

A DEAD RECKONING.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

Then the ladies went and Gerald was left alone. He looked a dozen years older than he had looked in the air previously. All the lighted down he had died out of his heavier than he of a man who is afraid of my taking some trouble said to himself, with a countenance as if I were to take cold and have a fever and die, it would be the best thing that could happen either to her or me." He began to pace the room slowly, his hands behind him, and his eyes bent on the ground. "Nearly three months have passed since Karovsky's visit, and nothing has yet been done. Only two more weeks are left me. Coward that I am, to have kept putting off from day to day doing that which I ought to have done long ago. Even this very afternoon when I reached Beaulieu, I had not the courage to go in and confront Von Rosenberg. My heart failed me, and I turned back. If I had begun one letter to him I have begun a dozen, only to burn or tear them up unfinished; but now there is no time for further delay. I will warn him that if he wishes to save his life he must leave here immediately, and seek some asylum where his enemies will be powerless to harm him. Shall I vaguely hint at some shadowy danger that impends over him? or shall I tell him in plain terms why and by whom the death sentence has been recorded against him? Shall I write to him anonymously, or shall I sign the letter with my name? Better tell him everything and put my name to the letter; he can then act on the information in whatever way he may deem best. In doing this, as Karovsky said, I shall be sealing my own doom. Well, better that, better anything than the only other alternative."

He halted by one of the windows, and stood gazing out of all the pleasant features of the landscape he had learned to know and love so well. "It seems hard to die so young, and with so much about me to make life happy," he sadly mused. "I think I could meet my fate on the battlefield without a murmur—but to be murdered in cold blood—to be the mark for some stealthy assassin! Poor Clara! poor darling! what will you do when I am gone?" He sighed deeply as he turned from the window. His eyes were dim with tears.

Presently he seated himself at the davenport, and drew pen and paper towards him. "No more delays; this very night the Baron shall be told. But how shall I begin? in what terms shall I word my warning?" He sat and mused for a minute or two, biting the end of his pen as he did so. Then he dipped the pen into the inkstand and began to write: "My dear Baron, from information which has reached me, the accuracy of which I cannot doubt, I am grieved to have to inform you that your life is in great and immediate peril. You have been sentenced to death by the Chiefs of one of those Secret Societies of the existence of which you are doubtless aware. Your only chance of safety lies in immediate flight."

"What shall I say next?" asked Gerald of himself. "Shall I tell him that—"

But at this juncture the door was opened, and Mrs. Brooke came hurriedly into the room. "O Gerald, such terrible news!" she exclaimed, breathlessly.

Gerald turned his letter face downward on the blotting-pad. "Terrible news, Clara?" he said in a tone of studied indifference. "Has your aunt's spial over-eaten itself and—"

"Gerald, don't!" she cried in a pained voice. "Baron von Rosenberg is dead—murdered in his own house less than an hour ago!"

Gerald rose slowly from his chair as if drawn upward by some invisible force. The sudden pallor that blanched his face frightened his wife. She sprang forward and laid a hand on his arm. He shook it off almost roughly. "Tell me again what you told me just now," he said in a voice which Clara scarcely recognized as that of her husband.

She told him again. "Murdered! Von Rosenberg! Impossible!"

"Dixon brought the news; he has just ridden up from King's Harold."

Gerald sank into his seat again. His eyes were fixed on vacancy for a few moments he looked as if his brain had been paralyzed.

Miss Primby came bustling in. "Oh, my dear Clara can it be possible that this dreadful-dreadful news is true?"

"Only too true, I am afraid, aunt."

"Poor Baron! Poor dear man! What a shocking end! I never knew a man with more charming manner." Cut off in the flower of his age, as one may say.

"Perhaps dear, you would like to see Dixon and question him," said Clara to her husband.

He simply nodded. Mrs. Brooke rang the bell and Dixon the groom entered. "You had better tell your master all you know about this frightful tragedy."

The man cleared his throat. Gerald stared at him with eyes that seemed to see far beyond him—far beyond the room in which they were. "I had been down to see Thompson, the farrier, about the chestnut mare, and was riding back, when just as I got to the Beaulieu lodge-gates I see the dogcart come out with Mr. Pringle the baron's man in it, along with Dr. King, and another gent as was a stranger to me. Seeing

...ere, and that Mr. Pringle... white and scared like, I... anything amiss, Mr. Pring... says I, with a jerk of my thumb... towards the house as the dog-cart thumped... me. But he only stared at me and... my poor master, the baron, was found... without a word. Then I turns to... the lodge-keeper's wife and sees that... she has her apron over her head, and... is crying. "Anything serious amiss... mum?" says I. "I don't know what you... calls serious, young man," says she, "but... my poor master, the baron, was found... murdered in the little shabby in the... garden only half an hour since—shot... through the heart by some blood-thirsty... villain." I didn't wait to hear more, sir, but made all the haste I could... home."

No word spoke Gerald. The man looked at him curiously, almost doubting whether his master had heard a word of what he had said.

"Thank you, Dixon; that will do," said Mrs. Brooke. The man carried a finger to his forehead and made a fainting... "Poor dear baron!" remarked Miss Primby for the second time. "There was something very fascinating in his smile."

"Clara, tell me," said Gerald presently. "Am I in truth awake, or have I only dreamt that Von Rosenberg is dead?"

"How strangely you talk, dear, I am afraid you are ill."

"There you are mistaken. I am well—excellently well. But tell me this; ought I to feel glad, or ought I to feel sorry? On my life, I don't know which I ought to feel!"

"Glad? O Gerald!"

"Ah; I had forgotten. You don't know."

"You no longer confide in me as you used to do."

"He took no notice of the remark. "Let the Dead Past bury its dead," he said aloud, but speaking exactly as he might have done had he been alone. "No need to send this now," he muttered in a lower tone as he took up his unfinished letter. "If I had but sent it a week ago, would Von Rosenberg be still alive? Who can say?" Crossing to the chimney-piece, he lighted a match and with it set fire to the letter, holding it by one corner as he did so. When it had burnt itself away he began to whistle under his breath.

"O Gerald!" said his wife in a pained voice.

"I had forgotten; Pardon—as Karovsky would say."

"I am grieved to say so, dear, but his brain seems slightly affected," whispered Miss Primby to her niece. "If I were you I would call in Dr. Preston."

Before Clara could reply Bunce came in with a lighted lamp half turned down. He left the curtains undrawn, for a soft yellow glow still lingered over field and woodland.

As soon as he had left the room Mrs. Brooke crossed to the couch on which her husband had seated himself, and taking one of his hands in hers, said: "Dearest, you must not let this affair, shocking though it be, prey too much on your mind. It is not as if you had lost an old and valued friend. Baron von Rosenberg was but an acquaintance—a man whose name even you had never heard six months ago."

His only reply was to softly stroke the hand that was holding one of his.

Clara waited a little and then she said: "Will you not come and dress for dinner?"

He rose abruptly. "Dress for dinner!" he exclaimed with a strange discordant laugh. "How the comedy and tragedy of life jostle each other! Grim death claps on the mask of Momus and tries to persuade us that he is a merry gentleman. Here a white cravat, a dress coat, the pleasant jingle of knives and forks. There, a pool of blood, a cold and rigid form, a ghastly face with blank staring eyes that seems appealing to heaven for vengeance. Yes, let us go and dress for dinner; for, in truth, you and I ought to rejoice and make merry to-night—if you only knew why."

"Gerald, you frighten me."

"Nay, sweet one, I would not do that; he answered as he drew her to him and kissed her. "I am in a strange humor to-night. I hardly know myself. I could laugh and I could sing, and yet—and yet—poor Von Rosenberg!" He turned away with a sigh.

At this moment in came Mr. Bunce again. "If you please, ma'am," he said to Mrs. Brooke, "here's a strange young pusson come running to the Towers all in a hurry, who says she must see you without a minute's delay."

The "strange young pusson" had followed close on his heels. Yes, mum, without a minute's delay," she contrived to gasp out, and then she stood panting, unable to articulate another word. She was breathless with running.

"Well, it ever!" exclaimed the scandalized Bunce, turning sharply on her. "Why, you aint even wiped your shoes."

"That will do, Bunce, thank you," said Mrs. Brooke with quiet dignity.

Bunce sniffed and tried to screw up his nose further than nature had done already. "Such muck!" was his comment to himself as he left the room.

The person to whom this deprecatory epithet was applied was a girl of some sixteen or seventeen summers, Margery Shook by name, who was dressed in a coarse but clean blue and apron, a short cotton frock considerably the worse for wear, gray worsted stockings, thick shoes, and a quilted sun-bonnet, from under the flap of which her nut-brown hair made its escape in tangled elf-like locks. Her bright hazel eyes had in them more of the expression of some half-tamed animal than that of an ordinary human being. Her features, though by no means uncomely, were somewhat heavily moulded and did not respond readily to emotional expression. For the rest she was a well-grown strongly-built girl, and when she laughed her teeth flashed upon you like a surprise.

Margery's laugh, if laugh it could be called, was perhaps the most singular thing about her. It was witch-like, weird, uncanny; it never extended to her eyes; it broke out of the most inopportune moments; to have been awake by it in the dead of night, and not to have known whence it emanated might have shaken the nerves of the strongest man.

Margery was an orphan, and until she was sixteen years old, had been

brought up on a canal barge. It was her boast that she could drive a horse or steer a barge as well as any man between London and the Didlands. But there came a day when the girl could no longer either drive or handle the rudder. Ague got her in its merciless grip. The barge-man for whom she worked landed her at King's Harold with instructions to a relative of his to pass her on to the workhouse. But before this could be done Mrs. Brooke had found out the sick girl. She was placed in a decent lodging, and the mistress of Beechley Towers paid all expenses till she was thoroughly restored to health. But not only did she do that; she went to see Margery three or four times a week, and sat with her, and talked with her, and read to her, and tried in various ways to let a few rays of light into the girl's darkened mind. Sometimes it happened that Mr. Brooke would call for his wife when she was on these expeditions, on which occasions he would always stay for a few minutes to have a chat with Margery, so that in a little while there was no such gentleman in existence as "Muster Geril." But towards Mrs. Brooke her feeling was of boundless gratitude and devotion; it was like the devotion of a dumb animal rather than that of a rational being. Willingly, gladly would she have laid down her life for her benefactress, to go back to her old life on the canal. About this time it was that the Baron von Rosenberg set up his establishment at Beaulieu. An assistant was required in the laundry; Margery thought she should like the situation, so it was obtained for her.

"Why, Margery, what can be the matter? Why do you want to see me so particularly?" asked Mrs. Brooke.

"It's about him—about Muster Geril," she managed to gasp out. "O mum! the polis is coming, and I've run'd all the way from Bulloo to tell you."

"The what is coming, Margery?"

"The polis, mum," answered the girl with one of her uncanny laughs. Miss Primby, who had never heard anything like it before, gave a little jump and stared at Margery as if she were some strange animal escaped from a menagerie.

"The polis, I suppose you mean?" Margery nodded, and began to bite a corner of her apron.

"You must be mistaken, child. What can the polis be coming here for?"

"To take Muster Geril."

"To arrest my husband?" Margery nodded again. "What can they want to arrest him for?"

"For murder!" ejaculated both the ladies.

There was a moment's breathless pause. Gerald, with one hand on the back of a chair, and one knee resting on the seat, had the impassive air of a man whom nothing more can surprise. He had gone through so much of late that for a time it seemed as if no fresh emotion had power to touch him.

"Great heaven! Margery, what are you talking about?" said Mrs. Brooke with blanched lips.

"They say as how Muster Geril shot the gentleman—the Baron—that was found dead about a hour ago. Not as I believe a word of it," she added with a touch of contempt in her voice. "A pistol set with gold and with funny figures scratched on it, was found far from the corpus, and they say it belongs to Muster Geril."

"My Indian pistol which I lent to Von Rosenberg ten weeks ago," said Gerald quietly.

"And now the polis have gone for a warrant to take him up," added the girl.

"A warrant to arrest my husband?"

Again Margery nodded. She was a girl who, as a rule, was sparing of her words.

"I the murderer of Von Rosenberg!" said Gerald, with a bitter laugh. "Such an accusation would be ridiculous if it were not horrible."

Mrs. Brooke wrung her hands and drew in her breath with a half moan. The blow was so overwhelming, that for a few moments words seemed frozen on her lips.

Gerald turned to the window. "Can the irony of fate go further than this," he said to himself, "that I should be accused of a crime for refusing to commit which my own life was to have paid the penalty!"

In came Bunce once more carrying a card on a salver which he presented to his master.

Gerald took it and read, "Mr. Tom Mr. Starkie?"

"Says he wants to see you very particular, sir."

"Into which room have you shown Starkie?"

"Into the blue room, sir."

"Say that I will be with him in one moment. Come, Clara, come aunt," he said with a smile, as soon as Bunce had left the room; "let us go and hear what it is so 'particular' that Mr. Tom has to say to me."

None of them noticed that Margery had stolen out on to the terrace, and was there waiting and watching with her gaze fixed on a distant point of the high-road where it suddenly curved, before dipping into the valley on its way to the little market town of King's Harold. Twilight still lingered in the west, and Margery's eyes were almost as keen as those of a hawk.

(To be Continued.)

BRIDAL SUPERSTITIONS.

A bride so far defied superstition as to be married May 13 last. She had also 13 tiny bridesmaids, had 13 carriages and a thirteen-days' honeymoon.

Another unsuperstitious maiden became engaged on the 13th of a certain month and has fixed on the first Friday in May as her wedding morning.

Several May brides have testified to the happiness of their married lives, and one woman declared that, although she became engaged on a Friday, fixed on the unlucky day as the onset apart in each week for the lovers' walk, got married on a Friday, had 13 guests at the wedding table, and set up house-keeping in May, she has never had a moment's serious unhappiness in all her eight years of married life.

ART IN THE COUNTRY.

She painted an exquisite picture—The colors were spread nice and thick; Then, while 'neath a tree, she fell dozing, A calf gave the finishing lick.

AGRICULTURAL

THE COST OF MILK.

Some one has said that where one man is found agonizing over the herd of cows he owns and seeking to have them better, and fed more cheaply, a lot of other farmers are trying to add to their revenues by cutting down the wages of the factory operator, and paying no attention to cheapening the production of milk. One of the factors that hinders more than all else in the progress and promotion of the dairy industry, says Country Gentleman, is the refusal of the average dairyman to change his methods and get into the drift and current of dairy thought and action. The result is that he is measuring everything about his business by a standard of forty years ago, when dairying was all a home affair, and a balanced ration was stack hay, and a wood-lot was a stable. These methods will not do now. It is asserted that if the incomes of the railroads of this country could be augmented one mill per ton a mile, the increase of revenues would be eighty million dollars yearly, and make them all paying property. What would it mean to the dairy-men of this country if their cows could all be put into the five and six thousand pound milk class, and the cost of keep reduced one-third, and the estimated wastes of the dairy and its losses practically corrected and put into the credit side of the account? Would it not be a fact that the profits of dairying would be increased fully 100 per cent.?

Now, three things are needed in making things about the dairy yield greater revenues, and they are outlined in the above query. The want to-day is a great reduction in the cost price of producing milk. It is costing too much for the price received. The thief who stole the five dollars and was by his shrewdness enabled to hold on to a dollar and a half of it, remarked that that was what he called thrift; but it is not thrift for the owner to feed a cow \$5 worth of food and investment and only get \$3.50 back; and yet this is what is taking place with fully one-third of the cows in the United States. There is more to this matter than this showing. All over the dairy territory, where dairying has been the rule for seventy-five years or even more, there has been a depletion of the soil going on that has in dollars been quite as much as interest and depreciation of the land in value. Director Dawley, at the New York institutes last winter, showed that on the older farm pasture lands as much as \$250 worth of potash alone had been cropped off in grass since the settlement of the land, and only in rare instances had any attempt been made to restore even this part of the loss of removed fertility. Can any plan of farming be made profitable that does not in some way maintain at least the fertility, and does not have a better cow than is now shown to be the average, fed at a much smaller cost than now?

Put in this light a cow that gives 3,300 pounds of milk in a year, and practically as much and to keep up her milk to its normal flow requires as rich protein food as does a cow that gives a half more milk. If the cost of the milk of the first cow is equal to the value of her milk, then 1,600 to 2,000 pounds additional milk given by the second cow would be in round numbers all profit. If by the intelligence of the dairyman this ration can be reduced in cost, so that instead of \$35, which is now regarded as approximately the cost of the yearly keep of a cow, the cost, with ensilage, peas, bean and millet, be reduced to \$20 or \$25, there would be a most substantial dividend made of the outlay of a little dairy intelligence. Milk is costing too much, and every poor cow, every ton of hay fed, and indifferent care adds to its cost. Market prices of butter and cheese are not based upon what milk costs to make. The last is the farmer's problem.

VARIATIONS IN FOOD.

On the stock farm, too often, there is lack of variety in the food for the animals. In many parts of the country, only a small acreage of corn is the rule of the average farm. The fodder, as a rule, is considered useless in a large part. The toughened stalks, after stripped of the blades when dry, were formerly of little feeding worth.

Of late it is claimed that the pith of corn stalks when freed from the outside of the stalk may be ground into a meal similar to wheat bran and that it thus has a good feeding value in that it modifies the condensed meal of other grain, when mixed with it.

If there is any truth in this claim, and if the machinery for separating the pith is not expensive, farmers in districts where wheat is not grown may find the pith bran a desirable substitute for the wheat bran which must be shipped for considerable distance in some places. In a small way farmers might experiment and determine whether there is any merit in this article and thus be prepared to consider intelligently the claims of the manufacturer who will soon be ready probably to sell them an implement for hulling out this substance and grinding it. We are inclined to think there is little in this claim, but we are willing to pass this along as news for what it is worth.

It is to be remembered, however, that the average farm affords considerable variety if there is only patient forethought to provide it. The corn field will often furnish peas, pumpkins, and other varieties of vegetables along with the growing corn with little detriment to the corn itself. After the small grain is removed from the ground, mil-

let or corn may be sown for a forage crop, and as late as August first by mops and some other root crops. The yield second returns after the small grain sown in the spring has yielded its crop.

Where there is not an abundance of permanent pasture, this may be added to by sowing rye early in autumn which will furnish grazing in early winter as well as in early spring, with little detriment to its crop of grain which may be harvested in early summer. The rye crop, in fact, if handled properly, may be harvested early enough to permit the following of either millet or late corn, the latter for soiling purposes in early autumn and to be cut off and removed from the ground as provender, in time to be followed by winter wheat or rye again.

Many stockmen do not realize the worth of root and vegetable, and it is only by patient and exhaustive experience with such food that they will prove this worth conclusively. For the working horses and the dairy stock, root and vegetables are of peculiar advantage in giving them a variety of moist food which is a counterpart of the cheap, dry provender, so much of which is fed to the stock that is not being fattened for market.

On the other hand the fattening animals need a cooling variety of food to counteract occasional bad influences of rich and heating foods that are potent for fattening purposes. One will be surprised to note the invigorating effect on the appetite of fattening animals where a moderate allowance of roots, vegetables or ensilage is furnished along with the rich, carbonaceous food at regular intervals.

In the case of all the weanlings it is particularly important that they be furnished with a cooling food in winter along with the heavy grain food which is called for to make the rapid growth desirable and to maintain the vigor of digestion which goes far to promote good health.

Care must also be exercised when the youngsters are grazing on immature grass that they have a liberal supply of bright, dry hay to counteract any bad influences from too much moisture in their food.

Calves, lambs and lambs are always benefited from their earliest age by access to bright hay.

OILING THE HARNESS.

Harness will last much longer and look much better if kept well oiled, and will not get so stiff after being exposed to a day's rain.

During the spring it is difficult to keep harness from getting wet, and it will pay well before the season's work begins to see that it is thoroughly oiled. In doing the work, the harness should be taken apart, washed clean, using warm water and castile soap, and then wiped dry, when the oil should be applied. If so clean that washing is not needed, it will be better to wipe off with a wet rag as the oiling can be done better. It is the best to take harness all apart, in order to get at all the parts and oil thoroughly.

Good harness oil can be purchased all ready for use, or neatfoot oil, with a little lamp black, will be found good. If the harness has not been oiled for some time and is hard and dry, it will be best to go over them twice, finishing all up, and then commencing with the first piece and going over again.

After every part has been thoroughly oiled, it should all be hung up over a frame of some kind and allowed to dry. It should not be hung in the sun or when the wind strikes, as it will dry too rapidly. The oil should have plenty of time to soak in.

Like most other work on the farm, if undertaken it will pay to do well.

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

A Few Paragraphs Which May Prove Worth Reading.

The seaport and lake towns of the United States have a population of over 16,000,000.

Hand painted shirt fronts are considered quite dresy by many of the London fops.

Last year, in Suffield, Conn., 1,250 acres were devoted to the culture of tobacco, and the yield averaged \$250 per acre.

Chinese male infants, when they are a month old, have their heads shaved. A banquet is usually a part of the ceremony.

The profit on an industrious and well-managed hen, says a Kansas farmer, averages two and one-tenth cents per day, all the year round.

The mistake of a Chicago druggist, in substituting carbolic acid for some harmless medicine in an eye-wash, caused a child to lose the sight of one of its eyes.

With one hand, Frank Butler, of Waterville, Maine, recently lifted a weight of one thousand pounds. He asserts that no other man in the State can equal this feat of strength.

The collection of postage stamps which ranks third in the world is owned by F. W. Ayer, of Bangor, Me. He recently sold a single stamp of the Hawaiian issue of 1851 for thirty-five hundred dollars.

A man of considerable weight in Oklahoma is Colonel P. S. Rucker. For years he has carried off the premium as the fat man at every Territorial fair. He weighs four hundred and ninety-seven pounds.

Wm. Johnson, of Richmond, Va., while fishing, fell overboard, and immediately sank out of sight. When his companions raised the seine, a long time afterward, Johnson's body was found entangled in the twine.

One of the trains on the Southeastern Railway, England, running between London and Hastings, comprises six passenger cars, which were built in Troy, N. Y. The entrances are at the ends, and they are lighted by electricity.

A pistol dropped from the pocket of a plump colored gentleman while he was on his knees in prayer, in a church in Crystal Springs, Ark. Complaint was made against him for carrying concealed weapons and a fine was the result.

The varieties of climate in Greece are amazing. Sir Wm. Gell, while traveling through the Morea in March, said that he found summer in Messenia, spring in Laconia, and winter in Aradia, without having moved beyond a radius of fifty miles.