

Madame Midas

By Ferfus Hume

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

"Pardon him not answering, Madame," interposed Vandeloup, "he has the misfortune to be dumb."

"Dumb?" echoed Madame, with a glance of commiseration, while Archie looked startled, and Selina mentally observed that silence was golden.

"Yes, he has been so from his birth—at least, so he gives me to understand," said Gaston, "but it's more likely the result of an accident, for he can hear though he cannot speak. However, he is strong and willing to work; and I also, if you will kindly give me an opportunity," added he, with a winning smile.

"You have not many qualifications," said Madame, shortly, angry with herself for so taking to this young man's suave manner.

"Probably not," retorted Vandeloup, with a cynical smile. "I fancy it will be more a case of charity than anything else, as we are starving."

"Surely not as bad as that?" observed Mrs. Villiers, in a softer tone.

"Why not?" retorted the Frenchman, carelessly. "We are strangers in a strange land, and it is hard to obtain employment. My companion Pierre can work in your mine, and if you will take me on I can keep your books"—with a sudden glance at a file of papers on the table.

"Thank you, I keep my own books," replied Madame, shortly. "What do you say to engaging them, Archie?"

"We might give them a try," said McIntosh, cautiously. "Ye do need a fidget man, as I told ye, and the other man can work in the claim."

"Very well," she said, sharply; "you are engaged, M. Vandeloup, as my clerk, and your companion can work in the mine. As to wages and all that, we will settle to-morrow, but I think you will find everything satisfactory."

"I am sure of that, Madame," returned Vandeloup with a bow.

"And now," said Madame Midas, graciously, relaxing somewhat now that business was over, "you had better have some supper."

Pierre's face lighted up when he heard this invitation, and Vandeloup bowed politely.

"You are very kind," he said, looking at Mrs. Villiers in a friendly manner; "supper is rather a novelty to both of us."

Selina meanwhile had gone out, and turned with some cold beef and pickles, and a large loaf of bread. These she placed on the table, and then retired to her seat again, inwardly rebellious at having two tramps at the table, but outwardly calm.

Pierre fell upon the victuals before him with the voracity of a starving animal, and ate and drank in such a savage manner that Madame was conscious of a kind of curious repugnance, and even Archie was startled out of his Scotch phlegm. Vandeloup, however, ate very little and soon finished; then filling a glass of water he held it to his lips and bowed again to Madame Midas.

"To your health, Madame," he said, drinking.

"We are not absolute barbarians, M. Vandeloup," said Madame, with a smile, as she arose and held out her hand to the young man; "and now good night, for I am feeling tired and I will see you to-morrow. Mr. McIntosh will show you where you are to sleep."

Vandeloup took the hand she held out to him and pressed it to his lips with a sudden gesture. "Madame," he said, passionately, "you are an angel, for to-day you have saved the lives of two men."

Madame snatched her hand away quickly, and a flush of annoyance spread over her face as she saw how Selina and Archie stared. Vandeloup, however, did not wait for her answer, but went out, followed by Pierre. Archie put on his hat and walked out after them, while Madame Midas stood looking at Selina with a thoughtful expression of countenance.

"I don't know if I've done a right thing, Selina," she said at length; "but as they were starving I could hardly turn them away."

"Cast your bread on the waters and it shall come back after many days—buttered," said Selina, giving her own version of the text.

CHAPTER VI.

At the foot of the huge mound of white talc which marked the site of the Pactolus Mine was a long zinc-roofed building, which was divided into two compartments. In one of these the miners left their clothes, and put on rough canvas suits before going down, and here also they were searched on coming up in order to see if they had carried away any gold.

From this room a long, narrow passageway led to the top of the shaft, so that any miner having gold concealed upon him could not throw it away and pick it up afterward, but had to go right into the searching room from the cage, and could not possibly hide a particle without being found out by the searchers. The other room was the sleeping apartment of such miners as stayed on the premises, for the majority of the men went home to their families when their work was done.

There were three shifts of men on the Pactolus during the twenty-four hours, and each shift worked eight hours at a time.

When M. Vandeloup awoke next morn-

ing at 6 o'clock the first shift were not yet up, and some of the miners who had to go on at 8 were sleeping heavily in their beds. The sleeping places were berths, ranging along two sides of the room, and divided into upper and lower compartments like those on shipboard.

Gaston having roused himself naturally wanted to see where he was, so rubbing his eyes and yawning he leaned on his elbow and took a leisurely survey of his position.

Gaston yawned once or twice, then feeling disinclined for any more sleep, he softly put on his clothes, so as not to awake Pierre, who slept in the berth below, and descending from his sleeping place groped his way to the door and went out into the cool, fragrant morning.

There was a chill wind blowing from the bush, bringing with it a faint aromatic odor, and on glancing downwards he saw that the grass was wet with dew. The dawn was burning redly in the east, and the vivid crimson of the sky put him in mind of that sunset under which he had landed with his companion on the Queensland coast.

He was near the mine by this time, and hearing some one calling to him he looked up, and saw McIntosh. There was a stir in the men's quarters now, and he could see the door was open and several figures were moving rapidly about, while a number of others were crossing the fields. The regular beat of the machinery still continued, and the smoke was pouring out thick from the tall red chimney, while the wheels were spinning round in the poppet-heads as the mine slowly disgorged the men who had been working all night.

McIntosh came slowly along with his hands in his pockets and a puzzled look on his severe face. He could not make up his mind whether to like or dislike this young man, but Madame Midas had seemed so impressed that he had half made up his mind to dislike him out of a spirit of contradiction.

"Women are so easy pleased, poor bodies," he said to himself, "a bonny face is all they bother their heads about."

He looked grimly at the young man as he came briskly forward with a gay smile. "Ye're a very early bird," he said, fondling his frill of white hair, and looking keenly at the tall, slim figure of the Frenchman.

"Case of 'must,' my friend," returned Vandeloup, coolly; "it's only rich men can afford to be in bed, not poor fellows like me."

"Your no much like other folk," said the suspicious old Scotchman, with a condemnatory sniff.

"Of that I am glad," retorted Vandeloup, with suavity, as he walked beside him to the men's quarters. "What a horrible thing to be the duplicate of half-a-dozen other men. By the way," breaking off into a new subject, "Madame Midas is charming."

"Aye, aye," said Archie, jealously, "we know all about the French-fangled way o' giving pretty words, and not a scrap of truth in any o' them."

Gaston was about to protest that he said no more than he felt, which was indeed the truth, but Archie impatiently hurried him off to breakfast at the office. They made a hearty meal, and, having had a talk, prepared to go below.

First of all, they arrayed themselves in underground garments, which consisted of canvas trousers, heavy boots, blue blouses of a rough woollen material, and a sou'wester each. Thus accoutred, they went along to the foot of the poppet heads, and Archie having opened a door therein, Vandeloup saw the mouth of the shaft yawning dark and gloomy at his feet. As he stood there, gazing at the black hole which seemed to pierce down into the entrails of the earth, he turned round to take one last look at the sun before descending to the nether world.

"This is quite a new experience to me," he said, as they stepped into the wet iron cage, which had ascended to receive them in answer to Archie's signal, and now commenced to drop down silently and swiftly into the pitchy darkness.

Archie did not reply, for he was too much occupied in lighting his candle to answer. So they went on sliding down noiselessly into the gloom, while the water, falling from all parts of the shaft, kept splashing constantly on the top of the cage and running in little streams over their shoulders.

"It's like a nightmare," thought the Frenchman, with a nervous shudder, as he saw the wet walls gleaming in the faint light of the candle.

At last they reached the ground, and found themselves in the main chamber, from whence the galleries branched off to east and west.

Being accustomed to the darkness and knowing every inch of the way, the manager moved forward rapidly, and sometimes Vandeloup lagged so far behind that all he could see of his guide was the candle he carried, shining like a pale yellow star in the pitchy darkness. At last McIntosh went into one of the side galleries, and going up an iron ladder fixed to the side of the wall, they came to a second gallery thirty feet above the other, and branching off at right angles.

"It's like the catacombs in Rome," said Vandeloup to McIntosh; "one could easily get lost here."

"He might," returned McIntosh, cau-

tiously, "if he did not know all about the lie of the mine—o'er yonder," putting one finger on the plan and pointing with the other to the right of the tunnel, "we found a twenty-ounce nugget yesterday, and one afore that o' twenty-five, and in the first face we were at two months ago o'er there," pointing to the left, "there was a big one called the Villiers nugget, which as ye know is Madame's name."

"Oh, yes, I know that," said Vandeloup, much interested; "do you christen all your nuggets?"

"If they're big enough," replied Archie.

"Then I hope you will find a hundred-ounce lump of gold, and call it the Vandeloup," returned the young man, laughing.

"There's many a true word spoke in jest, laddie," said Archie gravely; "when we get to the Devil's Lead we may fine one o' that size."

"What do you mean by leads?" asked Vandeloup, considerably puzzled.

Thereupon Archie opened his mouth, and gave the young man a scientific lecture on mining.

"My faith," said Vandeloup, carelessly, with a merry laugh, as Archie concluded, "gold is as hard to get in its natural state as in its artificial."

"An' harder," retorted Archie, "for-bye there's no such wicked work about it."

"Madame will be rich some day," remarked Vandeloup, as they left the office and walked up toward the house.

"Maybe she will," replied the other, cautiously. "Australia's a grand place for the siller, ye know, I'm not very far wrong but what w' industry and perseverance ye may make a wee bit siller yerself, laddie."

"It won't be my fault if I don't," returned M. Vandeloup, gaily; "and Madame Midas," he added, mentally, "will be an excellent person to assist me in doing so."

CHAPTER VII.

Gaston Vandeloup having passed all his life in cities, found that his existence on the Pactolus claim was likely to be very dreary. Day after day he arose in the morning, did his office work, ate his meals, and after a talk with Madame Midas in the evening went to bed at 10 o'clock. Such Arcadian simplicity as this was not likely to suit the highly cultivated tastes he had acquired in his earlier life. As to the episode of New Caledonia M. Vandeloup dismissed it completely from his mind, for this young man never permitted his thoughts to dwell on disagreeable subjects.

A whole month had elapsed since Madame had engaged M. Vandeloup and his friend, but as yet the Devil's Lead had not been found. Madame, however, was strong in her belief that it would soon be discovered, for her luck—the luck of Madame Midas—was getting quite a proverb in Ballarat.

One bright morning Vandeloup was in the office running up endless columns of figures, and Madame, dressed in her underground garments, was making ready to go below, just having stepped in to see Gaston.

"By the way, M. Vandeloup," she said in English, for it was only in the evenings they spoke French, "I am expecting a young lady this morning, so you can tell her I have gone down the mine, but will be back in an hour if she will wait for me."

"Certainly, Madame," said Vandeloup, looking up with his bright smile; "and the young lady's name?"

"Kitty Marchurst," replied Madame, pausing a moment at the door of the office; "she is the daughter of the Rev. Mark Marchurst, a minister at Ballarat. I think you will like her, M. Vandeloup," she went on, in a conversational tone; "she is a charming girl—only 17, and extremely pretty."

"Then I am sure to like her," returned Gaston, gaily; "I never could resist the charm of a pretty woman."

He went to work on the figures again, when suddenly he heard a high, clear voice singing outside. At first he thought it was a bird, but no bird could execute such trills and shakes, so by the time the voice arrived at the office door M. Vandeloup came to the conclusion that the owner of the voice was a woman, and that the woman was Miss Kitty Marchurst.

He leaned back in his chair and wondered idly if she would knock at the door or enter without ceremony. The latter course was the one adopted by Miss Marchurst, for she threw open the door and stood there blushing and pointing at the embarrassing situation in which she now found herself.

"I thought I would find Mrs. Villiers here," she said, in a low, sweet voice, the peculiar timbre of which sent a thrill through Gaston's young blood, as he arose to his feet. Then she looked up and catching his dark eyes fixed on her with a good deal of admiration in them, she looked down and commenced drawing figures on the dusty floor with the tip of a very dainty shoe.

"Madame has just gone down the mine," said M. Vandeloup politely, "but she desires me to say that she would be back soon, and that you were to wait here, and I was to entertain you," then, with a grave bow, he placed the only chair in the office at the disposal of his visitor, and leaned up against the mantelpiece in an attitude of unstudied grace. Miss Marchurst accepted his offer and took furtive glances at him, while Gaston, whose experience of women was by no means limited, looked at her coolly, in a manner which would have been rude but for the charming smile which quivered upon his lips.

(To be continued.)

Too Impressionable.

"Penner will never do as a critic," said the managing editor.

"No?" queried his assistant.

"No, I noticed him at the premier performance of that comic opera and he actually smiled once or twice."—Philadelphia Press.

GOOD Short Stories

A certain well-known lawyer excelled in cross-examination. His gift of humor often served him where other methods were unsuccessful. For instance, a young woman in the witness box was asked her age. She hesitated to reply. "Don't hesitate," said the lawyer. "The longer you hesitate the older you are." The witness took the hint.

One day as John W. Muiridge, the lawyer, and Judge Minot were walking along the street in Concord, New Hampshire, together, Mr. Muiridge, in his sepulchral voice, said: "Judge, let's go into partnership. You furnish the capital and I'll furnish the brains."

The judge quickly pulled a two-cent piece from his pocket, and, holding it in the palm of his hand, said to Muiridge: "Very well; cover that, John! Cover that!"

Mrs. Maud Miller Hipple, advocate of a course in "motherhood" for young matrons, tells this: "A young mother was walking with her husband on the Atlantic City board walk. Suddenly she gave a little cry of pleasure. 'Oh,' she said, 'there is nurse—nurse wheeling baby.' And she ran lightly to the luxurious coach of leather, with its swan-shaped carriage and its rubber-tired wheels, and she pushed back the parasol that shaded the occupant from the sun. Then she gave a great start. 'Why, nurse,' she cried, 'where's baby?'"

The nurse gasped. "Goodness gracious, ma'am. I forgot to put him in!"

It is one of the traditions of the Senate of the United States that no new Senator shall make a set speech till he has served a year or longer. Old Senators are very impatient of new comers. Edmunds of Vermont once allowed it to be understood that he would soon retire. Idaho had just been admitted as a State. Senator McConnell of Idaho, the day after he had been sworn in, took up a position in the middle aisle and in a foghorn voice made a speech. While he was holding the fort, Edmunds entered the chamber. He stopped short and gazed at the speaker with the utmost astonishment. Leaning over to the Senator next to him he asked: "Who is that person?"

"A Senator from Idaho." "You don't say so! When did he come?" "He was sworn in yesterday." "Sworn in yesterday and making a speech to-day," mused Edmunds. "Well, well, if that doesn't beat all! It looks like it's time for me to quit." And in a few days he resigned.

HOW TO FLOAT AND SWIM.

Dog Stroke, Breast Stroke—Swimming on the Back.

To float go out into the water as far as your waist. Throw yourself on your back facing the shore. Hold your chin up as high as possible.

This will submerge your ears, says a writer in Country Life in America, but don't let this strange sensation worry you. If the water closes over your head, simply close your mouth and remain still and straight—you will go under for a second only.

Now throw your arms out wide behind your back and throw out your chest. Hold your chin high. Inhale through the mouth. Exhale through the nose.

You are now in the ideal floating attitude. Never lift your head. Keep straight and still, chest up, toes showing, chin high and ears submerged.

Try to float as long as possible, because this exercise forms the basis not only for swimming on the back, and for life-saving, but also for sustaining yourself quietly in the water for hours. A thirty-minute float is a very respectable performance.

In treading water you return from the fish position to your original attitude, head up and feet down. Together with the dog stroke and floating, it is one of the three basic ways of maintaining life in the water.

To tread water properly just imagine that you are going upstairs and move your legs accordingly. Keep moving your arms horizontally from the elbow in a semi-circle, palms downward.

Your head will be well out of the water, a valuable point when you wish to summon help or are about to receive it. An expert water treader can keep his head out of water while using his right arm to grasp a line or signal for help.

The dog stroke is as simple as it is ugly. Throw your dog in and watch him. Then jump in and imitate the dog. If you can't do it at first keep on till you can. There are no rules.

You should now have the confidence necessary to start out on the regulation swimming strokes. The source of them all is the breast stroke. If you have ever watched a frog swim you will know what is expected of you. Imitate the frog.

Go out as high as your shoulders.

Face the shore. Imagine that you are in a tree, and want to make a leap to a branch above your head. Crouch with your hands at your breast and your legs drawn up under you.

Now leap. Send your hands out in front of you, palms down, and sweep them through the water until in line with your shoulders. At the same time you must kick with the legs downward, spreading the legs as much as you can, and kick with heel, not with toe.

For swimming in a rough sea there is nothing like a well developed breast stroke. It enables you to see at any time where you are going, so you avoid weeds or dangerous wreckage, etc.

Remember this: leap forward, rather than kick, and use your heels. Spread your legs, work the scissors grip before crouching. In flinging your arms out, it is palms down; in sweeping them back it is palms obliquely, and in bringing them back to the breast position it is palms vertical.

If you have any difficulty in negotiating the entire stroke, try the arm movement first, then the legs, while holding on to a rope, and finally the complete stroke. The insure your doing the breast stroke to absolute perfection, do it on dry land first and prevail on a competent man to watch you. Lie on your stomach across a bench and continue the movements till you get them right.

Swimming on the back from the position of floating means a sweep of the arms and the legs downward from head to foot. Try the arms first. Extend them in line with the shoulder, palms obliquely. Sweep them through the water down the side of your hips. Bring them back with palms facing bottom, or rip them out of the water and fling them over your head, taking a fresh purchase with oblique palms.

With each downward or backward sweep of your arms goes a good strong kick with your legs. Pull up your knees and kick back with the heels, so that the legs pass obliquely through the water, the feet as far apart as possible. Again try the scissors grip of the legs in bringing them together so the heels touch.

When this movement is finished, your arms should be ready and extended in line with shoulders to make a new sweep. The sweep of arms and the kick is simultaneous. The scissors grip occurs as you whip your arms into position for another stroke. Swimming on the back is the most satisfactory and least exhausting stroke for long distances.

AN EMERGENCY SPEECH.

People often say very funny things in times of emergency. It was fortunate for the general whose conciliatory efforts are described in Mrs. Jefferson Davis' life of her husband, that the Indians with whom the men were dealing had no great sense of humor. Lieutenant Davis, then on the staff of General Gaines, had accompanied his superior officer to a conference with the chiefs of the Sac nation.

The council met in a tent. The warriors, decked with war-paint and feathers, sat scowling and silent, their arms stacked near-by. Seated with them was a dark old woman, shrunken to a mere skeleton, clothed in white woolen. She held herself with great majesty of mien.

The general began the council in a hesitating manner. He explained that it was necessary for the Indians to move on, for the white man must have the territory. At this the old squaw became greatly excited, and began speaking with vehemence. She declared that the Sacs must die on their own hunting-ground. The general showed considerable irritation at her trade, and spoke to the interpreter.

"Tell her—a—that—a—woman is not expected to interfere between the—a—white and Indian braves. She must be silent."

The squaw rose from her seat with great impressiveness, and stretched her skinny arms above her head with a wild gesture.

"Does he say I am to be silent in the councils of my people? In these veins runs the blood of the last of the Sac kings. It is my right to speak."

The chiefs rose about her, stirred by her words, gesticulating angrily. It was plain that trouble was at hand, and the Indians far outnumbered the whites.

The general calmly listened until the speech was interpreted. Then he rose, with a sweep of the hand, to command silence.

"Mr. Interpreter," he said, "tell her—a—that—a—my mother was—a woman."

This revelation brought grunts of satisfaction from the Indians, and the frankness of the statement pleased the old princess. Order was restored, and the council proceeded with the business in hand.

Truthfully Answered.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what is a cigarette?

Pa—A cigarette, my son, is a rank concoction with a light on one end and nothing on the other.