

one bright oasis in the dreary waste. Her remarks are just mad enough to be mildly reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*: "How candied of you!" she remarks, when the heroine gives her a box of chocolates. "But why didn't you telephone them to the heathen? Our missionaries feed them too much meat."

"GOD'S COUNTRY AND THE WOMAN"

If you were employed by the United States Government to collect certain vital statistics among the natives well inside of the Arctic circle; if you had seen your companions die one by one of cold and privation after a hard winter; and if, suddenly, as you were making your arduous way southward, famished for the sight of civilisation, and above all for a woman's face, you should come upon a young girl, a white girl, well educated, refined and beautiful, absolutely alone in the midst of a waste of snow, you might be pardoned for a brief bewilderment. And if that same young woman, after taking a careful mental stock of you, should own that she was in desperate distress, that you perhaps could aid her if you would ask no questions, obey her implicitly no matter how strange her request and then, when she gave the word, pass out of her life and be henceforth as one dead to her and to her people—well, you would at least need to be as susceptible as the hero of Mr. Curwood's novel if you consented to take the rash gamble. For this is precisely the opening situation in *God's Country and the Woman*; and the immediate outcome of Philip Weyman's acceptance of the conditions is that he finds himself admitted to a marvellously comfortable and roomy dwelling, buried away in Northern snow and ice—a dwelling filled with rare books and bric-a-brac, a modern piano and other badges of civilisation. There are an abundance of Indian servants; and presently, arriving from different directions, there enter the girl's big, genial, devoted father and her frail, emotional

and still quite youthful mother—almost a counterfeit presentment of the girl herself. By this time Philip has been partially enlightened as to the rôle he is to play. There is a small child in the house, a baby boy; and the story which the girl tells to explain the child's presence would be quite convincing if it were not just a little bit too well ordered and methodical. She had not seen her father for two years. Winter before last, she had been at school in Quebec, and it was there that things had happened; on her return, she meant to tell her father the truth, but he was away on business and her courage broke down; so instead, she told him she had been married and that he had a grandson. Now at last her father had come home and the rôle that she planned for Weyman was to pose as the child's father. By the time that he hears this tale, Philip has spent many days with the girl in that close, clean comradeship that comes of sharing hardship and danger on land and water; he has come to know her better than the girl herself guesses; and, whatever momentary shock he may have received from the cold, blunt, almost callous manner of her telling, some subtle sixth sense assures him that, however incredible it may seem that she should lie about such a matter, yet nevertheless the girl has lied and the child is not hers. Such is the situation when the old father returns, obviously proud of his supposed grandson, but quite ready to be hostile to the stranger who has stolen his daughter. This situation, although obviously artificial, offers possibilities for an ingenious pen; and while Mr. Curwood has rather overdone the thing, and is at times a little premature in his revelations, he has certainly given us the local atmosphere, permeated our very bones with the chill of damp and cold, and conveyed a haunting foreboding of a repellent secret that must at all hazards be kept from the knowledge of the big-hearted and trusting old man who for a few brief days is so naively happy in his supposed grandchild.

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