Honey of Danger

An Adventure Story

Frank Lillie Pollock

Title: Honey of Danger: An Adventure Story
Date of first publication: 1927
Author: Francis Lillie Pollock (1876-1957)
Date first posted: May 22, 2026
Date last updated: May 22, 2026
Faded Page eBook #20260534

This eBook was produced by: Al Haines, John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at https://www.pgdpcanada.net

This file was produced from images generously made available by HathiTrust.

Honey of Danger

An Adventure Story

By

FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK

Author of "Rainbow Landing," "The Glacier Gate"

NEW YORK

CHELSEA HOUSE

PUBLISHERS

Honey of Danger

CONTENTS

Honey of Danger: An Adventure Story

CHAPTER I
THE FIRELIGHT DANCER

Firelight flashed red and high on the black background of pines, and glittered far out over the lake, mixing with the moonlight. A regular bonfire was burning on the beach, showing several large tents, another more distant tent for the guides, and the dark shapes of a number of canoes on the shore. It was just the sort of elaborate camp Delaine had expected, when he heard the music in the distance.

Skulking like a wolf through the spruces and cedars, Delaine peered through his field glasses, and then crept nearer. The chiming and chording of the ukuleles broke out again. By flashes of firelight he could see the forms of a number of people sitting on the ground, back from the blaze. There were men and women, a big camping party, probably from Montreal or Toronto, got up regardless of expense, and carrying all the luxuries of a hotel.

He crawled up still nearer, crouching at last in a dense clump of stunted, bushy cedars at the very edge of the open shore. The guides began to sing now, grouped invisibly in the shadows. Guides for that sort of party are expected to entertain; they had good voices, and one of them accompanied on a guitar.

They sang in French, at first *Alouette*, and then the jolly canoe chorus of *En Roulant ma Boule*, and then a fine tenor voice began *A la Claire Fontaine*, the sweetest of all the old Quebec chansons, and they all joined in the slow unison of the chorus.

"Long, long have I loved thee—never to forget thee——" they sang.

"*Longtemps, longtemps, je t'ai aimé,*
Jamais je ne t'oublierai."

The voices rolled sweetly cadenced over the water. The song might have sounded intolerably sentimental if you did not remember that it had been made and sung by fierce *coureurs des bois*, with scalps in their belts, English scalps as likely as not. But from his ambush, Delaine drank it all in greedily, sentiment and all.

This was the first sight and sound of civilized life he had had since leaving Montreal—and that seemed ages ago. He had sighted this fleet of canoes coming up the lower end of the long lake as he entered the upper. Instantly he had landed and hidden himself; but the campers did not pass.

They had made camp a mile down the shore. Later in the twilight, he saw the glow of their fires. Drawn by the fascination of his own kind, he had not been able to resist dropping down in his canoe in the dark, looking at the camp through his glasses, listening to the singing. Growing still more reckless, he went ashore and scouted nearer.

The song ceased; there was a great clapping of hands. The guitar twanged aimlessly a little. Then two girls darted out of the shadow and into the full firelight, dancing on the hard sand, each of them swinging and tossing a great gauzy scarf that filled and swelled like a sail. They were not very skillful dancers. This shawl dance was evidently a mere impromptu of sheer youthful animal spirits.

One of the girls presently dropped out with a laugh; but the other, a tall, graceful girl in a gold-colored jersey and with fair, bobbed hair, kept on indefatigably, turning and weaving her paces, improvising, swinging and coiling the great veil, as if held in the fascination of her own rhythm, while the strings chorded and the guides kept time with clapping hands.

Delaine watched, fascinated. He tried the glass to see the dancer more clearly, but could make out little in the tricky light. Suddenly it ended almost in disaster. The girl came too near the fire. The veil caught in a great flash. There was a shout, a rush of people, and Delaine hardly restrained himself from springing forward. But the dancer let the scarf go with a little scream. It drifted away in a wisp of flame on the breeze.

This put an end to the entertainment. The campers melted away to their tents. The fire burned down. Still Delaine lingered, looking at the now deserted beach, softened and tortured with music and beauty and loneliness.

The crooning music of the old French song echoed in his ears, not that there was any one whom he had loved *longtemps, longtemps*, but it sounded to him like a farewell to all that had ever been dear. Then he saw the girl of the shawl dance strolling toward him. He leaned forward.

She was sauntering slowly along the margin of the water, her hands clasped behind her head, walking lightly, out for another breath of air before turning in. She came down to the edge of the woods, and stopped within a yard of Delaine's lair. He could have almost touched her dress by stretching his arm. Her profile was clear now in the dim light, delicate and clear-cut, her face thrown back as she looked absently out over the water. Under her breath, just audibly, she was humming:

"*Longtemps, longtemps, je t'ai aimé——*"

Delaine drew breath slowly, slowly, holding every muscle still, afraid almost to wink. He had a wild impulse to speak to the girl, but he suppressed it. All at once she turned toward him, staring straight through the cedars at his face. It was perfectly impossible that she could have seen him; he was crouching close to the ground in absolute darkness. But she backed away, still staring with scared eyes at the place where he lay, backed away till she was halfway to the fires, then turned and made for the tents.

Delaine hastily fled in silence. She had suspected something, somehow, and a search would surely be made by the guides. He regained his canoe, and paddled away as he had come. After waiting a couple of hours, he went down to the lower end of the lake, keeping near the shore opposite the silent, glowing camp, and made his own camp near the river outlet. Very early in the morning, he was afloat again, and going down the stream.

The memory of that dancing and music stayed in his mind as he paddled that day, not with pleasure, but with a dull anger and regret. About the middle of the afternoon, he touched civilization again.

The river surged around a bluff of gray granite, cracked and shelving, crowned with jack pines, and a hundred yards ahead he espied a bridge. It startled him, and then above the rushing of the waters he heard a distant, increasing rumble and roar.

He raced down the swift current. He was almost at the high steel bridge when the train leaped out of the forest to the left, roared across the vibrating structure, streaming smoke and steam, all a-glitter with Pullmans and shot into the forest again. Its roar diminished to a humming, a murmur, and then silence.

Delaine looked after it, half scared, half delighted. This was his first glimpse of the railway for two weeks. It must be the Canadian train, the Limited from Montreal to Winnipeg and the coast. This bridge gave him an opportunity to find out with certainty where he was.

He got out his map as he drifted past the bridge. The river was evidently the Rouille, as he had suspected. It seemed an unusually unsettled region, even for northern Ontario. East and west along the railway, there were no stations marked for forty miles or so. But if he followed this river southward, it would bring him to Ormond in twenty or thirty miles. This seemed a small village, but it was the terminus of a branch railway line coming up from the south.

He was torn two ways, as he put away the map. The sight of the train and of the campers had made solitude horrible. He hankered after men; and yet he shrank back—afraid. Anyhow, he told himself, he would have to go somewhere soon, for his supplies were running very low. The sugar, in fact, was entirely out.

He knew well what Ormond would be—a straggling street of new planks and old logs, a dark, rich-smelling general store, men in shoepacks and duffel, two trains a day. But certainly nobody there would ever have heard of Louis Lajoie or of Meteor Colors, Limited.

He might reprovision at Ormond, and drift on again—where? He did not know, nor care, so long as he kept outside the range of civilized, newspaper-reading men. He might have felt more certain of his course if he had known how he stood. But the law wanted him; in fact, the law almost had him; and he was perfectly ignorant as to whether he was guilty or not.

He continued to drift down the river, still undecided. If he were not going to Ormond, he should turn back at once. It was a dry summer; the water was unusually low, and rapids were bad. There would be a great deal of carrying if he tried to reascend the stream.

The railway was out of sight. Swampy flats followed, muskrats dived, wild ducks splashed up and whizzed away above treetops. A great burned slash succeeded it, a chaos of charred and blasted trunks and branches, jungly with wild raspberry canes; then a stretch of wild, rocky shore. Through the jagged wilderness, the river twisted and wound with an air of going somewhere. In a few miles the shores fell away. He found himself at the head of another long, narrow lake, curving so that he could not see the lower end.

Low, wild hills of stunted evergreen growth bordered the water. A peninsula of gray rock and vivid green pines jutted out. Delaine observed the scene, then hauled the canoe ashore, got out his folding easel and painting box, and began a sketch.

He worked for over an hour, absorbed in the one thing that he really loved. The river gurgled and through his absorption he was conscious of a continual humming of insects in the spruces over his head. Then the afternoon light changed; the colors shifted; the scene grew different. He had to leave the sketch unfinished, and what he had done did not please him much, after all.

He put away the wet canvas safe from smudging, and paddled down the water. Rounding the peninsula, the lower half of the lake opened in a mile stretch, edged with gravel and backed with dark spruces. Far down the shore, he thought he saw something move. He lost sight of it again, but after another ten minutes he checked his paddle, startled. A man was stooping over a canoe that lay capsized a little back from the shore.

The man caught sight of the paddler at the same moment. He straightened up quickly, stared, then vanished like a rabbit. A second later Delaine caught a glimpse of him running up the shore inland, through the scattered thickets.

CHAPTER II
WILDERNESS BEES

If the man had hailed him, Delaine might have sheered off, but he was astonished and intrigued. He turned inshore. There was a rude wharf of three large logs, and the upsided canoe lay just beyond. A screen of cedar and hemlock cut off the view inshore.

He landed on the wharf. After some hesitation, he started through the thickets, following a well-marked trail. A dozen steps took him through the waterside thickets. A gentle slope arose, partly cleared, stumpy, dotted with evergreen clumps, and at the top of it fifty yards away stood several buildings.

A farm, undoubtedly, a squatter's cabin, though he saw no sign of cultivated land. The main building was a well-built, log-and-plank house with a plank lean-to. At a distance stood two much smaller structures. Beyond them, the dark woods closed densely.

Some dubious instinct made him take the shotgun from his canoe and put it under his arm as he started up the slope. His eyes were fixed on the cabin. No one was in sight. He noted its neatness, the good glass in the windows, the unusual luxury of wire screens on its doors. As he came closer, he detected a human form peering through the screen mesh or the lean-to door. It opened; a man came out.

He was a roughly dressed fellow of perhaps thirty, unshaven, with a drooping, heavy mustache. He did not, somehow, look quite like a backwoods farmer, and as Delaine looked at him, he was astonished to see unmistakable fear in that dirty face. The man was afraid.

"Hello!" Delaine greeted him. "*Bo' jour!*" he added, thinking the settler might be a habitant.

"Hello!" the man answered, sidling up. He examined Delaine with uneasy, shifting blue eyes. "You from Montreal?" he asked nervously.

It was Delaine's turn to start uneasily.

"Just canoeing down the river. There's a place called Ormond farther down, isn't there? I was going there for grub."

"Yes—it's near thirty miles," the man answered, studying his visitor with moderating suspicion. "Come on in. Come up to the house," he finally added. "You won't need go no farther to-day."

It occurred to Delaine that he might buy what supplies he needed from this woodsman. He followed the man toward the building.

"Plenty of grub here," said the settler, over his shoulder. "Rough place, though. I live here alone. My name's Duggan."

"Farming?" Delaine inquired, mentioning his own name.

The man grinned.

"One kind of farming. Look over this way."

He steered Delaine around the corner of the cabin and pointed beyond. There was a row of stunted cedar clumps fifty feet away, and an open glade beyond this, backed by dense timber. The open space was entirely filled with small square and oblong boxes, some red, some white, some paintless, seen by glimpses through the cedar openings. The air was crisscrossed with the flight of innumerable insects, and now that he saw the cause of it he was aware of a constant dull roaring like a distant factory, which he had heard before without noticing it. "What! A bee farm? An apiary?" he exclaimed, staring.

"Sure thing. Ninety colonies of the best bees in the north country. Why, you don't know anything about bees, do you?"

"Rather. Let's have a look at 'em!" cried Delaine, making for the bee yard.

He really did know something of beekeeping. It had been one of the too many side interests that had broken up his energies. As a boy there had been bees on the Pennsylvania farm and he had absorbed some knowledge of their management without knowing how. Much later when he was employed as a chemist at the great phosphate works in Virginia he had made acquaintance with a young man who had a commercial apiary.

Delaine had got the bee fever there. He had read books, had learned to handle the hives. With his friend he had planned to go to one of the great honey regions—Colorado or California—and start a great honey business. But capital was needed for that, and the scheme fell through. He had never owned a single bee himself, but he felt that he knew a great deal about them.

"They've got a lot of supers on," he remarked. "What are they getting now?"

"Well, not much of anything to-day. Too dry fer the raspberry. Raspberry bloom's our main crop here. Finest honey in the world. They're gettin' a little honeydew from the spruce trees."

Bees were certainly coming home with something. They were dropping heavily at every hive entrance, some laden with balls of brown or yellow pollen on their legs, some without visible cargo, but evidently with honey sacs full.

Duggan went to one of the buildings, and came back with a burning smoker. He lifted the cover of a particularly active colony close by. The bees boiled up angrily, and then surged down again from the blast of smoke. Duggan lifted out one of the combs, a great slab of honey, eight inches by eighteen, two inches thick, and sealed white as snow. The disconcerted bees crawling on it looked ink black.

"What do you think of that? Pure raspberry honey. I reckon I've got near two tons of it already, and part of the season still to come."

"Fine!" responded Delaine. He got a sting on the neck at that moment, but suppressed more than an exclamation.

Duggan deftly extracted the poisoned little dart. He was stung himself, but paid no attention. Warmed by Delaine's interest, he pointed out hive after hive, telling what each had done, the quality of its queen, its promise. One colony had three supers, or upper honey stories, on it, full to the top already. That colony had gathered two hundred pounds of honey last summer. It might make three hundred this year.

"Never had the outfit in better shape," he said. "If we'd just get some rain, I'd make mebbe four tons. There's miles and acres of wild raspberry; all the slashes and open spots are full of it. Then there's fireweed in the fall."

"The winters must be hard on them, though."

"Not a bit. There's snow enough to cover 'em up, and I pack 'em in big cases with dry leaves. I hardly ever lose many. I don't generally stay here with 'em myself. Mostly I go out and get me a job in the lumber camps."

"Great life!" said Delaine, almost enviously.

"You bet! I'll go in and get us some supper now. You can come in or stay here, if you want to."

Delaine stayed a while to watch the bees, standing back in the shelter of the small log building that seemed a storehouse. It was growing late in the afternoon, and the activity of the apiary was waning fast. Fewer bees were

going out, more coming home. Great groups of idlers collected, resting about the hive entrances. A massive, contented hum arose from the yard, and he could smell the sweet, mixed scent of bees and wax and honey.

Duggan was evidently an enthusiastic and successful apiarist. He seemed to have lost his first suspicion of his visitor, and continued to talk of bees when Delaine found his way to the lean-to kitchen where supper was in preparation.

The room had the familiar frontier sort of furnishings—a plank floor, a bunk full of blankets, a cupboard. A gun and a pair of snowshoes decorated the rough wall, with several types of feminine beauty as exemplified on magazine covers. But there was a rough workbench with a vise and carpenter's tools, and a litter of parts of beehives undergoing repairs. The door and windows had wire screens, and Delaine realized now that these were to exclude not mosquitoes chiefly, but bees. A closed door seemed to communicate with the front, and larger, portion of the dwelling.

It was all clean, and pervaded with a faint smell of honey. The supper was better than Delaine had expected. There was not only bacon, but potatoes and small young radishes. It appeared that Duggan had a garden. There was honey, too, last year's honey, candied white and hard as tallow. Duggan cast Delaine a wink and rose from the table.

"I'll show you something else that the bees can do."

He pried up a trapdoor in the floor, and descended into a small, dark cellar, carrying a jug. He emerged with the jug foaming full of a brown liquid resembling ale, from which he filled a couple of tumblers. Delaine tasted it and was surprised.

"What do you call this?"

"I call it honey wine. I make a barrel of it every fall, and by next spring it's just right. It's nothing but honey fermented with water, and a little yeast."

Mead, evidently, thought Delaine—the drink of our viking forefathers. He had thought its manufacture was a lost art. It had a flavor halfway between beer and cider, and possessed a most pronounced kick. He could feel the draft tingle warmly all through him.

"If you want something to beat that, I've got the goods, too!" said Duggan, after swallowing his tumblerful. He winked again, and went back to the cupboard, from which he took a brown bottle, and poured out about a wineglass full.

Delaine tasted it cautiously, and exclaimed. The liquor burned his mouth. It was dark brown, and must have been almost pure alcohol.

"You've got a still!" he said. It flashed upon him that Duggan might be making his living out of these by-products of the apiary.

"Not a bit of it. I don't need no still. It's an old Quebec trick with cider. I put a keg of this here honey wine out in the winter. Alcohol don't freeze, you know, but the water all freezes out of it. The keg gets to be a solid lump of ice, with the pure spirit in the middle. See? I don't make much. I'm no boozer. I ain't got but a few bottles."

From his scientific knowledge, Delaine saw that this ingenious process was quite practicable. The stuff was too strong a drink for him, however. He confined himself to the bubbling mead, while Duggan drank rather freely of both.

It grew dusk as they finished the meal, and they still sat by the table in the late summer twilight, smoking and sipping the honey wine, and Duggan, warmed by its influence, grew loquacious.

He told about his start. He had bought the bees six years ago from a French squatter. There had been only twenty colonies then, kept in old boxes. He had increased them, put them in modern hives, and had made a living out of them. In the fall and spring, he trapped, also. Food cost hardly anything; there were always ducks and partridges and trout, and he could get a deer when he wanted it, with no game warden to ask questions. It was a lonely sort of life, but he enjoyed it.

Delaine thought that he would enjoy it, too. After the dread, the disgrace, the anxiety of the past months, this forest apiary seemed an ideal haven. He could paint there, perhaps.

"You're lucky," he said. "I wish I had a bee outfit like this."

"I'll sell it to you," said Duggan promptly.

CHAPTER III
DODGING MEN

Delaine awakened the next morning astonished to find a roof over him, instead of a tent. It took him a minute to realize and remember. His awakenings had been painful lately, before he could get his mind braced to resist the day. But this morning had a sort of peace in it, and memories of Montreal, of Louis Lajoie and Meteor Colors slid through his mind without spoiling its tranquillity.

He was in bed in the front, and larger, room of the cabin. From a small window, he could see the sky, already growing blue, and the dark crests of the spruces. The room was furnished more comfortably than the kitchen. There were two fine bearskins on the floor; there was a set of shelves, hooks for clothing, a small bureau with a good mirror.

The bed itself had greatly struck his attention the night before. It was homemade, with high posts of black birch, and three of these had been carved into a delicate taper with a spray of foliage in relief, topped with the head and shoulders of an owl, carved with great spirit. The fourth post was still unfinished. Duggan had disclaimed it. He had got the bed along with the house.

Once more this spot seemed to Delaine an ideal retreat. He saw himself giving up industrial chemistry forever. He was sorry that he had ever taken up that profession. It had seemed a good prospect of a living when he was at college, and painting seemed to offer none at all.

Nor did it yet. But the bees would furnish all the modest living he needed, and he could paint between whiles. In the winters, he could go to some city, Toronto or New York. An ideal life! But he knew something of the value of bees and this outfit was far beyond his means. Besides, he had not taken Duggan's proposal seriously.

All he owned in the world was nine hundred dollars in the bank in Montreal, and about two hundred dollars in a belt around his waist. It had been his own fault—but he grew hot again at remembering his first encounter with Lajoie in Cleveland, and how readily he had been taken in.

That enormously energetic and temperamental French-Canadian was then developing his plans for Meteor Colors. He had secret processes and patents for varnishes and paints of the most marvelous brilliancy and durability. He needed a chemist for the factory he was starting in Montreal, but the chemist would have to invest a couple of thousand in the enterprise.

In return, he would be one of the directors, though without any salary attached to the honor. But for the scientific work, he would draw two hundred and fifty dollars a month.

It happened that Delaine was mortally sick of the dye works where he was then engaged, and he had over two thousand dollars saved up. But he took the precaution of going to Montreal to look at the project. The factory was really being equipped. Lajoie was selling stock in quantities, especially among the French business men of the city. The enterprise was well spoken of. Delaine accepted the proposition, invested his two thousand dollars, and came to Montreal.

That was nearly a year ago. He soon found that Meteor Colors did not live up to Lajoie's enthusiastic accounts. There might be further secret processes not yet divulged to the chemist, but, so far as he could see, the paints and varnishes differed in no way from several other standard brands.

However, that did not seem to be his business. His job was to test materials and see to the correct mixing of ingredients. It did not keep him very busy. For the first three months, the factory produced little. All the machinery was not yet installed, and Lajoie was still selling stock in his concern. He was a short, fat, dark man, amazingly dynamic and persuasive. He won Delaine completely by praising his pictures; he even bought one for fifty dollars, and introduced the chemist to an art dealer who consented to hang four more of Delaine's works in his sale gallery.

So far, none of them had sold, but it encouraged Delaine greatly. Again he wondered if art was not his forte, rather than science. He painted in all his spare time. Montreal was a brilliant and hectic city just then, swarming with American tourists, and fired up with government-control liquor, gambling and a feverish night life, but Delaine took no interest in its dissipations. He made hardly any friends. Walters, the manager of Chemical Refiners, Limited, was almost his only intimate. He began to import art into the laboratory.

He had an immense, well-lighted laboratory to himself at the color factory—an excellent place to paint, and he ventured to install an easel there during his abundant leisure. Lajoie did not mind. He exploded into the

laboratory every morning like a bomb, outlined Delaine's duties for the day, praised the latest sketch on the easel, and bounded out, always leaving two expensive cigars on the laboratory table.

At irregular intervals, board meetings were called, but they were not burdensome. There were four directors besides Delaine, and all they had to do was to sign an illegibly written statement which Lajoie presented, and receive the ten dollars honorarium. Delaine didn't know whether any of his codirectors ever read the statement; he never did himself; and it did not occur to him that he was responsible for the money of the stockholders.

He was coming to think more of painting and less every day of chemistry when the explosion came. He might have been prepared if he had known how much stock Lajoie had sold, and how much of the proceeds had gone into his private gambling transactions.

He did have a suspicion that the business was shaky and that he might lose his job not to speak of his two-thousand-dollar investment. He had so little to do that his week-ends frequently lasted from Friday to Tuesday, and he had been spending them at Portneuf, a tiny French village twenty miles up the river, where he found cheap board and good sketching.

A small cottage was for sale there, and he had almost made up his mind to buy it. If his job vanished, it would be a cheap and attractive haven, and he could live for a long time on his savings, with nothing to do but work on his paintings.

He had actually transferred four hundred dollars to the village bank for this investment, and he was in Portneuf that Monday morning when the Montreal paper brought the news. Lajoie had been arrested the previous afternoon, as he was boarding a train for Boston. The other directors had all been apprehended and were charged with fraud, conspiracy to defraud, falsification of books and reports, and a number of other offenses. Delaine's own name was conspicuous; there was a warrant out for him, too; but by some inexplicable and miraculous luck it seemed that his whereabouts were not known.

But his freedom must be a matter of hours only. Delaine fell into a sort of nightmare of terror. From the newspaper story, he could have no doubt that Lajoie had gambled away the stockholders' money. The directors were legally accomplices. Some of them may have been really so; others, like Delaine, guilty of no more than carelessness. But this was not an excuse that would pass, and Canadian justice was apt to be swift and stern. Only lately an influential bank manager had been sent down for six years.

In the brain storm of that crisis, Delaine saw himself facing at least a year of prison. He would be a marked man when he came out. His professional career, such as it was, would be ended.

There was no time to think. In a panic he drew out his money from the bank, thanking fortune that he had it, and took the first train northwest for a hundred miles. At a lumber village, he bought a canoe, supplies, a camp outfit, and plunged into the concealing wilderness.

He knew the woods. He had been on plenty of rough camping and canoeing trips before, but seldom alone, and never through these waters. But it did him good. The rough exercise, the fresh air braced his nerves. He had brought his sketching outfit and a good camera, but he seldom used either. Now and again he regretted having fled; he felt that he ought to go back and take his punishment, but the cold specter of the penitentiary terrified him again. His fellow criminals had been admitted to bail. Their trial must be imminent, was perhaps over; but he had no means of learning what had been the outcome of it all.

No doubt the police were looking for him, but he would never be caught while he stayed in the woods. North and west the wilderness ran almost unbroken for a thousand miles. He thought he could build a permanent camp, get in supplies, pass the winter. By spring, the affair would be blown over. He would not mind remaining a woodsman for the rest of his life, he thought, sickened with cities, and nauseated at the very thought of chemistry.

He doubted and hesitated, while he drifted and portaged through the wilderness. Twice he dodged camping parties; he was afraid to meet mankind, especially from Montreal. Only this once he had been drawn to approach in the dark, and it had left a torturingly bitter-sweet impression of beauty and music.

He heard Duggan in the kitchen, heard the sizzling of frying bacon, and he dressed and went out. The bee man had been out early and had brought in two trout, two-pounders at least, and one of them was companioning the bacon in the frying pan. The morning was sunny; a hot, dry day seemed promised again, and Duggan again deplored the lack of rain for the honey flow.

"Look here," Delaine proposed, as they ate breakfast. "Suppose I stay with you for a month. I'll go halves on the grub, or I'll pay you board, and I'd like to help with the bees—learn just how you manage 'em."

"Better do as I said, and buy 'em," Duggan interrupted. "I'll sell 'em dirt cheap."

"How much?" Delaine asked.

He knew very well that such an apiary with all its equipment and tools, in more civilized parts, would be worth all of two thousand dollars. Then there was at that moment five or six thousand pounds of honey already gathered, worth at the least five hundred dollars more. It was certainly far beyond his means.

"Well, if you'd come about a week later, I expect you could have had 'em for nothing," said Duggan, with a grin. "Fact is, I've got to leave. My only brother's dying in Colorado. They brought up a message from Ormond the other day. I was just patching up my canoe to start when you come. Like as not, I'll never be back. I was thinking of trying to get somebody to come up and manage the bees this summer, but there ain't nobody in Ormond fit for the job."

"I see," said Delaine. "Well, what'll you take, then?"

"It's worth close to three thousand dollars. I expect you know that, if you know anything about bees. But, seeing how I'm fixed, I'd be glad to take five hundred dollars, cash down."

"I don't say that isn't cheap," returned Delaine surprised. "But I don't carry that much cash on me, and I don't know that I could afford to pay it, anyway. How much honey do you generally get in a season?"

"Eighty or a hundred pounds per colony. I've got as high as a hundred and fifty. It makes about twelve dollars a hive, generally."

"But where do you sell it? How do you get it to a market?"

"There's more market than you'd think, right here. Lots of camping parties come up the river. There was a big one less'n a week ago, and they took away fifty pounds. They always pay twenty-five cents a pound. Then there's a couple of big pulpwood camps within ten miles that take over five hundred pounds for their men. And Indians are always dropping in for a pail; great boys for sweets they are.

"What's left I take down to Ormond, and the storekeeper there takes the lot, generally at twelve or fourteen cents. Fruit and sweet stuff is scarce up this way. There's an old logging road right to Ormond, and when the swamps freeze up and there's sleighing, you can send the whole crop down

in two or three sleigh loads. It don't cost much over twenty dollars. Sometimes I've taken some down by canoe."

It sounded eminently practical, but Delaine shook his head. Duggan still scrutinized him.

"I'll show you how I pack the bees for winter," Duggan went on. "I don't often lose more'n five or six. I've got all the honey tins for this year's crop, too. All you'd have to do is to tin up the honey and sell it. You ought to clear a thousand dollars by September."

"I haven't got enough cash on me, anyway," said Delaine.

"Tell you what!" said Duggan, after a silence. "Fact is, I don't ever expect to come back here no more. My brother's well fixed, and I'm all the family there is, so I expect I'll come in for about twenty thousand dollars, and these bees'll be no use to me. But I'd like to know that they'll be looked after right, and I need some cash bad for the journey. I'll take what I can get. It'll be all to the good. How much cash have you got?"

"About two hundred dollars."

"Well, look here! Give me a hundred. After you've sold the crop, you can send me the rest later. I'll leave you my address. What do you say?"

"I'll take you!" Delaine said.

CHAPTER IV
HONEYDEW

Duggan went down the river after an early dinner, and Delaine, left alone, again inspected his property with the intense satisfaction of fresh possession.

He had rather been rushed into the purchase, but he could not possibly lose. The sum he had paid down was trivial; the honey already on the hives would more than cover it. As he looked over the storehouses and the bee yard in the spruce clearing, the tools and outfit, he felt a warm glow of solidity, of security. It was the first real property he had ever owned.

This was better than the cottage at Portneuf. This was not only a refuge but a money-maker. The thought of Meteor Colors and of his own danger grew distant and dim. This place was safe. Perhaps, he thought vaguely, he might later surrender himself, if he should learn that his codirectors had only been fined. But prison—no, he could not bear that!

Forgetting both chemistry and commerce, he could begin a new life here. The bees would provide him with all the cash he would ever need. Food was a simple matter in the woods, and his other wants were few. He would have time now to paint as much as he wanted; and he had a vision of himself growing old in this cabin, half a hunter, half a hermit of art.

There were two shacks in the apiary clearing, built of small logs and lumber, bee tight, with screened windows. One of them was piled half full of supers, the upper hive stories to be added to hold a heavy honey crop. Some of them contained eight fully built combs apiece, ready to be refilled by the bees; some of them were empty. There were a hundred zinc queen excluders, feeders, smokers, old and new bee veils, a wax boiler and press, and a shelf of dusty bee books and old beekeepers' magazines. All sorts of things had been stored in that cabin. There were piles of lumber, tools, a spade and hoe, a bundle of steel traps, a moth-eaten deer hide, a box of ancient potatoes.

There was also about a bushel of some partly dried roots in a corner, smallish roots with large leaves, which Delaine finally identified as the common bloodroot. It looked as if Duggan had been doing wholesale botanizing, for the plant is not edible, in fact, contains a highly poisonous

principle. It is used somewhat in medicine, however, and he imagined that Duggan had been gathering these roots for sale.

The other shack was plainly the honey-extracting workshop, and it had a good, tight, board flooring. It contained the extractor, with a canvas corded over the top to keep it clean, several fifty-gallon honey tanks, two or three uncapping knives, huge, razor-edged blades, strainers and pails, and an uncapping box with a hot-water jacket.

There was a good coal-oil stove, and a large tin of oil. One end of the room was piled high with crates of new, empty honey tins, hundreds of them —he could not tell how many—and on a table was a little pyramid of full ten-pound pails of honey, the last of the crop of the previous year.

Delaine looked it all over with intense enjoyment. It was certainly a bargain at five hundred dollars. And there must be several thousand pounds of raspberry honey on the hives. He would have liked to begin extracting it at once, but apparently the crop was still coming in.

The bees were flying actively, certainly carrying sweets. He felt that he should go through the apiary thoroughly, inspecting every colony to ascertain its condition. But he felt still too excited and unsettled to buckle down to hard, continuous work. He put on a veil, lighted the smoker, and opened one hive.

It must have had fifty pounds of honey in its first super; it was as heavy as he could well lift, with great, white, delicate combs of sealed honey. He "hefted" the super below, and it seemed equally heavy, though he did not take out any of the combs. Below this was the brood chamber, with a zinc excluder to keep the queen down. It was swarming and cramped with bees and they were cross, and he did not investigate the colony any farther.

At the end of the yard he discovered a hive on scales, which Duggan had forgotten to show him. It was a strong colony with two supers, standing on a platform scale, so that its daily gain in weight could be read, and an estimate made of the work of the apiary.

The scale was set hard up, and had evidently not been adjusted for several days. Setting it, he found that it had gained five pounds since its last adjustment, and the whole hive weighed one hundred and forty pounds. That must mean a crop surplus of at least eighty pounds.

He sat by the cabin watching the bees for much of the afternoon, then went to the house with some of the bee books. He read them, laid them down to gaze over the misty lake among the spruces, and then read again.

But he was still too excited with his acquisition to make much headway with the complicated instructions that he perused.

At the end of the day, he lighted a fire in the stove, fried the rest of Duggan's trout, and made tea. There was a lamp in the cabin, and he thought of making candles of beeswax. But the summer twilight of the North lasted so late that it was hardly more than dusk when he went to bed between the carved owls, and lay wakeful for a long time.

The next morning he attacked the bee yard in earnest. There was no lack of work to be done.

Resolved to disregard stings, at least on his arms, he rolled up his sleeves, put on a wide-brimmed hat with a gauze veil, and lighted the smoker. Carrying a steel hive tool resembling a strong, thin chisel, he approached the first hive, not without a sense of adventure and risk.

A blast of smoke at the entrance sent the guards crawling in with a loud, terrified buzzing. He took off the hive cover, and met the uprush of bees with a puff of smoke that sent them down again. Prying loose two or three frames of comb, he found that this colony did not have so much honey. Its single super was not quite full, and some of the honey appeared darkish in color, probably gathered from early willow blossoms.

Inserting his hive tool, he broke the sealing of bee glue, and pried off this upper story. Below it was a queen excluder of zinc, perforated with holes so exact in size that the workers passed through freely, but the larger-bodied queen was prevented from going up and depositing her eggs among the honey.

The lower story, or brood chamber, was now exposed, containing ten combs, mostly filled with brood—eggs, or young larvæ like white worms at the bottom of the cells, or sealed over brown and biscuit-colored in its later stages. This colony was not too strong; it had not built up well, and was not populous enough to gather a great amount of honey. Probably it was the fault of the queen, who had not provided eggs enough in the early spring; and Delaine mentally marked this colony for requeening.

The next colony he opened was better, and had two supers fairly well filled—perhaps a total amount of sixty pounds of honey. The third proved to be queenless. Some accident had caused the death of the queen, and the colony had failed to raise another. There was no brood, and the bees were cross, desperate and reckless, stinging viciously.

Left to itself, it would perish within a few weeks, so Delaine, after trying to remember the approved procedure, set the whole colony, combs, bees and all, upon another colony for the two lots of insects to unite themselves together under one queen.

The next two colonies had evidently died in the winter, and Delaine carried the empty hives and combs into the storehouse. The next hive again was piled up with three supers, all full, and needing another—a tremendously prosperous and populous colony, having probably a hundred pounds of honey already and nearly a hundred thousand bees.

All the forenoon Delaine worked, progressing methodically from hive to hive, till his back ached from stooping. He had been stung less than he expected; better still, the stings did not swell and the pain passed quickly. Evidently he was physically adapted for a bee man.

He was thinking of stopping for dinner and a rest, when he noticed an excitement about one of the hives where he had been working within an hour. A vast cloud of bees hung about it with a tempestuous roaring, and, on going to look, Delaine found the focus of the excitement to be a comb of honey which he had inadvertently left on the ground, forgetting to put it back into the hive when he had finished examining it.

It was so covered with bees now that nothing was visible of it but a dark, surging mass of insects, eager to lick out the last drop of honey. Delaine was surprised at their fury. When honey is being gathered from flowers, the bees will not usually care to plunder it from any other source, not even if a bowl of honey were set in front of a hive.

He committed the mistake of smoking the bees away and removing the comb. He should have left it till the bees had taken all the contents and lost interest in it. Five minutes later he found that the cloud of bees, failing to find the honey, had turned their attention to the hive beside the spot, determined to rob it.

A fierce fight was already under way at the entrance. Bees were rolling over and over in struggling, stinging clusters, and at every crevice a group of robbers, was nosing, mad to get in.

But the colony was strong enough to defend itself. The thieves did not make much headway. In fifteen minutes the fighting had almost ceased. Then the cloud of robbers suddenly concentrated around another colony three stands away.

This was a weak colony in one story, and the scouts must have discovered its feebleness. Delaine plugged the entrance nearly full of mud, leaving only a half-inch hole. Surely the defenders could hold that narrow way.

They did hold it for a time. Robbers rolled back dead into the grass by dozens. But the swarm of assailants grew every minute, coming probably from every colony in the yard. They were getting in now, and in half an hour the battle was evidently lost.

The fighting stopped, and bees began to go and come, carrying the honey to their own homes. When Delaine ventured to peep into the hive a few hours later, there was nothing but the tattered combs from which every drop of honey had been taken, and about two quarts of dead bees on the bottom.

He was minus a colony, but he had his lesson, and never left honey carelessly exposed again. Still, he was amazed at this ferocious robbing spirit when there was honey in the blossoms. He walked a few hundred yards up the lake shore to look at the raspberry flowers. The canes grew in jungles and masses in every open space, and he was startled to find the bloom mostly gone. There was green fruit on many bushes. Still, there was enough bloom left to supply considerable honey, but he could not see a single bee on any of the blossoms.

Probably, he thought, the weather was too dry for the plants to yield. A certain degree of both heat and moisture is required for the blooms to secrete their sweet nectar. But what, then, were the bees working on? For he had certainly seen them coming home heavily laden by dozens.

Perplexed, he went back to the apiary, where the rioting had quieted. The bees were certainly bringing in something, and at that place and season there was nothing flowering but the wild raspberry.

Standing under the spruce trees beside the yard, he heard a murmuring in the branches. He had heard it before without paying any attention, but now he looked up carefully. Bees were certainly busy up there. He could see them, crawling actively over the stiff twigs. Struck with a new suspicion, he reëntered the yard and carefully opened one of the hives.

He lifted out a comb containing the darkish honey that he had attributed to the willow. He scraped off the wax capping of the cells. The contents were brown, dark, and hardening into sugary granules. He tasted it. It had a bitterish, resinous flavor. He shut the hive in the utmost disgust.

“Honeydew, by Jove!” he muttered.

CHAPTER V
ASTONISHING NEWS

Honeydew is one of the many annoyances of the commercial beekeeper. This substance with the poetical name is a dark, rank sirup secreted by the aphides, or plant lice, generally on the twigs of oak, spruce or pine trees during hot, dry weather. The bees do not care for it much, and pay no attention to it when real honey is to be had. But when the blossoms fail, they will work assiduously on anything they can find that is sweet, and a few pounds of this strong, dark stuff may be mixed with, and ruin, a whole super full of high-grade honey.

Duggan had said something about honeydew, Delaine now recollected. But it was not till this moment that Delaine realized that a great quantity—perhaps half—of his supposed honey crop was really this almost worthless product.

He had a feeling of having been swindled. But there must be, after all, over a thousand pounds of good clear honey at least on the hives, worth far more than he had paid. A good rain would save him yet, washing the honeydew off the trees, and perhaps starting a honey flow from the last of the raspberry bloom.

It did turn a little cooler, clouded over, lowered, and then became hot and dry again, without a drop of moisture having fallen. Delaine finished his inspection of the bees, very careful now to allow no robbing to start. They were in good condition; there was really more than half a ton of good honey there, besides perhaps a ton of mixed and doubtful stuff. With rain, he would get a crop yet.

He attempted to sketch, but could not settle his mind to it. He tried to fish, but the weather had made the trout extremely shy. He was coming to know the anguish of the beekeeper, whose crop depends on the slightest changes of temperature, of the moisture in the air. The secretion of nectar in the blossoms is the most sensitive thing in the world. In coolness or drought, there is no honey, and a change in the wind or a light shower may make a difference of a thousand pounds of honey to the apiary in a single day.

Delaine's last thought at night was of the weather, and his first glance in the morning was at the sky. He was finding apiculture less peaceful than he

imagined. In his nervousness and anxiety, he began once more to brood on his collision with the law. He grew intensely lonely, and yet he dreaded to see a human face.

Almost daily he half expected to see the return of that big party which he had spied upon. That night had left him with a strange impression of mixed bitterness and beauty. He could hear the singing of the guides still; he could see, clear as ever, the face of the girl who had danced—and who had shrunk away from him with a horrified instinct.

He dreaded to see that fleet of canoes coming down the lake. Yet he would have been glad of anybody, Indian or white, anybody with whom he could talk and relieve the strain of incessant thinking and hoping and scaring himself with ever darker and darker imaginings.

Two or three times, he paddled up to the railroad bridge to see the train go by. Sitting in his canoe, he could hear the murmur far away through the trees, rising to a roar, and then with a tremor of the earth the transcontinental Limited streaked over the bridge—a blur of dust, smoke, windows, human faces—and vanished. There was no stop for over twenty miles either way. Delaine dropped back down the stream again with a sense of having come partly into touch with human life once more.

Days went by. The bees continued to work on the spruces, collecting brown honeydew that seemed to granulate solidly almost as soon as brought in. The hive on scales registered a slow, steady gain of a pound or two a day.

Then Delaine, visiting the wild raspberry patches, found that the last of the bloom had disappeared. The sprays were covered with fruit, already turning red, ripened prematurely in the drought. There would be no more honey.

The next morning he paddled up to the railway bridge, in hopes of catching a trout in the river before the sun grew strong. It was already hot, and the night had been plagued with mosquitoes. No train was in hearing as he approached the bridge, and he was paddling mechanically, absorbed in his thoughts, when he was startled almost to the point of capsizing by a shout from above.

He stared up, letting the canoe drift. A man was sitting on the embankment at the end of the bridge, and he jumped up and started to make his way unsteadily down the steep slope to the water.

“Hello! Hello!” Delaine answered, confused with astonishment.

This was not a woodsman, nor a railway, nor an Indian nor a timber cruiser. He was wearing a shapely soft hat and a white collar, and he carried an expensive-looking club bag. He looked as if he had just alighted from a Pullman. As he came to the shore, Delaine saw that it was a young fellow, a mere boy, hardly over twenty, with a handsome, pleasant face, dressed in very modish city style, and wearing tan Oxford shoes. An odder apparition in the midst of this wilderness could hardly be imagined.

Delaine guided the canoe up to the shore. The young man looked at his stupefied face, and laughed.

"You've turned up at the right time," he said. "When I got to this bridge, I thought it was the limit, and I stopped. Can you tell me where I am?"

"My dear fellow, you are not anywhere," returned Delaine, recovering himself. "And how you got here passes my comprehension."

"Simple enough. I got off the train last night," said the stranger.

"The train? The train doesn't stop within twenty miles!" Delaine cried. "Bruce Hill is the nearest stop."

"Well, it stopped last night, somewhere near here. I thought it was Bruce Hill. I grabbed my bag and jumped out, half asleep. It was all dark, and before I found out my mistake, the train had pulled out. I waited in a sort of shed till morning, and then I started to hike. I thought I'd get somewhere if I kept going."

"It's true there is a sort of shed about four miles west," said Delaine, thinking. "It used to be a freight-loading point for a pulpwood camp. But it hasn't been used for a year. No train ever stops there."

"Well, I tell you it stopped last night," retorted the strayed youth, with some irritation. "I prove it by being here, don't I? Maybe it was in trouble—hot box or something. What are you doing here yourself? Camping?"

"Not exactly. You'd better come back to my place with me, for breakfast. I've got a bee ranch down this river."

The stranger looked oddly at Delaine and laughed with remarkable heartiness.

"Breakfast? Rather!" he ejaculated. "I'd begun to think there were no more breakfasts in the world. I knew you were a godsend as soon as I set eyes on you. My name's Maxwell. What's yours?"

"Burns," returned Delaine promptly, without any forethought. He was astonished himself at hearing the lie come out of his mouth, but he let it pass.

He assisted his guest into the canoe. Maxwell did not seem much used to canoes. He almost capsized it at the start, and then, following instructions, he crouched low in strained immobility, clutching his club bag. Fortunately it was not a great distance to the bee farm.

"Here we are. I can paddle you back to the railroad when you want to start for Bruce Hill," Delaine said, "but I don't see how you'll make the rest of the journey unless you walk."

"Oh, that'll be all right. I'll manage," said Maxwell easily. He glanced around him with more confidence when he was ashore, and started up the slope toward the cabin. Once indoors he lighted a cigarette and looked all about him with an air of great interest, as if looking for something that he failed to find.

Delaine busied himself with lighting the fire and preparing coffee. He had already eaten breakfast himself. Behind his back, he was conscious that Maxwell was scrutinizing him with an air of suppressed amusement, and he found it irritating.

"Grub's ready," he said curtly.

"Thanks. How long have you been here, anyway, Burns?" Maxwell demanded, laughing outright. "And where's Duggan?"

"Duggan!" Delaine gasped. "You knew Duggan? Do you mean—you've been here before?"

"Well, rather!" said Maxwell. "You see, this camp belongs to me."

Delaine glared at him in anger—consternation—then with a ghastly conviction of truth. Here was the explanation of his amazing bargain!

"I bought it from Duggan—j-just before he left," he stammered.

"You did? Well, Duggan hasn't owned a stick of it for three years. I bought it from him then and fixed it up, and kept Duggan on to take care of it. We divide the honey, and I use the place as a summer camp. It makes its own expenses. What did you pay him for it?"

Delaine angrily told the story of his purchase.

"Duggan was getting sore on the job and wanted to leave. He saw his chance and played you for a sucker," Maxwell commented. "We had a poor

honey crop last year, and he didn't make much. He hasn't any brother in Colorado. He comes from Bruce Hill. I expect he's gone back there. Why, you didn't think you could buy such an outfit as this for one hundred dollars, or for five hundred dollars, did you?"

Delaine smarted with wrath and humiliation. He had been a sucker, indeed!

"Well, if your man has cheated me, I'll look to you to make it good!" he exploded.

"Oh, hardly! You can't do that. You'll have to get after Duggan. Come on and let's eat. It'll make you feel better."

Delaine had not much appetite. He was too charged with anger against Duggan, Maxwell, himself, everybody. But Maxwell ate enormously, devouring all the bread, bacon and trout, and emptying the coffeepot.

"Where's that booze of Duggan's?" he inquired. "Haven't drunk it all, have you?"

The bottle of strong frozen spirit was still in the cupboard. Maxwell poured himself a stiff dose, swallowed it and poured another, which he sipped slowly. As he drank, it seemed to Delaine that his face changed. He looked uneasy, nervous, thoughtful.

"How's the honey crop this year?" he demanded abruptly.

"Poor. It's been too dry. The bees are gathering honeydew."

"Is there much of the honeydew?"

"Plenty. A ton or so."

"Um!" Maxwell looked at Delaine with sullen eyes. "Has anybody been through here lately—Indians or campers?"

"Not a soul."

Maxwell stared thoughtfully out through the wire screen of the kitchen door. In the steady light, Delaine noticed that his face, for all its youth, was lined and marked, perhaps with dissipation, perhaps with overwork. The fingers holding the cigarette quivered faintly. Maxwell's nerves were certainly in bad condition.

"Since this place belongs to you," Delaine said bitterly, "I think I'll be off—back to Montreal."

"Montreal!" Maxwell turned on him sharply. "I thought you were a bee man."

"So I am. But what's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing. Say, don't be in such a hurry to leave," said Maxwell, laughing with sudden good humor again. "We'll find some way to fix you up. Sorry Duggan played you such a trick. But I've got to have a nap. I got no sleep last night. Keep a lookout for anybody passing."

He leaned far back in his chair, yawning widely. His coat opened, and Delaine caught a glimpse of the handle of a small, black, automatic pistol. It was slung in a holster under his left armpit, as the city gunmen carry them.

The sight gave Delaine a violent shock, but Maxwell got up, closing his coat and yawning again. He went into the front room with his club bag and rolled himself in Delaine's blankets.

"Stay around till I wake up, anyway," he called through the door. "Keep a lookout, won't you? I'm half dead for sleep."

Delaine walked out of the cabin, in deep disgust and depression. Another plan had gone wrong. The sun blazed down; the bees hummed busily among the spruces, piling honeydew into their hives. It did not matter now, but this wilderness apiary had never seemed so desirable to Delaine as now that he had lost it.

He thought of recommencing his rough, aimless wandering up and down the waterways. The prospect seemed intolerable; but it would be worse to go back to the city.

Maxwell slept heavily till noon, and then came out to dinner, looking tousled and drowsy still.

"I suppose nobody's been along?" he inquired.

"You seem to think that this is a highway of traffic," said Delaine tartly. "Nobody's ever passed here in my time."

"You never can tell," said Maxwell. "I don't want to see anybody. I came here for a rest. I'm tired out—been overworking all summer. Rough customers come this way sometimes. Duggan's had honey stolen time and again."

He really looked tired, and was plainly in a condition of overwrought nerves. He would talk with sunny good nature, and then snap savagely at the

merest trifle. After dinner and a tumbler of honey liquor, he seemed to grow more tranquil.

"I've been thinking it over," he said. "You're not in a hurry to leave, are you? How'd you like to take over Duggan's job?"

"No, I can't stay here all summer," said Delaine, surprised.

"You could stay till you extract the honey and get it away. Two or three weeks. I'll pay you ten dollars a week and board."

Still Delaine shook his head. He wanted to get away from the place now.

"I can't be left here all alone!" Maxwell cried. "I don't know anything about bees, or how to run this ranch in the woods. What wages do you want? I'll go anything in reason. Yes, and if things go well, I might refund you the hundred dollars that Duggan got out of you."

Delaine would have refused again, but the look on Maxwell's face astonished him. The boy was plainly on edge with anxiety. He licked his lips nervously; his eyes were imploring. He was desperately anxious for Delaine to stay with him. He looked scared; and Delaine remembered that Duggan also had looked scared and feared the approach of some one down the lake.

Like a cloud of evidence, all the queer facts of the affair poured through Delaine's mind. It flashed upon him that everything he had heard was false, perhaps. Maxwell did not own this apiary. Maybe Duggan had not owned it. Maybe Delaine owned it himself. His mind swung round a complete revolution while Maxwell waited.

"All right I'll stay for a while, any how," he said.

"That's the stuff!" cried Maxwell exuberantly. "I'll make it right with you. Here, have a drink on it!"

Delaine took a sip, but Maxwell drank more than enough, finishing the bottle, and unearthing another from the square hole under the kitchen that served as a cellar. He grew light-hearted again, now that Delaine's coöperation was settled, talking and laughing with the abandonment of a schoolboy; but every now and again he cast a quick, anxious glance through the doorway and up the lake.

Rain fell that afternoon, and at sunset it clouded again and rained nearly all night. If this belated downpour had come two weeks earlier it might have meant another five hundred dollars' worth of honey, Delaine thought regretfully. However, it would make no difference to him after all.

The rain even stopped the honeydew flow, washing the spruces clear of the aphides and their sweet juice. It was impossible to think of taking off and extracting honey, or even of looking into the hives. The bees buzzed angrily about the yard, disappointed in the cessation of harvest, trying to rob one another's hives. Scores of robber scouts nosed at every entrance and joint; hundreds of guards clustered at the entrances; and knots of fighting, stinging bees might be seen rolling in the grass anywhere.

There was nothing to do but wait, and Delaine and Maxwell waited, loafing, smoking and fishing a little, for the rain had improved the appetites of the trout. Maxwell had fewer spells of nervous irritation; his mind seemed more at rest. Delaine came to a liking for him; he was boyish, eager, impulsive, and he seemed to have had a strange and rather sinister experience of life.

He said vaguely that he was in the brokerage business, without going further into details; but he abounded in tales of the sporting life of Montreal. This was particularly vivid at that time, though Delaine personally knew little of it. But he had heard much, even in the seclusion of his studio and laboratory.

Maxwell seemed to know all about it, though he did not claim to be a participant. Remembering the gun at his armpit, Delaine wondered; but on the whole he was inclined to set most of it down to the boastfulness of a boy anxious to show his acquaintance with "life."

CHAPTER VI
BLAZING LUCK!

The moisture was followed by several days of windy, sunny weather. No honeydew was gathered; the bees were growing accustomed to the dearth and were less anxious to steal, but still it was no weather for taking off honey. If a hive had been opened, it would have started an instant riot in the apiary.

"You might get a crop yet from fireweed," Delaine suggested, as they sat on the steps of the kitchen late in the afternoon.

"Fireweed? What's that? Does it amount to any——" Maxwell began without interest, and then stopped as suddenly as if he had been choked.

A man had suddenly and silently come around the corner of the cabin from the rear, so silently that they had not heard a sound. He was an Indian, clad characteristically in the worn garments of white men. He wore a khaki coat, duffel trousers, battered moccasins and a greasy and shapeless felt hat. He came up imperturbably and without speaking, and sat down on a flattened stump before the door. His beady, black eyes passed from one man to the other, and then seemed to settle on Maxwell's face.

"Hello!" Delaine greeted him. "*Bo' jour!* What you want, eh? Parlez Français?"

The aborigine shook his head.

"*Miel*. Honeys," he pronounced throatily.

"Oh, you want to buy honey? Got the price?"

He nodded, meeting Delaine's glance. It gave the white man a shock of surprise. The eyes were black, certainly, but instead of the slumbering, snaky gloom of an Indian, they were quick and alive with intelligence.

Delaine glanced instinctively at Maxwell. All the color had fled from the boy's face, and he was staring at the Indian in what appeared the fascination of terror.

Delaine looked again at the savage. He had seen plenty of Indians, and this man was certainly an Indian, he thought, or of part Indian descent.

There was hardly any mistaking the shape of the strong, square face, the wide mouth, the coarse black hair. It was probably an Ojibwa; Duggan had said that these were "great boys for honey."

Delaine went into the house for one of the ten-pound pails of last season's honey. While he was indoors, he was almost certain that he heard the mutter of a voice, the exchange of a sentence or two. But when he came out, the two men had not stirred, and were no longer even looking at one another.

"Two dollars. *Deux*," he said, holding up two fingers.

The Indian produced a crumpled bill and four quarters, and took the honey, rising to go.

"Ojibwa?" Delaine inquired, again examining the man's grease-streaked face.

The Indian shook his head and started away.

"Chippewa? Where's your camp?"

The savage swung his arm vaguely toward the north, pronounced a few words harshly in an unknown dialect, and strode away carrying his honey pail.

He vanished into the evergreen thickets, but from the rear Delaine caught a clear sight of his head. The hair was cut short, trimmed closely and neatly on the neck, as a professional barber would trim it.

"Did you notice——" Delaine turned to say to Maxwell, but he found that the boy had retreated to the cabin.

Maxwell was sitting on a stool, mopping his face, in a half collapse.

"What's the matter with you?" Delaine demanded. "Not scared of that Indian? They're the most peaceable lot in the world. Duggan says they were always coming in to buy honey. You didn't know him, did you?"

"No—no. Damn you, how should I know an Indian?" Maxwell snarled.

Delaine looked at him in silence. The boy, with an evident effort to control himself, went to the cupboard and took a long drink of honey brandy.

"I think I'll beat it out of this, Burns," he said, quite calmly. "I'll get you to run me down to Ormond in your canoe. We could start right away, couldn't we? Inside an hour?"

"You must be crazy!" said Delaine. "It's getting near sundown, and the river's dangerous. I wouldn't try to run down any unknown water after dark. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing's the matter," said the boy, still with the same hard calm. "I'll just tell you that I've got to beat it out of here damn quick. I'll pay you for your canoe if it's smashed, and I'll pay you one hundred dollars to land me in Ormond before morning. If we did get wrecked, we could go ahead on foot."

"We'd never make Ormond at all. I won't take any money to attempt such a thing. If you're determined to go, I'll start with you as soon as it's light in the morning."

Maxwell argued in vain, and at last sullenly acquiesced. He filled his tumbler again with honey brandy and sat brooding and silent. Delaine did not question him further. All that he needed to know was plain. Maxwell certainly knew the Indian, and for some reason, feared him. There was a feud of some sort; in view of the young man's conversation, it might be a matter of rum running.

Delaine did not care what it was, but he felt that the turn of things might not be so bad. He had an intuition that Maxwell would never come back if he departed. The bee ranch might remain in his hands after all.

Maxwell ate little at supper, but drank a good deal. He hung about uneasily while Delaine packed supplies for the next morning's journey. He became flushed and more confident and talkative, but he did not make a single reference to the Indian or to the cause of his nervousness.

He was far from drunk, but he moved a little unsteadily, when he finally went to the front room and brought out his club bag.

"Isn't there a safe corner to hide this thing overnight?" he inquired. "Down in the wine cellar, maybe?"

"Afraid of burglars?" asked Delaine ironically. "What's in it?"

"I'll show you what's in it!" Maxwell cried impulsively. He opened the valise, rummaged out a suit of silk pajamas, several shirts and collars, brushes and combs, and finally, from the bottom, a square package like a cigar box, done up in brown paper.

"Just to show you that I trust you!" he said, with a nervous laugh, and untied the wrapper.

Inside was really a book, a solid volume like a family Bible, bound in brown leather, and wrapped around and across with a fine steel chain secured with a small padlock. On the leather back, Delaine read the title, "The Book of Revelations."

"The sacred book of my church," Maxwell said. "It mustn't fall into the hands of the profane."

Delaine looked at him in amazement, concluding that he was either crazy or drunk.

"No, I want to put it in a safe place till we start," said Maxwell, quite soberly. "If anything should happen to me, don't let anybody get hold of it—unless it should be my Aunt Phil. Did you never hear of the Revelationists of Slovak River?"

"Never," said Delaine.

"You can't be a Canadian. All Canada knows about them. A big migration of them came over from Slovakia fifty years or so ago, and took up government land west of Ottawa. There isn't much good land there, but they found a few thousand acres, and cleared it and made the desert blossom like the rose. Now they have a big community, immensely prosperous, everything neat, stone houses and stone barns like a bit of Europe. I was brought up there. But I escaped young.

"Nothing eccentric about them except their religion, and that's queer only on one point. They think that revelation is still going on through the true church; of course they're it. The chief elder is the medium. At the quarterly meetings, he goes into a trance and speaks with tongues, as they call it. Sometimes it's pure gibberish, and sometimes it's hard sense; but a stenographer takes it all down, and it's printed in a book. They've got about twenty volumes of these revelations. This is the latest."

"What are they about?" asked Delaine, interested.

"Everything on earth. Farming, morals, politics, business, beliefs. A few years ago the community almost wrecked on a rock. You'd never guess what it was. Playing the Winnipeg wheat market on the revealed tips! They're all grain growers, and some of the young fellows got the idea that there were indications of market future conditions in the elder's revelations. It got so bad that the church had to threaten to excommunicate them; but I expect some of the game's still going on."

Maxwell paused and laughed heartily. He drank again, and observed Delaine's face.

"Otherwise they're a good, solid community. They've got good schools. They've even got a college, mostly for training men for their ministry. But it has a scientific department—that's not bad. I suppose you've never heard of Bracka—Professor Paul Bracka?"

The name seemed dimly familiar to Delaine, but he could not place it for the life of him.

"Several years ago, one of the Revelationists went north into the mining country, and made a fortune out of copper claims. But he always said that he'd have made a great deal more if he'd known something of metals and chemistry; so he endowed a department of physics and chemistry in the college.

"The community didn't want any chemistry, but it wouldn't refuse the gift, so they had a laboratory established, and looked around for a chemist to head it. It wasn't so easy. All the professors had to be Revelationists. Revelationist chemists aren't so common.

"Somebody thought of my Uncle Paul. He'd left the community young, gone to Montreal, backslidden and studied chemistry. He had a lectureship for a while, and then drifted away to some small American college where he was teaching chemistry. He was a brilliant chemist, but erratic and lazy and he couldn't teach, and the job in the home college just suited him. There never were more than two or three students in the class, and he had all his time to potter around on researches of his own. As for being a Revelationist, that didn't faze him at all. He'd have been anything. All he cared about was chemistry. He was my father's brother, and——"

"Then your name can't be Maxwell," Delaine incautiously interrupted.

The young man looked at him angrily.

"It's Maxwell Bracka. What the hell difference does it make to you?" he snarled.

"Nothing. Sorry. Go on," Delaine apologized.

"Well—that's all!" Maxwell—or Bracka—growled. He had turned silent and sullen again. He sat glowering for five minutes.

"We'd better turn in if we're starting at daylight," he said sourly, at last. "Here, I've got to hide this book underground somewhere."

Humoring him, Delaine carried the chain-bound volume of revelations down into the cellar hollow that Duggan had made to hold his wine, and buried it lightly in the sandy earth of the floor. Maxwell watched the

proceeding closely, seemed satisfied, and went to bed with hardly another word.

Delaine was left to ponder the grotesque story he had heard. It was not at all incredible; there were plenty of such queer communities of foreign origin. But what this one could have to do with the bee ranch, with the Indian, with young Bracka's panic, was more than he could begin to imagine. Perhaps it had nothing to do with it; perhaps the story was a mere product of honey brandy. Probably he would never find out.

He did not ponder over it long. He had more urgent affairs of his own to occupy him. He would take Bracka down to Ormond, and he did not believe he would ever hear of him again. Probably the bees would be left in his possession.

The thought of even such civilization as Ormond represented rather intimidated Delaine, after weeks of the wilderness. He had been negligent about his appearance. His face was covered with an inch or two of dark beard, and he clipped and shaved it off carefully that night, and got out a clean flannel shirt. The changed face that he saw in the shaving glass rather surprised him.

He slept badly, perhaps infected by Bracka's panic. Once he awoke sharply, imagining he had heard a sharp, jarring noise. But all the house was quiet, and was pitchy dark outdoors. Only as he looked from the window, he thought he saw a sudden, momentary, brilliant-white flash in the copses by the lake.

It did not reappear, though he watched for some time, and he believed it must have been imagination. It was late when he began to sleep soundly, and he awakened just in the first gray of dawn.

He jumped up, called Bracka through the door, and dressed quickly. He lighted the fire and put on the kettle, and then, remembering his vision of the night, ran down to the shore.

His canoe had been left there, bottom upward on the beach. It was still there, but there was a jagged hole in the bottom, six inches across, smashed with a sharp rock or a hatchet.

"Damnation!" he muttered, struck for the first time with a sense of mysterious fear. Then, on the sandy beach, he saw the clear print of moccasined feet.

He trailed them along the shore, but within twenty yards they turned inland, over hard ground, and became lost. He went back to the wrecked

canoe, and found Bracka stooping over it.

"Can't go to Ormond to-day."

Bracka gave him a startled, questioning, perplexed glance.

"You've changed your face!" he ejaculated, and then: "Can't you repair the canoe?"

"I don't know. Perhaps, if there's any canvas or patching material here. But it'll take a day or two."

"We'll have to start on foot, then," said the boy, with decision.

"In those shoes?" retorted Delaine, pointing to Bracka's dainty Oxfords. "You'd be barefoot in ten miles. I'd be lost about the same time. There's no trail that I know. It can't be done."

Bracka threw up his hands with a gesture of absolute despair.

"I'll try to hurry it up. I might get the thing patched in a sort of way this forenoon," said Delaine. "Let's have breakfast, and we'll do what we can."

Bracka, seeming entirely unnerved, followed him in silence to the cabin. Delaine got out the coffee, the bacon and the frying pan. He had a dozen questions to ask, but he hesitated to ask them. He was infected with Bracka's fear now, and as anxious to get away as the boy himself.

Bracka sat watching him narrowly, still with that searching and perplexed stare. He jumped to his feet suddenly.

"Jim Delaine!" he shouted.

Delaine was so startled that he dropped the frying pan with a clatter. The hot grease spilled sizzling on the stove. Bracka leaped toward him, catching him by the shoulder with a grip that was almost an embrace.

"I knew I knew you!" he was crying wildly. "Oh, what a lucky streak! What blazing, blinding luck!"

CHAPTER VII
PINKISH POWDER

"I couldn't p-place you at first!" Bracka cried incoherently. "I knew I'd seen you. I never forget a face. I knew your name wasn't Burns. I saw your initials 'J. L. D.' on that painting box of yours. It wasn't till you'd shaved that I spotted you. Your picture was in all the Montreal papers, and I'd seen you there besides. You were in the Meteor Colors fraud. You were old Lajoie's chemist."

Delaine was struck cold with terror. He opened his lips to deny, but it was plain that Bracka was unshakable in his identification.

"Well—what about it?" he demanded coldly, on the defensive.

"Everything. Couldn't have turned out better if we'd planned it all. It's the greatest piece of luck for us both. Do you want to make a lot of money—a hell of a lot?"

"Nothing would suit me better," said Delaine suspiciously.

"You don't mind breaking the law again?"

"What sort of law?"

"Any old law. Never mind the law. You're up against it anyhow. I know all about your case. I knew old Lajoie—the oldest gambler in Quebec—pyramiding when he won and doubling when he lost. I could have told you there was a smash coming. You were the wise guy to beat it when you did."

"Have they been tried? How did it end?" Delaine asked eagerly.

"Sure they've been tried." Bracka halted for a moment and thought. "They got stiff sentences, I remember. Lajoie was sent down for five years, I think, and the directors for two or three years apiece."

Again Delaine had an icy shock. It was worse than he had feared. This was what he had escaped by a bit of luck and the skin of his teeth.

"But never mind that!" Bracka was crying excitedly. "You're all right. Nobody'd find you in these woods. And wait! Just listen to what I've got to tell you. It's both our fortunes, Delaine. Big money! You remember what I told you about the Revelationists?"

Delaine nodded, confused, scared and puzzled. Bracka burst into noisy laughter, and moved toward the jug of mead.

"Don't take that stuff on an empty stomach!" Delaine checked him. "Drink some coffee. Keep sober, and tell me what you mean. What's that Indian got to do with it?"

"The Indian? Oh, we'll manage him, if you stick by me. Then it'll be all in our own hands. You see—— Fetch up that revelation book again, and I'll show you."

Delaine descended into the cellar and brought up the book. Bracka unlocked it, and opened the pages, A ten-dollar bill fluttered out, then another.

"I'm going to give you back the hundred Duggan took off you. What's a hundred? It'll be hundreds of thousands—what I'm going to show you. Look here!"

He turned back about a quarter of the pages, revealing that the heart of the book had been cut out. A piece four inches square had been clipped from each of several hundred pages, leaving a boxlike cavity.

Delaine had become so infected with the boy's excitement that he gaped with expectation of seeing—he knew not what treasures. But there was nothing but a rather crumpled roll of papers, scrawled with writing, apparently rolled around something solid.

They were irregular sheets of white paper, scraps of note paper, all written and scribbled over in a fine hand, sometimes with pen, sometimes with pencil. Delaine saw figures, letters, mathematical symbols, stray sentences, formulas, and he recognized the running notes that a laboratory worker keeps in his researches, usually in a sort of personal shorthand, and which he is frequently unable to decipher himself afterward.

Bracka unrolled the papers, revealing at their core a small bottle of blue glass.

"You're a chemist. What do you make of that?"

Delaine uncorked the bottle. It was nearly full of a flaky, slightly pinkish powder. He shook a little out in his hand.

"It might be any of a hundred things," he said, "I can't analyze it. You'll have to tell me."

"Taste it."

"What do you take me for? Taste it yourself."

Without hesitating, Bracka wet his finger, put it to the pinkish stuff, and licked it up. Delaine then ventured to imitate him. He cast a sharp, surprised glance at the boy. The acrid, bitterish flavor was familiar enough, and yet ——

Delaine dropped a little in a saucer of water. It hardly melted. Pouring out a small quantity of Duggan's honey brandy, almost pure alcohol, he found the powder dissolved readily.

"I don't know," he said. "I'd guess it was pure morphia alkaloid, or some such opium product. But its color is wrong, and there's something about the taste that isn't just right."

"You're a chemist, all right," Bracka said eagerly. "You're right, and you're not. It is morphine, and it isn't. It never came from any poppy. Yet it's the same thing as morphine, or so close that no dope fiend could ever tell any difference."

Delaine looked at him incredulously.

"What! You mean an artificial morphia—a synthetic product? There's no such thing."

"But you've got it in your hand. Strong stuff, too—much stronger than the regular morphine sulphate."

This was true. From the mere pinch he had absorbed, Delaine was conscious of a faint, tingling stimulus throughout his nerves.

"What is the stuff, really, then? What's it made of?" he demanded.

Bracka looked at him and hesitated, doubted, then decided.

"Bloodroot," he said.

Delaine had an instant memory of that heap of dried bloodroot in the storehouse. Bloodroot! What was its scientific name—Sanguinaria? He searched his memory for its chemical properties, and remembered. It was possible!

"Yes, I know," he said thoughtfully. "The alkaloids of the Sanguinaria are very similar to those of the poppy. Practically the same thing, indeed. But there's one fatal difference. All the preparations of sanguinarine are deadly poisonous. They couldn't be taken in any but the smallest doses."

"That's just the point!" Bracka cried. "This powder here is morphine made from Sanguinaria, and yet it isn't poisonous. We've both been tasting it."

"Well, go on and tell me," said Delaine. "I give it up."

Bracka went to the stove and refilled his coffee cup. Neither of them had eaten anything. He took a gulp of the black coffee, and spoke in an undertone, as if afraid of being overheard.

"Did you ever hear of 'Lockie' McKill?"

"Never."

"A chink?"

"A Chinaman? With a name like that?"

"They say it was his father's name. He's only half Chinese. His father was a Scotch drifter on the Pacific coast, and his mother was a Chinese woman in Seattle. That's the story. Lockie must have been a bright kid. He learned the drug-store business somehow and got a little knowledge of chemistry. He came to Montreal several years ago. He's got a shop there now—not a drug store—a little factory where they put up essences and fruit extracts, and such stuff. I've been working with him for two years."

"In the fruit-extract business?"

Bracka halted for some time again.

"Don't tell me any more than you like. I don't want to hear any criminal secrets," said Delaine hastily, oppressed already with what he felt coming.

"No—no—it's your secret, too. I'll tell you, all right."

His voice dropped lower still, and took a new and rougher accent, an echo from a different world.

"I'll give you the straight stuff, kid. I expect you know that Montreal is a center now for the dope trade. Lockie is in one of the biggest rings in America. Not that he's the top. There's big guys higher up that we don't know anything about. But I guess he's the chief in his own department. You see, he handles the stuff under cover of his factory. We get it in mostly from Europe, some of it by way of Havana, and some of it on the rum ships—all sorts of ways. We send it out from Montreal to Toronto and Detroit and Chicago, everywhere West."

"Are you talking about dope peddling!" cried Delaine, in disgust.

"Say, now, you don't think that a man like Lockie McKill would peddle dope, do you?" said Bracka compassionately. "He's a way-up guy—goes in the best society in Montreal—passes everywhere for a white man. It's all wholesale trade, don't you see?"

"Well, somebody's peddling this new dope for you," Delaine returned.

"No, not yet. There hasn't been over eight ounces of it made. But the Canadian Mounted Police are getting far too damn sharp, and besides, the European prices have gone way out of sight. What with seizures and the police grafters and commissions and losses every way you turn, there's getting to be hardly anything in the import business any more. Maybe a measly two or three hundred per cent—not near enough to cover the risks."

"But this artificial drug—what about that?"

"Lockie and Uncle Paul—Professor Bracka—worked it out between them. Uncle Paul did most of it, of course. Lockie didn't know enough chemistry. You see, Uncle Paul had done work for us before."

"At the Revelationist College?"

"Sure. It was just the place. Plenty of time, and nobody to bother what was going on in the laboratory. He was working at this job all winter. He found that the extract of bloodroot was the same thing as poppy juice, just as you say, but the stuff was deadly, a sure killer. You're right about that, too. Lockie croaked a chink with it, trying it out in Montreal.

"They tried every way to refine the poison out of it and leave the hop stuff, but it was only this spring that Uncle Paul hit on the process. And even then it was too expensive, cost nearly as much as to import the stuff. But just lately we've found out how to do it cheap. Yes, we can make that bloodroot dope, just as good as the genuine, for around fifty cents a pound, maybe less."

"Is this the process?" inquired Delaine, reaching for the roll of paper.

Bracka deftly pulled it out of reach.

"Wait a bit. Yes, that's the process, all right, if you can read it. I can't. Neither can Lockie. We can't make head nor tail of it."

"But why don't you leave it to your uncle, since he's making it?"

"Uncle Paul died suddenly this spring of pneumonia. These are all the notes of his work," returned Bracka.

Delaine realized the humor of the situation, and laughed in spite of himself.

"So you've got the directions for a million-dollar crime, and can't read them!" he exclaimed. "I take it that you want me to take your chemist's place. But," he added, "where does your partner the Scotch-Chinaman come into this? How do you come to have all the documents? Did you steal them? Oh, I see it now!" The explanation of the boy's fears had dawned upon him.

"Just about that," Bracka admitted. "Lockie didn't have any more right to the notes than I had. Professor Bracka was my uncle. Lockie couldn't read them, anyway. Besides," he went on eagerly, "I'll tell you this—even if Lockie knew the whole thing, he couldn't make the stuff, not without what I can give him."

"You think your partner won't get you first?" Delaine inquired.

"Not if you stick with me. I made a bad get-away. I was spotted taking the train. I had an idea that one of Lockie's gang had got aboard with me, too, and I was afraid to go on to Bruce Hill. It was another streak of luck that made the train stop that night beyond the bridge at the old pulpwood station. I guess she really did have a hot box. Anyway, I slipped out in the dark and beat it down the track. I figured that I could get down to Duggan's place somehow. I'd been here before, only this spring."

"I wish you'd never seen it!" said Delaine angrily.

He did not know what to think of Bracka's story. It was incredible on the face of it, though the young fellow had all the air of sincerity. But the idea of accepting this grotesquely criminal proposal never once occurred to Delaine. Dealing in opium had always seemed to him the lowest, most venomous, most contemptible of all iniquities, and the drug seller was worse than the addict.

Bracka cast a suddenly clouding glance at him, and the joyful confidence of his face darkened. His hand went halfway up beneath his coat; then he smiled with a rather forced grimace.

"You wouldn't think of turning such a thing down, would you?" he asked. "You can't afford to do that. You're up against the police now, you know."

Delaine said nothing. The boy got up and refilled his cup with hot coffee. Standing by the stove, he sipped it, looking out through the wire-screened door, casting quick, surreptitious glances at Delaine.

With a jerk, Bracka stiffened to sudden attention, looking through the door. The cup dropped from his hands upon the hot stove. A dense cloud of steam hissed up. Delaine heard nothing but the smash and the hissing, but Bracka spun round as if he had been struck, and tumbled over with a crash, crimson streaming from him.

CHAPTER VIII
SUSPENSE

Delaine stared one moment in a paralysis of horror, hardly believing his eyes. Then he sprang to Bracka and leaned over him, seeing him streaming with crimson and apparently dead. The next instant something came through the screen door with a tingling "whist—whack!" into the wall beside him.

He knew what that was. Wheeling sharply, he thought he saw a sort of shadow flit from a clump of cedars fifty feet from the door. Too dazed with excitement to realize his risk, he seized the double-barreled shotgun from its corner and dived out into the open.

Nothing met him. He plunged into the cedars and found them undisturbed. But something sharp came under his foot, and, looking down, he saw a couple of brass cartridge cases.

Beyond him were scattered clumps of small cedar and pine, merging gradually into unbroken, scrubby evergreen jungle. It was a perfect ambush, impenetrable to the eye. He stood irresolute for a minute, then started forward. He had just reached the next thicket when, without any audible report, something went past his head with the zip and tingle of a lightning crack.

He dropped flat on his face without meaning to. For several minutes he dared not raise his head and scarcely breathed. Then he ventured to look up, finally to creep forward a little into closer cover.

Here he lay still for five minutes. He was about to crawl forward again, when something stirred dimly behind a screen of hemlocks a hundred feet away, and a man stood up, holding a rifle and leaning forward to peer.

Delaine, hurried and overexcited, instantly let fly one of his barrels, loaded with buckshot. He thought he recognized the Indian by his dress. The gun seemed to fly out of the man's hand. He staggered, and then bolted.

Delaine took another flying shot at the man as he disappeared, then rushed after him, forgetting that his gun was empty. He saw the rifle lying on the pine needles; he almost reached it, when another bullet zipped sharply through the twigs, coming from a different direction, and this time with an audible report.

Delaine dropped again. He remembered now that he had no more shells with him. Reaching cautiously forward, he secured the abandoned rifle. It was a high-power, small-caliber weapon, with a curious tube affixed to the muzzle. He knew now why he had heard no reports. The rifle was equipped with a silencer.

He pulled back the bolt uncertainly, hardly knowing how it worked. There seemed to be more cartridges in the magazine, and he lay still, listening, peering, hearing nothing.

Nothing stirred in the blue-gray sunny hemlocks. All at once Delaine remembered Bracka, lying wounded in the cabin. He had entirely forgotten the boy for several minutes. The book was open there on the table. Certainly that was what the assassins were after.

He crawled backward hurriedly. Behind a dense thicket, he ventured to rise. Nobody shot at him. Stooping low, and carrying both guns, he dived through the copses, bolted across the open space and reached the cabin.

"The Book of Revelations" lay there undisturbed. Bracka also lay where he had fallen, his face a mask of crimson. Delaine thought him certainly dead, but he groaned faintly, and had a perceptible pulse.

He appeared to have been shot almost to pieces. Apparently he was hit in the head; there was a hole clear through his right shoulder, another in the upper arm, and still another in his thigh. It seemed impossible that he could live more than a few minutes.

Nevertheless, Delaine fetched a bucket of water. Sponging off the head, he found the wound was no more than a round hole through the upper part of his ear. Encouraged, Delaine got the boy's outer clothing off by cutting and unbuttoning, and managed to get him into the bunk. He had an emergency surgical kit in his dunnage, and he tore up Bracka's pajamas and all the shirts he could find for bandages.

The wounds were not so bad after all. They had been made by small, high-velocity steel bullets that had gone clear through, leaving small perforations. The wound in the thigh was a mere scratch. There had been a great shock, but the wounds did not look mortal.

Bracka half recovered consciousness at the sting of the iodine that Delaine poured in lavishly, and then lapsed back into a stupor. After applying sterilized cotton and bandaging him up, Delaine knew nothing else to do. The nearest doctor was thirty or forty miles away; Delaine could not leave the patient; besides, his canoe was wrecked.

He drank some of the honey brandy, feeling that he needed it. It gave him strength to clean up the floor. Then he forced himself to swallow a little of the cold bacon and flapjacks of the neglected breakfast. He felt stunned and dizzy with the infernal suddenness and vehemence of the thing—Bracka's outbreak of criminal confidences, and then the swift, silent attack.

"The Book of Revelations" still lay on the table—the root of the whole evil. He looked at it with horror; at that moment he had no curiosity to examine it; and he thrust it away on the shelf in the corner and covered it with a cloth.

He was certain now that this forest killer, who had a flash light, a silenced rifle and a city hair cut, was no Indian. It might be a Chinaman; many Chinese faces approximate the Indian type. It might be even the redoubtable Lockie McKill himself.

The probable drama reconstructed itself in Delaine's mind. Bracka had robbed his gang; he had received swift retribution. But had the ambushed rifleman shot with surprising clumsiness or amazing skill? Had he tried to kill, or only to wound, to punish?

Delaine glanced again toward "The Book of Revelations." This was what had drawn the danger. There would be no safety while this was in the cabin. There would be no safety for him, either, while Bracka lived, who had spotted him and knew his record.

Delaine had a horrible sense of being trapped, of being cornered. Bracka was tossing and moaning, half conscious; and he could have wished that the boy had been shot dead.

Delaine sat down to smoke, his shotgun handy, keeping an eye on the door and window. The sun grew high and hot; the bees hummed over the cabin. After a couple of hours, Bracka seemed to come to himself, and Delaine gave him a spoonful of honey brandy.

"Got me—didn't they?" the boy muttered. "Where's the—the book?"

"It's safe," Delaine reassured him. "Don't talk."

Bracka shut his eyes, seemed to doze fitfully, awoke, groaned and dozed, weakly tossing about in pain. Toward noon, he awakened again.

"Can't stand any more of this," he said, with some animation. "Too much pain. Can't you get me some of that dope stuff—out of the book?"

Delaine had not thought of this narcotic, but he got out the book and opened the blue vial. He doubted the contents. He did not know what the

stuff was; he had no idea what might be a sedative dose. However, he took out a little on a knife blade, dissolved it in honey spirit, and administered it.

With intense interest he watched for the effects. Within a few minutes, Bracka seemed easier. He grew drowsy, and Delaine noted that his eyes showed the contraction of the pupils characteristic of morphia. He murmured faintly.

"That's the stuff—the sure pain killer. Put it away safe. We'll do that gang yet, you and me. No chinks—no maiden aunts—just you an' me—D'laine—— Heaps of money—hell of a lot——"

He went to sleep muttering, and seemed to sleep deeply. Delaine looked at the bottle; the stuff certainly acted like morphia. He looked again at the bundle of scribbled papers, and took them out.

It was immediately plain that they were a chemist's laboratory notes, and Delaine knew by experience how indecipherable these are apt to be, even by the maker himself. There were eighteen sheets, written rather neatly, in a sharp, small hand. The beginning was not hard to read. He noted the frequent occurrence of the formula $C_{20}H_{15}N\text{-}O_4$—a complicated substance which he felt almost sure of being sanguinarine, the chief alkaloid of bloodroot.

It bore out Bracka's story, and the resulting processes he could partly read and partly guess at. The alkaloid had been extracted from the vegetable by much the usual method, he thought, mixed with something that he could not identify, purified and distilled off.

Growing interested, he tried to pursue it further, but the work grew more intricate, and the notes much less neatly written. Delaine conceived a high respect for Professor Bracka as a scientist, as he puzzled over these pages of intensely complicated symbols and equations. It was no wonder that an amateur like McKill could not make sense of them. Besides, Delaine doubted if the sheets were arranged in proper order. There was no paging; and different experiments seemed to have flowed together. Unsuccessful attempts were crossed off with impatient pencil strokes, and stains of chemicals and burns of cigarette stubs disfigured the sheets.

There was no use trying to decipher those illegible, condensed, complicated records without plenty of time and a chemical library at hand. Yet Delaine had grown too interested in the mysterious process now to give it up. If Max Bracka's story had any truth in it, this was not a secret to be left with its present possessors; it was rather a secret for the police.

He thought of trying to copy the sheets, for future reference and study. But it would be too difficult, too uncertain. An error in a single one of those tiny figures might vitiate the whole result, and with the erasures and interpolations, added notes and crosscut lines, a clear copy was almost an impossibility.

He thought of his camera. He had hardly used it at all. It was an excellent instrument, taking four-by-five films, and he had plenty of rolls. He cast a glance at Bracka, who appeared to sleep soundly, got out his camera and carried the written sheets outdoors, to the north side of the cabin.

Here he pinned the pages on a bit of board in a steady light and photographed them one by one, using a small aperture and a rather long exposure. He numbered the films to correspond with what he thought the correct order of the sheets; he wrapped up the three rolls of exposures carefully, and hid them in the honey storehouse. Some day, he knew not when, he would have them developed.

He returned the sheets to the book, feeling rather like a thief. Bracka still slept deeply. Delaine looked again at the blue vial, poured out about an ounce of the flaky, pinkish contents, wrapped it up, and corked it up in an empty brass shotgun shell. If he ever had the proper facilities, he wanted to examine and analyze that sample.

He replaced the notes and bottle in their secret receptacle and closed the book. He noticed that there was still a considerable number of bank notes among the leaves, but he did not disturb them; and he placed the book again under a litter of papers and burlap rags on the corner shelf.

Bracka remained quiet under the opiate, hardly stirring till sunset. Then he awakened, complained of thirst and seemed feverish. Delaine feared that the drug had done him no good. But he lapsed into semiconsciousness for two or three hours more, and then complained again of thirst and pain. His pulse was irregular. He asked for more of the drug, but Delaine refused.

"Guess I'm going to croak," the boy muttered.

"Not a bit of danger!" Delaine tried to encourage him. "You'll be better in the morning."

But he felt doubtful about it. He wondered if the boy had any family, any relatives. He had muttered something of a "maiden aunt."

"Have you got friends in Montreal, Max?" he asked, giving him more water. "Any relatives? I'd better know who they are."

"No—nobody," said Bracka dully. He moved his head feverishly from side to side. "No friends. Only just my aunt."

"Who is she? What's her name?"

"Aunt Phil. In Montreal. A school-teacher. No! no!" he added, with a little energy. "Don't let Aunt Phil hear about this. She's had trouble enough with me."

He shut his eyes resolutely and said no more. After half an hour, he appeared asleep, but Delaine had no intention of going to bed. He turned the lamp low, settled himself as comfortably as possible in a chair, with the shotgun and Bracka's automatic at his elbow, and prepared for a watchful and anxious night.

Outside everything was still, except for the occasional wilderness voices to which he had grown accustomed. Bracka turned, moaned, and was still again. Delaine ceased to be conscious of the dim light, of the silent room; he roused to attention several times, and then they blurred out again; until all at once he became aware that he was cramped and stiff in his seat, that the lamp had burned out, and that pale daylight was filling the cabin.

Bracka lay quietly breathing. Nothing had disturbed the camp. Greatly relieved, Delaine proceeded to make coffee and prepare breakfast. The hot food braced his overstrung nerves, but he was still so on edge that when Bracka called faintly to him, he jumped violently, upsetting his chair.

The boy seemed better and in less pain. His wounds looked healthy and not much inflamed. He even wanted food, and Delaine made a little oatmeal gruel—the only thing in the camp that resembled invalid diet.

Taking his shotgun, Delaine reconnoitered the ground all about the cabin and bee yard. He found no tracks; he could not see that anybody had approached. Relieved, but still far from being at ease, he returned to the cabin, dressed Bracka's wounds, administered more gruel and sat down to kill time by reading the encyclopedia of beekeeping.

That day seemed to drag unendingly, but without any disturbance. Bracka slept and wakened irregularly, would not talk, but seemed improving; and in the afternoon Delaine, growing tired out and reckless of danger, lay down on his own bed and fell into a heavy sleep that lasted till nearly sunset.

He passed another anxious, half-wakeful night, but morning came in peace. Bracka was distinctly better, and from that time he continued to mend without a setback. The clean, tiny bullet holes closed rapidly, and the boy

began to develop a healthy appetite. He refused gruel, and Delaine spent hours in looking for wild ducks and partridges to make broths. It was illegal, but necessity knows no game laws.

As one day after another passed, he began to lose his dread of another mysterious attack. Apparently the assailants had left the vicinity, though if they were really connected with the opium ring, he could hardly believe that the incident was closed.

Bracka gave him no information and asked no questions. He spent most of his time in sleep or in a lethargy, regaining his strength. As he grew better still, he retained a heavy, brooding silence. His former gayety and talkativeness were gone, and he looked sidelong at Delaine with anxious, brooding eyes.

Once Delaine questioned him openly about the bloodroot morphia.

"Cut that out!" the boy growled. "I was drunk, I guess—said too much. Unless," he added, with a quick glance, "you want to get into the game after all."

"No, I certainly don't!" Delaine assured him. "I suppose you're not afraid that I'll give you away?"

"Give away what? You've got nothing. Just go to the police and tell them that a couple of guys have a way of making moonshine morphine, and see what a laugh they'll give you. Besides, nobody's making it yet. Lockie McKill's too smooth ever to get caught with the goods. No, I ain't afraid. Besides, I reckon you're too wise to get your throat cut for nothing."

Delaine did, in fact, feel too wise for that; but he would have given much if he had never heard these dangerous secrets. He promised himself that he would take Bracka and the book down to Ormond and put him on the Montreal train as soon as the young fellow could possibly stand the journey. But it would be some time before this could be thought of.

Bracka continued to improve in health, though not in spirit. He grew able to sit up a little, to walk a little, to recline outside the door in the sunshine. It had turned burning dry and hot again. The bees were working eagerly in the spruce trees once more, and Delaine began to take a revived interest in the apiary while he waited on his companion's convalescence.

It was likely to be his apiary after all, he thought. The long flow of sweet from the spruces had produced some tendency to swarm. Two swarms had gone off and been lost; he had captured and hived a third. He undertook to

look through the colonies again, to detect and check swarming symptoms, and give more storage room where it was needed.

Several colonies, he found, had filled up astonishingly with the dark honeydew, crystallizing already in the cells into a substance like brown sugar. The hive on scales had gained eight pounds since he had set the balance last. He carried out empty combs from the storehouse and put them on the heaviest colonies, wondering how this solid honeydew would ever be removed, for the honey extractor would not throw it out.

The bees roared in the air and about his head. While working over an open beehive, a man can hear nothing, partly from the incessant roar in his ears, and partly from the extreme concentration of attention that the operation demands. Delaine had heard no human sound, but, as he held a comb of brood in his hands to loot at the developing larvæ, a voice spoke close beside him.

“Hello!” it said. “Are the bees making any honey?”

CHAPTER IX
TEMPTATION'S VOICE

Delaine almost dropped the comb with his violent start. Right at his elbow a man was standing, a young man, a white man, smoking a pipe and skillfully keeping a cloud of smoke around his head to repel the bees.

"You don't seem afraid of them!" ejaculated Delaine, in amazement.

"Not a bit. They don't sting me," returned the stranger.

Through the haze of smoke, Delaine saw a handsome, olive face, a long thin mouth, black eyes that looked alive with intelligence. The man was dressed in conventional camper's garb of flannel shirt, Norfolk jacket, knickerbockers, a green tie, and a gray cap crushed over his eyes. He looked almost like an Italian. A quick glance toward the lake showed a canoe stranded at the landing, and two men disembarking dunnage.

"I yelled at you, but you were too busy to hear me," said the visitor, smiling at the bee man. "So I came over. Go ahead with your work. I like to watch you."

"I've finished," said Delaine shortly. He stared hard at his visitor. Certainly he could not have identified the young man, yet he felt a moral conviction that he had seen him before. Like a cold shadow, the sense of peril crept over Delaine. He went to the workshop, emptied the hot smoker, and took off his protecting veil.

"You'll get stung if you stay here. We'd better——" He checked himself. It would not do to take this man to the cabin.

"Better go up to your house? All right," said the stranger. "I've just been there. Max told me where you were. Getting on all right, isn't he? I had a long talk with him."

"The devil you have!" Delaine exclaimed, again startled off his balance. Concealment was useless now. Heavily he felt that it would have been impossible all along; and he wished angrily that the newcomer would take Bracka away with him, anywhere, out of sight, and trouble him no more.

He led the way in silence to the cabin. Max Bracka was sitting up, in a cushioned seat, and he looked even paler than usual. He fixed his eyes on the

visitor's face with much the terrified fascination of a rabbit that gazes into the snake's open jaws.

"A visitor, Max," said Delaine.

"Y-yes—I know," Bracka stuttered. "Delaine, meet my—my friend—Mr. Lockie McKill."

Delaine felt that he had known it all along. McKill put out a chilly, soft hand, smiling. Quite at ease, he then produced a silver cigarette case, offered it courteously, and lighted one to replace his pipe. Smoking, he gazed cheerfully about the kitchen, appearing to study Delaine's sketches on the wall with peculiar interest.

"How's things in Montreal, Lockie?" inquired Bracka, as if with a nervous desire to make conversation.

"Slow. Very little doing, so I thought I might as well take a little canoe trip. We came up from Ormond since morning. Hard paddling—river very low—had to pole a good way."

He turned to look directly at Delaine, with an unexpectedly brilliant smile.

"You know, this isn't the first time we've been in contact, Delaine," he said. "Spiritually, as I might say. It was in Frechette's gallery in Montreal—the picture dealer's."

Delaine was so surprised at this that for a moment he could hardly remember he had four pictures on exhibition in that dealer's art gallery.

"I nearly bought one of them," McKill went on. "It struck me greatly. Probably I'll end by buying it, after all."

"Do you mean that you're interested in pictures?" Delaine asked ironically.

"He's got a whole house full of them," Max put in.

"I come of an artistic race," said the half-caste, with pride. "I don't usually care much for this new school of painting; still, I'm always interested in the young men of promise. You've got more than the promise, Delaine. You'll do something—probably great things—if you keep going."

Delaine looked at him skeptically, scenting the gross odor of soft soap. Still smiling, McKill rose and walked to the nearest sketch on the wall. Cigarette in the corner of his mouth, he put his finger on the exact merits and

defects of the picture with an unerring accuracy that left Delaine with an astounded and unwilling respect.

"Now, here," McKill went on to the next sketch. "Here's a bit of real painting, if you like. Just these two inches—the rest isn't worth much. But you had the inspiration there. Cézanne couldn't have done that better. It's like his touch and feeling."

Delaine was struck dumb. This half-caste drug smuggler did really know something about pictures—had quite a unique critical ability, in fact. That particular patch of paint was really what Delaine himself considered the best he had ever done. And Cézanne! How did McKill guess that the Frenchman was his greatest admiration?

"You think so?" he said immensely impressed, and forgetting everything else in the interest of the subject.

"I'm sure of it. With the right sort of chance, you could do something else. You haven't had much regular training, have you? Maybe you're none the worse, and you've got a strong originality in the way you see things, and a sort of harsh freshness in the way you paint them. I don't know that you'd be popular; you haven't got enough sweet prettiness. What you need is just to paint, paint hard all the time, and never think of popularity. When you're thirty-five, the public will be coming to you."

"In other words, what I need is a large private income. I could have told you that," remarked Delaine ironically.

"Yes, I never knew a man who needed it worse. You ought to be shut up in a studio, thinking of nothing but paint. What the devil ever made you go in for chemistry? How the devil did you ever get mixed up in Lajoie's swindle? I know all about it."

He lighted another cigarette, and cocked his sleek head shrewdly at the painter.

"You think you're clear of that," McKill went on, "but you're not. That affair made a bad impression. The French business men in particular wanted an example made of Lajoie and his associates for the sake of their race, and they all got stiff sentences. Your other directors went down for two and three years. You'd have got that.

"You'll get worse if they catch you now. It's only a matter of time. You were traced to where you left the railroad. It's known you're somewhere in these woods. The fire rangers are looking for you. Of course we won't give you away—but suppose somebody did!

"A year in prison is death to any man of imagination, any sensitive man, any artist. He never can be the same again. Something gets killed in him. It would be the end of you as a painter, Delaine. Even as a chemist—what positions could you get with that record?"

"I don't suppose you came here to advise me about my life," said Delaine, trying to keep up his face against this prospect. "Nor to talk art either."

"Not exactly, but I didn't expect to find a genius here. What Max has told me put a different face on it. Max talked to you a good deal—said more than he had any authority for. Max had got bad tempered—thought he'd break away from us. But he's had his lesson—haven't you, Max? He knows now that there's no use trying to buck our organization—don't you Max? So it's all over, and we're good friends again."

"What Max proposed was out of the question," said Delaine bluntly.

"Now, listen to me, Jim Delaine," said Lockie, smooth as silk. "You thought Max was proposing something dangerous, something to make you an outlaw, a criminal. Nothing of the sort. What I'm proposing is, first of all, to make you a great painter, backed up with all the influence and capital you need.

"We've an organization that can't be touched. I don't even know myself who the heads are, but there are big brains, big money at the back of us. Short of sheer blundering the police can never get near us. It's as safe as banking and far more profitable."

"What's all that got to do with painting?" Delaine demanded.

"Wait. As Max has told you, we've got the formula for a synthetic drug, practically the same as morphia, extracted from the common bloodroot—Sanguinaria. But you know all about sanguinarine, of course. The main difficulty was to refine it clear of its poisonous elements. We found a process, but it was so expensive that our drug cost more than imported opium. Only lately we've learned how to produce it cheaply. We can do it now for practically nothing.

"The profits are enormous! Why, even with the terrific price we once paid for European and Japanese morphia, and graft and the commissions to the peddlers—still we were able to make a few hundred per cent. With our new dope, we can clear a thousand, ten thousand per cent, any profit we like! All we need now is a good chemist. I don't know enough. The process is intricate and tricky, and the man who discovered it is dead."

Delaine listened in horrified fascination and repulsion at once.

"You want me to manufacture your dope for you? Here, in this place?" he asked.

"Oh, no! Not that at all!" cried McKill, jumping up with the enthusiasm of his idea. "I said that our first point is to make you a successful painter. My plan would be to establish you in Chicago or Detroit. You'd have a big studio there, a swell studio, in a fashionable location; and you'd paint there, and you'd have to paint damn well, too, let me tell you.

"You'd give teas and exhibitions and musicales in your studio, and we can manage your introductions so that the best people in town would come to you. We can work it so that no one would ever know where or how the influence originated, but between society and the press we'd make you the fashion in that town. All your expenses would be paid for you, but it would be up to you to keep up your standing by your painting and by your personality.

"You'd be a photographic enthusiast, too, and back of your studio you'd have your dark room and your laboratory, where you'd be trying new developers and all that sort of thing. The concentrated sanguinarine extract would be sent in to you, and the other materials, and you'd complete the process there. It would be taken away again in small quantities. You'd sell nothing. No money would pass. Nobody could suspect. You could have the chief of police and all the local clergy invited to your studio. It would be as safe as a church."

So it would! Delaine's imagination leaped to it, as the infernal cleverness of it all penetrated his mind. A painter's studio would be the best cover possible, better even than the Revelationist college. With some vogue and reputation, he might carry on such an illicit manufacture for years without arousing suspicion.

Temptation on the one side, fear on the other hit him stunningly at once. McKill was right; sooner or later he was bound to be captured, and then prison was a certainty. He would never be the same man again, after two years of that—McKill was right again. On the other side—independence, wealth, influence.

He knew he could paint. A chance was all he needed. No doubt McKill exaggerated the power of his organization, but Delaine knew well that there was enormous influence and wealth behind these opium rings.

"I'd be arrested all the same. That Montreal warrant would get me," he muttered.

"Oh, no, it wouldn't. You're known to have gone into the woods, paddling a canoe, somewhere in this direction. Well, your canoe will be found with a hole in her, upside down at the foot of the rapid and your hat and your sketch box with your name on them will be floating in a pool, and you'll be judged dead. Then in six months you'll be forgotten, and with a changed name and a little disguise, say a beard, you'll be absolutely a new man. You haven't an obstacle in your path.

"You wouldn't be such a fool as to walk right into prison," the smooth voice continued. "Better be dead. If it ever comes to that point with me, I'll choose the big dark rather than the stone wall, you may be sure. We'll arrange your career for you, Delaine. You'll never have to think of money again. Of course you'll have to paint hard and paint well; you'll have to make a reputation.

"A cheap faker would be of no use to us. But I can trust you for that. You'll have plenty of time. Our work wouldn't take you a dozen hours a week. Any time you wanted to take three months off to go and see what was doing in New York or Paris, it would be all right. You'd get expenses paid. You simply do what we want, and we'll give you all that you want—within reason, of course."

Delaine made him a hasty gesture to stop. He didn't want to hear any more. The prospect was too alluring, too plausible, and so nearly within his grasp.

"Let me have a little while to think it over," he said, with a dry tongue.

"Sure! Take all the time you want," said the half-caste heartily. "Take till to-morrow morning. Max and I start back for Ormond the first thing after breakfast."

CHAPTER X
DESTRUCTION THREATENED

Delaine wandered out of the cabin, mechanically lighting his pipe, his mind in a hot swirl of emotion. He found himself at the edge of the apiary, and sat down on an empty winter case. The bees were getting nothing. Guards crowded the entrances against thieves. Prison—he thought—or a life of wealth, ease, great painting, success.

It was not a case of two courses which could be coolly compared. The situation was purely emotional and moral, and no one but a struggling young artist could estimate the force of the temptation. He did not so much reflect as allow two streams of thought to flow alternately through his mind.

Down by the lake he heard McKill's canoemen singing. French-Canadians they must be, and undoubtedly members of the organization. McKill would not have come here with outsiders. Such men would be hired to gather bloodroot, perhaps, for the mysterious new process.

Enormous profits! They could flood the country with narcotics, not cheap to the consumer. From the secret laboratory in his elaborate Chicago studio would go out packages, pounds of the drug, to be passed on to the retailers who would probably adulterate it for increased profit, and then again to the peddlers themselves, white men, yellow men, foreigners, selling the poison in little paper "decks" to the addicts, the slaves who had to have it at any price.

But he would not see any of that. The dirty work would be kept far away from his studio. He sat there in a stupor of dizzy uncertainty, barely hearing the hum of the bees, the voices by the lake, and the snatches of song. Time passed without his consciousness. Prison—success!

For a long time, he sat quite motionless, torn on conflicting whirlwinds of desires and fears. He was vaguely aware that the bees were ceasing to fly, that the sun was low.

Suddenly a vision tore through his abstraction with the force of a hallucination. For an instant he actually saw flaming firelight on the lake water, and heard the singing; he saw vividly the profile of the girl in the

russet jersey, standing close to him, her face clear and pure in the moonlight. She had shrunk away from him in fright and horror, as if she knew.

He roused, startled to knowledge of the suggestion of all this. One of the canoemen was going back from the cabin to the shore, crooning light-heartedly:

"*Jamais je ne t'oublierai!*"

Delaine just caught the words that had pierced into his rapt mind without his knowing that he heard them.

She had not seen him. He would never see her again, no matter how powerfully her image had impressed itself upon his memory. But Delaine found that his mind had suddenly crystallized.

It couldn't be done! Apart entirely from the moral aspect of the case, he realized that he could never make himself an artist under the proposed arrangement—not in the most sumptuous of studios, with the most unlimited wealth, so long as he had that devil's kitchen behind his work. Art work needs a clean, clear, free mind, above all things. He would become merely a faker, a pretender, always conscious that, if they knew, people would shrink away from him in fright, in horror.

It couldn't be done, and if it could, he wouldn't do it. He couldn't. He had a feeling of relief at having reached a solution; then the thought of the Montreal prison flashed back upon him. No matter! He would have to go through with it. He hardly knew what had solidified his resolution, but he wondered now that he could ever have hesitated.

A distant shout reached him.

"Delaine! Delaine! A-hoo! Grub!"

He walked slowly back to the cabin. Supper was spread and waiting. Bracka, still in his invalid seat, gave him a long, strange look of anxiety and interrogation, but did not speak.

Delaine had had to brace his nerve to meet McKill again, but the half-caste asked him no questions, did not refer to their late conversation, and devoted himself to the meal, at which he played host. Well he might, for it was such a meal as Delaine had not seen for a long time, composed of stores from McKill's canoe, cooked by his two Canadians. There was fresh beef from Ormond, tinned asparagus, boiled potatoes, a ripe-tomato salad, even cheese and an apple pie, and honey wine and honey brandy—drinks which McKill declined to touch.

The cellar had been opened to get the liquor, and Delaine espied Bracka's club bag on the floor, gaping open and partly packed. Within it, he caught a distinct glimpse of "The Book of Revelations," bound with its chain.

Evidently Delaine's theft from it had passed unnoticed, and he blessed the prudence that had caused him to conceal the films and the drug sample in an empty honey tin in the bee workshop.

McKill did not ask Delaine for his decision, and Delaine shrank from that burning subject. The half-caste chatted pleasantly through the meal, talking of Montreal, of the liquor-control system, of art, and touched again upon Delaine's painting. But Delaine was no longer interested in that subject.

He found it hard to make appropriate responses, and Bracka remained almost silent through the evening, smoking cigarettes incessantly, too many cigarettes for a convalescent. Under other circumstances, Delaine might have found McKill charming. He was a clever talker; he knew books as well as pictures; and he had plainly had a wide experience of men and cities. But Delaine was in no mood for agreeable drawing-room conversation. A dozen times he was almost impelled to exclaim:

"Let's get it over! I've no use for your proposition. What are you going to do about it?"

What would be the answer—persuasion, threats, immediate violence? Would he be allowed to refuse? Or would McKill take Bracka's view, that Delaine knew nothing definite enough to be a source of danger?

No, he would put off the crisis to the last moment. But suspense hung heavy over all of them that evening. Even McKill at last succumbed to it. He grew more silent, yawned and proposed that they turn in. Max would need a good rest for the trip to Ormond.

The guides brought up a sumptuous cot, with an air mattress and pillow, and set it up in the kitchen near Bracka's bunk. Delaine retired to the owl bed in the front room, took off his boots and lay down without undressing.

For a long time, he heard a mutter of low conversation through the closed door. His shotgun and the silenced rifle were both in the kitchen; Bracka's automatic was probably there, too. Delaine could not remember where he had laid it.

But he was not much afraid of violence for that night. The light finally went out in the kitchen; the talking ceased. He tried to sleep, dozed a

moment, then started awake, in a high nervous tension.

The cabin was silent. Misty moonlight filled the outdoors. He heard the chattering cry of a loon far down the lake. The idea of escape came to him; but he would have to pass through the kitchen to get out of the cabin, and even if he managed this, his canoe lay right beside the camp of McKill's men.

He should have tried to break away before dark. He marveled that he had hesitated about the dope ring's offer. He had lost his chance. Now he would have to face it out.

He dozed fitfully and wakened again. Through those depressing hours between midnight and three o'clock, he lay feverishly awake, seeking nothing but unescapable dangers on every side, till at last it came to seem to him that there was nothing to choose between the Montreal prison and a revolver shot from McKill, and he did not much care which he encountered. He felt exhausted to the pitch of total indifference, and he fell asleep at last and slept heavily.

A thundering at the door aroused him. He leaped up in a dazed panic. But it was only McKill, calling him to breakfast. It was late, and the sun was already coming through the window.

Hastily putting on his boots, Delaine went out. Bracka and McKill were already sitting down to the table, where there were fried bacon, and real eggs that scented the kitchen deliciously.

Delaine forced down a meal for which he had little appetite, the conventional bacon and eggs, he recollected, of a man about to be hanged. McKill's bed was already folded and packed, and Bracka was freshly dressed, partly in his old garments and partly in new ones that McKill must have furnished.

The half-caste finished eating, and took out his cigarette case.

"Well?" he asked. "You've had a night to think."

"Nothing doing," said Delaine, finding himself unexpectedly cool.

Bracka gave him a wild glance that seemed charged with appeal. The half-caste raised his eyebrows, in faint, well-bred surprise.

"I didn't think you could doubt," he said. "You wouldn't walk straight into the penitentiary, would you? Are there any changes in the arrangement that you'd prefer—anything we could do to improve it?"

"Nothing," returned Delaine. "It can't be done, that's all. I could never do any painting as you propose, on a foundation of all that dirty work. I'd be no good to you. I'd be nervous and anxious all the time. I'm not cut out for a criminal. Besides," he added, "your sort of crime seems to me particularly abominable and nasty."

McKill looked at him without any sort of expression, except that he seemed to Delaine to look more Chinese at that moment than ever before. Then he went to the door to order his guides to pack quickly.

"Well, sorry you can't see your way to join us," he said, as indifferently as if it had been a question of a week-end invitation. "We must be off. Max'll have to have a long rest at noon."

"Is he strong enough?" Delaine stammered, perfectly bewildered at the matter-of-fact way his decision had been received.

"He'll be better in Montreal than here. Of course you'll have to come with us."

"Me come with you? No!" Delaine cried.

"As far as Ormond. Yes, you must. We can't carry Max and all the dunnage and three other men in one canoe. You'll have to come. You can get back here to-morrow—if you're lucky. They've put your canoe in the water, and some of your stuff in her."

Delaine had put a rough canvas patch with balsam and tacks on his broken canoe bottom, and now he wished that he had not done it. He was afraid of that proposed trip to Ormond.

The two guides had come back to the cabin for the rest of the dunnage, and to help Bracka to the shore. The canoes were almost ready to go.

"Get your hat," said McKill. "Take along your painting box, too. You might see something to sketch. Be quick, now!" He put his arm through Delaine's. "Don't you see you've got to go?" he asked kindly. "My men will carry you, if necessary."

Protests were useless. Delaine found himself hustled down to the landing. The guides, with most of the outfit, took the first canoe and launched her. In Delaine's own canoe, they placed Bracka, reclining amidships, while McKill took the bow, and Delaine unwillingly took up the stern paddle.

Delaine had an impulse to overturn the canoe, or to creep forward and brain McKill from behind with a paddle. Either would have been insanity;

he had to let himself be carried on the swift current of events. But he had to admit that McKill possessed nerve, for he sat dipping his paddle in the bow, smoking his pipe, and never once glancing behind.

They dropped down to the foot of the lake, in the mild, early sunshine. This was easy paddling, but the river that they entered required more skill. The water was low, running fast, and a very heavily laden craft could hardly have got through. It was never necessary to portage, however, till they reached a point six or eight miles below the lake.

The leading canoe landed, and Delaine heard the roar of rushing water. Directly in front, the stream narrowed and ran like a mill race between huge rocks, then rushed foaming down a rock-staked rapid for a hundred yards. Below this, it broadened into a long, calm lagoon, bordered by a marsh of cat-tails and reeds and water lilies.

In high water, the rapid could have been navigated, and even now a light canoe could go through without too much risk. But the guides were already unloading the dunnage, and Delaine steered to shore beside them.

"We'll have to carry around here," said McKill, getting out. "Clear around that marsh, and Max'll have to be carried, too, I expect. But you can run the canoe through, and then come back for the carrying."

One of the guides got back into his now empty canoe, pushed off into the rapid, and shot through it with superb skill, skimming away into the placid lagoon at the bottom. McKill mounted one of the jutting rocks at the margin, looked after him, and then motioned Delaine to follow.

Delaine had run plenty of worse rapids, and he had no uneasiness. As he pushed off, the current caught him with a jerk. He shot past McKill at a distance of hardly six feet, and out of the corner of his eye he saw the half-caste heave forward, poising something heavy.

Delaine made a wild swerve as he saw the big lump of rock coming. It barely missed crashing through the bottom of the canoe, but hit the thwart hard. Between the swerve and the blow, the canoe capsized like a flash, with hardly time for him to catch his breath.

Delaine made a grab at the canoe, but its slippery sides slid from him. Down and under he went, in the tearing current. He was shot half out of the water, caught breath, wrenched round and dashed against a rock, then whirled away from it.

He was blind with the spatter and spray. The strongest swimmer could not have steered any course; and how he went through that rock-strewn

chute without having his brains dashed out, he never could comprehend.

It was like going through the wheels of a mill, and he knew nothing but the roaring and grinding, till, all at once, he found himself floating down on a slackening current.

He was half drowned, dizzy, bruised, incapable of making a stroke, but he caught a gasping breath or two, and then something brushed his head. He rolled sidewise into shadow, against something soft that halted him.

He caught at it instinctively. Green stalks were all about him, growing tall over his head. He thought he heard shouting above the noise of the rapid. In a panic, he crawled deeper into the green growth, squirming through a bed of soft mud.

As his brain cleared, he remembered and realized the attempted murder. Somehow, he knew not how, he had escaped alive—for the moment. The current had carried him into the reed-fringed lagoon, and he judged himself out of sight from the shore. But a canoe coming up the stream would sight him.

He pushed himself through a narrow channel made by muskrats, to get farther from the open water. All the marsh was crisscrossed with these water trails. He wormed through one and then another, squirming through mud and water like a rat, till he was a dozen yards from the stream proper.

Now he ventured to raise his head for a look, and instantly ducked it again. The first canoe was coming slowly up the lagoon, with one of the guides aboard. Just below the rapid, it took on McKill, and came back, skirting the edge of the marsh. It turned again and came up the other side, and he could see McKill with a canoe pole peering into the weeds and water, as if looking for a drifting body.

The canoe passed down out of sight, and then Delaine heard the rustle and crush of the craft being pushed through the reeds of the marsh. The growths would not hide him if they came this way. He snaked forward, looking for denser cover, and came into a little round pool so densely covered with water lilies that the whole surface was an unbroken sheet of green leaves.

Under the pads was a foot of water and soft mud. He slid forward and immersed himself, sinking into the cold, soft ooze, with his nose an inch above the surface under the stem of a big water lily.

He could see nothing, but he felt the vibration through the water as the canoe was forced through the flags and cat-tails, over the shallow bottom.

McKill was probing the reeds with vicious jabs of the steel-shod pole. The waves rippled the lily leaves. It seemed to Delaine that the canoe slid almost over his legs, and certainly the pole missed his body by less than a foot.

The wash of the canoe passed, growing fainter. It went almost up to the rapid, then came back, exploring the marsh thoroughly. Then for a long time there was silence. The ripples in the water smoothed out.

Raising his face just above the leaves, Delaine saw that they were portaging the dunnage around the marsh. The guides carried the loads, while McKill was assisting, supporting Bracka over the rough trail. Renewed hope came to Delaine. They must have given up searching. They planned to go on to Ormond.

But at the bottom of the lagoon, they lighted a fire and seemed to make camp. Perhaps Bracka was exhausted and needed refreshment.

Some minutes later Delaine espied in a cautious peep that one of the guides had climbed into a tall, dead spruce, and was taking a wide bird's-eye view of the marsh.

He dived like a scared frog. A little later he heard a shout from the tree.

"Not a sign nowheres!"

This should have satisfied them, but they remained on the shore for nearly an hour, and then the canoe made another round of the lagoon. McKill was taking no chances. But this time it went back and took Bracka and the dunnage sacks aboard. It must have been a dangerously heavy load, as McKill had said, but it pushed off, diminished down the current between the dark, tangled evergreens, and vanished around the drooping cedars of a bend.

They were gone! Delaine mustered his last energies to wade through the mud and water to the shore. On the stony margin, he halted. He felt frozen and bruised all over, and he lay down flat in the sun, letting the delicious warmth penetrate his numbness, and went off into a dead sleep.

He lay there for an hour or two, and awakened wearily and slowly. The mud had caked all over him like armor. The sun had warmed him, but he still felt the chill of the deep ooze in his bones.

He got lamely to his feet. His right leg was very sore, and inspection showed a great, livid bruise on the thigh, where the rapid had banged him against a rock. Lesser bruises were everywhere. His chest, arms and shoulders were battered. One coat sleeve was torn nearly off. The back of

his right hand was skinned. His head ached severely. All the same, he could not find that any bones were broken, and a few stiff experimental steps showed that he was capable of walking.

But where? His canoe was gone. Probably it had floated down the river, to be picked up later by McKill's party. He had only one possible destination. He thought of the bee cabin now with positive yearning, as a place of loneliness and peace and safety. It must be over ten miles away; there was no trail; the rocky and tangled river bank was his only guide, yet he turned at once and began to limp up the shore.

CHAPTER XI
TREASURE-TROVE

With a shock of horror, Delaine awoke, not knowing where he was. Pitch darkness was around him, broken only by a square of pale light. He rolled over, fell off the couch, and scrambled to his feet before he could recollect himself.

Then, still shaking with nervousness and fatigue, he groped for matches and made a light. It was the front room of the cabin. He had reached it just after sunset. It had taken him some eight hours to get back from the marsh, a frightful journey of floundering and scrambling through swamps and almost impenetrable undergrowths.

He found himself faint with hunger. When he arrived, he had been too exhausted to eat, too exhausted to think, and had tumbled upon the bed, boots, mud and all, and fallen instantly asleep.

His watch had stopped in the water, but he judged it past midnight. Aching in all his bones, he searched the kitchen for grub. He had no energy to light a fire, but he found some lumps of stale, hard bread and tin of candied honey, and he devoured them ravenously, washing them down with honey wine. Then he took off his boots, lay down and slept heavily again.

When he awoke next, the sun was high and hot. He felt refreshed now and rested, but extremely stiff and sore. He lighted the stove and searched for food, uncertain what McKill had taken away with him. There was a small lump of bacon, plenty of flour, no coffee, but a little tea left, no tinned stuff, no sugar, but no end of honey. Out of these he extemporized a meal, and went out in the sun to smoke.

The weather had turned intensely hot again, and the heat was pleasant to him. He felt as if all the energy had been drained out of him by the emotional and physical stresses of the last two days. All he desired was to lie in the sun, resting, dozing.

But the caked mud on his clothes and body irritated him so much that he presently mustered energy enough to go down to the lake, strip and bathe, and afterward wash his garments and spread them to dry. With some

difficulty, he made up another suit out of odd clothing in his dunnage, thankful that all his baggage had not started to Ormond.

Afterward he sat listlessly in the sun again, dry and warm now, but stiff and sore and enervated. What he would do next, he did not know, and had not the spirit to consider. All the firearms were gone. McKill had taken them. Delaine's canoe was gone. There was hardly food enough in the cabin for a week. But for that hour, the sunshine was enough.

In the heat, his clothes dried quickly. His coat and trousers were badly torn, and he got out needle and thread and mended them clumsily. Again he sat idly watching the flying bees. They were working on the spruce and pine trees again. That meant more honeydew; but honey or honeydew was indifferent to him.

He did not know how he would exist when his scanty grub supply was done. He still had fishing tackle, indeed. But it was not going to be safe to stay in this place, in any event. He would have to move on; his whereabouts were known now. But how could he move without a canoe?

Then he realized that he need not move, need not fear anything, for the present at any rate.

His canoe would be found capsized at the bottom of a rapid, just as the half-caste had said, and Delaine's hat and sketching box. McKill would undoubtedly report it in town; Delaine would be considered drowned. The search for him would be dropped, and that would be the legal end of the Meteor Colors chemist.

So McKill had schemed it as a piece of deception; and then he had tried to turn it into tragical earnest; and now it had come back to a deception again, of which Delaine would get the benefit.

He spent nearly all that day in the sun, lost in a pleasant, dull languor. He wondered dimly if he could not keep the apiary; he was certain that Bracka was not its owner. He hated to leave the bees; but to remain there would probably be unsafe.

He grew very sleepy even before sunset. The next morning he felt greatly refreshed, more alert in mind, though his bruised leg was still so sore that he could only limp with pain.

He looked over the food supply more carefully. On the simplest possible scale, it might last him a week, with the addition of such fish as he could catch. He wondered if he could live on honey alone. It occurred to him that

he might take off the honey crop and sell it, if he could get it out to a shipping point.

There should be nearly one thousand dollars' worth of good honey in the bee yard, and he would need that money. All he had was the odd hundred dollars in his belt, and, being reckoned dead, he could never draw on his deposit in the Montreal bank.

The morning was hot and dry, and the bees were working vigorously on the spruces, as they always seemed to do in such weather. The fireweed would soon be in bloom. He noticed several of the tall plants already showing their spikes of swelling buds. But he would not be there for the fireweed honey flow.

Putting on a bee veil, he lighted the smoker and pried into two or three colonies to estimate the crop. All the recent sweet that had been carried in seemed to be honeydew. Comb after comb was filled with the dark, worthless stuff.

There were perhaps a ton or so of pure white raspberry honey also, but most of it was so mixed with the honeydew that it would be hard to extract them separately.

Once more he thought how strange it was for this honeydew to solidify so quickly. It seemed to candy almost as soon as stored in the cells. He resolved to look it up in the bee book, the "Beekeeper's Cyclopedia," which provided information on every possible subject connected with apiculture.

He dug his hive tool into the honeydew and tasted it. It had a peculiar flavor, mixed with spruce resin, but not like any product of the beehive that he had ever tasted before. He had tasted honeydew in the States, but this Canadian stuff might be different.

The bees were humming in the spruce branches all around the apiary, and he went to the edge of the yard and watched them on a low bough. He had never examined any of the sweet-producing aphides, and he looked for them closely. He observed a bee as it nuzzled its head eagerly into the joints of the twigs, and he could plainly see its threadlike dark tongue licking something up. But he could not see any aphides, though they are large enough to be easily visible to the naked eye.

Instead of plant lice, he thought he perceived minute specks of shiny moisture. Growing more interested, he carried a broken twig to the cabin, where he had a pocket magnifier. The glass showed the shiny points to be

thick, half-crystallized drops of a brownish, sirupy substance. There were no aphides on the twig at all.

It could not be ordinary honeydew. A faint recollection of old chemical experiences gave him a sudden start. He went back to the workshop and got down the "Beekeeper's Cyclopedia."

There was a long article on "Honeydew," and he ran through it hastily. "A sweetish substance secreted by aphides upon the foliage and twigs—dark and of little value——" He knew all that.

But at the very end was an additional paragraph:

> In hot, dry seasons, and under unusual conditions of the atmosphere, a sweet substance in very minute quantities is sometimes secreted by the twigs of spruces and other conifers. This is a trisaccharide, melezitose, one of the rare sugars, and is characterized by its extremely rapid crystallization, even hardening at once in the combs, and also by the fact that its solutions will not ferment. It is used occasionally in chemical research, but is of no commercial importance, mainly, perhaps, on account of the extremely small quantities in which it is to be obtained.

Melezitose! Delaine's memory quickened, and flashed out a vivid fact. He had experimented with melezitose once, in an industrial laboratory in Washington. The chief of the laboratory had ordered some of this substance, and he remembered the complaint about the cost made by the management. Delaine recalled the price clearly enough. They had bought about one hundred grams, some two ounces, and the price paid was twenty-four dollars.

Twelve dollars an ounce! Nearly two hundred dollars a pound. Of no commercial importance on account of the extremely minute quantities available! Out there in the apiary, the hives were packed with it—a thousand pounds, probably a ton, perhaps more! His mind performed a lightning calculation. Nearly a quarter of a million dollars!

He sobered himself. It wasn't possible! But what else could this stuff be? He rushed back to the apiary, opened a hive, and got out a heavy comb of the sugary honeydew. Taking it indoors, he dug out some of it with the point of a knife, tasted it, looked at it through the magnifier, its crystalline structure was unmistakable. He recalled having noticed that with curiosity in

the laboratory at Washington; he remembered, too, the peculiar resinous, sweet taste.

To make absolutely certain, he needed a polariscope. But it was almost impossible that he could be mistaken. The stuff was exuded by the spruces during this hot, dry weather, and not secreted by insects. No other honey or honeydew crystallized so rapidly. Of course, this would not be pure melezitose; it must contain a good deal of dextrose and levulose. They could be separated by filtration with alcohol. He searched his memory for the process. It was simple; and he remembered that he had the alcohol. Some of Duggan's strong honey spirit would certainly answer.

He dug out enough of the candied sugar from the combs to fill a teacup, and stirred it up with a cupful of the liquor. He had no filter; he was obliged to filter the mixture through a folded, not very clean handkerchief. The dextrose and levulose should pass through, dissolved in the alcohol.

Left in the filter, he had a handful of muddy, sugary stuff, mixed with scraps of beeswax. This he melted down very slowly in a tin cup, set it aside and waited impatiently for it to cool. The wax formed a yellow cake on the surface. He lifted this carefully off when it was hard. Underneath was certainly a gill of crude melezitose.

There was one more available test—its refusal to ferment. He mixed a weak solution of the stuff with water, and set it in a warm place by the window. As a check, he made a similar solution with pure honey. But this experiment would take time.

Still, he felt that this test was hardly needed. It was certainly the rare trisaccharide that he had. The worthless stuff that he had cursed the bees for gathering was worth at least its weight in silver.

His bewildered, incredulous sense of discovery began to harden into comprehension of the actual fact, with all its stunning implications. It was not a bee yard that he had bought from Duggan for a hundred dollars; it was a bank—it was a gold mine! There might be half a million dollars there. Certainly two hundred thousand. Freedom was there—security and luxury for the rest of his life. The intensifying consciousness of the treasure-trove grew so shattering that he dropped on a log by the bee yard, unnerved, dizzy. The bees hummed from the spruces past his head. They were bringing in more melezitose.

CHAPTER XII
UNWELCOME VISITORS

Excited dreams flowed through Delaine's mind as he looked at the precious bee yard set in the spruces, dreams of life and art, of enjoyment and adventure. Unsteadily he went to the cabin and got out a jug of the honey wine. He needed stimulant badly, and he drank to the treasure-finding bees. The melezitose was still coming in, but it could not last much longer.

No matter! He had enough already. The immediate thing was to get it out of the hives, extract it, dispose of it. Some catastrophe might yet snatch it out of his hands.

He wondered suspiciously whether Bracka and McKill had any knowledge of what was in the apiary. It was most unlikely. Neither of them was chemist enough to know anything about melezitose, and neither of them had shown any curiosity about the bee yard. Their minds were on other and still more valuable drugs; and it was not at all probable that either of them would ever come this way again.

Delaine was desperately eager to get away with his crop. He could ship the stuff to Detroit. There he could hire an equipped workshop, separate the dextrose and levulose, and refine the melezitose, to purify and reconcentrate it. Part of the product he could sell in Detroit, the rest in Chicago, New York, Boston, not too much anywhere lest he break the market, for nobody probably ever had so much melezitose for sale at any one time.

But how to get the stuff to Detroit? He dreaded the idea of trying to reach Ormond on foot. His ten-mile tramp up the river remained in his memory like a nightmare. Besides, the melezitose could hardly be taken down the river in canoes while the water ran so low. Yet Ormond was the nearest railway point that he knew.

He was afraid to go to Ormond. They might not know there that he was supposed to be dead. But this was a game in which he would have to take chances. Most of all, he needed money, for it might take bribery to get his melezitose out secretly and safely. He had better ship it to Chicago, he thought, or perhaps even to Seattle.

But melezitose was worth almost its weight in silver. He could take what he could carry, thirty or forty pounds, go up the railway line to the first station, and thence to some city where it could be sold. George Walters, of the Chemical Refineries, would buy it, if Delaine dared go to Montreal. Walters was a friend, and would keep his secret for him; and he could come back for the rest with sufficient working capital.

But the first thing of all was to get the melezitose harvested. He would have to melt down the combs to get it, he felt sure, for the honey extractor would not throw out that solidified sugar.

There was a capping melter in the workshop, which was what he needed most. It was a shallow, sheet-iron tank with a hot-water jacket, resting on a coal-oil stove, which melted up and separated honey and beeswax. There were two large, razor-edged uncapping knives, which he cleaned and sharpened. He would hardly need anything else.

He was too impatient to wait any longer. He put on his veil, lighted the smoker, and went out to bring in the melezitose. Smoking the bees down furiously when he opened the hive, he lifted out one comb after another, brushed off the remaining bees, and set it in an empty super on the ground. When he had them all, he carried the lot into the workshop to examine them.

Some contained a large proportion of the raspberry honey, distinguished by its whiteness and liquidity. He would have to sort out the combs as he took them off, in future, so as to leave the comparatively valueless honey on the hives.

Returning to the yard, he went through the next colony, securing only two or three full combs of the dark honeydew; but the next colony yielded eight.

Entirely forgetting his lameness and bruises, he hurried from the hives to the shanty, collecting his treasure. It was hard, heavy work, for the supers weighed fifty pounds apiece, and slow, too, for every comb had to be inspected, brushed, cleared of bees. He went through twenty colonies, collecting over a hundred combs well filled with candied melezitose. They should yield about five hundred pounds, which promised well for the whole apiary.

He was surprised to find the sun at meridian. He worked another hour, and then reluctantly went back to the cabin for a hurried dinner, grudging the time for boiling tea. There was hardly anything ready to eat. He had to make flapjacks hurriedly in the frying pan. It was an indigestible meal and he felt

none the better for it—much worse, in fact, until he fortified himself with a stiff drink of the strong honey spirit.

This stimulated him to fresh effort. He went back to the bee yard and continued to bring out super after super, filled with combs of the precious sugar. The bees were uneasy and cross that afternoon, and he was tired, nervous, excited and shaky. He was stung continually. At frequent intervals, he resorted to the honey brandy again, and kept going on the stimulant until, late in the afternoon, he stumbled with a load of combs and fell heavily, spilling the honey.

He lay for a moment limp as a rag, unable to get up. Righting himself with difficulty, he felt the energy gone out of him.

"Been overdoing it," he muttered to himself. "Mustn't be sick now."

He couldn't continue any longer. He went back to the cabin and lay down, feeling really sick and shivering. Too much excitement had been piled upon too much fatigue. He wanted no supper; he dozed and then slept, waking to find it dark. Then he slept again with terrifying dreams; but finally deep sleep overcame him and he did not waken again till nearly sunrise.

A vague feeling struck his awakening mind of something momentous having happened, something appalling. For a dazed second he groped in his memory; then it flashed back upon him. The melezitose! The half million! It wasn't a dream.

He jumped up. He felt a new man after the long night. Looking out, he saw the dense evergreens glittering with dew, and the east brilliant. To Delaine, there seemed something extraordinary in this sunrise, like none he had ever seen before. The world had changed since the last dawn. It was a new era.

The bees were hardly yet flying when he entered the apiary, merely crawling in chilly knots about the entrances. It was not a good hour to handle them, but he would not wait, and began at once to smoke and brush the bees off the combs, and carry the heavy supers into the building.

By the end of that afternoon, he had brought in about thirty supers, nearly three hundred combs mostly well filled. They should yield at least a thousand pounds. It was enough to start melting. He got out the capping melter, filled it with water and set it on the coal-oil stove. When it was steaming hot, he began work with the knife.

Taking one of the filled combs, he sliced off the cells and their contents, cutting right down to the midrib. It left a mere sheet of wax in the frame,

sticky with honey, a foundation upon which the bees could rebuild their comb. The mass of wax and melezitose fell from the knife blade into the hot capping melter, where it slowly liquefied, running in a thick current of molten honey and wax out the opening, and into a huge bucket set underneath.

Once under way, the work went on rapidly. At last the big bucket under the melter became full, and he emptied it into one of the forty-gallon honey tanks against the wall. It would take the wax some time to harden, and he began to refill the melter with fresh combs.

He labored all that afternoon, ceasing only when it grew dusk. By that time he had the combs of melezitose removed from all but a score of colonies in the apiary, three tanks filled with the dark, still intensely hot mixture, and the melter still full and steaming.

His excitement and exuberance over the treasure were gone. He had worked it off into fatigue. He was tired enough to drop. Those supers of filled combs weighed over fifty pounds apiece, and he had handled and lifted them many times over.

Tired as he was, he still had to put the cut-down remnants of comb back on the hives, for they were coming to fill all the spare room in the workshop. This operation can only be done after dusk, otherwise serious robbing is likely to result.

He piled the emptied supers two and three high on the hives, and a tremendous excitement at once arose in the apiary. The bees found themselves suddenly presented with several sets of mutilated combs, sticky and dripping with sweet, without knowing where these had come from.

They rushed out of the hives in clouds, the apiary roaring like a tornado. Robbers started tentative attacks in a dozen places, and by daylight there would have been severe fighting; but in the dusk the insects presently quieted themselves, and in half an hour there was no stir in the apiary but the deep, active humming of colonies cleaning off the broken combs, storing the dripping sweet, and planning how to rebuild.

Delaine slept the sleep of weariness that night, and did not awake in a shock of excitement the next morning. While it was still early, he walked down the shore for trout, and had the luck to catch two. Half of one he prepared for breakfast; the rest he cleaned, salted, and put away in a cool place.

He found the honey tanks covered with thick yellow cakes of wax, still holding a little warmth. He lifted the cakes off, leaving the liquid melezitose below. On the edges of the tin, he observed that a smear of the stuff was already showing a tendency to recrystallize. It would need to be drawn off at once. If it should harden in the tanks, he would have trouble in handling it. He opened a crate of the empty ten-pound honey pails, and began to fill them from one of the tanks.

The honey pails filled up, one by one. When he had finished the undertaking, he had two hundred and twenty-eight pails of the valuable stuff, each pail holding ten pounds. There was a certain percentage of ordinary honey in it, as well as the dextrose and levulose and other impurities, but he estimated that it should yield not much less than a ton of pure melezitose crystals. Even if he had to cut regular prices, it could hardly sell for less than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

He had no doubt now that it was the rare trisaccharide. That morning his check solution of water showed a faint, but decided flavor of fermentation; while the melezitose solution was as sweet as when he had mixed it.

Transporting these stacked tins would take planning. Thinking it over, he decided that he would go out to Montreal, taking what melezitose he could carry, and sell it to strengthen himself with the sinews of war.

But it was at least twenty miles to the railway station at Bruce Hill, and he was in no condition for that tramp, carrying provisions and thirty pounds of melezitose besides. He would have to rest for it. He made up his mind to repose and relax for two days, then walk up to the bridge and thence along the track to Bruce Hill.

For that afternoon he did rest, lounging and smoking, and planning his golden future.

The next morning, to pass the time, he packed the tins of melezitose in their wooden shipping crates, sixty pounds to the case. The treasure would have to be left unguarded while he went to Montreal, but there was not much danger from thieves in that wilderness.

All the same, the thought of that defenseless quarter of a million weighed on him. His mind reverted to Bracka and McKill. It was a thousand to one that they would never come back, yet that one chance frightened him.

He got out the small shelter tent that he had used on his canoe voyage, and pitched it just at the entrance to the apiary. No one could reach the storehouse without passing close to him, and he slept there that night, an

uneasy slumber, waking fitfully at the call of an owl or a raccoon, but finding all well in the morning.

His leg was still extremely painful, and he decided to rest another day. It rained a little that forenoon. Another light shower fell in the afternoon, and evening came on cloudily and thunderous. Mosquitoes swarmed. The well-screened cabin was the only place of comfort. Delaine was debating whether to spend the night in his tent or in the building, when through the wire mesh of the door, he caught a glimpse of a shadowy canoe passing behind the cedars of the shore.

For a second, he sat absolutely frozen. He had not the slightest doubt that it was McKill, or some of his agents. He was about to make a bolt into the woods—anywhere—when he saw that the canoe had drawn up to the landing, and a woman was getting out.

There were two canoes. A man disembarked, and drew the craft closer inshore. There was still another woman. It must be merely a canoeing party, after all. The weight lifted off Delaine's chest. He went out and walked down to the shore.

There were two guides, white men, middle-aged, steady-looking, unloading dunnage sacks of gray canvas. A tall woman was directing the operation. She wore a long, loose coat and a broad hat with a voluminous veil, not unlike a bee veil, no doubt for protection from the flies. The other woman was short and plump and dark, and wore no veil, and was already untying the sacks.

"Hello!" said Delaine. "Going to camp?"

The tall woman turned on him sharply.

"Hello!" she exclaimed "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"Why——" Delaine faltered, taken aback, "this is a bee farm—the Duggan bee ranch—Duggan's gone——"

"Gone!" the woman exclaimed. "Gone where? Is there a young man here—a city man—dark and good looking?"

"Max Bracka?" exclaimed Delaine spontaneously. He gazed at the woman, dim in the twilight. Her face was invisible through the gauze veil; but she seemed tall and gaunt, and he caught sight of a wisp of gray hair protruding through the gauze. An inspiration came to him.

"He spoke of an aunt. You're not his Aunt Phil?"

"Yes, I'm Aunt Phil—Phyllis Gordon. Where's Max?"

"He isn't h-here," Delaine stammered. "He was hurt—shot—accidentally. A friend from Montreal took him away last week."

Aunt Phil said nothing. She turned away, spreading her hands with a gesture of entire despair.

CHAPTER XIII
FROM THE PAST

Quickly Miss Gordon recovered herself and turned with a sharp gesture to her companions.

"We're stopping here, anyway. Get the tent up," she said to her guides. "*Allez donc!*" she dropped into French to the dark girl, "unpack the dunnage before it gets any darker. Quickly, Suzette."

"You don't need the tent. You'll use the cabin. Everything's there," Delaine put in.

"I couldn't inconvenience you," said Miss Gordon shortly.

"Not at all! I'm sleeping in my own tent myself. I don't use the cabin. Have your people carry your dunnage up. I'll just see that things are all right."

He rushed up to the cabin, lighted the smoky lamp, and glanced about to see that nothing important lay about. Half a pail of melezitose sample, he carried out to the workshop. Who this party could be, what Aunt Phil wanted, he could not guess; but he was now deeply suspicious of everybody —especially when they came from Montreal.

From that twilight glimpse, Phyllis Gordon looked exactly the maiden aunt, the school-teacher aunt, that he would have expected—middle-aged, gray-haired, thin and tall. Surely she was not in league with the drug ring! But she might be. At any rate, Delaine had a quarter of a million dollars' worth of secret melezitose here, and the untimely visit of this old maid was going to make it difficult for him to get away with it.

He groped into the storehouse and piled boards and old sacks over the pile of crates. The party was carrying stores and baggage up to the cabin now. Delaine might have helped them, but he did not. He stayed by his tent, watching them from the darkness. They seemed to have a great quantity of stores, as if for a long stay. Something always happened to spoil his plans at the very last moment, Delaine thought, raging with irritation; and he cast about for some means of getting rid of these visitors quickly. But first he would have to find out what Aunt Phil was after.

The guides had put up the tent for themselves at the landing, and lighted a fire. The dim lamplight shone from the cabin, now from the front window, now from the kitchen. Delaine should have gone to ascertain if the women needed anything, but he stayed sulkily in his tent.

The light burned for a couple of hours, but finally went out. The visitors had gone to bed. Delaine, however, was too uneasy and angry to sleep well, and mosquitoes were troublesome as well. He had a bad night and when he awoke from an uneasy sleep, it was after sunrise.

Smoke was rising from the cabin chimney, and the camp fire on the shore was blazing up. He caught a glimpse of a canoe coming slowly up the shore; it had one of the guides in the stern, and a woman in the bow, with a fishing rod. Aunt Phil had been out early after trout.

The canoe went up the lake for a few hundred yards and then turned back. Delaine knew that the sun was getting too bright for fish. It was coming back to the landing, and Delaine slipped out of his tent and ran down toward the water, dodging from one clump of cedar to another, to catch a close look at his visitors without being seen himself.

The canoe was concealed now by the thick screen of cedars at the margin, but he heard voices. He recognized Aunt Phil's voice, remarkably sweet and youthful for an elderly school-teacher. The canoe was close inshore. It surprised him by turning in sharply. Dimly through the thicket, he saw the woman step lightly upon a log and come ashore, while the canoe backed off again.

She turned to speak to the guide, then came up the bank. Delaine ducked behind a dense thicket, getting one clear glimpse of her that gave him a shock of amazement. This was not Aunt Phil.

Instead of the angular and gray schoolma'am, he saw a tall, graceful girl, surely not much over twenty, in a gold-brown jersey, a short brown skirt, golden-tan stockings. Her face was flushed with the morning air; her blue eyes sparkled. A blue cap was crushed on her bobbed hair—thick ashen-blond hair—that might have looked gray by twilight.

In a daze, Delaine thought this must be a third woman. Still, he had not seen her clearly for more than a glimpse. She passed where he crouched, and paused, looking almost over his head, her face toward him.

Delaine's breath seemed to stop. A clashing of banjo strings, a chorus of French voices echoed in his ears. Even so he had seen that delicate, beautiful

face once before from ambush. It was incredibly true—the girl of the shawl dance, the girl who had shrunk away from him in the moonlight.

The next instant she turned away and went up the bank with a free, athletic swing, disappearing between the scattered evergreen clumps. The golden-brown figure vanished into the door of the cabin.

Delaine stood up, dazed with amazement, incredulity and delight. He found his heart thumping; he had a sense of rapture and consternation at once, mixed up in a fog of bewilderment. The early sunshine looked strange, the trees unreal. He still heard that echo of singing—real or hallucination?

"*Longtemps, longtemps, je t'ai aimé,*
Jamais je ne t'oublierai——"

His whirling bewilderment began to crystallize into reality. It was not a mistake; this really was the girl he had seen at that night camp. Not so improbable that she should have come this way again, after all, perhaps. But—Bracka's aunt? Impossible! She was no older than Bracka himself.

Delaine pushed through the branches to the water and bathed his face. He noticed suddenly how dirty he was. He was again wearing the clothes he had torn and mended, wrinkled with water and still stained with the mud of the lily marsh. He could feel nearly an inch of stiff hair on his chin. He must have looked like a border ruffian.

He was filled with horror of himself. He hastened up the lake for a quarter of a mile, stripped and plunged in, scouring himself thoroughly. Skulking back through the trees to his tent, he got out his razor and a small mirror, soap and a nail brush. He took off the mended clothes, put on instead a pair of knickerbockers, stockings, and a white sweater, which was the utmost improvement at his disposal.

He dreaded the actual meeting, yet was impatient for it. Torn between fear and delight, he walked hesitatingly to the cabin, and tapped on the screen of the kitchen door.

Suzette opened it, a plump, freckled, short, French-Canadian girl, who beamed at him as if he were an old friend. The table was spread; bacon and coffee were steaming; evidently breakfast was just about to begin.

"Oh—come in!" said Miss Gordon. "I sent Suzette to your tent to invite you to breakfast, but you weren't there. Oh, yes, of course you must have breakfast with us, since we've taken your house," she added.

She was looking him over carefully, and her manner grew more cordial on the inspection. She must have thought him the roughest sort of interloper last night, Delaine thought.

"Don't trouble, please. A—a cup of coffee——" he stammered, losing his nerve.

"And some bacon and so forth," said Aunt Phil. "Suzette will fry a little more. You're letting the flies in. Do come inside, Mr.—— You didn't tell me your name, did you?"

Delaine gave his correct one. He couldn't have lied to that girl in the gold jersey, who looked at him so clearly and frankly. How could he possibly have imagined her an old woman, even under disguise of cloak and veil?

Youth and vitality were in every line of her. Her blond hair was not of the usual dead hue; every silken thread of it was alive, looking like cloudy sunlight. Her chin was clear-cut and firm; her face was full of energy and decision; it was the profile he had seen so sharply and memorably in the moonlight. Her skin was slightly browned and freckled with the sun. She looked at him with frank interest, then dropped her intensely dark-blue eyes, half frowning.

"I'm afraid you didn't find much grub in the place," said Delaine. "I was running very short. Have you got all you need? That stove is tricky in its action. Could you make it burn without smoking?"

"Well, rather!" said Phyllis Gordon. "I ought to understand it. I set it up, three years ago."

"You put it up! You've been here before?" Delaine ejaculated.

"Of course. Why, I built this place—part of it, anyway."

She paused and looked at him in surprise.

"Didn't Max tell you? This is my summer place. I've been here with Suzette every year. I own this bee farm. Duggan's been managing it for me part of the time, but it seems he's deserted."

Delaine, drinking his coffee, suddenly choked. He set down the cup and gazed at the girl, who looked back calmly. He stifled an almost hysterical laugh.

He believed her. Delaine had doubted Bracka when he called himself the proprietor of the place, but he never doubted Bracka's aunt. Here was the

authentic owner at last. His heart turned heavily cold. Then here was also the real owner of the melezitose.

"I happened along on a canoe trip," he began to explain. "Your man Duggan was on the point of leaving when I came."

"I'm not altogether surprised," said Phyllis. "You see, Duggan was working the bees on half shares. He was a good bee man, but there was a poor crop last year. He didn't make much, and was getting discouraged. Then he used to make what he called honey wine, mostly out of refuse honey.

"That was all right, but last winter he took to selling it. I heard all about that in Ormond. I was up through here unexpectedly a few weeks ago, and I gave him a blowing-up. I told him a provincial officer was likely to be through here any day to run him in. I must have laid it on a little too thick, and with the poor crop and his discouragement, he just lighted out."

This was the secret of Duggan's alarm and haste to be off, Delaine thought.

"No, Max didn't tell me anything about your being interested in these bees. In fact, he hardly mentioned you at all. But surely you can't be Bracka's real aunt! He's no younger than you."

"Yes, two years younger. I am his aunt, though!" She laughed. "It's always been rather a joke. I'm the sister of the wife of his father's brother. Do you get that? My elder sister married an uncle of Max, who was considerably older than she was——"

"Was that Professor Bracka, of the Revelationist College?" Delaine inquired.

"Yes," she said, with a sharp glance at him. "I didn't suppose you had heard of him. Max's parents are both dead, and I've had a good deal to do with Max's upbringing. Oh, yes, I've had to be an aunt to him. It wasn't always easy." She paused, and occupied herself with the breakfast equipment for a few minutes.

"Just tell me how Max came here, and what happened to him," she said, in a perfectly even tone, which, Delaine felt, concealed inward uncertainty.

He hesitated, uncertain how much to tell. He was far from sure of his ground. Finally he described briefly how Bracka had reached the cabin, his stay for some days, until—somehow—a shot had been fired from the woods —he couldn't tell by whom—perhaps a stray bullet—that had wounded the

boy, but not very seriously. When he was convalescent, a friend from Montreal named McKill had taken him away.

Delaine left out all the excitement. Phyllis was watching him closely.

"Do you know this man McKill?" she asked.

"I had never heard of him before. Do you?"

"I've heard Max speak of him," she returned, and Delaine felt a conviction from her tone that she knew much of the Scottish-Chinese outlaw.

CHAPTER XIV
A REAL EXPERT

She grew silent. A dozen fantastic theories floated in Delaine's head. This girl seemed to know too much, though he could not believe that she had any connection with the opium ring. But she did not know anything about the melezitose. What was he going to do about it? He could not give up that golden prospect of hope and freedom! No, not even for this girl who had somehow impressed his imagination so powerfully when he did not know her, that now he felt as if he had known her all his life.

He would have to keep her away from the honey storehouse, away from the bees. He hurriedly began to question her about her journey up the river. They had had very little trouble, she said, except for a long carry around the marsh—that almost-fatal marsh.

"I should have been here earlier," she went on. "I generally count on being here all through the main honey season. But now the raspberry bloom is all over. I suppose you didn't hear Duggan say how the bees had done?"

"I don't believe he was optimistic. I fancy it was too hot and dry," Delaine replied hesitatingly.

Miss Phyllis sighed.

"I was afraid so! I did hope the bees would make money this summer. They did poorly last year, and the year before that I had only a small apiary. I wanted to increase them to about two hundred—enough to make a real income. Let's go out and look at them."

They had finished breakfast by this time. Delaine rose, in a sort of panic.

"I—I wouldn't! Too early in the morning—isn't it?"

"Oh, not to look at them." She glanced at him with an amused smile. "You needn't go into the yard, if you're afraid of them."

"It's not that I'm afraid—— Oh, well, I'll go!" he said resignedly, and followed her out into the fresh morning sunshine.

The bees were beginning to fly already, and they were not working in the spruce branches. Delaine noticed bees dropping heavily laden at the

entrances. Some of the fireweed must be out and yielding. Phyllis glanced over the apiary.

"Duggan seems to have piled on the supers," she remarked. "If they're all filled up, there must be a crop, after all. I'll just get the smoker——"

"They're not filled up," Delaine interposed. "In fact—in fact, there's not much in them. There was a great quantity of honeydew."

"What do you know about it?" demanded the girl, laughing at him.

"Well, you see, I've been sort of looking after the yard, since Duggan left," Delaine admitted.

"Surely you don't know anything about bees?"

"Just a little. It was really the bees that made me interested, and kept me staying here."

Phyllis looked at him, still smiling curiously, incredulously.

"Get a smoker," she said. "We'll just go through a few colonies, and I'll see what you know."

Delaine brought out the smoker and a couple of bee veils. Phyllis tucked up the sleeves of her jersey.

"Start here," she said, briefly indicating a strong colony on which he had piled three supers of his mutilated combs.

Delaine smoked the entrance a little, removed the cover, smoked the bees down, and hesitated.

"These are just empties put back," he said. "There was so much honeydew honey that I had to take it off and extract it—— Or rather, I had to cut it out of the combs. It had candied in the cells, and the extractor wouldn't handle it."

Phyllis lifted out one of the cut-down combs. The bees had licked off the comb base perfectly white and clean, and in places were beginning to erect cell walls again. Phyllis uttered a grieved exclamation. The stock of fully built, empty combs is the most precious part of an apiary equipment.

"My beautiful combs ruined!" she cried. "Why did you do it?"

"It was the only way," Delaine protested. "It was better than melting up the whole comb, and you couldn't get the honeydew out."

"Let's see all this honeydew," said Phyllis.

Reluctantly Delaine went into the workshop, and removed the boards and sacks from the pile of crates.

"Open it up," the girl ordered.

With still greater trepidation, Delaine got a hammer and removed one of the wooden box lids. Phyllis pried off the cover of a tin, looked at the brownish, crystallizing contents, tasted them.

"It was hardly worth putting up in tins," she said. "Why, you must have over a ton! Late last summer the bees gathered a little honeydew, but nothing like this. It won't bring five cents a pound, and it'll cost three cents to ship it."

"The bakers use it," said Delaine. "It's used somewhat also in—in chemistry. I know you can get—well, ten or fifteen cents at least."

"I wish you'd take it all at that price," said Phyllis.

"I'll take it," he promptly agreed.

She glanced at him with a faint smile. He knew that the bargain was illusory. He might just as well steal the melezitose outright as buy it for ten cents a pound.

"You really do know something about bees," Phyllis remarked. "Where did you learn it? Have you ever run an apiary?"

"Not exactly. Over in the States, where I was working, I got interested in ——"

"Working at what?" she asked crisply.

"Why," he hesitated, "a sort of job in chemical works."

"Not in a studio?"

She laughed at his startled glance.

"Of course I noticed those sketches pinned up in the cabin. I knew Duggan didn't do them, nor Max either. Curiously," she went on, "I saw some pictures that reminded me very much of them, in Frechette's gallery in Montreal. I didn't notice the artist's name, but they struck me immensely. Frechette said that the artist was a genius. One of them was sold, I remember."

Sold! Delaine had to use self-control to avoid betraying himself. Each of those pictures at Frechette's was priced at two hundred dollars. It was the most important sale he had ever made.

"Well, we can't all be artists," said Phyllis. "Some of us have to do real work, like keeping bees." She looked at him with a provocative smile again. "Now that you're here to help, I want to look through every colony in the yard. I must find what they've done, and what their condition is. Want to help?"

Phyllis went away to the cabin, and came back dressed in what she called her "bee suit"—light-gray, loose knickerbockers, loose gray leggings that the bees could not sting through, and a gray blouse, with sleeves tucked up to the elbows. She looked extremely alert and businesslike as she took the fuming smoker and hive tool and went to the far side of the yard, to start at the most distant point.

She was as capable and businesslike as she looked, Delaine discovered immediately. There was barely enough honey being gathered to keep the bees quiet. They were nervous, inclined to sting at any clumsy or jarring movements, but Phyllis handled them with extraordinary skill, using just enough smoke to keep them subdued, fearless, gentle, deft. Once or twice she was stung on the hands, but paid no attention beyond scraping out the sting with her hive tool.

Delaine found himself strictly an assistant; he lifted supers, removed combs, fetched and carried, according to the brief orders spoken abstractedly as her blond head bent with entire concentration over the humming interior of the hive.

She knew far more about bees than he did. She was lightning quick to find the queen among the brown clusters of bees, and she could tell at once whether the queen was old and failing, or in good condition. Delaine felt himself a mere novice beside her, qualified only to heave heavy weights about.

Just before noon they stopped. The guides were going back to Ormond, and dinner had to be early. They took one of the canoes with them, leaving one that belonged to Phyllis, and provisions enough for nearly a month.

Delaine and Phyllis went back to the bee yard after the men had disappeared down the lake, and worked hard for most of that afternoon. Both of them were absorbed in the job and there was little talk, except upon the business in hand.

It came strongly upon Delaine how pleasant it would be to work thus, with this girl, day after day, with a common interest, in this work so fascinating, skilled, specialized. He could imagine nothing more delightful.

The huge shadow of the melezitose rose between them. What he was going to do with that chemical treasure, he did not know.

The hours passed, and row after row was inspected, finished, closed up. Phyllis paused near the workshop, straightened up a little wearily, and glanced back over the apiary.

"I do believe we've been through every colony!" she said. "Not a bad day's work." She glanced at her assistant's heated face, and smiled through the black-silk gauze of the veil. "I've worked you pretty hard, I'm afraid. But I see you really are a bee man."

"Not as much as you," returned Delaine. "You must have had a good deal of experience."

"I've had this outfit four years. It was only thirty colonies when I bought it, and I improved the cabin and increased the bees. I want the business to be large enough to make my living; and meanwhile I've been keeping Duggan to attend to it until I can afford to give my whole summer to it myself."

"Bracka said you were a school-teacher in Montreal."

"A school-teacher? Not exactly. I'm in charge of the drawing and English departments of the Maisonneuve Correspondence School. A correspondence school has no regular vacations, but I can always arrange to have my work taken by somebody else when I want to come here to look after the bees.

"Suzette has come with me the last three years, as a sort of servant-companion, you know, and she helps extract the honey, too. This is the bright time of the whole year for me. I love the woods, and I love the bees, and I'm looking forward to the day when I can stay here and make a living out of it."

They went into the building and took off their veils. During all the work in the apiary they had scarcely exchanged a word that was not severely to the purpose, but the silent coöperation in labor had brought them into closer terms than speech. Phyllis sat down and talked of her plans without reserve. She was going to have the largest bee ranch in the North Woods.

"I want to have about two hundred and fifty colonies of bees in three apiaries, strung out along the river between here and Ormond," she said. "I might employ two men. It's a wonderful honey district—lots of willow for early pollen, and then a simply unlimited amount of wild raspberry that yields heavily when the weather is right, and then the fall honey flow from fireweed.

"I should average thirty thousand pounds of honey a year, and you've no idea what a market there is close by. You see, fruits and sweets are scarce up here, except for the wild berries and maple sirup, and the demand for honey is enormous at all the backwoods settlements. The little store at Ormond sold over a ton for us last year. All the lumber and mining camps buy it, too, and at top prices. Yes, I'm sure I could sell thirty thousand pounds without any trouble, and all at twenty cents."

"Six thousand dollars a year. Good enough," said Delaine, who perceived some of his own former dreams expressed. "Even this year, you ought to clear close to a thousand."

"Not this year, unless the fireweed yields wonderfully," remarked Phyllis, shaking her head. "I doubt if there's more than a ton of white honey. So much of it was honeydew, you know. You've agreed to take it yourself at ten cents."

"You'll get all of ten cents for it, I'll guarantee!" Delaine laughed.

"Of course that was only a joke," Phyllis returned. "I'll be lucky to get six cents. It's used instead of molasses for baking. But I think the raspberry honey should be taken off at once, before it gets mixed in with the fireweed. I like to keep the grades separate. Did you look over the extracting equipment? Do you know if it's all right?"

"I think so," said Delaine. "But you and Suzette don't think of trying to extract all that honey alone, do you? It's much too heavy a job for two girls."

"Suzette is nearly as strong as a man. Of course we had Duggan before."

"Of course. You needed him. Look here! I'm in no hurry to move on. Why not let me have Duggan's job?"

Phyllis glanced at him, half startled, almost with a flash of suspicion. She frowned as she considered it.

"On the same terms? Well—why not?" she agreed coolly.

CHAPTER XV
THE WAITING GAME

The raspberry honey, however, was not to be extracted at that time. The hot, dry summer broke suddenly. Storms of cold wind and rain came down from the northwest, off the chilly reaches of Lake Superior. The bees ceased to fly; the hives streamed water. Delaine's tent was intolerably cold, and he gladly sat by the fire in the stove of the cabin. The stunted and neglected vegetables of Duggan's little garden began to grow again, and Suzette went out in the rain and gathered bowls of wet red raspberries.

When the rains ceased, a cold wind still blew, and it was impossible to open the beehives. Even when this moderated, the bees were fiercely cross, anxious to rob, suspicious of robbers, and any attempt to take off honey would have stirred up the most deadly uproar in the apiary.

But the cold weather had held the fireweed back; only early, scattered plants were blooming, and it would be a long time yet before its honey flow really started. Unless the weather turned warm again, it would never start at all.

Feeling the responsibility of Duggan's job, Delaine busied himself as much as he could. There was a great pile of new hives in the flat, frames, and hive covers in the storehouse, which he nailed together, adjusted and painted till the small supply of white paint ran out. He cleaned and set up the extracting outfit, looked over the remaining honey tins, and he gazed daily at the pile of full tins of melezitose.

The treasure no longer brought him any pleasure. Sometimes he almost wished that he had never discovered it. To think of abandoning it was intolerable, yet he knew more and more certainly that this would be the end. As he said to McKill, he had not the stuff in him for a criminal. Even now he ought to be on his way westward or northward, stealing the melezitose, buying it for ten cents a pound.

A fascination held him to this spot. It was the wildest folly, and he knew it. Phyllis did not care whether he stayed or went. But for him, a niche had been prepared in his mind into which the girl fitted so accurately that it seemed that she had always been there.

He had no business with philandering, in his perilous position. He knew the danger, but he was in a thrilling sort of intoxication. He felt like a drunken man in a motor, knowing himself unfit to drive, holding straight in dizzy concentration, pressing more heavily on the gas, faster, waiting for the smash. For the smash was bound to come. Delaine trembled, but continued to accelerate recklessly.

The surface was calm enough. He talked for hours with Phyllis, of bees, of pictures, of the woods, of Montreal. Under her air of frank cordiality, he felt that she was watching him, sizing him up. He wondered if she suspected him to be a friend of Lockie McKill and her nephew.

She helped him nail up frames in the workshop, and proved surprisingly handy with tools. A day or two later he came into the cabin on a wet afternoon, and found her at the carpenter's bench which Duggan had rigged in the kitchen. In the vise she had the unfinished leg of the four-post bedstead, and was chipping at it with a tiny chisel. A litter of fine shavings lay on the floor and she was surrounded by an outfit of delicate rasps, chisels and gouges.

"What!" he exclaimed. "It wasn't you who did that—carved all those owls?"

"You didn't think Duggan did it, did you? I've been working on that bedstead for two summers in spare time, and I hope I'll get it finished at last. Wood carving is my great hobby; it always has been. I really believe I could make a living at it. I carved a walnut chair in town last winter and sold it for eighty dollars. I'm going to take this bed to Montreal—if I can bring myself to part with it."

"I should rather think you could make a living! You don't need bees, if you can do work like that," said Delaine, looking at the delicate tracery she was cutting in the hard wood.

She didn't need bees—or wood carving either. Out in the storehouse lay a quarter of a million dollars' worth of the rare trisaccharide.

"You ought to know," returned Phyllis. She leaned back against the bench and brushed the wood dust from her damp hands. "You're an artist—and a woodsman—and a bee man—and a chemist. I wonder what you really are."

"What I really am? A failure at all of them."

"I don't think so."

"But it seems to me that you can do everything well."

It was perfectly true. She could use all sorts of tools; she could make a tracery of delicate incisions in the hard birch, or nail up beehives, or put a workmanlike patch on the splintered bottom of her canoe. She was an expert with bees, and she could cook. She had brought a light single-barreled shotgun, and once she went out and broke the game laws by bringing in a couple of partridges, shooting them both flying.

She could both catch trout and fry them. She was a much better fisherman than Delaine. With the rainy weather, the trout rose more freely, and Phyllis went out, either alone or with Suzette to paddle the canoe, and never came home without a big one.

Occasionally Delaine went out with her, paddling the canoe while Phyllis fished. One drizzling forenoon he paddled her up the lake to the railway bridge, the first time he had been there for weeks. The sight of that embankment always reminded him vividly of Bracka's arrival, and he pointed out the spot to Phyllis, and for the first time described the incident fully.

The girl looked up at the bridge.

"Tell me just what Max came for, and what he said to you, and why McKill came here," she said quietly.

Delaine hesitated. He had wondered that she had not questioned him sooner, and had been relieved. Somehow, he shrunk from telling her the whole truth, of the bloodroot dope and his temptation.

"I think Max was just on the point of saying something important when he was shot from the woods, through the screen door," he replied.

"Who fired the shot, do you think?"

"There were several shots. Apparently it was an Indian—or a man disguised as an Indian. Why Max was shot—why he came here—— Maybe you can make as good a guess as I can. Do you know anything of the business he was mixed up in in Montreal?"

"Yes," said Phyllis. "Everything."

"I take it there had been some quarrel between your nephew and his friend McKill. Max had some papers, chemical formulas, and a bottle of drug which, it seems were important. He may have been trying to hide them here; but Lockie was too sharp for him. Anyhow, the quarrel seems to have been made up, and the two went back to town together."

"Do you know what the papers were—and the drug?"

"I did take a look at the papers. They were chemical notes, made, I understand, by Professor Bracka."

Phyllis gave him a startled glance.

"What were they?"

"I couldn't read them, not without a great deal of time and some books of reference. McKill and your nephew took them away with them. But I've got photographic copies. As for the drug—I can't say positively what it is, but I stole a sample, and I hope to get it analyzed."

"I think you did well," said Phyllis, after an abstracted silence. "I knew Paul Bracka was intimate with Max. He knew McKill, too. He used to be in Montreal often. I never liked him.

"Let's go home," she added, after another silence. "I don't think it's any use fishing now. But I believe it's going to clear and get warmer. Perhaps we can get the honey off within a few days."

The rain was slackening to a fine, misty drizzle. The clouds were breaking; watery rays of sunlight came and went. The fresh-washed green of the wet cedars and spruces glittered through the drifting, drizzling vapors of the atmosphere.

"If I only had my painting kit!" Delaine sighed, looking at this landscape. He had already explained the loss of his canoe and outfit by a wreck in the river.

"You might send down to Ormond for colors and brushes."

"No, it's hardly worth while. But painting's the one thing I can do at all well, and it's what I've never had time for. I'd like nothing so much as to have a bee ranch like yours, somewhere away in the wilds. I wouldn't even mind staying there all winter. It would be great fun. I'd salt down a couple of deer and a lot of partridges, and go out to the settlements about once a month. I'd have all the time for painting, and with plenty of logs to burn and some books and maybe a radio set, I'd do well. It would be a great life."

"Why don't you do it?" asked Phyllis, looking at him curiously.

Delaine sighed, as the uncertain dangers of his position came back to him.

"Maybe I'll be able to some day," he answered.

Delaine had a fright the next forenoon. A canoe with two men in it came down the lake and landed, and the men came up to the cabin. Delaine was working in the bee yard at the time, and he stayed there, continuing his work, reluctant to hide, reluctant to come out. At each moment he expected to be summoned; the men might be fire rangers, or mounted police.

But it turned out that they were merely fishermen, and they stopped only an hour, buying two pails of honey and moving on. Both Phyllis and Suzette took the opportunity of sending letters by them to be posted at Ormond.

The episode reminded Delaine sharply that he ought not to be there, but he stayed; and, in fact, it was impossible to go without a canoe. The honey was still unharvested; the weather was cool and crisp; and the bees were getting nothing. The fireweed was slowly coming into flower, but was not yet secreting honey, and to attempt to remove the supers in the apiary would have started a riot of robbing.

During this interval Delaine wired frames in the workshop, and Phyllis, abandoning her wood carving, put in foundation every day.

It was a light, delicate, but endless business. There were nearly a thousand of the wooden brood frames, and each had to be strung with four fine steel wires to support the future comb, and afterward filled with a sheet of wax foundation.

Delaine felt perfectly content, as he worked with the girl. An atmosphere of peace and calm flowed round him like a healing lotion. He ceased to think of Montreal, or of the police, or of the problematic and dangerous future, of the opium ring, even of the melezitose. He thought of nothing at all except this golden afternoon, with the bees humming outside, and Phyllis working beside him in the wax-scented room.

Phyllis glanced up once, saw him looking at her, and smiled happily.

"Nice work!" she said.

"Heavenly!" said Delaine, with enthusiasm.

She smiled again and returned to her beeswax, but he thought her face was a shade pinker.

Late that afternoon the bees seemed to be getting a little honey, and Phyllis thought they might be able to extract the next day. They stopped work and went to look at the fireweed, growing in masses all over the open spaces and burned slashes. There were acres and acres of it, tall spikes of

pinky buds, bursting into fire-crimson bloom at the top. A few bees hovered about the flowers, but it was too late in the day for honey.

"There'll be a honey flow to-morrow," Delaine predicted.

But it rained lightly the next forenoon, remaining damp and overcast, but much warmer, all the rest of the day.

"I won't wait any longer," said Phyllis. "We'll take off that honey to-morrow morning, whether it's a robbing day or a honey day."

But Delaine heard the roar of the bee yard even before he was up the next morning, and knew what it meant. The fireweed was yielding. It was a hot, moist morning, ideal weather for honey. Early as it was, the apiary was all astir; bees were pouring out from the hives almost in streams. Delaine lifted a cover, and found the bees too busy with the fresh honey to be cross.

Hastening to the cabin, he found Phyllis aware of the changed condition, and highly delighted.

"It's come with a rush, as it always does. If this weather would last, we might get a big crop yet!" she said. "Anyway, we can get our extracting done."

Suzette put on kettles of water to heat for the capping melter. After a hastily swallowed breakfast, Delaine went to the yard to bring in honey, leaving Phyllis to follow.

Veiled and armed with smoker, hive tool and bee brush, he began the harvest. After a time, a stream of thick, amber gushed slowly out of the extractor. Phyllis came to look, thrust her finger into it and licked it off. Delaine imitated her. It was almost pure raspberry honey, ripened and thickened by the long stay on the hives through the hot, dry season.

"Nothing wrong with this honey!" Delaine exclaimed. "You'll get twenty-five cents a pound for this."

He brought enough honey in the building to keep the extractor busy all the rest of the forenoon. It made just under five hundred pounds, completely filling one of the tanks.

"I thought we could finish the yard in one day," said Phyllis, at noon, "but we hardly seem to have made a start."

All that afternoon the extractor whirred and rattled. By six o'clock they had handled only about fifteen hundred pounds.

Delaine got up early the next day and brought in all that was left on the hives, about two dozen supers, mostly heavy ones. They went through this lot in a long forenoon. The result yielded nearly a thousand pounds, with the drainings from the capping melter still to be counted.

"Not much over two thousand five hundred pounds," said Phyllis, rather ruefully. "I'd hoped there would be more. However, if this fireweed flow keeps up, we'll get another ton. Then there's about fifty dollars' worth of beeswax, and all that honeydew certainly ought to bring something."

"It certainly ought," Delaine agreed, with a rather wry smile.

It was odd to watch her counting her pitiful hundreds of dollars, almost within arm's length of the stack of melezitose that would bring hundreds of thousands. He knew that he would have to tell her; he almost told her at that moment; then he shrank back in a sort of panic.

After that, he could do nothing but go. Indeed, it was time to be gone—to Montreal or to the wilderness—he did not know which. But the honey time was over for him. Fall and winter were coming—no more sweetness! What could he say to her? There was hardly a chance, he thought, that love could have entered her heart during these few weeks of the honey flow. She hardly knew him. With him it was different. He felt as if he had known her always.

"Of course, half of all of it is yours," Phyllis was saying.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Aren't you on Duggan's job? Half the crop was what he got."

"Oh!" Delaine laughed. "That was only a joke, you know. I wanted to stay and help you for the fun of the thing. Besides, I didn't work the whole season, like Duggan. Besides, you haven't any idea yet what your crop is worth."

"Whatever it brings, I shall insist on your taking your share," said Phyllis firmly.

Delaine let it pass. It was a matter that would settle itself only too soon.

CHAPTER XVI
TOLD AT LAST

The next morning came up muggy and hotter than ever. Thunder was in the air, and electrical tension always stimulates the honey secretion. The apiary roared. Delaine, examining the hive on scales, found that it had gained fourteen pounds in the last two days.

Immediately after breakfast, he skimmed the tanks with a large spoon. He opened a case of five-pound tins, and with Phyllis seated at one tank and himself at another, they began the lengthy process of "drawing off."

"I do hope it doesn't rain!" said Phyllis anxiously. "A thunderstorm at this time of year always brings a cool wave, and every day like this must be worth at least five hundred pounds of honey."

Once, toward noon, a faint rumble sounded below the horizon, but the weather stayed hot and close. The scale hive grew spectacularly. Delaine took to visiting it hourly, and found that it was gaining almost at the rate of a pound every hour, so that at times the scale beam seemed to be rising visibly before his eyes.

Phyllis was jubilant; at that rate the day might bring half a ton of honey. The pile of filled pails grew tall. The stock of tins was growing short. It seemed doubtful if there were going to be enough.

The change came an hour after dinner. Delaine noticed a different sound in the apiary. There was a suddenly different feeling in the air, and the scale ceased to go up. A bank of dark cloud was rising in the southwest. It was still hot and dead calm, but all at once the whole sky seemed overcast and threatening.

"Look!" cried Phyllis, who had gone to the door.

The bees were coming home, the whole mass of field workers returning at once. Over the apiary, a solid stream of bees was pouring down, almost as dark and solid as a river, coming from fifty feet in the air, rushing down in a torrent, and separating into a hundred small currents to the individual hives.

This rush for shelter lasted only a few minutes. There was a shock of thunder; a few big drops of warm rain splashed down. Every bee had got out

of sight.

A spatter of rain fell for a few minutes, with distant thunder, and then the cloud center moved around to the southeast. The sky brightened, but a cool breeze sprang up, and the bees did not attempt to fly again.

"The storm's going around us, after all. The honey flow'll pick up again to-morrow," said Delaine.

Phyllis was more dubious, but they went back to the honey tanks. The supply of empty containers was almost at an end. Phyllis went to the cabin, collected all the honey pails she could find, washed them, brought them to be refilled, then began to ransack both storehouses for odd pails. She gathered up nearly a dozen, and then came upon the pail upon a high shelf, in which Delaine had secreted his photographs and the sample of bloodroot morphine.

Busy at the honey gate, Delaine had not noticed that she had taken the tin, till he heard her exclamation. She seemed to guess instantly what it was.

"Yes, those are my pieces of evidence," said Delaine. "Better leave that tin."

She gazed into the pail as if fascinated and repelled at once.

"Evidence? Evidence of what?" she cried. "I know there's something you're not telling me. What did Paul Bracka have to do with Max and Lockie McKill? You're a chemist. You must surely have some idea of what those papers meant."

Delaine paused in his answer, thinking hard.

"Dangerous stuff," he returned slowly. "You told me once that you knew all about your precious nephew-in-law and his doings in town. I wonder how much you really do know?"

"Only too much!" Phyllis exclaimed, throwing out her hands with a gesture of despair. "If you knew the anxiety, the distress I've had. I've done what I could. You can't tell me now anything about Max Bracka that will startle me, so tell me everything. His parents died years ago. I've been an aunt to him indeed—yes, and a sister and a sort of mother. I'm very fond of Max. A lovable boy, generous, full of good, but foolish and weak, too easily influenced."

She walked to the door, glanced out absently, came back, flushed and bright-eyed, and poured out the story. Max had been her anxiety, her weight, her care since his parents had died. She had tried to provide for his

education, had spent much money that she could not spare. He had gone wrong young. She had paid fines for his minor offenses.

He had been mixed up in rum running across the American border. He had been in tight places, and she had got him out somehow. More lately, since he had fallen into association with Lockie McKill, it had grown worse. Once he had come, hard-pressed, to her apartment at midnight, and she had had to keep the police outside the door for ten minutes while he destroyed the packets of drugs he was carrying.

"I'm afraid I fell under police suspicion myself," she said. "If the correspondence school heard of it, I'd lose my job."

Max had sworn reformation after that, but it had not lasted. Phyllis had tried to interest him in beekeeping, had had him here at the apiary; but hard work was the last thing to his taste. If she could have taken him away from Montreal, away from all the cities, he might be reformed, but she had not the means. Almost her only hope was that McKill might be arrested and the gang broken up; but she knew too much of the power and resources of the drug ring, and the hope was a faint one.

"You know," she said, with a smile, "when I came and found you here, I was sure that you were one of them, when you admitted that you'd seen Max and McKill."

"I don't wonder. In fact, just at first I suspected you," returned Delaine. "As a matter of fact, I don't know but I nearly did become one of them. I was greatly tempted."

"You? I don't believe it!" Phyllis ejaculated, almost indignantly.

"It's true, though. I had a few hours of a sort of insanity. I'm only glad I recovered in time. You wanted to know what those chemical notes meant. I couldn't read them, but I know. Max let me into a deadly secret. They have a plan to make millions, and very likely they'll put it across. They had a process for making an artificial morphine, a morphine from the common bloodroot."

"From bloodroot? Impossible!"

"No, it's quite possible. It's well known that the essential principle of bloodroot is the same as that of the poppy. Bloodroot, however, contains a deadly poison, difficult to separate. It seems your uncle worked out that part of it for them. McKill has the full formula and the process, but it needs a good chemist to work it. The process is intricate and tricky—I made out that much—and that was where I was expected to come in."

He recapitulated the story of the events at the bee ranch—the silent shooting at Max Bracka, the arrival of McKill, the proposals, and finally the murderous attempt at the river rapid.

"I got out by the skin of my teeth," he finished. "It made for safety after all, for McKill thinks I'm dead, and he imagines that he has all your uncle's notes, and he'll give no more thought to me or this place."

"It's the most ghastly thing I ever heard of!" Phyllis murmured, gazing in fascinated horror. "What a miraculous escape! I never dreamed such a thing could be—and yet I might have suspected something," she added, after meditating a moment. "For I knew that Max was interested in some work that Uncle Paul was doing at the college. But I didn't know what it was, and Uncle Paul never talked to me of his experiments, though I was at Slovak River several times with my sister. I knew that he knew Lockie McKill."

"What sort of a man was the professor?" Delaine asked curiously.

"I couldn't bear him," Phyllis admitted. "He pretended to believe like the Revelationist people—good, simple, ignorant farmers—for the sake of his position. They say he was a wonderful chemist. But was he really going to use the college as a cover for making this drug?"

"So I understood it. But I know only what I've been told—by not very reliable people. Wait till I've read the notes and had the sample analyzed."

"Max came and told me that he was breaking away from McKill," said Phyllis. "He was going to leave Montreal, going West, he said, and he borrowed two hundred dollars from me. I was so glad that I'd have lent him all I owned. Later, I heard that McKill was looking for him. McKill even telephoned me to try to find if I knew where he was. I heard that Max had been seen taking the train for Bruce Hill. I knew that he'd been at this place before, and it struck me that he might have gone here again."

"He was breaking away from his gang, all right," Delaine agreed. "But he wasn't clever enough to give them the slip. He got a sharp punishment, and now I imagine he's in as deep with McKill as ever."

"But this must be stopped!" Phyllis exclaimed. "I'm just beginning to understand. That gang musn't be allowed to manufacture their morphine. They could flood the country with it, you said. I must persuade Max—use every possible means to get him out of it. You'll help me, won't you? We must go back to town at once."

"I want to help you," said Delaine, faltering miserably. "I'd do almost anything. But I can't go to Montreal, I'm in a bad sort of scrape myself. I've

been thinking of leaving."

"Going away? Going where?" Phyllis asked, looking at him strangely.

"I don't know. West—I think," Delaine faltered.

She glanced up at him and then down, with a startled, hurt contempt.

"I never thought you were like that," she said stiffly. She got up and went to the door, came back again, and spoke in a choking voice as if the words were being wrung out of her.

"I thought you would be a friend. I don't know what to do now. I must save Max. If I had any one who would help— — If I only had money enough to— —"

"It looks as if I couldn't be a friend," Delaine interrupted, "but if you want money—here it is."

"What do you mean?"

"There!" said Delaine, in a mixture of wretchedness and triumph, pointing to the stacked melezitose tins.

Phyllis stared, mystified, angry.

"Melezitose!" he said. "It isn't honeydew. I ought to have told you before, I know. I extracted it, when I thought I owned this apiary. It's worth maybe a quarter of a million dollars."

"Are you out of your mind!" Phyllis exclaimed. "What do you say? Melezitose? What is melezitose?"

"One of the very rare sugars—a valuable chemical—gathered from the spruce twigs. Wait, look here!"

He snatched down the "Beekeeper's Cyclopedia," and turned up the article for her to read.

"But this doesn't say that it's so valuable."

"It's of no importance to beekeepers, I suppose. They never get enough of it. I don't suppose there ever was so much melezitose in one spot before. It was the hot, dry weather, and the great number of coniferous trees close to the bee yard. Apiaries aren't generally located in spruce forests. I took the stuff for plain honeydew myself, at first. Then I couldn't believe until I had applied all the tests I could manage."

Phyllis gazed at him, still incredulous, mystified.

"You're sure you're right? Can it really be worth such a great deal?"

He laughed, his heart warming. He had no regret at parting with the precious trisaccharide. It was a noble gift that he was giving, pouring out fortune with both hands. Eagerly he detailed all he knew of melezitose. He opened a tin and showed the brownish, sugary mass of melezitose and honey, crystallizing already. The solution he had set to ferment was still perfectly sweet.

"Trust me for making no mistake," he said. "I'm an industrial chemist. I've seen about fifteen dollars an ounce paid for pure melezitose. Of course, this isn't pure. But I think that this lot should crystallize out about fifteen hundred pounds of pure melezitose, and I don't see how it can bring less than one hundred and fifty dollars a pound. I'm sure you can count on two hundred thousand dollars out of it, anyway."

"Two hundred thousand dollars! From my poor little bee yard!" She drew a long, tremulous breath and laughed nervously. "But no! It's impossible—a dream. There must be some mistake."

"You'll have the money in your bank within three months."

"You thought it was yours. Why didn't you take it and go?"

"I was planning to, when you arrived," answered Delaine truthfully.

"Now you hand it all over to me!" She looked at him with surprised, softening blue eyes, then broke out with an exclamation. "But I'd forgotten! Half of this is yours—Duggan's share."

"That joke is worn out," Delaine muttered.

"No, it was the agreement—half the crop. Why, I'd never have suspected what it was, but for you. Even now I couldn't have the least idea how to sell it, unless you helped me."

"Any wholesale chemical establishment would buy it just as it is. You can't lose. I couldn't take any of it. I'm glad for you to have it. I'm glad I could help you to get it. That's one way of being a friend. I suppose I have to move on. I'm in a sort of tangle, as I said—worse than you've any idea of. But I wanted, I've wanted for a long time to——"

The old French chorus sounded in his brain. He hardly knew what he wanted to say, what he wanted to do, except that he wanted her to have the melezitose, all of it. He was wretched and confused and singularly happy, all at once.

"I wanted to be a friend, I did indeed," he went on. "Ever since I saw you. I didn't know you at first, the night you came. But—you remember the night when your big canoe party camped on the lake twenty miles up the river? You built a big fire and played ukuleles and banjos?"

"Yes. And the guides sang—oh, wonderfully! But how do you know of it?"

"*Longtemps, longtemps, je t'ai aimé,*
Jamais je ne t'oublierai——"

he quoted, almost involuntarily. She colored suddenly crimson.

"I remember I danced with another girl on the sand. We were all in wild spirits, that night."

"Your scarf caught fire. Afterward you went out alone, and almost walked over me in the dark."

"What?" she cried. "It isn't possible that that was *you*? Oh-h! I looked down, and saw suddenly two round, great, glaring eyes reflecting the light of the fire. I almost dropped with fright. Afterward our guides searched the place, but——"

"Eyes? Not mine," said Delaine, puzzled, then he laughed. "It must have been the lenses of my field glasses. I was holding them in my hand, I remember."

"But what were you doing there? Why didn't you come to the camp?"

"I was afraid to meet people. I was so lonely that I couldn't keep away. I skulked around your camp like an Indian, listening to the singing, watching your dance. There was something magical about that night. It cut deep into my memory, Phyllis. A splendid tenor voice that guide had.

"Then when you came here, I hadn't the slightest idea who you were. You said you were Aunt Phil, and I thought of somebody about forty-six. When I recognized you the next morning, I was half stunned. I realized all at once that I'd been thinking of you for weeks. I didn't know who you were. I'd never expected to see you again—and here you were! So, you see, I was glad to take Duggan's job. Now my job's over. Oh, well!" he added vaguely, and turned away impulsively.

"What do you want to go away for?" asked Phyllis, who had sat down by the honey tank again, speaking in a calm, conversational tone.

"I don't want to go! I'd like to go on working the bees—with you. I wouldn't care whether we got a crop or not. You know what I mean, don't

you? I mean that I love you, of course. I couldn't help it. *Longtemps, longtemps*—it isn't so very long, after all, is it? But—never to forget thee! That's true enough, wherever I go. All I gave you that night was a scare. But it was different with me. Anyway, I'm glad you've got the melezitose."

He turned away again, too confused to know what he meant to do.

"Stop!" Phyllis called imperatively, and he looked back.

"You talk about going away," she exclaimed, in a not quite controlled voice, "and you don't seem to realize nor care that you'd be b-breaking my heart!"

CHAPTER XVII
DESERTED TREASURE

"This is far more wonderful than the melezitose, even if it brings a half million," said Delaine.

"It's all more wonderful—everything more wonderful than everything else!" said Phyllis, in an almost awed voice. "Don't you feel dazed? I do. Success—and wealth—and love—all in one minute. It's too much." She smiled deliciously. "The bees did it."

"Yes, they brought in the melezitose, and I wouldn't be here now, but for the bees. You'd have been only a picture of a girl dancing in the firelight with a blazing scarf."

"You'd be only a pair of flaming eyes in the dark. You'll take Duggan's share now, I hope. We'll help Max with some of this money, help him to get far away from Montreal and into some clean business, and then you can tell the police all you know, and this ghastly scheme can be stopped. You will come to Montreal and help me, won't you?"

Delaine shivered.

"Yes—of course," he faltered. "Yet—if I go to Montreal—I'm a ruined man, Phyllis."

"What do you mean? Don't frighten me!" she cried, seizing his coat. "You said you were in some sort of scrape. Tell me instantly."

Delaine shrunk from confession.

"Did you ever hear of the Meteor Colors Company?" he asked.

"Meteor Colors? I should think I have heard of it! Is that what's the matter?" She laughed with sudden relief. "Is that how you're ruined? My dear boy, I put a thousand dollars into that company, nearly all my savings. A man named Raymond persuaded me to do it; I think he was one of the directors. He told me it would pay ten per cent, and the stock would go up besides."

"This is worse than I thought!" Delaine groaned.

"No—listen! I thought I'd lost it all, and I was thinking what a fool I'd been. Then I got a letter from the receiver or something, saying that the company was being wound up, and that if I'd deposit my stock with him, I could get my money back. So I did, and I got a check for every dollar, and interest at six per cent, and eighty dollars besides, that they said was a bonus. Don't worry about Meteor Colors. If you had stock, you can get it all back, with interest. How much did you have?"

"It can't be!" exclaimed Delaine, stupefied. "Where did the money come from?"

"I'm sure I don't know. There must have been more money in it than they thought at first."

Delaine laughed shortly. He knew how highly improbable was any such supposition.

"But Lajoie—and the directors—weren't they tried and sent to prison? Max and McKill both told me that they got long terms."

"I never heard of any trial. In fact, all the directors weren't sent to prison anyway, because I saw Mr. Raymond, the man who sold me the stock, walking the streets only a few days before I left town."

Raymond was the nominal treasurer. If any director was to be imprisoned, it would surely be Raymond.

"Perhaps he was out on bail. He was arrested," Delaine muttered, confused. "But he couldn't be out on bail all this time. The trial must be over. If you're right, then McKill lied to me most damnably. You see, it's important to me. I'm one of the men who stole your money, Phyllis."

"You? I know you never stole anything. Besides, there's been nothing stolen. It's all paid back."

"Nevertheless, it was certainly stolen, and I'm technically responsible in part. I'll have to tell you. I'm afraid I've been a fool. A coward, too. But I hadn't done anything, and the penitentiary scared me."

Summoning courage, he stumbled through the story of Meteor Colors and his flight. It was not a very long story, but he watched her face anxiously. The threat of prison is a strong dose for young love to swallow.

"Ah, you did wrong!" said Phyllis quietly. "You should have stayed and faced it out. Why didn't you tell me sooner? My dear boy, do you think I'd go back on you, even if you were sentenced to prison? When you've done nothing wrong? But there's no danger now. It's all cleared away."

"I wish I could think so. But there's certainly some mistake," returned Delaine. "Lajoie couldn't have refunded forty thousand dollars. He didn't have it."

"Well, I certainly got mine," Phyllis insisted. "But look now, you must go back to Montreal at once. You must find how you really stand. If there's anything to do to clear yourself, you must do it. Isn't that right?"

"That's right, I know," Delaine admitted. "But suppose it means the penitentiary, after all?"

Phyllis looked at him with softening eyes.

"Then I'll be waiting for you when you come out. But I know it won't be anything like that. Why," she cried, "I'd forgotten! With all this money from the melezitose, we could pay off the whole debts of your company. Only forty thousand dollars, you said. We'd never miss it, and that would surely settle the case."

Delaine burst out laughing.

"Only a trifle like forty or fifty thousand. I suppose the thing might really be squared somehow, if somebody made good the loss. I never thought of it either. But I couldn't use your money to buy myself off."

"It's all ours. Some of it must go to buy Max off, anyway. Can't we go back to town at once—to-morrow?"

He, too, felt a sudden impatience. His mental attitude had turned over. He felt that he would give anything to have this uncertainty settled, to stand on solid ground. He wondered that he could have contemplated carrying this danger for the rest of his life. He could hardly believe that the affairs of his company had really been adjusted, but he was ready to go up to town and take the risk. Any change would be a relief.

"What about the melezitose and all this honey? What'll we do with it?" he asked.

"The honey is nothing. We can leave the melezitose safely for a little while, till we can arrange to move it. Nobody ever steals anything here. We've left several hundred pounds of honey stored here all winter, and it was never touched."

"Still, I don't like the idea," said Delaine. "I hate to leave that valuable stuff alone here, even for a day. Yet we certainly couldn't take much of it away in your one canoe."

"We can get canoes at Ormond," Phyllis suggested. "I know all the people there."

"We might do that. We might have it all freighted down the river before we go to Montreal, if the water isn't too low. Or it's possible that, if we paid enough, we could hire a truck or something to come out to the railway bridge and take it to the next station. But it would cost heavily, either way. I haven't got enough money on me, and I don't suppose you have."

"If we could only sell a hundred pounds of the melezitose!" said Phyllis.

"Just what I was thinking of. We'd better take twenty pounds or so to Ormond with us, and I'll go on to Montreal, while you're looking out for canoemen. One of the chemical wholesalers in town is a friend of mine—George Walters, of the Chemical Refineries—and he'll give us a square deal. Probably I can arrange to have the whole lot sold through him.

"Anyway, I know he'll buy what I have with me, and twenty pounds ought to be worth a long way over a thousand dollars, at the worst. I'll come back with the cash, and we'll get the melezitose out to the railroad and shipped. When I'm in town, I can find out how I stand with the police," he added. "But I'm determined to get the melezitose safe before I take any chances with my liberty."

"Let's get ready to start in the morning!" cried Phyllis.

But it was already late in the day. There were still a hundred things to do. The work overflowed into the next day, and the departure had to be postponed to the following morning. All available rubbish was heaped over the pile of melezitose tins. The dunnage had to be packed, and a little attention given to the apiary. The weather had turned clear and cool, with a north wind and robber bees were flying about the honey house, smelling at every crevice.

They made the start at sunrise of the next morning, heavily laden with three passengers and all their dunnage. The river seemed even lower than when Delaine had last been on it. They had to make a long, fatiguing portage around that almost-fatal rapid and swamp, and three times again they had to carry, over difficult trails. It was going to be no joke to bring out those two thousand pounds of melezitose crates.

When Delaine saw Ormond, of which he had heard so often, it proved even smaller than he had imagined. There were barely a score of houses, a sawmill, a store, and a railroad station, where two trains came and went daily.

Phyllis knew where to find accommodation for them, however, and the next morning Delaine went out with her to try to engage freighters.

Almost immediately he found that it was going to be difficult. By noon, it began to seem impossible. At that season most of the men were away guiding, with their canoes. The few that were left refused to think of bringing heavy freight down the river until the water rose. Money might have done it; money was what they must have.

Delaine bought a small suit case, packed it with a few necessaries, and left for Montreal that evening, carrying two ten-pound pails of melezitose, his rolls of films, and the sample of Bracka's dope. He was going to what had seemed to him so long as the city of danger; but now, brown and shabby and with a stubbly beard, he did not believe any one would recognize him on the streets. Besides, he took comfort in the thought that he was supposed to be dead.

CHAPTER XVIII
BURSTING BUBBLES

Delaine reached Montreal just before midnight. Fresh from the silence of the wilderness, the lights and hurry of the big railroad station confused him and excited him with a sense of danger. He held his breath as he walked past two policemen. They did not give him a glance, and then in a crowd near the street exit, he thought he caught sight of Max Bracka's face.

Instinctively Delaine wheeled to hide himself, and then wheeled back to look again. Bracka was gone—if it had been he. Delaine looked through the crowd without finding any one resembling him. He thought he must have been mistaken. Even if he had been right, Bracka's presence could only have been an accident.

He felt himself horribly shabby and woods worn among the city figures, but he valued the disguise. He intended going to a small hotel that he knew, not far from the station, frequented mostly by habitant farmers. He was encumbered with his luggage and could not afford a taxi, so he left his suit case at the check room, and started down the street, carrying the two precious pails of melezitose.

He walked several blocks, and then turned down what he believed the street for his hotel. Here all was quiet and asleep; the electric lights shone on empty asphalt and dead house fronts. He made another turn, then halted, confused, realizing that he had taken the wrong street.

As he paused, a taxicab slid up and halted. The driver leaned out.

"Taxi, sir?"

Delaine shook his head, and started to retrace his steps. He knew the right way now. But the taxi driver jumped out to the sidewalk.

"Your money I want. Put 'em up!" he snapped, with a blunt, black pistol already out.

Delaine caught the deadly determination in the man's eye, sensed the danger by intuition. It was not his money, but his life. He flung up his hands, still holding the melezitose, and with the same movement he swung the ten-pound tin by its handle, even as the pistol exploded.

The hot blast scorched his face. But the heavy pail caught the bandit just above the ear, and he dashed sprawling upon the pavement against the wheel of his car. There he lay, and Delaine snatched up the fallen gun and ran, still clinging to his honey tins, dodged around a corner, and saw the lighted front of his hotel within fifty feet.

Up in the safety of his bedroom, the realization and the reaction of the thing came over him. Holdups were common enough in Montreal, but this was no ordinary holdup. The man had meant to kill, from the first. Bracka must have seen Delaine at the depot, after all. But what miraculous intelligence service could the dope ring have, to be thus aware of his being alive, of his coming by that train?

He looked out of his window over the lighted city, and thought that there was no safety for him in this jungle. Between the police and the gangsters, every man's hand seemed against him.

But he would be here only a day or two. The first thing in the morning, he intended to see Walters and finish his business. He might be able to start back to Ormond at night. Meanwhile, he would avoid taxicabs and dark streets. By daylight, there would be no danger.

He slept poorly and nervously, and awoke early. Even after breakfast, it was too early to find Walters at his office, but he remembered his films, and took them to a photograph supply house. They were to be developed and printed in enlargement, and they were promised for noon of the following day. Afterward Delaine, choosing the most-frequented streets, went slowly to the offices of the Chemical Refineries Company.

George Walters, the general manager, had just come down. He was a huge, gross, puffy-faced man, who looked fat as a hog, and was in reality as strong as an ox. He was a sportsman, a moose hunter, canoeist, snowshoer, and was almost the only intimate friend Delaine had made in Montreal.

He uttered a shout of surprise and delight as Delaine entered his private office.

"Jim Delaine, by gad! Say, I never expected to see you again, after you made that get-away. Where've you been?"

"Up in the woods. I shouldn't have gone— —"

"Gosh! you look it! Regular upriver mossback. What have you got in those pails—honey?"

"No, something in your line. But, Walters, what's doing—about that Meteor Colors business? Do you know how it stands?"

"Sure I do. They owed us about two hundred dollars for supplies. You don't mean to say you don't know?" He leaned back and eyed Delaine with a grin. "You shouldn't have skipped. Looked bad, my boy—it looked bad."

"I know it. I think I lost my head just then. But here I am now, anyway. For Heaven's sake, tell me where I stand!"

"You haven't known all this time? I expect you've taken it out in worrying. Well, that's no more than you deserved. But it's turned out all right. The concern's wound up; the shareholders and creditors have got their money; your directors have crawled out of sight; and Lajoie's warned out of business in future. I hear he's gone to Havana."

So Phyllis had been right! It was blissful and mysterious.

"But who paid, then?" he demanded.

"Why, your boss took the cash, all right," said Walters comfortably. "Used the money as if it was his own, only more so. He played everything—the stock market, the wheat market, the races. Mostly he had rather poor luck; funny how these embezzlers always back losers. He'd run through pretty much the whole purse when they pinched him. But there was one asset that didn't come to light till later.

"Just before he was arrested, he'd put up a big play on Associated Steamships, on the short side, with instructions to sell on the scale down. He must have had a hot tip, for it was just before the court decision broke up the merger, you know. The bottom dropped right out of that stock. He cleaned up thirty or forty thousand on the coup.

"I expect he hoped to get away with it, but his broker gave him away. The courts attached the money for the benefit of the shareholders. Along with the factory building and other assets, it made enough to satisfy all claims, and even leave a little bonus.

"The shareholders had a meeting and decided not to press the prosecution, if the Crown would withdraw. So that was how they fixed it. The case never came to trial. Lajoie was warned out of business in this province."

Like a healing balm, these words flowed through Delaine's brain. He had a feeling of inexpressible relief, like a release from physical pain.

"I'd heard a rumor of that, b-but I couldn't believe it!" he stammered. "I thought there was a warrant out for me."

"So there was, but it won't be served now. In fact, you had stock in the thing, didn't you? Well, you get your money back like the others. You get out of it lucky. Let this be a lesson to you," he added paternally. "I'm just going into the woods myself for my vacation—start to-morrow night, if I can get off. Two weeks up the Coulonge River. Better come along with me."

"No, thanks. I've had enough of that for this summer."

He picked up a pail of the melezitose, excited and thrilling with anticipation as he said:

"Here's something I brought to show you."

Walters pried off the lid, looked in, smelled the sugary contents, and turned an inquiring eye on his friend.

"What the deuce is the stuff?"

"Just melezitose," said Delaine, smiling.

"Melezitose? Are you sure? It's hardly likely. I never saw so much melezitose at once in my life. Where'd you get it?"

"I've an—an interest in a bee yard back in the spruce woods. The weather happened to be just right this summer, and the bees gathered several thousand—— Well, quite a quantity of this."

"Of course, it may be. I suppose you've tested it. What do you intend doing with it?" Walters asked, without much interest.

"Why, sell it, naturally," returned Delaine. "I thought you'd want to buy it."

"All this—twenty pounds or so? I don't know what we'd do with so much. What price do you want?"

"Why, melezitose is worth around fifteen dollars an ounce, isn't it?" Delaine asked, with a vague chilliness of doubt invading him. "I've seen that much paid for it."

"Oh, so have I. I've sold a few grams at an even higher figure, for the pure sugar. How much have you really got?"

"A couple of thousand pounds, at least. I calculated it would crystallize nearly seventy-five per cent pure—say fifteen hundred pounds."

Walters began to laugh heartily.

"Did you really expect to sell all that for fifteen dollars an ounce? Nearly a quarter of a million dollars. No wonder you looked excited when you came in!"

"I certainly did. What's the matter? Don't you believe that it's the genuine article?"

"Of course it would have to be tested. But I'm not doubting it." He stopped laughing, recognizing the real anguish in Delaine's face.

"My dear fellow, I didn't know you were serious," he went on soberly and kindly. "I'm afraid you're in for a disappointment. I thought you'd have known more about the chemical market. Melezitose is rare stuff, of course. The wholesalers do stock a little, but it's used only in laboratory research work, and only a few grams at a time. It's high-priced, but there's no demand for any quantity of it. It hasn't any real commercial value. There isn't enough of it sold in a year in all North America to keep an aged widow from the poorhouse. If you've really got two thousand pounds, you've got the world's supply assured for the rest of your lifetime."

Five minutes ago Walters had given Delaine liberation; now it was disaster. Gentle as they were, his words were like exploding shells, blowing to bits all the glittering edifice of Delaine's hopes. He did not doubt their truth. Walters was an expert, and he would not deceive. Delaine should have known the market better. The melezitose was worthless—Phyllis' melezitose; and how would he break the news to her?

"I'm—I'm sorry!" he faltered, trying to pull himself together. "It's a—a disappointment, as you say. I thought we had a fortune. Is it valueless?"

"Oh, not quite so bad as that. Not quite valueless. We do use a little. I might buy these two buckets here, if you care to make the price right. If it tests a fair percentage of pure melezitose, we might give you, say, sixty dollars for the lot. I expect it'll keep us stocked up for the next ten years."

"It isn't altogether mine, but I've no doubt you can have it," agreed Delaine miserably.

"Possibly I could help you to place a little more somewhere. But not at any fancy price. If you could furnish a lot of it at a reasonable figure there ought to be some sort of commercial use for it. It's rare, interesting stuff. But I can't think of anything at the moment, unless the borax people could use it instead of mannose, as a determinant. Let's see—what's melezitose?"

He leaned back to a revolving bookcase and took down a volume.

“Alekhine gives melezitose as $C_{18}H_{32}O_{16}$ plus $2H_2O$, and the specific rotation for the anhydride as plus 95.12. It ought to make a useful substitute for something. I’ll make inquiries. Drop in later, or ring me up.”

CHAPTER XIX
JUST A CLEW

Delaine went out the door so completely dazed with disappointment that he forgot the sample of drug he had brought, and he had to go back.

"I'd forgotten this," he said, producing the brass shell and opening the plug. "I wish you'd examine and test this, and see what you make of it."

"What is it? Another chemical curiosity?" asked Walters, shaking out a little of the pinkish, flaky stuff.

"That's what I want you to tell me. It's supposed to be a sort of morphia. Not from the poppy, though—a sort of synthetic drug."

"Thank Heaven, that's impossible!" said Walters. "There's no such thing."

"An artificial dope at any rate. It's supposed to be made from bloodroot —Sanguinaria, you know."

"What?" said Walters sharply. "Where did you get this? How was it made?"

"I don't know. It's too long a story for now. I didn't make it, of course. I may be able to find out the process." Delaine was thinking of his photographs.

"You'd better find out, if you can. But Sanguinaria is much too poisonous to yield any sort of practical imitation of morphia." Walters poked at the drug and smelled it suspiciously. "I expect this is some sort of bootleg morphia, mixed with an adulterant. I can't imagine how you got into touch with this sort of thing, Delaine.

"You'd better cut it out. Montreal is getting to be a sort of center for the dope business, and it's a horror to me. Murder is an innocent trade compared to morphine peddling, and I'd do almost anything to help wipe it out. The smugglers seem to be too quick and clever for the police. A synthetic morphine, that needn't be smuggled in, would be the very devil, but fortunately it's impossible. I don't take much stock in your Sanguinaria drug, but I'll certainly test it. If you can find how it's been made, you'd better do so."

Delaine went out and proceeded slowly toward his hotel. The Montreal streets were hot and crowded. Streams of glittering motors went by. The big hotels were crammed with tourists. Underneath the glitter and the spending, but breeding from it and feeding on it, ran the dark, silent current of that underworld, whose flow had touched Delaine, in fact had almost carried him away. But he was not thinking of that.

He was thinking of his lost fortune. The melezitose was a dream. He would have to tell Phyllis how he had blundered. Passing a telegraph office, he braced up his courage and dispatched a message to Ormond.

> Dreadful mistake. Melezitose of no value. Will rejoin you, Ormond. Letter follows.
>
> DELAINE.

Phyllis should get it that afternoon, unless, by chance, she had succeeded in getting canoemen to go up the river.

Now that this was done, by degrees his mind began to react from its depression. His long terror of the law was gone, at any rate. He had got out by better luck than he had any right to have; and he was going to get his two thousand dollars back from Lajoie's company.

Delaine had nearly another thousand in the bank. It made a not despicable capital. He thought that he might put some of it into increasing the apiary; they might have the two hundred and fifty colonies that Phyllis wanted. The idea of making a couple of thousand a year from the bees seemed alluring again, now that the melezitose had lost its lurid glare of half a million.

He would have given anything to see Phyllis, to explain his blunder, to talk of new plans. Instead, he sat in the hotel writing room and poured himself out in a long letter, which he posted at noon. He expected to reach Ormond himself not long after it, but he could not deny himself the pleasure of writing it to her.

When he had posted his letter, he had nothing to do. He knew nobody in Montreal he wished to see, and he preferred to go on the street no more than necessary. He read newspapers and old magazines in the hotel, took a nap in his room, almost determined to start back to Ormond that evening. But he wanted to see Walters again, and he had some curiosity to see the prints of his surreptitious films.

With the help of a movie theater directly opposite the hotel, he got through that afternoon and evening, went to bed early, slept badly and got up late. It consumed part of the dull morning. He read all the papers, even trying the French ones, and looked up the railway time-tables, and regretted that the picture theater did not open till noon.

The films were promised for one o'clock, but it was an hour later before they were ready. By a blunder, the prints had not been enlarged, but were finished the same size as the films. Delaine glanced over them as he stood in the shop. The notes had photographed well for the most part, but were blurred here and there, and the fine characters would frequently need a magnifying glass.

The least defect in one of those tiny coefficient figures might change the whole meaning of a page, and he felt less hope than ever of being able to make sense of them. The films would have to be reprinted and enlarged. He shuffled over the sheets of complicated notes, crisscrossed and interlined, conveying no meaning, until, near the end, his eye lighted on the formula $C_{18}H_{32}O_{16}$.

It was familiar, yet for a minute he could not think what it was. Then he remembered Walters' reference. It resembled his own melezitose. But this was more than improbable. Melezitose could not possibly have anything to do with either morphia or Sanguinaria.

He could not make out how the substance was being used. He looked farther. The familiar combination occurred again; and then the substance $C_{12}H_9O_9$.3Cao. This was levulose, he felt sure; it was one of the rare sugars, at any rate, and akin to melezitose. Whatever it was, the experiment had been canceled as a failure. But what could any of the sugars have to do with the bloodroot dope?

Possibly one of them was used as a dissolvent, or refining agent. The crux of the process lay, not so much in extracting the narcotic, as in purifying it of the poisonous element. Bracka had said that they had found the process too costly at first; only lately they had found how to do it to advantage. Was it after they had discovered the huge crop of melezitose?

If melezitose was the key, much that was mysterious would be illuminated! The melezitose would be worth a quarter of a million after all, he thought—not to him, but to the morphia makers. There it lay unguarded at the deserted bee ranch.

Delaine turned the sheets with shaky fingers. His mind was in a whirl, and the little symbols blurred before his eyes. It seemed impossible, and yet, if it were true, what a crisis of danger was imminent! He remembered suddenly that Phyllis had told him that her brother-in-law, the professor, had secured fifty pounds of honey from her apiary the previous autumn—for analysis, he said.

There must have been melezitose in it; perhaps that apiary in the spruces often yielded melezitose. Bracka had known where to look for it this summer, and the spruces had yielded to excess.

Yet it seemed incredible that melezitose could have entered into the morphine process. Delaine stuffed the prints into his pocket and thought of Walters. If only Walters had not started on his vacation!

Delaine reached the Chemical Refineries out of breath. Walters was still there, and he uttered an ejaculation of satisfaction as Delaine came in.

"Did you get my message?" he demanded quickly. "I've been phoning your hotel, to have you come around at once."

"I was out. Did you examine it—the stuff I left with you?"

"I surely did. That's what I phoned you for. How did you come by that infernal stuff?"

"I'll tell you directly. It's morphine, then?"

"Practically. Not the sulphate of morphia, but the pure alkaloid, and yet it's not quite identical. There's a difference. It has much the same action, but it's more potent, far more virulent. I fancy a heavy dose would kill even a hardened addict. No addict would live a year on a steady course of it.

"It has something else in it. There's a trace of sanguinarine, and that bears out the story you gave me; but I don't think it's the sanguinarine that does it. It's a peculiarity of the drug itself. If any of the dope rings are making and selling this stuff, there'll be hell to pay, Delaine!"

"They're not making it—not yet. I'll tell you all about it. Look here. I think I've got the process. I stole—borrowed the laboratory notes, and photographed them——"

"The devil you did!" Walters snatched the prints and stared at them, frowning.

Delaine cut the story short, leaving out all his personal adventures, while Walters shuffled over the prints.

"The queer thing is that melezitose seems to be used in it somehow," he finished.

"Nonsense! Melezitose couldn't possibly be in this process," returned Walters shortly.

"But look there!" said Delaine, putting his finger on the significant letters.

There was no denying the formula. Walters looked in silence, knitting his brows. Then he picked up a pencil and motioned Delaine to a seat by his desk.

"Come on, now!" he exclaimed. "We've got to work this out."

It was a hard business. Through a magnifier, Walters conned the fine symbols, dictated to Delaine, went on, swore as a section was blurred or crossed out. But the earlier portions of the notes yielded up their secret without too great labor.

The sanguinarine seemed to have been extracted from the bloodroot by the usual methods, apparently mixed with something, and evaporated off. This produced a complicated substance, for which Professor Bracka seemed to have found more than one formula, resembling morphia, but highly impure and, as they knew, highly poisonous.

"Couldn't the melezitose have been used as a solvent or something, in refining it?" Delaine asked.

"I don't know. Who has these notes now—the ones you photographed?"

"A man who can't read them," replied Delaine.

Walters chuckled grimly. He threw out a whole sheet that was too blurred to be legible at all. The next sheet was crossed out—a failure.

"What's this? Galactose—lactose!" he murmured. "What the devil——"

He ceased to dictate, becoming absorbed in the sheets, making rapid pencil notes, copying equations by snatches on a scrap of paper. Delaine watched him in silence, the expert immersed in his work. Walters sat back and half shut his eyes, thinking, for two or three minutes, then consulted a big book at his elbow.

He turned to the last page of the prints, turned back, stopped and swore under his breath. For fully ten minutes, he groped, copying one formula after another, filling odd sheets of paper with equations, then he looked up.

"I can't make it out entirely," he said, "but you can get the gist of the thing. You guessed right. It's the purifying process that takes up most of this. See here! He's been trying to clear out the poison by making glucosides of both substances so as to separate them by their physical properties. He tried galactose, levulose, lactose—he seems to have had a collection of the rare sugars. They wouldn't work. At last, he tried melezitose."

"It worked?"

"It seems so. I can only get the general run of it. I could work it all out in time, now I've got the clew. He added something that's too blurred to read to his sanguinarine extract, heated it gently, and added the melezitose. It gave a precipitate. He filtered this off, tried adding sulphuric acid, and then used hydrochloric. Just what came next, I'm not certain, but he evaporated his solution down to crystallization, and got the pinkish crystalline flakes. Of course the pink color comes from the sanguinarine. The melezitose is the key of the process. You're quite sure nobody is making it?"

"No, but, by heavens, they will be!" cried Delaine. "Unless I can get away with all that melezitose at once. I never should have gone away and left it like that."

"You mean to say that your melezitose is left alone at your bee farm?" said Walters, grasping this situation for the first time. "Where's the place? How do you get there?"

Delaine made a hurried, rough sketch map, showing the river and the railway.

"These places, Tedford and Bruce Hill, are really nearest," he explained, "but you have to go by Ormond, because that's the only water route that I know of. It's a whole day up the river from Ormond. I couldn't get canoes. I don't know whether Bracka or McKill can."

Ormond was going to be the danger point. It made Delaine's nerves cringe with alarm to think that Phyllis was there, unsuspecting what was coming.

"McKill?" Walters was saying. "Haven't I heard of him? There was a big round-up of dope gangs last night. Didn't you see the afternoon papers?"

"He's a half-breed Scotch Chinese," said Delaine. "I believe he runs a small factory. He ought to be in the telephone book——"

But Walters had fished up the crumpled sheets of the afternoon *Star* from behind his desk, flipped over the sheets, and passing it to Delaine, indicating

a paragraph. The name stood out, startling to his eyes. He uttered an exclamation.

"Lachlan G. McKill! That's Lockie, beyond a doubt. He said his gang was police proof."

It was a rather brief, very circumspect item, stating that a raid had been made by mounted police, coöperating with Montreal police, and the following had been arrested, charged with being in possession of prohibited drugs. The dozen or so names were mostly of foreign sound. Max Bracka was not among them, unless under an alias.

"Thank Heaven! This gives me time!" Delaine exclaimed, with intense relief. "No danger for a few days, anyway, and it won't take me long to take that ton of melezitose and sink it in the lake."

"No—no. I wouldn't do that," said Walters. "I forgot to tell you, but I saw a couple of the local men for big American borax companies. They were interested right way. They're wiring their people, but I haven't a doubt that they'll take some of your melezitose, maybe several hundred pounds, if you'd take about three dollars a pound. It'd save them considerable on mannose, at that."

"I should think so!" Delaine exclaimed. "We'd take three dollars—— Yes, between ourselves we'd take a good bit less. You've been awfully kind, Walters."

"That's all right. When do you want to start for your honey farm? I don't see how I could get away to-night, but I think I can make the morning train."

"You? Will you come?" Delaine cried.

"I wouldn't be left out for anything. I was going into the woods anyway, and this looks a darn sight more fun than 'lunge fishing. Ring me up at my house about nine to-night, unless I let you hear sooner, and we'll arrange to start."

CHAPTER XX
A GAS ATTACK

This time Delaine went away wonderfully cheered. The pendulum of luck was swinging his way again. There was going to be money in the melezitose after all—some money—maybe a thousand dollars. Lockie McKill was pinched; his boasted organization had crumbled. No danger from him, nor from Bracka, who must be lying low. Delaine was most grateful for the massive strength of Walters, who was going to the bee farm with him.

He resisted a strong temptation to wire Phyllis again. He would see her within a few hours. He returned to his hotel and looked up the trains for Ormond. His preparations for departure did not take long, and when he had packed his suit case, he spent a long time in his room poring over the prints of the morphine process. McKill or Bracka had the originals. Delaine wondered if the police had captured them, and what they would make of them.

He half expected to hear from Walters again, but there was no message. Between seven and eight that evening, as he sat smoking in the hotel lobby, a bell boy came to tell him that a gentleman waited to see him on the street.

Expecting to see Walters, Delaine hurried out. But the boy indicated a small car standing by the curb a few yards away. It was not Walters' car, Delaine was sure; it was a small, shabby coupé. Delaine was afraid of cars now. But this was not a taxi, and just beyond, at the corner, a policeman stood lounging under the electric light.

The sight of this officer gave Delaine courage. He approached cautiously. A man was leaning forward on the wheel, his cap drawn over his eyes, his face almost buried in his hands. As Delaine edged up, the driver glanced out sidewise and opened the door.

"Get in, quick!" he muttered.

It was Max Bracka, looking thinner, paler, haggardly anxious, but unmistakably Max.

"What!" exclaimed Delaine, recoiling. He approached cautiously again and looked into the car. Nobody else was in it. "What do you want?"

"I want to talk to you," said Max, half under his breath. "Can't stand here in this light. The bulls are after me. Damn it, man, do you think I'm trying to get you? I'm trying to save my own skin."

The officer turned and was beginning to stroll toward them. On the impulse of it, Delaine got into the car, which Max instantly started.

"Go slow and keep in the lighted streets," Delaine ordered. "You did try to get me, you know, the night I got here."

"That was Lockie's idea—it wasn't mine," said Max. "He thought you ought to be bumped off. I didn't want it. Murder's too strong stuff for me. Now Lockie's pinched. They raided his factory. There's a warrant out for me, too. I've got to beat it out of Montreal. Can you lend me fifty dollars? I'm broke."

"No," said Delaine. "How did you know that I was coming to Montreal?"

"We knew everything you've been doing. Suzette's been drawing twenty a week to send us tips whenever she got a chance. Oh, she didn't know she was doing any harm. Where's Aunt Phil now?"

"At Ormond. I'm going back myself."

"To look after the mel—what do you call it? Melzose? You're wise to it, I know. I was sure of it when I saw you carrying those pails off the train."

Delaine was rather taken aback. He was silent, while Max slowly steered the car around one block after another of quiet, well-lighted streets.

"Yes, I'm wise to the whole thing, Max," he said, at last, with emphasis.

Max cast a startled glance at him.

"The whole thing? What? Say, I'll bet you read those chemistry notes while I was at your shack!" he exclaimed, with lightning comprehension, "Copied 'em, too, as like as not. You did? Well, you know I told you the truth, then. That was a great prospect. You ought to have come in with me."

"Forget it," said Delaine. "That prospect is all off; nobody will ever work it. Besides, it can't be worked. The stuff was too poisonous."

"No worse than lots of the dope they sell, I guess. But I'm out of the dope game for keeps," Max declared energetically. "Too risky a game for me. All I want now is to get out of here—out of Canada. I wish I could see Aunt Phil."

He sounded sincere, and Delaine did not want to see him arrested.

"I might do this much for you, Max," he said. "I'll buy you a ticket as far as Toronto. You can lie low there, till I see Miss Gordon, and we'll decide what can be done. But you've got to run straight in future."

"You can bet I will!" said the boy earnestly. "You're a gentleman, Delaine. I'll make Aunt Phil less trouble than I have in the past. Can I get off to-night?"

"Why not, if there's a train?"

"I've got to get my grip at the house where I live, if I can. I don't know whether the cops have been there or not. I've been afraid to go near the place all day. It ain't far from here. We'll just scout a little."

He went ahead a few blocks, and then turned into a street of small houses and many vacant lots, quiet, apparently almost deserted. Along this he drove slowly, warily looking ahead.

"It's in the next block, but there's a cop on the corner," he whispered, slowing almost to a stop. "I'll bet he's watching my bunk house. We'll turn in here, anyway."

He went ahead twenty feet and then wheeled in across the sidewalk, into a wide entrance. The car's lights showed a small brick garage, low and windowless. Max turned off the lights, but left the engine running, and got out.

"I don't see him now," he whispered, gazing from the door. "This is where I keep my car, but I don't think they've spotted it. I'll scout ahead again and see if it's clear. Wait here for me. I won't be three minutes."

He shut the two big doors quickly and disappeared, leaving Delaine in the dark. Delaine got out also, went to the closed door and listened, but heard nothing but the smooth throb and pur of the engine running beside him.

Three minutes passed. He had no great faith in Bracka's repentance. The boy had had a bad scare; he would be good while the effect lasted. But for Phyllis' sake, Delaine was glad to help him out of danger of arrest—glad, too, because it left the melezitose absolutely free of danger, for a time, at least.

It was hot and close in the garage. It made his head ache. He was standing close by the rear of the car, and he got a sudden choking whiff from the spouting exhaust. He tried to push open the big door. It would not move,

for it was latched on the outside. All at once, his knees seemed to weaken; he had a feeling of general collapse, like impending death; a violent pain rent his chest.

It was the gas, he realized all at once, the deadly carbon-monoxide gas from the exhaust. He would have to get fresh air—stop the engine. In a crescendo of terror and weakness, he stumbled toward the front of the car, fumbled with the latch of the door, and collapsed on the running board.

With a desperate effort for his life, he got the door open and fumbled for the switch in the dark. He could not find it, and his strength suddenly gave way, letting him fall downward, downward into dizzy blackness and annihilation.

Waking, as it were out of a painful sleep into a dreadful dream, Delaine still seemed to hear the roar and throb of that murderous engine. Everything swayed around him; he was sick and weak; he sank back again almost into unconsciousness. But still he felt the heave and swaying and roar. He tried to fix his eyes and wits, and he seemed to be in a close compartment full of tobacco smoke and gasoline fumes, and in front he saw a glare of lights on a moving white roadway.

Dimly he understood, without caring much, that he was in a fast-driven motor car. He was in the back seat; he could see the side of the driver's face. It was not Bracka; it was a stranger; and Delaine subsided on the cushions again, indifferent to everything but the swimming and sickness in his head and chest.

Time stood still for him, while the car rocked and swayed. He was roused by the sensation of stopping, of being half lifted out, of the fresh air, air smelling like the woods. He saw an open space, flashing lights, and he was dropped on a pile of something soft.

Here he lay inert, but by degrees the fresh air revived him. He was aware of a continual movement, an intermittent roar of motor engines, of men passing and talking. Overhead, he saw the starry sky and around him he smelled the hemlock, mixing with gasoline.

He was in a good-sized clearing. Dimly a big barn stood up. Men were moving about, carrying small wooden cases from the barn to a large truck that stood close to him. Like pictures, the movement passed over Delaine's eyes, till somebody took him by the arm.

"Come along. Time to start."

It was a handsome young fellow, dark as an Italian, with a good-natured, reckless face, and he wore a large automatic pistol strapped openly over his stomach. He led Delaine almost unresistingly to the truck and assisted him to get into it. Two or three tiers of the wooden cases were piled on its floor, several bundles of hay on that, and on the hay were huddled five or six men, rough and shabby and foreign looking, mostly with small bundles.

The young man went to the driver's seat and started the engine. Another man, also wearing a pistol and carrying a rifle, mounted the rear and stood like a guard. The truck started, lumbering over the rough clearing, then out a roadway where its lights glared on hemlock thickets.

Delaine was seized with a sense of danger and mystery. He staggered up against the guard.

"Where's this going?"

"Why, you want to get across to the States, don't you?" returned the armed man.

"No, I don't!" Delaine ejaculated, in weak bewilderment. "How'd I get here? I want——"

"Well, your fare's paid across the line, and I've got orders to put you across. Sit down and keep still. Don't matter a hoot what you want," returned the guard curtly.

Delaine made a grab for the stake sides of the truck, to jump over. He was instantly jerked loose. He went staggering down into the hay, among the other passengers, who laughed openly, thinking him drunk.

He was too shaken to get up, and he lay where he fell. But the reality of the situation penetrated his mind. He had come into one of the rendezvous of the international smugglers, the men who run cargoes of liquor, drugs and undesirable immigrants across the line, and bring back return loads of silk and lace and automobile parts into Canada.

Bracka was at the bottom of this. He had rescued Delaine from that poisonous garage in time. Probably he had been waiting just outside the doors. Murder was not in his line, as he said, but he was sending Delaine where he would be out of action.

Laden with Quebec whisky and illegal aliens, the truck rolled heavily through the forest lane, bumped out at increasing speed on a wider roadway, and presently emerged upon a broad and well-built highway.

Here it began to speed up. Heavy as it was and with a heavy load, it was tuned and adjusted so exquisitely that it ran with only the low, smooth pur of a passenger car. The dark-faced boy handled it with consummate skill, and at a smooth thirty miles the farms and belts of woodland and tiny, dark villages flashed past.

The fresh current of air relieved Delaine's aching head. His feeling of intense weakness passed off. He looked over the truck sides. Somebody would surely stop him if he tried to jump; besides, it would be suicidal—bone-breaking at the least. He would have to wait his chance.

He had no idea how far they were from the international boundary. There was no change in the landscape. The armed guard was sitting at the rear, rifle across his knees, smoking a cigarette, and watching the road astern. The speed must have been nearer forty than thirty now.

They roared over a small river on an echoing bridge, went up a hill, passed an intersection of four roads, and there the stillness broke.

There was a yell from the pale darkness beside the road. A brilliant light was flashed out on the truck. The big car shot ahead with sudden acceleration, and a revolver fired from the roadside made a long streak of fire.

"Halt! Halt!" The shouts were already dying in the distance, but there was a rapid-fire thundering of several motor cycles being started. At least four glaring headlights darted out from the side road, now a long way behind.

They were across the border—ambushed by State police and likely to be overhauled. Delaine realized it instantly, and for a moment saw himself rescued. Then the true position flashed upon him.

He would be arrested and held, if not as a bootlegger, then as an alien seeking unlawful entry. To be sure, he was an American citizen, but he couldn't prove it on the spot. It might take him a week, and meanwhile he would be held in custody.

With a brain suddenly stimulated by danger, he realized how Bracka must have counted on this, must have planned it. Bracka had passed him over to confederates of the underworld, to leave the field free for himself—for what, if not to get away with the melezitose?

Now Delaine prayed that the truck would not be overtaken. It was rushing along smoothly, but at a terrific speed for so heavy a vehicle. The

motor cycles were not gaining, but were certainly not putting out their full speed.

The guard on the truck fired four shots from his rifle, without trying very hard to hit anything, Delaine imagined. Then, taking handfuls of short, sharp-pointed nails from his pocket, he began to scatter them over the rear of the truck.

One of the motor cycles fell out of the chase. The others held back, perhaps afraid of the rifleman, perhaps expecting reënforcement farther on.

The truck plunged down a slope, up a rise, down another hill, dropping the police from sight, and suddenly swerved into a crossroad, extinguishing its brilliant headlights.

Down that dim avenue, it rushed recklessly, the road only a pale streak in the faint moonlight. Delaine saw the police lights rush past the turning, off the trail. The truck driver slowed suddenly.

"Get off! You're across the line. Jump! Beat it!" cried the guard, threatening his passengers with his pistol.

The immigrants were up, jabbering, hesitating. The guard snatched at them, beat them with his gun butt, threw them off. Delaine found himself sprawling in the road, and the truck went ahead with a rush again.

At that moment the police lights reappeared, swooping back. They came so fast that they were almost upon him before he could get out of the way. Horns blew shatteringly. Aliens scuttled all over the road. Delaine dived for the ditch, stumbled through high weeds, ran against a wire fence. Over this he went somehow, and burst into a field of tall corn.

The cycles had gone right on. He caught sight of the truck, with lights on again, rushing over the top of a hill with the police close behind, and they all vanished together in an outburst of firing, motor explosions and howling horns.

He never knew whether they caught the truck or not, and he never saw any more of any of his fellow passengers. He wanted to get as far away as possible from this too adventurous highway. He ran through the crashing corn, climbed a fence, crossed a stubble field and came into a patch of woodland.

He felt suddenly weak and shaken. He sat down, trembling, his heart fluttering wildly, incapable of walking farther, almost thinking for a moment that he was going to die. The weak fit passed off; he forced himself to walk

on, but he was unable to go far, and he began to realize that he did not know which way he was going.

He was in the States, and he had to get back into Canada. He would have to keep out of sight of the State police, and also dodge the Canadian immigration guards. He sat down and groped in his pockets, without much hope. His money was gone, as he had expected. So was his watch. So was the packet of prints of the professor's notes, and he knew well who had them now.

Max hoped to find another chemist to handle the process for him. Delaine boiled with outrage and indignation. He had saved Bracka's life, was trying to save him from arrest, and the boy had turned on him, treacherous as a snake. Max was criminal to the bone. Next time, Delaine thought vindictively, he would have no mercy, whatever Phyllis might say.

Meanwhile he was at least fifty miles from Montreal. In a vest pocket, he came upon a little loose change, about fifty cents. It was not enough for railway fare; and he dared not take a train, until he was well inside Canada again.

Boiling with futile wrath, he tried to compose himself to rest under a tree. Daylight would show his directions. He did not expect to sleep, but he dozed fitfully, uncomfortably awaking with the chill of night, and finally slept heavily as dawn was breaking.

Then he found the sun well up. He was damp with dew and stiff, but that feeling of poisoned collapse was gone. The effect of the gas was wearing off. He took his directions from the sun, and started across the woods, avoiding the highway.

The woods ceased; he crossed a quarter of a mile of farmlands and reached a road, a quiet, little-traveled road from its appearance, leading north. It was just what he wanted, and he followed it, wondering how he would get across the boundary.

He had miscalculated his strength, which was still vitiated by the poison gas. After a couple of miles, his legs flagged; he had to rest. He felt terribly empty, but money meant mileage and he could not waste it on food.

The orchards that he passed were full of red-and-yellow harvest apples, in ripe heaps in the grass, and he took to raiding them. But the fruit, though filling, was not sustaining. A few miles farther, he ventured to ask for milk at a farmhouse, paying ten cents.

For several hours, he plodded along slowly, forced to rest at frequent intervals, hastily skulking behind the fence whenever he saw a motor car or cycle in the distance. He dreaded the border; he was mortally afraid of arrest, and he intended to evade it by a detour through woods or fields.

Suddenly as he toiled over a hot junction of four roads, he beheld a gray-cement monument, much like a graveyard memorial. He knew instantly what it was, without reading the lettering, and glanced up and down in wild alarm.

CHAPTER XXI
IN A HURRY

Nobody was anywhere in sight. The ordeal he dreaded was nothing. He simply walked across the boundary.

He did not know that the Canadian government keeps no immigration guards on the highways, so he took to the fields and skulked like a hunted man till he was several miles from the border. Then he encountered a railway line, and followed the tracks to the first station.

It was a small branch line, and there would be no train connecting for Montreal till evening. The fare was ninety-five cents. It was double what Delaine possessed, and he was forced to increase the difference by buying a slice of cheese and some crackers at the village store.

Thus provisioned, he started down the tracks Montrealward. He intended to keep going as long as he could, and then take the train as far as his money would carry him.

He tramped on till he was faint, sat down and rested, and started again, driven by a fierce determination. His hotel in Montreal would take him in, and he had money in the bank there. He would draw some next day, buy a rifle and cartridges, and make for Ormond as fast as possible—Ormond, where Bracka might have arrived already, where Phyllis was waiting, in danger and unaware of her peril.

It was hot and close, splendid honey weather; it had been good honey weather for days, and Delaine wondered if the bees were doing anything with the fireweed flow.

He grew tired again and rested in the shade of a bridge, dropping asleep and wasting a precious hour. The crackers and cheese were gone, and he was very hungry again. He became tired more quickly, had to rest longer, and he foresaw the time drawing near when he would have to give up altogether.

The sun went round the sky, went low, finally set, while he dragged himself along the ties in a mixed state of hunger and fatigue, black vindictiveness and uneasiness that was near despair. At the last station it was still sixty cents to Montreal, and it was an hour to train time. He managed

painfully to reach another depot, and bought a ticket as far as his money would take him, having three cents left.

His ticket was to a point still a dozen miles short of the city, but when he reached that point, he stayed resolutely aboard. The train was crowded; the conductor did not notice him; and Delaine came right into the Montreal station a little before eight o'clock.

He made for a penny slot machine, put in his three coins and took out cakes of chocolate. He was stuffing these greedily into his mouth when some one seized him by the arm.

"What on earth have you been doing? I'd given you up. Where have you been?" Walters ejaculated in his ear.

"I thought you'd come to grief somehow," continued Walters. "I've had the police searching for you. I couldn't wait for you any longer. Where've you been?"

"In the S-States. Crashing the border with the rum runners," Delaine stammered, his exhausted wits quite confused by the meeting.

Walters was wearing a corduroy jacket, flannel shirt and knickerbockers, and carrying a gun case.

"Well, you're just in time. The train goes in fifteen minutes. Never mind baggage, or anything. I've got all we'll need. Wake up, man! Don't you understand? To the Rouille River." He lowered his voice. "McKill was released on bail yesterday morning, I hear, and he's left town. It's a safe bet where he's going."

"Oh, Lord!" Delaine groaned. "I've got no money, Walters. I'm half famished. I'm all in——"

"Come along with me!"

Walters hurried him to the lunch counter, supplied him with two cups of strong coffee, bought a great packet of sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, and dragged him aboard the train, a minute before it started. Still stupefied with fatigue and the shock of events, Delaine ate sandwiches and drank sherry from Walters' flask, giving out an incoherent and fragmentary account of what had been done to him.

"They put it all over you, didn't they?" Walters commented. "That's all right. We'll beat them to it now. You rest and leave it to me."

Delaine was only too glad to leave it to anybody. He was incapable of thinking or planning anything. He sank back on the cushions drowsily. Presently he found himself dropped against Walters' shoulder, while the big chemist sat bolt upright, frowning, thinking hard. That bulky, puffy figure seemed a tower of strength. Delaine let responsibility drift away from him, with deep relief.

He awoke several times and dozed again, and in the small hours Walters dragged him off the train, still stupid with sleep. There was a small station, a cold, crisp air, a smell of pines.

"This is Elgin. Got to change here for the local. This train doesn't stop where we get off," Walters explained.

"Elgin?" Delaine's mind began sluggishly to work again. He had never heard of the place. "But—but this isn't the train for Ormond!" he cried, in sudden dismay.

"Of course it isn't!" Walters smiled. "Don't worry. I've got it all fixed up. The local takes us to Tedford—next station to the railway bridge. I know the district superintendent, and I got in touch with him and fixed it for the track workers to carry our canoe and ourselves down to the bridge. I shipped the canoe by express. From the bridge, it's only a short run down to your bee camp. See? It saves nearly a whole day's travel."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Delaine, becoming alive to the strategy. His hopes rose suddenly. He felt rested, more himself.

"Besides," Walters went on, "I've arranged to meet a couple of government fire rangers at Tedford and have them go down the river with us. They've got the powers of deputy constables, so we'll have the law with us. Not that I think we'll need it. I think we'll be a long way ahead in this race.

"But I do hope," he continued, "that we connect with Mr. McKill and your young friend. We've got to get possession of those notes, those prints. That secret's got to be destroyed, Delaine. It's too dangerous to live. I'm more anxious about that than I am about the melezitose.

"Oh, speaking of that melezitose! You're in luck. Two of the American borax firms will take a thousand pounds between them, at two dollars and fifty cents a pound, delivered in Chicago, on the basis of seventy per cent purity. I think there won't be any difficulty about placing the rest of it at about the same rate. Not so bad, after all."

Delaine glowed with gratitude. It was a come-down after two hundred dollars a pound, but it seemed munificent to him now. It would be good

news for Phyllis. He wished they could have gone by Ormond, and the uneasy feeling came again that Ormond was the danger point.

There was a long, chilly wait. In the paling dawn, the local came and picked them up. The train dragged on slowly, stopping everywhere, till it let them off at Tedford just after six o'clock.

Walters' canoe and two dunnage sacks were handed out. On the platform, the foreman of the section gang was waiting. He was ready with his men and gasoline lorry, but the expected fire rangers had not turned up. According to their schedule, they should have arrived in Tedford the preceding day, and now it was hardly likely that they would appear before noon or later.

The railway man took them to his own home for breakfast, and hot coffee, potatoes and bacon restored Delaine's spirits to a normal level again. He felt desperately eager to push on. To wait for the rangers might mean to lose everything.

Walters assented, with just a shade of reluctance. Returning to the station, the canoe and dunnage were loaded on the gasoline car, and the machine started thuddingly up the track.

It was twenty-five miles to the river and it took them nearly two hours, for twice they had to get off the track to let trains go by. But the bridge came in sight at last, the familiar bridge that Delaine had always before seen from below.

The railway gang helped them to carry the canoe down the embankment, and started back to work, already late. Walters opened his gun case and took a shiny light repeater, and carefully filled the magazine.

"You'd better put this in your pocket," he said, passing Delaine a small automatic pistol. "It's loaded. I hardly know why I packed it, but now I'm glad I did."

The canoe went swiftly down the river current. It was a cool morning, with a brisk north wind, crisp and autumnal. In the burned slashes ashore, Delaine saw acres of crimson fireweed still in full bloom, but he knew there would be no honey in it that day. The good honey weather had broken up.

From the foot of the river, the lake looked solitary as ever. They went cautiously around the crescent curve. The lower waters also had no sign of life. Keeping close inshore they came to the landing place, and Delaine began to feel exultantly confident that they had won the race.

"No other canoe in sight," said Walters. "What's that roaring?"

"It must be the bees. Yes, I think we're first at the post. Come along!" Delaine exclaimed.

Still with caution they went up through the waterside thickets. The cabin came in sight, undisturbed, the doors closed as he had left them. But Delaine was puzzled by the tremendous roar from the bee yard, since there could be no honey flow in that cool weather.

Confident now that nobody had been there, they went around to the storehouse. It was surrounded by a roaring cloud of bees, and Delaine saw at the first glance that trouble had been here. The door that he had left carefully closed was wide open now, and bees drifted in and out like gusts of smoke.

He gazed in consternation for a moment and then ventured to the door. The interior was so clouded with flying bees that he could hardly see, but he was able to make out the stack of melezitose crates apparently undisturbed. He was stung two or three times, but, remembering where the bee veils hung, he secured them and came out.

"Great heavens! I'd as soon go into a den of rattlesnakes!" ejaculated Walters, who had kept at a safe distance. "What's the matter with 'em? Has anybody been there?"

"Put this veil over your hat and they can't get you," said Delaine anxiously. "I don't know quite what's happened. Don't be afraid. Come on!"

Walters followed him reluctantly, in spite of the veil. The melezitose was certainly there, but the lumber and litter masking it had been pulled off to the floor. The great pile of tins of raspberry honey was deranged. Several tins were upset, and two or three had spilled their contents in great pools of honey on the floor.

This was what had caused the uproar. Bees by thousands were licking up the spilled sweet, flying back to their hives, buzzing against the window, crawling over the walls, the bench, over everything in the room in the search for more honey. The whole room buzzed and crawled, but the bees were not really cross yet, and would not become so till they had taken all the honey and failed to find any more.

"I don't believe anybody's been here at all," Delaine cried, above the roar. "I think a bear has broken in, looking for honey. It must have been only last night."

He went out and examined the ground, but the hard earth showed no marks. The hives in the apiary were undisturbed. With sudden curiosity, he went over to look at the hive on the scales, to see what had been done in his absence. The scale beam was hard up; it needed another weight. The hive had gained twenty-eight pounds.

There had been a tremendous honey flow. He peeped under the covers of two or three colonies, and could see the combs bulging with new honey, sparkling fresh, not yet sealed over. There must be over a ton of fresh honey in the yard, he thought delightedly, then was attracted by Walters' excited calling.

Walters pointed to the workshop floor, where he had kicked aside an old sack. Where it had lain was a great, dark-red, wet spot, a pool that had soaked into the flooring, greasy and sticky.

Delaine knew instantly what it was. The whole situation changed its color as he looked at it. He gave one glance around. There was nothing there.

"The cabin!" he exclaimed, and rushed toward the building, drawing the pistol and tearing off the bee veil. Walters was just behind him as he reached the door. Delaine listened a second, then threw it open.

A suffocating gust met him. The room was full of smoke, choking, so thick that he saw nothing at first except a red smolder on the wall opposite, where fire had almost gone out, brightening a little on the charred joists as the fresh air blew in. Then as the smoke swirled in the draft, they both saw the dark, huddled forms on the floor.

Delaine made a dash and dragged out the first he touched. Back in the open air, with watering eyes, he saw that it was a strange man, a yellow-faced man with black hair, unmistakably a Chinaman, though dressed in blue overalls like a mechanic. He was quite dead, wounded in the chest, but not yet rigid.

Walters staggered out with the other body, and Delaine beheld Max Bracka, blackened with smoke, with a bullet wound through his neck. He was not dead, however. There was just a flicker in his pulse.

Delaine knelt beside him and tried to pour some drops from Walters' flask between his teeth. The liquor ran out again, but the boy's eyes half opened, and he looked up, without recognition, without concern.

"Max! Max! Who was it? Who did this?" Delaine spoke eagerly into his ear.

It was no use. Bracka's eyes closed slowly again. His mouth opened; his whole body shuddered and relaxed.

"He'll never tell you now," said Walters, looking down. "But who did do it? Ah!"

Delaine was still gazing into the dead face. His vindictiveness evaporated. He had no quarrel with Bracka now, only a sense of futility and regret. He was so absorbed that it was some seconds before he became aware of a sort of tense silence surrounding him.

He glanced up and saw Walters with hands above his head. Facing him was a tall, rawboned Chinaman, also in blue overalls, who presented a heavy, nickel-plated revolver, grinning evilly. At the Chinaman's shoulder stood Lockie McKill, smooth and spruce as ever, apparently unarmed, but carrying his hands in his coat pockets.

CHAPTER XXII
HIS OWN MEDICINE

Delaine jumped convulsively to his feet. In the flurry he couldn't think where he had put his pistol. Walters' rifle lay six feet away on the ground. The men must have come silently around the corner of the cabin.

"Don't trouble about who did it," said Lockie calmly. "Just keep perfectly still, both of you."

He walked forward and retrieved the rifle, also picking up the pistol that Delaine had laid down behind him. He glanced at Bracka, poked him with his foot, and indicated the body with a gesture to his confederate.

The Chinaman handed McKill the revolver, and promptly dragged the dead men back into the cabin. There was a crackling sound, and the coolie came back, with a fresh burst of smoke and sparks from the cabin interior.

"It won't work," said Walters, without emotion. "There's always bones, buttons, bits of metal left—enough for identification."

"I'll take a chance on it. Will you?" returned McKill, with a smile.

"I suppose that's what you intend for us, anyway."

"Well, I don't know," said the half-breed thoughtfully. "It depends on how you two turn out. Max croaked one of my men before we got him, and it leaves us short-handed. You got here at just the right time. Right-about now—march!" he added, with a snap in his voice like a whip.

With the two muzzles trained on their backs, Delaine and Walters marched back to the storehouse.

"Inside, now, and each of you fetch out one of those crates," McKill ordered.

Even Walters did not think of bee stings at that moment. Each brought out one of the sixty-pound crates of melezitose on his shoulders, the Chinaman also shouldering one. Delaine began to have a glimmering of what was intended.

"Now march—straight on, as I tell you."

The coolie took the lead, heading straight out through the scattered cedar and spruce clumps and into the deeper woods. Delaine came behind him, then Walters, and McKill closed the file, the rifle poised warily in his hands.

In and out through the spruces, the Chinaman led them, seeming to know precisely where he was going. Only at moments could Delaine detect any semblance of a trail. The crate grew heavy and cutting on his shoulders, but the leader went on at a good pace without any appearance of fatigue.

Over fallen logs, through fireweed slashes, belts of tearing raspberry thickets, through shallow creeks he went steadily. Delaine had never explored this district before. He imagined that they were making for some cache, some hiding place, a cave or a camp.

He looked at the bent back of the Chinaman ten feet ahead and thought how he could smash the man's skull with a sudden plunge and a heave of the crate. But what would be the use? Quick death would certainly follow.

He began to stumble and falter with fatigue, and the crate of melezitose grew crushing. It must have been at least half an hour, and it seemed far longer, when he saw a glimmer of water ahead and they came down a slope and upon the wooded shore of a long, narrow lake. At the margin, he was amazed to see a string of boats, two heavy plank bateaux, fit for heavy freight, in tow of a motor launch, all lying half hidden and unguarded.

They deposited their loads aboard one of the boats, and the relief from the weight gave Delaine a feeling of expansionlike hope.

"You didn't know there was a clear waterway from here to within a mile of Bruce Hill railway station, did you?" McKill remarked. "Duggan could have told you. Come on now. We've got to get the rest of it."

Delaine had not known, and his map had not shown this waterway. But he made no answer. He understood now the slave task into which they were impressed. Only one ending, it seemed, was possible.

"I'm sorry I got you into this, Walters. My fault," he said, in a low voice, as they straggled back along the trail.

"Never mind. This game isn't played out yet," Walters returned, under his breath.

Flames were bursting through the roof of the cabin when they reached the apiary again. Delaine hoped that the fire might spread to the storehouse, but the strong wind was blowing in the opposite direction, and hardly a whiff of smoke came over the bee yard.

McKill paid no attention to the fire, but forced another load upon them. The bees in the storehouse were growing bad tempered now, and all of the carriers were stung several times, but Delaine, at least, hardly noticed it.

Halfway through this journey, he thought his strength was going to fail. He was still weakened by the gas poisoning, and his breath suddenly failed, his heart fluttered, and he almost dropped his load.

"Hold up! Here, I'll carry it!" said Walters behind him, putting out his free hand for the crate.

But Delaine summoned up some unsuspected reserves of energy. He staggered for a dozen yards, almost blind with weakness, but knowing that he would be shot dead if he gave up. Then the faintness departed a little. He stumbled on, and managed to reach the end of the journey.

Walters looked at him anxiously. Delaine drank deeply at the lake and felt a little refreshed. But he remembered that there were over two dozen crates to carry over that road. He would never be able to do it.

Nevertheless, he accomplished another round trip, stimulated by the fear of death. The fatigue was telling on them all. Walters' face streamed with sweat, puffier than ever with swelling bee stings and mottled with livid spots, and even the tough coolie breathed hard with distress.

Back again to the storehouse McKill drove his slave gang. The roof of the cabin had fallen in, and the log walls were collapsing. The bees in the storehouse were intensely vicious now, and even McKill, standing at a distance, was stung several times.

It could not go on. Delaine knew that he could do no more than one or two more trips. Even if they carried it all, the end would be the same. The work done, he and Walters certainly would be shot down and thrown into the fire. It might as well come to the crisis at once.

But he could see no chance of rebelling. He was at the rear of the file this time, with McKill's weapon poking him in the back whenever he lagged. The coolie steadied his crate with one hand and carried the revolver in the other.

That journey was a blur of distress. It would be the last, Delaine said to himself, reckless of any chance if he could make an end.

He drank again at the lake, and tramped back as slowly as possible, trying to recover strength. Again they went through the swarms of bees into the building and brought out their loads. Delaine staggered a hundred feet

from the door. Then he stopped, wavered, let the crate fall from his shoulder, and dropped beside it in a heap.

"Pull up! Play it out!" Walters hissed at him savagely. "Here—I'll carry it for you then."

Delaine shook his head feebly, and tried to give Walters a meaning glance. He was not really exhausted, but he knew he would be done for with another journey, and he resolved to force the crisis while he still had strength to face it. Crouching as if utterly collapsed, he was in reality drawing his legs under him, breathing deeply, trying to concentrate his last ounce of force.

McKill came up and looked at him critically, then kicked him in the ribs. Delaine was set and tense for a wild spring, when, over his enemy's shoulder, he seemed to see the face of Phyllis thrust from among the thickets across the bee yard.

He relaxed, limp with amazement. He thought she made him an imploring gesture, and at her shoulder was the outline of a second figure behind the leaves. The sight was gone in an instant. He thought it had been a hallucination.

McKill turned and walked away, beckoning his Chinaman. The coolie dropped his load and cocked the revolver he carried. He stepped up close to Delaine with a yellow-fanged grimace, relishing the moment. The shiny muzzle came up slowly, and Delaine drove himself headfirst forward at the fellow's legs, gripping him by the knees.

The man shot back helplessly over Delaine's shoulder, kicking him in the head. For a second they writhed together, Delaine grabbing wildly for the dropped gun, then Walters smashed his honey crate down on the coolie's head.

A sudden wild flurry of firing, near and far, seemed to break out. Delaine got hold of the pistol and rolled free, cringing from an expected bullet. McKill seemed to be gone. Then Delaine saw him, nearer the storehouse, a crackling pistol in his hand, aiming at the woods. McKill had dropped the rifle, and his left hand was dripping red.

Delaine, lying flat, began to shoot, but his hand wavered unsteadily and the bullets went wild. McKill cast a wild, uncertain glance at him, and Delaine steadied his nerves with a powerful effort, holding the heavy revolver in both hands, and fired.

At the shot, Lockie crumpled half down on one knee, a vivid scarlet blotch on his thigh. A bullet fired from the woods kicked up the earth beside him.

"Drop it! Surrender!" Walters was yelling.

But McKill raised himself on his hands and fired another shot. Then, with a violent effort, he got himself up on one leg, and with a succession of convulsive hops, he reached the open door of the honey house. Even at that crisis, he shrank back a moment from the raging interior, but the next instant he was inside and had slammed the door.

Walters swooped down to capture the rifle. Even as he picked it up, the window of the honey house burst with smoke and shattering glass, as two shots were fired right out through it. Walters ducked, bolted on past the door and went out of sight at the other side of the building.

Delaine also got hastily back out of range of the window, watching it with one eye while he searched the woods with the other. Had he really seen Phyllis, or was it a flash from overstrained nerves? But somebody had been firing from the spruces across the bee yard, and had fired in the nick of time. Then he heard a sound of crashing in the underbrush, and caught the outline of two figures circling widely around the bee yard toward him.

It was no hallucination. It was really Phyllis, and beside her came a man in rough woodsman's dress, carrying a rifle. One of the Ormond men must have come with her. She ran up and seized Delaine by the shoulders, gazing intensely into his face.

"You're safe? You're not hurt?" she exclaimed. "We were almost too late. We'd been watching—we were going to make an ambush—when you went up through the woods next——" Breaking off, she flung both arms around his neck.

"But how did you get here? Oh, Phyllis! You know—Max is dead!" Delaine managed to say, through his bewilderment and delight.

"Yes, I know," said Phyllis, her face troubled. "My poor Max! He came through Ormond and went up the river alone. I didn't hear of it till later, or I might have stopped him."

Better as it was, Delaine thought, but did not say it. He put his left arm around her comfortingly. Walters suddenly emerged from behind the storehouse, flushed and exultant.

"Got him caged!" he exclaimed. "Why, who on earth is this?"

"The owner of the melezitose. My partner," Delaine told him.

"Well, I'm damned!" Walters exclaimed, in amazement. His attention went back to the storehouse. "I'll keep watch of that back window. You guard the door. He may make a break, if he isn't too badly hit. He can't stay in there, can he? Won't he be stung to death?"

"Not if he sits quiet and covers up his head," replied Delaine, and Walters rushed back to his post at the rear of the honey house.

Phyllis' companion had stopped a few yards away and had sat down behind a big cedar root, his eyes on the building and his rifle across his knees. Phyllis had nestled herself close to Delaine, and the bees swirled over their heads, flying from their hives to the honey house.

Minutes passed in silence. It all seemed unreal to Delaine and dreamlike. The flurry of fighting had died to silence. Behind him, the ruined cabin poured up volumes of hot blue smoke. The bees circled the honey house in whizzing clouds, and ten yards away lay the Chinaman with his skull crushed, beside the dropped crates of melezitose. Phyllis was close, alive and unharmed, and Delaine, still dazed and feverish, could not yet quite grasp how the situation had capsized so suddenly from imminent death into almost victory.

"There's no fortune in the melezitose after all, Phyllis," he said, the fact coming back into his mind.

"Dearest, I never thought there would be," she answered. "I always knew there must be some mistake. It was like a fairy tale."

"And your cabin's gone."

"We'll build a better one. There's two tons of fresh fireweed honey in the hives."

"I got my money back for my stock, just as you said I would. Oh, I forgot the most important—Walters says he can sell the melezitose for you, for two or three dollars a pound—maybe five thousand."

"I expect there's some mistake even in that. But I knew it would be all right," said Phyllis. "Everything seems unreal, but this moment."

That moment seemed to Delaine the most unreal of all. He was still shaken and dazed with strain, as if in a dream. He looked at the door of the honey house, expecting any moment to see McKill leap out, pistol in hand, preferring quick death to that ordeal. A man is not easily stung to death, but Delaine knew how he would be covered with crawling bees, bewildered as

much as vicious, how the bees would crawl through and under all his clothing, to every part of his body, stinging almost automatically whenever they touched flesh. Would any one have the hardihood, the endurance to bear that torture long?

Apparently Lockie had it. The minutes dragged past, slow as dying breaths. Delaine did not know how long it was since the shooting—ten minutes, twenty minutes, an hour? Walters came back to them, looking doubtful.

"I tried to peep through that back window," he reported. "But the bees are so thick on the glass that I couldn't see anything. There wasn't a sound from inside."

The rifleman behind the stump left his lair and came up to join them. To Delaine, the man's face looked half familiar, but at that moment he could not make the identification.

"I don't believe that feller's alive in yonder," he said, with conviction. "He couldn't stand the stinging for this long. I couldn't myself, and I'm used to it. I'm going to see, anyway."

"Wait!" Walters advised, but the man edged himself along the wall of the building, and thrust up his hat on his rifle muzzle against the glass of the shattered window. It brought no response. He went on to the door, listened, opened a crack, peeped in, and then opened it wide.

"All right. Come on!" he called back.

Delaine and Walters rushed after him, but Walters recoiled from the gust of bees anxious for escape that burst out the open door. The inside of the honey room was darkened with bees; they crawled in a moving layer all over floor and walls and windows and the stacks of honey tins, and filled the air. But at the first glance, Delaine saw McKill in a huddled mass on the floor just under the window.

His legs were drawn up and his face buried in his arms, as if he had tried to protect himself, and his clothing was alive with bees. His pistol lay at his elbow, and when they lifted him, a small empty blue bottle dropped from his hand.

They carried him out and laid him down in the shelter of the spruces. Walters, following them, bent over him intently.

"It's McKill, isn't it?" he asked. "Dead?"

"Yes. Not from his wound nor from bee stings, though. I think it was this," said Delaine, producing the blue vial.

Walters sniffed at it, poked in his finger and looked at the smear of the contents.

"Sanguinarine!" he said. "He took his own medicine. I expect weakness and shock made it act quick. Now, I wonder— —"

He looked down at the body again, brushed away a dozen bees and felt in the inner coat pockets. Nothing was there but a wallet bulky with bank notes. But something rustled softly under the vest. Walters pulled it open, and extracted from its inside pocket a sheaf of papers, written papers and photographic prints, that Delaine recognized instantly as the source of all the trouble.

Walters recognized them as quickly. He shuffled them in his hands a moment, then, with sudden passion, he ripped them into strips, tearing them again and again. Striking a match, he set fire to the sheaf in his hand, let it burn up, and scattered it in flaming patches.

"That's the end of that!" he exclaimed, with grim satisfaction.

It came upon Delaine that that moment really was the end of the fear and the danger. Now came a beginning—everything would be new.

"Oh, what was that?" Phyllis asked, in a low, almost awed voice.

"It's the evil principle of the trisaccharide. It's what those men died for," said Delaine.

"If I'd only been a day earlier!" said Phyllis, not understanding. "It might all have been saved! But if I hadn't happened to meet Duggan yesterday in Ormond, I couldn't have come at all. I made him come with me, and— —"

"Duggan?" Delaine exclaimed, staring at the woodsman, whose face had seemed known to him. Yes, it was indeed the man who had sold him the bee ranch.

"Duggan! I declare it's you!" Delaine said. "I didn't know you. Besides, I thought you were in Colorado. Have you come into your fortune yet? You know, you've got a hundred dollars of mine that you've no right to."

The bee man shuffled his feet, looking abashed, then he met Delaine's eyes with a defensive grin.

"Well," he said, "ain't you got your money's worth?"

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A cover which is placed in the public domain was created for this ebook.

[The end of *Honey of Danger* by Francis Lillie Pollock]