

THE FATAL KISS.

BY TRISTRAM MONKE.

From New York Weekly.

CHAPTER II.

"But you shall not work in the mines, for I will save you! Ah, but how?" she cried, in agony. "I am only a woman, alas! but what strength cannot accomplish, cunning must."

With a groan of despair, she returned once more to the window. Toward her, from the road to the mine, advanced four men, under the guard of Boris. Strangely enough, the tall, soldier-like figure was among them. Once again he halted, when Boris, drawing his struck him with the flat side of it so furiously as to stretch him almost senseless to the ground. It was then, for the first time, that the young Lieutenant became aware that he was in front of Fedora's house, and that she had witnessed his action.

He bit his lip with vexation. A moment later, Fedora, regardless of the biting cold, was in the street. Darting a furious glance at Boris, she knelt down in the snow beside the prostrate convict, then, turning her flashing eyes on the lieutenant, she bade him leave her presence. Scarcely knowing what he did, he obeyed, and marched a good six rods away with his three prisoners. It was not far, yet the swiftly falling snow blotted them out from her gaze; then, taking the man's head on her knee, she whispered in his ear:

"Alexis!"

The convict opened his eyes, and exclaimed in a low voice:

"Fedora, dearest, you recognized me!"

"Could I not penetrate any disguise? I have come to save you!"

"Save me?" he echoed, dully.

"Who can be saved from the mines?"

"Hush!" whispered she. "Do you know where you are to be lodged tonight?"

"Yes. The usual prison being full, we are to be placed in a little hut, just outside this hamlet, for a short time, until a band of the prisoners here are sent back to Tobolsk en route for elsewhere."

Fedora uttered a low, glad cry on hearing this intelligence, and replied, in a low, excited whisper:

"Be ready to fly on the fifth night from now—to fly with me!"

"But how—"

"Hush! Don't question me, dearest, but trust all to me; only be ready on the fifth night; and now pretend to be recovering from a faint, for here they come."

She spoke the truth, for Boris, realizing that he had no right to leave a convict unguarded, was returning, Fedora rose, and with well simulated wrath, cried:

"So you have come to fetch your prisoner. It is no thanks to you that he has recovered consciousness."

Then, taking him on one side, she exclaimed, as Alexis staggered to his feet: "Should it come to my ears that you have struck another convict as brutally as you did that man, I will never give you my answer."

A happy smile irradiated his face, and, calling to some soldiers, who had just come up, he bade them conduct the convicts to their prison. As soon as they had gone, Boris cried, passionately:

"Fedora, I implore you to give me your answer now."

"In five days you shall have it."

"But why this delay—why keep me in this cruel suspense?"

"As a punishment for your barbarity," she replied, coldly; then she added: "and also to test your courage, for it is whispered here that you are but a coward at heart."

"Set me any task, however perilous it may be, and you will see if I cannot give the lie direct to the circulators of such a vile slander."

"You know the tale of that convict who was kicked to death, whose spirit, it is said, haunts the house in which he died? Well, my father told me that the prisoners are going to be kept there."

"Only those four," interrupted Boris.

"If you keep guard alone there on the fifth night from now, I will give you my answer. This is the task I set you."

Like most Russian, Boris was superstitious. He would not have feared to meet a mortal foe or brave a danger, but to meet, perhaps, the spirit of the convict whose death some laid at his door, made him draw back—he hesitated to accept the challenge.

"So this is the way you give the lie direct to those who, it appears, speak the truth," she said, sneeringly, and moving away. "Coward!"

"Stay!" cried Boris, laying a detaining hand on her arm, "do not accuse me of cowardise before you have heard my answer."

"And it is?"

"That I shall be there."

It is midnight, and the convict station of Orlouski is wrapped in repose. No sound disturbs the stillness, for the snow deadens even the footsteps of the sentries outside the common prison, and those of Lieutenant Xerinka, who, armed with bayonet and rifle, keeps his strange vigil outside the hut where in the four convicts are imprisoned.

For the hundredth time Boris strives to pierce the gloom, to see if she whom he awaits comes; in vain—Fedora is late in keeping her tryst.

A sudden fear chills his heart as the idea flashes across his brain that she may not come, but a rustle of garments quiets his fears. In an instant he was on guard and had challenged.

"It is I—Fedora."

"You, dearest! I almost feared you would not come," he exclaimed, flinging down his rifle.

"Not come, Boris?" there was a wondering tone in his voice. "Did I not say I should? How did you get permission to keep guard?"

"They thought I was mad," he answered, as she approached him, "but they granted my request, though, Colonel Stanuff had a good laugh at my expense. And now, having granted your strange request, darling—what—what is your answer?"

The question was asked haltingly. "I have been thinking and reasoning for five days, as you know, Boris, and have at last arrived at my decision."

"And that is—"

"Yes."

"Ah, Fedora, what an angel you are!" he cried, impetuously, "and what a relief you have brought to my mind." Then suddenly check-

ing himself, he added: "But how can I tell you are not amusing yourself at my expense, as you have so often done?"

A moment's pause, during which her hand had sought the hilt of a dagger at her girdle; then throwing back her furs, she said, softly: "Let my first kiss be the seal of truth of my answer."

She flung herself into his outstretched arms, and raised her face to his. The instant their lips met a foot of steel at the same moment was driven to its hilt into his heart, and Boris fell, without a groan, at his deceiver's feet.

With nervous fingers she took the keys from his girdle, his blood staining her white fur gloves as she did so, and with trembling hands she unfastened the door of the hut.

A few seconds later the manacles fell from the wrists of Alexis, and he was free, his release being followed by that of his companions.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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From Grand Rapids, Mich., Evening Press.



CHAS. H. HACKLEY.

The most beautiful spot in Muskegon is inseparably associated with the name of Hackley, and in all Western Michigan there is not a name better known, and among the studios and those interested in deeds of philanthropy, this name is known and admired. Chas. H. Hackley has been in the lumber business continuously since 1856, and in that time has amassed a fortune, which gives him a rating among the wealthy men of the nation. But with wealth there did not come that tightening of the purse-strings which is generally a marked characteristic of wealthy men.

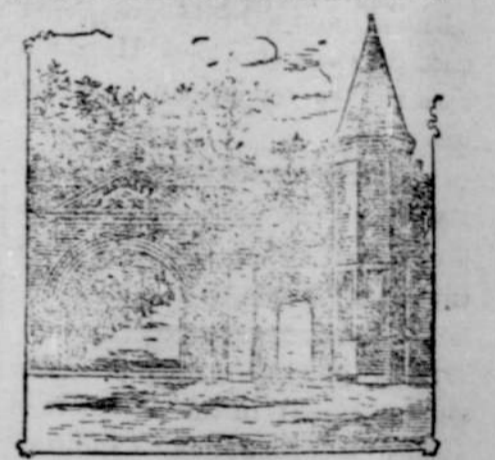
There is no prettier spot in the State than Hackley Park in a square surrounded and pierced by stone walls, emphasizing with their whiteness the green of faultlessly kept lawns, its crowning pride a towering soldier's monument on the top of which stands a bronze figure pointing ever in remembrance of the heroes who died that the nation might live. Surrounding this park are the magnificent Hackley Public Library—a poem in granite—with its 60,000 volumes, and the equally stately Hackley school, like a beehive with its 600 children. Other elegant buildings testify likewise to the liberality and munificence of this man who has pulled wealth out of the forests of Michigan.

It is no wonder then that the name of Charles H. Hackley is known at home and abroad. His munificence to Muskegon alone represents an outlay of nearly half a million. For the past twenty years he has been a constant sufferer from neuralgia and rheumatism, also numbness of the lower limbs, so much so that it has seriously interfered with his pleasure in life. For some time past his friends have noticed that he has seemed to grow young again, and to have recovered the health which he had in youth.

To a correspondent of the Press, Mr. Hackley explained the secret of his transformation, and to his friends who have known how he suffered, it is indeed a transformation. "I have suffered for over twenty years," he said, seated in his private office, "with pains in my lower limbs so severely that the only relief I could get at night was by putting cold water compresses on my limbs. I was bothered more at night than in the day time. The neuralgia and rheumatic pains in my limbs, which had been growing in intensity for years, finally became chronic. I made three trips to the Hot Springs with only partial relief, and then fell back to my original state. I couldn't sit still, and my sufferings began to make life look very blue. Two years ago last September I received an account of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, and what they had done for others, and some cases so nearly resembling mine that I was interested. But I did not know whether the testimonials were genuine or not, and I did not wish to be humbugged, so I wrote to one who had given a testimonial, an eminent professor of medicine in Canada. The reply I received was even stronger than the printed testimonial, and it gave me faith in the medicine.

"I began taking the pills and found them to be all that the professor had told me they would be. It was two or three months before I experienced any perceptible betterment of my condition. My disease was of such long standing that I did not expect speedy recovery, and was thankful even to be relieved. I progressed rapidly, however, towards recovery, and for the last six months have felt myself a perfectly well man. I have recommended the pills to many people, and am only too glad to recommend a health through the medium of a wonderful medicine. I cannot say too much for what it has done for me."

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