

A DEAD RECKONING.

CHAPTER IV.

"Pardon. I hope I do not intrude?" said M. Karovsky, addressing himself to Mrs. Brooke with the suave assurance of a thorough man of the world. "I saw through the window that Mr. Brooke had returned, and as my time here is limited—me voici." Then advancing a few steps and holding out his hand to Gerald, he added: "It is five years, mon ami, since we last met. Confess now, I am one of the last men in the world whom you thought to see here?"

"You are indeed, Karovsky," responded Gerald as he shook his visitor's proffered hand, but with no great show of cordiality.—"Have you been long in England?"

"Not long. I am a bird of passage. I come and go, and obey the orders that are given me. That is all."

"My wife, Mrs. Brooke. But you have seen her already.—Clara, Monsieur Karovsky is a gentleman whose acquaintance I had the honor of making during the time I was living abroad."

"May we hope to have the pleasure of Monsieur Karovsky's company to dinner?" asked Clara in her most gracious manner, while at the same time hoping in her heart that the invitation would not be accepted.

"Merci, madame," responded the Russian, for such he was. "I should be delighted, if the occasion admitted of it; but, as I said before, my time is limited. I must leave London by the night-mail. I am due in Paris at ten o'clock to-morrow."

"For the present, then, I must ask you to excuse me," said Clara.

Karovsky hastened to open the door for her, and bowed low as she swept out of the room.

"That man is the bearer of ill news, and Gerald knows it," was the young wife's unspoken thought as she left the two together.

M. Karovsky was a tall, well-built man, to all appearance some few years over thirty in point of age. His short black hair was parted carefully down the middle; his black eyes were at once piercing and brilliant; he had a long and rather thin face, a longish nose, a mobile and flexible mouth, and a particularly fine arrangement of teeth. He wore neither beard nor moustache, and his complexion had the faint yellow tint of antique ivory. He was not especially handsome; but there was something striking and out of the common in his appearance, so that people who were introduced to him casually in society wanted to know more about him. An enigma is not without its attractions for many people, and Karovsky had the air of being one whether he was so in reality or not. He was a born linguist, as so many of his countrymen are, and spoke the chief European languages with almost equal fluency and equal purity of accent.

"Fortune has been kind to you, my friend, in finding for you so charming a wife," he said, as he lounged across the room with his hands in his pockets, after closing the door behind Mrs. Brooke. "But Fortune has been kind to you in more ways than one."

"Karovsky, you have something to tell me," said Brooke a little grimly. "You did not come here to pay compliments, nor without a motive. But will you not be seated?"

Karovsky drew up a chair. "As you say—I am not here without a motive," he remarked. "Then, with a quick expressive gesture, which was altogether un-English, he added: "Ah, bah! I feel like a bird of ill-omen that has winged its way into Paradise with a message from the nether world."

"Whatever your message may be, pray do not hesitate to deliver it." But apparently the Russian did hesitate. He got up, crossed the room to one of the windows, looked out for half a minute, then went back and resumed his seat. "Eight years have come and gone, Gerald Brooke," he began in an impressive tone, "since you allied yourself by some of the most solemn oaths possible for a man to take that Sacred Cause to which I also have the honor of being affiliated."

"Do you think I have forgotten! At that time I was an impetuous and enthusiastic boy of eighteen, with no knowledge of the world, save what I had gathered from books, and with a head that was full of wild, vague dreams of Liberty and Universal Brotherhood."

"The fact of your becoming one of us is the best of all proofs that the cause of Liberty at that time was dear to your heart."

"But when as a boy I joined the Cause, I was ignorant of much I have learned since that time."

"The world does not stand still. One naturally knows more to-day than one did eight years ago."

"Karovsky, I know this—that the Cause, which, when I joined it, I believed to be so pure in its aims, so lofty in its ideas, so all-embracing in its philanthropy, has, since that time, been stained by crimes which make me shudder when I think of them—has dragged its colors through shambles reeking with the blood of those who have fallen victims to its blind and ferocious notions of revenge."

"Pardon. But can it be possible that I am listening to one who, only eight short years ago, was saturated with philanthropic ideas which seemed expensive enough to include the whole human race—one whose great longing was that every man should be free and happy?—Ah, yes, you are the same—daily time and the world have contrived to spoil you, as they spoil so many others. In these days you were poor; now you are rich. Then you had no

fixed home; you were a wanderer from city to city; your future was clouded and uncertain. Now, you are the wealthy Mr. Brooke—a pillar of your country; this grand old mansion and all the broad acres, for I know not how far around it, are yours. You are married to one whom you love, and who loves you in return. Away, then, with the wild notions of our hot youth!"

Karovsky, you wrong me. My love of my fellows is as ardent as ever it was. My— But why prolong a discussion that could serve no good end? You have a message for me?"

"I have." The man was evidently ill at ease. He rose, crossed to the chimney-piece, took up one or two curios, and examined them through his eyeglass, then went back and resumed his seat. "Gerald Brooke," he continued, "eight years ago, on a certain winter evening, in a certain underground room in Warsaw, and before some half-dozen men whose faces you were not permitted to see, you, of your own free-will, took the solemn oath which affiliaed you to that great Cause for the furtherance of which thousands of others have given their fortunes, their lives, their all. From that day till this you have been a passive member of the Society; nothing has been demanded at your hands; and you might almost be excused if the events of that winter night had come at length to seem to you little more than a half-remembered dream. That you have not been called before now is no proof that you have been overlooked or forgotten, but simply that your services have not been required. Other instruments were at hand to do the work that was needed to be done. But at length the day has come to you, Gerald Brooke, as it comes to most men who live and wait."

Gerald had changed color more than once during the foregoing speech. "What is it that I am called upon to do?" he asked in a voice that was scarcely raised above a whisper.

"You are aware that when an individual is needed to carry out any of the secret decrees of the Supreme Tribunal, that individual is drawn for by lot?"

"And my name?"

"Has been so drawn."

The light faded out of Gerald Brooke's eyes; a death-like pallor crept over his face; he could scarcely command his voice as for the second time he asked: "What is it that I am called upon to do?"

"The Supreme Tribunal has decreed that a certain individual shall suffer the penalty of death. You are the person drawn by lot to carry out the sentence."

"They would make an assassin of me?—Never!"

"You are bound by your oath to carry out the behests of the Tribunal, be they what they may."

"No oath can bind a man to become a murderer."

"One of the chief conditions attached to your oath is that of blind and unquestioning obedience."

"Karovsky, this is monstrous."

"I am sorry that things have fallen out as they have, mon ami; but such being the case, there is no help for it."

"—Gerald Brooke—whose ancestors fought at Cressy, to sink to the level of a common assassin? Never!"

"Pardon. Might it not be as well, before you express your determination in such emphatic terms, to consider what would be the consequence of a refusal on your part to comply with the instructions of which I have the misfortune to be the bearer?—Mrs. Brooke is very young to be left a widow."

"Karovsky!"

"Pardon. Any affiliated member who may be so ill-advised as to refuse to carry out the decrees of the Tribunal renders himself liable to the extreme penalty; and so surely as you, Gerald Brooke, are now a living man, so surely, in a few short weeks, should you persist in your refusal, will your wife be left a widow."

"This is horrible—most horrible!"

"Obedience, blind and unquestioning, the utter abnegation of your individuality to the will of your superiors, is the first rule of the Propaganda to which you and I have the honor to belong. But all this you know, or ought to have known, long ago."

"Obedience carried to the verge of murder is obedience no longer—it becomes a crime. However you may put it, assassination remains assassination still."

"Pardon. We recognize no such term in our vocabulary."

"Karovsky, had you been called upon to do this deed?"

"I should have done it. For if there be one man in the world, Brooke, whom I have cause to hate more than another, that man is Baron Otto von Rosenberg!"

"Von Rosenberg?"

"Pardon. Did I not mention the name before? But he is the man."

For a moment or two Gerald could not speak. "It is but half an hour since I parted from him," he contrived to say at last.—"Karovsky, I feel as if I were entangled in some horrible nightmare—as if I were being suffocated in the folds of some monstrous Python."

"It is a feeling that will wear itself out in the course of a little while. I remember— But that matters not."

"But Von Rosenberg is not a Russian; he is a German ex-diplomatist. What can such a man as he have done to incur so terrible a vengeance?"

"Listen. Four years ago, when attached to the Embassy at St. Petersburg, certain secrets were divulged to him, after he had pledged his sacred word of honor that no use whatever should be made of the information so acquired. Wretch that he was! Von Rosenberg turned traitor, and revealed everything to those in power. In the dead of night, a certain house in which a secret printing press was at work was surrounded by the police. Two of the inmates were shot down while attempting to escape. The rest were made prisoners, among them being three women and a boy of seventeen—my brother. Two of those arrested died in prison, or were never heard of more; the rest were condemned to the mines. On the road, my brother and one of the women sank and died, killed by the dreadful hardships they had to undergo; the rest are now rotting away their lives in the silver mines, forgotten by all but the dear ones they left behind.—You now know the reason

why the Baron Otto von Rosenberg has been sentenced to death. The vengeance of the Supreme Tribunal may be slow, but it is very sure."

There was silence for a few moments, then Gerald said: "All this may be as you say; but I tell you again, Karovsky, that mine shall not be the hand to strike the blow."

"Then you seal your own death-warrant."

"So be it. Life at such a price would not be worth having. Death before Dishonor is the motto of our house. Dishonor shall never come to it through me."

Gerald rose and walked to the window. His face was pale; his eyes were full of trouble; what he had said had been lacking neither in dignity nor pathos.

The Russian's cold glance followed him, not without admiration. "English to the backbone," he muttered under his breath. "It was a blunder ever to allow such a man to become one of us." Then he looked at his watch, and started to find it was so late. "I can stay no longer—I must go," he said aloud. "But remember my last warning words." He took up his hat and moved slowly towards the window.

"Karovsky, for the last time I solemnly declare that this man's death shall not lie at my door!" Gerald sank into a chair, let his elbows rest on the table, and buried his face between his hands.

"I have nothing more to say," remarked the Russian. He stepped through the window, his hat in his hand, and then turned.

At that moment the door opened, and Mrs. Brooke, on the point of entering the room, paused suddenly as her eyes took in the scene before her. "Gerald!" she exclaimed in a frightened voice, and then her gaze travelled from her husband to Karovsky. The latter, with his eyes still resting on the bowed figure at the table, pronounced in low clear accents the one word, "Remember!" Then he bowed low to Mrs. Brooke, and next moment was gone.

CHAPTER V.

Ten weeks had come and gone since the memorable visit of M. Karovsky to the master of Beechly Towers. It was a pleasant evening towards the end of June. There had been a heavy shower a little while ago; but since then the clouds had broken; and the sun was now drawing westward in a blaze of glory. In the same pleasant morning-room, in which we first made their acquaintance, Mrs. Brooke and her aunt, Miss Primby, were now sitting. The latter was dozing in an easy-chair with a novel on her lap, the former was seated at the piano, playing some plaintive air in a minor key. The glad light of happiness that knew no cloud, which shone from her eyes when she saw her first, dwelt there no longer. She looked pale, anxious, and distraite, like one who is a prey to some hidden trouble. She had spoken no more than the truth when she said that her happiness was too perfect to last.

As the last sad note died away under her fingers she turned from the instrument. "I cannot play—I cannot work—I cannot do anything," she murmured under her breath.

"At this juncture Miss Primby awoke. "My dear Clara, what a pity you did not keep on playing," she said. "I was in the midst of a most lovely dream. I thought I was about to be married; my watch and veil had been sent home and I was just about to try them on; when you stopped playing and I awoke."

"If I were to go on playing, aunt, do you think that you could finish your dream?"

"No, my dear, it's gone, and the chances are that it will never return," said the spinster with a sigh.

Clara crossed the room, and sat down on a low chair near the window, whence she could catch the first glimpse of her husband as he came round the clump of evergreens at the corner of the terrace.

"I wish you would not mope so much, and would try not to look quite so miserable," said her aunt presently.

"How can I help feeling miserable, when I know that Gerald has some unhappy secret on his mind, of which he tells me nothing? He has been a changed man ever since the visit of M. Karovsky. He cannot eat, he cannot rest; night and day he wanders about the house and grounds like a man walking in his sleep."

"Bad signs, very, my dear. Married men have no right to have secrets from their wives."

"If he would but confide in me! If he would but tell me what the secret trouble is that is slowly eating away his life!"

"I remember that when the Dean of Rathdrum leaned over the back of my chair, and whispered 'My darling Jane!'"

"Here comes Gerald!" cried Mrs. Brooke. She started to her feet, while a girl went into her room, and ran out on the terrace to meet him. "What a time you have been away!" she said, as he stooped and kissed her. "And your hair and clothes are quite wet."

"It is nothing," he answered. "I was caught in a shower in the wood."

"Poor fellow! He certainly does look haggard and dejected," remarked Miss Primby to herself.

"Have you been far?" asked Clara. "Only as far as Beaulieu."

"You called on the baron, of course."

"No, I changed my mind at the last moment."

"The first bell will ring in a few minutes."

"I have one important letter to write before I dress."

"Then aunt, and I will leave you. You will not be long? I am so afraid of your taking cold. Come, aunt."

"Nothing brings on rheumatism sooner than damp clothes," remarked Miss Primby sententially, as she folded down a leaf of her novel, and tucked the volume under her arm.

AN ACHIEVEMENT.

Put a penny between yer teeth, mum, an' me little brudder will climb up yer back an' take yer legs aroun' yer neck an' take de penny from 'tween yer lips wid his feet, an' yer wot know that it's did!

A NEW DANGER.

First Tramp—I hear dere's a new drug wut kin be put in a cup of coffee an' it'll take away yer desire fer liquor widout yer knowin' it.

Second Tramp—Great hevings! Some of dem women temperance cranks'll be tryin' dat game on us!

PRACTICAL FARMING.

FOOD FOR LAMBS.

A contributor to American Sheep Breeder says: Let us first consider the mother. From her the lamb gets, by all odds, the most important, the most indispensable part of his food. She digests the crude, raw food stuffs in her large stomach and prepares the concentrated, easily digested and perfect mother's milk. In the abundance and regularity of this supply of milk depends your hopes of good lambs. You must feed the mother generously; yet, the food must be of the right sort to be turned readily into milk, and this brings us to consider what milk is made of and why. Not to go specifically into details, the milk is very rich in nitrogenous materials, in what we call protein. This protein is the stuff that muscle and brain-stuff and nerve-stuff and blood is made of. It is exactly what the young animal needs to make his frame grow and build up his young tissues. Now to produce this milk in abundance the ewe must be fed foods that have in them the elements of milk. They must be foods that are somewhat rich in protein. Of course, there is fat in milk, and the animal system burns a good deal of carbon, so we don't want a food free from the starchy principles that are made of carbon yet, for milk production, you do need a greater proportion of protein to starchy food or fat-forming foods than if you were fattening the mother. This bars out the large use of corn in the diet. Corn will not make milk satisfactorily, no matter in what amounts it be fed. I have tried it by keeping ewes on full diet of corn, with clover hay, too, but the lambs did not generally thrive. I did not expect them to thrive, I was fattening their mothers for sale. Now there are any number of combinations of foods that will be good for the ewe, but we will consider what is easiest and cheapest to you. Mix up the following mixture, by weight: 100 lbs. cornmeal, 100 lbs. wheat bran, 25 lbs. oil-meal, shovel it over until well mixed, then give the ewes a little of it. Each day increase the amount that you give them until they have all that they will eat; then I would make a self-feeder, if I were you, and let them run to it all the time; they like to eat little and often; they will not eat too much while sucking their lambs after once accustomed to it. It is true that they will rapidly gain in flesh sometimes when fed this ration. Well, if not too valuable, keep up the food for a few weeks or less, after the lambs are sold and sell the mothers, too. Now the lambs will be getting what milk their mothers are capable of producing, yet they will soon want to be eating themselves. I know of no better food for them than this same mixture that I have advised for the ewes. Let them have all that they will eat of it, and they and their mothers will want clover hay of the best, and in abundance, too. Have it so that they can all get it, but not get on it with their dirty little feet. A lamb is more dainty about his eating than a baby. To have the lambs do their best they must be allowed to eat at their table, in a separate pen from the ewes, so that whenever they feel hungry there will be nothing to prevent their eating in peace. There ought to be plenty of sunlight, too, in which they can lie and sleep. Some way or other you must see that they are perfectly happy—no fear, no disturbance, no awakening from sleep, no dog running through them, no hunger unsatisfied, no thirst unassuaged. It is the happy lamb that grows and causes your bank account to grow. I think that lambs that are to spend their lives on the farm rather than coming to an early death at the butcher's block will need quite a different treatment from the one outlined above. I would not feed nearly so strong; would like the ewe to do her best in milk-giving, but the lamb had better have but little corn, if any.

FEEDING COWS ON PASTURE.

Very soon, now, warm weather will come, and the soil being well filled with moisture, the grass in the pasture will start up and make rapid growth. When it gets up so as to provide a good bite, the farmer will turn out his cows. He will think, says Hoard's Dairyman, because the cows can get grass enough to "fill themselves," and because the flow of milk increases, there is no need of feeding hay or grain any more. The truth is that this fresh and succulent grass stimulates the production of milk beyond what the nutriment it contains will warrant. It is juicy and watery and lacks substance to such a degree that this large production of milk will rapidly reduce the strength, vitality and carcass of the cow, so that she cannot long continue this extra flow of milk, unless she has some more substantial food to go with this fresh grass, to keep her up in condition. The farmer makes a great mistake when he abruptly drops off his hay and grain feed as soon as the cows go out to grass in the spring. He would probably see very little difference in the amount of milk given for awhile, whether he fed grain and hay with the grass or not, and for that reason may have come to the conclusion that when they did feed grain on early pasture, it was thrown away, and the one who does so feed will find that his cows will keep up their strength and condition much better than those not fed, and later in the summer and fall and even the next winter will be giving a much better flow of milk, so that when he comes to foot up his account at the end of the year, he will find that for every dollar's worth of extra feed his cows had while on fresh grass he has received back at least two dollars.

It has been our practice for years to feed to all cows giving milk a small grain ration all summer. The advisability of feeding grain on pasture, after the grass has come to have plenty of substance in it, may, with some show

of reason be questioned, but not in the spring. At that time it is folly not to feed. We have experimented to some extent to try to determine what grain food was best to feed on pasture. We have tried wheat bran, but many cows do not seem to care for it much, when the grass is plenty, and some will refuse to eat it. They seem to crave something more concentrated. Corn and oats they liked much better than bran, and clear corn meal better yet; but, best of all, gluten feed. Now, what we think is the very best feed for cows on pasture, is five pounds of corn meal and gluten feed—half and half—daily, to each cow giving a fair flow of milk. Besides this, they should have before them, every time they are put in the stable to milk, some good early cut clover hay. They will eat some every time, no matter how good the pasture is.

A CHEAP PAINT.

While whitewashed buildings look very nice when first done, they soon become gray looking and often discolored from the trees that grow near. Red-wash looks just as well, if not better, as it does not show all the spots, and it is just as durable. After doing the buildings twice, once in two years is sufficient to keep the buildings looking well. How much it adds to the look of a farm to have the buildings nicely painted up, and it costs but little—only time and labor.

Take skim-milk that has just begun to thicken; add to one gallon of milk, 3 pints of coarse prime salt; also add iron brown or Venetian red in the dry form, enough to make the color you wish. The dry paint can be bought for three or four cents per pound. Keep the mixture well stirred all the time; put it on the buildings when there is no danger of rain; after it is once dry it will not wash off. Be sure to use this amount of salt, and keep well stirred, as it is the salt well mixed that keeps it from rubbing off.

TRACKING A CHILD.

An Incident of the Remarkable Intelligence of the Bloodhounds.

So many terrible stories of the ferocity of blood-hounds have been told, that it is refreshing to read of a true story of a chase by a bloodhound in which the hunter and the hunted were equally satisfied. It is vouched for by a writer in Good Words, who had it from an eye-witness.

The bloodhound was enjoying a stroll with his master on the sands of Weston-super-Mare, quietly following the horse his owner rode. Neither was thinking of a chase. In fact nothing seemed further from the character of the dog than a desire to interfere with any human being. The groups of pleasure-seekers scattered over the sands saw nothing unusual in him. Nor did the poor distracted woman who ran from one group to another frantically asking for tidings of a lost child. Nobody knew anything of the missing boy, and when in her desperation she approached the gentleman on the horse, he also shook his head.

But though he knew nothing of her boy, he was not so sure that he could not help her find him. He alighted from his horse, and thrusting his arm through the bridle bent over the hound, putting both hands caressingly round the dog's head. Then he took from the woman something that looked like a child's hat, and held it toward the dog, talking to him the while. The hound sniffed and whined mournfully, as if unwilling to leave his master. Soon, however, he lifted his head in the air, uttered a short, sharp bark or bay, and began sniffing about the sands.

For a minute or two he followed the scent in a zigzag fashion, and then, with a loud, loud bay, turned off at an amazing pace, ran in a straight line across the sands, crossed the parade, and baying as he went, turned down a side street.

That was an exciting chase—the field the streets of a populous watering-place, and the game a lost child. The loud voice of the dog could be heard in the distance, guiding those who followed.

The mother's feet were swift, but she could not keep up with the dog. On he went till he had run his prey to ground; then he stopped and fawned upon the little lad, who was overjoyed to find so friendly a playmate. When the mother came up, hunter and hunted were the best of friends, so much so that neither was willing to part with the other.

The gentleman had more than once to summon the dog before he would consent to leave the child. As for the boy, he could not be led away while the dog remained, and after the hound had disappeared he was still heard to murmur, "I would like that dear doggie for my own."

SHERIDAN'S GRATITUDE.

Sheridan once had occasion to call at a hairdresser's to order a wig. On being measured the barber, who was a liberal soul, invited the orator to take some refreshment in an inner room. Here he regaled him with a bottle of port and showed so much hospitality that Sheridan's heart was touched. When they rose from the table, and were about separating the latter, looking the barber full in the face, said: "On reflecting, I don't intend that you shall make my wig." Astonished and with a blank visage, the other exclaimed: "Why, Mr. Sheridan! How can I have displeased you?" "Why, look you," said Sheridan, "you are an honest fellow, and I repeat it, you shan't make my wig, for I never intended to pay for it. I'll go to another less worthy son of the craft."

AN AMATEUR SNUBBED.

Darling, he cried, in tender tones, I never loved but thee. Then you must, part, the maid replied; no amateurs for me.