

# CALABASH



## High Grade SMOKING MIXTURE

2 oz. tin costs	25c
4 " " "	40c
8 " " "	75c
16 " " "	\$1.50

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long white months, the first week of which saw Luke's books and stores in perfect order, guns, furs, clothing, all cleaned, oiled or mended—no snowshoe broke on that trail; and as Lourdes had borne no child to keep herself employed and them entertained by its prattlings, there was nothing left but to sit around the fire and talk, or, what was more dangerous, think, think, think, while the roaring winds freighted the ceaseless snows outside.

As aforesaid, Lourdes had screwed up her pretty lips to blow on the live coals of Gabriel's passion before ever the snows locked them in. With a woman's fondness for playing with fire, it was this dangerous time that she chose to fan it to a flame by her attempts at revenge for their indifference during the summer.

From Gabriel himself comes the tale of how, seating herself on Luke's knee, she would alternately tease and fondle him, pull his hair and beard, caress him with small pats and pushes, always with intervening glances at the silent man on the other side of the hearth. Of evenings, she would let her hair fall, a cataract of ruddy gold in the fire's red glare, and comb out the shimmering masses whose perfume rose strong in his nostrils. While flouting him with her beauty, she would tease him with merry words and mischievous glances, thrusting, probing his dark quiet for the old sore.

And often she touched it. With a bitter oath, he described how, flinging out from the fire into the storm, he would pace for hours in the black smother, nor dared retire to the frozen silence of his lonely hut till exhaustion had killed both sense and thought. But he always returned next day—to the lure of her ivory beauty.

**WHY** did Luke permit it? A sterner man would have quickly checked her levities, but in him was no particle of that saving salt, the spice of deviltry of Father Beaupre's yearnings. Spurred during this slack time to some recurrence of lover's warmth he first encouraged and still submitted to her fondlings long after Gabriel's old friendliness had changed to a sullen moroseness. Albeit with many an uneasy glance at the dark, silent man who brooded by their fire, he accepted and returned her fondlings. Whereafter picture them: The woman busy with her thoughtless revenges, coaxing and teasing the old lover in whom life was transmuted into one long desire, the new husband whose soft blue eyes presently reflected the dawn of an ever-growing fear. For in that surcharged atmosphere thought pulsed freely without intervention of words.

In ignorance of that old relation—of which, for some woman's reason, Lourdes had not informed him—Luke came to know Gabriel's mind. Imagine them, I say, sitting out the long days and longer nights under such stress of feeling that Gabriel could not move without causing Luke a start; imagine that nervous atmosphere deepening, intensifying until, surcharged, it was primed for the explosion that 'whelmed them in a storm of passion and fear on Christmas night.

In a double sense, a lull preceded the storm. First, the drift lifted that morning long enough for Luke and Gabriel to dash over to the forest and return laden with green boughs. While they were gone, Lourdes had ransacked the stores to provide a feast, and, combining with the glow induced by wholesome exercise, the seasonable associations helped to dispel for a few hours the unhealthy vapours of that long brooding. At table they were merry, and if Luke had not obliged Lourdes to taste the

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