

of some of the finest art-bits in the vicinity. One day, in the fourth week of the honeymoon, the two young people, as usual, started off for the artist-husband's sketching-ground; but first turned aside to witness a mountaineer's wedding at a chapel at the foot of an ascent in the Alps which the Wiltons intended making later on in the day. Young Wilton made some studies of the picturesque group round the altar in the chapel, his lovely bride—her husband being himself of the Roman faith—joining devoutly in the service. Before the ceremony was over the artist came and knelt by the side of his wife. Alas! it was the last act of worship the loving and hitherto inseparable couple were together to take part in.

After leaving the chapel the Wiltons proceeded with their design, to ascend to a new region in the mountains, accompanied by the officiating priest of the district, who was going to a monastery beyond the Gleichen Pass, and who undertook to show the Wiltons over part of the road. Hand-in-hand the two young people climbed the steep ascent, the artist-lover turning every now and then to the good father to ask information as to the means of reaching points in the mountains, where, in subsequent excursions, he might set up his easel. At last they came to the Pass which was to detach the priest from the party, and here, on a jutting crag overlooking a deep gorge, through which dashed a raging torrent, the Wiltons determined to rest for a while, and now said farewell to their father-guide. Before the priest had gone half a mile on his way, the artist, seeking a point from which to sketch the defile at his feet, daringly ventured to plant his sketching-stool on an insecure footing in advance of where he had left his wife; and, while the latter was calling to him to retrace his steps, the jutting ledge suddenly gave way and the lover-husband fell with the dislodged mass of rock to the bottom.

The piercing cry of the terror-stricken wife, as she saw what had happened, reached the ear of the priest and hastily recalled him to her side. His first care was for the unhappy wife. She had fallen to the ground in a swoon, and it was some time before the good father could recall her to consciousness. With great nerve she realized that she must brace herself to return to the village, and there get help to undertake the search for her husband. In this she was greatly assisted by the compassionate priest, whose heart was wrung by the agonized look of the poor bereft creature whom he conducted back to the village.

"I can tell you nothing more connectedly," said Leighton's companion, as she walked the beach by his side; "the whole subsequent story," she added, "is so pitiful. Mercedes' husband's remains were never found, and it is supposed that they were swept away by the torrent at the foot of the gorge, into which he was so cruelly precipitated. For weeks the poor desolate wife haunted the place refusing to be removed and piteously refusing to be comforted. I and my husband," said Mrs. Kinglake, "who loved Mercedes almost as much as we loved each other, tardily heard of what had happened, and, hastening from England to the Tyrol, insisted on taking the disconsolate widow from the scene of her brooding trouble. For six months afterwards we travelled about with her to endeavor to divert her mind, but at first we only partly succeeded. We then all returned to England, and Mercedes has since lived with us, with the occasional visit to a rich aunt, as a dearly loved sister. After what I have told you," confidently remarked Mrs. Kinglake to her sympathetic auditor, "you will understand, I daresay, the interest Mercedes feels in the artistic profession, and how strangely she was affected by the first sight of you in the chapel at Quebec. Mercedes indeed told me that the meeting with you reminded her much of the wedding scene which she and her husband had witnessed at the foot of the Tyrol mountains within a few hours of his dreadful death.

"I spoke just now," resumed Mrs. Kinglake, "of poor Wilton's death; but I must tell you of a rather odd circumstance in the unhappy story, to help to unravel which has partly brought Mercedes out with us to Canada. She has a curious idea that her

husband is still alive, but that he received such injuries in his fall from the cliff as prevented him from letting his wife know of his escape from death, and that those injuries so preyed upon his mind, always sensitive to physical deformity, that he imposed silence upon his rescuers rather than be taken hack, a bedridden hunchback, to his beautiful and queenly wife. This idea poor Mercedes has entertained for years; and it found a deeper lodgment in her mind, curiously enough," continued Mrs. Kinglake, "after reading an account in an English magazine of a similar incident, happening in Central America, and the details of which, woven into a story, were contributed to the magazine by a lady, resident, I believe, in your Canadian North-West."

"Why," interrupted Leighton, "that story was not by a lady; it was written by me. Was it not in *Belgravia* Lady Mercedes read it, and the signed name of the author was Francis Leighton?"

"What; do you really say so?" interposed Mrs. Kinglake. "But the author's Christian name was a woman's. It was Frances."

"Yes, you are quite right," rejoined Leighton, "but the printer made a mistake of a letter—an 'e' for an 'i,' and I didn't rectify the error, thinking that it would be an advantage to leave the publishers under the impression that their Canadian contributor was a lady."

"Well! well! this is a surprise indeed," said Mrs. Kinglake, "and so *you* are the author of the story. I must run and tell Mercedes."

At this juncture, as Mrs. Kinglake hurried off to find her companion, a boat-full of people from Maplehurst pulled into the bay in search of the storm-bound fugitives. In the boat were the man and the boy who were in charge of the ladies on the previous afternoon, and who, before the storm so suddenly swept down upon the lake, had gone ashore in Morgan's Bay to pick a few wild raspberries, leaving the ladies in the boat, which was lightly tied to a log at the landing. They had been witness to the scene which occurred, of a gust of wind snapping the worn rope which moored the boat, and the speedy drifting out to the lake of the small craft, with its half-frenzied occupants. Their own dismay was allayed, they informed Leighton, when they saw his boat scudding past the entrance to the bay, bearing the artist to the rescue; and they were further relieved in their minds when, after a long tramp through the woods back to the hotel, they heard that the steamer in its up-bound trip had reported the safety of the ladies. Fortunately, as Mr. Lewis and Mr. Kinglake had not come up from Toronto, those gentlemen were ignorant as yet of what had taken place and the ladies were glad to be apprised of the fact.

The expedition in search of the party broke rather rudely in upon Leighton's felicitous sense of possession and wardership of the ladies. He however resigned himself good-humouredly to the interruption; and his content was increased when the Lady Mercedes came up to him and with full heart owned that, having heard that he was the writer of the story in the English periodical which had so interested her, another link had been woven in the bond of attachment which now bound the artist to her and her friends.

The Lady Mercedes' naive confession was made with the modesty, as well as with the impressive sweetness of manner which characterized her every utterance. It struck a new and responsive chord in the Canadian artist's heart. But as he looked into the beautiful face of his love, he saw with misgiving that it invited no confession from him in return. The Lady Mercedes' face wore now a more pensive look, her lustrous eyes became exceedingly wistful, her brow seemed lined with thought, and her whole attitude spoke eloquently of calm resignation. There was no opportunity just then for further talk, which the beautiful widow's avowal, though not her manner, had invited. All that Leighton could say, was to admit that he had been honored by Mrs. Kinglake with the chief facts in the Lady Mercedes' sad personal history. With a compassionate glance at the dear bereaved figure before him, he assured