THE DEVIL'S LEAD

A Thrilling Tale of the Australian Gold Diggings.

Thin, pale, with light, bleachedlooking hair, and eyebrows and eyelashes to match, she looked so shadowy and unsubstantial, that an impression was conveyed to the on-looker that a breath might blow her away. She was often heard to declare, when anything extraordinary happened, that one might "knock her down with a feather," which, as a matter of fact, was by no means a stretch of fancy, provided the feather was a strong one and Mrs. Pulchop was taken unawares. She was continually alluding to her "constituotion," as if she had an interest in politics, but in reality she was referring to her state of health, which was invariably bad. According to her own showing, there was not a single disease under the sun with which she had not been afflicted, and she could have written a whole book on the subject of medicine, and put herself in, in every instance, as an illustrative case.

Mr. Pulchop had long since departed this

Mrs. Pulchop said he had been a handsome man, but according to the portrait they had of him, he resembled a bulldog more than anything else in nature. The young Pulchops, of which there were two, both of the female sex, took after their father in appearance and their mother in temperament

One day Vandeloup sent a telegram to Kitty saying he would be home to dinner, and as he always required something extra in the way of cooking, Kitty went to interview Mrs. Pulchop on the subject.

"Ah!" groaned Mrs. Pulchop, in a squeaky voice, sipping her hot water; "you don't know, my dear, what it is to be a-worrited by your liver-tortures and inquisitions ain't in it, my love."

Kitty said she was very sorry, and asked her if nothing would relieve her sufferings, but Mrs. Pulchop shook her head triumph

"My sweet young thing," said the patient,
"I've tried everything under the sun to make it right, but they ain't no good; it's always expanding and a-contracting of itself, unbe-known to me, and throwing the bile into the stomach, which ain't it's proper place." "It does sound rather nasty," assented Kitty; "and Topsy seems to be ill, too." "Toothache," growled Topsy.
"Try a roasted fig, Toppy, dear," suggest-

"Toothache," growled Topsy, in reply, "not gumboil."

"You are quite well, at any rate," said Kitty to Anna, cheerfully. Anna, however, declined to be considered in good health. "I fancy my back is going

to ache," she said.

"Monsieur Vandeloup is coming to dinner to-night," she said, timidly, to Mrs. Pulchop "And a wonder it is, my sweet angel," said that lady, indignantly rising and glancing at the pretty girl, now so pale and sad looking, "it's once in a blue moon as he comes 'ome, a-leaving you to mope at home like a broken-hearted kitten in a coal-box. Ah, if he only had a liver, that would teach

Groans of assent from the Misses Pulchop, who both had livers, and were always fight-

"And what, my neglected cherub," asked Mrs. Pulchop, going to a 100 always hung in the kitchen for the three to examine their tongues in, "what shall I give you for dinner?"

Kitty suggested a fowl, macaroni, cheese, and fruit for dessert, which bill of fare had such an affect on the family that they all groaned in unison.

Kitty retired into her own room and made herself nice for Gaston to look on when he

Poor thing, it was so rarely now that he came home to dinner that a visit from him was regarded by her in the light of a treat. At six o'clock everything was ready for dinner, and having seen that all was in good order, Kitty walked outside to watch for

There was a faint, warm light outside, and the sky was of a pale opaline tint, while the breeze blowing across the garden brought the perfume of the flowers to her, putting Kitty in mind of Mrs. Villier's garden at Ballarat, Oh, those innocent days! would they never come again? Alas! she knew that they would not.

Suddenly she heard the rattle of wheels and, rousing herself from her reverie, she saw a handsome cab at the gate, and M. Vandeloup standing on the pavement paying the driver. She also heard her lover tell the cabman to call for him at eight o'clock, and her heart sunk within her as she thought that he would be gone again in two hours. The cab drove off, and she stood cold and silent on the veranda waiting for Gaston, who sauntered slowly up the walk with one hand in the pocket of his trousers. He was in evening-dress, and the night being warm he did not wear an overcoat, so looked tall and slim in his dark clothes as he came up the path swinging his cane gayly to and

"Well, Bebe," he said, brightly, as he bent down and kissed her, "here I am, you see; I hope you've got a nice dinner for me?" "Oh, yes," answered Kitty, trying to smile, and walking before him into the house; "I told Mrs. Pulchop, and she has made special preparations.

"How is that walking hospital?" asked Vandelcup, carelessly taking off his hat; "I

'So she says," replied Kitty, with a laugh, as he put his arm in hers and walked into the room; "she is always ill." "Why, Bebe, how charming you look to-

night," said Vandeloup, holding her at arm's length; "quite like your old self." And indeed she looked very pretty, for the excitement of seeing him had brightened her

eyes and flushed her cheeks, and standing in the warm light of the lamp, with her golden hair floating round her head, she looked like "You are not going away very soon?" she

whispered to Gaston, coming close to him and putting her hand on his shoulder; "I see "My dear child, I can't help it," he said,

carelessly removing her hand and walking over to the dinner-table; "I have an engagement in town to-night."

"Ah, you no longer care for me," said Kitty, with a stifled sob. Vandeloup shrugged his shoulders.

"If you are going to make a scene," he said, coldly, "please postpone it. I don't want my appetite taken away; would you kindly see if dinner is ready?" Kitty dried her eyes and rang the bell,

upon which Mrs. Pulchop glided into the room, still wrapped in her heavy shawl.

"Itain't quite ready yet, sir," she said, in answer to Gaston's question; "Topsy 'aving been had with the toothache, which you can't expect people to cook dinners as is ill!" "Why don't you send her to the hospital?" said Vandeloup, with a yawn, looking at his

"Never," retorted Mrs. Pulchop, in a decisively shrill voice.

At last dinner made its appearance; and Kitty, recovering her spirits, they had a very pleasant meal together, and then Gaston sat over his coffee with a cigarette, talking to

ver was without a cigarette in his outh, and his fingers were all stained a llowish brown by the nicotine. Kitty lay back in a big arm-chair, listening to his idle talk and admiring him as he sat at the din-

"Can't you stay to-night?" she said, looking imploringly at him.

Vandeloup shook his head gently.

"I have an engagement, as I told you before," he said lazily; "besides, evenings at home are so dreary."
"I will be here," said Kitty, reproachful-

"That will, of course, make a difference," answered Gaston, with a faint sneer; "but you know," shrugging his shoulders, "I do not cultivate the domestic virtues." "What will you do when we are married?"

said Kitty, with an uneasy laugh.
"Enough for the day is the evil thereof," replied M. Vandeloup, with a gay smile.
"What do you mean?" asked the girl, with

a sudden start. "I mean that when we are married it will be time enough to talk about such things,' he answered, looking at her through his

"Then we will talk about them very shortly," said Kitty, with an angry laugh, as her hands clinched the arms of the chair tightly; "for the year is nearly up, and you promised to marry me at the end of it." "How many things do we intend to do that

are never carried out?" said Gaston, gent-"Do you mean that you will break your promise?" she asked, with a scared face. "My dear," he said, quietly, "things are

"Well?" asked Kitty, in a whisper, her heart beating loudly.
"You are not rich," said her lover, why should we two paupers get married, only to plunge ourselves into misery."

"Then you refuse to marry me?" she said,

not going well with me at present, and I

rising to her feet. He bowed his head gently.

want money badly.'

"At present, yes," he answered. Kitty stood for a moment as if turned to stone, and then throwing up her hands with a gesture of despair, fell back into the chair. and burst into a flood of tears. "How long is this going to last?" she asked

"Till I get rich." "That may be a long time?"

"Perhaps never?" "Perhaps!"
"And then I will never be your wife?"

"Unfortunately, no!"
"You coward!" burst forth Kitty, rising from her seat, and crossing over to him; 'you made me leave my home with your false promises, and now you refuse to make me the only reparation that is in your

"Circumstances are against any virtuou ntentions I may entertain," retorted Vande-Kitty looked at him for a moment, then

ran over to a desk near the window, and took from thence a small bottle of white glass with two red bands round it. "Do you know what this is?" she asked, in harsh voice.

"The poison I made in Ballarat," he an swered, coolly, blowing a wreath of smoke; how did you get hold of it ?" "I found it in your private desk," she said,

"That was wrong, my dear," he answered, gently; "you should never betray confi-I left the desk in your charge, and it should have been sacred to you." "Out of your own mouth are you condemn-

ed," said the girl, quickly; "you have betrayed my confidence and ruined me; so if you do not fix a day for our marriage, I swear I will drink this and die at your feet." "How melodramatic you are, Bebe," said Vandeloup, coolly; "you put me in mind of Croisette in 'Le Sphinx."

"You don't believe I will do it?"

"No! I do not." "Then see." She took the stopper out of the bottle and held it to her lips. Vandeloup did not stir, but still smoking, stood looking at her with a smile. His utter callousness was too much for her, and replacing the stopper again, she slipped the bottle into her pocket and let her hands fall idly by her

"I thought you would not do it," replied Gaston, smoothly, looking at his watch; "you must really excuse me, I hear the cab wheels

Kitty, however, placed herself in front of him as he moved toward the door. "Listen to me," she said, in a harsh voice, with white face and flaming eyes; "to-night

I leave this house forever."

He bowed his head. "As it pleases you," he replied, simply. "My God!" she cried, "and have you no love for me now?"

"No," he answered coldly and brutally, "I am tired of you." She fell on her knees and clutched his

"Dear Gaston! dear Gaston!" she cried. covering it with kisses, "think how young l am, how my life is ruined, and by you. I gave up everything for your sake-home. father, and friends-you will not cast me off like this after all I have sacrificed for you! Oh, for God's sake, speak-speak!"

"My dear," said Vandeloup, gravely, looking down at the kneeling figure with the streaming eyes and clinched hands, "as long as you choose to

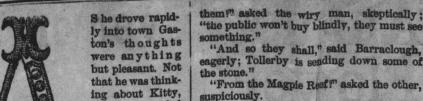
stay here I will be your friend--I can not afford to merry you, but while you are with me our lives will be as they have been; good-bye at present," touching her forehead coldly with his lips, "I will call to-morrow afternoon to see how you are, and I trust this will be the last of such scenes."

He drew his hand away from hers, and she sat on the floor dull and silent, with her eyes fixed on the ground and an aching in her heart. Vandeloup went into the hall, put on his hat, then lighting another cigarette and taking his stick, walked gayly out of the house humming an air from "La Belle Helene." The cab was waiting for him at the door, and telling the man to drive to the Bachelor's Club, he entered the cab and rattled away down the street without a thought for the broken-hearted woman he

Kitty sat on the floor with her folded hands lying carelessly on her lap and her eyesstaring idly at the carpet. This, then, was the end of all her hopes and joys-she was cast aside carelessly by this man now that he wearied of her. Love's young dream had been sweet indeed; but ah! how bitter was the awakening.

So still the night was. No moon as yet, but an innumerable blaze of stars set like diamonds in the dark blue sky. A smoky, yellowish haze hung over the city, but down in the garden amid the flowers all was cool and fragrant. The house was quite dark, and a tall mulberry-tree on one side of it was black against the clear sky. Suddenly the door opened, and a figure came out and closed the door softly after it. Down the path it came, and standing in the middle of the garden, raised a white, tear-stained face to the dark sky. A dog barked in the distance, and then a fresh cool breeze came sweeping through the trees and stirring the still perfumes of the flowers. The figure threw its hands out toward the house with a gesture of despair, then gliding down the path it went out of the gate and stole quietly down the lonely street. lown the lonely street.

M. VANDELOUP HEARS SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE.



the scene he had with her as merely an outburst of and did not dream she would take any serious step. He forgot all about her when he left the house, and, lying back in the cab smoking one of his everlasting cigarettes, pondered about his position. The fact was he was very hard up for money, and did not know where to turn for more. His luck at cards was so great that even the Bachelors, used as they were to losing large sums, began to murmur among themselves that M. Vandeloup was too clever, and as that young

gentleman by no means desired to lose his popularity he stopped playing cards alto-gether, and so effectually silenced every one. So this mode of making money was gone, and until Mme. Midas arrived in town, Vandeloup did not see how he was going to keep on living in his former style. But as he never denied himself anything while he had the money, he ordered the cabman to drive to Paton's, the florist in Swanston a good few thousands out of it." Street, and there purchased a dainty bunch of flowers for his button-hole. From thence he drove to his club, and there found a number of young fellows, including Mr. Barty Jasper, all going to the Princess Theatre to see "The Mikado." Barty rushed forward

when Vandeloup appeared and noisily insisted he should come with them. The men had been dining, and were exhilarated with wine, so Vandeloup, not caring to appear at the theatre with such a noisy lot, excused him-self. Barty and his friends, therefore, went off by themselves, and left Vandeloup alone. He picked up the evening paper, and glanced over it with a yawn, when a name caught his eye which he had frequently noticed be-"I say," he said to a tall, fair young fellow

who had just entered, "who is this Meddle-chip the paper is full of?" "Don't you know?" said the other, in surprise; "he's one of our richest men, and very generous with his money."
"Oh, I see! buys popularity," replied Vandeloup, coolly; "how is it I've never met

or,—or—something commencing with a returned the young man, vaguely; "he only came back to Melbourne last week; you are sure to meet him sooner or later." "Thanks, I'm not very anxious," replied Vandeloup, with a yawn; "money in my

eyes does not compensate for being bored; where are you going to-night?"
"'Mikado,'" answered the other, whose name was Bellthorp; "Jasper asked me to go up there; he's got a box."

"How does he manage to pay for all these things?" asked Vandeloup, rising; "he's only in a bank, and does not get much money." "My dear fellow," said Bellthorp, putting his hand in that of Vandeloup, "wherever he gets it, he always has it, so as long as he pays his way it's none of our business; come and have a drink."

Vandeloup assented with a laugh, and they went to the bar. "I've got a cab at the door," he said to Bellthorp, after they had finished their drinks, and were going down-stairs; "come with me, and I'll go up to the Princess also;

Jasper asked me and I refused, but men, as

well as women, are entitled to change their minds." They got into the cab and drove up Collins Street to the Princess Theatre. After dismissing the cab, they went up-stairs and found the first act was just over, and the bar was filled with a crowd of gentlemen, among whom Barty and his friends were conspicuous. On the one side the doors opened on to the wide stone balcony, where a number of ladies were seated, and on the other balcony a lot of men were smoking. Leaving Bellthorp with Jasper, Vandeloup ordered a

brandy and soda and went out on the bal-The bell rang to indicate the curtain was going to rise on the second act, and the bar and balconies gradually emptied themselves into the theatre. Monsieur Vandeloup, however, still sat smoking, and occasionally drinking his brandy and soda, while he thought over his difficulties and wondered how he could get out of them. It was a wonderfully hot night, and not even the dark blue of the moonless sky, studded with stars, could give any sensation of coolness. Round the balcony were several windows belonging to the dressing-rooms of the theatre, and the

lights within shone through the vivid red of the blinds with which they were covered. The door leading into the bar was wide open, and within everything seemed hot. even under the cool, white glare of the electric lights, which shone in large oval-shared globes hanging from the brass supports in clusters like those grapes known as ladies' fingers. In front stretched

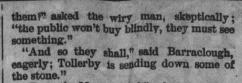
the high balustrade of the balcony, and as Vandeloup leaned back in his chair he could see the white blaze of the electric lights rising above this, and then the luminous darkness of the summer's night. Beyond, a cluster of trees, with a path lighted by gaslamps going through it, the lights of which shone like dull yellow stars. On the right arose the great block of Parliament buildings, with the confused mass of scaffolding standing up black and dense against the sky. A pleasant murmur arose from the crowded pavement below, and through the incessant rattle of cabs and sharp, clear cries of the street boys, Gaston could hear the shrill tones of a violin playing the dreamy melody of the "One Summer's Night in Munich"

valse, about which all Melbourne was then raving. He was so occupied with his own thoughts that he did not notice two gentlemen who came in from the bar, and taking seats a little distant from him, ordered drinks from the waiter who came to attend them. They were both in evening-dress, and had apparently left the opera in order to talk busin for they kept conversing eagerly, and their voices striking on Vandeloup's ear, he glanc-ed round at them and then relapsed into his former inattentive position. Now, however, though apparently absorbed in his own thoughts, he was listening to every word they said, for he had caught the name of the Magpie Reef, a quartz mine which had lately been floated on the market, the shares of which had run up to a pound, and then, as bad reports were circulated about it, dropped suddenly to four shillings. Vandeloup recognized one as Barraclough, a wellknown stock-broker, but the the other was a dark, wiry-looking man of medium height, whom he had never seen before.

"I tell you it's a good thing," said Barra-clough, vehemently laying his hand on the table. "Tollerby is the manager, and knows everything about it."

"Gad, he ought to," retorted the other with a laugh, "if he's the manager; but I don't believe in it, dear boy. I never did; it started with a big splash, and was going to be a second Long Tunnel according to the prospectus; now the shares are only four shillings reheave."

hillings—pshaw!"
"Yes; but you forget the shares ran up to pound," replied Barraclough, quickly; "and now they are so cheap we can snap them up all over the market, and then—"
"Well!" asked the other, with interest.
"They will run up, old fellow—see!" and the broker rubbed his hands gleefully.



"Of course," retorted the broker, indignantly; "you did not think it was salted, did you? There is gold in the reef, but it pays patchy. See"—pulling out a pocket-book—"I got this telegram from Tollerby at four o'clock to day;" he took a telegram from the pocket-book and handed it to his companion.

"Struck it rich—evidently pocket—thirty ounces to machine," read the other slowly.
"God! that looks well-why don't you not "Gad! that looks well; why don't you put

it in the papers?"
"Because I'don't hold enough shares," replied the other, impatiently; "don't you understand? To-morrow | go on 'Change and buy up all the shares affour shillings I can lay my hands on, then at the end of the week the samples of stone—very rich—come down. I publish this telegram from the manager, and the 'boom' starts." "How high do you think the shares will

go?" asked the wiry man, thoughtfully. Barraclough shrugged his shoulders, and replaced the telegram in his pocket-book. "Two or three pounds, perhaps more," he replied, rising. "At all events, it is a good thing, and if you go in with me, we'll clear

Come and see me to-morrow morning," said the wiry man, also rising. "I think I'll Barraclough rubbed his hands gleefully, and then slipping his arm in that of his compan-ion, they left the balcony and went back to

Vandeloup felt every nerve in his body tingling. Here was a chance to make money. If he only had a few hundreds he could buy up all the Magpie shares he could get and reap the benefit of the rise. Five hundred pounds! If he could obtain that sum he could buy two thousand five hundred shares, and if they went to three pounds, he could clear nearly eight thousand. What an idea! It was ripe fruit tumbling off the tree without the trouble of plucking it. He stepped out of the balcony into the light and touched Barty on the shoulder as he stood amid his

"Halloo! it's you!" cried Barty, turning round. "Where have you been, old chap?" "Out on the balcony," answered Vandeloup, curtly. "Come and have supper with us," said

Barty, hospitably. We are going to have some at Leslie's. "Yes, do come," urged Bellthorp, putting his arm in that of Vandeloup's: "we'll have no end of fun."

Vandeloup was just going to accept, as he thought on the way he could speak privately to Barty about the scheme he had, when he saw a stout gentleman at the end of the room taking a cup of coffee at the counter, and talking to another gentleman who was very tall and thin. The figure of the stout gentleman seemed familiar to Vandeloup, and at this moment he turned slowly round and looked down the room. Gaston gave a start when he saw his face, and then smiled in a gratified manner to himself. "Who is that gentleman with the coffee?"

"Those stout and lean kine," said Barty, airily, "puts me in mind of Pharaoh's dream, "Yes, yes!" retorted Gaston, impatiently;

'but who are they?" "The long one is Fell, the railway contracor," said Barty, glancing with some surprise at Vandeloup, "and the other is old Meddlechip, the millionaire." "Meddlechip," echoed Vandeloup, as if to

himself; "my faith!" "Yes," broke in Bellthorp, quickly; "the one we were speaking of at the club-do you know him?"

"I fancy I do," said Vandeloup, with a strange smile. "You must excuse me to your supper to-night." "No, we won't," said Barty, firmly; "you must come.

"Then I'll look in later," said Vandelcorp, who had not the slightest intention of going. "Will that do?" "I suppose it will have to " said Bellthorp, in an injured tone; "but why can't you come

"I've got to see about some business," said "What, at this hour of the night?" cried

Jasper, in a voice of disgust. Vandeloup nodded, and lighted a cigarette. "Well, mind you come in later," said Barty, and then he and his friends left the bar, after making Vaudelovp promise faith-

fully he would come. Gaston sauntered slowly up to the colfee bar, and asked for a cup in his usual musical voice, but when the stout gentleman heard him speak he turned pale and looked up. The thin one had gone off to talk to some one else, sc when Vandeloup got his coffee he turned lowly round and looked straight at

Moddlechip seated in the chair. "Good-evening, Monsieur Kestrike," he said, quietly. Meddlechip, whose face was usually red and florid-looking, turned ghastly pale, and

sprung to his feet. "Octave Braulard?" he gasped, placing his coffee-cup on the counter "At your service," said Vandeloup, looking rapidly round to see that no one overheard the name; "but here I am Gaston Vande-

Meddlechip passed his handkerchief over his face and moistened his dry lips with his

"How did you get here!" he asked, in a strangled voice. "It's a long story," said M. Vandeloup, putting his coffee-cup down and wiping his lips with his handkerchief; "suppose we go and have supper somewhere, and I'll tell you all

"I don't want any supper," said Meddle-chip, sullenly, his face having regained its normal color. "Possibly not, but I do," replied Vandeloup, sweetly, taking his arm; "come, let us

Meddlechip did not resist, but walked passively out of the bar with Vandeloup, much to the astonishment of the thin gentleman, who called out to him, but without getting any answer. Meddlechip went to the cloak-room and

put on his coat and hat. Then he followed Vandeloup down the stairs and paused at the door while the Frenchman hailed a hanson. When it drove up, however, he stopped short at the edge of the pavement. "I won't go," he said, determinedly. Vandeloup looked at him with a peculiar

gleam in his dark eyes, and bowed. "Let me persuade you, monsieur," he said, blandly, helding the door of the cab Meddlechip glasced at him, and then, with a sigh of resignation, entered the cab, followed by Vandeloup.

"To Leslie's Supper Rooms," replied the Frenchman, and the cab drove off. CHAPTER IV.

"Where to, sir?" asked the cabman



Leslie's Supper-Rooms. These

people and steady business men knew nothing about such a place except by reputation, and reputation, and looked upon it with horror, as a haunt of vice and dissipation.

Though Leslie's, in common with other places had to close at a certain hour, yet when the shutters were up, the door closed, and the lights extinguished in the front of the house, there was plenty of life and bustle going on at the back, where there were charmingly furnished little rooms for supper-parties. Barty Jasper had engaged one of these apartments, and with about a dozen young men was having a good time of it when Vandeloup and Meddlechip drove up. After dismissing the cab and looking up and down the street to see that no police was in sight, Vandeloup knocked at the door in a peculiar manner, and it was immediately opened in a stealthy kind of way. Gaston gave his name, whereupon they

were allowed to enter, and the door was closed after them in the same quiet manner, all of which was very distasteful to Mr. Meddlechip, who, being a public man and a promin-ent citizen, felt that he was breaking the laws he had assisted to make. He looked round in some disgust at the crowds of waiters, and at the glimpses he caught every now and then of gentlemen in evening-dress, and what annoved him more than anything else-ladie in bright array. Oh! a dissipated place was Leslie's, and even in the day-time it had a rakish-looking appearance as if it had been up all night and knew a thing or two. Mr. Meddlechip would have retreated from this den of iniquity if he could, but as he wanted to have a thorough explanation with Vandeloup, he meekly followed the Frenchman through a well-lighted passage, with statues on either side holding lamps, to a little room beautifully furnished, wherein a supper table was laid out.

A magnificent waiter who answered to the name of Gurchy, received Vandeloup's orders with a majestic bend of his head, then rolling up to Mr. Meddlechip, he presented the bill of fare to that gentleman, who, however, refused it.

"I don't want any supper," he said, curtly. Gurchy, though a waiter, was human, and looked astonished, while Vandeloup remonstrated in a sauve manner. "But, my dear sir," he said, leaning back

in his chair, "you must have something to eat. I assure you"-with a significant smile -"you will need it." Meddlechip's lips twitched a little as the Frenchman spoke, then, with an uneasy laugh, he ordered something, and drew his

chair up to the table. "And, waiter," said Vandeloup, softly, as Gurchy was rolling out of the door "bring some wine, will you? Pommery, I think, is best," he added, turning to Meddlechip. "What you like" returned that gentleman, impatiently, "I don't care."

"That's a great mistake," replied Gaston, coolly, "bad wine plays the deuce with one's digestion—two bottles of Pommery, waiter." "Now, then, sir," said Meddlechip, sharply rising from his seat and closing the door, 'what did you bring me here for?" M. Vandeloup raised his eyebrows in sur-

"How energetic you are, my dear Kestrike." he said, smoothly, lying down on the sofa, and contemplating his shoes with great satisfaction; "just the same noisy, jolly fellow as of yore."

"Damn you!" said the other, flercely, at which Gaston laughed. "You had better leave that to God," he answered, mockingly; "He understands more about it than you do.'

"Oh, I know you of old," said Meddlechip,

walking up and down excitedly;"I know you of old, with your sneers and your coolness, but it won't do here," stopping opposite the sofa, and glaring down at Vandeloup; "it won't do here!' "So you've said twice," replied M. Vande-

loup, with a yawn. "How do you want me to conduct myself? Do tell me; I am always open to improvement." 'You must leave Australia," said Meddlechip, sharply, and breathing hard. "If I refuse?" asked M. Vandeloup, lazily, smiling to himself.

"I will denounce you as a convict escaped from New Caledonia!" hissed the other, putting his hands in his pockets, and bending "Indeed," said Gaston, with a charming

smile, "I don't think you will go so far as that, my friend." "I swear," said Meddlechip, loudly, raising his band, "I swear-" "Oh, fy!" observel M. Vandeloup in a shocked tone; "an old man like you should

not swear; it's very wrong, I assure you; besides," with a disparaging glance, "you are not suited to melodrama. Mcddlechip evidently saw it was no good trying to fight against the consummate coolness of this young man, so, with a great effort, resolved to adapt himself to the exigencies of the case and fight his adversary with

his own weapons. "Well," he said at length, resuming his seat at the table, and trying to speak calmly, though his flushed face and quivering lips showed what an effort it cost him, "let us have supper first, and we can talk after-

ward. "Ah, that's much better," remarked M. Vandeloup, sitting up to the table and un-rolling his napkin. "I assure you, my dear fellow, if you treat me well, I'm a very easy

person to deal with." The eyes of the two men met for a moment across the table, and Vandeloup's had such a neaning look in them that Meddlechip dropped his own with a shiver.

The door opened, and the billowy waiter rolled up to the table, and having left a deposit of plates and food thereon, subsided once more out of the door, then rolled in again with the champagne. He drew the cork of one of the bottles,

filled the glasses on the table, and then, after giving a glance around to see that all was in order, suddenly found that it was ebb-tide, and rolled slowly out of the door, which he closed after him. Meddlechip eat his supper in silence, but

drank a good deal of champagne to keep his courage up for the coming ordeal which he knew he must go through. Vandeloup, on the other hand, eat and drank very little, as he talked gayly all the time about theatres, racing, boating, in fact of everything except the thing the other man wanted to hear. "I never mix up busifess with pleasure, my dear fellow," said Gaston, amiably,

we have finished supper and are enjoying our cigars, I will tell you a little story. "I don't want to hear it," retorted the other, harshly, having an intuitive idea what the story would be about. "Possibly not," replied M. Vandeloup, smoothly; "nevertheless it is my wish that you should hear it." Meddlechip looked as if he were inchned to

ing his companions thoughts; "when

resent this plain speaking, but after a pause evidently thought better of it.

When they had finished Gaston rang the bell, and when the billow rolled in, ordered a fresh bottle of wine and some choice cigars of a brand well-known at Leslie's.
"Try one of these," said M. Vandeloup, affably, to Meddlechip, when the billow had rolled in with the cigars and wine, "it's an

"I don't care about smoking," answered

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