

A Woman's Laughter

mouth formed a quick and silent approbation of his final remark.

"Three hours!" the trainman continued his growling, as he went on with his lantern. "That's the hell o' railroading it along the edge of the Arctic. When you git snowed in you're *snowed in*, an' there ain't no two ways about it!"

He paused at the smoking compartment, thrust in his head for a moment, passed on and slammed the door of the car after him as he went into the next coach.

In that smoking compartment there were two men, facing each other across the narrow space between the two seats. They had not looked up when the trainman thrust in his head. They seemed, as one leaned over towards the other, wholly oblivious of the storm.

It was the older man who bent forward. He was about fifty. The hand that rested for a moment on David Raine's knee was red and knotted. It was the hand of a man who had lived his life in struggling with the wilderness. And the face, too, was of such a man; a face coloured and toughened by the tanning of wind and blizzard and hot northern sun, with eyes cobwebbed about by a myriad of fine lines that spoke of years spent under the strain of those things. He was not a large man. He was shorter than David Raine. There was a slight droop to his shoulders. Yet about him there was a strength, a suppressed energy ready to act, a red-blooded eagerness for life and its daily mysteries which the other and younger man did not possess. Throughout many thousands of square miles of the great northern wilderness this older man was known as Father Roland, the missionary.

His companion was not more than thirty-eight.