

to the roof; in the centre there was a space about six feet wide. To keep the piles steady, he had braced them with strips of "two-by-fours," bolted together and to the sides of the car.

Some of the hives had evidently shifted, however; the bees were certainly getting out. The light of the lantern attracted them, and in a moment the glass was covered with buzzing yellow bodies. One of them stung George on the hand. He held the lantern up and scanned the boxes to find the place through which the bees were escaping. No leak was visible. As the bees in increasing numbers seemed to be coming from the interior of the forward pile, he concluded that the break was there. If it was in one of the lower hives, it endangered the whole tier.

Glad that he had this chance to put things to right, George hurriedly began to unscrew the nuts from the bolted scantlings, in order to get at the boxes. The flying bees annoyed him so much that after a time he put out the lantern, and worked by the light of the street lamp just opposite. Bees were crawling on everything that he touched, and he was often stung; but he kept on working, taking the hives one by one from their piles, and setting them on the floor behind him, till he came at last to the source of trouble.

The base-board of a hive near the bottom of a pile had split, and moved slightly, leaving a four-inch opening, through which most of the bees had probably escaped. George straightened the board, drove two or three nails to hold it firm, and seeing nothing more amiss, began to set the hives back in place again.

He was intent on his work when hurrying footsteps came past the car. Some one slammed the door shut, and he heard the rattle of the hump and bolt. One of the brakemen had locked him in.

George shouted, but the man had gone. He resumed his work somewhat angrily, and had almost finished piling up the boxes, when the car started forward with a violent jerk that caught him off his balance, and sent him sprawling over the hives behind. As a result of the shock, half a dozen of the insecure hives came sliding, tumbling down round and upon him.

He extricated himself and got up. The train was in motion. The station lights slid past outside. At first he thought that the movement was merely for the purpose of shunting a car; but after the train had passed the switch-points,

there came two long blasts from the whistle, the train gathered speed, and he realized that it was really under way. It would not stop again for perhaps two or three hours.

The fallen hives slid and banged about the floor as the springless car lurched and swung, and two more hives toppled and crashed down. It was pitch-dark now in the car, but above the clatter he could hear the loud roar of three million mad, venomous insects. He groped about for his lantern, struck a match, and was appalled at what the light showed.

The open space in the centre of the car was a chaos of tumbled white boxes, some of them broken and splintered by falling, and all of them almost black with a crawling coating of bees. At the rear end of the car the tiers of hives stood firm, but those at the forward end were sliding and tumbling at every lurch.

Thousands of bees flew to the light, clustered about the lantern chimney and on George's hand and wrist, and stung viciously whenever he moved. They blundered and buzzed against the lantern till they clouded the light. George's clothing was covered with them; they were crawling up his sleeves and up his trouser legs; they were in his hair. Every moment he started with the pain of a flesh sting. Like most bee-keepers, he had grown accustomed to being stung, but he had never had so serious an experience as this. He was beginning to feel poisoned through and through. His heart beat wildly; he was nauseated, and his swollen tongue seemed to fill his mouth.

With the hope that he could fasten them in position again, he tried to replace the hives on their piles, but the pitching of the train shook them down as fast as he stacked them up. More and more hives were slipping and tumbling, and he realized that the only hope of saving them was to have the train stopped and the car side-tracked long enough for him to rebuild the load. Unless this could be done, fully half the colonies would be ruined before they reached the next regular stop. But how was he to stop the train?

He braced himself against the hives, trying to hold the pile up, and thought desperately. He could not get out of the car. From the inside he could not reach the hump of the side doors, and the small end door was blocked by the piles of hives. There was no way of communicating with either the engine or the caboose.

While he puzzled over the problem, he heard the tramp of a brakeman on the roof overhead; but although he shouted at the top of his voice, the steps went on.

He thought of thrusting the lantern between the bars on the end of a stick, and swinging the stop signal, but he found the space too narrow to put the light through it.

He was in despair, for he grew more sick and dizzy every moment, and suffered tortures from the pain of the stings. His knees trembled under him; he was growing desperately weak. His pulse dropped suddenly to an almost imperceptible beat, and he knew that more than money was at stake. If he stayed in that car three hours, he would be stung to death.

Somehow he must signal the train crew. He collected his strength and looked about him. Presently he noticed a large piece of burlap that was wrapped round a bundle of combs. He tore it off and twisted it round the end of a strip of "two-by-four," blew out the lantern, and poured oil from it over the cloth. He set fire to this, and thrust the stick out as far as he could between the cars.

The flame flared up and streamed far out with the rush of the train, scattering flakes of fire behind. Surely some one must see it; every moment he expected to hear the whistle for brakes. But the fire burned out, and he had to draw in the charred stick and brush off the smouldering bits of sacking.

He intended to try the plan again, and as long as the oil lasted; but as he shook off the burning rags, there was a sudden flash of flame almost in his face. The lantern had been upset, had spilled the oil, and a spark from the smouldering torch had touched it.

The bundle of combs that George had



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unwrapped was blazing furiously, and the strong draft sucked the fire through the sides of the car. The bars themselves were catching. George tore off his coat to beat out the flames. The train lurched violently round a curve; he was caught off his balance and thrown violently backward. His head hit something sharp and hard, and he felt as if he were rushing into darkness among flaming stars.

When he came to himself he found that a lantern was shining in his face. The car was full of smoke, but there was no fire. Three men, brushing wildly, stamping and swearing at the angry bees, were trying to lift him. The train was not moving.

The fire, he learned afterward, had been observed, not from the caboose or from the engine, but by a farmer who lived near the track. He had seen the train go by with one side of a car apparently all ablaze, and had telephoned to the next station, where the signals were set to stop it. The fire, which had not gained much headway, after all, was easily put out, and the car side-tracked and left there.

The next day George, although still weak from the poison of the stings, was able to superintend the repacking of the load by a local bee-keeper whom he hired.

The damage that had been done was not as great as he had feared it would be. Fifteen hives were split or burst open, and nearly all the bees had left them, but the rest were in fairly good shape, although all had leaked somewhat. In the darkest corner of the car George found a cluster of about three gallons of abjectly terrified bees, and these he distributed in dipperfuls to the hives that seemed to need them most.

Twenty-four hours later the re-judged load was on its way north again, and it arrived at Cleveland without any further mishap. There George learned that the railroad demanded of him fifty dollars for damage to the car by fire.

After his experience, George felt for some weeks as if he never wished to see a bee again; but when he sold one hundred colonies for nearly double the price he had paid for the entire lot, his interest revived. At present he is planning to bring up another car-load from Alabama next spring.

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