

he let these Englishmen see her, for her beauty seemed to him so powerful that they could not help trying to spirit her away, and he feared the sagacity of the white men, though not their power. His heart was with his people. Nakomis should marry an Araucanian—the noblest and most valiant man in all the realm of the Araucanians.

“But the precaution came too late. As the Englishmen came up from the boat, Dale had caught sight of her, standing on a magnolia veranda with a group of other girls. The glimpse filled him with a sensation of indescribable wonder. He had read of wood nymphs—could this be done? A white girl with a face of refinement and rare beauty, in this South American forest! She was not dressed like the others. Many articles of luxury had been obtained for her at great cost, and from her mother she inherited a modest taste.

“Dale saw her only an instant, but that was enough. She saw him, too, for a look of wonder and eagerness came over her face. Her mother’s people! Then they passed on, and she did not see them again, for the toquis immediately sent her out of their reach. Dale overwhelmed Jumbo with questions. The mother of the princess was a missionary—little more could he learn.

“That appealing look Jim never forgot. Besides, he was charmed with this lovely country abounding in fruit and game, and tired of the conventionality of the world. The upshot of the affair was that Dale stayed behind when their ship left for home. In all his previous wandering he had followed paths made by other travelers. Now he was going to have a really original adventure of his own.

“Of course that girl had more to do with this foolish notion than anything else, but if Dale had known how high the wall around her was, he would never have stayed.

“She was now sixteen and the toquis was already considering the matter of a husband for her. For many years it had been a custom in the Northland for the king to give his daughters to the mightiest men in the realm. This was not determined by rank, of course, but by a series of contests, which any Araucanian could enter. But this was not all. After winning the contests a gorilla combat was required, and then the princess reserved the right to choose or reject; so you see the aspirant to royalty had a pretty tough row.

“Now, here comes the most doubtful part of the story, Perkins,