

Continued from Tenth Page.

We should have plenty of time to go across the peak," said the vicar. "Then you'd get one last fine view before you leave us."

The peak was a rock, some four hundred feet high. One side of it was easily accessible—a mere gentle slope, and there was good walking at the top, and exceptionally fine view; but on another side it rose to its full height almost perpendicularly, and the sea, at full tide, washed its base.

It was full tide now, as the Reverend Paul Martyn and his friend gained the top, and stood with their backs against an enormous boulder, resting for a minute or two after their climb.

A striking contrast they made, those two men—Montague, deep of chest and broad of shoulders, with a massive head and intensely dark eyes, bright just now with a curiously sombre brow; the vicar, slender of physique, a scholar and a dreamer, with a smile as sweet as a woman's, clear grey eyes, and a broad, intellectual brow.

For a minute or two there was silence; Martyn broke it by saying—

"Don't you think Eva is looking a little pale, Basil?"

Montague flushed guiltily. He had noticed that pallor—had told himself he was its cause.

"Is she? Well—yes; perhaps so," was his evasive answer.

Again there was silence; then the clergyman reached over and put his hand on his friend's.

"Basil, I'm going to tell you a little secret before you go away. I feel so happy this morning. I want a friend's congratulations; let me have yours, old fellow. I know I haven't a truer friend in all the world."

"What is it?"

The vicar's pale, scholarly face flushed little.

"Why, Basil, there's actually a chance of my becoming a paterfamilias after all," he said, trying to speak lightly, and failing, because his emotion was so deep. "It's been the one unrealized wish of my life," he went on, "and I'd almost given up hope. So now you know why the wife's looking a little pale—God bless her!"

Montague moistened his lips with his tongue; they felt strangely hot and dry.

"I've told you first of every living soul," resumed the vicar. "You'll have to stand godfather, old fellow. Remember, I shall count on you for that."

"I congratulate you, Martyn; I hope it will all go right."

His manner was almost formal. Certainly it lacked heartiness and warmth.

His friend felt vaguely disappointed; but, reflecting that he couldn't expect his news to seem as wonderful to everybody as it was to him, he smiled happily, and reached out his hand to get a specially beautiful tuft of crimson heather to take home to Eva.

"Monty's a gay young bachelor yet," thought the good, simple-hearted parson. "He can't enter into these things; but he will when he's a married man. He's such a good fellow! How I should like to see him with a wife and half a dozen children. What a pity he and Caroline didn't make a match of it."

And, meantime, Montague leaned against the great boulder and spoke no word.

The vicar's announcement had struck him dumb.

It had brought home to his soul afresh, with sudden startling vividness, how sacred a thing to every man should be his neighbor's wife.

"I do believe that's a new fern. I'm sure I haven't it in my collection. Look, Montague! Do you see which I mean?—the one growing in that crevice just above the tall foxglove. I wonder if I could get it?"

So said the vicar, two or three minutes later, as they still stood looking down the side of the cliff.

Montague looked with only a languid interest at first, but presently he seemed to share something of the botanical enthusiasm of his friend.

"Oh! I could get it easily," he said. "Wait a minute and I will; or, indeed, to tell you the truth, we could both of us get down to that piece of stinging rock, and, by so doing, could save half-a-mile. Shall we try?"

"I think we will," replied the vicar. They began the descent, very carefully, and, for a minute or so, all was well.

But after a while the vicar was attacked by sudden dizziness.

"I don't think I can get any further,"

Basil," he panted. "I'll try to get back, or—I must rest a little."

But Montague's quicker eyes had seen there was no question of resting a little; not, at any rate on the crumbling surface of the cliff.

"If we could get to that tree we might be all right," panted Martyn.

The tree he indicated was a small oak, with a single stout branch hanging over the abyss.

With almost superhuman efforts, they at length reached it, and got astride the branch.

There, for the time being, they were safe.

One thing was certain: they would have to wait till they were rescued; for the piece of rock from which they had clambered into the tree had proved itself treacherous and, even as they sprang from it, had toppled over into the gulf below.

Suddenly there was a faint crackling noise, and Montague saw, with horror, that the branch would not bear their united weight.

Martyn, too, had heard the ominous sound.

In a couple of minutes the branch would snap.

One it would bear, not two.

The clergyman was at the outer end of it; Montague close to the trunk.

If the branch broke, it was Martyn who must die. For one mad moment this thought was deliciously sweet to Basil Montague.

If Martyn died, Eva would be free—free for him to win.

It was as though a fiend stood beside him whispering this into his ear.

But in a moment, higher and nobler thoughts took possession of his soul.

"Give us your hand, dear old fellow," he said. "I'm half afraid we mayn't both live to get safe out of this. But you know you must take care of yourself, for—Eva's sake."

"Just come further up here," he added, very calmly. "You'll find it safer."

He turned his eyes to the blue, smiling heavens. It was his farewell look.

Then, with a voiceless prayer, he quietly let go his hold!

Half an hour later they found the vicar still clinging to the tree, half paralyzed with horror.

He fainted away when they had drawn him to the top of the cliff.

Those who carried his unconscious form to Eva, carried also the news that Basil Montague was dead.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### THE VICAR'S DEATH.

Six months have passed since that August day when the vicar and his friend attempted the descent of the cliff together.

Snowdrops, and even a few early primroses, are lifting their meek heads in the vicarage garden; and the vicar himself, with a chastened look on his gentle, kindly face, as of one who has borne a great sorrow, walks among the flower, and divides his mind between thoughts of the friend who gave up his life for him, and of the wife who lies all day on the couch in her own room, looking almost as white and frail as those sweet snowdrops.

She had looked like that ever since they brought home her husband's unconscious form and told her his friend was dead.

As the vicar walked in his garden that mild February day, his sister Caroline came out and walked beside him.

It had suited her to spend the winter at the vicarage, inasmuch as she seemed likely to make a conquest of a young gentleman in the neighbourhood.

But she had found it very dull; and, having ample opportunity to notice Paul's tender, watchful care of Eva, her envious, jealous nature had learned to hate her more and more each day.

The vicar began to speak at once of the thing which lay nearest his heart—Eva's alarming delicacy of health.

"She seems to have literally no hold on life, Caroline. I fear that when her baby is born she will quietly drift away."

Caroline gave her head an impatient toss.

"She wants rousing, Paul. The truth is, you are a great deal too gentle with her."

"Too gentle with her—my Eva!"

The vicar's face expressed an infinite surprise; it was as though he said: "My Eva is such a sweet, fragile flower, how is it possible for anyone to be too gentle with her?"

His sister's anger, which had smouldered for long, now broke all bounds.

"Paul, how ridiculous you are! Really, I can hardly bear to hear you go on like that. Worshipping your wife as though she were an angel, when anyone might see what it is that's ailing her. She's simply pining over her lover—she, a married woman. For my part, I wonder she isn't ashamed to show it as plainly as she does."

"The vicar's pale cheek glowed, a light that might have warned her sister not to go too far sparked in his mild grey eyes; but her anger made him blind.

"Ob, I don't care for your angry looks, Paul!" she flashed out, resentfully. "I will speak, and you can't hinder me. Basil Montague was her lover, as anyone but you might have seen plain enough. Wasn't she taken ill as soon as she heard he was dead; and she's been fretting over him ever since."

"If you believed that tale about their getting into the wrong train by mistake, I didn't. She meant to elope with him, only her courage failed at the last moment, and she made him bring her back."

"Caroline!" There was that in the vicar's voice now which awed even that passionate woman. She cowered beneath it—cowered, too, beneath the lightning of his glance. "How dare you?" he cried, drawing his tall, slender figure to its full height, as he laid his hand, almost fiercely, on her shoulder, and all but shook her in his wrath.

"Dare to utter such a word again and I will never speak to you as long as I live."

My wife is the purest woman upon God's earth, and you—you are not fit to so much as breathe her name! Go! Go out of my sight! I cannot bear to look at you!"

Thoroughly awed, and even a little frightened, Miss Caroline stole away without a word.

The vicar, as soon as she had gone, went into the house, and sat by his wife's couch, not speaking, but looking on her with ineffable tenderness, and holding her thin, white hand.

It was Miss Caroline's intention to quit her brother's house immediately.

She felt she could not well stay there after what had passed between them.

But Fate had willed that she should leave that roof under widely-altered circumstances.

That night, the vicar was called out to visit a poor parishioner, who lived at some distance.

He was caught in a terrible storm, and, when he reached home, had a shivering fit. In the middle of the night a doctor had to be fetched, and, before another eight-and-forty hours had elapsed, the fatal words, "No hope," were uttered.

Caroline Martyn must needs stay a little longer at the vicarage, but it would only be to see her brother die.

Then Eva showed how an heroic soul could conquer bodily weakness.

She rose from her couch, and took her place beside her husband, suffering no hand but her own to administer medicine or to smooth his pillow, and when all that could be done had been done, and the fatal "No hope" was spoken, she sat down beside him, and held his hand in hers, and prepared herself to give him all the comfort of wifely tenderness as he trod the valley of the shadow of death.

He was quite resigned—quite calm—quite conscious.

The faith he had preached in life sustained him now. He knew Him whom he had believed, and had a serene confidence that He was able to keep him—body and soul—unto the last great day.

"It is only leaving you that troubles me," he whispered. "That is my only care—my only pain. And—I would that it had been God's will for me to have just looked once upon my child. But we must not repine."

Eva bent over him and kissed his brow.

"Paul, there is something I want to tell you," she whispered. "before you go!"

"If you really wish to tell me, dearest," he whispered back.

"I do wish it. Oh, Paul! I should feel myself guilty if I shut you out from one single secret now."

And then, in a low voice, broken by sobs and tears, she told him of his friend's illness.

She told him the whole truth about that railway journey. She kept nothing back—nay, she told him one thing more, she confessed to him that she had loved Basil Montague.

He listened in tenderly sympathetic silence, then drew her head down till her face lay beside his on the pillow.

"Dear heart, I knew it all," he whispered. "I knew it long ago. When you were so ill, and at times delirious, you used to speak of Montague. I learned then everything that you have told me now."

"Oh, Paul! And you never spoke of it! And you could forgive?"

The dying man smiled—a sad, sweet smile.

"Forgive, dear one! what was there to forgive? I knew your purity, I knew your tender, faithful heart. It was not your fault that I wooed you when you were a child, and with a brother's affection, rather than a husband's love. But never a man has had a better or sweeter wife than I."

"When I am gone, remember I told you that, darling, and believe that I feel it with every fibre of my heart. Poor Montague did wrong, but he was only human. And he both repented and atoned. I wish it had been God's will to have spared him. Then I should have left you to him—you and my child. Now I must leave you alone, my Eva."

She clung to him, weeping.

Her love for him was deep and tender, though it was the love of a sister rather than of a wife.

She clung to him, and kissed him, and told him she would gladly die with him, it only were Heaven's will.

"No, no! You must live, dear, for the child's sake. My pure, sweet wife, it is hard to say good-bye to you. Kiss me, Eva; kiss me 'Good-night'."

She kissed him 'Good-night' and 'Good-bye' all in one, for he never spoke again on earth, and ere the morning dawned, he was in the company of 'just men made perfect'—he was in Heaven.

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### IN THE TYROL.

In a little village in the Tyrol, a young widow, very pale and slender, but with a face so sweet, that almost all who see her turn to look at it, sits in a pleasant orchard nursing her baby boy.

It is Eva.

Six months ago she saw her husband laid to rest in the little graveyard on the mountain side; a week later, his child lay on her bosom.

As soon as she was strong enough to travel she had come to this quiet Tyrolean village.

determined to spend her life henceforward in bringing up Paul's child.

But to-day a letter had come to her, a letter which had made her cheeks white and let her pulses thrill. It was as though she had received a letter from the dead, for it was from Basil Montague.

Over and over again she read it, lost in wonder and a sweet, tremulous, palpitating joy—read how he had fallen, comparatively unhurt, on the ledge of rock to which he and Paul had been making their way, and how he had deemed it best, since no one knew of his escape—not even Paul—to go quietly away, and let everyone believe him dead.

He knew it would be thought he had fallen to the very bottom of the cliff, and that his body had been carried out to sea at the turn of the tide.

"I thought it best," said the letter, in conclusion. "I had not a relative in the world to mourn my death, and it seemed to me best that I should be dead to you. I have waited six months since poor Paul died before telling you this, but now I can wait no longer. I must see you. My heart is hungry for a look at your sweet face; it has been starved so long. If you do not hate me, let me come; if you do hate me, send me one line, saying I am not welcome, and you shall never see me more."

She did not send that line to tell him he was not welcome.

In five minutes he would be here, and she sat in the orchard, awaiting him with her baby in her arms.

He stood at the little old fashioned gate.

The same tall, deep chested figure, the same dark, intellectual face; only, it was a trifle thinner, and there was a chastened look in the dark eyes.

She half rose at sight of him; and something in her face must have revealed to him all her heart for in a moment she and Paul's baby with her—was clasped close in his sheltering arms.

"Then you did love me dearest?" he whispered, presently when they were seated side by side, her head on his shoulder his arm around her waist.

"I did, Basil," she whispered softly. God forgive me if I sinned in loving you. I don't know how it even how began. I only know I could not help it. And Paul knew all before he went away. It comforts me to think of that."

And me, too, my dearest," he replied with a grave, earnest look. "I think I am a better man—I hope so, most humbly and devoutly. I will try and atone to you, Eva, for the pain I caused you once."

"Dear Basil, we shall comfort each other. We both suffered. Oh, I know that well. Looking back, I feel full of humility and of thankfulness to God for his mercy. We might so easily have fallen as—others do. But God kept us. It was a sore temptation. I was so young when Paul married me; I did not know what love was. And he was as a father, or an elder brother, rather than a husband. And—when you came—"

"You mean you learned to love me Eva?" he asked, softly as she paused.

Yes, dear; I may tell you now. It is no sin to tell you," she answered simply.

"And you loved me even when you spoke to me as you did in the train that evening?"

"Yes—even then. I was compelled to utter a falsehood or else fall into a deep sin. I choose the falsehood, feeling, as I feel still, it was not a falsehood—not a sinful falsehood—in the eyes of God."

Then she told him what Paul's last words had been, and once again he clasped her and baby to his sheltering breast.

He can look down upon us, she shall see nothing he could wish to alter," he muttered, softly. Then after a moment: "Love, if we had not waited for our happiness, it would not be so perfect now."

#### A MOUNTAIN LION WITH FEELINGS

He Showed Them, Too, When he Pounced on an Empty Coat Instead of a man.

"People who imagine that animals haven't got feelings don't know what they are talking about," said the Yellowstone Park guide as he sat cleaning his rifle.

"I was cutting a trail around one of the spoutin' springs one day and warmed up. I threw my coat over the end of a log."

By and by I went off to hunt for a drink of water, and it was perhaps half an hour before I returned to my work."

"When I came up it was to see a whalin' big mountain lion creepin' along to spring on the coat."

It was over the log in a way way to make it look like a man stooping down, and the lion was nicely deceived deceived. He skulked up to within eighteen feet of the log, crouched flat for moment and laid back his ears, and then he made two jumps of it. Greased lightning wasn't in it with that critter. It was like a big ball of fur shot from a cannon, and as he flew he uttered a screech, which brought my hair on end. If that coat had been a man he wouldn't have had time to

any gum. The lion lit down upon it with laws and teeth ready for business, and in five seconds the garment was cut into carpet rags.

"Then he realized the cheat and you never saw a human being look so foolish. His tail went down to the earth, and he died out of his eyes, and he'd given forty dollars for some one to kick him up the hill. His chagrin was so plain that I laughed right out, and that broke his heart. He looked at me and whimpered like a puppy and when I asked it his mother knew he was out he fetched a sort of sob in his throat and sneaked off like a dog caught killin' sheep. If I could have fast enough to have caught him by the tail he wouldn't have even looked back. He knew had made a fool of himself, and he wanted to go off and hide and have a long think."

#### Not Anticipated.

The extreme thoroughness with which Press censorship in Austria is carried out clearly demonstrated by an amusing story now being told in Germany. An editor, being quite at his wit's end for a leading article, has the inspiration at the last moment to print these lines:—

"After careful perusing the leading article written for the present number by one of the ablest of our contributors, we have arrived at the reluctant conclusion that it may be misinterpreted by the authorities, and regarded as an attack upon the Government. We ourselves consider it to be perfectly innocent; but as we are unwillingly, for our readers' sake, as well as for our own, to have our newspaper confiscated, we have very unwillingly, though as we think, prudently, resolved to withdraw the article. This must serve as an apology to our readers for the blank space in our present issue."

Imagine the shock with which the editor heard from his clerk the next morning that the paper had been confiscated by the people.

"For what reason, I should like to know," gasped the unfortunate man.

"For the malicious ridicule of the institutions of the Austrian Empire by the omission of the leading article," replied the clerk.

#### Submerged.

At the conclusion of service the minister of a certain Nonconformist church went down the aisle, as was his unvarying custom, to greet the strangers in the congregation.

"I don't think you are a member of our church," said he to one as he warmly shook his hand.

"No, sir," replied the stranger.

"Well, you will not think me unduly curious if I ask to what denomination you belong?" asked the minister.

"I suppose," responded the other, "I'm really what you might call a submerged Presbyterian."

"A submerged Presbyterian!" exclaimed the minister. "I should be glad if you'd explain."

"Well, I was brought up a Presbyterian, my wife is a Methodist, my eldest daughter is a Baptist, my son is the organist at a Unitarian church, my second daughter sings in a Church of England choir, and my youngest goes to a Congregational Sunday school."

"But," said the minister, abashed, "you contribute, doubtless, to some church?"

"Yes. I contribute to all of them," was his answer. "That's what submerges me."

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#### Had Been There, Too.

A well-known county cricketer is fond of relating the following little story, though the laugh is decidedly against him:—On one occasion he visited a certain seaside resort with his team. Early on the third morning of the match he was taking a constitutional on the sands when he was recognised by a group of youngsters, who were engaged in playing cricket. At their request, he consented to bowl down a ball or two. He took several wickets in a very little time, after which the youngsters suggested that he should have his innings. He agreed, and the game came to an abrupt conclusion, as he managed to break the bat in playing the very first ball he received. The youngsters looked very down hearted, but brightened up considerably on receipt of five shillings with which to buy a new bat. Later in the day the gentleman chanced to refer to the incident. To his astonishment, the other members of the team thought it very funny, and laughed.

"I can't see," what there is to laugh about, he began.

"Well, you see," explained the captain of the team, "we happen to know that bat. I broke it on Monday morning. G—here broke it on Tuesday, and the smart youths have sold you on the Wednesday morning. They must have made a good sum out of that bat."

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