

# THE FATAL KISS.

BY TRISTRAM MONKE.

From New York Weekly.

## CHAPTER I.

The northern plains of Siberia were experiencing a far more vigorous winter than usual, even for that latitude. The snow, fanned by a strong northern gale, fell in wild, curling eddies across the ice-bound, desolate plains, wrapping the wooden houses of the convict mining station of Orloski in a feathery mantle of immaculate white.

In one of the houses nearest the mine dwelt the head of the settlement, by name Nicholas Ozaski, and his daughter Fedora. The latter, when our story opens, was sitting beside a roaring fire in her home, while on the opposite side of the hearth was a young Cossack lieutenant, tall and strikingly handsome, so much so, indeed, that his face won for him the cognomen of Handsome Boris.

Boris Xerinka had been at Orloski for the space of one week only, and yet Fedora had become to him the idol of his heart; such was the result of five days' reasoning with himself, but Fedora, who was quite accustomed to receive homage, did not or would not understand that he expected her to offer him any; moreover, for some unaccountable reason, she had conceived a rooted antipathy for him, a dislike which at first was generated by a shifty expression which seemed to lurk behind his bright blue eyes, as well as by the downward curve of his handsome mouth, which would have better graced a woman's face than that of a man.

For some time the two occupants of the room had remained silent, watching the glowing embers, then Fedora, raising her head, glanced at Boris, and said:

"My father told me that another gang of those poor wretches was expected here today. Is that so?"

"Yes," replied Xrinka, "it is true Fedora, and they ought to have been here eight hours ago!"

"Doomed to the mines," she cried in a dull voice, as though speaking to herself. "Poor creatures! I wonder their hearts do not stop beating when they hear their sentence; but yet they live on, only dimly conscious of the fate worse than death, which awaits them. The tales of those who have escaped from this Russian prison land cannot portray the fearful fate into which they march. But, alas! when they arrive they experience the grim realism of those tales. Ah, how I wish I had never left St. Petersburg."

A moment's silence followed this heartfelt ejaculation, then Boris said, gently:

"Fedora, would you be pleased if you knew you were about to return to Russia's capital?"

"Pleased!" She rose from her chair in surprise. "Pleased were but an empty name for the joy I should experience. Are—are we to leave here?"

"Well, in regard to your father the government has not quite decided," was the answer. "I have received orders which recall me to St. Petersburg eight days hence, and—Fedora, you could leave here as my wife!"

For a moment she looked coldly at him, and then in a loud voice, she said:

"Do you jest?"

"No, by Heaven! I am in deadly earnest. Fedora, I have not known you long, but just a week—and yet when I received my orders this morning I cursed them, for it would necessitate my leaving Orloski—and you! But I must obey the Czar, and I cannot bear to part, perhaps forever, with you!"

She relented on hearing his earnest tones, and said, more gently:

"Have you thought of my father?"

"He has consented."

"Indeed! It is very kind of him to do so, I am sure," she continued, sarcastically. "But what, if I in my turn, say no?"

The young man clutched the arms of his chair and stared aghast at her for a moment; then, giving a sigh of relief, he continued, in a reassured tone of voice:

"For a second I thought you were in earnest; it was a cruel jest."

"What if I say I do not jest?"

"Ah! Stop those cruel questions, in mercy. You would not have let me call you Fedora if you—you did not entertain some regard for me."

"In Siberia one forgets conventionalities."

"What!" exclaimed Boris, in a dazed voice, rising to his feet. "Do you—"

"Hush!" interrupted Fedora.

"Hearken to my tale, and then you will know one of my reasons for refusing. Four years ago I was in St. Petersburg; there, at a ball, I met a young Russian noble; we fell in love with each other, and in two months we were engaged. By some unlucky occurrence, my father quarreled with him, broke off the engagement, and brought me with him here, despite my pleading, and those of my aunt (with whom I was staying), in order that I should not see him again. How can I marry you, as I am engaged? Go to St. Petersburg, forget me, and wed some other girl, who would be better able to appreciate you than I should."

"If he were dead would you marry me?" asked Boris, laying his hand on the hilt of his sword. "Say yes, and give me his name and address; I will insult him—he will be forced to challenge me; and then—"

A bugle call rang out at this moment, followed by hoarse orders and the neighing of horses.

"The convicts!" cried Fedora, as she walked swiftly toward the window, followed by Boris, just in time to see them file past.

They were a motley gang of men, women, ay! and children, too; manacled, footsore, haggard, and with despair imprinted on their faces. They marched on through the driving snow, urged forward, ever and anon by the lash. It was a sight to cause the hardest heart to quail.

"Well, Fedora, what is your answer?" cried Boris, looking out of the window.

She did not reply, for her gaze had rested on the tall, soldier-like figure of one of the convicts, who started when he saw her, and stood still in surprise, until a soldier, riding up, raised his whip, the next instant it descended, curling around the prisoner like a writhing snake. Fedora cried out in sympathy, while the convict once more moved haltingly onward.

"Come away," said Boris, "your heart is too tender to behold such

sight as these, although the curs deserve their treatment."

"Deserve!" cried Fedora, turning her flashing eyes upon him. "By what right do you set yourself up as a judge of your fellow man?"

"They have been condemned by Russian law," hazarded Boris.

"Condemned by Russian law?" she echoed, with a bitter laugh.

"But there—go! I feel faint—go!"

"Your answer, Fedóra! Do not say—"

"You will have it in a week," she replied; then she continued: "But go—leave me—alone."

There was such an accent of pleading in her voice that Boris left her presence without uttering a word. As soon as she was alone she buried her face in her hands and cried in a voice broken by sobs: "Alexis! Oh, Alexis, to think that you should come to this." Then, clinching her hands, she exclaimed rising from her chair:

TO BE CONTINUED.

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From the Examiner, San Francisco, Cal.

The prevalent maladies of diminution of the vital powers, undue physical fatigue and mental exhaustion, are to-day engaging the careful attention of the most eminent pathologists. Their prevalence is ascribed to poisoning through alcoholic drinks, opium habit and adulterated foods, contaminated water, the vitiated atmosphere of towns, the continuous jar and rumble of railroad trains, the flashing of electric lights, the clangor of street cars, the jingling of telephone bells, the vertigo-producing effects of lofty buildings and swift elevators, the perpetual noises and shifting sights of city streets, all the constant activities, the simpleness of which involve an effort of the nervous system and a wearing of tissue.

A German author in a recently published work calls attention to these inroads of the century and points out that the enormous increase in nervous expenditure has not and can not have a corresponding increase of supply in the food we eat. Even if we had the choicest food in the greatest abundance it could do nothing toward helping us, for we would be incapable of digesting it. Our stomachs can not keep pace with the brain and nervous system. The latter demand much more than the former are able to furnish and as the inevitable consequence then comes disaster. The strongest may keep up but the weaker fall by the way. Mankind has become fatigued and exhausted and this fatigue and exhaustion make themselves manifest in the increase of nervous disorders, including such new affections as the "railway brain" and "railway spine," the increase of heart disease, the prevalence of precocious dental decay and baldness, of nearsightedness and deafness and premature old age. To counteract the incessant strain on the nerves and to replenish the wear and tear on the brain caused by every line we read or write, every face we see, every conversation we carry on, every scene we perceive, every noise we hear, every impression we receive is precisely the province of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. They are designed to fill the void in the nourishment of the nerves and brain that no amount of choicest food can fill. In a concentrated form is a infinitely richer food for the blood, and the blood is the life of the nerves, than in vast quantities of beef and bread.

It is generally agreed that a man's physical condition is dependent, to a great degree, upon the nature of his employment. Men whose occupation necessitates the constant use of the brain, without any opportunity for physical exercise, are generally nervous, while men employed at manual labor requiring no exercise of the brain function, are almost universally possessed of sound nervous systems, not easily disturbed by exciting events.

A striking illustration of this principle is found in the case of Professor George E. Coleman, who is a professional pianist, and who was, until within recent years, a distinguished. Professor Coleman lives at 1330 Buchanan Street, San Francisco. He is well known here as a pianist, having played at some of the most popular music halls in the city. Mr. Coleman is not a man of strong frame, and he has been an easy prey to the severe, nervous tension of his work at the piano. He has had to play continuously for several hours during every evening for five years, and his nervous system finally gave way under the strain. He was forced to retire from regular work at the piano, but that did not have the effect of improving his condition. Upon the contrary, he steadily grew worse. His nerves had been shattered, and in addition he discovered that one of his lungs had been affected by his having been exposed to counter draughts in poorly ventilated halls. His condition soon became such that he was confined to his home and finally gave him over to the care of a physician. Mr. Coleman's experience as a pianist had given him an acquaintance with diseases and their remedies, and a full knowledge of just what was necessary on his part to effect a cure.

After several weeks' careful treatment by the physician, said Mr. Coleman, "I could notice no improvement in my condition. If anything, I think I was considerably worse. The action of my lungs had become so weak that I was at last obliged to quit any distance unrelated for fear of falling, through loss of a spasm. My nervousness had advanced to an alarming stage. I was not able to contain myself for even a short time, but had always to be running with something or moving nervously about the room. It was while I was in this condition that I noticed in a paper an article on Williams' Pink Pills. I determined to try them, even though they killed me. Well, they didn't kill me, but I'm not satisfied you that they cured me immediately any case was much too serious for that. But I had not taken a full box before I felt a great relief. My nervous system was more certainly gradually regaining control of my nerves and my condition was generally improved. I kept right on taking the pills and getting well. Now, I had taken just three boxes of them when I considered myself a cured man. And I was right, for although I quit taking the pills, I did not relapse into my former condition, but grew stronger daily."

"It was truly a marvellous cure, and I will say that I think Williams' Pills possess remarkable curative properties, and I would recommend them to the use of the thousands of people of this city who are nervous wrecks, or who are suffering from diseases of the lungs."

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