THE DEVIL'S LEAD

A Thrilling Tale of the Austral-ian Gold Diggings.

Wopples, who had been in Villiers's company on the night of his disappearance.

Mr Barty Lawrence Barty Jasper, however, had not yet departed, so Slivers way-laid him, and asked him in a casual way to drop into his office and have a drink, with a view of finding out from him all the

events of that night. Barty was on his way to a lawn-tennis party, and was arrayed in a flannel suit of many colors, with his small, white face nearly hidden under a large straw hat. Being of a social turn of mind, he did not refuse Slivers's invitation, but walked into the dusty office and assisted himself liberally to

"Here's fun, old cock!" he said, in a free and easy manner, raising his glass to his lips; "may your shadow never be less." Slivers hoped devoutly that his shadow never would be less, as that would involve the loss of several other limbs, which he could ill spare, so he honored Mr. Jasper's toast with a rasping little laugh, and pre-

pared to talk. "It's very kind of you to come and talk to an old chap like me," said Slivers, in as amiable a tone as he could command, which was not much. "You're such a gay young

Mr Jasper 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.

Mr. Jasper decided that Slivers was an unusually discerning person, and worthy to talk to, so prepared to make himself agree-

"I wonder what's become of Villiers?" said Slivers, artfully pushing the whisky bottle

"I'm sure I don't know," said Barty, in a languid, used-up sort of voice, pouring himself out some more whisky; "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, I suppose?" "Yes-pretty early-about two o'clock, I

'And you never saw him after that?" "Not a sight of him," replied Barty; "but, I say, why all this thusness?" "I'll tell you after you have answered my

questions," retorted Slivers, rudely, "but I'm not asking out of curiosity-it's business." Barty thought that Slivers was very peculiar, but determined to humor him, and to take his leave as early as possible.
"Well, go on," he said, drinking his whisky, " 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 Vandeloup."

"Vandeloup!" echoed Silvers in surprise "oh, indeed! what the devil was he doing?" "Enjoying himself," replied Barty, coolly: "he came into the theatre and Villiers introduced him to me, then Mr. Wopples asked us all to supper.'

"You went, of course?" "Rather, old chap; what do you take us

"What time did Vandeloup leave?" asked Slivers. "About twenty minutes to twelve."

"Oh! I suppose that was because he had to drive out to the Pactolus?" "Not such a fool, dear boy; 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 first find out what time Vandeloup had come home on the night in question, for this suspicious old man had now got it into his head that Vandeloup was in some way responsible for Villiers's disap-

"Where did Villiers say he was going when he left you?" he asked.
"Straight home." "Humph! Well, he didn't go home at all."

"Didn't he?" echoed Barty, in some astonishment. "Then what's become of him? Men don't disappear in this mysterious way without some reason. "Ah, but there is a reason," replied Sliv-

"Why! what do you think is the reason?" faltered Barty.
"Murder!" hissed the other through his

thin lips; "he's been murdered." "Lord!" ejaculated Barty, jumping up from his chair in alarm; "you're going too

"I'm going further," retorted Slivers, rising from his chair and stumping 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 one eye blazing, and his cork arm swinging rapidly to and fro, was not a pleasant object to contemplate.

This unguarded remark recalled Slivers to himself.

"That's what I want to find out," he replied, sulkily, going back to his chair. "Have some more whisky?" "No, thanks," answered Barty, going to

the door, "I'm late as it is 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 tem-

"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? we'll see about that, you rag shop." This last in allusion to Barty's picturesque garb. "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 senti-

ment. Slivers put on his hat, and, taking his stick, walked out of his office.

"If," argued Slivers to himself, as he pegged bravely along, "if Villiers wanted to get rid of the nugget he'd have come to me, for he knew I'd keep quiet and tell no tales. Well, he didn't come to me, and there's no one else he could They've been looking for him all over the shop, and they can't find him; he can't be hiding or he'd have let me know; there's only one explanation-he's been murdered-but not for the goldoh, dear, no—for nobody knew he had it. Who wanted him out of the way?—his wife. Would she stick at anything?-I'm damned if she would. So it's her work. The only question is, did she do it personally or by deputy? I say deputy, 'cause she'd be squeamish to do it herself. Who would she select as deputy?—Vandeloup. Why?—'cause he'd like to marry her for her money.

Yes, I'm sure it's him. Things looks black against him; he stayed in town all night, a thing he never did before-leaves the supper at a quarter to twelve, so as to avoid sus picion; waits till Villiers comes out at two in the morning, and kills him. Aha! my handsome jack-a-dandy," cried Slivers, viciously, suddenly stopping and shaking his stick at an imaginary Vandeloup; "I've got you under my thumb, and I'll crush the life out of you—and of her also, if I can," and

with this amiable resolution Slivers resumed

At the Wattle Tree Hotel, he found Miss Twexby seated in the bar, with a decidedly cross face, which argued ill for any one who held converse with her that day, but as Slivers was quite as crabbed as she was, and, moreover, feared neither God nor manmuch less a woman—he tackled her at once.

"Where's your father?" he asked, abruptly. "Asleep!" snapped that damsel, jerking her head in the direction of the parlor; "what do you wan't?" very disdainfully. "A little civility in the first place," retort-

ed Slivers rudely. "You wicked old wretch," said Miss Twexby, viciously, "go along with you, and take that irreligious parrot with you, or I'll wake

"He won't thank you for doing so," replied Slivers, coolly; "I've called to see him about some new shares just on the market, and if you don't treat me with more respect I'll go, and he'll be out of a

Now, Miss Twexby knew that Slivers was in the habit of doing business with her parent, and moreover was a power in the share market, so she graciously asked Slivers what he'd be pleased to have.

"Whisky," said Slivers, curtly, leaning his chin on his stick. "I say!"
"Well?" asked Miss Twexby, coming from behind the bar with a glass and a bottle of whisky, "what do you say?" "How's that good-looking Frenchman?

asked Slivers. "How should I know?" snapped Martha, angrily; "he comes here to see that friend of his, and then clears out without as much as a good-day; a nice sort of friend, indeed," wrathfully, "stopping here nearly two weeks and drunk all the time; he'll be having deliri-

ous trimmings before he's done." "Who will?" said Slivers, taking a sip of his whisky and water. "Why, that other Frenchman!" retorted

Martha, going to her place behind the bar, "Peter something; a low, black wretch, all beard, with no tongue, and a thirst like a "Oh, the dumb man."

Miss Twexby nodded.
"That's him," she said, triumphantly; "he's been here for the last two weeks." "Drunk, I think you said?" remarked Sliv-

ers, politely.

Martha laughed scornfully, and took out some sewing.

"I should just think so," she retorted, tossing her head; "he does nothing but drink all day, and run after people with that knife." 'Very dangerous," observed Slivers, gravely shaking his head; "why don't you get rid

"So we are," said Miss Twexby, biting off a bit of cotton, as if she wished it were Pierre's head; "he is going down to Melbourne the day after to-morrow." Slivers got weary of hearing about Pierre,

and plunged right off into the object of his "That Vandeloup—" he began.
"Well?" said Miss Twexby.

"What time did he come home the night he stopped here?" "Twelve o'clock."

"Get along with you," said Slivers, in disgust, "you mean three o'clock." "No, I don't," retorted Martha, indignantly; "you'll be telling me I don't know the

"Did he go out again?" "No, he went to bed." This quite upset Slivers's idea.

Miss Twexby nodded. "Both in the same

"What time did the dumb chap come in?" "Half past nine." Here was another facer for Slivers-as it

could not have been Pierre. "Did he go to bed?" "Straight."

"And did not leave the house again?" "Of course not," retorted Miss Twexby, impatiently; "do you think I'm a fool? No one either goes in or out of this house without my knowing it. The dumb devil went to bed at half past nine, and Mr. Vandeloup at half past twelve, and they neither of them came out of their rooms till next morning." "How do you know Vandeloup was in at

twelve?" asked Slivers, still unconvinced. "Drat the man, what's he worryin' about?" rejoined Miss Twexby, snappishly: "I let him in myself."

This clearly closed the subject, and Slivers arose to his feet in great disgust, upsetting Billy on to the floor. "Devil!" shrieked Billy, as he dropped.

"Oh, my precious mother. Devil-devildevil-you're a liar-you're a liar-Bendigo and Ballarat—Ballarat and Bendigo-"A nice pair you are," muttered Martha,

"I wish I had the thrashing of you. Won't you stay and see par?" she called out as Slivers departed. "I'll come to-morrow," answered Slivers,

He stumped home in silence, thinking all the time, and it was only when he arrived back in his office that he gave utterance to his thought.

"It couldn't have been either of the Frenchmen," he said, lighting his pipe. "She must have done it herself."

CHAPTER XVI MCINTOSH SPEAKS HIS MIND.

T was some time before Mrs. Vil. liers 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 at first anticipated, and Selina deemed it advisable that a doctor should be called in. So Archie went into Pactolus with Dr. Gollipeck, an eccentric medical practitioner, whose peculiarities were the desired to the Ballarat, and returned to the whose peculiarities were the talk of the city.

Dr. Gollipeck was tall and lank, with an unfinished look about him, as if Nature in some sudden freak had seized an incomplete skeleton from a museum and hastily covered it with parchment. He dressed in a rusty black, worn dingy, cotton gloves, carried a large, white umbrella, and surveyed the world through the medium of a pair of huge spectacles. His clothes were constantly coming undone, as he scorned the use of buttons, and preferred pins, which were always scratching his hands. He spoke very little, and was engaged in composing an erudite work on "The Art of Poisoning,

from Borgia to Brinvilliers." One result of madame's illness was that M Vandeloup 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 life-time. He found in Vandeloup 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 Vandelow wanted to find out the secrets of toxicology for his own eads, which were anything but

Wearied of the dull routine of the office work, Vandeloup was taking a walk in the meadows which surrounded the Pactolus, when he saw Dr. Gollireck shuffling along the dusty, white road, from the railway

"Good-day, Monsieur le Medecin," said Vandeloup, gayly, as he came up to the old man; "are you going to see our mutual

friend?" Gollipeck, ever sparing of words, nodded in reply, and trudged on in silence, but the Frenchman, being used to the eccentricities of his companion, was in nowise offended at his silence, but went on talking in an animated manner.

"Ah, my dear friend," he said, pushing his straw hat back on his fair head; "how goes on the great work?" "Capitally," returned the doctor, with a

complacent smile; "just finished 'Catharine de Medici'-wonderful woman, sir-quite a mistress of the art of poisoning.' "Humph!" returned Vandeloup, thoughtfully, lighting a cigarette, "I do not agree with you there; it was her so-called astrologer, Ruggieri, who prepared all her potions. Catharine certainly had the power, but Ruggieri possessed the science—a very fair division of labor for retting rid of people, I

must say—but what have you got there?" nodding toward a large book which Gollipeck carried under his arm. "For you," answered the other, taking the book slowly from under his arm, and thereby causing another button to fly off, "quite

new-work on toxicology."
"Thank you," said Vandeloup, taking the heavy volume and looking at the title; "French, I see! I'm sure it will be pleasant

reading." The title of the book was "Les Empoisonneurs d'Aujourd'hui, par MM. Prevol et Lebrun," and it had only been published the previous year; so as he turned over the leaves carelessly, M. Vandeloup caught sight of a name which he knew.

"I shall enjoy this book immensely," he said, touching the volume. Dr. Gollipeck nodded and chuckled in a hoarse, rattling kind of way.

"So I should think," he answered, with another sharp look, "you are a very clever young man, my friend." Vandeloup acknowledged the compliment with a bow, and wondered mentally what

this old man meant. Gaston, however, was never without an answer, so he turned to Gollipeck again with a nonchalent smile on his handsome lips. "So kind of you to think well of me," he

said, coolly flicking the ash off the end of his cigarette with his little finger; "but why do you pay me such a compliment?" Gollipeck answered the question by asking another.

"Why are you so fond of toxicology?" he said, abruptly.
Vandeloup shrugged his shoulders.

"To pass the time," he said, carelessly, "that is all; even office work, exciting as it is, becomes wearisome, so I must take up some subject to amuse myself." "Curious taste for a young man," remark-

ed the doctor, dryly.
"Nature," said M. Vandeloup, "does not form men all on the same pattern, and my taste for toxicology has at least the charm of novelty. Gollipeck looked at the young man again

in a sharp manner. "I hope you'll enjoy the book," he said. When he was gone, the mocking smile so habitual to Vandeloup'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.

thing. The case may be in this book, but I doubt if even this man with the barbarous name can connect Gaston Vandeloup, of Ballarat, with Octave Braulard, of Paris. His face resumed its usual gay look, and throwing away the half smoked cigarette,

"He's an enigma," he thought, referring

he walked into the house and found Mme. Midas seated in her arm-chair near the window looking pale and ill. "Good-day, madame," said the Frenchmen. advancing to the table and putting his hat

and the book down on it. "How are you to-"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. "Which madame does not seem likely to get," observed Vandeloup, dryly.

"Ou, ay," said McIntosh, stopping in front of Vandeloup, with a fine expression of scorn. "I ken weel 'tis me ye are glowerin' at-did ye no ken what's the matter wi' me?" "Not being in you confidence," replied Gaston, smoothly, taking a seat, "I can hardly say that I do.

"It's just that Peter o' yours," said Archie, with a snort; "a puir weecked unbaptized child o' Satan!" "Archie!" interposed madame, with some

"Your pardon's begged, mem," said Archie, sourly, turning to her; "but as for that Peter body, the Lord keep me tongue fra' swearin', an' my hand from itching to gie him ain on the lug, when I think o' him.' "What's he been doing?" asked Vendeloup,

coolly. "I am quite prepared to hear anything about him in his present state." "It's just this," burst forth Archie wrathfally. "I went intil the toun to the hotel, to tell the body he must come back tae the "I went intil the toun to the hotel, fatne, and I find him no in a fit state for a

Caristian to speak to." "Therefore," interposed Vandeloup, in his even voice, without lifting his eyes, "it was a pity you did speak to him.'

"I gang t' the room," went on Archie, excitedly, without paying any attention to Vandeloup's remark, "an' the deil flew on me wi' a dirk, and wud hae split my weasand, but I hed the sense to bang the door to, and turn the key in the lock. D'y ca' that conduct for a ceevilized body?" "The fact is, Monsieur Vandeloup," said

madame, quietly, "Archie is so annoyed at his conduct that he does not want Lemaire to come back to work."

"Ma certie, I should just think so, cried McIntosh, rubbing his head with his handkerchief. "Fancy an imp of Beelzebub like yon in the bowls o' the earth. Losh! but it maks my bluid rin cauld when I think o' the bluid-thirsty pagan." "Aren't you rather hard on him?" he said

coolly, leaning back in his chair; "he is simply drunk, and will be all right soon."
"I tell ye I'll no have him back," said Archie, firmly: "he's ain o' they foreign bodies full of revolutions an' confusion o' tongues, and I'd no feel safe i' the mine if I kenned that deil was doon below wi' his

"I really think he ought to go," said madame, looking rather anxiously at Vande-loup, "unless, Mousieur Vandeloup, you do not want to part with him." "Oh, I don't want him," said Vandelbup, hastily. "As I told you, he was only one of the sailors on board the ship I was wreeked 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 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, Monsieur Vandeloup?" asked Dr. Gollipeck, who had been listening to the young Frenchman's remarks with great in-terest; "do you not wish to go to France?" Vandeloup rose coolly from his chair, and, picking up his book and hat, turned to the

"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." "Never go back when you have once put your hand to the plow," observed Selina, opportunely, upon which Vandeloup bowed

"Mademoiselle," he said, quietly, with a charming smile, "has put the matter into the shell of a nut; Australia is my plow, and I do not take my hand away until I have finished with it."

"But that deil o'a Peter," said Archie, impatiently. "If you will permit me, madame," said Vandeloup, "I will write out a check for the amount of money due to him, and you will sign it. I will go into Balarat to-morrow, and get him away to Melbourne. I propose to buy him a box and some clothes, as he certainly is not capable of getting them him-

"You have a kind heart, Monsieur Vandeloup," said madame, as she assented with a

A stifled laugh came from the doctor, but as he was such an extremely eccentric indivi-

dual no one minded him. "Come, monsieur," said Vandeloup, going to the door, "let us be off to the office and see how much is due tomy friend," and with a bow to madame, he vent out. "A braw sort o' friend," muttered Archie,

as he followed. "Quite good enough for him," retorted Dr. Gollipeck, who overheard him. Archie looked at him approvingly, nodded his head, and went out after the Frenchman; but madame, being a woman and curious, asked the doctor what he meant.

His reply was peculiar. "Our friend," he said, putting his handkerchief in his pocket and seizing his greasy old hat, "our friend believes in the greatest number.

"And what is the greatest number?" asked madame, innocently. "Number one," retorted the doctor, and took his leave abruptly, leaving two buttons and several pins on the floor as traces of his

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BEST OF FRIENDS MUST PART. strength in union; and if Dr. Gollipeck had only met Slivers and revealed his true opinion of Vandeloup to him, no doubt that clever young man would have found himself

somewhat em-

barrassed, as a

great deal of a man's past history can be found out by the simple plan of putting two and two together. Fortunately, however, for Gaston, these two gentlemen never met, and Gollipeck came to the conclusion that he could see nothing to blame in Vandeloup's conduct, though he certainly mistrusted him, and determined mentally to keep an eye on his movements. What led him to be suspicious was the curious resemblance the appearance of this young man had to that of a criminal described in the "Les Empoisonneurs d' Aujourd 'hui," as having been transported to New Caledonia for the crime of poisoning his mistress. Everything, however, was vague and uncertain; so Dr. Gollipeck, when he arrived home, came to the above-named con clusion that he would watch Vandeloup, and then, dismissing him from his mind,

went to work on his favorite subject. Meanwhile M. Vandeloup slept the sleep of the just, and next morning, after making his inquiries after the health of Mme. Midas -a thing he never neglected to do-he went into Ballarat in search of Pierre. On arriving at the Wattle Tree Hotel he was received by Miss Twexby in dignified silence, for threat 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 virgin heart and then break it, so Miss Twexby 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 the fair Martha, who sat silently in the bar, looking like a crabbed

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

That 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

"Would you mind going and telling him I want to see him?" he asked, lounging to the

"Me!" shrieked Martha, in a shrill voice, shooting up from behind the counter like an infuriated Jack-in-the-box. "No, I sha'n't. Why, the last time I saw him he nearly cut me like a ham sandwich with that knife of his. I am not," pursued Miss Twexby, furiously, "a loaf of bread to be cut, neither am I a pin-cushion to have things stuck into me; so if you want to be a corpse, you'd

better go up yourself." "I hardly think he'll touch me," replied Vandeloup, coolly, going toward the door which led to Pierre's bedroom. "You've had a lot of trouble with him. I'm afraid; but he's going down to Melbourne to-night. so it will be all right."

"And the bill?" queried Miss Twexby. anxiously. "I will pay it," said Vandeloup, at which she was going to say he was very generous, but suppressed the compliment when he added: "out of his own money."

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 sulleny when his friend told him he going to Melbourne; so Vandeloup left the room, having first secured Pierre's knife, and locked the door after him. He gave the knife to Miss Twexby, with injunctions to her to keep it safe, then sallied forth to buy his shipwrecked friend a box and some

He spent about ten pounds in buying an outfit for the dumb man, and hired a cab to call at the Wattle Tree Hotel at seven o'clock to take the box and its owner to the station. And then, feeling he had done his duty and eserved some recompense, he had a nice little luncheen and a small bottle of wine. for which he paid out of Pierre's money. When he finished he bought a choice cigar, nad a glass of Chartreuse, and after resting in the commercial room for a time he went out for a walk, intending to kill time until it would be necessary for him to go to Pierre

and take him to the railway station. He walked slowly up Sturt Street, and as the afternoon was so warm, thought he would go up to Lake Wendouree, which is at the top of the town, said see if it was any cooler by the water. Even Vandeloup, full of life and animation as he was, felt weighed down by the heaviness of the atmosphere, and was glad enough to sit down on one of

the seats for a rest.

The lake under the black sky was a dull leaden hue, and as there was no wind the water was perfectly still. water was perfectly still.

On one of the seats Vandeloup 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 sprung up with a cry of joy, and throwing her arms about his neck, she kissed him

"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 ac-"Oh, no," said Kitty, gravely shaking her head; "unexpected meetings are always

pleasanter than those arranged, for there's never any disappointment about them." "Oh, that's your experience, is it?" answered her lover, with an amused smile, pulling out his cigarette-case. "Well, suppose you reward me for my accidental pre-

sence here, and light a cigarette for me." Kitty was of course delighted, and took the case while M. Vandeloup leaned back in the seat, his hands behind his head, and stared reflectively at the leaden-colored sky. Kitty took out a cigarette from the case, placed it between her pretty lips, and having obtained a match from one of her lover's pockets, proceeded to light it, which was not done without a great deal of choking and pretty confusion. At length she managed it, and bending over Gaston, placed it in his mouth, and gave him a kiss at the same time.

"If pa knew I did this he'd expire with horror," she said, sagely nodding her head. "Wouldn't be much loss if he did," replied Vandeloup, lazily, glancing at her pretty face from under his eyelashes. "Your father has a great many faults, dear."
"Oh, 'The Elect' think him perfect," said

Kitty, wisely. "From their point of view, perhaps he is," returned Gaston, with a faint sneer; "but he's not a man given to exuberant mirth." "Well, he is rather dismal," assented Kitty, doubtfully. "Wouldn't you like to leave him and lead a

jollier life?" asked Vandeloup, artfully, "ir Melbourne, for instance." Kitty looked at him, half afraid.

"I-I don't know," she faltered, looking "But I do. Bebe," whispered Gaston, putting his arm round her waist; "you would like to come with me." "Why? Are you going?" cried Kitty, in

dismay. Vandeloup nodded. "I think I spoke about this before," he said, idly brushing some cigarette ashes off his waistcoat.

"Yes," returned Kitty, "but I thought you did not mean it." "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,

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

"You must run away," he whispered, with caressing smile. "For a time, yes," he answered, throwing away his cigarette; "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, Carleton; you understand?"

'Yes," faltered Kitty, nervously, "I-I inderstand." "And you will come?" he asked, anxiousy, looking keenly at her, and pressing the little hand he held in his own. Just as she was going to answer, as if warning her of the fatal step she was about to take, a low roll of thunder broke on their ears, and Kitty shrunk back appalled from her lover's

"No! no! no!" she almost shrieked, hysterically, trying to tear herself away from his arms; "I can not; God is speaking." "Bah!" sneered Vandeloup, with an evil look on his handsome face, "He speaks too indistinctly for us to guess what He means; what are you afraid of? I will join you in Melbourne in two or three weeks, and then we will be married."

"But my father," she whispered, clasping her hot hands convulsively. "Well, what of him?" asked Vandeloup, coolly; "he is so wrapped up in his religion that he will not miss you; he will never find out where you are in Melbourne, and by the time he does you will be my wife. Come," he said, ardently, whispering the temptation in her ear, as if he was afraid of being heard, "you must con-

She felt his hot breath on her cheek, and felt rather than saw the scintillations of his wonderful eyes, which sent a thrill through her; so, utterly exhausted and worn out by the overpowering nervous force possessed by this man, she surrendered.

sent; say yes, Bebe; say yes."

they walked slowly along.

drove off.

"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

"My dear Bebe," said Vandeloup, rising also, and kissing her white cheek, "you must go home now, and get a little sleep; it will do you good." "But you?" said Kitty, in a low voice, as

"Oh, I," said Monsieur Vandeloup, airly; "I am going to the Wattle Tree Hotel to see my friend Pierre off to Melbourne." Then he exerted himself to amuse Kitty, and succeeded so well that by the time they reached Lydiard Street, she was laughing as merrily as possible. They parted at the railway crossing, and Kitty went gayly up the white, dusty road, while M. Vandeloup strolled leisurely along the street on his way

to the Wattle Tree Hotel. When he arrived he found that Pierre's box had come. Gaston, however, dragged the box into the room, and having made Pierre dress himself in his new clothes, he packed all the rest in the box, corded it, and put a ticket on it wit' his name and destination, then gave the dunio man the balance of his wages. It was now about six o'clock, so Vandeloup went down to dinner; then putting Pierre and his box into the cab, stepped in himself and

The promise of rain in the afternoon was now fulfilled, and it was pouring in torrents. "Bah!" said Vandeloup, with a shiver; as they got out on the station platform, "what a devil of a night." He made the cab wait for him, and, hav-

ing got Pierre's ticket, put him in a second-class carriage and saw that his box was safe-

ly placed in the luggage-van. "You are now on your own responsibility, my friend," said Vandeloup to Pierre, as he stood at the window of the 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-byes were spoken, the guard shouted "All aboard for Melbourne," and shut all the doors, then, with another shrick and puff of white steam,

the train, like a long, lithe serpent, glided into the rain and darkness with its human "At last I have rid myself of this dead weight," said Vandeloup, as he drove along the wet street to Craig's Hotel, where he intended to stay for the night, "and can now shape my own fortune. Pierre is gone, Bebe will follow, and now I must look after my-[To be continued.]

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