

# Madame Midas

By Fergus Hume

**CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)**  
Slivers was just going out to seek him when the door of his office was violently swung open, and a tall, raw-boned female entered in a bonnet placed askew on her rough hair. This lady banged on Slivers' table a huge umbrella and demanded where Villiers was.  
"I don't know," snapped Slivers viciously, "how should I?"  
"Don't sneer at me, you wooden-legged monster," cried the virago, with another bang of the umbrella, which raised such a cloud of dust that it nearly made Slivers sneeze his head off. "He ain't been home all night, and you're been leading him into bad habits, you cork-armed libertine."  
"Hain't been home all night, eh?" said Slivers, sitting up quickly, while Billy retired to the fireplace and tried to conceal himself up the chimney. "May I ask who you are?"  
"You may," said the angry lady, folding her arms and holding the umbrella in such an awkward manner that she nearly poked Slivers' remaining eye out. "I'm his landlady, Matilda Cheedle is my name, and I don't care who knows it."  
"It's not a pretty name," sneered Slivers. "Neither are you. What do you mean by banging into my office like an insane giraffe?"—this in allusion to Mrs. Cheedle's height.  
"Oh, go on! go on!" said that lady defiantly. "I've heard it all before; I'm used to it; but here I sit until you tell me where my lodger is, and sitting the action to the word, Mrs. Cheedle sat down in a chair with such a bang that Billy gave a screech of alarm and said, 'Pickle!'"  
"I'll have a look round, and if I see him I'll send him home," said Slivers, rising to intimate the interview was at an end.  
"Very well, mind you do," said the widow, rising. "Send him at once and I'll speak to him. And perhaps," with a bashful glance, "you wouldn't mind seeing me up the street a short way, as I'm alone and unprotected."  
"Stuff!" retorted Slivers, ungraciously. "There's plenty of light, and you are big enough to look after yourself."  
At this Mrs. Cheedle snorted loudly like a war horse, and flounced out of the office in a rage, after informing Slivers in a loud voice that he was a selfish, cork-eyed little viper.  
When she had gone Slivers locked up his office and sallied forth to find the missing Villiers, but though he went all over town to that gentleman's favorite haunts, he could see nothing of him; and on making inquiries heard that he had not been seen in Ballarat all day.  
This was so contrary to Villiers' general habits that Slivers became suspicious, and as he walked home thinking over the subject he came to the conclusion there was something up.  
"If," said Slivers, pausing on the pavement and addressing a street lamp, "he doesn't turn up to-morrow I'll have a look for him again. If that don't do I'll call the police, and I shouldn't wonder," went on Slivers, musingly, "I shouldn't wonder if they called on Madame Midas."

**CHAPTER XVI.**  
Slivers was puzzled over Villiers' disappearance, so he determined to go in search of evidence against Madame Midas, though for what reason he wanted evidence against her no one but himself knew.  
The reason he had for turning detective was simply this: It soon became known that Madame Midas had been robbed by her husband of the famous nugget, and great was the indignation of everyone against Mr. Villiers.  
Slivers waylaid Barty and asked him to drop into his office with a view of finding out from him all the events of that night.  
"It's very kind of you to come and talk to an old chap like me," said Slivers, in an amiable tone as he could command. "You're such a gay young fellow."  
Barty acknowledged modestly that he was gay, but that he owed certain duties to society, and had to be mildly social.  
"And so handsome!" croaked Slivers, winking with his one eye at Billy, who sat on the table. "Oh, he's all there, ain't he, Billy?"  
Billy, however, did not agree to this, and merely observed "Pickles," in a disbelieving manner.  
Barty felt rather overcome by this praise, and blushed in a modest way, but felt that he could not return the compliment with any degree of truth, as Slivers was not handsome, neither was he all there.  
Slivers, who had thus gained the good will of the young man by flattery, plunged into the subject of Villiers' disappearance. "I wonder what's become of Villiers," he said, artfully.  
"I'm sure I don't know," said Barty in a languid, used-up sort of voice. "I haven't seen him since last Monday week."  
"Where did you leave him on that night?" asked Slivers.  
"At the corner of Sturt and Lydiard streets, early in the morning, about 2 o'clock, I think."  
"And you never saw him after that?"

"Not a sight of him," replied Barty; "but, I say, why all this thussness?"  
"I'll tell you after you have answered my questions," retorted Slivers, rudely, "but I'm not asking out of curiosity—it's business."  
"Well, go on; I'll answer."  
"Who else was with you and Villiers on that night?" asked Slivers in a magisterial kind of manner.  
"A French fellow called Vandelpop."  
"Vandelpop?" echoed Slivers in surprise; "oh, indeed! what was he doing?"  
"Enjoying himself," replied Barty, coolly; "he came into the theater and Villiers introduced him to me; then Mr. Wopples asked us all to supper."  
"What time did Vandelpop leave?" asked Slivers.  
"He stayed all night in town."  
"Oh!" ejaculated Slivers in an excited manner, drumming on the table with his fingers. "Where did he stay?"  
"At the Wattle Tree Hotel."  
Slivers mentally made a note of this, and determined to go there and find out at what time Vandelpop had come home on the night in question, for this suspicious old man had now got it into his head that Vandelpop was in some way responsible for Villiers' disappearance.  
"Where did Villiers say he was going when he left you?" he asked.  
"Straight home."  
"Humph! Well, he didn't go home at all. What's become of him? Men don't disappear in this mysterious way without some reason. He's been murdered!"  
"I say!" ejaculated Barty, jumping up from his chair in alarm; "you're going too far, old chap."  
"I'm going further," retorted Slivers, rising from his chair and stamping up and down the room; "I'm going to find out who did it, and then I'll grind her to powder; I'll twist her neck off, curse her."  
"Is it a woman?" asked Barty, who now began to think of making a retreat, for Slivers, with his one eye blazing, and his cork arm swinging rapidly to and fro, was not a pleasant object to contemplate.  
"That's what I want to find out," replied Slivers, sulkily, going back to his chair.  
"Well," said Barty, going to the door, "I'm late for my engagement; ta, ta, old chap, I hope you'll drop on the he or she you're looking for; but you're quite wrong. Villiers has bolted with the nugget, and that's a fact, sir," and with an airy wave of his hand Barty went out, leaving Slivers in anything but a pleasant temper.  
"Bah! you peacock," cried this wicked old man, banging his wooden leg against the table, "you eyeglass idiot—you brainless puppy—I'm wrong, am I? Well, see about that. I've found out all I want from you, and I'll track her down, and put her in jail, and hang her—hang her till she's as dead as a door nail."  
Having given vent to this pleasant sentiment, Slivers put on his hat, and taking his stick, walked out of his office, but not before Billy saw his intention and climbed up to his accustomed place on the old man's shoulder.

**CHAPTER XVII.**  
It was some time before Mrs. Villiers recovered from the shock caused by her encounter with her husband. The blow he had struck her on the side of the head turned out to be more serious than was at first anticipated, and Selina deemed it advisable that a doctor should be called in. So Archie went to Ballarat, and returned to the Pactolus with Dr. Gollipeck, who soon verified the adage that appearances are deceptive by bringing Madame Midas back to health in a wonderfully short space of time. She was now convalescent, and, seated in the armchair by the window, looked dreamily at the landscape. She was thinking of her husband, and in what manner he would annoy her next; but she half thought that having got the nugget he would now leave her alone.  
One result of Madame's illness was that M. Vandelpop had met Dr. Gollipeck, and the two, though apparently dissimilar in both character and appearance, had been attracted to one another by a liking which they had in common. This was the study of toxicology, a science at which the eccentric old man had spent a lifetime. He found Vandelpop a congenial spirit, for the young Frenchman had a wonderful liking for the uncanny subject; but there was a difference in the aims of both men, Gollipeck being drawn to the study of poisons from a pure love of the subject, whereas Vandelpop wanted to find out the secrets of toxicology for his own ends.  
Wearied of the dull routine of the office work, Vandelpop was taking a walk in the meadows which surrounded the Pactolus, when he saw Dr. Gollipeck shuffling along the dusty white road from the railway station.  
"Good-day, Monsieur le Medecin," said Vandelpop, gaily, as he came up to the old man. "How goes the great work?"  
"Capitally," returned the doctor, with a complacent smile; "just finished Catherine de Medici—wonderful woman, sir—quite a mistress of the art of poisoning."  
"Humph!" returned Vandelpop, thoughtfully, "I do not agree with you there; it was her so-called astrologer, Ruggieri, who prepared all her poisons."

Catherine certainly had the power, but Ruggieri possessed the science—a very fair division of labor for getting rid of people, I must say—but what have you got there?" nodding towards a large book which Gollipeck carried under his arm.  
"For you," answered the other, taking the book slowly from under his arm—a work on toxicology.  
"Thank you," said Vandelpop, taking the heavy volume and looking at the title. "French, I see! I'm sure it will be pleasant reading."  
When he was gone the mocking smile so habitual to Vandelpop's countenance faded away, and his face assumed a thoughtful expression. He opened the book and turned over the leaves rapidly, but without finding what he was in search of. With an uneasy laugh he shut the volume with a snap and put it under his arm again.  
"He's an enigma," he thought, referring to the doctor; "but he can't suspect anything. The case may be in this book, but I doubt if even this man with the barbarous name can connect Gaston Vandelpop of Ballarat with Octave Brandard of Paris."  
His face reassumed its usual gay look, and he walked into the house and found Madame Midas seated in her arm chair near the window looking pale and ill, while Archie was walking up and down in an excited manner, and talking volubly in broad Scotch. As to Dr. Gollipeck, that eccentric individual was standing in front of the fire in an abstracted manner. Selina was in another room getting a drink for Madame, and as Vandelpop entered she came back with it.  
"Good day, Madame," said the Frenchman, advancing to the table, and putting his hat and the book down on it. "How are you to-day?"  
"Better, much better, thank you," said Madame, with a faint smile; "the doctor assures me I shall be quite well in a week."  
"With perfect rest and quiet, of course," interposed Gollipeck, sitting down.  
"Which Madame does not seem likely to get," observed Vandelpop, dryly, with a glance at McIntosh, who was still pacing up and down the room with an expression of wrath on his severe face.  
"Oh, ay," said that gentleman, stopping in front of Vandelpop, with a fine expression of scorn. "Do you know what's the matter with me?"  
"Not being in your confidence," replied Gaston, smoothly, "I can hardly say that I do."  
"It's just that Peter o' yours," said Archie, with a snort; "a poor wicked unbaptized child o' Satan."  
"Archie!" interposed Madame, with some severity.  
"Your pardon's begged, men," said Archie, sourly turning to her, "but as for that Peter body, the saints keep me hand from itching to give him one on the head, when I think o' him."  
"What's he been doing?" asked Vandelpop, coolly. "I am quite prepared to hear anything about him in his present state."  
"It's just this," burst forth Archie, wrathfully. "I went into the town to the hotel, to tell the body he must come back to the mine, and I find him not in a fit state for a Christian to speak to."  
"Therefore," interposed Vandelpop, in his even voice, without lifting his eyes, "it was a pity you did speak to him."  
"I went to the room," went on Archie, excitedly, without paying any attention to Vandelpop's remark, "and he flew on me with a dirk. I had the sense to bang the door and turn the key in the lock. Do you call that conduct for a civilized body?"  
"The fact is, M. Vandelpop," said Madame, quietly, "Archie is so annoyed at this conduct that he does not want Le-maire to come back to work."  
"I should just think so," cried McIntosh. "Fancy an imp of Beelzebub like him in the bowels o' the earth. It makes my blood run cold when I think o' the bloodthirsty pagan."  
To Vandelpop this information was not unpleasing. He was anxious to get rid of Pierre, who was such an incubus, and now saw that he could send him away without appearing to wish to get rid of him. But as he was a diplomatic young man he did not allow his satisfaction to appear on his face.  
"Aren't you rather hard on him?" he said; "he will be all right soon."  
"I tell you I'll not have him back," said Archie, firmly; "he's one o' those foreign bodies full of revolutions and confusion o' tongues, and I'd not feel safe in the mine if I knew he was down below with his dirk."  
"I really think he ought to go," said Madame, looking rather anxiously at Vandelpop, "unless, M. Vandelpop, you do not want to part with him."  
"Oh, I don't want him," said Vandelpop, hastily; "as I told you, he was only one of the sailors on board the ship I was wrecked in, and he followed me up here because I was the only friend he had, but now he has got money—or, at least, his wages must come to a good amount."  
"Forty pounds," interposed Archie.  
"So I think the best thing he can do is to go to Melbourne, and see if he can get back to France."  
"And you, M. Vandelpop?" asked Dr. Gollipeck, who had been listening to the young Frenchman's remarks with great interest; "do you not wish to go to France?"  
Vandelpop rose coolly from his chair, and, picking up his book and hat, turned to the doctor.  
"My dear monsieur," he said, leaning up against the wall in a graceful manner, "I left France to see the world, so until I have seen it I don't think it would be worth while to return."  
(To be continued.)

**PRISONERS ON A CHIMNEY.**  
"Unravel your stocking, John; begin at the toe," was a sentence which every old-time schoolboy learned well, for it appeared in the school readers of a generation ago. It was the solution found by a quick-witted wife for the problem of rescuing her husband from the top of a tall chimney. When he had let down an end of a raveling she tied a piece of string to it and eventually sent him up a rope. Something of the same sort happened not long ago to two chimney builders on Staten Island, says a writer in the New York Sun.  
They were up on the top of a big new concrete chimney, over one hundred and sixty feet tall, and started to complete their job by tearing away the scaffolding on the inside as they worked down. There was a ladder running all the way down. The men stood on some planks about ten feet down from the top. They ripped up the planks one by one, and shot them down inside the shaft. The next to the last one, however, went a little crooked, glanced from the wall, hit the ladder, and in a twinkling tore several sections out and left the men standing on a single plank, six feet long and two feet wide, with no means of going up or down.  
It was then noon, and for more than four hours they alternately whistled and shouted in a vain attempt to attract attention. It was nearly 5 o'clock when another workman happened to come into the chimney at the bottom and heard their cries. A crowd quickly gathered, and began to wonder what they could do to help. Meanwhile the prisoners had not been idle; they had torn their shirts to narrow strips and made a rope of them, and this they sent down the chimney slowly.  
Firemen were soon at hand and attached a light line to the cloth rope, and sent it up. The chief's idea was that if they threw it over the top of the chimney and let it down to the ground, he could anchor it there, and they could safely slide down the inside.  
They threw it over the top, but there it stuck, fastened in the soft concrete and soon they could neither pull it to ward them nor pay it out; yet they dared not trust their weight on it. For some time the rescue was halted, but at last another rope was secured, and with the line already in hand this was hauled up and thrown over the chimney rim. It went without sticking, and was secured on the outside.  
The scaffolding had held in place was only about fifty feet below the men, but they had used so much of their clothing in making ropes that they were both badly burned in sliding that distance. However, they reached ground in safety, and in a few days were back at work again, none the worse for the adventure.

**RELICS OF OLDEST FRANCE.**  
**Carbonic Acid Gas Found to Be Coming From Ancient Well.**  
Relics have just been found of the most ancient France of all, says the New York Post. In the high plateau of Auvergne, among the extinct volcanoes around Pay de Dome, there is a great excavation known to the peasants as the Poison well. When their animals came too near and stayed too long they slept and died asphyxiated. A university professor chanced that way and discovered that the deaths were caused by carbonic acid, which is sued forth in the form of gas, purer than that made by chemical processes.  
More than half a million liters evaporate daily and this waste of ancient volcanoes is now to be utilized by a factory to liquefy it. In digging for the purpose the bones of an ox, horse and human skeleton, also Gallo-Roman vases, were found; and then, a little lower down, a bison and a mammoth with tusks three yards long. As geologists say that the mammoth in these regions dates back 50,000 years, the volcanoes must have been dead at that time, when the Poison fountain was already giving out its exhalations. This should alleviate the scare of half-scientific authorities who, ever since the outbreaks of Vesuvius, have been predicting a revival of the Auvergne volcanoes.

**The Gun Wooling.**  
There was a lovely lady gun Who browsed beneath a spreading yew  
Its stately height was her delight; A truly cooling shade it threw!  
Upon it little tendrils grew Which gave her gentle joy to chew.  
Yet oft she sighed, a-gazing wide, And wished she knew another gun  
(Some newer gun beneath the yew To tell her tiny troubles to).  
—Harper's Magazine.

**A Difficulty.**  
This oratory, all well meant,  
Oft leaves us in a plight.  
A man is just as eloquent  
When wrong as when he's right.  
—Washington Star.

There is nothing better than a good story, and nothing as bad as a poor one.

## TRIED TO CUT THROAT

**YOUNG MAN FOUND NEAR TOWN OF GREENWOOD**

**Wound Is Not Dangerous—Seemed Disappointed When Doctors Informed Him That He Would Not Die**

**GREENWOOD, Nebr.**—A man was found a mile from here, lying in the road with his throat cut. He was taken to a city hospital and the attending physician is confident of his recovery. He gave his name as Harry M. Layton, aged twenty-seven years and living at Waukee, Iowa.  
A small penknife was found by the side of the man which he explained he had used in attempting suicide.  
There was a gash two inches long on the right side of his neck and a cut an inch long on the left side. He stated a regret that the knife was too dull, otherwise he would have been more successful. When the doctor informed him that he would probably recover, he seemed disappointed, and told the physician if he healed him, he would have to try again. No reasons for the deed were given.  
On his clothing was found \$5.25 and a Bankers' Benefit association card, No. 109, issued at Webster City Ia.

**Simply Simplified**  
**WASHINGTON.**—President Roosevelt will withdraw his simplified spelling order to the public printer and hereafter all documents for the executive departments will again be printed in the old fashioned style.  
Representative Landis, of the joint committee on spelling, had a conference with the president, when the president said that he did not wish to have spelling overshadow matters of great importance, and expressed a willingness to revoke his order for the new spelling in case the house of representatives should go on record as opposed to the system. Accordingly Mr. Landis introduced the following in the house:  
"Resolved, That it is the sense of the house of representatives that hereafter in presenting reports, documents or other publications authorized by law, ordered by congress of either branch, thereof or emanating from the executive departments, their bureaus or branches and independent offices of the government, the government printing office should observe and adhere to the standard of orthography prescribed in generally accepted dictionaries of the English language."

**Guiltily of Train Robbery**  
**MARSHALL, Mo.**—Jesse Clyde Rumsey, the Chicago boy who robbed the Alton-Burlington train and the Rock Island both near Glasgow, Mo., pleaded guilty to the charges filed against him. He was given the minimum sentence, ten years imprisonment on each charge, and was immediately sentenced to twenty years. He was taken to the penitentiary.  
Four informations were filed against Rumsey. At his preliminary hearing he pleaded not guilty. He offered to plead guilty to two charges connected with the Alton-Burlington holdup if he promised the minimum sentence. He refused to plead guilty to the Rock Island robbery, although he had previously confessed to having committed this holdup also. The maximum penalty for train robbery in Missouri is death.

The robbers were most daring. Single-handed Rumsey forced the trainmen to go ahead of him and help rob the passengers. He was overpowered by Conductor Heywood of the Alton-Burlington train and the money and jewelry secured at that time was recovered. He was landed in jail four hours after the second robbery was committed.

**Impales Himself on Knife**  
**NEW YORK.**—A man who described himself as Rankin Duvall, an actor, forty years of age, entered a saloon, walked to the lunch counter, picked up a long cheese knife and, turning to the bartender, asked: "May I use this?"  
"Certainly," replied the bartender, thinking he was about to carve some cheese for himself.  
Instead he unbuttoned his coat and vest and pressing the point of the knife to his abdomen, threw himself to the floor so that the big blade ripped his body open. Then he thrust the weapon twice more into the frightful wound. At the hospital to which Duvall was taken it was said he had only a slight chance for recovery.