



SQUALMISH INDIAN'S HUT, NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C.

Mrs. Dartmouth gave a gasp, and her bosom laboured under the hand with which she tried to still it. He laid the book open at the paragraph he had read half-an-hour before. "Read for yourself," he said. She took the book, and remained staring at it blankly for a minute or two. When at last she bent her eyes upon the lines, they so danced and gyrated before them that she could not read. Even when she had found the passage she sat staring at the page as if the words meant nothing to her. Presently the tears began to run down her blanched cheeks, and she gave a gasping sob or two. Bream feared an attack of hysterics. "I will leave you," he said, "and send Barbara." "No, no!" she said. "Stay!" She tried hard to fight down the attack, and succeeded, but the tears were still running when the door opened, and a head of golden curls peeped round it. Dora sped to her mother, and climbed upon her knee, began to cry in affectionate and ignorant sympathy. Mrs. Dartmouth strained her in her arms, hushing and soothing her with broken ejaculations of comfort. The tears still ran, but the emotion which called them forth was changed. She kissed and caressed the child almost as much as her mother's white face and choking sobs had done before. "Oh, mamma, what is it?" cried Dora bewildered and frightened by the rapid changes of emotion readable in her mother's face and manner. "What is the matter?" "I will tell you darling, some day, perhaps; not now—you would not understand. See, I am quite

happy now; I am not going to cry any more." She wiped the tears from her own face and from that of the child. "Run away, dear; Mr. Bream and I have things to talk of."

"And you are sure—sure—that you won't cry any more?" asked Dora.

"No, darling, my crying is over now," answered Gillian. She kissed the child again, whispering, "go!" in her ear, and Dora went obediently, with a lingering backward glance. Bream had retired to a window looking on the garden, and had left the child and mother together. He remained there, giving Gillian the time to conquer herself before resuming her talk with him.

"Let us go into the open air," she said, "I am stifling here."

They passed into the garden together, and for a space there was silence between them. They crossed the lawn, and a hay field where the grass was almost ready for the scythe, and entered a long stretch of spinney, bounded by the public road. Still no word was spoken, as they walked slowly through alternate spaces of green gloom and golden sunlight.

"Mr. Bream," said Gillian at last, "I feel like a criminal. The man was my husband, I almost loved him once, when our married life was new. He was the father of my child, I swore before the altar to love and honour him, swore as a Christian woman, knowing the meaning of that solemn vow. And now, that I know that he is dead—I cannot help it—my only feeling is joy."

"Very naturally," said Bream. He made his tone purposely dry, almost careless, for there was such a deep emotion in her voice that he dreaded to increase it. "There is a point at which nature

must assert itself, at which no vow, however sacred, no duty, however great, can beat it down."

"I was his wife," she said.

"A true one, I know," he answered, "and a loving one had he ever cared to have your love. Am I right?"

"God knows you are," she said.

"I am a clergyman," he said, "an unworthy one, I know, but one who at least tries to do his duty. I am speaking now guardedly and with a full sense of the spiritual import of what I say. Justice and commonsense absolve you. You gave this man duty and obedience. He trampled them underfoot. You offered him affection and respect. He flung them aside. You owe to his memory no more than the sorrow every Christian should feel for a wasted life, and hope that God may have pardoned his cruelty."

The steady beat of a horse's hoofs, which had been clearly audible since they entered the strip of woodland, had come nearer and nearer unmarked, and now in the sudden dead stillness, which had followed Bream's solemn words, rang on their ears with a startling suddenness. They reached the further outskirts of the spinney, and saw Sir George Venebles riding by. He was looking in their direction, but passed without seeing them. Bream stole a look at his companion, and saw the pallor of her face drowned in a sudden wave of crimson. She turned, and struck into a narrow path through the undergrowth, so narrow that he could no longer walk abreast with her. To his mind, the blush and succeeding action were a confession. When a widening of the path permitted him to regain her side, he saw that though the first brilliancy of the blush had faded, her face was aflame with