

My Christmas
A Tale
of a Donna
from Eva Bush
Snoqualmie Falls

by

Sto'loug Sla'de

(lou as in loud—a as in arm)

(River Woman)

Eva A. Bush Polley.

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They were gathered were the people,
Great descendents of the moon,
While the flare of waving camp-fires
Gave faint light 'mid coming gloom.
Crowded there in throbbing silence
By Snoqualmie's flowing stream:
Summoned by their noble chieftain
There to hear the ancient tale
How in ages far and distant
Came the Yakimas one day
Matched their cunning with the Moon-men,
Death the price that they did pay.
While a hush fell o'er the meeting
Rose the chief of noble mien,
Told in accents fitting, stirring,
How the foe was lured and drowned:

"Once there dwelt within a valley
Studded thick with spruce and fir,
In a distant western valley
Where the spreading maples were,
Where the hemlocks yielded tan-bark,
And the restless waters go
From the distant Cascade mountains
To the ocean's ceaseless flow.
Indian braves within this valley
Famed for fleetness, daring, skill;
Indian maidens, ancients, children,
Pitched their tepees 'mong the hills.

"Far across the rugged mountains,
Where the upland joins the plain,
Roamed the Yakimas so war-like
And they ruled a large domain.
Envy smote them of their rivals;
And with cunning, stealth, and skill
Crossed they to the western valley,
Neared the falls between the hills.

"Just as dawn came through the tree-tops
And the lazy camp-fire smoke
Gently floated toward the heavens
Spotted Deer, the warrior, spoke.
Ceased the clatter and the howling
As with panting, hurried, breath
Told the painted, frightened, warrior
Of the nearing certain death.

"Then the blood-lust of the Moon-folk,
Long lain dormant in their breasts,
Rose to make quick preparations;
Fight they must the stealing death.
All the sounds about the camp-fires
And among the wigwams set
Were the sharp'ning of the hatchets
And the spear-heads being whet.

"War-drums stilled their calling thunder
And there broke another day
As brave Crumpled Horn, the warrior,
Led them to begin the fray.
Softly tread six hundred warriors
Of Snoqualmie tribesmen brave.
With the eagle's sight and sureness
They their homes and squaws would save.

And on Sallal's green-clad prairie,
(Where the vales and mountains meet,)
When there burst another morn
Were the Yakimas advancing
And Snoqualmie's painted forms.

"Now great Kewah, noble chieftain
Of Snoqualmie's ancient tribe,
Spoke to his assembled warriors
Spoke of hunting-grounds and pride.
Burst the fury of the combat
And there raged the bloody war
As the foemen pressed advantage
And defenders gave way more.
Then there surged the routed Moon-men
And they gained the hard-lost ground.
But the foemen won the battle
Ere another sun went down.

"As the sun drew near its setting
And the day its course had run
Broke the ranks of the defeated
As they lost the bloody ground,
'To the river', sounded shrilly
'Bove the battle's din and roar,
Cried by Ball Head Crow, the warrior,
As they neared the river's shore.
Swift the word passed to the routed,
And they leapt to beached canoes;
Down the river deeply shadowed
Rushed pursuers and pursued.

"But the victors' great elation
Dimmed their cunning in the night;
And to their eternal error
Paddled swiftly in the flight.
For the night's deep-shadowed mantle
Hid the swerving from the foe
Of Snoqualmie's fleeing tribesmen
As they quit the darkened river
Ere they felt the fatal tow;
For deceptive are the waters
As untroubled on they flow
To the sharp and sudden plunging
Of the falls to rocks below.

"Dark the clouds lay o'er the wood-land,
Hid dark forms within the gloom
As the Yakimas speed onward
Blind to strategy and doom;
For with cunning, ancients, klootchmen,
Left to guard their homes or die
Lighted high on distant hill-side
Fires to catch the foeman's eye.

"Swiftly dipped the many paddles,
Onward rushed the crude canoes,
And five hundred warrior foemen
Hastened to their coming doom.
All too late they saw their error
And then rose their fearful screams
As the gliding current bore them
Farther down the fateful stream.

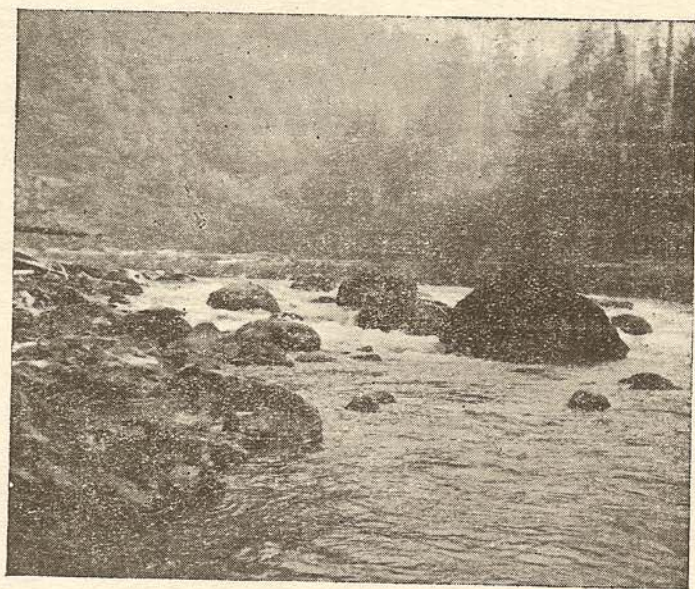
"Deeper dug the futile paddles
Cleaving hidden depths below,
Clutched by terror-taunted fingers
As they sensed the deadly flow.
Bent the naked, painted, bodies
Backward flashed the speeding oars
In a vain and useless battle
To avoid the fateful plunge.
But no hand of earthly cunning
Could now stem the mighty flow
Or escape the dragging waters
As too near the brink they go.

"Nearer now and ever nearer
Swept the helpless crude canoes.
Louder now and louder, clearer
Came the roar of angry falls.
Swifter now the rushing water
Bore the foemen in its wrath,
Carried all those hapless warriors
On its tragic, ghastly, path.

"Shot the prows out o'er the chasm
Hung suspended in the air
Tilted downward in the maelstrom
Spilled the crouching, dark forms there:
Flecked the leaping, whitened, waters
With distorted, hurtling foe;
Dropped the terror-stricken warriors
Some three hundred feet below.

"When the day's caressing sunbeams
Softly through the tree-tops came
Touched the swirling, foaming waters
And the rocky, raging, stream,
Came the victors and their klootchmen
Stoically viewed the gorge's bed . . .
Left them to their final resting,
Foemen mangled, crushed, and dead."

Glowed the coals and flame-seared embers
By Snoqualmie's starlit stream.
Quickened were the breaths of youngsters,
And the eyes of warriors gleamed
As the thrilling tale of cunning,
Story of an olden time,
Told by noble, honored, chieftain,
Ceased its cadenced stately rhyme.



Stoically viewed the gorge's bed.