

THE FATAL BUEL.

Old Dr. Tatham was sitting cozily with his daughter one morning, when the servant came in, and announced Mr. Irving and his son.

"Leave us, Amy, darling, for a short time, will you?" said the doctor, to his daughter.

Amy Tatham was a charming girl, in the fresh bloom of youth and beauty. I don't think she quite liked being sent away just at that moment and it is quite certain that she raised her head very suddenly when she heard the name "Walter Irving" mentioned.

"Both business, dear papa!" said Amy; "but remember you have promised not to keep me away long, and if you don't keep your word, I shall come in and surprise you. Good-bye, you old dear."

When Amy Tatham had left the room, the doctor turned towards the servant, who still stood at the door.

"Ask Mr. Irving and his son to walk in, please, and don't let me be disturbed unless there is something very important to be done."

Mr. Irving was a fine looking old gentleman of the Colonel Newcome stamp; his son not so tall, or of such commanding presence, but intelligent looking, and also gentlemanly. The father was about sixty; the son twenty-five, but looking evidently younger.

After commencing on a few ordinary topics of conversation, Mr. Irving was about to come to the point, and explain more particularly the object of his visit on this occasion, when he was stopped by the doctor.

"I beg pardon," said he, "but may I be allowed to interrupt you for a moment. It would be absurd of me, to affect ignorance of the object of your visit. Before, however, I can listen to what either you or your son have got to say, I have something very important to divulge. I must take you into my confidence, and relate something which it is necessary you should know—a secret which I fearlessly entrust to you."

Walter Irving rose.

The doctor appreciated the modest diffidence of the young man, as he showed by the smile which played over his features.

"My dear boy," said the doctor, "I beg that you will remain. What I have to say affects you much more particularly than any one else here. You have been a good son, and I feel confident that you will make an excellent husband. Your love for my daughter is warm and generous; but promise me now—promise me, the father of the girl you love and desire to marry—promise me, as the gentleman that you are, that you will religiously keep my secret. Keep it; yes, even from my daughter!

Mr. Irving and his son were evidently not prepared for so serious an interview. However, they promised faithfully to obey the doctor's earnest request, and waited patiently for him to continue.

The doctor looked round in his chair, to assure himself that they were alone, and then, clearing his throat and addressing himself more particularly to young Walter Irving, spoke as follows:

"Eight-and-twenty years ago I was studying medicine at a German university. It was at Heidelberg. I did not take up this study until late in life, in fact, considerably after I had taken my degree at Oxford.

"When I first took up my residence in Heidelberg, the somewhat absurd custom of duelling between the students was in vogue.

"The students were mad on the subject of duelling, and the slightest disturbance resulted in a formal and hostile encounter. Hardly a day passed that some duel or other did not take place. The students fought occasionally with the officers, as well as with the townspeople, and I need hardly add, perpetually among themselves.

"I was a strong muscular fellow when I went to Heidelberg, and the love for adventure and sports of all kinds, which I had inherited at school and fostered at college, was not easily to be got rid of.

"I was as wild and as headstrong as any of them. My strong and unflinching English spirit and determination gained me a reputation even among these dare-devil German boys, and very soon I became noted as a reckless fellow and experienced duellist. I became the leader of a 'clique.'

"A very little way from where my lodgings were, lived a young student, but who was as unlike me, or any in my set, as black is from white. He was the kind of fellow we should have called a 'milksop' at school; and yet, somehow or other, I felt I could not dislike the fellow. Instinctively—I don't know how it was—but I took to him. One's likes are, after all, as incomprehensible as our dislikes."

"Max Oppenheim—for that was my neighbor's name—was a pale-faced, studious-looking young man, and a perfect model of a student. He was always being held up as a pattern to us. He was never known to miss a lecture; he was never seen at the gaming table; he didn't smoke, drink beer—did nothing wicked, in fact.

"Outside the University, he never joined his fellow students, and was never known to invite them home.

"I forgot to say that he lodged exactly opposite where I was residing, so my window commanded his.

"One morning as I was smoking a cigarette on the balcony outside my sitting room, I saw, to my surprise, over the way, a pretty fair head peeping out of Oppenheim's window. The head popped back immediately I was detected.

"I laughed to myself, and thought what a good story I would make out of it for the benefit of my friends.

"That evening, before I had an opportunity of doing this, I happened to meet Max, and began joking with him about the fair apparition that I had seen.

"He stopped me in an instant.

"I am married," said he, rather proudly. "That was Madame Oppenheim that you saw."

"I am afraid I must have perpetrated an unbecoming mistake."

"It was Madame Oppenheim, I tell you, sir," said the pale-faced Max, getting irritated; "and I beg that her name may be treated with respect."

"I was half inclined to treat the matter still as a joke, and I fully believe I should not have been inclined to let the conversation drop so suddenly with any one else; but, as I told you just now, in my heart I esteemed Max thoroughly, and knew him to be by no means a bad fellow. Between you and me, I really liked him, only I did not like to own it. We are all desperately weak sometimes."

"This little altercation of ours was trivial enough; but it had its ill effects notwithstanding."

"Before it happened, we were in the habit of shaking hands and exchanging a few friendly words when we met. This was all knocked on the head after it. We bowed coldly to one another when we met, and in time even the bows became few and far between."

"And then the months slipped away, and the winter came, and with it—at least, not very long afterwards, the carnival.

"Of course, I went to the carnival ball, and in due time, I remember it well: it was a Pirot dress. I danced all night and got back to my lodgings at some unearthly hour in the morning.

"I threw myself on the bed, tired as I was; too tired, in fact, to take off a scrap of my costume.

"I had fallen asleep outside the bed, but was awakened by a loud knocking at my door. I had heard the knocking for some minutes, and it mixed itself fantastically enough with my dreams.

"Still the knocking went on; but when I heard my name repeated two or three times, I started up suddenly.

"Come in—come in!" I called still confused, and very sleepy.

"The door opened, and a man walked into my room.

"It was Max Oppenheim.

"He seemed very much agitated, and was as pale as death.

"Why, Oppenheim, what on earth can you want with me at this hour of the morning?" said I, rubbing my eyes, and looking comical enough. I should think, in my troubled Pirot dress.

"Mr. Tatham," said he, hesitating a little, and with a broken voice, "you have shown me kindness before now; I have come to ask you to do me a very great favor."

"By all means. What can I do?"

"Max Oppenheim took two or three turns up and down my room, hesitating once or twice, but at last commanded himself, and said, in a nervous, anxious whisper, "You cannot conceive how sorry I am to put you to any trouble or annoyance, Mr. Tatham; but to deal honestly with you, let me say that you are the only man I know how to appeal to in my present unhappy condition. I have heard, and I believe I am correct in believing, that in affairs of honor, as they are called here, you are somewhat expert."

"My dear fellow," replied I, now thoroughly surprised; "you don't mean to tell me that a duel is on the cards?"

"Yes."

"He looked me steadily in the face. There was a flash of something like pride in his eyes, and a tone of dignity in his voice, as he gave me the following explanation:

"Last night my wife was very anxious to see the masqueraders go to the ball. I didn't see much harm in this simple wish, and said that I had no objection to take her. We took up our position under the trees, away from the crowd, where I imagined we should be able to see everything without being in any way disturbed. It may appear strange, but I fancied somehow that all would not go well. One has these odd presentiments at times, you know; and, although it is perfectly impossible to account for them, it is no use denying that they do occur."

"Not a doubt of it," said I.

"A party of students, as ill-luck would have it, passed by the very spot we were standing, and recognized me. They surrounded us. I suppose they had been dining freely. At any rate, they insulted me grossly; but this I could have endured. They heaped their insults upon her who was with me. I will do them the justice to believe that they were ignorant that she was my wife.

"I am sure they must have been," said I, consoling him; "for there was a wild look about his eyes when he alluded to his wife, which rather frightened me."

"Well, I informed them of the relationship in which we stood to one another. I told you the same, Mr. Tatham, you may remember, and, like a gentleman, you believed me. These young ruffians simply laughed in my face. I had to defend my poor wife against their coarse and cowardly attacks, and to compel their silence as best I could. By degrees they left me one by one. One solitary individual remained. He was the ringleader, the most offensive, the most unparliamentary. Snapping his fingers in my face, he said, 'I consider I have been grossly insulted by you, Mr. Max Oppenheim. I shall expect satisfaction to-morrow. If there is an atom of pluck in your composition.'"

"Well, what then?"

"I have told you all, Mr. Tatham. The thought struck me once or twice during the night that such a foolish and trivial affair would be allowed to drop so hastily as it began. I thought, perhaps, the morning would bring with it sober reflections, and that, happily, an apology might be offered me for the gratuitous insults I received at the hands of my fellow-students. However, this morning, almost at day-break, I received a visit from two of them, still in their fancy dresses. They came to ask me if I had made any preparations. They assured me that my adversary—heaven knows I bear him no unkindness—was determined not to rest until he had obtained satisfaction for the injuries inflicted on him."

"Poor Max. I think I see him now, as he stood talking to me in the cold, gray, morning light, so frankly, so earnestly, and with such charming modesty. But I was a young fool

then, and never allowed my heart to be broke. How this young, promising fellow stood at my bedside, confiding to me his happy, brilliant life and prospects, and all his pretty wife's hope and love and heart."

"If you knew the students as well as I do, Oppenheim, and understood their mad enthusiasm for duelling, and strange notions of honor, you would believe that this man spoke the truth."

"Do you know who it is I mean?" said Max, nervously.

"I know them all. What is his name?"

"Ferdinand Kohler."

"A most experienced swordsman. What practice have you had?"

"—I am ashamed to say that I have hardly ever had a sword in my hand."

"You don't mean to say so?"

"At the time of which I am speaking, I don't believe there could have existed two students at that, or, indeed, in any university, who would have made such a confession."

"If you think, Mr. Tatham, that it is a point of honor for me to fight this man, I am prepared to meet him, come what may."

"To this courageous and plucky speech, without thinking of its consequences, I said, 'Bravo, Oppenheim! that's spoken like a man!'

"He didn't quite look all the courage of his word, so I tried to encourage him."

"Why, this will be a splendid opening for you," said I. "You will never become a swordsman without practice; and to own yourself ignorant of the weapon is to own yourself no student, or, indeed, gentleman, according to the present idea."

"There was another knock at my door."

"Here are the gentlemen, most probably," said he, "Hoping—indeed, knowing, that you would not refuse your assistance, I begged them to wait in the street. Shall I open the door?"

"Certainly. Let them in."

"There they stood, flushed with wine, careless, and excited—German students to the life. We all went out together."

"There is a picture of Gerome's which I saw once in Paris, and of which I see photographs in the shop windows in London, which makes me shudder again. It is called 'Le Duel di Pirot.' On just such a spot Max Oppenheim and Ferdinand Kohler met."

"It was just such a winter's morning, just such a bleak, dreary landscape, just the same snow-dust strewn on the ground."

"I never look at the picture, or imagine the scene, without seeing Max Oppenheim's blood."

"For Max Oppenheim fell that morning mortally wounded, on the snow."

"We saw at once that he was utterly ignorant of the sword, and unaccountably begged Ferdinand to be gentle with him. 'Just give him a scratch,' we said, 'and that will do.' I have no doubt, in my own mind, that Ferdinand had no intention of acting otherwise. Poor Max thought about his own death. He fought like a young lion, wildly, and without a bit of head. Ferdinand gave a lunge to defend his own life, and it was a fatal thrust for Max Oppenheim."

"There he died, where he had fought so desperately. It was an awful thing for all of us; and we would, one and all, have cut off our right hand sooner than it should have happened."

"The last sad and painful duties connected with Max's unfortunate death devolved upon myself. The worst part was yet to come; for, before he had breathed his last, he entrusted a letter to my care, and whispered only one word—"Marie!"

"I had to meet the young widow face to face."

"How I blamed myself for my folly as I hastened on my sad mission! How far was I not accountable for the young man's death? How easy it would have been for me to take his part and patch the matter up! But, no! Because a few headstrong fools, excited with wine, had insulted the woman he loved more than any one else in the world—his wife, whom he was bound to protect to the last—because he had resented these insults, and an absurd quarrel ensued, I had lent myself to a meeting between the principal offender, an old and experienced swordsman, and poor Max, who hardly knew one end of the sword from the other."

"At last I arrived at the house, but went up the stairs very slowly, and after much hesitation, knocked."

"Marie herself came to the door."

"Directly she saw me she shrank back. For some time she stood there immovable and trembling like an aspen leaf. She dared not ask me on what account I had come there. There she stood, with her long, fair hair floating down her shoulders. So young, and so very beautiful!"

"And there I stood before her, gazing into her sweet, pale, terribly-tinged face, and did not dare to move or speak a word. The words stuck in my throat, and nearly choked me."

"And then she fixed me with her eyes, and that look of fear burnt into me like melting lead."

"So terrible was that look, that I was compelled to take my eyes off her, and look upon the ground."

"Max is dead?" she shrieked, putting her hand to her heart, as if that one effort had made it cease to beat."

"I said nothing. There was a wild, hysterical sob, and then, falling upon her knees, she moaned out a prayer. After that she fell apparently lifeless to the ground."

"I shall never forget that scene to the day of my death. Nothing I have ever seen on the stage—nothing I have ever read in books—nothing I have ever seen in pictures—has ever come near it in depth and intensity."

"I don't know exactly how long I remained there. I was more than half stupored with grief myself."

"I tried feebly enough to console her. She would not be comforted."

"You are very kind," she said, "but don't understand me. Max is dead, and that is all I care to hear or know. It was I who sent him to you. I believed—hoped—that, happily, you would save his life; but God willed it otherwise. He loved him so much that He robbed me of my husband,

and has taken him to himself. There is only one thing I want now—my husband's body. It belongs to me—it is mine! I alone will watch over it—I alone will lay it in the coffin—and I alone will follow it to the grave! Bid them bring me my husband, and promise me faithfully that no one shall disturb the last few hours that I, Marie Oppenheim, have to spend with my darling boy. Sir, I beg—I implore—to allow me this!"

"What could I say?"

"I gave her his last letter, and left her, as she bid me."

"Night after night I watched the house from my balcony opposite. It was bitterly cold, but there I stood and watched, and sallow were the tears I shed for her who sat desolate in the room in which a light burned through the long night into the morning again."

"My house was terribly close to her, and I heard everything. I heard her awful shriek, when they led her away, and she had seen his face for the last time, and I heard the dull thud of the hammer, and the click of the cruel nails."

"We followed, all of us, but afar off and away from her."

"The next day, hearing and knowing that Max's widow was desperately poor, I wrote to her, notifying what we had arranged to do among ourselves for her."

"She wrote back, declining all assistance, and within a few days had left Heidelberg no one knew where. I tried in vain to discover her whereabouts, and not long afterwards I myself had completed my University life there, and came to England."

"For five years I was attached to one of the London hospitals, and at the end of that period, before I bought the practice down here," continued Dr. Tatham, "I went for a short Continental trip, and revisited Heidelberg for the first time since I had left it at the termination of the old student days."

"There is little wonder after what I have related to you that the place had a strange attraction for me."

"I lost no time in making my way to the pretty church yard, where, five years ago, I had seen Max Oppenheim sadly placed, and from whence I had conducted his poor heart-broken wife."

"I found the grave. It was surrounded by a simple cross. There were two names carved on the arms of the cross. On one arm was the word Max, and on the other, freshly cut, Marie."

"An old woman was standing by the grave, and on her bosom was a fair haired girl, dressed in deep mourning, and busily employed in planting on the grave some snowdrops and violets."

"From the old woman I learned how that Marie Oppenheim had returned to Heidelberg some months after I had left for England, bringing with her a little baby, whom she idolized. The sweet mother had died but a few months back, and here was the little one on the grave of its mother and father, as yet hardly old enough to know the real bitterness of its loss."

"The child took to me in a wonderful manner. I stayed at Heidelberg for some weeks, and the little one would not allow herself to be for a moment out of my sight. The consequence was that, when I returned to England, I brought her with me, and it was given out when I came down here that I was a widower with an only child. This, my dear friend, was not, as you will know, the truth. I was never married, and my darling Amy is the daughter of Max and Marie Oppenheim."

A little tender sob was heard at the other end of the room when Dr. Tatham finished his story, and in another moment Amy was in his arms, circling round the good man, and crying passionately.

"She had heard a greater part of the story, and what appeared to have been a mystery was now as clear as day-light to everybody."

Amy soon changed her surname for the third time, and became Mrs. Irving, and the young people lived on with old Dr. Tatham, who often said that now the secret was off his mind, he was twice as happy a man as he was before.

**THE MUD CURE.**—A street scene in San Francisco is described as follows:


"Tuesday morning a horse drawing a grocery wagon up Pacific street, took a notion into his head that he had gone far enough, and in spite of urging, coaxing, and whipping, stood stock still, with his ears drawn back. The crowd surrounded him, and innumerable treatments were suggested and tried with no avail. They sawed his fore-legs with a rope, stopped his breathing, twisted his tail, pulled and pushed him; but he only braced the harder, and looked at the crowd with an eye of contempt.

"At last a tall Piker came along, and picking up a large handful of mud from the gutter, crammed it into the brute's mouth. There was a scattering of the crowd as the old horse kicked and reared, and the scene ended in an exciting race by the young man after his horse and wagon, as they tore up the street at a pace they never equaled before."

**WHAT SCOTLAND PAYS FOR ALEX-** Mr. Bess, the India Pale Ale man, a great brewer, has been specifying to his conferees, and, among other things, he exhorted that men, especially if advanced in years, should eat half and drink double their usual quantum. This said in earnest would only be the old saying about millers wishing water to their own wheels. The whole has been pretty well examined by pure water men, and it is not likely to increase the liquor trade. But as to the means of the nation's subsistence, its destruction and the consequent evils, I will attempt to condense very briefly a few statistics. By five trade in corn, £1,100,000 is saved to the nation but £70,000,000 worth is withdrawn from food and made into drink yearly, and this costs the drinkers £113,000,000 yearly, which helps in making the number of criminals in jails and 131,000 convictions for drunkenness yearly, largely swelling also the rates for poor and police up to the enormous sum of thirteen and a half million sterling.—*Laborer.*

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