THE DEVIL'S LEAD. A Thrilling Tale of the Australian Gold Diggings.

"This particular mine, 1 suppose you "Very mean?" said Gaston, win a yawn. likely it is. However, I'm willing to take the risk. Good-day! See you at four," and with a careless nod M. Vandeloup lounged

He walked along Collins Street, met a few friends, and kept a lookout for Kitty. He, however, did not see her, but there was a surprise in store for him, for turning round into Swanston Street he came across Archie McIntosh. Yes, there he was, with his grim severe Scotch face, with the white frill around it, and Gaston smiled as he saw the old man, dressed in rigid broadcloth, casting disapproving looks on the pretty girls walking

"A set o' hizzies," growled the amiable Archie to himself, "prancin' alang wi' their gewgaws an' fine claes, like war-horses—the daughters o' Zion that walk wi' mincin' steps an' tinklin' ornaments."

"How do you do?" said Vandeloup, touching the broadcloth shoulder; upon which Mc-

Intosh turned. "Lord save us!" he ejaculated, grimly, "it's yon French body. An' hoo's wi' ye, laddie? Eh, but ye're brawly dressed, my young man," with a disapproving look; "I'm hopin' they duds are paid for."

"Of course they are," replied Vandeloup, gayly, "do you think I stole them?" Weel, I'll no gae sa far as that," remarked Archie, cautiously; "may be ye have dwelt by the side o' mony waters, an' flourished. If ye ken the Screepture, ye'll see God helps those wha help themselves.

That means you do all the work and give God the credit," retorted Gaston, with a sneer; "I know all about that." "Ah, ye'll gang tae the pit o' Tophet when ye dee," said Mr. McIntosh, who had heard

this remark with horror; "an' ye'll no be sae ready wi' your tongue there, I'm thinkin', but ye are not speerin about Mistress Vil-"Why, is she in town?" asked Vandeloup,

"Ay, and Seliny wi' her," answered Archie, fondling his frill. "She's varrarich noo, as ye've nae doot heard. Ay, ay," he went on, "she's gotten a braw hoose doon at St. Kilda, and she's going to set up a carriage, ye ken. She tauld me," pursued Mr. McIntosh, sourly, looking at Vandeloup, "if I saw ye I was to be sure to tell ye to

Present my compliments to madame," said Vandeloup, quickly, "and I will wait on her as soon as possible."
"Losh save us, laddie," said McIntosh, ir-

ritably, "you're as fu' o' fine words as a play-Have ye seen onything doon in this pit o' Tophet o' the bairn that rin away?" "Oh, Miss Marchurst!" said Vandeloup, smoothly, ready with a lie at once. "No I'm sorry to say I've never set eyes on her." "The misstrers is joost daft aboot her,"

observed McIntosh, querulously, "and she's ganging tae look all thro' the toun tae find the puir wee thing."

"I hope she will," said M. Vandeloup, who devoutly hoped she wouldn't. "Will you

come and have a glass of wine, Mr. McIn-"I'll hae a wee drappy c' whusky, if ye've got it gude," said McIntosh, cautiously, "but

I dinna care for they wines that sour on a body's stomach." McIntosh having thus graciously assented,

Vandeloup tock him up to the club, and introduced him all round as the manager of the famous Pactolus. All the young men were wonderfully taken up with Archie and his plain speaking, and had Mr. McIntosh desired he could have drunk oceans of his favorite beverage. However, being a Scotchman, and cautious, he took very little, and left Vandeloup, to go down to Mme. Midas at St. Kilda, and bearing a message from the Frenchman that he would call there the next

Archie having departed, Vandeloup got through the rest of the day as he best could. He met Mr. Wopples in the street, who told him how he had found Kitty, quite unaware that the young man before him was the villain who had betrayed the girl. Vandeloup was delighted to think that Kitty had not mentioned his name, and quite approved of Mr. Wopples's intention to take the girl on a tour. Having thus arranged for Kitty's future, Gaston went along to his broker, and found that the astute Polglaze had got

him his shares. "Going up," said Polglaze, as he handed the scrip to Vandeloup, and got a check in

"Oh, indeed!" said Vandeloup, with a smile. "I suppose my two friends have begun their little game already," he thought, as he slipped the scrip into his breast-pocket "Information?" asked Polglaze, as Vandeloup was going.

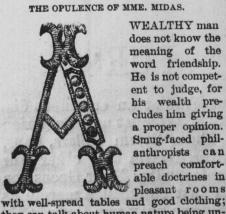
'Oh! you'd like to know where I got it.' said M. Vandeloup, amiably. "Very sorry I can't tell you; but, you see, my dear sir, I am not a woman, and can keep a secret.' Vandeloup walked out, and Polglaze looked after him with a puzzled look; then sum-

med up his opinion in one word, sharp, incisive and to the point: "Clever!" said Polglaze, and put the check in his safe.

Vandeloup strolled along the street think-

ing. "Bebe is out of my way," he thought, with a smile; "I have a small fortune in my pocket, and," he continued, thoughtfully, "Madame Midas is in Melbourne. I think now," said M. Vandeloup, with another smile, "that I have conquered the blind god-

CHAPTER VII.



his wealth precludes him giving Smug-faced philanthropists can preach comfortable doctrines in pleasant rooms

they can talk about human nature being unjustly accused, and of the kindly impulses and good thoughts in every one's breast. Pshaw! any one can preach thus from an altitude of a few thousands a year, but let these same self-complacent kind-hearted gentlemen descend in the social scale—let them look twice at a penny before spending it—let them face persistent landladies, exorbitant landlords, or the bitter poverty of the streets, and they will not talk so glibly of human nature and its inherent kindness. No; human na-ture is a sort of fetish which is credited with a great many amiable qualities it never pos-sesses, and though there are exceptions to the general rule, Balzac's aphorism on man-kind that "Nature works by self-interest,"

kind that "Nature works by self-interest," still holds good to-day.

Mme. Midas, however, had experienced poverty and the coldness of friends, so was completely disillusionized as to the disinterested motives of the people who now came focking around her. She was very wealthy, and determined to stop in Melbourne for a year, and then go home to Europe, so to this year, she took a hours at St. Kilds, which had

been formerly occupied by Mark Frettl-by, the millionaire, who had been mixed up in the famous hansom cab murder nearly eighteen months before. His daughter, Mrs. Fitzgerald, was in Ireland with her husband, and had given instructions to her agents to let the house furnished as it stood, but such a large rent was demanded that no one felt inclined to give it until Mrs. Villiers appeared on the scene. The house suited her, as she did not want to furnish one of her own, seeing she was only going to stop a year, so she saw Thinton & Tarbet, who had the lesting of the place, and took it for a year.

The windows were flung open, the furniture
brushed and renovated, and the solitary charwoman who had been ruler in the lonely rooms so long, was dismissed, and her place taken by a whole retinue of servants. Mme. Midas intended to live in style, so went to work over the setting up of her establishment in such an extravagant manner that Archie remonstrated. She took his interference in a good-humored way, but still arranged things as she intended; and when her house was ready, waited for her friends to call on her, and prepared to amuse herself with the comedy of human life. She had not long to wait, for a perfect deluge of affection-ate people rolled down upon her. Many remembered her—oh, quite well—when she was the beautiful Miss Curtis; and then her husband-that dreadful Villiers-they hoped he was dead—squandering her fortune as he had done-they had always been sorry for her, and now she was rich-that lovely Pactolus-indeed, she deserved it all-she would marry, of course—oh, but indeed, she

And so the comedy went on, and all the actors flirted, and ogled, and nodded, and bowed, till Mme. Midas was quite sick of the falseness and frivolity of the whole thing. She knew these people, with their simpering and smiling, would visit her and eat her dinners and drink her wines, and then go away and abuse her thoroughly. But then Mme. Midas never expected anything else, so she received them with smiles saw through all their little ways, and when she had amused herself sufficiently with their antics, she let them go.

Vandeloup called on Mme. Midas the day after she arrived, and Mrs. Villiers was delighted to see him. Having an object in view, of course Gaston made himself as charming as possible, and assisted madame to arrange her house, told her about the people who called on her, and made cynical remarks about them, all of which amused Mme. Midas mightily. She grew weary of the inane gabble and narrow understandings of people, and it was quite a relief for her to turn to Vandeloup, with his keen tongue, and clever brains. Gaston was not a charitable talker-few really clever talkers arebut he saw through every one with the uttermost ease and summed them up in a sharp, incisive way which had at least the merit of being clever. Mme. Midas liked to hear him talk, and seeing what humbugs the people who surrounded her were, and how well she knew their motives in courting her for her wealth, it is not to be wondered at that she should have been amused at having all their little weaknesses laid bare and classified by such a master of satire as Vandeloup. So they sat and watched the comedy and the anconscious actors playing their parts, felt that the air was filled with heavy, uous perfume, and the lights were

and that there was wanting entirely that keen, cool atmosphere which Mallock calls

"the ozone of respectability." Vandeloup had prospered in his little venture in the mining market, for, true to the prediction of Mr. Barraclough-who, by the way, was very much astonished at the sudden demand for shares by Polglaze, and vainly pumped that reticent individual to find out what he was up to-the Magpie Reef shares ran up rapidly. A telegram was published from the manager stating a rich reef had been struck. Specimens of the very richest kind were displayed in Melbourne, and the confiding public suddenly woke to the fact that a golden tide was flowing past their doors. They rushed the share market, and in two weeks the Magpie Reef shares ran from four shillings to as many pounds. Vandeloup intended to sell at one pound, but when he saw the rapid rise and heard every one talking about this reef, which was to be a second Long Tunnel, he held his shares till they touched four pounds, then, quite satisfied with his profit, he sold out at once and pocketed nearly ten thousand pounds, so that he was provided for the rest

The shares ran up still higher, to four pounds ten shilling, then dropped to three, in consequence of certain rumors that the pocket of gold was worked out. Then another rich lead was struck, and they ran up again to five pounds, and afterward sunk to two pounds, which gradually became their regular price in the market, That Barraclough and his friend did well was sufficiently proved by the former taking a trip to Europe, while his friend bought a station and set up as a squatter. They, however, never knew how cleverly M. Vandeloup had turned their conversation to his advantage, and that young gentleman, now that he had made a decent sum, determined to touch gold mining no more, and, unlike many peo-

Now that he was a man of means, Vandeloup half decided to go to America, as a larger field for a gentleman of his brilliant qualities, but the arrival of Mme. Midas in Melbourne made him alter his mind. Her husband was no doubt dead, so Gaston thought that as soon as she had settled down he would begin to pay his court to her, and without doubt would be accepted, for this confident young man never for a moment dreamed of failure. Meanwhile, he sent all Kitty's wardrobe after her as she went with the Wopples family, and the poor girl, taking this as a mark of renewed affection, wrote him a very tearful little note, which M. Vandeloup threw into the fire. Then he looked about and ultimately got a very handsome suite of rooms in Clarendon Street, East Melbourne. He furnished these richly,

and having invested his money in good securities, prepared to enjoy himself. Kitty, meanwhile, had become a great favorite with the Wopples family, and they made a wonderful pet of her. Of course, being in Rome, she did as the Romans did, and went on the stage as Miss Kathleen Wopples, being endowed with the family name for dramatic reasons. The family were now on tour among the small towns of Victoria, and seemed to be well known, as each member got a reception when he or she appeared on the stage. Mr. Theodore Wopples used to send his agent ahead to engage the theatre—or more often a hall—bill the town, and publish sensational little notices in the local papers. Then when the family arrived, Mr. Wopples, who was really a gentleman and well educated, called on all the principal people of the town and so impressed them with the high-class character of the entertainment that he never failed to secure their patronage. He also had a number of artful little schemes which he called "wheezes," little schemes which he called "wheezes," the most successful of these being a lecture on "The Religious Teaching of Shakespeare," which he invariably delivered on a Sunday afternoon in the theatre of any town he happened to be in, and not infrequently, when requested, occupied the pulpit and preached capital sermons. By these means Mr. Wopples kept up the reputation of the family, and the upper classes of all the towns invariably supported the show, while the lower classes came of a matter of course. Mr. Wopples, however, was equally as clever in providing a bill of fare as in inducing the public to come to the theatre, and the adaptability of the family was really wonderful.

One night they would play farcical then "Hamlet," reduced to acts by Mr. Wopples, would follow on the second night; the next night burlesque would reign supreme; and when the curtain arose on the fourth night Mr. Wopples and the star artistes would be acting melodrama, and throw one another off bridges, and do strong starvation business with ragged clothes amid paper snow-

Kitty turned out to be a perfect treasure, as her pretty face and charming voice soon made her a favorite, and when in burlesque she played Princess to Fanny Wopple's Prince, there was sure to be a crowd house and lots of applause. Kitty's voice was clear and sweet as a lark's, and her execution something wonderful, so Mr. Wopples christened her the Australian Nightingale, and caused her to be so advertised in the papers Moreover, her dainty appearance, and a certain dash and abandon, she had with her carried the audience irresistibly away and had Fanny Wopples not been a really good girl, she would have been jealous of the success acchieved by the new-comer. She, however, taught Kitty to dance breakdowns, and at Warrnambool they had a benefit, when "Faust, M. D." was produced, and Fanny sung her great success, "I've Just had a Row with Mamma," and Kitty sung the jewel song from "Faust" in a manner worthy of son, as the local critic--who had never heard Nilsson—said the next day. Alto-gether, Kitty fully repaid the good action of Mr. Wopples by making his tour a wonderful success, and the family returned to

Melbourne in high glee with full pockets. "Next year," said Mr. Wopples, at a supper which they had to celebrate the success of their tour, "we'll have a theatre in Melbourne, and I'll make it the favorite house of the city, see if I don't."

It seemed, therefore, as though Kitty had found her vocation, and would develop into an operatic star, but fate intervened, and Marchurst retired from the stage, which she had adorned so much. This was due to Mme. Midas, who, driving down Collins Street one day, saw Kitty at the corner walking with Fanny Wopples. She immediately stopped her carriage, and alighting therefrom, went straight up to the girl, who, turning and seeing her for the first time, grew deadly pale.

"Kitty, my dear," said madame, gravely,
"I have been looking for you vainly for a year—but I have found you at last."

Kitty's breast was full of conflicting emotions; she thought that madame knew all about her intimacy with Vandeloup, and that she would speak severely to her. Mrs. Villiers's next words, however, reassured her. "You left Ballarat to go on the stage, did you not?" she said, kindly, looking at the girl; "why did you not come to me?-you knew I was always your friend."

"Yes, madame," said Kitty, putting out her hand and averting her head, "I would have gone to you, but I thought you would stop me from going."
"My dear child," replied madame, "]

thought you knew me better than that, what theatre are you at?" "She's with us," said Miss Fanny, who tad been staring at this grave, handsomely dressed lady who had alighted from such a swell carriage; "we are the Wopples Fami-

'Ah!" said Mrs. Villiers, thinking, "I remember, you were up at Ballarat last year. Well, Kitty, will you and your friend drive down to St. Kilda with me, and I'll show you my new house?"

Kitty would have refused, for she was afraid Mme. Midas would perhaps send her back to her father, but the appealing looks of Fanny Wopples, who had never ridden in a carriage in her life, and was dying to do so, decided her to accept. So she stepped into the carriage, and Mrs. Villiers told the coachman to drive home.

As they drove along, Mrs. Villiers delicately refrained from asking Kitty questions about her flight, seeing that a stranger was present, but determined to find out all about t when she got her alone down at St. Kilda. Kitty, on her part, was thinking how to baffle madame's inquiries. She knew she would be questioned closely by her, and resolved not to tell more than she could help, as she, curiously enough-considering how he had treated her-wished to shield Vandeloup. But she still cherished a tender feeling for the man she loved, and had Vandloup asked her to go back and live with him, would, no doubt, have consented. The fact was, the girl's nature was becoming slightly demoralized, and the Kitty who sat looking at Mme Midas now-though her face was as pretty and her eyes as pure as everwas not the same innocent Kitty that had visited the Pactolus, for she had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, and was already cultured in worldly wisdom. Madame, of course, believed that Kitty had gone from Ballarat straight on to the stage, and never thought for a moment that for a whole year she had been Vandeloup's mistress, so when Kitty found this out-as she very soon did-she took the cue at once, and asserted positively

to madame that she had been on the stage for eighteen months. "But how is it," asked madame, who believed her fully, "that I could not find

"Because I was up the country all the time," replied Kitty, quickly, "and of course did not act under my real name." "You would not like to go back to your father, I suppose?" suggested madame. Kitty made a gesture of dissent.

"No," she answered, determinedly; "I was tired of my father and his religion; I'm on the stage now, and I mean to stick to it." "Kitty! Kitty!" said madame, sadly, "you

little know the temptations—"
"Oh! yes, I do," interrupted Kitty, impatiently; "I've been nearly two years on the stage, and I have not seen any great wickedness-besides, I'm always with Mrs.

Wopples."
"Then you still mean to be an actress?" "Yes," replied Kitty, in a firm voice; "if I went back to my father, I'd go mad leading

that dull life." "But why not stay with me, my dear?" said Mrs. Villiers, looking at her; "Iama lonely woman, as you know, and if you come to me I will treat you as a daughter.

"Ah! how good you are," cried the girl, in a revulsion of feeling, falling on her triend's neck; "but indeed I can not leave the stage -I'm too fond of it."

Madame sighed, and gave up the argument for a time, then showed the two girls all over the house, and after they had dinner with her, she sent them back to town in her carriage, with strict injunctions to Kitty to come down next day and bring Mr. Wopples with her. When the two girls reached the with her. When the two girls reached the hotel where the family was staying, Fanny gave her father a glowing account of the opulence of Mme. Midas, and Mr. Wopples was greatly interested in the whole affair. He was grave, however, when Kitty spoke to him privately of what madame had said to her, and asked her if she would not like to accept Mrs. Villiers's offer. Kitty, however, said she would remain on the stage, and as Wopples was to see Mme. Midas next day, made ples was to see Mme. Midas next day, made him promise he would say nothing about having found her on the streets, or of her living with a lover. Wopples, who thoroughly understood the girl's desire to hide her shame from her friends, agreed to this, so Kitty went to bed confident that she had saved Vandeloup's name from being dragged into the affair.

Wopples saw madame next day, and 'a

On the other hand, in consideration of Wopples losing the services of Kitty, madame promised that next year she would give him sufficient money to start a theatre in Mel-bourne. So both parted mutually satisfied. bourne. So both parted mutually satisfied.
Kitty made presents to all the family, who were very sorry to part with her, and then took up her abode with Mrs. Villiers, as a kind of adopted daughter, and was quite prepared to play her part in the comedy of

fashion.
So Mme. Midas had been near the truth, yet never discovered it, and sent a letter to Vandeloup, asking him to come to dinner and meet an old friend, little thinking how old and intimate a friend Kitty was to the

young man.

It was, as Mr. Wopples would have said,
a highly dramatic situation, but, alas, that
the confiding nature of Mme. Midas should thus have been betrayet, not only by Van-deloup, but by Kitty herself—the very girl, whom, out of womanly compassion, she took

And yet the world taks about the inherent goodness of human na

CHAPTER VIII. M. VANDELOUP S SURPRISED. HE quiet Kitty had since she came to Melbourne, and the fact that her appearance on stage taken place in the country, made her feel quite safe when making her ap-pearance in Melbourne societ y

that no one would recognize her or know anything of her past life. was unlikely she would meet with any of the Pulchop family again, and she knew Mr. Wopples would hold his tongue regarding his first meeting with her so the only one who could reveal anything about her would be Vandeloup, and he would certainly be silent for his own sake, as she knew he valued the friendship of Mme. Midas too much to lose it. Nevertheless, she awaited his coming in onsiderable trepidation, as she was still in love with him, and was nervous as to what reception she would meet with. Perhaps, now that she occupied the position as Mrs. Villiers's adopted daughter, he would marry her, but, at all events, when she met him she would know exactly now he felt toward her

Vandeloup, on the ther hand, was quite unaware of the surprise in store for him, and thought that the old friend he was to meet would be some Ballarat acquaintance of his own and madame's. In his wildest flight of fancy he never thought it would be Kitty, else his cool nonchalance would for once have been upset at the thought of the two women he was interested in being under the same roof. However, where ignorance is bliss- Well, Monsieur Vandeloup, after dressing himself carefully in evening-dress, put on his hat and coat, and, the evening being a pleasant one, thought he would stroll through the Fitzroy

Gardens down to the station. It was pleasant in the gardens under the golden light of the sunset, and the green arcades of trees looked delightfully cool after the glare of the dusty streets. Vandeloup, strolling along idly, felt a touch on his shoulder and wheeled round suddenly, for with his past life before him he always had a haunting dread of being recaptured.

The man, however, who had thus drawn his attention was none other than Pier e Lemaire, who stood in the centre of the broad asphalt path, dirty, ragged, and disreputable looking. He had not altered much since he left Ballarat, save that he looked more dilapidated looking, but stood there in his usual sullen manner, with his hat drawn down over his eyes. Some stray whisps of grass showed that he had been camping out all the hot day on the green turf under the shadow of the trees, and it was easy to see from his appearance what a vagrant he was. Vandeloup was annoyed at the meeting and cast a rapid look around to see if he was observed. The few people passing, however, were too intent on their own business to give more than a passing glance at the dusky tramp and the young man in evening-dress talking to him, so Vandeloup was reassured. "Well, my friend," he said, sharply, to the dumb man, "what do you want?"

Pierre put his hand in his pocket. "Oh, of course," replied M. Vandeloup, mockingly, "money, money, always money; do you thing I'm a bank, always to be drawn

on like this ?" The dumb man made no sign that he had heard, but stood sullenly rocking himself to and fro and chewing a wisp of the grass he had picked off his coat. "Here," said the young man, taking out a

sovereign and giving it to Pierre; "take this just now and don't bother me, or upon my word," with a disdainful look, "I shall positively have to hand you over to the law." Pierre glanced up suddenly, and Vandeloup caught the gleam of his eyes under the

shadow of the hat. "Oh! you think it will be dangerous for me," he said, in a gay tone; "not at all, I assure you. I am a gentleman, and rich; you are a pauper, and disreputable. Who will believe your word against mine My faith! your assurance is quite refreshing. Now, go away, and don't trouble me again, or," with a sudden keen glance, "I will do

as I say." He nodded coolly to the dumb nan, and strode gayly along under the shade of the heavily foliaged oaks, while Pierre looked at the sovereign, slipped it into his pocket, and slouched off in the opposite direction without

even a glance at his patron.

At the top of the street Vandeloup stepped into a cab, and telling the man to drive to the St. Kilda Station in Elizabeth Street, went off into a brown study. Pierre annoyed him eriously, as he never seemed to get rid of him, and the dumb man kept turning up every now and then like the mummy at the Egyptian feast to remind him of unpleasant

"Confound him!" muttered Vandeloup angrily, as he alighted at the station and paid the cabman, "he's more trouble than Bebe was; she did take the hint and go, but this man, my faith!" shrugging his shoulders, "he's the devil himself forsticking." All the way down to St. Kilda his reflec-

tions were of the same unpleasant nature, and he cast about in his own mind how he could get rid of this pertinacious friend. He could not turn him off openly, as Pierre might take offense, and as he knew more of M. Vandeloup's private life than that young gentleman cared about, it would not do to run the risk of exposure. "There's only one thing to be done," said Gaston, quietly, as he walked down to Mrs.

Villiers's house; "I will try my luck at marrying Madame Midas; if she consents, we can go away to Europe as man and wife if she does not, I will go to America, and, in either case, Pierre will lose trace of me."

With this comfortable reflection he went into the house and was shown into the drawing room by the servent. There ing room by the servant. There were no lights in the room, as it was not sufficiently lark for them, and Vandeloup smiled as he

saw a fire in the grate.
"My faith:" he said to himself, "madame "My faith!" he said to himself, "madane is as chilly as ever."

The servant had retired, and he was all by himself in this large room, with the subdued twilight all through it, and the flicker of the flames on the ceiling. He went to the fire more from habit than anything else, and suddenly came on a big arm-chair, drawn

up close to the side, in which a woman was "Ah! the sleeping beauty," said Vandeloup carelessly; "in these cases the proper thing to do in order to wake the lady is to kiss

lacious young man, and though he did not know who the young lady was, would certainly have put his design into execution, had not the white figure suddenly risen and confronted him. The light from the fire was fair on her face, and with a sudden start Vandeloup saw before him the girl he had ruined and deserted.

"Bebe!" he gasped, recoiling a step.
"Yes!" said Kitty, in an agitated tone,

"your mistress and your victim."
"Bah!" said Gaston, coolly, having recovered from the first shock of surprise. "That style suits Sara Bernhardt, not you, my dear. The first act of this comedy is excel lent, but it is necessary the characters should know one another in order to finish the "Ah," said Kitty, with a smile, "do I not

know you too well as the man who promised me marriage and then broke his word? You forgot all your vows to me." "My dear child," replied Gaston, leisurely, leaning up against the mantel-piece, "if you had read Balzac you would discover that he says, 'Life would be intolerable without a certain amount of forgetting.' I must say,"

smiling, "I agree with the novelist." Kitty looked at him as he stood there cool and complacent, and threw herself back into the chair angrily.
"Just the same," she muttered, restlessly,

"just the same." "Of course," replied Vandeloup, raising his eyebrows in surprise. "You have only been away from me six weeks, and it takes longer than that to change any one. By the way," he went on, smoothly, "how have you been all this time? I have no doubt your tour has been as adventurous as that of Gil

"No, it has not," replied Kitty, clinching her hands. "You never cared what became of me, and had not Mr. Wopples met me in the street on that fearful night, God knows where I would have been now. "I can tell you," said Gaston, coolly, tak-

ing a seat. "With me. You would have soon got tired of the poverty of the streets, and come back to your cage."
"My cage, indeed?" she echoed, bitterly

tapping the ground with her foot. "Yes, a cage, though it was a gilded one." "How Biblical you are getting," said the young man, ironically; "but kindly stop speaking in parables, and tell me what position we are to occupy to each other. As

"My God, no!" she flashed out suddenly. "So much the better," he answered, bowing. "We will obliterate the last year from our memories, and I will meet you to-night for the first time since you left Ballarat. Of course," he went on, rather anxiously, "you have told madame nothing?" "Only what suited me," replied the girl

coldly, stung by the coldness and utter heartlessness of this man. "Oh!" with a smile. "Did it include my "No." curtly

"Ah!" with a long drawn breath, "you are more sensible than I gave you credit for." Kitty rose to her feet and crossed rapidly over to where he sat calm and smiling. "Gaston Vandeloup!" she hissed, in his ear, while her face was quite distorted by the violence of her passion, "when I met you I was an innocent girl-you ruined me, and then cast me off as soon as you grew weary of your toy. I thought you loved me, and,

with a stifled sob, "God help me, I love you "Yes, my Bebe," he said, in a caressing

tone, taking her hands. "No, no!" she cried, wrenching them away, while an angry spot of color glowed on her cheek, "I loved you as you were-not as you are now-we are done with sentiment, Monsieur Vandeloup," she said sneering, "and now our relations to one another will be purely business ones."

He bowed and smiled. "So glad you understand the position," he said, blandly; "I see the age of miracles is not yet past when a woman can talk sense. "You won't disturb me with your sneers," retorted the girl, glaring fiercely at him out of the gathering gloom in the room; "I am not the innocent girl I once was."

"It is needless to tell me that," he said, She drew herself up at the extreme in-

"Have a care, Gaston," she muttered, hurriedly; "I know more about your past life than you think." He rose from his seat and approached, his face, now white as her own, to hers. "What do you know?" he asked, in a low,

passionate voice. "Enough to be dangerous to you," she retorted, defiantly. They both looked at one another steadily, but the white face of the woman did not

blench before the scintillations of his eyes. "What you know I don't know," he said steadily; "but whatever it is, keep it to yourself, or-" catching her wrist. "Or what?" she asked, boldly. He threw her away from him with a laugh, and the somber fire died out of his eyes.

"Bah!" he said, gayly, "our comedy is turning into a tragedy; I am as foolish as you. I think," significantly, "we understand one another.' "Yes, I think we do," she answered, calm-

ly, the color coming back to her cheek.
"Neither of us is to refer to the past, and we both go our different roads unhindered." "Mademoiselle Marchurst," said Vandeloup, ceremoniously, "I am delighted to meet you after a year's absence—come," with a gay laugh, "let us begin the comedy thus, for here," he added, quickly, as the door opened, "here come the spectators." "Well, young people," said madame's voice, as she came slowly into the room,

you are all in the dark; ring the bell for lights, Monsieur Vandeloup."
"Certainly, madame," he answered, touching the electric button, "Miss Marchurst and myself were renewing our former friend-

ship."
"How do you think she is looking?" asked madame, as the servant came in and lighted "Charming," replied Vandeloup, looking

at the dainty little figure in white standing under the blaze of the chandelier; "she is more beautiful than ever." Kitty made a saucy little courtesy, and burst into a musical laugh. "He is just the same, madame," she said, merrily, to the tall, grave woman in black velvet who stood looking at her affectionate-

ly; "full of compliments, and not meaning one; but when is dinner to be ready?" pathetically; "I'm dying of starvation. thetically; "I'm dying of starvation."

"I hope you have peaches, madame," said Vandeloup, gayly; "the first time I met mademoiselle she was longing for peaches."

"I am unchanged in that respect," retorted Kitty, brightly; "I adore peaches still."

"I am just waiting for Mr. Calton," said Mme. Midas, looking at her watch; "he ought to be here by now."

"Is that the lawyer, madame?" asked Vandelour.

"Yes," she replied, quietly; "he is a most

delightful man."
"So I have heard," answered Vandeloup, nonchalantly, "and he had something to do with a former owner of this house, I think."
"Oh, don't talk of that," said Mrs. Villiers, nervously; "the first time I took the house I heard all about the hansom cab murder."
"Why, madame, you are not nervous," [To be continued.]

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