The Klootch Girl

N. de Bertrand Lugrin

Illustrated by

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The Klootch Girl

The story of Timel-soo and the man who tried to harden his heart

By N. DE BERTRAND LUGRIN

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANZ JOHNSTON

Vane Sully plunged out of the underbrush beside the mouth of the creek, and swung to the left, following the trail by the sea that led to Clonoot. A bronze-bearded giant of a man, with huge shoulders and swinging arms, his long legs and light-stepping feet spurned the tangled salal and matted blackberry vines. Behind him, across the vast sweep of the Pacific, the sun was setting in ruddy splendor. Before him, over the sand dunes, lay the Indian village, a circle of native huts, fringing a half moon of silver beach.

Chief Klattomupt sat cross-legged, on a square of cedar matting at the doorway of his handsome lodge, the great outside posts of which were carved with symbols of his totem, the Bear. He smoked his pipe and stared over toward the sunset. Vane Sully, however, knew quite well that the Indian had seen him while he was a half-mile away. Drawn up, at the chief's feet, was a handsome canoe.

Sully gave him greeting in Chinook, "Kla-ha-ya," and Klattomupt grunted, "Kla-ha-ya, tilicum," in reply. Then they both stared at the sunset.

One after another, the doors of the huts were softly opened, and women's heads were thrust out. A battlement of black eyes was focussed on the white man. Some little native children, digging clams, turned to stare at him, then, frightened at his size, they scurried up the bank to right and left, and disappeared almost instantly in the tall bracken that grew beyond reach of the salt.

But old Klattomupt was quite unmoved. In the bygone days, had he not been down to Victoria, year after year, to paddle in the canoe races? Had he not met all sorts and conditions of white men, from the governor himself in his silk hat and long coat; the admiral in his beautiful braided uniform; the

red-coated soldiers, the haughty policemen; down to the lowest type of beach comber and the dirty half-castes. Moreover, he himself possessed a shining top hat, a cane and a Prince Albert coat. Vane Sully knew all about Klattomupt. He could guess at the thoughts that were going on in his mind and he smiled in his beard.

Presently he swung round to face the chief and pointed to the canoe, "How much?" he asked in Chinook.

Klattomupt shook his head; made a pretence of filling his pipe.

"Five dollars," offered Sully.

"Not for sale!" The chief also spoke in the Coast Indian dialect.

"Six dollars."

No reply beyond a grunt of dissent.

"I want a boat," Sully's eyes began to darken. "I want a boat now. I'll pay ten dollars for the canoe."

There was a sudden ripple of silvery laughter behind him, and he turned to see in the window of the lodge, a small, oval face, a face indicating unmistakably a white father or mother. Pretty, finely chiselled features, long, silky hair that curled in tendrils around the brow; a slim throat and skin of creamy gold. One moment only and it was gone.

"I can't sell you that boat." The chief drew his aged form to his feet with difficulty, trying to straighten himself to the height of the stranger. Klattomupt was accounted the tallest Indian on the West Coast, but he had to raise his eyes to Vane Sully. Again the white man smiled in his beard.

"You come with me," said Klattomupt with a feeble attempt at command. Still smiling, Sully followed him.

He led the way around behind the lodge and up a bit of road, to where a tiny brook gushed out from the wooded bank. Here were half a dozen canoes in process of manufacture, from the hollowed log to the almost completed craft: there was one with a head-piece shaped like a raven and painted with crimson and yellow lines, running lengthwise. Along the gunwale of the boat, some inlay work had been begun: bits of abalone shell inset with much skill.

Sully pointed it out. "How much this one?"

Klattomupt lifted his head in indignant protest, "That is part of the dowry of Timel-soo, my daughter. She will travel in that boat to her

husband's people." He pointed to another canoe not half finished, "You may have this one in six days, for ten dollars."

Sully laughed contemptuously and turned away. "Six days is no good. I want a boat right now for the fishing and to go up the river. Here's your money." He drew a small leather bag from his coat pocket, opened it, and extracted two gold pieces which he tendered the chief. "I'll take the canoe on the beach, by your lodge."

Klattomupt refused the money with a dignified gesture. "That boat belongs to Timel-soo. It is her plaything, her delight. *Huchleeth* she calls it, which means 'wind from the west.' You cannot buy."

Under his breath, Vane Sully cursed. He had never heard of such sentiment from a Siwash. To give a woman a boat in the first place! And then to refuse to sell it! It was past his comprehension. The chief must be a fool.

As well as he could in Chinook, he expressed his opinion of any man that would be such a fool. But Klattomupt's leathery old face gave no sign of resentment.

"I must have a boat at once," Sully cried angrily. He strode away down the road, and around the wall of the lodge. He rubbed his eyes. The canoe was gone.

He swept the beach with a furious glance, then ran down the shingle, over the sand to the sea. The canoe had just taken the water. By the time he reached the water's edge it was a good sixty feet away, propelled by the thin arms of a young girl. For one moment he thought of swimming after it. He even started to wade till he felt the cold around his thighs. But he knew the paddler could not be overtaken.

She made a wonderful picture in the brightly painted boat, which seemed to float on a sea of gold; her long hair lifted a little and was caught by the sunlight; her face was alight; her dark eyes flashed; her teeth were agleam in a triumphant little smile. Again her lilting, silvery laugh rang out.

Sully saw nothing of her beauty. He was savagely, helplessly angry. He had meant to get that boat. There would be no time to-morrow, for late to-night the fishing fleet would return.

He walked up the beach and took the trail, along which he had come before, to where the creek ran into the sea. There, at early starlight, he made a fire and broiled two grilse he had caught earlier in the day. After he had eaten he smoked and sat on a log watching the tide.

It would be midnight before the flood. Long before that, he saw, coming around a headland, in gallant array, the whole of the fishing fleet, led by a large motor boat which belonged to one of the sons of Klattomupt. The fisherman were chanting in not unmusical gutturals. The plaintive melody came to him across the water in thin threads of sound as the flotilla moved along path of tumbled silver cast on the waters by the newly risen moon.

Sully cursed and then cursed again. With the men back, he could not return to the village and carry off the boat. And he must have that boat.

The girl had laughed. She had laughed at him! No woman could laugh at him with impunity. That other woman—five years back—she had laughed. He had loved her but she had laughed and left him for another man. She had shattered his life. There was only one way to treat women, the savage primitive way. Otherwise they were a snare and a curse. He hated them all, hated this Siwash girl with her mocking laugh. And now, here was the fleet back again.

It was the devil's own luck.

An hour later, by the bright light of the moon, he made his way back to the village.

The bay on which Clo-noot was built was semi-circular, steep-banked, with a very wide stretch of beach when the tide was out, and, beyond the beach, a bar, against which the ocean vented its impatience, before it came rolling up the sand. Numerous small fires burned now in front of some of the shacks. Figures sat or lolled about them, picturesque silhouettes against the red glow of the beachwood fires. There was much laughter, shouting and an occasional chanting song. The tribe was rejoicing after the return of the fleet. The fish had been sold to the canneries, and there were presents for everybody.

Sully stood, knee-high in the coarse grass of the dunes and stared moodily down. Dimly he could see the boats of the fleet drawn up on the beach or at anchor behind the bar. He could make out the lodge of the chief where a large fire was burning, and around which many persons were gathering. The company seemed to be divided, a hundred or more sitting on the left side of the fire, and a rather less number to the right.

When Klattomupt emerged from the door of his lodge every head was turned toward him. He was dressed in all his fine travesty of frock coat, silk

hat and walking stick, and came stalking down to take his place in front of the larger company.

Immediately from behind the other crowd an Indian made his appearance walking around and standing in front of them, facing the chief. He began to speak. His voice was thin and nasal and he shouted at the top of his lungs. He was delivering a panegyric, telling the assembly of some man who was the finest fisherman, the bravest warrior, the cleverest hunter on the coast. While he talked, another Indian came forward, bearing a pile of blankets. These he threw down at the feet of Klattomupt. The speech was immediately interrupted by derisive shouting from the larger company, at the inadequacy of the offering.

Presently Sully became aware of a noise in the grass behind him. Instantly his revolver was in his hand and he swung round. A squat figure coming stealthily toward him, stopped short.

“What do you want?” a voice asked. “What do you want here?”

Sully advanced a little, so that the other could see the moonlight glisten on his revolver barrel. He could see, too, the giant stature of the white man, and the fearless thrust of the jaw.

“Shut up!” growled Sully in Chinook. “Talk in whispers! What are they doing down there? Is it a wedding?”

The Indian’s voice was surly as he replied: “Not yet. Chief Hy-ye has sent presents from Nootka to Klattomupt. He will come down in one week for the wedding.”

“Sit down,” commanded Sully, seating himself, “What are you doing here? Why are you not down with the rest?”

CHIEF KLATTOMUPT.

"I keep watch." The Indian was huddled together on the ground, an uneasy eye on the revolver. Plainly he answered against his will.

"Why do you watch?" Sully's voice was sharp.

"Huh! because maybe Timel-soo run away. She don't want to marry. She's up to something. She's hidden her boat."

"Who are you?" asked Sully with interest.

"A slave of the chief. My name Yatchuh."

For a few minutes Sully was silent. From over the top of the grass he could see the crowds around the fire. Klattomupt himself was speaking now. His old voice was feeble beside the strident tones of the former Indian.

Nothing of what he said could be heard by the white man. The Indian ventured a question:

"Who are you and why do you come here?"

"I am a white man from Alberni. I come to hunt and fish. I want a boat."

"Huh!" the Indian spoke in English. "You all alone?"

"Yes. Nothing to fear if you let me have my way." Sully, too, spoke in English, wishing to placate the Siwash.

"Why for you want a boat?"

"To fish, and by and by to go south. I will pay ten dollars for a boat." He slipped one hand in his pocket, drew out a leather bag and shook it.

"Huh!" said the Indian, and the two fell silent.

"Timel-soo has hidden her boat," Yatchuh said at length, "Suppose we can find; you take for ten dollars?"

"Very good." Sully jumped to his feet. "Let's find it then."

The two crawled through the grass to the edge of the cliff and started to skirt the shore overlooking the water. The tide was almost full. It broke in a long line of silvery foam against the bar. There were numerous small indentations around the bay, that led into quiet pools, flooded at high water. In one of these pools, after an hour's searching, they found *West Wind*, Timel-soo's canoe. It was moored under an overhanging rock, very cleverly hidden. In it were a box, two paddles, a rifle and a rolled-up sail. Yatchuh chuckled when he saw it.

"She plan go to-night. The tide will be full till daybreak. She waits till Klattomupt sleeps."

Sully exulted. Here was sweet revenge. The *klootchman* would be trapped, forced into marriage, tamed to slavery. That was as it should be. He grinned to himself.

He gave the Indian the gold pieces: handed him the rifle and other things. Then he noiselessly paddled the canoe out of the pool around the rock to the breast of the bay, keeping as close to the shadows of the cliffs as he dared. He rowed for a quarter of a mile, out of the bay and along the shore, where it was still sheltered by the bar, which ran practically to the mouth of the creek. Then on the crest of a gentle swell, he entered the brackish water, to fight a little while with the current, master it, and pull his way up stream. Presently he turned to the left and was in a backwater. Here

he left the canoe, and took the shore trail back toward the Indian village. He wanted to see the girl when she discovered the loss of her boat. It would be a sweet revenge for her insolence, for her fool's laughter.

It had been a hot day. Therefore in the long grass of the cliff above the beach, the sandy soil was still warm. Behind a boulder Sully ensconced himself. The moon had set. It was very dark. The village had gone to bed. There was merely a dull glow where the great fire had been, and all was still except for the intermittent barking of some dog at the farthest end of the village.

He stretched himself in the grass, pillowed his head on his arm, and dropped to sleep as suddenly as a pebble drops and disappears in the sea.

When he awoke, stars, eerily bright, swung from a paling sky over the ocean toward the west. But eastward was the first rosy finger of the dawn. He lay over on his back, stretched his great body luxuriantly, yawning widely, his eyes blinking up at the heavens. Then he heard a swishing of the dew-damp grass. A breeze seemed to flutter past him. He sat up.

The girl, Timel-soo, had run by him, never noticing him in her excitement. She sped toward the edge of the cliff, stopped a moment to look over; then she wrung her hands and raced along, keeping her eyes seaward.

It was getting much lighter. Sully could see her very plainly now. Her hair, almost to her knees, was unbound and floated out behind her in a cloud as she ran. He could hear her utter little inarticulate cries, like a wounded bird. Her punishment was beginning. It would reach its climax by and by when Hy-ye came down from Nootka and forcibly made her his bride.

She was coming back, evidently thinking there might be some pool she had overlooked. She was crying in small gasping sobs.

Now it was dawn and the whole eastern sky was aglow. The first sunshaft pierced its way to the sea. The girl glanced around quickly. She saw him. For a moment she stopped running and clasped her hands against her breast. Then she came toward him hesitatingly.

Sully stood up and leaned against the boulder. His eyes narrowed and his lip curled. The rising sun sent a glory over her. Her features were finely cut and regular, quite unlike an Indian's. Her creamy skin seemed overlaid with gold. Her little mouth was like the red petals of a flower. Because she was beautiful, the more reason he had to hate her, he told himself.

Presently she stood there in front of him, a mere slip of a thing, her eyes, her mouth pitiful.

"Who are you?" she whispered in English.

Sully shrugged. "What you see. Nothing more."

"I, too, am white," she told him, "no Indian blood at all." She gasped a little, her eyes imploring his. "Won't you please help me. I have lost my boat; and I cannot stay here with the Indians any longer, not a day. I meant to start this morning. There is fine weather ahead. Maybe I can get down to San Juan, or a ship will pick me up. I had a rifle in the boat, and food. I—hid it away. But it's gone. It's gone." She wailed the last words and threw out her hands helplessly.

He stared at her, his lips sneering.

"It was a light canoe, painted yellow and red with its name *Huchleeth* on the bow. Oh, please, have you seen it?" She regarded him doubtfully and questioned him anxiously. "I was sure you spoke English yesterday to Klattomupt when you asked about the boat. But you are foreign?"

He shook his head. "I am English," he said coldly.

"Oh then," she clasped her hands, holding them out toward him, "let me tell you all! You will pity me. You will want to help me. I have lived here for years. At first I liked it; the sea, the big boats, the great fires. And I was very little. I grew up knowing nothing else. Klattomupt named me 'Timel-soo' which means 'little bell' because I was always singing. I had a room of my own in the lodge and white bed, and I went to the nuns in Alberni to school. You will blame my mother perhaps for marrying an Indian. But if you only knew. More than twenty years ago she came out here from Sweden, with my father, thinking to make a fortune. Other Scandinavians came, too. They made a little settlement. But what can they do. There is no transportation. No way to reach markets. No money. One by one they went away, until only my mother and father remained. And then there was only my mother.

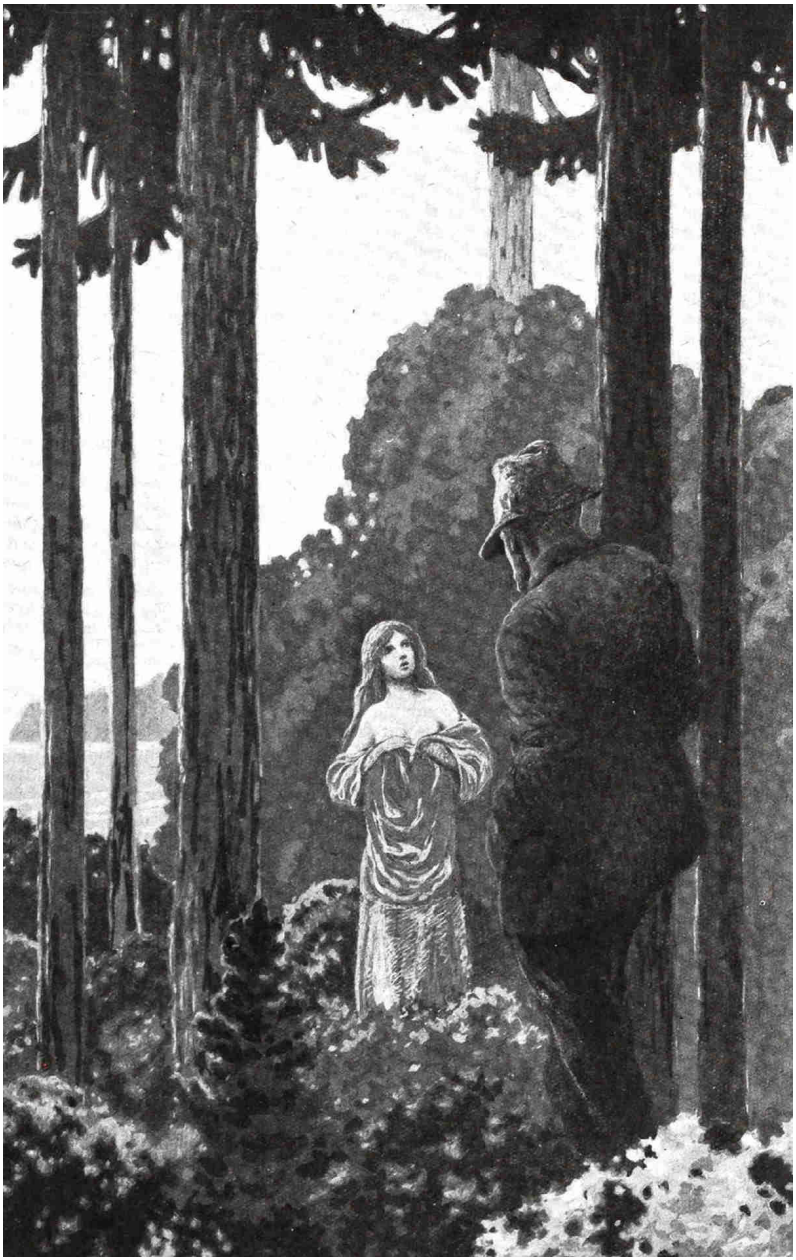
"My father was drowned." Her voice choked a little, "and I was born just two months after he was washed up by the sea. So it was Klattomupt found my mother. So sick and weak with a wee baby. All alone in a great loneliness. And he was kind and good. Quite beautiful, too, then. Straight and tall and smiling. They were married by the priest, and for one year Klattomupt lived there with us. Then we came here.

"Oh! it was not so bad while my little mother lived. The Indians treated her like a queen, and they were good to me. But three years ago I had to leave the nuns. My mother—" she shook her head. She could not go on for a

little. Then, “Do you know the sons of Klattomupt, the sons of his Indian wife?” She drew a step closer to Sully, speaking in a whisper.

He nodded.

“They want me to marry the chief at Nootka. There is a dreadful secret. He knows it. Suppose they do not give me to him, he will tell.” She closed her eyes for a moment as though to shut some ugly vision away. “Have you ever seen an Indian wedding here on this west coast?” She was speaking very rapidly, her eyes dark with horror. “The crowds all gather on the beach. Then the fleet of canoes arrive bringing the bridegroom. His presents are flung down before the father of the bride. And they talk and talk. And night comes on while the woman waits trembling in the lodge. By and by they go to fetch her, and they send her down to meet the bridegroom all naked—except for one little garment. No! no! no!—I will not think of it. I am only seventeen! I want to go back to my mother’s people. I want to go back to the kind nuns and the school where I was, long ago. But my boat is gone, my little *Huchleeth*, my boat.” She began to weep wearily, her eyes searching his.



"Maybe," she whispered, "you do not think I am white."

Sully watched her. His expression was so coldly cruel that presently she began to realize the hopelessness of pleading.

She tried to control her sobs, biting hard at the back of one hand. She pressed the other to her breast. “Maybe,” she whispered, “you do not think I am white. Maybe you believe I am lying.”

He laughed shortly.

“But no, I tell you the truth,” she continued, “it is the sun and the wind that have made me brown. See, my skin is quite pale.” She slipped her tunic down over her shoulder, holding it with her two trembling hands, the while she watched him, her lips apart, her breath coming in small gasps.

Something in that small despairing gesture, modesty forgot in her agony of desperation, touched the icy hardness of Sully’s heart. In spite of himself, he turned his face away. To know that she trusted him!—was not ashamed before him! He laughed again. This time at himself. Was it possible that he was still a fool? A slow unreasoning rage came over him that fate should thus mock him.

The girl, seeing a faint softening in his face, flung herself at his feet, laying her head against his knees. She began to speak again, incoherently, sobbingly; trying to tell him that she was only a child and did not want to marry; at least, not for years.

He did not listen. He was afraid to listen. He stooped down, and, catching her by the shoulders, threw her from him. “Don’t touch me, you *klootchman*,” he snarled. Then he walked away. He turned once and saw her lying where he had flung her. But he felt no pity. Only a shame and anger against himself.

He almost ran along the cliffs till he reached the creek. The tide was going out. He crossed the sedges, the reeds slapping against his feet. The sun was fully up, the mist above the fresh water turned to a veil of gold.

Late noon he began the climb to his shack. He heard his dog’s welcoming bark, and shouted in response. A few moments more and a magnificent Airedale came bounding down the trail to meet him.

He and the dog Fellow lived in a deserted prospector’s cabin, a picturesque place, heavy shutters on the windows, vines climbing around the door, a chimney of native stone. Three cougar skins and a bearskin were spread out to dry on the outside walls.

The cabin was in the very heart of the forest. A brook ran behind it, one of the many that fed the creek which near this spot, widened out into a small

lake. It was cool as twilight among trees and as silent as sleep.

He talked to the dog. “Fellow,” he said, “we are going hunting. That will keep us a week away from home. By the time we come back the chief from Nootka will have married the *klootch* girl.” He tried to laugh. “I have ten cougar skins and two bear. Next month we shall go into civilization, and get our bounty from the government and have a grand feast, eh, Fellow?” The dog bounded about his master in a transport of joy.

Early the next morning they started. And the first night out Sully tripped on a buried root, fell heavily and twisted his ankle.

He had not known a sleepless night in five years. The out-of-doors had taken him to her bosom and soothed and hardened him. But to-night he could not sleep. He lay there on the soft bracken, his leg hurting, his head aching, his whole body uncomfortable. Night noises that he had never noticed before, so sound had been his slumber, startled him constantly. He twisted and turned and swore.

He had vowed to himself that he would not think of Timel-soo. He had dismissed her absolutely from his mind. But the moment his vigilance relaxed and he was almost asleep, she stood before him. Again and again this happened. He could see her plainly, her eyes streaming with tears, her trembling hands holding her tunic down over her snow-white breast. He could hear her pleading—“They talk and talk and the night comes on, and all the while the woman waits trembling there in the lodge. By-and-by they go to fetch her, and they send her down to the bridegroom, all naked, except for her one little garment . . .”

At daybreak he was on his way back to the cabin.

But travelling with a sprained ankle was no easy task. Fallen trees had to be climbed, brooks crossed, thick underbrush breasted. He was tired out when he reached the shack at sunset.

For two days he lay helpless, with a swollen leg and a head that ached intolerably. He slept intermittently, but felt no refreshment upon waking. He began to lose his appetite. It was too much trouble to cook anyway, he decided. He merely nibbled at a few biscuits and drank cold water. There was plenty of meat for Fellow.

Two more days went by. The ankle was better. But his head still ached. He had told himself a hundred times that he was a fool but he could not forget that which he made himself believe he wanted to forget. The Nootka chief would be down in a week’s time but the weather was so fine, he might

have arrived already. Over and over again he pictured the arrival—the chief in a big war canoe—his men behind him singing. When they came in sight of the village, they would raise their paddles high and shout and Timel-soo, hiding in the lodge, would hear them . . .

At last he could bear it no longer. He would take Fellow, his two rifles, and go down in *Huchleeth*. He would paddle straight to the village. He would not let a damned Siwash marry a white woman against her will—

It was the fifth morning when he got up and cooked his first hearty meal. His appetite had come back. His head was clear. He called Fellow and they set off down the river trail.

Then all of a sudden it swept over him that fate, mocking fate, had got the better of him after all, and through such a means, a little half-caste, a miserable little half-caste, who would be better dead. No! He would not go! He returned to the shack.

Somehow or other the day went by. He shot a cock-pheasant and cooked it for his dinner. He went down to the river and fished. He made his cabin tidy; washed his clothes; took a swim. At last it was night. He had been afraid to go to bed, but he dropped at once to sleep.

He was awakened by Fellow's loud barking and the rattling of his chain. He heard a noise at the door. It sounded like an animal prowling around. Now and then came a feeble whine, resembling a sob. Sully sat upright in his bunk. The door was not fast. He had not put the bar in place and the dog was tied. Some animal was trying to force an entry.

The moonlight came in through the crack in the door and showed him something there, pressing against it. Something tall enough for a bear. He felt for his rifle slung up on the wall beside him. He was a dead shot, but he had to shoot through the narrow crack and it was dark in the cabin. He took careful aim, running his finger along the barrel to the sight. Then he fired.

He heard a sharp cry, a human cry, and the shadow outside dropped and vanished.

Sully sprang from his bed and crossed the floor. Still clasping his rifle in one hand he opened the door. The moonlight showed a girl lying partly on the broad stone doorstep, partly on the ground. She had fallen backward, her head in the grass, her face upturned. A cloud of hair lay across her breast.

It was Timel-soo.

He stepped over her, and then knelt beside her, lifting her up. She seemed to have on but one thin garment, and it was wet and torn. He carried her to his bunk and laid her down. Then he lit a candle and, by its poor light, searched for a wound. The shot had passed between her arm and her body, grazing her side a little, but doing slight injury. He saw that her feet were badly cut. Her arms and legs showed blood stains. He washed the wounds and bandaged them. Then he laid her neatly within his blankets and covered her up to the chin. She was beginning to revive and he turned his back.

A wind was rustling around the cabin, and, the door being open, entered in a gust and blew out the candle. Sully was about to light it again when the girl spoke. “Mother! Mother! Mother!” came in a feverish whisper.

Off her head, thought Sully to himself. Better not light the candle yet.

“Mother, are you there?” Again the fevered whisper and he could hear her move, trying to sit up.

He went over to her and laid her back. “You are all right,” he said gruffly, “lie still and rest.”

She sighed. “Is mother here?”

“No, I’m taking care of you.” Sully walked over and closed the door.

“Anyway, he is one of my mother’s people,” she said to herself, Then: “Did my mother send you?”

“Yes,” said Sully shortly. He brought her water to drink, and lifted her head, feeling about in the dark. For some reason he was afraid to let her see him, some reason he did not analyze.

“You tell my mother,” the girl went on, in the weak high-pitched voice of semi-delirium, “you tell her to pray for me. I tried to kill myself. You would have tried, too, if you had been there in the lodge, with the Nootka chief waiting. He is crooked—and ugly—and old—and black. Oh, please come close to me, you, you—” She held out her arms in the dark, and Sully sat down on the edge of the bunk and began to pat her clumsily.

“Now, now,” he said quietly, “shut your eyes and try to rest.”

“Listen!” The weak voice was imperious. “You must listen! Then you can tell my mother. To pray for me. Klattomupt didn’t want me to go. He was sorry. He put a little bundle of clothes in the door and left the bar down. And I wriggled out through the grass, and threw myself into the sea. But the

tide flung me back. I saw a panther in the woods, and I followed him. To let him kill me. But he ran away. I heard a wild dog barking, and I climbed the hill and pushed against a door. Then something struck me and I fell. But still, I am not dead—you, you tell my mother—"

Her voice broke. She had been speaking in staccato sentences, gasping for breath sometimes in the middle of a word. Now she began to sob, stranglingly, tearlessly.

He wet a cloth in water and laid it on her fevered forehead. His hands became tangled in her hair. She should not have all that hair about her, he decided. It would increase her fever. He had better cut it off. He went to fetch his hunting shears. He could find them in the dark, and he was still curiously afraid to make a light. But he could not cut off her hair in the dark. She seemed quieter now. He dared to light the candle again.

He came to her carrying it, shading it with his hand. The shears were under his arm. She lay there with her eyes closed. But when he leaned over her she opened them.

Then she started up with a scream of mad terror, staring straight at him, one arm across her forehead in a gesture of abject fear, one hand pushing against his breast. When he attempted to speak to her she screamed again. He could see the pulse throbbing in her throat, her temples. Her face was deep crimson.

"Hush!" he cried out to her, "hush!" But there was no controlling the fear that possessed her. She screamed to God, to her mother; over and over again.

Sully moved from the bed, set the candle on the table, and, opening the door, went out into the night. He was surprised to find himself trembling from head to foot, his body in a cold sweat. He listened at the closed door.

The girl ceased to scream; she moaned a little and was silent.

He walked down to the river and back again. The moon sank below the fringe of the firs. The wood was very dark. Coming back he found the candle had burned down and gone out. The girl was calling.

"Oo-ee, OO-ee, oo-ee." The imperative, childish summons sent Sully shivering again. She must be very sick. Quite off her head.

He opened the door and went softly to the bedside, taking water to her. Fearfully he spoke to her, and lifted her up. But she was not afraid now. She drank greedily and thanked him. "Don't go away," she said childishly, "a

great giant comes when you are not here. He called me a *klootchman*. He hates me. He wants to kill me."

"All right," agreed Sully, thankful for the present that her terror was allayed, "I won't let him come back."

She sighed contentedly and settled down. "I'll go to sleep now."

He took his dunnage bag and some skins from the shack, went out again and made himself a bed at the back of the house, much to the joy of Fellow, who curled up beside him.

Just as day was breaking he heard voices from the river.

He slung his shot gun over his shoulder, took Fellow on the lead and went down the trail.

Three Indians had come up the stream in a dugout. Two of them were large men, the other rather small. Sully appraised them. He felt quite competent to handle all three of them without either his gun or the Airedale. He glanced swiftly around for his canoe. It was still safely hidden in among the reeds.

"What do you want?" he asked in Chinook.

The tallest of the Indians stepped forward. He, too, carried a shot gun. He looked distrustfully at the white man. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

Sully shrugged. "This is my property."

"This is the reserve," replied the Indian angrily.

Sully shook his head, smiling slightly. "The reserve ends at the river. My property begins here and runs up to Shuiat Lake and beyond. I have bought it from the government, from the king."

The three Indians whispered together, turning their backs to him.

Fellow was straining at his leash, making no sound, but baring his white teeth in ugly warning. Sully waited. He was afraid the woman in the shack might begin to scream again, and that her voice would reach them. He knew he had no legal right to keep her if her people claimed her.

"Move on down the river," he said suddenly, sharply. "Go on! Clear out! Sabbee? This is my land. I can't hold the dog and he's a man-eater."

He followed them down the bank and watched them as they hurried into their canoe. A few feet from shore they halted the boat. “Have you seen an Indian girl,” they spoke again, “or her body? We are looking for her.” All three eyed him with malevolent intensity.

“No,” he replied, apparently indifferent, “I’ve seen no Indian girl, nor her body either. And don’t you come up this stream again without my permission or I’ll set the dog on you.” Then, curious as to what they might say, “What should an Indian girl be doing away up here, eh?”

The tallest Indian for answer spat toward him contemptuously. The canoe was brought around and paddled swiftly down stream. Not another word or look did they vouchsafe him.

All day Sully prowled around in the neighborhood of the shack, afraid to go near it and afraid to leave it. Once, after the Indians had gone, he opened the door but he was met with such a wail of sobs and shrieks that he closed it sharply. He did not try again. He cooked his meals in the open and ate absently. At intervals he could hear the girl talking, sometimes rapidly in Chinook, again in English. Several times he heard that childish summons, “Oo-ee, Oo-ee, Oo-ee.”

Night came on and after the sun had gone, the woods grew dark, suddenly. He had made broth over the outside fire, and he put some of it in a tin cup, working by the uncertain light of the flame. He filled a pail with fresh, cold water. Then he entered the shack.

“Is that you?” Timel-soo’s voice called him, less trembling, less feverish. “Has my mother sent you again?”

“Yes,” agreed Sully.

“Why does she only send you in the dark?” She did not wait for an answer but hurried on, “Did you see the giant? Did you see Hy-ye?”

“No,” Sully answered. “They have both gone. I have brought you some soup. And cold water to bathe your face and hands.”

But she began to ramble again, and he must lift her head and hold the liquid to her lips, spilling it a little. Clumsily, he dipped a towel in water and laved her forehead, her throat, her arms and hands. She was very docile, and leaned against him like a trusting child. “You smell like balsam,” she said drowsily, “and fern-root. Not smoke or fish-smell. You are one of my own people. I am not afraid.”

The next day Sully took himself in hand. He had been ashamed to face himself for days. Broken resolutions reproached him. His adamant cynicism upon which he had once prided himself now seemed to stand aloof and sneer at him, like some separate, individual, thing that had never been, and never should be, his. It was useless for him to try and persuade himself that what he had done for Timel-soo he would have done for any wounded animal, and that the fact of her being a woman had not made him any the more ready to act. He had taken a vow that his hand should always be against woman, his flesh armored against her, the whole species of her. For five years he had been immune from the slightest temptation to deviate from that vow. And now this girl—this half-breed girl—the thing was ridiculous, incredible!

He took his gun and went down the river trail. Then he jumped into his boat and paddled up the lake. He fished all day, and did not return until nightfall.

He heard her childish call above the barking of the dog, and instinctively quickened his steps. There was a light in the cabin. He ran toward it. He answered it. He answered the call with a reassuring shout. But he did not go to the door. He moved softly round and peered into the house through a crack in the shutter opposite the bed.

Timel-soo was sitting up in the bunk, trying to untangle her hair. Sully caught his breath at the sight of it. What a mass it was, floating and falling about her. The candle burned on a bench beside the bed. The cup was there that had held the soup. It was empty.

She glanced around suddenly as though listening. Then: “Oo-ee, Oo-ee, are you there?”

He answered, “I’m here. But I can’t come in. Are you better?”

“Yes,” he saw her nod her head, “I am almost well. I have been up. But there have been terrible dreams. Where are you?”

“Outside the window, keeping watch.”

She caught her arms together across her breast, her eyes widened. “Are they coming after me?”

“No, no,” hastily. “I drove them away. But I must watch.”

She leaned in the direction from which his voice seemed to come. “There is another man who comes here. I am as afraid of him as I am of Hy-

ye. He hates me. He called me a *klootchman*. He wants to kill me. Have you seen him?"

"Yes. He's gone up the Canal."

She smiled then and closed her eyes, lying back in the bunk.

That night Sully made up his mind. In the bottom of his dunnage bag there was a razor. The hunting shears were just inside the door. He had other clothes, riding breeches, boots that laced up to his knees, a blue shirt, a white knitted coat. All of these things he got that night when Timel-soo was asleep.

The next morning he performed a painful operation. He had not shaved for five years. He scratched his face, cut a gash across his chin and slit a small slice off one of his ears. But in the end the beard disappeared. His jaws and cheeks looked strangely pale and naked to him. He stared shamefacedly at the reflection in the mirror. He was in the midst of cutting off his hair with the great shears when he remembered the story of how Samson lost his strength, and perhaps that was why Sully's hair-cut could, by no stretch of the imagination, be called a success. The more he tried to remedy matters, the worse the effect. "It looks as if a goat had eaten it off," he decided ruefully.

Among his belongings was a bandana handkerchief. He wound it around his head, tying the knots behind. He looked like a dashing buccaneer.

Even after he had altered his appearance to such an extent that he could scarcely believe his own eyes, he was doubtful about the girl, fearful lest she should recognize him as 'the giant.' When he heard her calling, he opened the door with some hesitation and came in very slowly.

She sat up in bed and stared at him. She had plaited her hair and it hung over her shoulders and lay along the blanket. She held her hands loose-clasped in her lap. He saw her large eyes soften, grow dim, tears brim over their lids. But said nothing. When he asked her if she were better, she nodded dumbly.

She accepted the food and drink he offered her, whispering her thanks. Every time he glanced toward her he saw her eyes fixed upon him with an expression that baffled him. The oftener he saw her the more he realized how young and childish she was. Of all things he did not want to frighten her. He forebore to question her lest it should excite her again.

He had grouse for supper, and trout that he had caught the day before. He prepared the meal in the open. But as he crouched in front of the fire,

broiling the bird over the coals, she came out of the shack noiselessly and stole opposite him. She had wound one of the small blankets around her.

"Are you hungry?" Sully glanced up, not betraying his surprise upon seeing her.

She shook her head, smiling a little. "I did not come out for that." Then, as he showed no curiosity as to the reason of her coming: "I came out to see you, to look at you. You are braver than a hundred chiefs put together, and as beautiful as the sunrise."

His face grew hot under her scrutiny. Muttering below his breath, he stood up and away from the light of the fire.

He was awakened that night by uneasy growls from Fellow. He sat up and stared out into the black of the firs. The moon was low. Fellow moved about restlessly, giving vent to an occasional low, menacing note. Sully called to him softly, patted him and ordered quiet. Then he listened intently. He could hear nothing. But no man's ears are as sharp as those of a well-trained hunting dog. Someone or something was trespassing. Under his hand he felt the bristles rise along Fellow's back and he whined complainingly, as though he found obedience to his master's commands very difficult.

Then a sound came to Sully from down by the river. The crackling of underbrush; a 'whoo, whoo' that another, less wood wise than Sully, might have taken for an owl.

From the shack came the girl's voice, calling in a frightened whisper.

Keeping Fellow on the leash, he ran round and opened the door. "Hush," he said, peremptorily, "Don't make a sound."

Instantly she was still, save for shuddering sighs.

"I'm going down to the river," said Sully, "I'm afraid someone is trying to steal my boat."

But she broke in, trying to control her voice, "No! No! No! That was Sah-ook's call. I know it. He is the eldest son of Klattomupt, a very evil man. You must not go. He has come to kill you, to take me back." All this in jerking little whispers.

"He doesn't know you are here," Sully said quietly, "his quarrel is with me." He took his gun from the wall, filling his pockets with shells.

But all in the dark the girl flung herself from the bunk and whirled across the room, to stand with her back to the door. “Please, please,” she entreated, “you don’t understand, because you are good—Sah-ook is bad and all the Indians who run with him are bad. Listen, I will tell you the secret. He killed a white fisherman this spring! And his wife! They had a quarrel. Hy-ye knows it and I know it and Klattomupt. That was why they would make me marry Hy-ye, because he said he would tell the police. And Sah-ook is afraid, if I am alive and free—oh, don’t you see! He is so bad, a murderer. He does not mind, having killed once, killing again—and he may have many with him. What are you against ten.”

Fellow began to growl protesting, lifting his nose high as though scenting danger.

“Stand out of the way,” Sully ordered her, his gun in one hand, a loop of Fellow’s leash in the other. He laughed a little. “I’m not afraid of the whole tribe. I can hide and shoot them off one by one while Fellow does his part. The moon will be full on the river trail.”

“They won’t take the open trail.”

“Let me out, anyway. Come! Move away from the door. I insist!”

She was crying now and did not answer him. But she turned and began to fumble with the bolt of the door, opened it, throwing it wide, and then stepped out across the sill.

“What are you doing?” Sully was close behind her. “Come back. If any of them see you—”

“I’m going down. I’m going down to them,” she was out on the path, a dim little blanketed shape. “They will not harm you if I go back.” Sully loosed the chain from Fellow’s collar, and the dog went bounding away. Then in half a dozen strides he overtook Timel-soo.

He picked her up. Carried her back. Put her in the bunk and covered her. Then he made the doors and windows fast. They could hear the Airedale’s triumphant barking; challenging and shrill.

A shot, then another and another. The barking continued, fiercer than before, broken by snarls of rage.

“Fellow is wise,” muttered Sully, “and the Indians are poor shots.” All the same he listened apprehensively. If they killed the dog they would sneak up to the cabin. It would be only a matter of time then, until his shots gave

out, or they set the place on fire. If they suspected the girl was there they could tell a plausible story to justify any crime.

The dog's barking ceased suddenly. The silence was ominous. Sully could hear the girl whispering to herself. Was she going off in delirium again? Would she begin to cry and call.

He went over to her. "Don't be afraid," he said with gruff gentleness, "you're safe with me. Can't you trust me?"

"Oh, yes," she whispered, "I'm not afraid. I'm praying for you. All at once I do not care for myself any more, what becomes of me. Just you I care for. And for you I pray to Christ Jesus, and to Hoop-palh, the moon god of the Indians, to save you from Sah-ook."

He sat down beside her, resting the butt of his rifle on the floor, straining his ears for the slightest sound from outside.

Something soft and warm touched his wrist pressed itself within his palm, wound around his fingers. The little hand of Timel-soo. He could feel her slight body against his, her hair brushed his face. Then he heard a noise. The quick padding of feet. Labored breathing. He loosed her fingers.

He spoke with his lips against her ear. "Be very quiet. No matter what happens." He put something in her hands. "This is a revolver. It's loaded."

His heart was pounding. For himself he had no fear. He had taken too many risks, faced death too often to care. And what was life to him anyway? Smell of the budding spruce—music of singing waters—a full meal—dreamless sleep at night—would death be much less? But for this little tender girl death was an unthinkable thing. He tiptoed across the shack.

A low whine outside. A scratching at the boards.

Sully laughed aloud. Shot back the bolt and opened the door. Fellow flew into his arms in an ecstasy of joy and pride. He had driven off the enemy and returned safely to his beloved master. There was not a mark upon him.

He and Sully slept by the door on a pile of furs. In the morning they were awakened by the low, sweet singing of Timel-soo.

But that day he made up his mind that they must leave and journey overland to civilization. He had been down to the river and found the

boat gone. The Indians would return. There was not a doubt of it. Their only chance lay in getting away at once.

He cached his skins where not even a savage could find them, keeping out five to take with him. And they started at noon. He had said nothing to the girl about his ankle, which was very painful still at times, but he knew they must travel light and comparatively slowly. Besides he was afraid she could not stand a hard journey. He carried the cougar skins on his back. They would bring him over a hundred dollars.

Fellow ran ahead. He had been over the trail to the lake many times. Next in line went Timel-soo, clad in a tunic made of a bright red Hudson's Bay blanket, and looking like a flame-winged butterfly. Sully brought up the rear, his rifle under his arm, eyes and ears alert for the slightest sound. It would take them a day and a half to reach the lake, though ordinarily he could do it in a day.

They camped that night by a small stream and Timel-soo slept on a soft bed of bracken and furs. When he had made her comfortable Sully took off his boot and laid his aching foot and leg in the ice-cold water of the little brook. The ankle was much swollen. In the morning it was nearly impossible for him to get his boot on.

They started again very early and struck the big timber toward noon. It was cool and sweet under the high, green roof of the interlaced firs. And the going was easy, the turf soft and springy. But Sully suffered. His boot held his leg and foot in a vice. He set his teeth and followed Timel-soo, struggling against the pain which gradually increased until it brought on nausea. Once he had to stop and lean, faint and dizzy, against a tree. He hoped the girl would not look around.

She did. She came running back. She touched him with little fluttering hands. Questioning him. Trying to lift the pack from his back. He put her hands down.

"It's this confounded ankle. I sprained it a week ago. It's nothing. Been on it too long at a stretch. If we can just make the lake; there's a dugout there. It's only a few miles now."

He cut himself a staff and went on again. She walked beside him, solicitous eyes upon him. She wanted to carry the pack. She was quite well and strong, she insisted. He laughed at her, made light of his lameness.

But he was becoming anxious. Two or three times the Airedale had stopped in his tracks and seemed to listen. It was not because of the honking

of pheasant, the drumming of grouse, or the whir-r-r of the rising quail covies. He was used to that and took no notice.

At last, far ahead, the gleam of blue water through the trees. And the forest timbers themselves were giving way to the bright green of new growth nearer the water. Here a handsbreadth of a spring gushed out of a bank and crossed the path. Just beyond, rose a mossy knoll open to the sky.

With a suppressed groan Sully sank down beside the water and began to unlace his boot. “We might as well eat,” he told Timel-soo. “By that time I can go on again.”

“It will be sunset soon.” She looked at him with pitying eyes. “Why not camp?”

Sully took out his knife and slit the boot from the lacing to the toe. The pain was excruciating. Even when he bathed it there was but slight relief.

Presently here was Timel-soo kneeling beside him, her hands full of moss and fibrous roots, that gave forth a pungent smell. “Please,” she said, “I know. It is the Indian cure.” Deftly and tenderly she bathed his foot and leg, then bruised the green stuff between two stones and laid it over the inflamed skin. She tore his largest handkerchief in strips and bound the dressing in place. The comfort was instantaneous.

Sully took off his pack, stretched himself full length on the moss. “Only for a few moments,” he told her apologetically. But in less than a minute he was sound asleep.

Timel-soo called to Fellow. Took his great head in her hands and whispered to him. He whined understandingly and sat down close beside his master. Then the girl ran back along the trail, keeping herself hidden behind the tree-trunks.

It was an hour before she returned. Sully still slept and the setting sun slanted its rays across the green knoll into the depths of the timber like the light from a stained window into a shadowy cathedral.

She dropped beside Sully, holding one hand to her breast.

She was breathing fast. She called him softly.

Instantly he was awake, sitting up, staring at her, and at the long rays of the sun, with blinking eyes.

“How long have I slept? What is it? What’s happened?”

“While you slept, I went back,” she whispered. “Look.”

Fellow was standing, stiff and bristling, facing the back trail.

“I hid and saw them,” the girl went on quickly, “Sah-ook, his brother and Yatchuh. They have been to the cabin. They think I am with you, that you took my boat and ran away with me the night of the wedding.”

“Yatchuh knows better,” began Sully, then checked himself. She did not connect him with the loss of her boat at all, and he did not want her to know. “They are fools, these Siwash,” he said shortly.

She was leaning against his shoulder now, exhausted with her exertion. He held himself stiffly, looking down upon her bright head. “You’re tired out!”

“No,” she wound her hands about his arm, “only frightened. Not for myself. Only for you. Sah-ook will kill you—”

“Look here,” Sully said impatiently, fighting back the desire to comfort her, to put his arm around her shaking figure. “Do you pay me such a poor compliment as to believe I’m no match for a Siwash; or half-dozen of them?” He told her she must take the dog and go on down to the lake. On no account to let Fellow return.

A plan had suggested itself to him. He knew it would work. But he could not explain it to Timel-soo.

“You know what I think,” she pleaded, “that you are braver than a whole tribe of Indians. But I want to stay with you,” she begged him. She held her cheek close against his unresponsive arm and pleaded. At last his voice was angry.

“Do as I tell you. I know what I’m about. We’ll get across the lake to-night. Mellish and his two sons, loggers, live over there. We can stop at their place. And to-morrow they will take us down the big lake in their launch. Do exactly as I say, or you may spoil everything.” He showed her a whistle that he carried in his pocket. “When I blow this twice, it means I’m coming. Get into the dugout and wait for me.”

He put on his stocking, laid his foot and leg within his high boot and laced it together loosely. Then he got to his feet. He leaned against the bank beside the stream, the bracken breast-high about him. He could not be seen from the trail except directly in front.

He pushed up the high collar of his jersey, but let his body sag a little so that he should not look his ordinary height.

It was twenty minutes before he saw the three Indians coming, single file. Sah-ook carrying a rifle. All bare-footed. An ugly, dark-faced trio: moving along as noiseless as snakes.

Sully raised his gun to his shoulder, intently watching Sah-ook, "Stop!" he called sharply.

With one accord they turned to face him, Sah-ook in the act of raising his own gun, but thinking better of it. Their dismay showed in fallen jaw and staring eyes. Here was no bronze-bearded, long-haired, beetling-browed giant, but a sunburned, clean shaven young man of medium height, with a crimson kerchief tied carelessly about a handsome head—

"Drop your gun," said Sully, drawling his words a little, and, as Sah-ook obeyed, "what do you want around here?"

"We're looking for an Indian girl, a half-breed, the chief's daughter."

Sah-ook's voice was propitiating. "You sabbee Chinook?"

"Why?"

"I can maybe tell you better in my language. My English she not very good."

"I no sabbee Chinook," said Sully cheerfully, knowing what would follow.

Instantly Sah-ook began to talk rapidly to the other two Indians, telling them that they had made a bad mistake, that the big, hairy man must have taken the north trail, that this man was undoubtedly a policeman.

At that, Sully blew his whistle, causing them all to jump and glance about them apprehensively. Sully flashed his white teeth in a grin. "Two mounted police are down at the Lake, I call them," he said. "Oddly enough we are looking for a son of your chief, Sah-ook. Do you know where he is?"

"He's gone to Nootka," lied Sah-ook instantly, looking into the timber as if anxious to be off. "Maybe if we run ahead and get Klattomupt's launch—"

"Go to it," Sully nodded. "And mind you follow the straight trail. No, leave your gun where it is. It's safer. We'll bring it along with us. Get out." He smiled again. They had disappeared among the trees almost while he spoke.

Again he blew his whistle. Waited a few moments and hobbled off toward the lake. He saw it all through a haze of sunset gold-quiet water, radiant green of young willows. And Timel-soo sitting in the little boat.

She raised both slim, bare arms to him in salutation. Her cloudy hair floated loose about her.

It was like some fairy vision that must vanish with the after-glow.

Sully quickened his steps to a stumbling run.

It was warm in the high walled garden of the convent. All sorts of old-fashioned flowers, mignonette, sweet peas, lavender, verbena, wove a special fragrance for the delight of an unusual visitor.

Vane Sully, huge as ever, but well-groomed and clad in tweeds from Donegal, sat on a stone bench under a lilac tree, twisting his hat in his hands. Whispers came to him over the wall, where a dozen pairs of curious young eyes watched him covertly. Now and then there were smothered peals of laughter. But Sully concerned himself not at all with the little convent girls, even their laughter evoked no resentment. His mind was very full of other matters, matters which had to do with a slim maid in a white gown; a sweet, flushed face, framed in heavy plaits of hair that shone like coiled sea-weed. Two little hands that fluttered half-way to his neck and then, abashed, hid themselves behind the small white figure. Two eyes as softly golden as the light in the timber forest. Eyes that pleaded—adored—

Sully stood up, calm and composed and outwardly indifferent, as the Mother Superior came toward him. He counted out one hundred and fifty dollars. He said that when his next remittance came he would send her a similar sum. She could always count upon it regularly until Littlebell—

"She will be eighteen in September," the sister said gently, smiling a question. "Of course she is very young, younger than most girls in many things. But she reads and writes very nicely and sews skilfully. She is devoted to you."

Sully blinked, coughed and said rather brusquely.

"She is a child, a mere child," but his heart began to hammer like a riveting machine, and he avoided the sister's calm, interrogative glance.

"She is old enough to know her own mind." The Mother Superior's lips curved in the self-less little convent smile. "She will never be wholly happy away from you."

"A mere child," he repeated, and moistened his dry lips.

"A good woman is always a child at heart," said the sister.

“I must be going,” said Vane Sully.

“Shall I tell her that you will return on her birthday in September?” A furtive dimple crept into the sister’s cheek, close to the left of her mouth and disappeared as though suddenly reproved. “It will be on Thursday, the nineteenth.”

Sully bowed from the waist down with a nonchalant grace which had been his in other days. But he did not reply at first, because he could not. He walked past the nun, straight along the flower-bordered path to the little gate, and during that walk of a few steps, which took less than a minute, five years of bitterness, of merciless cynicism, of non-belief in God, were thrust into oblivion.

At the gate he turned.

“Tell her I’ll be back for her in September,” he said.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Klootch Girl* by Ann de Bertrand Lugrin (as N. de Bertrand Lugrin)]