

and face from the sight of the eager narrator, by walking a little behind, or stooping occasionally to examine the track.

He interrupted him once or twice to have the name of the ship which was wrecked repeated, together with the names of the crew, as far as Cuthbert could remember, asking his questions in a half light, half interested way, and mentally making note of the name of every individual and place, and it was not until Cuthbert had finished, by saying, "Now you have the whole story until the day poor Nat and I found you sitting on the rock," that he made any comment, and then only said, with a short laugh—

"It would make a capital novel! Why not continue your diary—didn't you say you had kept one in England?—and publish the story intact?"

Cuthbert smiled sadly. "Truth is stranger than fiction; I seem to be living, walking, and starving in a dream, when I remember the past. The past!" he repeated sadly; "it is so different from this, that I could almost fancy that I had changed my individuality with my name."

Then he broke off short, remembering that he had concealed his real name throughout the recital; but Guy did not seem to have noticed the slip of the tongue, for there was no look of inquiry or astonishment on his face, as he replied in a low tone, almost inaudible—

"It would be well for some of us—especially for you, my friend—if we could!"

Then aloud—

"Never look back on the past. If it be a pleasant one, it makes the present blacker by the contrast; and if it be a miserable one, the memory of it is only a trouble. The present is what we have to do with. See, these marks become thicker at every step. We shall—we must be near. Ah!" he cried, suddenly, pointing to a thin streak of smoke rising through the trees a few yards before them. "What is that?"

"Smoke!" said Cuthbert; "and where there is smoke there must be fire. Thank God; we shall meet with mankind once more! Let us hurry on."

"Stop!" said Guy, coming to a halt, and laying his hand upon his shoulder; "not so fast: the men who kindled that fire may be friends—or foes!"

"Foes?" repeated Cuthbert.

"We must reconnoitre," said Guy. "Stay you here, while I creep on noiselessly, and get a view of the camp—if camp it be—and, if all is safe, I will hold up my hand for you to come on; if not, I will come back."

Cuthbert nodded; and Guy stealthily crept towards the direction from whence the smoke seemed to proceed.

He had not gone many yards before a dozen dogs sprang from the little wood, and filled the air with their warning bark. All further caution was useless, so Cuthbert limped on, and came up to Guy at the moment a man issued from behind the trees. He was a short, thick-set, stout looking figure, dressed in a suit of gray linen, with a round felt hat stuck on the exact middle of his round conical-looking head; a long, bent pipe, with a fine Dutch porcelain bowl at the end, held tightly in one large, fat hand, and the other thrust into the capacious pocket of his loose coat. He came forward with a sunny rattle waddle, and, shouting to the host of dogs in a rich, oily voice, strongly impregnated with a Dutch accent, approached near enough to make the following inquiry heard above the infernal din—

"Hallo! Who the devil are you? Hi! hi! Get down you tam tog! Hi! hi! Carlo, Fraulein, Pass, get down." And, waving his long pipe with stolid earnestness, he at last succeeded in abating the din and driving the noisy herd back towards the house, which the two travellers could see peeping through the trees.

"Well, why don't you answer? Who the devil are you? Where do you come from?"

Cuthbert opened his mouth, but Guy interrupted him.

"We are farmers, myulcer, and we come from the other side," waving his hand towards the black line of hills. "A cursed lot of bushrangers have burnt us out, stick and stone, and we have only just escaped them to reach death's door through starvation."

"Hi, ti!" replied the Dutchman, opening his mouth and eyes until his large round head looked like a capital O enclosing three small o's in a child's picture book, and suspending his pipe half-way to his mouth with a fixed attitude of astonishment, which gradually changed to one of comic commiseration, as he ran his round eyes over the thin figures, and the ragged garments that half covered them, of the two travellers, and exclaimed—

"My yi! teer! teer! teer me! bushrangers, fire, escape, lost your vays, noting in your stummacks. Mi yi, follow me." And turning round with the gesture like the grotesque face in a child's india-rubber football, he waddled towards the house, Guy plucking Cuthbert's sleeve and whispering as they followed—

"He is a sheep-farmer; they hate and abhor gold-diggers. I know something of herding, and can carry it through, if you will back up my story. We must turn cattle-runners."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

##### CHANGES AT THE VALE AND THE HALL.

"And cruel sorrow breaks across my soul  
Like stormy war on against the shore,  
Beating one sad, one long refrain  
For ever and for ever more."—ANON.

Yes, Ida was getting thin and pale. She had fought well and bravely; all through the long winter her laugh had rung out free and clear, her smile shone calm and sweetly as of old, though her heart was gradually breaking, and the memory of the past, with its one face enshrined in her heart, eclipsing all others, was driving her mad.

Now she was beginning to give way. The struggle was wearing her out, and she gave up the ghost of a smile and the bitter mockery of the laugh; for once and for all refused to hide her feelings; she fasted for life any longer, and spent her time either wandering through the grounds in the chill spring air, or sitting at her window, gazing at the horizon, as if, with eyes of love and despair, she could pierce the blue veil, and find beyond the form whose image was enshrined in her heart.

Sir Robert, who loved his daughter, had noticed the terrible change that was coming over her; but beyond speaking to her once, and Lady Edith twice or thrice, about her listless air, he did nothing, for a new anxiety had beset him.

Arthur Thussington had written for more money. He had speculated not only with the money Sir Robert had placed at his disposal, but also with his own, and the shares he had purchased had for the time—so he had written—gone down. Fully believing in them, he pointed out how good an opportunity it was to buy more, and Sir Robert, trusting to him entirely,

had procured a large sum of money and placed it at his disposal.

So the share and stock list, the money market, and all the other speculative news and announcements, absorbed Sir Robert's time and interest; and before he had become aware of it, he was bitten with the gambler's disease, and lived for one thing only, the rise and fall of the great Wheel Baug mining shares.

Ida, who was not so devoured by her own substantial grievances as not to be cognizant of what was going on around her, saw her father's changed manner, and instantly connected his agitated, wrinkled brow and embarrassed speech, his many hours of seclusion after the post had come in, with the long, business-like letters that came daily, directed in Arthur Thussington's handwriting, and thinking thus, felt a nameless apprehension and fear cast its glamour over her. She never saw the outsides of the envelopes, empty or full, but she shuddered.

So things were going on at the Vale; at the Hall a greater, heavier gloom and cloud was falling.

The place was getting like a vast, huge tomb.

Naught broke the grim, dead silence, for the very dogs had been killed or sent away, for fear they should give tongue too loudly, and so disturb the silence of the master.

The servants stole about the floor with the stealthy steps of midnight thieves, and the sweet, pale face of Lady Mary had a scared look as it shone softly along the dim corridor or dismal gallery, for the soul of Sir Harry Edgecombe had grown terrible to himself and others, and the slightest sound moved him beyond expression.

The doors and windows of his room were made double to shut out the sound. Heavy curtains were hung around to shut out the light, and save his devoted wife and the steward, Sir Harry saw no one.

What concatenation of causes had brought about this terrible state of mind, no one could clearly discover, but all said that the disappearance and loss of his son, though bad enough, was not sufficient to have wrought so awful a change.

There was something behind, they whispered, and the steward, as he told of the white, hard face, that was so different to the once florid and healthy one, shook his head to and fro with a significant drawing in of the lips that filled his hearers with a sudden, mysterious awe.

Yet, with all the change, the baronet was sharp enough on business matters. The steward, with a darkened face, confessed, and was as grasping as ever; indeed, his avarice, which grew more intense day by day, was the only thing Mr. Startel, the steward, said, that kept him alive. However that might be, the fact that Sir Harry had become more niggardly and grasping than ever was true, and he spent all those fearful latter days of his poring over his books, as if he meant to drive the past from his memory and heart by long rows of figures and high, glittering piles of gold.

All said the end must soon come. Yet, though he got weaker day by day, he would see no doctor; indeed, a proposal to that effect, though it was made in Lady Mary's gentle tones, brought on such a violent fit of passion, that those who were around dreaded that each ground-out oath would be his last.

He would see no doctor, he said, for he was not ill; at least, he should be no better, and he or she who plagued him to do so, would do it at their peril.

So the winter wore away, day and night being alike to the master of Edge-

combe, shut up in his darkened room, and changing ever with each hour, in a way both awful and incredible.

Sir Robert, Lady Edith, and Ida had called frequently, but he had refused to see any of them, even Ida, who was always a great favorite. Arthur Thussington had travelled from London, hearing of his uncle's ill health, and had one afternoon walked silently into the hall, and requested to see him. Lady Mary was out at the time, and the steward with whom Arthur was no great favorite, the two being slaves, and therefore distrustful of each other, happening to cross the hall, took his card.

"Arthur Thussington!" cried Sir Harry, in a voice choking with suppressed passion. "That sleek wolfhound wants to see me! Did I send for him? Tell him to wait until I do; and, harkee, Startel, tell him, if he does not leave the Hall in five minutes, I myself will come and trust him out. I am Sir Harry Edgecombe still, and will have no jackals prowling round me while I'm alive, though they may do it when I'm dead. Let them wait till then!"

This the steward repeated word for word, lending an additional sting to the bitter message by a coarse, malignant leer of his; one that set the long hands of the listener twitching to catch at his lean throat.

So Arthur Thussington stole quietly back to town, first paying a flying visit on business to Sir Robert alone, and spent half-an-hour meditating before the fire at his chambers, which resulted in his sending for a sleek-faced clerk, who was like himself in a smaller way, and despatching him to Edgecombe in the character of a young man out for a holiday, instructed him to keep watch over the Hall and communicate everything, however great and apparently trivial, that he could learn to him. Then he settled down to his plans, feeling more secure, and went on weaving the web that was to secure him a fortune, and others ruin, as fast as before.

To be Continued.

THE VATICAN.—The word "Vatican" is often used, but there are many who do not understand its import. The term refers to a collection of buildings on one of the seven hills of Rome, which covered a space of twelve hundred feet in length and one thousand in breadth. It is built on the spot once occupied by the garden of the cruel Nero. It owes its origin to the Bishop of Rome, who, in the early part of the sixth century, erected an humble residence on the site. About the year 1150, Pope Eugenius rebuilt it on a magnificent scale. Innocent II., a few years afterwards, gave it up as a lodging to Peter II., King of Arragon. In 1305, Clement V., at the instigation of the King of France, removed the Papal See from Rome to Avignon, when the Vatican remained in a condition of obscurity and neglect for more than seventy years. But soon after the return of the pontifical court at Rome, an event which had been so earnestly prayed for by the poor Petrarch, and which finally took place in 1376, the Vatican was put into a state of repair, again enlarged, and it was thenceforward considered as the regular palace and residence of the Popes, who, one after the other, added fresh buildings to it, and gradually enriched it with antiquities, statues, pictures and books, until it became the richest depository in the world. The library of the Vatican originated fourteen hundred years ago. It contains 40,000 manuscripts.