

men, expert with the axe, daring and dexterous canoeists, and very ingenious in meeting the continual difficulties and vicissitudes of backwoods life. Keen hunters are often to be met among them, men who are so successful with the rifle that their families keep a full larder without the aid of butcher or poulterer.

An enlightened system of free schools enables the widely scattered children of this island and of the other portions of British Columbia to obtain a substantial education at the public expense; and much credit is due to the energy and ability of the school superintendent, whose task it has been to organise and perfect the present satisfactory educational arrangements. We shall be glad if these sketches help to stir up an interest concerning this beautiful and productive island.

### THE ADMIRAL'S SECOND WIFE.

#### CHAPTER IX.—TANGLED THREADS.

THERE is another listener to the song, and every word of it falls on his heart with intense meaning. It seems to him a lamenting wail of despair wrung out from aching hearts. The Admiral has returned from an official dinner-party, and when he reaches the drawing-room door, the duet is just begun. Rather surprised, and a good deal vexed at seeing Walter Reeves so soon installed as a familiar guest at Government House, he pauses, and the words of the song fall distinctly on his ear.

In bygone days, Captain Reeves was the only one amongst all Katie's admirers who really gave him uneasiness; and if truth must be confessed, he had often felt a pang of jealousy at the great attention Walter paid her, and by his unconcealed admiration of the young lady. He had made up his mind there was an end to all that now. His wife would henceforth be far removed from such influence; and when she and Walter should chance to meet, their acquaintanceship would be strictly ceremonious.

Yet now, they have taken up the old strain, and are already deploring in doleful song the hard fortune that has divided their lives. Sir Herbert has no idea of pretence or mere acting or of singing for effect. He is true to the 'heart's core' himself, and would not deign to seem other than he is. The words come to him with terrible meaning, and rouse him to sudden awakening. Has he spoiled their lives? While he would shield his wife from every rough wind and from all that could vex and annoy, has he only been driving her to despair? The guests are all so occupied that they do not notice the Admiral at the door, nor do they see him turn away with bowed head and a weight like an added ten years pressing on his heart.

Are Laura's words proving true? Has Katie only married him for wealth and position, while her heart has been given to Walter Reeves? Is she growing weary already, and pining in her gilded chains? Terrible thoughts these! They eat into his very soul, and crush him down as he has never been crushed before. He is only thankful no one sees the storm of agony that sweeps over him, while the merry music still goes on up-stairs.

Why did he not tell Katie then? She would

have flown to his arms, and assured him, truthfully enough, that she has grown to love him better than any one else in the world. Pleasure-loving, thoughtless, she may be, but no thought of disloyalty to her husband has ever entered her heart. But the Admiral asks no question, gives no sign, only shrouds himself up with a proud man's reticence and reserve. Though deeply hurt and wounded, he goes on his way silently, and Katie never for a moment suspects that she is making him wretched.

The next morning Walter arrives, and all the others who are to take part in the entertainment arrive also; so the rooms are again crowded, and the rehearsal goes on with spirit. There is a sound of music and talk, of song and discussion. Peals of silvery laughter burst forth; snatches of various airs are heard; Major Dillon's voice loud and prompt; Liddy Delmere's, clear and ringing. All are excited; and Walter Reeves, from his experience on the subject, is voted by all, chief authority and general manager.

Nothing loath to bear the honour, he makes even the consequential Major play second-fiddle to him. He flirts with Liddy, while she purposely goes wrong, to be set right by him; and Katie smiles more than ever at the rapid friendship springing up between the two. It is on this scene of distracting confusion that Sir Herbert looks, as he returns home an hour earlier than usual. He glances gravely round on the busy groups, who are all talking and laughing together, and cannot understand what they are about in the broad daylight, turning the quiet matter-of-fact noonday into the revelry of night. His greeting to the guests is rather formal; there is a faint compression on his lips, a slight furrow on his brow, as he listens to the allusions and watches the proceedings. In fact the guests, his wife, and all seem to him to have gone a little out of their senses. At last the visitors decide it is time to depart, and they go off in high spirits, promising to meet again there in the evening.

Sir Herbert has all that morning been taking himself to task for his hard thoughts about Katie; but resolves to atone by paying her more devoted attention. What would he not do to win her back! No sacrifice can be too great, he thinks; so he begins by coming home an hour earlier than usual, only to find fresh annoyance and disappointment. When the guests are gone, he turns his grave inflexible face to Katie, and says: 'I came back early, my darling, on purpose to drive you to Belton Park.'

Lady Dillworth is gathering up the pen-and-ink sketches of costumes, glancing at each, and mentally considering what jewels she will use to adorn the highly ornamented stomacher of Lucy Ashton's blue dress, so she replies quickly: 'I'm sorry you fixed on this morning for a drive, Herbert, for I cannot possibly get away; I've no end of music to try over.'

'Perhaps there will be time in the afternoon then. Lady Ribson leaves Belton Park in a few days, and I promised to introduce you to her.'

'Does she return to Scotland?'

'Yes. Had she not been so old and feeble, she would have come here to call for you.'

'Oh, I am so sorry about it, Herbert; but every minute of to-day is portioned out: I've a hundred things to do.'