



An Athabascan Princess



George
Fenwick





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AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS



Yonatchna

An
Athabascan Princess

BY
GEORGE FENWICK

Illustrated by MAX W. KOLLM

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*In acknowledgment of help so generously
given, this little volume is
lovingly dedicated to
My Wife*

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AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS
BOOK I

HAROLD BROWN IS INTRODUCED

FULL determined on the journey, though the
north-wind bit his face,
Every shade of his demeanor prophesied the
luring race
That stretched rosily before him, calling, calling to
his heart,
Lending visions to his dreaming, with ambition as his
chart.
He was strong, and full of purpose—cast like iron was
his will,
And the vigor of his body only matched his spirit's
thrill.
Here he was alone, abandoned, with a grim intent to
stay,—
Let the others turn them homeward, he would wait a
better day.
As he gazed about he pondered, wondered if he'd done
aright
In this effort to reach outward and engage this arduous
fight;
For though young in years and north-craft, much he
craved that he might know
Of the wondrous bleak, wild region, up where spread
Alaska's snow.

For this great strange country to him, reaching ever
to the north,
Held a mystic maze of wonders, and would prove his
lack or worth.
He well knew from stories told him, that the menace
of these lands
Boasted few to brave the trailways; few to meet with
their demands.

Overruling doubts that met him, he would master sure
his part,
Through the strength of his great purpose that made
way to cheer his heart;
Leapt to passion now his hoping that the greatness of
his aim
Would insure his progress ever, lead him on to golden
fame.
Wild the blood sprang from its urging, zeal now quick-
ened to new life,
And his will commanding sternly, now applied the goad
and knife.
Strove he onward, in his mind's eye, seeking new
worlds to inspect,
And of these he grasped the fruitful; then behind him
left the wreck
Of the life that yielded nothing, through these years
of clinging hope
That was deadening in its meanness, and was narrow
in its scope.

Massive mountains lay beyond him, capped by stainless,
changeless snow,—

Where the rivers find their fountains; eager that the
 world might know
 Of this matchless land inviting, spaced and set aloof
 by God,
 Ruled by Nature and the north lights to the tune of
 nature's rod.
 How the cool air fanned his bosom, thrown wide open
 from the heat
 That suffused his entire body; he would never know
 defeat,
 For the mind was ruling, building, and the body
 swerved reply,—
 Dare to do the things once hoped for, dare to do, or
 dare to die:—
 Thus the purpose worked within him, while he stood
 here all alone
 With his lone dog as companion, faithful as his under-
 tone.
 In the future that was calling this would be his only
 mate,
 Striving onward, ever upward, he would bravely meet
 his fate.

—This the foeman of my liking, much my heart aspires
 to tell
 How he floundered through the morass, how he waded
 through a hell,
 How the obstacles he met there tried his mettle to the
 quick:
 Founded on the plan of testing—always nature's bold-
 est trick,—

Weighed the balance in the summing, if this was the
child she sought,
Or a stripling with a fancy, following thus his aim for
naught.

'Twas a brave soul that old Nature searched for to
commence her work,—

Who would dare the boldest issues, and the hardest
trails not shirk.

Oft the sweetness of our nature, like the honey in the
comb,

Turns to sour when fermenting, and takes on a bitter
tone.

Safe within the folds of sequence, changes come and
changes go,

Like the swinging of the pendulum minutes shuttle to
and fro.

Night was settling o'er the Northland, and the cour-
tiers nature sought

In her animal and bird-life, sank to sleep, and peace
thus brought.

Now the eyelids of our traveler, drooping heavy o'er
his eyes,

Lulled his soul to peaceful slumber, quieting the doubts
and sighs;—

Peaceful sleep, like the Redeemer, gathered up his scat-
tered thoughts,

Built them into hope redoubled, thus to conquer what
life brought.

With the morning breaking tranquil, woke our sleeper
from his dreams;

Sleep had brought reserves of nature, and sewed up
the broken seams
That his shattered hopes had brought him, when he
found himself alone
On the wild shores of a strange land, that in future
would be home.
Gazed he long upon the prospect, as it stretched far to
the North,
Trained his vision through the great gash cut by waters
surging forth
From the mountains in the distance, cheerless, spectral
in their state,
They should witness yet his triumph in the struggle
with his fate.

It was on the great Susitna, trained to carve its outlet
wide
Through the reaches of the valley, where the rocky up-
lands bide
In their peaceful slumbers, lying here in wait for newer
life,
As the man-child in the chrysalis climbing up the scale
through strife.
With his dog beside him trudging, lowly bending
'neath his pack
Of provisions that must succor, with his rifle on his
back—
He was leaving far behind him all the life that youth's
bright years
Had encircled close around him, with their promises
and tears.

Trod he now the path that offered, leading on the river
bank,
Over rocks, and through morasses in whose miry
depths he sank :
Galling deep the impetuous nature that was burning
in its zest ;
Firing wild the resolution that had gold for its sole
quest.
Tangled brush was scattered freely from the fury of
the storm
That had swept adown this valley in its driving, bitter
scorn.
Pushed he forward in his venture, nothing daunted by
restraint,
Though the hardships of his journey left him hungry,
chill, and faint.
Roared the waters wild below him in their hurry to
the sea,
Thick with silt which they had bitten from this wild,
rough country.
Noon had come, but naught he heeded, one hill more he
still must climb,
Then go downward to the river, there to rest him for
a time.
Rolled the great sun westward, westward, and its slant-
ing rays flung wide
Shadows from the shrubbery finding life upon the
mountain side.
Upward still the weary body staggered to the mind's
intent,
Weaker grew the struggling spirit that was leading
on the scent.

But the resolution boldly pricked ambition to its test—
Poured its fullness in the giving to this one aspiring
quest :
So the asking seeks to further what the better senses
know,
And engenders strength of purpose—for the true man
seeks to grow.

When the sun had kissed the hill tops in its westward
bent that night,
And had signaled its last watchword to the stars that
now grew bright,—
Staggered slowly to the river a lone figure with his
dog ;
He was spent and sore from effort as he sank upon
a log ;
Threw his pack from him so careless, caring naught
where it might fall,
As fatigue numbed him to slumber midst the evening's
gloomy pall.
And his dog exhausted lay there, watching by his mas-
ter's side,—
Gaunt from hunger, tired from tramping, but still
faithful to his guide.
Chill the air grew on the river, carried from the
mount on high
Where the snow and ice eternal lift their shroud
against the sky.
Closer crept the dog to warm him, bitter this the hour
of trial,
When the heart of man needs coaxing, that it may his
lot beguile.

So throughout this long, lone night time, they two laid
there as if dead,
Naught to cover or protect them, naught on which to
rest the head,—
Save the damp and chilling mosses, that for centuries
have spread,
Hiding from the eye of mankind many coal fields in
their bed.
Once again the morning sunlight kissed the evergreens
in state,
Stole its way among the valleys, found the sleepers
there innate ;
Not a quiver of the eyelash, not a motion of the form :
Fain the daylight would arouse them, fain the sun
their bodies warm.
Birds sang sweetly midst the bushes, for it was their
mating time,
And the whisper of the breezes made a soft cathedral
chime.
When the sun had reached its zenith heralding mid-
day's quiet hour—
It was then the sleeping figures showed some impulse
of their power.

Roused he from his lingering slumber, stiff of joint
and numb of limb ;
But the ardor in him burned still with a never-quench-
ing vim.
Famished from his lengthy fasting, quickly he a meal
prepared,
And from all their craving hunger naught himself nor
dog he spared.

Sitting there upon the moss-bed, stringing out the
 threads of hope
 Leading through the life before him in this climbing
 fortune's slope:
 Answering doubtful questions stoutly, fearing not that
 heart would fail
 In his distant wanderings onward. That much suffer-
 ing would entail
 He well knew from his short travel; but he suffered
 not a doubt
 To gain entrance to his planning. He would put all
 fears to rout,—
 So he gathered up belongings, carefully he made his
 pack,
 And with hesitating movements swung it to his blis-
 tered back.

On before him boggy stretches, tangled with a scrubby
 growth,
 That past ages never bettered in their fair display of
 sloth;
 Deep, thick, brackish ooze lay waiting to impede his
 every step,
 Intersected by the mosses; and the nigger-heads here
 slept
 In their dormant state, inactive, no excuse for being
 here,
 Save to fill the time and place in, and this valley
 gravely sear.
 Trail there was none, but the river stretching up to-
 wards its source,

Told his sense in strict assurance that his way lay by
its course,
Many hours he stumbled onward, fighting insects fierce
and keen,
For mosquitoes by the millions find their birth in this
demesne.
Struggling over fallen timber, wading through some
slimy stream,
Leaping over pools that sheltered poisons with opalescent
gleam.
Oft in crossing he would stumble o'er some treacherous,
knotty log;
Tear his clothes and flesh in falling headlong in some
brackish bog.
Now the night grew chill and moody, and as lowering
shadows fell,
Deepest meditation lingered, with its blissful, restful
spell.
Once he thought he heard the voices of some natives
far ahead,
As he listened more intently, naught but silence there
instead;
Even the wind had died to stillness, and the black night
settled down
With his spectral, lonesome quiet, and its ominous dark
frown.

Now beneath a friendly willow, with its branches lifted
high
To protect him all the surer, down he laid him with a
sigh.

And his dog beside him nestled, slept they two in perfect peace,—

Past and present, and the future,—time gave him its sweet release.

Thus the days wore on in numbers, and nigh tried his body out;

But complained he not, nor shrank he—he had gone too far to doubt.

When the days waxed hot or rainy, and his limbs and feet grew sore,

He would stop and stretch his blanket, pet his dog, and count his score:

“Now to-morrow,” he would murmur, “if I reach a certain place,

I must travel several hours, can I make it at this pace?”

Then ambition would soar upward, and his courage would reply:

“Dare to do the things once set on, dare to do, or dare to die.”

But his food was getting lighter, and himself and dog grown weak

From this awful racking travel, and the land lay cold and bleak.

Naught he saw to train his rifle, saving birds that he might miss,

And his ammunition precious was in this vast wilderness.

Passed he several streams by fording, but he varied not his course;

He would reach his destination, if for better or for worse.

He was seeking for the confluence where the Yentna
pours its flood,
Here an Indian village slumbered, where he'd seek for
rest and food.
Then would toward the mountains travel, till he struck
the low divide,
Over which rapacious gold fields, sucked entire their
human tide.
Oft he saw the two volcanoes,—Illimna, and Redoubt,
Cast their glimmer to the heavens from their tremor-
ous, angry spout.
Now a longing seized his bosom, rent his purpose nigh
in twain,
God, for just a human being to make less this awful
strain!

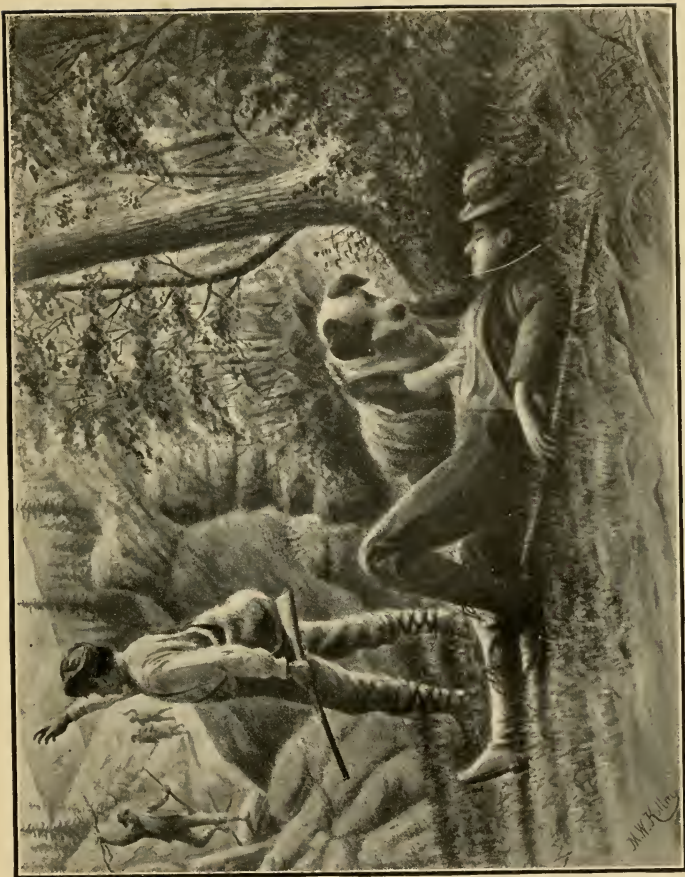
Could he make it? Oh, so weary, would no man stretch
out a hand,
Help him gently o'er this cursed space of treacherous
boggy land?
Grasped he wildly to the air-space, full he fell upon the
ground:
Crippled, torn, and bleeding badly from the wounds
he'd left unbound.
Stood his dog in silent wonder, eyes that showed a hu-
mane sense,
Faithful to the last long moment, with an agony in-
tense
From the starving and the walking; and the poisonous
brackish ooze
Ate into his flesh and stung him,—not his nature to
refuse:

For his master in his weakness, strapped upon the dog
 his pack,
 As he wandered blindly onward, praying God to fill
 each lack.
 Low upon his belly lying, licked his master's wounds
 and face,—
 Thus revived him for a moment, and was caught in an
 embrace,
 And the crazed man hugged and kissed him, talked in
 tones so full of heart,
 As emotion ran its riot,—for 'tis thus does love impart.
 Thus they found them, did some natives, huddled on the
 cold damp moss,
 Trembling from the cold that gripped them,—nature,
 with its gold and dross,
 Took them to their kaiaks, gently, paddled to their
 village near,
 In their warm igloo they tendered all the care that man
 holds dear.

With selected skin of moose-calf, scraped clean of its
 every hair,
 Smooth as velvet in the finish, handled with the great-
 est care ;
 'Round about the edge for trimmings, colored strips
 of skin were placed
 Fashioned in the native custom, with soft folds her
 form was graced.
 Thus appeared fair Yonatchna, with her moccasins so
 light
 Fitting close her slender feet, and tied about with new
 thongs bright ;

Varied the artistic bead-work—bright her dainty foot-
gear shone,
Like the colors of the rainbow that the summer sky has
known.
Tall she was with supple figure, timid as the faltering
fawn;
Rounded features, eyes of coal black, dimpled were the
cheeks of brown.
When she moved 'twas like the zephyrs blowing
through some rosy bower,—
Life had touched the maid with blessings, through its
rare artistic power.

As she stood there, haughty, silent, crept a deep flush
o'er her face;
Not a word spake she in looking,—as the custom of
her race.
Back they fell before this maiden, back these dusky
natives all,
Her one glance so firm sufficed her to make plain her
early call:
She had come, this Chieftain's daughter, as a mark of
their good will,
Bearing in her bosom kindness that this stranger's
doubts be still.
Quiet lay he on the fur robes, spread in layers on the
ground,
If he heard, he gave no signal to the babel all around.
Slowly to the bedside, faltering as the deer urged by
the chase
Seeks to hide its presence always, with a stealthy tread
of grace;



"Thus they found them"

Knelt she down beside this stranger, gazed upon his
 visage pale ;
 With a lingering look of sadness read his sufferings
 on the trail.
 Quick she rose, and spake some few words to a native
 standing by,
 And his animated footsteps paused not that he make
 reply :
 Soon some herbs he brought and offered, these her
 deft hands quick prepared,
 Bathed his wounds so tender, careful,—the esteem her
 people shared.
 Then she lingered but a moment, gave her orders as
 she went,
 In a voice that held command, but still it left the flow-
 ers' scent.

Days and days passed to oblivion, still he hovered near
 death's door,
 Raving in his shattered senses ; muscles weak and body
 sore.
 Attentively they watched his welfare at the orders of
 this maid,
 Who had well usurped this function in her duty, un-
 afraid.

Came a time the sun swung southward, in its gradual
 trend from sight,
 On its annual migration, turning daylight into night ;
 And this gloomy stretch of darkness, makes an effort
 to hide low

All this cursed, gripping freezing, midst this north-
land's ice and snow.

By this term of nature's respite, man adopts the one
extreme,

Utilizes this advantage to cross over bog and stream,
In the hauling of his outfit to the vast interior,
where

He may delve and grope for riches—find a stipend as
his share.

But the work is hard and trying, and it takes man's
stoutest heart

To make good and crown his effort by his sole, integral
part:

Not a semblance of weak shirking, hope to rest is put
aside—

Always working, pulling, hauling,—cold and wet he
must abide.

Many are the men who've tried it, led there by the lure
of gold;

But defeated and disheartened at the hardships mani-
fold,

They have left these northern death trails for the
stouter hearts to break;—

Left the struggling and the suffering to the men whom
hopes still shake—

But they come again and follow where the master hand
has led:—

Follow over trails that threaten: strewn along with
maimed and dead.

Yonatchna came one evening when the sun had sunk to
rest;

Stepped into the igloo gently, with a weight in her
 young breast;
 For somehow this stranger touched her through the
 pallor of his face,
 And the lines of suffering wrought there, for the weeks
 had left their trace.

He was noble, manly, feared not to take up an arduous
 task:

What on earth is more enchanting, what on earth has
 better cast?

Let the world pay tribute ever to the men who blaze
 the way

They control the secret power that lights to a better
 day.

Slowly to the bedside stole she, fearful in her maiden's
 quest,

Lest the unforeseen might happen, and she thus dis-
 turb his rest;

He was wide awake to greet her, but his voice was low
 and sad:

Though he'd passed the man's first land-mark, still in
 features was he lad.

"I am glad you came," he faltered, and reached out a
 thin white hand

That bespoke the pain he'd suffered, and his manhood's
 sturdy stand;

But she gave no hand in greeting,—stood there silent
 in her pride—

Was she not the Chieftain's daughter, all emotion to
 deride?

From the cradle to the present, strict her tuition on
these lines,

So 'twas purely second nature stirring her from ancient
times.

Calm she stood and gazed upon him, not a line of her
sweet face

Told the secret that her soul knew,—thus her heart
did she efface.

Calm, from her display of calmness, he withdrew his
outstretched hand,

Waiting 'till she gave some answer,—then he'd better
understand.

“You are better, are you?” asked she, and her words
were low and clear,

Like the wood-notes of the thrushes, singing their first
morning's cheer.

“Better? Yes; but still not able to take up my daily
tramp;

Trails are rough in this wild country; though you'll
think me but a scamp

If I stay a charge upon you and your kindness try still
more,

For to you I owe my life and so I thank you o'er and
o'er.

I'll repay you though,” he finished in a burst of manly
pride,

And his eyes turned quick enquiry to this maiden by
his side.

“Pay, we ask not that! I came here, I, the Chieftain's
daughter, came

On the bidding of my father, who is old and very lame :



Chief Amugannock



He would see you when you're able; I have told him
of your case,
How our hunters found you lying when returning from
the chase.
Rest," the words slipped from her gently, as she turned
and left his side:
Thus her calm adieu was spoken in the quiet eventide.

Quietly the shadows falling o'er this village in the wilds
With its igloos standing ghost-like, basking fair in
nature's smiles,
Yonatchna walked its whole length, wrapped in medi-
tative mood:
Glowing in the joy of living this her budding woman-
hood.
Life to her was void of sorrow, and the spark burned
deeply bright
Through the richness of her nature, making ideal what
requite
She could offer those about her in her benign atti-
tude:—
Full of love, her buoyant spirit always sought to do
some good.

Dearly loved by all her people, who had gathered from
afar,
Oft returned their huntsmen hungry, bearing deep
some jagged scar
They had proudly gained in combat from the victims
of their chase,—
'Twas to her, sweet Yonatchna, with an all-becoming
grace,

That they would relate so proudly, all their arduous,
daring deeds:—

She would recompense them simply by a smile, and
gift of beads

Worked in some artistic fashion on a strip of moose-
hide white,

Which they wore in full view always in the chase as
proof of might.

Born of brave blood, thus her lineage traced a long
ancestral line;

Backward, backward through the ages, at a place at
such a time

Rose the first man from the unknown; he was Chief
and Lord o'er all.

And from that to this late living ne'er once did his
prestige fall

To the rear in chase of walrus, or the savage polar
bear,

And the hunting of the great moose; always first for
battle's share.

Down throughout the long, long ages, pride and
strength, and ruling power,

Had engendered pride and valor, as their natural
earthly dower.

But a sweeter pride had caught her, in her attitude to
self,

For she knew this sweet, true living was the spirit's
greatest wealth.

Suitors had she beyond counting; far was her sweet
nature known:—

From the Kobuck, and Aleutians, to where Thlingit
 natives roam.
 For, in gathering to this village on some pilgrimage
 of note,
 Back the brave in pride bore with them, her small em-
 blem to denote
 That a day had passed their tribe life when they'd won
 their laurels well
 In the chase, or through endurance. Of her beauty
 they would tell;
 But they could not win an answer that would crown
 their wish entire:—
 Laughingly she'd circumvent them, till their pleading
 lost its fire,
 And they'd give a whole-souled friendship with its
 ardor no whit less,
 She would be friends to all, lowly, through this north-
 ern wilderness:
 Thus contrite in her soul's fullness, with a woman's
 instinct clear,
 Reaching deep through their emotions,—her consoling
 aim, to cheer.

When the next morn brought its brightness, ere the
 sun had sucked the dew,
 'And the birds were singing sweetly songs which
 seemed to her anew,
 Yonatchna, in her simple yet artistic dress, came forth,
 And she lightly brushed the flowers on the pathway to
 the north.
 Humming lowly some strange lore-chant, thus she
 voiced her yearning heart;

Plumy grasses, glinting sunlight, all gave homage to
her art.
Life was glorious in this freedom, with the dandelions
in love—
Drinking in this primal color; and just through the
alder cove
Strove the gypsóphila's beauty to offset the daisy's
hue;
And entangled through the grasses, laughed the morn-
ing-bell so blue.
Oh, these children of the valley, how they nod in elfish
glee,
As the wind comes swishing past them with its gusts
so saucily.
Yonatchna, moving careful, lest she mar this splendid
scene,
Plucked so lovingly the flowers, with appreciation
keen,
Just to shade the dainty colors more to her artistic
taste.
Her bouquet being completed, off she set in maiden
haste.
Straight towards an igloo went she, but she paused,
as half afraid
Lest her act savor of boldness, being she was but a
maid.
So she hummed a lore-song gently, thus to make her
presence clear;
Then so proudly with her flowers aloft, she bade him
morning cheer.

He was sitting on a low seat that was carved from
 some great tree;
 Buried deep in recollections, and was startled much to
 see
 Entering, so fair a vision, with the gifts from nature's
 bowers:
 In her hand, that was extended, held she morning's
 fairest flowers!
 Rose he up to greet her quickly, took this offering she
 gave:
 "I am ever now indebted, so from now I am your slave;
 These are wondrous flowers, surely; but the donor in
 the act,
 Shows a rarer beauty to me. Is this friendship's fair
 compact?"
 For a moment she was silent, thus to weigh her words
 aright:
 "I was walking up the valley, and I thought perhaps
 you might"—
 Then words failed her, as she stood there, in her grave
 nativity,
 Like a messenger of gladness in her sweet simplicity.
 "So you thought I might like flowers? Yes, they yield
 a double hope—
 Their sweet fragrance is a message that has life for its
 great scope.
 Hope still lives within my breast here that the future
 will hold dear
 These, your people, who have succored, and yourself,
 who, standing here
 Praising loudly all your goodness, that yourself will
 not admit;

But my heart is more than grateful, and dear lady, all
my wit
Would count naught in this, my telling, if my thanking
were not true—
I was thinking it this morning, so I'm voicing it to
you."

Yonatchna's face grew brighter and, with her extended
hand,
Led her woman's courage upward, that she stood here
in command.
Taking her small hand within his, and with just a pres-
sure mild,
Bowed in recognition, lowly, to the sweet in nature's
child.
"Soon my stay here will be over, but wherever I may
roam,
Through your kindness, I'll be tempted to claim this
as my own home."

"My fair stranger, I implore you, for my kinsfolks
and myself,
That you tarry here among us, so you might regain
your health:
Thanks we ask not, as I told you, 'tis with pride we
recognize
That we have a man among us, as yourself must well
surmise,
'Tis a brave one who tramps northward, fearlessly and
all alone,
For what reason, 'tis your secret,—and for this you
must atone."

And mischievously she laughed here, with that low
sweet sound of joy,
Promising a freer feeling, which he hoped she might
employ.

“Pray be seated; and those flowers, have you plucked
them fresh this morn’?

Was it for myself you brought them, or has some one
else been shorn

Of their beauty, and your presence? If so, I am in
black books;

And again I am your debtor. Some day I will seek
the nooks

Where they grow, if you will show me. Might I be
so bold to ask,

As a favor that I crave much,—and the favor is no
task,—

That you tell me for my pleasure, by what name I
might address?”

Then she looked toward him shyly, though her poise
showed none the less.

“Why, they call me Yonatchna, just a plain name, as
you see;

Names mean nothing, when you know one, so at least,
it seems to me.

I like better deeds of daring, for their inspirations
urge

To live better, and be nobler; through them such im-
pulses surge.”

So he sat and gazed upon her, both in face and mind
so rare,

Born here in this wild, rough country, no advantages
to share.

"I am Harold Brown, from 'Frisco. You have never heard of him:

"Well, I'm traveling o'er the mountains to the upper Kuskokwim.

There is gold there, so they tell me, and, being young and full of hope,

I have set out in this manner with Dame Fortune's gods to cope."

"Gold! And you are a gold-seeker? You, just in the prime of life:

Tramping, tramping, day-time, night-time, undergoing all this strife

For the gold that's so appealing to your race beyond the sea:

What is in this gold that lures you? It has never mastered me.

Oh, how careless are my manners, you are hungry; what a shame!

Pray be seated, Mr. Harold Brown,—oh, what a funny name!"

When she left him, he thought deeply on the words she spake to him:

Very interesting, surely, was this girl's rare, native vim.

How was it that she had mastered thus the tongue his people spoke?

These her people, this her country, this her place from rock to oak.

He would learn the answer from her, but his time he must abide;

She was sweet and very noble, and possessed of
queenly pride.

Came the natives now to greet him, on their wooden
platters, bare

Lay dried moose-meat, sweet and wholesome,—noth-
ing of it did he spare.

'Twas three days from this their meeting ere he saw
her once again;

Cold the day and very gloomy, with an intermittent
rain;

He was nervous from inaction, so he walked about out-
side,—

Sauntered through their crooked roadway, past their
igloos standing wide.

He met many of the natives who were strangers to his
eyes;

Broken men and time-worn women, who himself did
recognize.

Paid his deep respects to many, and to some the slight-
est bow,

Many of the northmen nodded, while the rest just
grunted "How."

Deep in wisdom of the Northland, well they knew this
stalwart form,

Could do battle and win laurels; and could face the
veriest storm.

Many men were in the roadway, so they formed a little
crowd,

And among them Yonatchna stood, so silent and so
proud:

She was always with the men folks, filling her allotted
part,

So unlike the other women, who seemed not to know
this art.

When she saw him she gave greeting in a voice which
brought him cheer ;

But her glance was momentary as he passed her by so
near—

Had he tried he might have touched her ; and quite
clearly he observed

All the black looks turned upon him by these men, alert
and nerved.

His way led him through the valley, where a foot-path
had been trod,

And from here he gazed beyond him, where stretched
out his future road.

Gravest doubts now fast assailed him ; what had life in
store for him ?

Unacquainted with this country ; had he still the proper
vim

To mush over all this long way ; had his zeal been a
mistake

Thus to start him on this journey ? He would trust
himself to fate :

Well he knew what trail life promised, and he would
not give up now ;

So determination seized him,—put its mark upon his
brow.

Down the roadway from the village, in its sombreness
of state,

Came the figure of a young girl—Yonatchna, calm,
sedate;

In her walk the bloom of centuries now was breaking
to new life,

And her lineage seemed new waking to engage in bitter
strife.

“Are you hunting for my flowers? Well, they’re on
the hill up there;

But I do not like your choosing this a day that is not
fair.”

Thus her voice rang out in gladness; but her face grew
sad and long,

When she saw that he was downcast, and that some-
thing had gone wrong.

For he stood there all dejected; but he looked into her
face:

“I have come, Miss Yonatchna, to search out the better
place,

For my journey must begin soon; I have lost a week
you know.

If your flowers grow up yonder, they a comfort will
bestow;

For the way will be most lonely, and I’ll miss you to
be sure,—

Else, my heart throbs would be lying, and a sweet re-
membrance, poor.”

“Do you see those hills uplifting? Well, they’re many
miles away,

And I doubt if yet you have the strength to walk the
livelong day.”

Looking through her crowning beauty, simply, with no
trick of art

Shaking down the barriers built there to protect his
lonely heart.

He would fain have made his answer as impulsive as
he felt;

But he only stood there silent, weighing full his deep
intent.

Reaching out his hand to touch her, through the folly
of desire;

But she shrank in terror from him, as though burnt
by fiercest fire.

Like an avalanche above them, sprang a native to her
side:

On his face a lowering hatred that was growing like
the tide;

Yonatchna, quick of action, when her reason dictates
clear,

Turned and laughed outright so gaily, showing him she
had no fear.

With a dogged look of hatred, yet obedient to her
voice,

Straight he turned and walked off slowly,—not from
any wish or choice.

“What did you do this for?” cried she, as swift her
anger spent:

“You should not deign to touch me in whatever argu-
ment.”

Humming lowly, but distinctly a strange song she oft
would chant,

“My good, true friends, I love them all; but they watch
against my want.”

And her face turned upward to him, as she gazed into
his eyes,

And she saw his passion lurking, as he stood there in
 surprise.
 Now a coolness crept about him; and his anger rising
 fast,
 Spread its likeness o'er his features, while his soul
 within him lashed
 In a fury born of madness, and his eyes shone hard
 and cold.
 "Do *you* think that I came here, Miss, to insult you,
 and make bold?
 The native dog who sprang here now, what was his
 full intent?
 Does *he* think that I'd insult you? Is his mind so
 downward bent
 That my every act of friendship is construed for some-
 thing queer?
 And do you think within yourself that you have aught
 to fear?
 Pray answer this, for on my soul and by the name I
 bear,
 If so, I'd have contempt for you and yours; and so I
 swear
 That I would rather perish there on that bare moun-
 tain side,
 Than eat again the food you give, or glory in your
 pride!
 You think because you are a girl, that I am not a
 man,—
 We are not beasts in our land; we rend not whom we
 can
 That gives the succor to our needs; we do not stain the
 clean;

And I am not the sneaking cur you sought to prove
I've been.
Go, take your igloo and your robes; and tell your
Chieftain too,
That now I scorn the hand that gave. With money
I'll ensue
To pay my debt, whate'er it be, and curse the day that I
Fell by the wayside on the trail when your men passed
me by."
And standing there in all his pride,—pure manhood at
its best,—
He dominated all about, through his pure righteous
zest.

Fair Yonatchna stood her ground, though wept she
bitter tears;
But proved the self-sufficiency she'd gained through
many years,
While growing slow to womanhood,—her father's
mandates dealt
To all his people in their wants,—through which she
lived and felt.
He did not soften at her tears; the hurt in him was
deep,
And scorning rose within him more; he felt its onward
sweep—
“Why don't you speak, or have you lost that lovely
voice of yours?
You offered flowers, that I might fall into the trap that
lures:
For you are fair, I grant you this, with eyes that steal
their light

From out the blackest cloud that hangs about the darkest night."

"Oh sir, you much misjudge the cause, and so you misjudge me :

I have not put my faith in you to lose it utterly!

For all my friends, and father, too, will surely meet your scorn

That rises in its fury, like the direst thunder-storm.

Fair Yonatchna stands here now, your servant as before ;

But well I know that when I speak, your anger is no more.

You do not know our customs yet, and so you are at sea

Why this old friend who was here now, should thus look after me.

You do not know the hurt you deal, the pain my heart must feel ;

But I would not, for all this world, their friendship let you steal.

They are my friends, those men you see, all sturdy fellows, they,

Whose hearts are true as tempered steel, forever and a day.

They do not gauge a dire insult as you, with finer sense ;

They cannot see your gallantry, and all your fine intents
In just your way of viewing it, and so they might hurt you ;

But with all unconscious actions, to me they would be true.

Their acts to me are nobly meant, and so you must
agree,

If they have over-stepped a point, it was their love, you
see.

If you are noble, as you say, and as I surely thought,
You, in yourself, would offer first the best that could
be brought

From any heart at any time, at such a place as this;
And here your full apology would not become amiss.
You think because I am a girl, raised by a native tribe,
That I am far beneath yourself, and I should have no
pride;

You did not feel like this, my friend, when you lay
there alone

Upon the trail on that bleak day, reduced to skin and
bone!

You rise up in your anger now, and curse us every one;
And merely just because you see we have been spied
upon.

Well, this is such a foolish scene, for us two children
here,

A-scratching at each other's eyes,—it really does seem
queer."

And here she shot a stinging glance that pierced him
as a knife,

As he stood here, and heard her words with sorrow's
tears so rife.

"You half convince me, as you speak, that I was harsh
to you:

Thus my unbroken will I bend, and grant that you are
true."

The riotous soul within him strove to master what he
felt;

And now the maiden, quick of step, before the young
man knelt.

“See, kneel I here, not to you, sir, but to your better
heart;

I feel within my own lone self, that much the greatest
part

Is in the heart of any man, if he but master it.”

And through the force of her pure mind, she made him
this admit.

“My Yonatchna, glad I stoop to quaff my visitor’s cup
And henceforth through the years to come, no one can
e’er corrupt

The purest thought that will live here within my own
lone heart

Of you, the supreme queen of right whose life must
good impart.”

She bounded up in maiden glee, and let him take her
hand,

As homeward bound they walked along, with deep trust
in command.

Into the igloo that was his, he led her tenderly;

And gloried in the fact that she was girt with purity.

She looked so girlish and so trim, clothed in her
moose-hide gown;

Her wealth of hair, of blackest hue, o’er shoulders fell
adown.

On robes of bear and caribou hope sprang to their
desire,

And love found birth as they sat there before the
blazing fire.

True to her dreams of symmetry, here nature showed
her art

In graceful lines, that moulded her nearest to nature's
heart.

"If we could but believe in dreams," and here her face
lit up

Until it shone with radiance from draughts of
memory's cup.

"Why, I would be a Princess fair, and you my per-
fect Prince;

There now, you're laughing at me, and I do not like
your hints.

In bygone days, so long now past, that this seems a
new sphere,—

I learned it from my father dear, the story you shall
hear:

There was a maiden who had dreamed that on a future
day

Would come a man among them who, in battlement
array

Would be full decked, and on his head would bear a
signal charm,

And not a man or beast on earth could do him any
harm.

She dreamed that he would sweep the earth with his
majestic power,

And make subjective every man in one brief fleeting
hour.

And then she dreamed that he would come to look upon
her face,



"Love found birth"

And from that moment, all his power he'd barter for
her grace

If she would be to him a wife, and follow to his land,
Where all the subjects of his power would be at her
command.

And, strange enough, this dream came true, and thus
our own forbears

Have settled on this land about, and to them we are
heirs."

"And so you dreamed of me?" he cried. "Well, I have
little power

To sway a kingdom, or enchant a people in an hour;
But Yonatchna, I would ask, where gained you all this
speech,

In English you are versed so well, while not within its
reach?"

"Why, I am just a mission girl, I got my English
there;

And so I learned to feel the weight of this a woman's
care.

They taught me that a woman weak, was still of
greater strength

To mould the good, than any man with all his boasted
length;

For most men curse where women pray,—they do not
feel the good

That consecrates one's very soul in radiant woman-
hood.

They come to me, those friends of mine, that I might
give them power,

Not knowing 'tis the good in me I give them as a
dower."

She paused and looked into the fire in meditative mood;

“You men are weak in your great strength, and cannot gauge the good.

I’ve read in books that worldly men praise much a pretty face;

That they will throw fair virtue down and enter any race;

As you have come from that far land, you know where-of I speak,

And know that I am ignorant of knowledge that I seek.”

“Far from the knowledge you may be, but not far from the truth

That goes to recompense the one who lives for good, forsooth;

I have not come to teach you in the happenings of our time.

Fair souls, to thrive through their great wealth, must purity entwine

About their very cores, for then the greatest sinner here

Will much reflect to such an one the essence he holds dear.

And do you seek the one great God, as my race taught you to?

I feel within my own lone heart temptations are not few,—

For you have come from nomad stock that finds its pride in strength,

While roaming over hills and dales throughout your world’s great length.”

“Temptation, as you speak the word, I know not what
you mean;
For we have many natives, all with morals good and
clean.
And I have read your teachings too, and have pondered
their sense;
They sent me to your mission in my very innocence.
And there they strove to make me think that all the
earthly good
That could be brought to prove its worth, was as religion
stood.
With us the man who shows his strength, and proves
his courage too,
Lives his own life by what he knows in his own self
is true.”
She rose and stood a moment tense, and looked upon
her friend,
Her body swaying lightly, thus her silence to defend.
She left him as the brooding dusk had offered up her
prayer,
And showed the traveler that she had no greater light
to spare.
She did not bid a fond adieu, she gave him not her
hand;
But left him in this quiet way that he might understand.

“To-morrow I will go,” he said, in speaking to his
heart,
“To-morrow on the long lone trail, my pilgrimage I’ll
start.

Oh, for the time to prove the man within me has not
died,

The chance to prove ambition true that courage has not
lied!

Yet, I must go to-morrow, sure," and here his brow
grew stern,

"The Chieftain must my wants supply, my eagerness
doth burn."

AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS

BOOK II

THE DEATH OF CHIEF AMUGANNOCK

THE Chieftain lay upon his robes, the death
light in his face;
But not in that poor wasted form, was there of
suffering trace:
Brave as the stoic heroes old, and proof against dis-
play,
Not once the voice had raised complaint, though many
came that day
To gaze upon that face they loved, and utter words of
cheer;
But shamman with their boasted powers, had naught
to do with fear.
The shamman stood to all the tribes conjurers of the
race;
And loudly they proclaimed their power all evil to
efface.
The sick and troubled of the tribe would bare their
hearts and pray,
In confidence, that through their power, good spirits
would obey.
And all the braves before the chase, were taken well
in hand,
They sought these worthy shamman that those spirits
brave and grand,
Would dwell within their hearts and limbs, would
clarify their sight,

And reinforce their efforts so that they would win
through might.

They claimed well to foretell the day good spirits
would come forth

And bless the tribe in all they did that was of any
worth.

When the great hawk or raven stood with mockery's
grave grimace,

To call some one from out their midst, who well had
served the race,

'Twas then the shamman's office here well to display
their power,

And through fantastic revelry enhance life's blessed
shower.

And now that their dear Chief was ill, no power at
their command

Was left neglected or uncalled, to strengthen well their
hand

In overcoming wicked spirits that would cut the cord,
And write across his noble brow death's dark unhal-
lowed word.

So all the shamman's that were near, and many from
afar,

Now gathered to their Chieftain's home, to give the
spirits war.

Deep painted were their faces all, and decked in strange
attire,

With voices weird they bade good spirits their sick
Chief to inspire.

Wilder and louder rose their chant, while sadder grew
their wail,



“ Wilder and louder rose their chant ”



The spirits present they blasphemed, to make their
boldness quail:
Thus up and down the igloo floor their wild eyes roving
mad,
Then shrieking shrill, fantastic calls, they laughed with
voices glad;
The amulets upon their limbs forced blood where
tightly drawn,
Which culminated in their boasts that spirits lick their
spawn.
On the Raven and the Hawk they called, to dissipate
their spleen,
They danced in frantic reverence with zest both deep
and keen.
'Round the still form of their sick Chief, the shamans
rallied all
In gesticulating agony, on hands and knees to
crawl;
And as they watched that pale face there, their very
madness grew,
They shrieked and cursed, implored and begged the
dragging hours through;
They snatched great coals from out the fire and tossed
them in the air;
They rolled upon the ground, then gazed about with
vacant stare;
The spirits that could aid them here to save their dying
Chief,—
To them they offered beads and charms if they would
grant relief.
Then looked they on his face again, and it was paler
grown,

The eyes were set and glassy hard,—the spirits heard
no moan.
They tore the clothes from off their backs and tramped
them to the ground,
They smeared their bodies with foul paste, and tight
their eyes they bound.
And now they stood each in his place, and danced and
tore their hair
Until their strength exhausted was and they fell in
despair.
But though their shamman's powers failed to win a
lease of life
Still, to this day, the shamman's sway with natives
here is rife.

Yonatchna, pale and trembling, through her agony of
grief,
Despairing and heart-broken, knelt beside her suffering
Chief:
All the sunlight of her young life had now turned to
blackest night,
And she suffered there in silence through her agoniz-
ing plight.
Prayed she silently but earnest, to the God of branch
and dove,
Prayed that He would spare her father in His goodness
and His love.
Then she meditated deeply, how her father in his
pride,
Strove to keep a promise given to the good priest—'till
he died
This fair Yonatchna cherish, as a being set apart

From the hardships of her sisters to bring sunshine to
his heart.

He had ever kept his promise, always treated her
aright;
And instructed all his subjects that her presence
brought much light.
She could speak the pale-face language, she could sing
white sister songs;
She it was to whom acknowledged he that right and
wrong have tongues.
He was wise within his domain, ruled with firm and
iron hand;
Owned his slaves, his furs and igloos, and the kashims
for his land,
Where he entertained the strangers who had journeyed
from afar;
And where slept the many young men, to avert wrong's
searing scar.
Now in prayer and meditation, long she knelt beside
the bed:
Many came and gazed in silence, fearing much that she
was dead,—
For her face, where it showed slightly, was as pale, and
cold as stone
But they touched her not for fearing they would find
her spirit flown.
Only once in all these hours did a hand in rudeness
dare
To grip the shoulder tightly, to discern if life was
there.

It was he who would be Chieftain, when this fleeting
life ebbed out :

It was he who swore to claim her,—all objections put
to rout.

She had scorned his every pleading, yet her heart was
doubly kind,

For she'd smile on him as others, through her gentle-
ness of mind.

Now she rose and laid her soft hand on her father's
brow, so cold,—

While she knelt here he had left her with his Chief-
tain's spirit bold.

Bitter tears sprang to her eyelids, but she dried them
hastily,

She must show her weakness never, she would act quite
stoically ;

But her daughter's heart bled deeply, she had lost a
father, friend !

Who was there now to protect her, who such strength
and goodness lend ?

Only once her thoughts did wander to her pale-face
friend, near by,—

In the face of all her sorrow, would he tarry, would he
fly ?

But her woman's instinct told her that no threat of
deadliest foe,

Could make less his liking for her even if he had to go.

Thus their great Chief, Amugannock, from the nature
of his death,

Passed to worlds beneath their own world, but of
power was not bereft :

He would come again in spirit, keenly guide them in
the chase ;

He would lead them on to conquer any warring hostile
race.

Through the roof they raised the rough box ; hewn
from trees with the stone adz

In which lay his body, covered with the gifts of these
nomads,—

Stones and bow and arrows, clothing, amulets, and
shells and beads :

These were sacred to his people ; and would meet with
all his needs.

From this old world to his new one, lend him strength
to fight his foes,

Resurrecting all his knowledge and add much to what
he knows.

Out upon the well known tundra on a mound they
placed him high,

Raised a totem shaft to comfort, 'neath the Hawk and
Raven's eye.

AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS
BOOK III

CHOOSING A NEW CHIEF

NOW to choose a great successor, worthy of the name of Chief:

Tests were planned, as custom warranted to the best of their belief.

Tuluksaka was the foremost in the feats of trying strength:

His it was whose arrow never missed the mark at greatest length;

His the foot that was the fleetest, his the eye of keenest sight;

He it was who challenged boldly, and had never lost a fight.

In the chase he bagged the great bear that roams through the underbrush;

Brought the deer to earth so surely with swift arrow in its rush;

And fleet mountain sheep he captured, as in craggy heights they'd roam;

And the ground-hog did he waylay, when it wandered from its home.

In the stalking of the great moose, his sure skill knew no defeat,

And in spearing wily northfish none with him could well compete.

He was sure of aim in striking with great strength to land them safe,

And like the Great Alexander, still for new feats did
he chafe.

Challenged he the men in speaking, challenged them in
song and dance;

Challenged them to brave dread suffering: wild his
boasts through insolence.

Then he gave to all the people, share and share alike of
beads;

Gave them stones and shells he'd gathered, thus to
emphasize his deeds.

Thus though every testing tried they, Tuluksaka was
the first,

And there could be no misgivings—he for dominance
was athirst.

So they named him Chieftain ever, and a lodge they
set apart,

As a token of his power, and the greatness of his heart.

On the tenth day from the burial, all the native women
here,

Took the fasting obligation; some from duty, some
from fear.

Sixty days as was the custom, scant the food that
graced their plate,

But exempt from arduous labor; o'er his deeds must
contemplate.

In the meantime many envoys went to foreign tribes
to tell

Of the death of their great Chieftain, and to laud their
choice right well.

To the Sitka tribe they traveled, and then to the
Yakutat;

Roamed they through the Thlingit country, so toward
the brave Klawak;
Eskimos, the Togish, Tongas, and also their friends
Ah-Tena;
Traveled they in fleetest fashion to the empire of the
Huma;
Told the Hydad, and the Chilcot, told the fleet of foot
the Kuyu;
Thus conveyed their news in sorrow to the tribe of the
Taku;
Over to the Wrangel nation, the Aleut, and to the Auk;
The Killisnoos heard their story, so in sorrow did the
Rake:
All agreed, as was the custom, to take part in their
great meet,
Pay respects to the departed, and the living Chieftain
greet.

As the days wore on in number, filled our traveler's
heart with awe;
Deep his interest in this people, wondering much at
what he saw.
For he had postponed his journey in the midst of their
great grief;
And to mourn with Yonatchna, now deprived of father,
Chief!
All the livelong day he wandered through the valleys,
o'er the hill,
With his trusty dog and rifle, thus the dragging hours
to fill.
Many were the deer he landed, packed them to his
native friends;

Caught the halibut and salmon,—hoping thus to make
amends
For the kindness they had shown him when he needed
help the most:
Though they felt distrust for strangers, still they
proved the willing host.

It was on the day he wandered, that he came upon her
there,
Kneeling low beside the rough box, lost in agony of
prayer.
Here her father lay so lonely; had her God forsook her
quite!
Would her earnestness in praying ever bring him back
to sight?
For a moment he stood watching the lone form con-
vulsed with grief,
Then in sympathy strode nearer in the hope to grant
relief:
Wild she sprang up at his footsteps, like the startled
deer from rest;
Turned and gazed in pained wonder; heaving was her
maiden's breast.
Standing there at bay a moment, just as if to ward
a blow;
Lost her mind to all things earthly, in her face there
was no glow.
Now the native blood was upmost, she in silence heard
his speech;
Backward stepping as approached he, always keeping
out of reach.

She was dressed in native *muskrat* that hung loose
from neck to feet ;
And a hat made from the spruce roots hung down from
her head so neat.
But her eyes grew fiercer, fiercer, and as flint were set
and stern,
Deep with passion were their black depths, and with
dark contempt did burn.
Down her features ran the sorrow that had carved its
way outright
From the heart which was the fountain of this agoniz-
ing fight.
Stolid in her bare demeanor, ignoring quite the past
she showed,—
Where her beauty captured surely, where her wondrous
rich words roved.
He was stunned and stood there silent; and for pity,
what the count?
Half his eyes accused of lying that he might this shock
surmount ;
Cut adrift was all his hoping that had pledged his soul's
requite,—
She was only just a native, and could never know his
light.
“Yonatchna, fairest maiden,” sent wild riot to her
soul ;
Though his words were tender, loving ; still his voice
bore reason's roll.
“I have come out here to greet you, I have come to
make it plain,
That the sorrow you have suffered finds a sympathizing
strain

Through my heart that holds you sacred, though you
doubt my words at best;
In these long days you were hidden, my poor soul could
find no rest!

I have waited here to tell you, that in all the years to
come,
Yours will be the image with me, wheresoever I may
roam!"

Milder grew her eyes while listening to the words that
meant so much,
But she gave herself no gesture that the man might
heed and touch!

Silence reigned, while hearts beat wildly, mute confes-
sions came and went;
But the barrier was perfect, as her native challenge
sent.

Backward, backward, slowly backward, moved she
farther from his sight,
Till the shrubbery hid her from him, and made plain
his direct plight:

Lost she was to him forever; his way lay along the
trail,
Hers to live ever in anguish and her future to curtail.

While his heated brain ran rampant down the resolve
that was set,
Shriveled up his full intentions, he this maid could not
forget:

Almost lost he thus his purpose,—she was still before
his eyes,—

As he saw her praying silent when she sprang up in
surprise.

Thus the morrow found him thinking, what was left
to do for him,
Only to fulfill his purpose, and mush to the Kus-
kokwim.

Tuluksaka, sought he early, for this Chieftain he must
see :

Offered money for his keeping with a sense of surety.
Stern the face that met him squarely, deep the eyes set
in his head ;

Cold of speech, and set of purpose,—these the arrow
words that sped :

“You have come here as a stranger ; you were sick ; we
took you in,

Nursed you back to strength and gave you what protec-
tion you could win,

Now your path lies o'er the mountains, by to-morrow
you must go !

Let your exit now be final, and by this you then can
show

You thank us ; for your money it is nothing to our
eyes ;

All your speech is but deception, your contention basest
lies.”

Turned his back toward our traveler, closing thus the
interview,

As the native custom always, when with speaking they
are through.

Here our traveler stood a moment, while the hot blood
swept his soul,

Strung his nerves to highest tension, from these insults
manifold :

“Curse this devil of an Indian,” and his brow grew
dark with hate;
But he turned and left him standing, “Let the devil
meet his fate.”

AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS
BOOK IV

YONATCHNA'S PLEADING

FAR towards the southern heavens rose the sun
to greet the earth,
Cold its face that leered towards them and
its rays of little worth;
Deep the snow lay o'er the landscape, shrouding every
hill in white:
Playing havoc with the trail-ways, lighting up the
darkest night.
Slow the temperature was shrinking,—it was forty-two
below,
And the ravenous frost bit deeply all life moving to
and fro.
Gone were all the flowers and foliage that had made
the summer bright:
And the gladsome sunny day-time shrank before this
wintry blight.
O'er the mountains to this village, that lay on Susitna's
stretch,
Coursed the natives, as their promise, to attend the
great potlatch,
With their dog teams and their snow shoes, wending
on their way in peace
Bearing emblematic tokens, that their friendship might
increase.

In this Athabaskan village where fair Yonatchna dwelt,
'Twas a cold December found them, all upon their work
intent :

Large new Kashims that the Chieftain willed to house
their many friends

Had been planned, were now completed well to meet
intended ends.

All the wood beads in the carving had been colored
with much taste,

And the ornamented native bone in moose-hide shields
were cased ;

Rarest teeth and shells were strung on thongs as amu-
lets to wear

About the neck, on arms and legs, and in the jet black
hair ;

And copper nuggets, which they worked in wonderful
design,

Were set in trays carved from the wood of tamarack
and pine ;

Great stores of fish and caribou, of moose so choice to
eat,

Were smoked and dried, and laid away with which
their friends to greet.

Tuluksaka proved himself a wise, efficient Chief,
He ruled them with an iron hand, but still would grant
relief :—

He took his share of all the pelts they brought in from
the hunt,

Exacting much, he gave them much, but would not
stand affront ;

His massive frame of giant size, a symbol to them all

That they must live the life he wished, or 'neath his
hatred fall.

Fair Yonatchna was his choice, and he this mandate
gave:

That she would be his wife ere long, or serve him as
a slave!

Full many a night she lay awake and wept sore, bitter
tears;

Full many a day each hour would seem an agony of
years;

The sad wan face had lost its smile, the eyes their lustre
too,

And all that sprightly grace so rare had vanished from
their view.

Bold Tuluksaka saw not this—at least he gave no sign,
Nor not a loving word he spoke to make her young life
shine:—

For natives have a heart as we, and feel the love flush
creep

About the heart and through the form, and o'er the
features leap,

*They too can feel the tenderness that quickens all the
soul,*

*That makes their world look brighter far, their men
of purer mould.*

From down Susitna's Valley came the first party of
friends,

Bearing the Thlingit banner high, where this their
journey ends.

First came the snow-shoe men ahead, to tramp new
fallen snow,

And laboriously they plodded on, while making head-
way slow;
Behind them, following hot their tracks, came twelve
dogs in one line,
Hitched to a native sled that bore their robes and gifts
so fine;
Five natives in their regalia formed thus the traveling
crew,
From their far distant village home they'd pushed their
long way through.
For several days, through storm and frost, these dusky
envoys came;
And each was dressed in his own style, as such became
his fame.
Tuluksaka, in robes of state, bade each a welcome
here,
Insured them of his friendliness to show they'd naught
to fear.
Keen-eyed and cautious in their sense, from bloody
tribal wars,
Bearing the proof of struggles fierce, as showed by
many scars
That much disfigured face and neck; and lent each a
distrust,
That second nature had enforced from many a back-
ward thrust.
Here enemy met enemy on this a neutral ground;
But through a custom's loyalty in peace they must
abound.
And so we find the several tribes, to mourn a Chief-
tain's death,
Were gathered here in courtesy as tribal laws attest.



“Snow-shoe men ahead”

Fair Yonatchna, queen of all, known for her native
grace,
To many tribesmen who had won her talisman in the
race,—
Was not in evidence to share the greeting that they
brought,
From all their people to this tribe, so they her pres-
ence sought.
In answer to the questions asked, her native tribes-
men plead,
That she was mourning for her Chief and father who
was dead;
She could not see them now, they said, but ere they
took their leave,
'Twould be a pleasure then to send her greetings to
their Chief.

So finally the last had come from far Aleutian shores,
Forming a goodly gathering here of natives with their
lores,
These they would chant at this conclave, in memory
of their tribes,
And seek again to taunt the evil spirits with their
jibes;
For all believed it rarest truth, that spirits in their
wrath,
Were still among them day and night, camped on their
very path
To intercept their full success, to cheat them of the
race,
To bring an evil to their lives when they entered the
chase;

And so they'd burn their incense long, and wail their
hatred loud,
Thus to drive off the evil ones and their attendant
cloud.

The Chieftain gathered one and all the nobles to his
side;
And there the shamans stood apart in one great cir-
cle wide;
The natives all had gathered too, that they might view
the meet,
And, with misgivings that were real, their visitors then
greet:
From ancient time the custom ran to kill sufficient
slaves
On meets like this, to lay them bare upon the dead
ones' graves,
That they might serve their masters well in that mys-
terious life,
Where pain was not, and sin was dead, and happiness
was rife.

The Chieftain rose, and silence fell while Tuluksaka
spoke,
And careful were the words he chose that none he
need revoke:
"I call upon the spirits all—of ours, and of our
friends;
I call upon the Great White Light to sanction well
our ends.
Our gathering here of purpose true,—we of ourselves
are naught,—

But you, the spirits that abound, have well our path-
way fraught

With good and evil deeds.

So now we worship all the good,—
We gladly pay in tributes that will fill you well with
food.

See, we have here a goodly host, and our dear Chief-
tain may

Come calmly in and feel the warmth as though it were
bright day.

We have no sins but that the fire will quench them
every one;

The spirits will detect the one who seeks his sins to
shun.

I stand here now before my friends, and make it plain
to all,

That these our worthy shamans there will answer
quick the call

For help to heal the sick, to drive the vilest spirits off;
And woe to him who comes to plead, and then returns
to scoff,

And here, my friends, my truest friends, those whom
I shall claim as mine,

If aught of you a grievance have—I hope none will
decline—

He shall come forth and make it plain, and all my
nobles here,

Will well detect the one at fault, and punishment
severe

Will meted be, with no escape, for by our dead Chief's
grave

I swore all this, but yesterday.

And so my friends, I crave
Your will, and the good spirit's will, to point us out
the slaves
Who shall, in duty to their Chief, prove that they are
not knaves,
But here submit to that one death to glorify their end,
And serve their Chief in other worlds, and there his
life defend."

He paused a moment in his speech, and searched well
every face
That filled that Kashim full throughout its every foot
of space;
Discerning not the one he sought, he raised his hand
on high,
Like some great cruel fiend, who now the thumb-
screws would apply,—
"I speak it here to all my 'friends, and with the spirits
plead,
I of a wife and helpmate, surely stand greatly in need.
There is but one that fills my wish, and let the spirits
frown
If so they wish,—conserve I thus my dear dead Chief's
renown.
She is the daughter of our Chief, who now lies down
below :
Sweet and fairest Yonatchna, on her my hand bestow."
A murmur of excitement ran throughout that anxious
crowd ;
But Tuluksaka stood there still, his manner firm and
proud.
"If she will wed me not," and here his voice grew hard
as flint,

“She then must serve me as a slave, and bear the slave’s imprint.”

That night when the assembly broke, and all the friends
were pledged,

And every heart was satiate with forms and vows
alleged :

A spirit of excitement moved among that multi-
tude,

For this the night to choose the slaves who’d drink
death’s noxious food.

And when the sun had screened her light for the rich
eventide,

And thrown her purple glory o’er the landscape far
and wide,

They drove them to the great corral,—a place stained
long ago—

And here stood Tuluksaka with the shamman in a
row.

Here all the slaves who served the Chief who now had
passed away,

Were singled out, that they might thus preclude the
least delay.

Five of the oldest slaves, and so, the ones of greatest
prize,

Were named as trophies to appease and quell the spirits’
cries ;

For on the morrow, when the sun was sinking to her
rest,

To their dead Chief these slaves would speed and fill
his one behest.

Among them was an older slave, who'd served his
master well,
One who was born to slavery and had passed
through fires of hell;
He stood erect, compassionate at this his new Chief's
whim;
But not a word he uttered here, nor cast a glance at
him—
A stoic in its truest sense,—no hurt could force the
cry;
And just but once throughout his varied life the heart-
broke sigh
Escaped him in a moment when his agony intense
Swept o'er him to unman him with its dire recom-
pense:—
His son had dealt a deadly blow to one who gave insult,
And he was hacked to pieces as the law's severe
result.

The news of their Chief's choice now reached fair
Yonatchna's ears,
And through that gentle heart there ran a multitude of
fears;
"To-morrow I must brave his wrath, and plead for this
one life:
To-morrow, I will break his will, and show him how
a knife
Can be thrust in the heart to deal a deadly, wicked
blow,
Just as he gave to me a thrust not many days ago.
To-morrow, and to-morrow," here the voice died in
despair,

The head bowed low again in grief that seemed beyond repair.
Full well she knew that she was marked a victim by her Chief;
But still her maiden heart rebelled in wrath, though full of grief!
Why should she give her life to him who could not win her love;
Or palliate the gross insult 'gainst which her goodness strove?
Her pride ebbed up in one great wave and dashed her fears to ground,
And fiercely swept her being through till she was captive bound:
Gone was the gentleness of soul which thrall'd her worshipers;
And o'er her face the hard lines crept which lent her courage spurs;
The native cunning swept within to supersede the calm,
And every movement of her friends was gauged with dire alarm:—
She would not tolerate a move but what her senses caught,
And her fears surged her through till they a world of hatred wrought.

The old slave now condemned to death had served her many years,
Had stood between her and all harm, thus to allay her fears;
Almost a father in his love, a mother in his care,—

His gentleness had thus endeared him to this heart, so
rare.
She lived again the life when she had left her home
in youth—
A child then in her innocence, born of a tribe un-
couth.
With rapid thought she brought to life that space of
time again
When she was sent to learn the lore taught by the pale-
face man;
And then those years spent in the task unfitting her to
live
Among her people here again—for she could never
give
The same hard service that her sisters gave as custom
made,—
To slave from morn till latest night, because they were
afraid.
Then next would come the cutting lash, which she had
oft seen fall,
And at the word of cruel lords the slaves were forced
to crawl.
Now Tuluksaka stood again, as thus her vision
wrought,
His hated presence poisoned all the good within her
heart,
His very voice had shriveled up the kind words she
would speak,
For he had proved himself the cur by punishing the
weak.
And then the face of her dear friend, the traveler met
that day,

Fate brought him here to tempt her love; but would not
let him stay.
How stout of heart, how strong of limb, how tender
were his words;
How holy sweet was this impulse, what memory it
affords!
She pictured him again when first he came into her
life,
When his young energy was spent upon the trail of
strife;
He looked so careworn, that her heart bled for this
youth, alone
Struggling to compass a hope that led him far from
home;
How manly were his attributes, how pure the words
he spoke;
How quick to flash a challenge back if doubt ever
awoke,—
In the one aim that prompted him to speak, or do a
deed;
And had he not proved a staunch friend when most
she was in need?
And now her heart leapt to new life, when once again
she vied
With sweet remembrance tried to trace the time, when
by her side,
He led the converse on and on, to show her his true
heart:
How strong it beat to manly aims, how eager to im-
part
The real terse feeling that he had for her dear friend-
ship's sake,

And how his hope was born on wings and kept his soul
awake.

And then again beside the grave, how sad his words
and strange,

That he should here protest his love midst her deep,
bitter pangs;

Emotion rose to riot now and, leaping to her feet,
She struck her breast in vowing now that nothing but
defeat

Could meet this Tuluksaka when he asked her heart
and hand—

To be his wife, and live with him in this her father-
land.

“Pure shall my love remain for him, and when he shall
return,

My heart will meet his heart half way, and with great
joy will burn.”

The morning had passed through the hours that
brought the noontime here;

And through the ordeal that would come, not one least
twinge of fear

Could gain an entrance to her heart,—for her resolve
was set:

Come what there might in her whole life, she never
would forget

That her pure heart would rise triumphant, as they
taught it would,

When battling for a righteous cause through a death-
dealing flood.

The men without her igloo, tramped incessantly all
day;

She kept within her confines well, and silently did
 pray
To the one God, whom they had taught would
 strengthen every soul,
And cleanse the bitterness from those who wished to
 be made whole.
A gentle knock without the door, a signal to her
 brought
And up she raised, a convert now to this new truth
 they taught :
And now her face shone with new life, her eyes were
 bright and clear,
And through her animated form the pulsing flash of
 cheer
Ran, as the sunbeams run to light the darkest ways
 of earth,
And turn the coldest spots that frown to a rebounding
 mirth.
"I come," she said, and opened wide the door which
 led without ;
And on her ears smote revelry that ended with a shout.
She made her way directly on toward the great
 Kashim,
Nor paused she here a moment's time, but boldly strode
 within.

The surging crowd made way for her as to the front
 she went,
And stood without the circle there,—which dire sug-
 gestion lent.
She knew that every eye was firmly fixed upon her
 face ;

She knew that many men within would gladly take
her place,
If they felt sure within themselves that they could win
her fight;
But courage in a woman's heart, has naught to do with
might:
They do not measure this or that; no obstacle's too
great
For their assault, having made sure that there is no
mistake.
As she stood there in her own strength, her father's
image wrought,
His great, brave spirit lived again, and to their senses
brought
The man and Chief to them once more and their hearts
leapt to aid
Her in her fight, for she was brave, and stood there
unafraid.
There to the left the five slaves stood, the shamans
to the right;
And full before her Tuluksaka towered to his great
height.
Behind him sat his nobles all, the very men she knew
Did have but kindly thoughts for her, whom she loved
all life through.

“My friends, I stand here as your Chief, the keeper of
my tribe;
'Tis not for me, or aught of you our customs to de-
ride.”
And here he cast a full, long glance at Yonatchna's
face,

As though her features true the secret of her heart
might trace.

“These honest slaves have signified their willingness to
die :

No thongs to bind them captives down : in fact each
one will vie

To meet his end unflinchingly, and leave such record
here,

That not the least of native men have aught in death
to fear.

If there be one among us here who dares the spirits’
wrath,

To plead the fate of the least one ; if that one reason
hath

Why now he should not meet that death to serve their
master hence,

Let him speak forth, but let him mark the future conse-
quence.”

The room grew still as death is still, while the Chief
took his seat.

Then stepped forth Yonatchna quickly to ward off
defeat ;

She spoke in low, deep, even tones and every ear was
strained,

And every eye was turned on her, and every soul re-
strained,—

“Our reigning Chief, and my dear friends, and you
our visitors,

Think not that I come here to pose as your inquisitors ;
When I was young, so very young, that scarcely I
could walk

And I knew not a mother's care, for death, led by the
hawk,
Took her from me, 'twas then I knew a gentle, but
firm hand
To guide my cause, and watch o'er me, to make me
understand.
He was a slave, my father's slave, and so he was my
slave,
They sent me to the Mission then, and I attention
crave
That I might plead the cause of one, and make my
pleading plain
To all who listen to my voice,—I will not long detain.
They sent me to the Mission, where I loved a God of
grace,
They taught me there a God who loves the entire hu-
man race;
A God who is so great and good that He can compre-
hend
The smallest mite of sinning and will love man to the
end.
They taught me that 'twas wrong to steal, and that
'twas wrong to lie,
And those who live uprightly here should never fear
to die;
They taught equality in men, and that the life God
gave—
Be he Chief or King, or white or black, or freeman
or a slave—
Was truly sacred, and for Him alone to choose his end.
And you, my Chief, what right have you to kill my
slave and friend?

I call upon your tarnished life the wrath of this great
God,

And here I prophesy to all, that low beneath the rod
Of persecution you will bow; you'll be a slave in-
stead,

Now let the consequences fall upon my uncrowned
head!

I call upon my father's friends to note my words
aright,

I call upon his spirit here to hold me to the light—
He does not ask that these slaves here should feel the
traitorous knives,

And I dare you, our coward Chief, to rob them of their
lives;

You are too low to crawl upon your hands and knees
to them

Whom you class as unworthy slaves, though in the
form of men.

You here did boast that you would claim me as your
lawful wife,

And if I scorned your base demand, a slave for all my
life

To you I'd be.

Well do your worst: but hear me still, you
knave,

I'd rather serve the lowest man, and be to him a slave,
Than ever stoop so low to let your vile hand touch my
flesh;

Or condescend to have you know my maiden's sacred-
ness!

I here defy you openly; and by my father's soul

I here proclaim you lower far than any low down mole.

I nigh could curse you as I stand before the Most High
God,
For so I hate you in my soul, and dare you wield your
rod."

They led her to her igloo door, and gently urged her
in;

While in the Kashim Tuluksaka sat morose and grim.

The female persons of the land were held in poor es-
teem;

They were the work-abouts on which the men-folks
cast their spleen.

And that a one of them should dare to desecrate their
hall,—

Their superstitions riot ran thus to bespeak their
fall.

Great Tuluksaka rose to speak, a steel glint in his eye,
And every ear was strained to hear how he would
make reply:

For Yonatchna, they well knew, had won full many a
heart

Among the braves and visitors who fain would take
her part;

And he well knew 'twas not himself alone who ruled
the tribe:

But what his nobles thought was best,—with them he
must decide.

"But yesterday," he thus began, his anger rising fast,
"I visited the holy place, and there my offering cast;
Up rose the spirit of the dead,—of Amugannock, Chief
Who was, and who now is the great, and I besought
relief,

And this he said to me, 'Go thou and kill five slaves
that I
Might feel again the prestige power, and with my
brethren vie.'
By the great spirit of the Hawk, by the fierce light of
day,
And by the prestige power of wealth, and by the spirits'
sway,
I now demand that these five slaves shall fill their mas-
ter's wish,
And bring contentment to our tribe.

As for that traitorous kiss
That now was shown to be a curse by Yonatchna here,
My nobles will advise with me.

My friends, there is no fear
But that full justice will be done; for no she dog can
link
Herself with us and cause dispute, and leave that last-
ing stink
Of dogs which bite the gentle hand with which we fed
them first;
I pray the mighty spirits here to make her life accursed,
And that the fiercest pangs of pain will sear her very
heart
Till she a loathsome spectacle, falls every bone apart."

As he stood there not one hand moved, not one eye
flashed a sign,
And not a man in that conclave showed aught his trend
of mind.
Stung to the quick at this defeat, he walked straight to
the slave,

Whom Yonatchna had plead for, and, with a vengeance
gave

Him one sharp slap upon the face with the back of his
hand,

To show his hatred deeper still than words at his com-
mand.

Back to the place from whence he spoke he strode with
anger wild,

Yet was his cunning uppermost his guests to reconcile.
“My dearest friends I here implore that you would pass
this by:

We have met here to bind our faith, and silence the
war-cry.

I deep regret these happenings, and for my nobles here,
And for my tribe grouped here about, I offer you good
cheer.

To-morrow is the fasting day.

And so to-night we meet

To summons all the spirits here, with loyalty to greet,
And to combat the evil ones in all the fulsome sense;
So now the shamman will begin to burn their sweet
incense:

But ere we thus invoke the gods, these slaves must
leave our sight,

And let them curse the very one who thus prolonged
their plight.”

Within the charmed circle wide the shamman took
command

And for the space of many days' joy rang throughout
the land.

Fair Yonatchna left alone within her own igloo,
Spent many hours of awful thought on what she had
passed through.
Wronged was her sense of womanhood, though full
her sense of grace,
For her great joy in what she did had left a glowing
trace.
Once and for all this new-made Chief must gauge his
attitude,
And treat her with severe restraint, since knowing how
she stood.

She sank upon her fur-robed floor, a penance to per-
form,
While in her heart still deeply raged the fury of the
storm:
Racked deep with doubts in her own mind as to her fit-
ness here,
To come before the great high God in purity sin-
cere
And ask for aught close to her heart, for sinning she
might be,—
For darkness still ruled half her life, through native
pedigree.
“Oh, Mighty Spirit, God, I mean, the God I learned to
love,
Look down in all Thy pity, now from Thy home up
above,
And watch o'er him who's gone away, I know not
where he strays;
But watch o'er him, I love him so, and will through
all my days!

Oh, bring him back to me again, for he is staunch and true,
And he can help me now so much with what I must go through."

A noise without her igloo door, and quickly up she sprang
But stood a-trembling, as the sound increased from knock to bang.
And louder still the tumult came, her name she clearly heard,
"Hello," she called out timidly, and waited for the word
That would reply.

"I've got a letter, so dismiss all fear,
From Harold Brown, you know the man, the one you nursed last year."

And quickly she unlatched the door, and bid him come within.

"And do you sure know Mr. Brown, and how is it with him?"

Her joy showed through her every word and set her eyes on fire;

It roved throughout her being swift and claimed her now entire.

She bade him sit upon the robe, that lay upon the floor,
And brought forth moose-meat dried in strips to pay this golden score.

'Twas naught to her that he sat there, a stranger to her sight,

Enough for her to know that he had brought this new delight.

He looked upon her in surprise, at her excited mood :
Still in the dark, much he surmised, but much he understood.

He knew the Indian custom well, so ate the proffered
meat,

And promising to call again, he then made his retreat.

Left all alone, she first made fast the door that led
without,

And glanced about the room, from fear and trembling
much in doubt.

Her shaking fingers scarce could hold the letter as she
read

Her name scrawled in a firm young hand, which much
her fancy fed ;

She feared to tear the envelope, perhaps the message
there

Was not the love note that she wished, for that would
be too rare.

Perhaps this missive was to tell her something he forgot,—

And thus she sat a victim to her own most anxious
thought.

Doubts came and went, fears found their birth, and
died when faith arose,

Then love sprang to the aid of faith and lent her sweet
repose :

So wistfully she opened now, the first in all her life,
This letter that had quite caused her such passing, bitter
strife.

“Fair Yonatchna,” thus it ran, “my dearest maiden
fair,

I have desire to write to you, 'midst all my worldly
care,
I find my every moment now is full of love for you;
And that the brightest stars that shine from that far
dome of blue,
Seem not so bright as did your eyes; and not so pure
a light
Does radiant fresh morning give as did your soul that
night
When first you let me look within, and hear those ring-
ing words,
That battled hard for mastery, and cut like gleaming
swords.
How is it with you, sweet my love? For I am ever
bold
To reach far out and win that heart that pales the
purest gold
In its rare fineness; do not think that I have e'er for-
got
The poignant happy moments there, beside that sacred
plot
Where lay your father, and your Chief; and then you
ran away;
But you would not do that again, for soon will come a
day
When I will come again to you, and you will under-
stand
That love is all, and life is sweet when love is in com-
mand.
I left you then because I knew that you would be alone,
And that your custom taught that you at this time must
atone

For him who died! But, dearest girl, let this thought
live with you
From that day that I last saw you, I've been sincerely
true.
And when the day comes, as it will, that I can feel
your love,
God will have smiled supreme on me from His throne
there above.
Good bye, good bye, and think of me, as I will think of
you ;
And ere the season has been spent, we'll greetings give
anew."

She read and re-read every word, and traced the
thoughts with care,
Lest she might miss the sweetness that his pure heart
had put there.
This was the holiest night that ever her fair life had
known,
She reveled in a wonderland that his dear love had
shown.

AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS
BOOK V

THE PRINCESS' DEFIANCE

WHEN morning broke, the restless sleep retreated from her eyes,
And she sprang from her hide-dressed couch
in wondering surprise;
There burned the simple light by which she read of
his pure love;
While from without she plainly heard the treading
footsteps rove
By her small igloo, now in haste, and now with patient
tread;
And then again the great ordeal through which her
young heart bled
Rushed over her; and deep again her outraged anger
rose,
And hatred made her slave once more.
“Did her Chief dare suppose
For one brief moment he could win the least shade of
her love,
And did he think that honor was the last thing reck-
oned of?”
No, he might treat her with contempt, or deal her base
insult;
But gladly true her steadfast soul knew well the sure
result,—
For not her Chief should know her charms, or sap
her holy life;

God gave her these, and she would guard with the
 keen cutting knife
Of her resolve, and hew the line straight with her
 sacred love—
He could not feel this fine instinct that armed her from
 above ;
Nor could he know her abhorrence to thus be bound
 a slave,
That would in time make her servile to dictates of a
 knave.
No, she would fight with all her strength, and treat
 with direst scorn
The least suspicious acts of him whose aim was e'er
 base born.
She stepped without her igloo door, and looked o'er
 hill and swale ;
She saw the wintry garb of white, fair as a bridal veil
Upon the vastness of the scene, spread out before her
 eyes,
Steeped in the beauty of her hopes, and glinting with
 sun dyes.
Outward her rich thoughts floated on, and beat against
 the skies
'Neath which there labored for her sake, he of the
 deep blue eyes—
Of all the men that she could know, the best that e'er
 would live,
To him she gave her wealth of love, she would her
 beauty give.

Outside the village confines stood a tent beside the
 trail,

And from its stove-pipe curled the smoke with movement of a snail,

And hung in one great cloud above.

No other sign of life

Could she detect, but well she knew that here in active strife

Dwelt her lone friend who was so loyal as to fulfill his word

And bring the message from her love. So she could well afford

To risk what censure might befall and call upon him there.

So hastily she took some food which she prepared with care,

As a thank offering thus to show she counted him a friend,

And that his wants she would supply, and his stay here defend.

She walked in haste along the trail till she had reached his tent,

Oh, that the one inside might gauge the depth of her intent.

She hardly knew now what to do, her courage almost failed,—

Dare she disclose her presence here?

Her ruddy cheeks now paled,

And she was trembling half from fear at her audacity;

Then boldly picked her courage up to meet what chance might be.

“See, I have brought you here some food, that I have well prepared

That you may understand that I would wish your
trouble spared;
For it is hard to cook one's food when one is on the
trail;
And you will understand, I know, that I can never
fail
To thank you, oh, so kindly, sir, for what you did for
him
Who now is somewhere over there along the Kusko-
kwim."

The tent-flap raised, as thus she spake, and there upon
the ground
Sat her new friend, and with him one whose hands and
feet were bound.
In answer to her startled gaze replied he casually,
"He froze his hands and feet, back there, you see," and,
pausing here,
He bade her enter, and quick too the proffered food
she brought.
"And thank you miss for bringing this, for we are
surely caught
In a bad place.
You see we aimed to reach the river's mouth,
And then return before the sun had crawled up from
the south.
But now," and here his face grew grave with doubting,
and with pain,
"I fear me much that my friend here will never bear
the strain
Of this long mush, that's hard at best.

His feet are frozen bad ;

And you must know 'tis many a mile before help can
be had :

Unless," and turning to her full, so he could catch
her eye,

"Unless your folks would lend a hand in this our pass-
ing by."

She hesitated ere she spoke and looked him earnestly,
Then paused a while, and he could see the wish creep
wistfully

About the rounded cheek and down toward the trem-
bling chin,

Traced by the tears that rolled fast from her eyes 'cross
dusky skin—

"Yes, I will aid you all I can, and I have friends who'll
be

A present help in your dire strait, for they can surely
see

That help is needed at this time. But you will me
obey

And never tell to any one that you fetched yesterday
The letter that my friend sent me; for things would go
amiss,

The Chieftain here is venomous, and he would resent
this;

And your friend would find suffering upon my own
account:—

Things are not as they used to be. If he knew, he
would doubt."

And shortly afterward she came, and deftly, with her
hands

Applied a sort of secret salve, and then with muskrat
bands

She wrapped the frozen members tight, then told him
to bring snow,

And into this she banked his feet, and watched the pro-
gress slow,

His face grew pale as one in death; the agony intense
Swept through his body to his face, to make its own
defense.

She seemed to feel the pain with him, and stepping to
his side

Sought in her own sweet way to show that pain he
must deride

If he would soon be well again.

“You know it will take long

To make you well so you can walk; and then you will
be strong

To go back home again up there, where my dear friend
still lives;

It must be nice there, I should think, such place con-
tentment gives.”

“Your friend is Harold Brown, I judge, well, he is a
great lad,

So true of heart and strong of limb; and he has never
had

The least trouble with any one, that you could call dis-
pute,

But not a man in that whole camp, would dare his word
refute.

But I will tell you more of him if I'm allowed to
stay.

Send me your Chief, I'll talk with him. I will his
doubts allay,
For all the trouble I might give.
My friend Pat, can go on;
And I'll remain with your folks here until I have
grown strong."

The temperature had sunk down low, till it read fifty-
two;
And few there were who cared to face the trail and
make it through.
Dense grew the air that, thick as fog, hung low to-
ward the snow;
And hardly could one breathe this frost in moving to
and fro.
But, 'twas the day set for his start, so Patterson struck
out;
The time was short to make the trip, but never did he
doubt
His own full strength, and the swift pace of all his
noble dogs,
Who were companions, tried and true, o'er trails and
hills and bogs.
Oh, could the world without but know the feelings that
will grow
Between a faithful dog-team and their master's heart
aglow;
They give and give with all the fineness of a human
being,
Clinched in the solitary wilds of this great Northland's
seeing.

The stretch was long, the trail was hard, the air burnt
like the fire;
But never would this brave, true soul give up the fight
entire.
Such are the brave souls who have carved that others
might traverse;
These are the men who much deserve, but often hear
the curse
Hurled at them by the timorous few who follow in
their steps,
To find their failing strength cry out the lie to their
concepts.
But let the world know, once for all, that heroes fight
and die
Alone, unsuccored and unloved, while with their
strength they vie.

His friend and comrade gone, McVaugh lay in his
tent alone;
Though promised succor from the tribe, he knew that
only one
Could be relied upon to give him aid in his distress;
Yes, only one in all this cold, forbidding wilder-
ness.
She came anon and brought her slave,—the slave she
saved from death,
And well he knew that she was much of other aid be-
reft.
The quiet manner of this maid, the sweetness of her
mould
Spake more to him in the true sense than volumes
manifold.

How tender were her words, how shy if chance left
them alone,
How quick to take her leave when once her duty had
been done.

The Chief had promised to give aid, and in return re-
ceive

Tobacco, tea, and calico, his tribe's wants to relieve.
But deep his hatred grew apace for Yonatchna fair,
And never once from this time forth would he her in-
sults spare.

And many of his followers, who in the past loved her,
Now treated her with dire contempt, and often cast a
slur

On seeing her return from out the tent where Mc-
Vaugh lay—

For she was true as heart is true, and ministered each
day.

So, sadder grew this fair sweet maid, as days succeeded
days,

And 'tis strange if she wondered not if such devotion
pays.

But gave she never hint nor word, but steadfast to her
task,

Dressed well the frozen members till the pain left him
at last.

He heard them speak to her one day, when she had left
his tent,

And heard her fiery soul spring out their base slurs
to resent:

"You call yourselves the brave men here, and so I
thought you then,

But now I know too well I judged you wrongly as
brave men.
Where are the valiant gone I knew when father was
your Chief?
Then you did seek me, one and all, that I might grant
relief ;
And now you know that care I naught for all your
ridicule,
It hurts me not, and more it proves that you are but
the fool.”
With this she walked straight up the trail, proud as
her ancestors,
And wavered not in her straight course from these her
sequestors.

The Irish fire leapt in McVaugh and burned to fiercest
flame,
Anger there was in this just man to hear her put to
shame ;
He hobbled well without the tent, and spake as natives
do :
“You Indian devils, you vile rogues, you coward sneak-
ing crew ;
Let me but hear that once again you dare this girl de-
ride,
And you’ll be laying cold and stiff along the bare trail’s
side.
You must not think that I’ll stand here while you insult
this maid,
Though you may be a thousand strong, you know I’m
not afraid

To face you all, and you might tell your Chief that I
am here,
And will make good the word I speak,—of him I have
no fear.”

They slunk away, as Indians will, when rightly called
to task ;

They greatly dread to hear the word that does their
fear unmask—

So days passed on, and days grew long, as the glad
spring drew near

With all its glorious sunshine bright ; but he now had
a fear,

For by this time brave Patterson should have turned
on the trail.

What if his comrade had misjudged the trip, and thus
should fail

To make this point before the snow had sunk to mother
earth ?

Grave was his dread, and less he showed the maid his
native mirth.

Day after day he took long walks along the river's
course,

And questioned all the native men of this and that
stream's source :

For much he feared that these small pups would open
in advance

Of the Susitna,—the main flow,—his partner's doubt
enhance.

For, when the spring breaks with its flow of warm air
and sunshine,

It eats the billowy whiteness from the mountain's top-
most shrine,
Down leap the turbulent waters in their race toward
the sea,
And gut the streamlets clear of ice.
So nature holds the key
To vast dominions of the North, but long her warning
gives
Ere she enacts this tragedy; and none within her lives
To tell a different tale than this: that nature at her
best
Aids every one of her dear sons well to conserve their
quest.

AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS
BOOK VI

THE PERSECUTOR

THAT spring had come the village life took on
an active mood;
Their visitors had left them long; and so a
quest for food
Was carried on, as one by one, the huntsmen went
away
Till in that village scarce was left a man from day to
day.
For it devolves upon the men to stalk the roaming
game;
As on the women-folks it rests well to preserve the
same:
They must prepare the hides for clothes, by tanning
them to wear,
And they must see that meat is dried, and then be-
stowed with care.
Their lordly masters like not work, for it is truly
known
That native men will seldom toil and ably play the
drone.

Fair Yonatchna's efforts rose to still her Chief's com-
plaint,
Worked, as the other women worked, though often
chill and faint;
But she was treated with contempt by these poor, igno-
rant folk

Who drank the poison of their spleen from men of
meaner yoke.
She was untaught in their crude work, save seeing how
'twas done,
And doubly hard it came to her, though she with pa-
tience won—
Men stood in wonder as they watched her try to tan
some hide:
Bending so lowly o'er her work, with faultless marks
of pride.
With her small hands and shapely form, her wealth of
jet black hair,—
None sweeter in the whole bleak land could e'er with
her compare.
But had their Chief not told them in his unmistakened
terms,
That favors would be given him whom Yonatchna
spurns?
And few there were who disobeyed, and just these very
few,
Were barely civil to her now, since their Chief's wish
they knew.
For had he not here, openly, expressed his wish to
wed?
And had she not refused his hand, his igloo, and his
bed?
Their Chief had told them in plain words that she
loved the firebrand
Who feigned his sickness with them once, that he
might win her hand.
“She spurned us all, her truest friends, she says we are
not fit

To touch her hand, nor win her love, nor in her presence sit.

So why should we coerce her whims, or hold her as the best?

What is there in this female dog that she should still be blest

With all attention we can give, because her father Chief

Had fostered her and cared for her?

I hold but as a thief

One who would take our substance and meanwhile still spurns our love;

I do not know, my tribes-men all, what we are thinking of.

True, our dead Chief did counsel us to look to her with care;

But is there one among us who has not done his full share

In helping and in petting her? And what is the return?

Why, my dear friends, she slights us all, and our love doth she spurn!

She loves a pale-face, this I know; a white-skinned dog who here

Imposed on us, and lived on us; and well I saw the fear Spring to his face, as to a cur's, when I did bid him go.

And so he went, as a thief goes with trembling heart, I know.

You must not think that I bear spite because she would not wed;

But I do here proclaim to you, that, for the honored dead

I feel that she would bring insult to this her lineage
 tribe,
 If she would wed a pale-faced dog, and leave us in her
 pride.
 She must be humbled to the dust, and you, my brave
 tribesmen,
 Must see to it that this is done before he comes again.”
 With this he turned and sought his lodge, while the
 braves stood aghast!
 What did this mean? Was *this* their Chief who dared
 defy the past,
 Where every maiden's honor stood a glory to them all
 As from the dead past o'er such sins they always threw
 a pall.

Here is a lore song that I learned, this is the way it
 ran,
 Known by the learned of this tribe, and sacred to each
 man:—

LORE SONG*

Command we our maidens that they should be spotless
 and loyal:—
 The Spirits demand it to ward off the chance of our
 fall;
 In long ages past this their emblem; let ours now attest
 That virtue must still regnant be, if our nation be
 blest.

* Handed down from Chief Ik-Khagamute, whose fame still lives among the Indian tribes for his unquestioned loyalty to his people, his great powers in war, and in the chase. The author gives it as nearly word for word as is possible to insure rhythm.

This one lonely instance conserve in a sense to display
How our fathers were firm in their efforts their honor
to stay :—

For a wee babe was born ; but quickly dispatched was
its life ;

Its mother was shielded, for she laid not claim to be
wife.

The Chief called aloud for her name, that example be
made,

The tribe was compelled now, to hold up to shame this
vile maid ;

The igloos were searched, every child and its parents
must come

To the great meeting square,—not one was this edict
to shun.

They came all excited, their honor shone forth from
their eyes :

Their Chief, and his nobles, their slaves, and their chil-
dren and wives ;

From every low home that was built in the bowels of
the earth,

Even every wee babe was brought from the place of its
birth.

Not a one was exempt, for the edict had gone into
force ;

The Chief and his nobles and shamman were there to
endorse.

Deep painted and plumed came accusers with low
steady tread,

And bearing the proof of the guilt of the maiden
unwed.

The Chief stood apart, while his brow showed no sign
of a frown :

The proof of the stoic,—the badge of his tribe's wide
renown

For their fierceness in war, for their unconquered speed
in the chase,—

On him it devolved to wipe out every sting of disgrace.

The women and children and tribesmen stood some
way apart,

While accusers stood close by their Chieftain, their
proofs to impart.

A deep silence fell o'er that gathering ; almost hearts
ceased to beat,

As the Chieftain their faces searched boldly, command-
ing them to speak.

“Our Chief,” came the voice of the leader, “is won-
drous and brave ;

We bow to your courage in battle ; and audience we
crave :

We come, O, our Chief, at your mandate, we bow to
your will,

We come that your eyes may behold, that your doubts
may be still.”

And then to the eyes of the anxious who had been de-
layed ;

They brought forth a bundle, unwrapped it, and
showed the dead babe!

The Chief in his anguish stood silent; intent was his
thought!

“Let the men and their families be counted, the guilty
be caught.”

His voice rang like far distant thunder, command on
command,

And broke on the ears of his people, renowned through
the land.

The families were counted and passed on, then stood
off apace,

Till they found one of them to be missing, now hid in
disgrace.

The accusers again faced their Chieftain, and each
bowed his head;

“O, Mighty, the Chief of our people,” and their voices
showed dread,

“We have counted thy people, O, Chieftain, and one is
not here;

She is hid from the sight of thy visage through anguish
and fear.

“Bring her forth that our people may see her, this sin-
ner accursed!”

Men sprang to the igloos in haste now; through the
doorways they burst,

They scoured the homes that were empty; but no one
they found,

Till they entered their Chief's only igloo, and there
she was found.

They dragged her in haste through the door-way, and
into the square,
Where the people fell back in amazement, her anguish
to share;
But the old Chief, her father stood boldly, not a tremor
he showed;
Then quick to the side of his daughter,—they feared as
he strode.

He cursed the vile spirits, then struck her, contempt for
the sin;
Contempt for the flesh of his flesh that she let spirits
in
To defile, and corrupt, and destroy her, and thus heap
up shame
On the race of his father, his people, his untrammelled
name.

And turning he walked off in silence his head bending
low,
Not willing to show to his people the force of that
blow!
They took her and caged her for six days with no
water, no meat;
But bare to the sun's heat they left her to beg, to en-
treat.

They passed daily by her to taunt her and scourge her
anew;

On her ankles and wrists they hung fish-teeth that cut
the skin through ;
Though water flowed outside her prison they gave her
no drop !
In their firmness of heart to be loyal they aided her not.

On the sixth day, nigh dead from exhaustion she lay
in a heap,
From her body they tore all her clothing and painted
her feet ;
In a cage they had built for the purpose, with breasts
in full view
That her dead baby's spirit might suckle and her life
renew.

Thus cleansed from her base sin and folly, the spirits
forgave ;
Her forefinger cut from her left hand, her future to
pave,
She was publicly wed to her consort, who knew well
the chase,
The shamman implored then the spirits their sins to
erase.

But for years she must hide from her sisters her face
and be lorn,
And amulets gather and wear she, till a baby was born,
Then she knew that the spirits forgave her, that she
was made new :
That the future was planned for her living,—the sun
would shine through.

AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS

BOOK VII

THE PURSUIT

THE spring had come in earnest now, with all its glorious light;

And here the pussy-willows sprang to greet the living light;

The snow had left the south hillsides, and tufts of tender grass

Waved to the breeze, and lent a charm as o'er this course she passed :

For Yonatchna tramped alone in this sweet solitude ;
Always fair nature overjoyed and filled her soul with food.

The radiant sunshine of the day, the never dark'ning nights ;

The beauteous flowers, the fragrant breeze, filled her with rare delights.

Here could she find the one true salve for all her wounded pride ;

And here her thoughts found life again in all their range so wide.

'Twas on this very hill that he had met her long ago,
And he would fain have drawn her near, where now sweet flowers grow.

And here it was that she had learned he really cared for her,

For, with a maiden's instinct clear, she saw he did concur

With all she said, when his wild soul had voiced its
riot out,
For eagerly he drank her words when the truth came
about.
How manly he had plead to her, and opened wide his
heart,
In his firm pleading for her wish to judge him as a
part
Of her true self, in this one way, that she was his
best friend,
And evermore he would endorse, and her sweet self
defend.
The flowers were here, in her mind's eye, and here the
running vines,
And over there, from where she stood, the honeysuckle
twines
Its tender branches with the spruce, in seeking for
support;
And just beyond the gypsóphila filled the flowery port.

This place was sacred to her now, and every leaf which
grew,
Flamed radiant with life-giving love the vivid day-
time through;
No, nevermore should night-time come, for love had
paved the way,
And dark or light, for all the time life would mean
glorious day.
Hearing a noise behind her, quick she turned to seek
the cause,
Who could intrude upon her now? As she looked
came a pause.



Chief Tuluksaka

Wild beat her heart as there she saw the Chieftain
crouching low,
A fiendish leer shone from his eye, and dark his evil
brow.

“What would you here, my Chief?” she cried, as fear
sprang up with stress
And clogged her senses as to how she best should him
address.

“Oh, I was walking o’er the hills, by chance I saw you
here,
Sweet Yonatchna, I would know why you do show
such fear
At this my presence on this day, at such a time as this?
Is there aught now that you would say, or aught that
is amiss?”

“Oh! I know why I should fear, you do not mean me
well;
You have no love for me I know that you will have to
quell:
Then why have you come here I pray, you heaped on
me a curse;
Now I know well your deep intent—

You still do wish me worse!

I know you do not care for me for arts I can employ,
Much rather do I think that you my good name would
destroy.”

“You think this, do you, oh my maid? You are so
wondrous wise,
You think because you are well versed in many pale-
faced lies

That you are far above your tribe; I curse them every
one,

And so my tribesmen curse them too.

Who will you lean upon

When he, your friend, has come again and robbed you
of your pride,

As he will surely do? Or will you take his love betide,
And boldly hold your head as now, and shun us as
you do?

But I will rob him of his first sweet kiss,—yes him and
you!”

And like a lynx that creeps upon his helpless, cornered
game,

So the Chief crept toward this maid, with not a twinge
of shame.

Wild grew her eyes, fast pulsed her heart, while down
the bare hillside

She ran in fright, her trembling limbs o'er doubled
thrice their stride,

As over rocks and stunted pines, whose branches reach-
ing out,

Rended her dress of caribou, and scratched her all
about.

Down, down, and ever down she plunged, the twigs
caught in her hair,

Her face was torn and bleeding now, her soul was in
despair,

For just behind her plunged the Chief, an oath in
every breath

He swore by devils and by ghosts, by all the fiends of
death!

She side-stepped him as he reached out to grab her in
his clutch,
And prone upon the bare hillside he stumbled; and a
touch
Of wild new hope leapt to her breast; she downward
sprang again,
Crippled and torn, and bleeding much; but heart and
brain still sane.
This bare mishap stood her in stead, for fair into the
arms
Of old McVaugh she fell prostrate, safe from immedi-
ate harms.

He laid her there upon the ground, and drew his hunt-
ing knife,
The Irish blood in him was fierce to let out some
skunk's life.
He ran about the hill in hopes of finding cause for
fight,
And once he thought he saw the semblance of a fleeting
sprite
Dodge through the tangled, scrubby brush; but when
he reached the place
No single living thing he saw that he might give it
chase.
Back to the spot where he had lain poor Yonatchna
down,
He hastened with redoubled steps, with still a murder-
ous frown
Upon his face.
"God curse the cur who would attack this
maid,

And hell burn out his coward heart till he is well repaid."

She still lay prone upon the ground, insensible to life,—

The poor, worn body, limp as death! So raising up his knife,

Till its blade glistened in the sun, to consummate his oath

Wildly he swore o'er that still form :

"Oh, God, I am not loth

To seek the coward heart of him who dare assault this girl,

So make my arm now doubly strong, to strike the skulking churl.

And I swear here, o'er her still form, and by my mother's name,

And by the very drops of blood that run throughout my frame,

By my own being, and more I swear—I swear my sacred soul,

That every drop of poisonous blood that he can claim as whole,

Shall be scattered upon the ground, to poison this fair earth,

And every spot that it escapes will blossom with its mirth."

He raised the poor weak body up in his great sinewy arms,

And bore his burden lovingly, with all her maiden charms

Entrusted well for safe keeping; for all the native men

That he passed by seemed not to care her honor to defend.

She had nursed him, so he would now repay her for her deeds;

His staunch heart knew this best of ways to satisfy her needs.

He knew that by her acts to him she had lost all her friends,

He knew the native custom well: that none can make amends

For what they do that might reflect upon their tribal pride,

And she a Chieftain's daughter, too, this insult more beside.

To her igloo he bore her now and laid her gently down;

And his crude efforts to help her brought to his face a frown.

Now, if she were but man instead, he'd know just what to do;

But duty urged his staunch heart on, and he would pull her through.

He deftly bathed her face and hands, and wrapped her robe about;

And from his tent he brought some rum and gave her with a doubt.

And then beside the couch he sat, and watched the fragile form

As still as death, while in his heart raged a deep, bitter storm

Against the beast, who ever dared to wreak such havoc
here.

“It calls for vengeance and I’ll surely seek him far and
near.”

And now the eyelids trembled some with urge of com-
ing life,

And her whole form convulsed in memory of the awful
strife.

She gave one scream that smote his heart, as half from
out the bed

She sprang in frenzied innocence, from her pure girlish
dread :

“Oh, save me, save me,” loud she called, and quick he
caught her arm,

“There, there, you’re safe, safe for all time.

I will not let him harm

You for one instant, see, I’m here. It is your friend
McVaugh,

Your friend I say, look well at me, for I was there
and saw

How it all happened ; you’re safe now and I am here to
stay ;

There, lie back now, and look at me, I’ll watch by you
each day

Until you’re well again, and then your Harold will be
here,

Oh, he will come ; I know he will, so you need have
no fear.”

She looked at him in that strange way, which showed
the mind a blank

To all the present happenings.

And she had him to thank
For this her present hopeless state!
"Oh, if I could undo
It all again, and let her be the native maiden, true
To these her native friends, in fine, as in the past she
was;
But she is true, and they are wrong; and I have been
the cause."
And thus McVaugh nursed her for days, while she
begged piteously
In incoherent ramblings wild that he would set her free
From her strange agony.
"For he will come, I know he'll come
And kill us both. He said he would; and oh, you'll
see him soon
Come through the door, with all his might! Oh, save
me, save me now!
Oh, please, my Chief, do not do this, for you are
strong, and how
Can I protect my lonely self, Help! Help!! Oh, help I
say!"
Then she would clasp McVaugh's great hand, and beg
that he would stay;
Beg him with all her frenzied fear in her poor native
way.
Tears oft would spring from McVaugh's eyes as he
would comfort her,
And talk for hours of Harold Brown, and get her to
concur
In all he said about their friend, how he was good and
brave;
And how in all sincerity he'd come her love to crave.

Thus quietly he brought her back to reason once again ;
And she would go when he went forth ; but all their
walks in vain :

For Patterson had not appeared.

“He’ll have to travel nights,
Now that the snow has mostly gone. I see the north-
ern lights
Are playing wild, and that portends we’re going to
have more cold ;
He must have had a trip of it, and likely has been
fooled.”

And thus the days dragged on, and now approached
the month of May,

And Patterson reeled in one day, much worn in every
way

From his long trip ; his weary dogs were naught but
skin and bone

From untold hardships they had met, making this
journey home.

AN ATHABASCAN PRINCESS
BOOK VIII



THE WEDDING

THE season had cut off their hopes to reach the
Kuskokwim,
And earnestly they set to work to put their
tent in trim:
For they must wait here for a space until the ice had
broke
Upon the Yetna's watercourse, so then they set to
work,
Whip-sawed their lumber for a boat, though crude
from lack of tools,
Still worthy: for they gained their art from these wild
northland's schools.
McVaugh soon told his partner all about the Indian
rake;
But spake no word to the poor maid for her own com-
fort's sake.

They watched the Indians cautiously, and met them
with contempt
When aught of them would come near by and sneak
around their tent.
And Yonatchna kept aloof from people of her blood,
Always she lingered with these two,—in safety by
them stood.
She cooked their meals, and cleaned their tent, and
took a wondrous pride

In what attention they would give.

And sitting there beside

The fire she told them tale on tale of tribesmen of
renown;

But only once, up to this time, spake she of Harold
Brown:

“He said he’d come, and I had hopes that he would
come ere this,—

I wonder if he’s lost his way, or aught has gone
amiss!”

They quieted her fears in this, and told her he would
come;

That he had told them he’d be here before June’s stir
and hum.

“He has a week yet to make good, and you can count
on him,

For he’s the hardiest chap we know along the Kusko-
kwim.”

A change had come o’er this fair maid, the reader will
observe,

Though staunch as steel and proud and pure, with all
her sweet reserve,

Yet, she had lost a something here, and gained a some-
thing there,

Which made her less impulsive girl, and more the
woman fair.

When she spake now she weighed her words with the
precisest care,

Lest she might utter something that in justice was not
fair;

And oft these two firm friends of hers would relate
tales from life,
While she would listen avidly and marvel at the strife.
And when they'd leave her igloo as the night drew on
apace,
Quietly she'd sit alone.

And o'er her wondrous face
Would creep a frown, or flash a light, as though she
weighed their words,
Which cleared her vision's mental scope, like rays from
gleaming swords.
And every night before she sought her couch for rest
and sleep,
To her great God she humbly prayed that He her love
would keep.

One morning ere she left her bed she heard her friends
without,—
Their tent was moved beside her home, to still her fear
and doubt,—
Welcome, she knew not whom, except his was a
friendly tone
And much beloved, for glad their talk, and through it
was no moan.
She listened now ecstatically to catch the comer's
voice:
Hoping on hope that it would cause her lone heart to
rejoice.
The voices seemed to her, constrained, for oft she lost
the sound,
Then they would ring again, the more her senses to
confound.

No time for her to lie abed, when hopes sprang to her
breast,
There was no peace for her now that her mind could
find no rest.
Quick from her couch she sprang, and dressed her with
artistic care;
Her every movement set on fire her hoping he was
there.
In haste she strung about her neck the beads he liked
so well,
And donned her dainty moccasins he told her looked
so "swell."
Her hair was braided and hung down, and at the ends
were tied
With dainty bows, stained deepest red, cut from the
moose-calf hide.
Her black eyes shone with hope and fear unto their
very deeps;
And o'er that face, for long careworn, a flush of
beauty creeps.
It seemed she waited ages there before she ventured
out,
But hope restrained her ere she sought to still her lin-
gering doubt:
"If he is here, my eyes must see, my heart must know
the joy;
My ear must hear his voice again, my soul his love
enjoy."
Quick from her igloo she stepped forth, but paused
now where she stood,
Within the cadence of a voice that seemed to her so
good!

“It must be him,” her wild heart said, “Oh, God, how good Thou art
To bring him to me once again, and this great joy impart.”

She heard his words so clearly now, they mentioned her own name,
And all a-tremble back she turned, her purpose now gone lame.

“I’ll wait until he comes to me, his heart will find me here ;

He can not long remain away.”

She heard a foot-step near
And now it paused at her own door, then gently came a knock :

She tried to bid him come within, but silence, stood to mock

Her every effort to speak out, “Come in, come in,” she cried,

But silence reigned supreme instead. Had her own senses lied ?

Her great eyes stared ; with wild heart throb she bade him come once more.

But not a whisper could be heard, and no one oped the door.

Knock, knock ! She heard it loud again, and trembling like a fawn

Just startled from its morning’s sleep by the rude huntsmen’s horn

She staggered wildly to the door, “Oh, Harold, is that you ?

Oh, do come in,” her weak voice said, as slight her courage grew.

The door was fairly broke within; and like a mighty
blast
That sweeps its path she felt two strong and loving
arms at last
Close round her in a warm embrace, and then she
knew no more
Love had rewarded her at last: love had its golden
store.
“Sweet, oh, how sweet it is to see your own dear lov-
ing self;
And just to know that once again, my arms can you
engulf!
Dear Yonatchna, darling girl, how great has been my
gain,
Now that I have my own sweet girl in lieu of all this
pain;
But since I see you still are safe, you’ll let me tell you
now
That love has crowned you queen of all, and my heart
will endow
With all the beauty that can come to any one in life;
And nevermore again shall you taste aught of this
world’s strife;
For you will be my wedded wife, and proudly I’ll pro-
tect
Your every moment with my care, so you may walk
erect.”

She did not speak a word as yet, this moment holy
sweet,
Joy surely crowned her steadfast soul with a pure love,
complete.



"Her mission-book served"



Closer became his hold on her, as sweet the moments
grew;
Time had no meaning to them now, as their hearts
beat anew.
And when she looked into his eyes and saw the pas-
sion there,
And felt his warm breath fan her cheek, she doubted
not his care.
And holy sweet to her pure soul was his first, fervent
kiss:
Not for the world would she retreat, and this dear
moment miss.
She led him gently to the robes, and down upon the
floor
She made him sit; where he then told his travels, o'er
and o'er.
She then prepared some food for him, which he ate
with a zest;
And when he could, he took his leave, to seek much-
needed rest.

McVaugh had told Brown what he knew about that
fateful day;
And how, for days and days he sat, while in her bed
she lay,
Begging so piteously for life, in her delirious mind,
And to the fact that she was safe, completely was she
blind.
He told him how, through nursing him, she won the
hate complete
Of all the natives here about; and when they'd chance
to meet,

They gibed her in deep, bitter tones that she had broken
laws,
And that she was a slave, impure, unworthy of their
cause.

“And I swore them many an oath that there would
come a day,
When I would meet this scoundrel, and he'd have that
score to pay;
But so far he has kept well hid, though I have searched
alone.”

“'Tis not for you, McVaugh,” Brown spoke, “to me
he shall atone.

And I have still another debt,—for days that are gone
by:

I have my bearings better now, I'll with his cunning
vie.

Oh, do not fear, he is a dog of the low mongrel breed:
And so he thinks since he has strength, that others
shall take heed.

But he shall pay, or I'll forfeit my every drop of blood.
My vengeance shall he surely feel; it surges like a
flood”—

He rose and stalked from out the tent, his great form
showing fair

Against the evening's waning light; none might his
purpose share.

McVaugh now followed in his wake, well to protect his
friend

Against the cunning of the man whose braves would
him defend.

The young man hurried to the place where dwelt the
reigning Chief
And not a moment did he pause to grant his ire
relief,—
Crash went the door, when his great strength had met
this feeble bar,
And he stood there with lion heart to face this Chief-
tain cur.
Low on the robes the Chieftain lay; but sprang quick
to his feet,
His muscled form in attitude an enemy to meet.
“So here you hide, you cursed scum, you Chieftain of
black hell;
You base defiler of the pure and innocent as well;
Think not that I am not aware of what a dog you are,
And how the devil keeps your kind that this earth he
may mar.”

Chief's lowering eyes grew hard as flint, a leer de-
formed his face,
His muscles tightened with a snap, as when he took
the chase.
Then glancing for a moment sharp about his dark
igloo,
He raised his head in vaunting pride.
“And so your friends and you
Are come to rule instead of me? You stole a foolish
girl
By your base flattery and food. You are the vilest
churl
That eyes have ever looked upon.”
And like a man insane

Harold was at his throat, and fought like a wild hurricane.

Flash went a knife with lightning speed, and deep into his arm

The long blade sank. But Harold, quick to ward off further harm

By such base treachery, sprang clear and, drawing his keen knife,

“You cowardly devil’s whelp,” he cried, “now, this shall cost your life.”

But ere he could make good his threat, the strong arm of McVaugh

Had seized him firmly by the arm.

“Come, Brown, this is no way.”

And then he saw the blood gush forth from out the deep cut there,

And quick as flash his pistol came.

But all in war is fair :

“You skunk of a declining tribe, you’ll fight a good square fight,

And by the skittering cats of day, we’ll show you who is right.

Come now, and drop that knife of yours ; your men are here to see

That fairness will be done to you. Drop it, and let it be,

Or you will never fight again. There, now, come on without.”

And Harold gave up his own knife, to quash the Chieftain’s doubt.

The stalwart form stepped quick without in face of all
his tribe,
'Twas not for him, the bully now, to give them room
to gibe.
Strong as the bear that roams the hills, as quick of eye
and limb;
Who was this cur of a pale-face who thus dared chal-
lenge him?
His fury rose in face of all, and giving one wild
yell,
He sprang toward the younger man; but quick as
word can tell,
A side-step, and a thundering crash fair on his vicious
face,
Now stunned him for an instant; then loud jeers from
his own race
Quite maddened him, and fury spent its spleen upon
his mind.
Then like a bull, pricked to attack, what semblance to
mankind
Was left in him, had been destroyed and straight to-
wards his foe
He sprang. They whirled, now clinched and broke;
the fight was never slow,
Arms shot out with the lightning's speed, and landed
fair and full;
Now down, now up again, and round with many a
lurch and pull.
McVaugh and Patterson stood there, their pistols in
their hand,
Stern in their attitude, to hold the natives in com-
mand.

Well were they watching every move of the grim
fighters there,
And saw with satisfaction that their friend had
strength to spare.
The Chieftain's face was red-blood-stained, and his
eyes staring wild.
"You'll say I stole this native girl, or robbed you of
your child?
You skulking cur," fast fell the blows upon the head
and face,
"I'll show you where you're standing now, and how
we keep the pace."
This all from Harold as he sprang clear of all blows
that fell
With awful force; then back again with a victorious
yell.
The Chieftain's strength was waning fast; by all
'twas clearly seen,
When somewhere from without the crowd came a
heart-rending scream:
And full before them sprang a girl, pale, and with
heaving breast,
"Oh, Patterson, oh, please, McVaugh!" she pleaded
with all zest,
"Save him, oh, save him from this beast. See, Yon-
atchna pleads,
On bended knee; oh, please, McVaugh, I served you
in your needs,
And now you will not turn a hand to save my Harold
there!"
And she clung to him piteously. "You think I do not
care!

My poor, poor girl, 'twill soon be o'er. Remember
well the hill
When he attacked you that day. Think how he tried
to kill
Your precious life's virtue. Think! Think! And let
your love avenge
The base, deep insult that you felt. You know we are
your friends
And will stand by him and by you."
"Oh, please, oh, please, McVaugh,
Let him not suffer for my sake!" And screaming as
she saw
Them both fall heavily to the ground. The fight at
last was o'er,
For now the Chieftain lay quiet, still,—no use to fight
him more.
She sprang towards her champion as he lay upon the
ground:
And wept hysterically and kissed the one great gaping
wound
Upon his cheek.
"Oh, Harold dear, the joy of all my life!
O, God! that I should cause you this,—this bitter,
bitter strife.
Can you forgive me, Harold dear? Oh, speak to me
sweetheart,
So I may hear your voice again, and I'll use every art
To nurse you back to life again as it was yesterday."
And sobbing thus, they gently led the stricken maid
away.

The following day Harold was out, though his wound
gave him pain:

And all the natives ready were to greet him with
acclaim.

To them strength was a mark of rank, a trust of
worthiness;

And eagerly fair Yonatchna they would now address.
She was again their idol fair, and her great heart did
melt

Before the native warmth again,—no hatred now she
felt,

Her life was much too full of love to let a shadowy
thought

Enter her soul, since it was love that had this beauty
brought.

They left there when the stream ran full, to reach the
Kuskokwim;

And life was one great pulsing joy in sharing it with
him.

Her Mission book served for McVaugh rightly to
marry them,

And he was classed as minister from this time with
the men.

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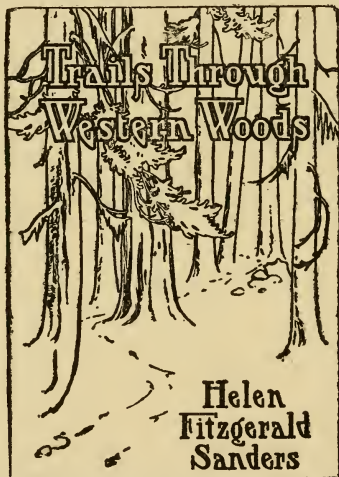
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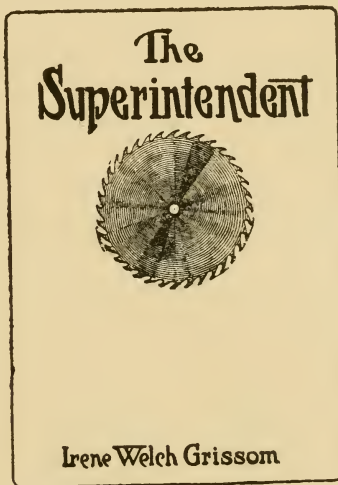
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