

Madame Midas

By Fergus Hume

CHAPTER XVIII.

M. Vandeloup slept the sleep of the just, and next morning, after making his inquiries after the health of Madame Midas, he went into Ballarat in search of Pierre. On arriving at the Wattle Tree Hotel he was received by Miss Twesby in dignified silence, for that astute damsel was beginning to regard the fascinating Frenchman as a young man who talked a great deal and meant nothing.

He was audacious enough to win her heart and then break it, so Miss Twesby thought the wisest thing would be to keep him at a distance. So Vandeloup's bright smiles and merry jokes failed to call forth any response from fair Martha, who sat silently in the bar, looking like a crabbed sphinx.

"Is my friend Pierre in?" asked Vandeloup, leaning across the counter, and looking lovingly at Miss Twesby.

The lady intimated coldly that he was in, and had been for the last two weeks; also that she was sick of him, and she'd thank M. Vandeloup to clear him out—all of which amused Vandeloup mightily, though he still continued to smile coolly on the sour-faced damsel before him.

Gaston, however, failed to persuade Pierre to accompany him round to buy an outfit. For the dumb man lay on his bed, and obstinately refused to move out of the room. He, however, acquiesced sullenly when his friend told him he was going to Melbourne, so Vandeloup left the room, having first secured Pierre's knife, and locked the door after him, and then sallied forth to buy his shipwrecked friend a box and some clothes.

In the afternoon Vandeloup went to the lake and espied a little figure in white, and seeing that it was Kitty, he strolled up to her in a leisurely manner. She was looking at the ground when he came up, and was prodding holes in the spongy turf with her umbrella, but glanced up carelessly as he came near. Then she sprang up with a cry of joy, and throwing her arms around his neck, she kissed him twice.

"I haven't seen you for ages," said Kitty, putting her arm in his as they sat down. "I just came up here for a week, and did not think I'd see you."

"The meeting was quite accidental. I know," replied Gaston, leaning back lazily; "but none the less pleasant on that account. Wouldn't you like to leave Papa and lead a jollier life?" asked Vandeloup, artfully, "in Melbourne for instance."

"I—I don't know," she faltered, looking down.

"But I do, Bebe," whispered Gaston, putting his arms round her waist; "you would like to come with me."

"Why? Are you going?" cried Kitty, in dismay.

"I think I spoke about this before," he said. "I never say anything I do not mean," answered Vandeloup, with the ready lie on his lips in a moment; "and I have got letters from France with money, so I am going to leave the Pactolus."

"And me?" said Kitty, tearfully.

"That depends upon yourself, Bebe," he said rapidly, pressing her burning cheek against his own; "your father would never consent to my marriage and I can't take you away from Ballarat without suspicions, so—"

"Yes?" said Kitty, eagerly, looking at him.

"You must run away," he whispered, with a caressing smile.

"Alone?"

"For a time, yes," he answered; "listen—next week you must meet me here, and I will give you money to keep you in Melbourne for some time then you must leave Ballarat at once and wait for me at the Buttercup Hotel in Gertrude street, Carlton; you understand?"

"Yes," faltered Kitty, nervously; "I—I understand."

"And you will come?" he asked anxiously, looking keenly at her, and pressing the little hand he held in his own.

"Yes," she whispered, clinging to him with dry lips and a beating heart; "I will come!" Then her overstrained nature gave way, and with a burst of tears she threw herself on his breast.

"My dear Bebe," said Vandeloup, kissing her white cheek; "you must go home now, and get a little sleep; it will do you good."

"But you?" asked Kitty, in a low voice, as they walked slowly along.

"Oh, I," said M. Vandeloup, airily; "I am going to the Wattle Tree Hotel to see my friend Pierre off to Melbourne."

"You are now on your own responsibility, my friend," said Vandeloup to Pierre, as he stood at the window of the railway carriage; "for we must part, though long together have we been. Perhaps I will see you in Melbourne; if I do you will find I have not forgotten the past," and, with a significant look at the dumb man, Vandeloup, lounged slowly away.

The whistle blew shrilly, the last good-bys were spoken, the guard shouted "All aboard for Melbourne," and shut all the doors, then, with another shriek and puff of white steam, the train, like a long, lithe serpent, glided into the rain and darkness with its human freight.

"At last I have rid myself of this dead weight," said Vandeloup, as he drove

along the wet streets to Craig's Hotel, where he intended to stay for the night, "and can now shape my own fortune. Pierre is gone, Bebe will soon follow, and now I must look after myself."

Kitty left a note saying she was going down to Melbourne to appear on the stage. Meanwhile, the man who was the primary cause of all this trouble was working in the office of the Pactolus claim with a light heart and cool head. Gaston had really managed to get Kitty away in a very clever manner, inasmuch as he never appeared publicly to be concerned in it, but directed the whole business secretly. He had given Kitty sufficient money to keep her away for some months in Melbourne, as he was in doubt when he could leave the Pactolus without being suspected of being concerned in her disappearance. He also told her what day to leave, and all that day stayed at the mine working at his accounts, and afterward spent the evening very pleasantly with Madame Midas. Next day McIntosh went into Ballarat on business, and on returning from the city, where he had heard all about it, he saw Vandeloup come out of the office, and drew up in the trap beside the young man.

"Aha, Monsieur," said Vandeloup, gaily, shooting a keen glance at Archie; "you have had a pleasant day."

"Maybe yes, maybe no," returned McIntosh, cautiously, fumbling in the bag; "there's nothing much in the town, but I've gotten a letter or so from France."

"For me?" cried Vandeloup, eagerly, holding out his hands.

"Ah! for who else would it be?" grumbled Archie, giving the letter to him—a thin, foreign looking envelope with the Parisian postmark on it; "did ye think it was for that blackvised friend o' yours?"

"Hardly!" returned Vandeloup, glancing at the letter with satisfaction, and putting it in his pocket. "Pierre couldn't write himself, and I doubt very much if he had any friends who could—not that I knew his friends," he said, hastily catching sight of McIntosh's severe face bent inquiringly on him.

Madame Midas was very much grieved at the news of Kitty's escapade, particularly as she could not see what motive she had for running away, and, moreover, trembled to think of the temptations the innocent girl would be exposed to in the metropolis. After tea, she spoke to Vandeloup on the subject. The young Frenchman was seated at the piano in the darkness, striking a few random chords, while Madame was by the fire in the armchair. It was quite dark, with only the rosy glow of the fire shining through the room. Mrs. Villiers felt uneasy; was it likely that Vandeloup could have any connection with Kitty's disappearance? Impossible! he had given her his word of honor, and yet—it was very strange. Mrs. Villiers was not, by any means, a timid woman, so she determined to ask Gaston right out, and get a decided answer from him, so as to set her mind at rest.

"M. Vandeloup," she said, in her clear voice, "will you kindly come here for a moment?"

"Certainly, Madame," said Gaston, rising with alacrity from the piano, and coming to the fireside; "is there anything I can do?"

"You have heard of Miss Marchmont's disappearance?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Yes, Madame," he answered, in his calm, even tones.

"Do you remember the day I introduced her to you and you gave me your word of honor you would not try to turn her head?" pursued Madame, looking at him; "have you kept your word?"

"Madame," said Vandeloup, gravely, "I give you my word of honor that I have always treated Miss Kitty as a child and your friend. I did not know that she had gone until I was told, and whatever happens to her I can safely say that it was not Gaston Vandeloup's fault."

An admirable actor, this man, not a single deviation from the calmness of his speech—not a quickening of the pulse, nor the flush of betraying blood to his fair face—no! Madame withdrew her eyes quite satisfied. M. Vandeloup was the soul of honor.

"M. Vandeloup," said Madame suddenly, after they had been chatting for a few moments, "one thing you must do for me in Melbourne."

"I will do anything you wish," said Vandeloup, gravely.

"Then," said Madame, earnestly, rising and looking him in the face, "you must find Kitty and send her back to me."

"Madame," said Vandeloup, solemnly, "it will be the purpose of my life to restore her to your arms."

CHAPTER XIX.

There was great dismay at the Pactolus mine when it became known that Vandeloup was going to leave. The only two who were unfeignedly glad at Vandeloup's departure were Selina and McIntosh, for these two faithful heirs had seen with dismay the influence the Frenchman was gradually gaining over Madame Midas.

For some time past McIntosh had not been satisfied with the character of the ground in which he had been working, so

abandoning the shaft he was then in, he had opened up another gallery to the west, at right angles from the place where the famous nugget had been found. The wash was poor at first, but McIntosh persevered, having an instinct that he was on the right track. A few weeks' work proved that he was right, for the wash soon became richer; and as they went farther on toward the west, there was no doubt that the long-lost Devil's Lead had been struck. This gave Madame Midas a weekly income of one thousand one hundred pounds, so she now began to see what a wealthy woman she was likely to be.

Vandeloup congratulated Madame Midas on her luck when he was going away, and privately determined that he would not lose sight of her, as, being a wealthy woman, and having a liking for him, she would be of great value. He went to Ballarat, and put up at the Wattle Tree Hotel, intending to start for the metropolis next morning; but on his way, in order to prepare Kitty for his coming, sent a telegram for her, telling her the train he would arrive by, in order that she might be at the station to meet him.

After his dinner he suddenly recollected that he still had the volume which Dr. Gollipeck had lent him, so, calling a cab, he drove to the residence of that eccentric individual to return it.

When the servant announced M. Vandeloup, she pushed him in and suddenly closed the door after her, as though she was afraid of some of the doctor's ideas getting away.

"Good evening, doctor," said Vandeloup, laying the book down on the table at which Gollipeck was seated; "I've come to return you this and say good-by."

"You read this?" he said, laying his hand on the book; "good, eh?"

"Very good, indeed," returned M. Vandeloup, smoothly; "so kind of you to have lent it to me—all those cases quoted were known to me."

"The case of Odele Blondet, for instance, eh?" asked the old man sharply.

"Yes, I was present at the trial," replied Vandeloup, quietly; "the prisoner, Octave Braulard, was convicted, condemned to death, reprieved and sent to New Caledonia."

"Where he now is," said Gollipeck, quickly, looking at him.

"I presume so," replied Vandeloup, lazily. "After the trial I never bothered my head about him."

"He poisoned Adele Blondet," said the doctor.

"Yes," answered Vandeloup, leaning forward and looking at Gollipeck. "He found she was in love with an Englishman, and poisoned her—you will find it all in the book."

"It does not mention the Englishman," said the doctor, thoughtfully tapping the table with his hand.

"Nevertheless he was implicated in it, but went away from Paris the day Braulard was arrested," answered Vandeloup. "The police tried to find him, but could not; if they had it might have made some difference to the prisoner."

"And the name of this Englishman?"

"Let me see," said Vandeloup, looking up reflectively; "I almost forget it—Kestroke, or Kestrike, some name like that. He must have been a very clever man to have escaped the French police."

"Ah, hum!" said the doctor, rubbing his nose; "very interesting indeed; strange case."

"Very," assented M. Vandeloup, as he arose to go. "I must say good-by now, doctor; but I'm coming up to Ballarat on a visit shortly."

"Ah, hum! of course," replied Gollipeck, also rising, "and we can have another talk over this book."

"That or any other book you like," said Vandeloup, with a glance of surprise; "but I don't see why you are so much taken up with that volume; it's not a work of genius."

"Well, no," answered Gollipeck, looking at him; "still, it contains some excellent cases of modern poisoning."

"So I saw when I read it," returned Vandeloup, indifferently. "Good-by," holding out his hand, "or rather I should say au revoir," and Vandeloup walked out of the room with a gay smile, humming a tune.

"He is suspicious," muttered the young man to himself, thoughtfully; "although he has nothing to go on in connecting me with the case. Should I use the poison here I must be careful, for that man will be my worst enemy."

(To be continued.)

Cold Proposition.

Vice President Fairbanks came down the street this morning in his finest carriage. He met Representative Brownlow, who was walking along Fifteenth street.

"Get in, Brownlow," said the Vice President, "and I will take you up to the capitol."

Brownlow hopped in. They chatted until at the corner of Fifteenth and F streets, where the Vice President halted the carriage in order to go into a store. He left Brownlow in the carriage.

Two or three Representatives, walking to the capitol, came along and found Brownlow there, sitting in state.

"Hi, Brownlow," said one of them, "how about this? When did you get a turnout like that, and what are you doing here?"

"Nothing," Brownlow replied, "Nothing at all; merely getting a free ride in the ice wagon."

Nicknames of Statesmen.

The nickname with the British public for Balfour, lately premier, is "Miss Fanny," and that for Joe Chamberlain is "Monocle Joe."

Helps Convalescent.

One of the greatest pleasures you can give a convalescent is to sit and sympathize with him while he tells you how sick he is.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

Comments and Criticisms Based Upon the Happenings of the Day—Historical and News Notes.

Artemus Ward was ahead of his age on spelling.

The truth is a name we give to a fallacy that has survived.

The youngest Civil War veteran certainly is numerous enough to form a camp if he wants to.

It sounds odd to hear of a dictator being called for in Russia, where the czar is a perpetual dictator.

London ridicules the president's spelling. All right. It doesn't seem any more ridiculous there than it does here.

Religious freedom is granted to 12,000,000 in Russia. The empire has advanced from 1600 to somewhere around 1700.

It is a shame that the enlisted man of the United States army and navy is not held in honor everywhere till the guns begin to fire.

Mr. Rockefeller says we Americans hustle too much. We would be glad to stop—but Mr. Rockefeller needs the money and won't let us.

It is asserted that hazing is unknown in Russian colleges. The students work off their surplus energy in hazing the police and other officials.

A Philadelphia woman thrashed one of her admirers who got out a license to wed before she had been informed. Moral: Pop the question first.

There are people in the world who will be unable to understand why Miss Krupp, with a fortune of \$75,000,000, didn't spend \$70,000,000 on her wedding.

The Pullman company declares that its sleeping cars are hotels. It does not go so far, however, as to suggest that its porters shall hereafter be referred to as chambermaids.

Sir Frederick Treves brings to light a new canine meat grievance. He says we strain at a goat and swallow a camel. That mysterious potted chicken is probably camel.

A New Yorker shot four times at a girl without hurting her, and then killed himself with a single shot. Somehow that marksmanship seems to have commendable features.

The Department of Commerce and Labor estimates an immigration of 5,400,000 persons to this country this year. The question as to whether restriction restricts seems to be an open one.

An army officer and his five children are living in New York on \$3 a week. With what contempt must he be regarded by the Pittsburg millionaires who go to New York to spend their vacations.

According to some of the scientists, women are growing taller. If this would keep them from growing stouter after they reached middle age it isn't likely that many of them would worry much over their increasing length.

In a sermon to Yale men Rev. Lyman Abbott said: "The remedy for industrial evils is a substitution of the ambition for service for the ambition for acquisition. It would be a good plan to put the golden rule up in our factories." If employers were to preach ambition for service to their employes the latter would strongly suspect the presence of a selfish motive behind the preaching and would be likely to suggest that the employers teach by example rather than by precept.

The nonvegetarian citizen will rejoice in the knowledge that the chicken population of the United States in 1900 was 230,000,000, and at present approaches 300,000,000. Turkeys numbered more than 600,000, ducks more than 5,000,000 and geese as many, though that seems an underestimate for geese, everything considered. The yearly consumption of chickens is more than 300,000,000, though not a few, it appears, are carried over from year to year indefinitely in cold storage for the ultimate benefit of the hapless boarder.

News that the Colorado River has once more been returned to its old channel, thus stopping the flooding of the Salton sink, is important if true. The same intelligence has been heard before, but the event has proved that the river was still beyond control. The difficulty is that the river's banks are of sand, and though they may be diked up in one place they will melt away in another. The sink is below the level of the river, and thus whenever a slight break occurs the tendency

of water to run down hill widens the breach. We shall be interested to know that the engineers really have fettered the Colorado, but we shall not be greatly surprised to discover that their jubilation was premature.

In a sermon to Yale men the Rev. Lyman Abbott said: "The remedy for industrial evils is a substitution of the ambition for service for the ambition for acquisition." Surely. And it is the only remedy. We need to learn over and over that men cannot be made good by legislation, that society cannot be redeemed by law, nor by invention, nor by thrift. It matters not what system prevails, whether it is competition or combination, or what not; the good or ill of the world depends upon the good or ill that is in men and women. If the ambition of a man is to get out of the world all he can get, rather than to put into the world all he can give, then it matters little what system of government he lives under. He is of no use in helping to remedy ills. We sometimes talk with pride of our civilization. We point to the material betterment of conditions. We get into a glow in telling of the progress of invention, of thrift and prosperity, of the perfecting of institutions. But as Guizot observes—Such a pointing with pride puts civilization on a plane little above that of the ant hill and the bee hive. The ant and the bee communities show thrift and obey law and order. What we have of civilization today is because of the service of noble men and women rendered to the race. Lyman Abbott is right. Put the ambition for service in the hearts of men, instead of the ambition to acquire money, and you have solved the problem of industrial ills. Moreover: Society has a great reward which it reserves for public service rendered. Call the roll of the men honored in politics today. They are the men whose ambition it is to serve. And as in politics, so in all other callings: The world needs, wants and rewards all ambition to render it service.

Many abuses in public life have of late been exposed, and many men have entered the battle against them. Immediately "reform" becomes a catchword. Not all the sincere reformers give convincing evidence that reform must follow the adoption of the measures they advocate, and many who pose as reformers are neither competent nor sincere champions of good causes. The routing of great public evils is usually accomplished by many persons working together, or by a few persons who labor patiently for many years. Single, sudden acts of legislation, the election of a "reform" candidate, the defeat of one group of corrupt men—none of these is sufficient to solve permanently any of the great difficulties. Conversely, the defeat of a reform candidate here and there need not bring despair to honest hearts, for the failure of a single campaign does not mean defeat of the forces for good. They go on, slowly, persistently, and in the end mount above the forces of darkness. The reform of abuses which the American colonies suffered was not achieved by the Declaration of Independence, nor yet by the successful War of Revolution, but by the slow establishment of the nation and by the uprightness in public life which proved that America could walk better alone. Slavery was not abolished by abolitionists, nor by a stroke of Lincoln's pen; the Emancipation Proclamation merely marked the moment when the nation had outgrown an evil. Great leaders and great deeds stand out deservedly in the story of the world's improvement, but it is the union of humble followers, the aggregate of undistinguished deeds, which has accomplished reform. Every citizen who does his best is a living part of every real reform movement, even if he does not realize his participation. He helps right acting and right thinking to triumph. He is like the stoker in the depths of the man-of-war, who does not witness the striking of the enemy's colors, but by doing his work well has contributed his share to the victory.

School for Mistresses.

If, in the United States, along with a training school for professional domestic servants, there could be a training school for mistresses, which would stand for uniform methods of household work, would regulate wages and hours of work, would educate the housekeepers upon the subject of giving truthful recommendation, and last, but by no means least, would emphasize the impertinence of attempting to regulate the maid's life down to the minutest detail, as is so frequently done by the well-meaning but misguided women, peace, in time, would take the place of present strife.—M. R. Cranston, in the Craftsman.

Under Water.

"You see," said Subbots, "I bought the property for a truck farm, but I was badly swindled."
"Can't grow anything on it, eh?" asked Citman.
"Well, I might grow fish on it if I only knew how."—Philadelphia Press.