush in and help themselves to all the stores. Let us hope that our innocent action led to no such fatal consequences.

There are bees on the asters on the other side of the woods, and we can take a chance on their being wild ones. We hasten over to the field and trap several more in our box and find a suitable stump to set the box on.

This time we manage to line the second bee out, and as the line leads to the woods, our hopes for a successful hunt are raised. We decide that the line passes by a tree with a blasted top about half a mile away. It is well to have some object to mark it by.

We wait for further developments. Presently one of our little friends we released with a load of honey comes buzzing back. Hear his high-pitched humming? That is precisely the same note robbers make when, having had a taste of graft, they hover before a strange hive preparatory to a raid. Our bee couldn't have been gone more than five minutes. That means its nest is only a short distance away, as it is said that bees, on an average, will take five minutes to fly a mile and spend about two minutes unloading. And our bee has brought others with him, which is more evidence of the nearness of the nest.

Felicitating ourselves on our luck, we close the slide of the box and move forward on the line so as to be nearer to the woods. Again we open the box and soon it is fairly alive with bees that have rushed from their nest to get a share of the spoils. This practical demonstration of instinct excites our profound interest, and we cannot choose but marvel at the omnipotence of the Creator who packs so much intelligence in creatures so tiny and delicate.

Again we take a squint at a bee as it circles about the box before departing with a load. Having seen it bear for home, we are able to correct our line. We thought it led to the left of the blasted tree, but now we know it leads just to the right. Very good. We take the box and move off thirty or forty rods to one side. This enables us to start the bees on a cross-line; a line, that is, which will meet our original one at an acute angle. The object, of course, is to fix definitely the situation of the nest, which, as bees invariably take a straight line for home, will be at the vertex. It sounds simple, but we find that to make the calculation to a nicety out in the open is far from easy. In fact, after we have started two or three bees on the cross-line we have only a hazy notion as to where the vertex of our angle may be. We advance, however, in the direction of where we think it is.

Just before plunging back into the woods, we stop to get another line work. We don't have to trap the bees now; for they are about us in great numbers, and the instant we withdraw the slide of the box they are at the honey. So much has been carried off that another filling of the feeder is necessary. Our latest line shows us we are heading in the right direction. We re-enter the woods

passing in and out of a cavity in the limb. Our elation is pardonable; for not all hunters find a tree as easily as we did; sometimes they have to keep lining and cross-lining until they actually see the bees flying from the honey into the tree.

But, now that we have found the tree, how are we going to get at the nest, fifty feet in the air? It is too fine a chestnut to chop down, and the only thing to do is to climb it. For this we shall need various implements, and, after marking the tree for identification, we return home. A young farmer to whom we confide our discovery is impressed by our statement that the bees seem to be pretty fair Italians, and volunteers to climb the tree, if we will permit him to capture the colony to start an apiary with. As we do not want the bees, nor have much zeal for the climbing job, we gladly close with his offer.

Accordingly, on the next afternoon, all three of us start for the beehive, formidably armed with a pair of stiel-spurred climbers, an axe, saw and auger, long lengths of rope and clothes-line, a good-sized basket, beehives and a blow-bee-smoker. This last object, borrowed from a neighboring apiary, burns rotted wood to create smoke to puff at bees when they show too enthusiastic a desire to get rid of their stings. Upon our arrival at the tree the young farmer straps the climbers to his legs, ties an end of the clothes-line about his waist and cautiously ascends. When he reaches the limb containing the nest he puts on a veil and hauls up, by means of the clothes-line, the auger and the smoker. Crawling out to the entrance of the nest, he takes the precaution to send in a puff or two of smoke. You may kill bees by the score and succeed only in stirring up the survivors to renewed fury, but a little smoke usually makes them as gentle as lambs.

Sometimes bee hunters slaughter the entire colony with brimstone; but such an unsportsmanlike proceeding is not to be tolerated, unless there is good reason for the massacre, such as is presented when the woods are full of Germans and hybrids, and apiarists in the vicinity wish to keep their Italian colonies pure. An apiarist in Tennessee, it may be said in this connection, is now offering a substantial reward for every colony of German or hybrid bees taken "dead or alive" within four miles of his hives.

All the honey bees in this country having originally been imported from Europe or Asia, there is no racial difference between the wild ones and the domesticated; those that live in trees are simply the descendants of those that from time to time have taken "French leave" from their owners' hives and reverted to a state of nature. The vast bulk of the wild bees are of the German or black race, while the standard domesticated bee is the Italian; but that, however, is only because the Germans were the first to be introduced here. Just when the Germans came is in doubt, but it was sometime in the seventeenth century; certainly it was not until near the close of the eighteenth century that any bees were found west of the Mississippi. The Indians used to say they could mark the advance of the white man by the appearance of bees in the woods. The Italian bees were first imported in 1860. Better tempered and more industrious than the Germans, they have become very popular with apiarists; but as many still keep the German bee, and others have the hybrid formed by the crossing of the two races, while countless Italians now have taken to the woods, there to breed more hybrids, it is clear that there is no sure way of distinguishing between the wild bee and the domesticated.

When honey is the only object of the hunter the custom is to open the hollow, cut out the combs and lower them in a basket or pail; but if you want the bees as well, it is advisable to obtain possession of the whole section of the tree containing the nest. Such a thing is not always feasible; but the young farmer has decided that it is in this case. First he bores holes in the limb with the auger, to see how far the hollow extends. Then we send him up the saw and axe. He cuts off the part of the limb extending beyond the hollow. Now he is ready for the rope, which he hauls up at the end of the clothes-line. He ties the rope about the limb, passes the free end of the rope over a limb a little higher up and lets it drop to the ground. There we keep tight