

Journal
back mag
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1135 THE PEACE OF SAULT SAINT FRANÇOIS

but because of His mercy, your dirty life is still yours to do with as you please—but not here! The next time Armand sees you, we will not be there.

"The vengeance of an outraged hearth is long and patient, Pierre Dumoulin; there is not a man who is a man in Quebec who would not defend Armand if he slew you, and I for one would do so, because hatred of a false friend is in the heart of everyone. The door is open. Go—and go far!"

He stepped back and flung the cottage door wide. Pierre, although his eyes showed the madness of wrath, hesitated only the fraction of a second.

As he passed the Englishman, the latter with a sudden growl as of one with a mighty rage, grasped him by the neck and with a good, swift kick hurled him sprawling into the snow.

Closing the door, he turned to the *Curé* and the two proceeded to the bedside, where Celeste was watching over her husband.

It was many hours before she looked up at them with her white face and dark, shadow-haunted eyes, and murmured:

"He will live, Messieurs!"

"Ay," said the Englishman.

In the terrible blizzards which come

down from the North, it frequently happens that one gets lost at night in the cold, and is frozen to death on the wide prairies where there is but slight chance of the body ever being found. This, according to both *La Presse* and *La Patrie*, undoubtedly was the cause of the complete disappearance of Pierre Dumoulin of Villeneuve. His sleigh and horses were found wandering about in the snow about five miles from the village.

Victorine still cooks the most delicious things for Père-Latour, although she has not yet quite forgotten the perfect croquette he deserted one winter night, and occasionally refers to it. At such times, the *Curé* is patience itself, knowing that it is indeed a fact, as the Blessed Saints themselves have testified, that the vagaries of women are many.

And it so happened that Armand, becoming well after a long and severe illness during which he received many visits from the good *Curé*, looked into the eyes of his Celeste and through them saw that her soul gave him with all the power of her being: what is more even than faithfulness—the true love which forgives all and is forgiven all, and which is indeed the peace of the beautiful Sault Saint François as Père Latour, the *Curé*, knows so well.



The COMPOSITE GIRL

BY JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

Author of "Kazan," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAWRENCE HERNDON

FOR a quarter of an hour Stannard had been studying the photograph which he held in his hand. It was the picture of a girl. Most people would have looked at the photograph a second time, and a third time, because of the eyes. They were

fine, dark, lustrously beautiful eyes, and even from out of the picture they gazed upon Stannard with an infinite tenderness and sincerity. But Stannard was searching beyond the eyes—and he found nothing of that which he sought. The face was pretty in its way, but it was not

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It was an odd habit of his always to turn at the door. . . . The photograph caught his eye.

beautiful along the more sharply defined lines of Stannard's æsthetic fancy. It was a face of luring sweetness, approaching very near to loveliness when the eyes shone with laughter or love, and Stannard had seen them shining with both; but still, there was something missing in it for him.

He tossed the picture on the table and rose to his feet, purplish-white clouds of tobacco smoke trailing behind him as he paced back and forth across the room. There came up to him from the street below, the rattle of passing cars, the joyous music of sleigh-bells, and the shrill voices of newsboys calling out the evening papers. But to-night he was too deeply perplexed by his own thoughts to be interrupted by these sounds. He turned to the table, and for the tenth time that evening picked up the photograph.

"It doesn't flatter her. By George, but it doesn't," he exclaimed. And then with extreme vehemence he called himself a fool.

as he sat down and reloaded his pipe. For the first time in his life, Stannard knew that he was loved as few men are fortunate enough to be loved. He had known it for some time past, and he had tried hard to build up a love within himself in return for that love. But unfortunately he was an idealist, and his Ideal, an elusive and haunting fabrication of his mental world, stood insistently between him and the sweet-faced girl in the photo-

graph. More than once it had come between him and possible happiness. He had met many women who might have loved him, but always they had fallen before that Ideal. At thirty-three he was still homeless, because he had not found the Ideal in flesh and blood; and a home, together with his Ideal, had been Stan-

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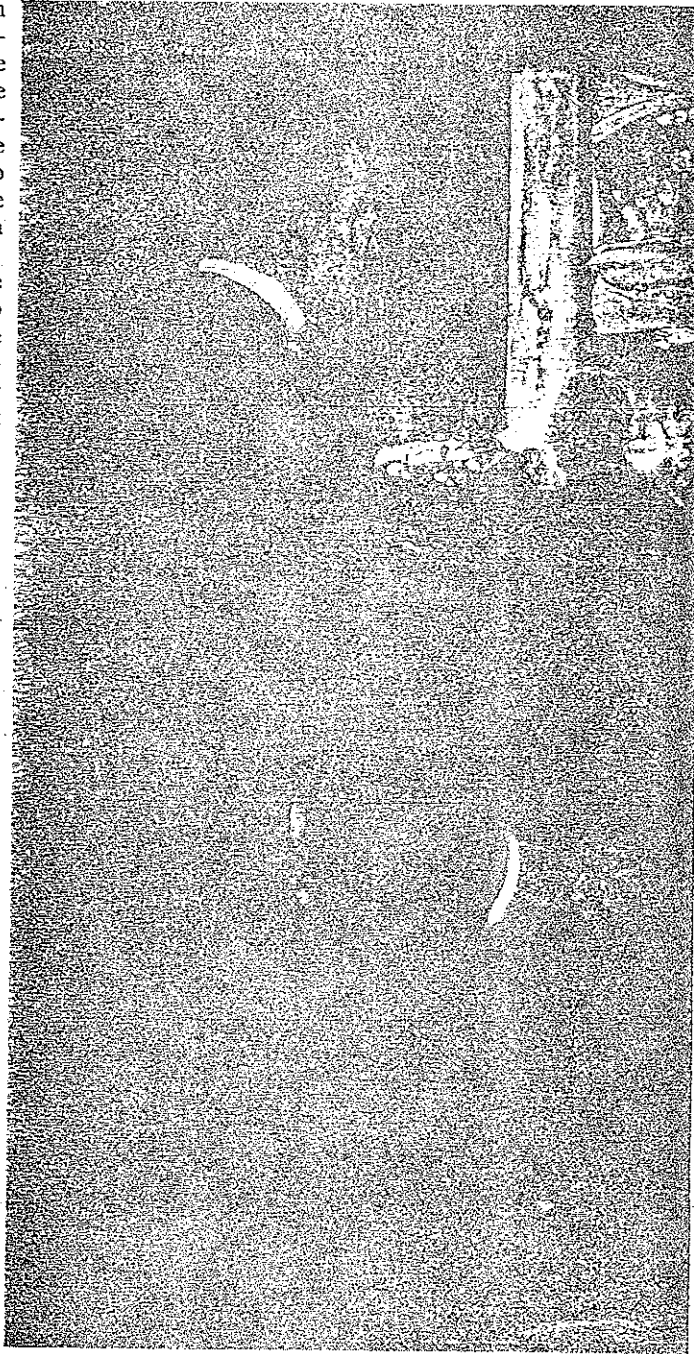
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nard's ambition since he could remember. The love and sweetness of the girl in the photograph had come nearest of all to triumphing over the lifeless thing which he had created.

For the last time Stannard picked up the picture. He looked at it critically, holding it near to him and then at arm's length, and the longer he gazed the deeper grew the perplexity in his face.

"I'm a fool and an idiot, Arlie!" he growled, speaking aloud to the photograph. "You're one of the sweetest girls in the world and I believe you'd make any man happy. But—"

He sat down, with his feet tilted on the table, and puffed out great clouds of smoke. Even as he had spoken, a vision of his Ideal had come between him and the picture. Would he ever find that Ideal? And if he did find her, would he be fortunate enough to win her? He closed his eyes, and one by one he brought before him mental pictures of those who might have made a home for him. They had been a nice lot of girls, and most of them were happily married now. There was Ethel Redwood, who had married Al Lewison, his college chum. Ethel had



Stannard gave a sudden start.

possessed the rare color of a delicately tinted flower and the slender beauty of figure which he had given to his Ideal, but that was all. She and her husband

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were immensely happy. Lois Greenfield had married a young engineer. To her belonged the hair of his Ideal, shining brown, with lustrous reflections of Titian fires slumbering in it, and Stannard never forgot it, though he had not seen her for years. With a grim sort of pleasure he built up his Ideal from among those whom he had known, and his composite picture took form and beauty and mentality in his half dreaming thoughts. Last of all he added the eyes and the sweet loyalty that looked at him from out of the photograph. If only these things had been given to *one* girl instead of to all of them! And—somewhere in the world—was there not an Ideal for every man? For years Stannard had answered this in the affirmative. It was a pet theory of his which had never suffered a decisive blow, and he was sure that such a girl as she whom he brought before him tonight he could marry, and love until the end of his days.

A bell outside tolled eight o'clock, and Stannard jumped to his feet. He had almost forgotten that he was to meet a newspaper friend at the theatre at eight-thirty, and he hurriedly put on his hat and coat and gloves. Then he lighted a cigar, turned down his gas lamp, and went to the door. It was an odd habit of his always to turn at the door and look back to see that he was forgetting nothing. The photograph caught his eye. It was a large picture, and when he had tossed it upon the table it had fallen against the lamp, standing almost upright. In the faint light that fell upon it like a halo, the great eyes seemed pleading with Stannard, and as he softly closed the door, and locked it, something that was nearer to joy than he had ever known before throbbed within him, for he knew that though he might never find his Ideal, a woman *loved* him. He felt the warmth of that love following him as he went out into the night. It was with him as he walked swiftly to the theatre, and as he checked his hat and coat he regretted that he had made this appointment with Mahaney. There was a growing feeling of loneliness in him, and he would have liked to go to the girl.

Mahaney was late, and Stannard stood in the edge of the lobby watching the

people as they came in. He loved to watch people. Sometimes he amused himself by building up his Ideal from those who passed him, choosing this from one and that from another as he might have selected flowers for a bouquet. But tonight they did not interest him as usual, and he went into the smoking room and lighted a cigarette. Hardly had he seated himself when a voice came to him. It was a wonderful voice, low and sweet, and Stannard sat bolt upright, his face turned to the door. After the voice there came a gentle laugh, and with a sudden thrill of pleasure Stannard dropped his cigarette into an ash tray and rose to his feet. There was only one voice in the world like that! It belonged to Nell Todd—and to his Ideal. Nell had gone to California three years before. Was it possible— The laugh came again, and he went to the door.

A few steps away two young women were talking. One of them was facing him, a short, bright-eyed brunette who flashed an inquiring glance at him as he stood in the doorway. It was the other who held his staring eyes. Her back was toward him, and as her low, musical laugh sounded again she partly turned her head. Stannard gave a sudden start. He did not know that he was attracting attention. He did not see the suggestive uplifting of the brunette's eyes nor did he hear the whispered words which she spoke to her companion. Only he saw the half revealed vision before him, the slender, beautiful figure of his Ideal, the glory of coiled hair that gleamed in the rich tints of his masterpiece, the exquisite coloring that he caught in the half turned face! And then, suddenly, the face met his own, and he knew that at last he had found the living picture of his dreams. It was a face of rare beauty and gentleness, a face apart from all the million others of its kind that he had ever seen. For an instant the girl's eyes glowed upon him, and as she saw the adoration in Stannard's face, the flush deepened in her cheeks—and she smiled. It was a frank, spontaneous smile, thanking him a little for the homage his eyes had given to her, and as she turned to follow an usher down one of the box aisles, Stannard gazed after her as if in a dream.

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He saw the half revealed vision before him, the slender, beautiful figure of his Ideal.

He had found his Ideal! He had found his conception of all that was beautiful and pure and lovable in woman, and the woman had looked upon him, and had smiled into his eyes! He watched the two as they appeared in their box, and his heart thrilled when he saw the girl look in his direction. She and her companion

were alone. Surely he could find some one to give him an introduction!

A laughing voice sounded beside him.

"She's very beautiful, isn't she, Tom?"

"She is, Mahaney!" he replied as he turned. "Do you know her?"

"Ye-e-e-s," volunteered the editor of the *News*. "I once knew her pretty well.