

“Bravely trying to conceal the tremor in her voice, she replied: ‘Sir, I admire your valor and might. Surely there is none in all the kingdom like you. But the heart of the princess is not for any one now. I’m so sorry. I’d have told you if I could.’

“Dale didn’t expect this turn of affairs; in fact, he didn’t know what he did expect, nor what he should have done if the princess had answered differently.

“‘Princess,’ continued he, ‘I know why you do not love the victor. You are thinking of that white man you saw a year ago, and who is near now.’

“At these words Nakomis uttered a startled exclamation. News of her Spaniard! ‘Where, where?’ she cried. Her face was flushed and her eyes strangely animated.

“‘I know where,’ replied Dale. ‘Shall I bring him?’

“‘Yes,’ she whispered, ‘bring him.’

“Jim went out, found Jumbo, and then, regardless of curious eyes, went to the spring and had his face cleaned, which was accomplished by much scrubbing with Jumbo’s cleaning powder.

“Then he went into the presence of the princess. His step on the furs was so soft she did not hear him enter, for she was in deep thought, and her eyes were closed. For an instant he stopped to admire again the grace and fairness of her features. Then he knelt before her and said: ‘Has the white man found favor with the princess?’

“First an expression of great astonishment, and then a happy, confused blush spread over her face, and a strange mingling of hope and fear came into her eyes.

“‘The Senor knows not what he asks.’

“‘Good heavens! Spanish!’ cried Dale.

“‘Yes, Spanish. I am a Spaniard,’ she answered proudly. ‘My mother taught me the language.’

“Dale hesitated a moment. His adventure now assumed a far more serious light than before. Here in this South American forest was a beautiful girl, strangely beautiful, daughter of a refined Spanish lady. From her this daughter of nature had inherited grace and gentleness; from her father strength of physique and of character, and the fire of his liberty-loving race. Where under the heavens should he look for pure, self-denying love, if not in this girl?

“Dale had wandered all over the world, and he had at last reached the point where he felt that such love was worth more than all the rest.