

A DEAD MAN.

It was just before the opening of the railway from Tagnorog to Kharkof in 1868, that I was driving those dreary...

"I called for tea, and the samovar was brought in by a fine, upright, gray-headed man, whom from his black velvet tunic and slashed sleeves, I took to be the postmaster himself."

"Your wife is in love with you still, and you with her, postmaster," I said. "You must have treated her well when she was young for her to love you so."

"I am 60," he replied; "I was married at 25, thirty-five years ago; five years before I died."

"Five years before my death. Is it possible that you don't know my death?" You must have come from a long way off, for I have heard that it is told even upon the Azof."

And throwing his legs across a chair, without more ado, he spoke thus: "I was born in 1809, and can remember the return from Paris of my father and uncle—Cossacks of the Don. Those were grand days, when every Cossack was an officer by birth, and when the Herman Platoff was king of Europe, conqueror of the Turks and of the French, and friend and equal to the white tsar."

"In 1834, as a young postmaster—for my father was dead—with a good place and a handsome beard, I was the best match in the two church villages round. I could pick my wife, and I chose Olga, that you saw just now."

"There," said I. "Ah, wait and see! Wait, little lord. Don't be impatient. Olga was as lovely as she was good. You have seen her in her 60th year; her goodness is what it was, and though I may be an unsafe judge, her beauty, I think, is not yet gone."

"We were happy at first, but I was young. I felt the chain. I was faithful to her as far as women went, but not kind. We had no children. One day in '39 she was in a low spirit about me, and flung her arms upon a sudden about my neck, with: 'Do you really love me, little John?' 'You know I do.' 'But not as I love you.' At that very moment, lord, the devil must have been unchained from hell. To tell you what thoughts flashed in an instance through my mad mind would be impossible. That what she said was true! That, while I did love her in a kind of way, I was bound to her for life whether I would or no. In a fit of wild rage I struck her one short, sharp blow. She looked at me with despair in her eyes, and I walked slowly into our other room. I ran into the stable-yard."

"Harness a troika," said I to the starosta; "I leave at once for Kharkof with dispatches that the courier dropped, and that I've found upon the floor. Quick! quick! the best courier horses." In an instant they were ready. Merrily jingled the bells in the crisp air. Paul took the reins, and off I whirled. In twenty hours I was at Kharkof. To my friends, the starosta, at the great Kharkof-station, who was equal in rank and pay to most postmasters themselves, I said: "Do me a service, little friend, as I would do one for you. I am going to leave my wife, to whom I have been kind, and am going to enlist in the guards. But I wish her to forget me, and she must think me dead. Write to her in a week and tell her that I was taken with the cholera and died. Beg her to forgive me for my unkindness; say that I wish she should marry some lad more worthy of her than myself. Make interest to have the station continued to her as postmistress. She is a priest's daughter and can write." We crossed ourselves; he swore; we bowed to the image in the corner of the stable, we kissed, and in five minutes I was gone. At the recruiting office I enlisted for the empress' regiment of cuirassiers of the guard, as a fourteen years' volunteer guard, and in a false name. I'd, of course, no papers, but they asked no questions, for I was a fine recruit. My beard was shaved, my hair was cut, and when I got to Petersburg and was fitted with my uniform and eagle-crowned helmet, I met no one who had known me. I rose to sergeant, and second riding-master. From your padarogin I see that you are English. Now, in fifty-three, when I had served my time, there was rumors of war in Turkey against you, and tempting offers were made to me to stop and drill the new recruits. But I was wretched, and homesickness drove me south, though if I found my wife dead or married again, I intended to kill myself. Petersburg is not a place for Cossacks, either. By brooding over the past, I had become madly in love with my wife. It was no use for me to tell myself that I had left her well off; that she was married again and happy; that she was forty-four and fat; or else, perhaps, a scarecrow, I was madly in love.

"I got my discharge and pension papers, and started south. At Kharkof my friend was dead." What if she, too, was dead? "Who keeps the Donski post station now?" I murmured, crossing myself the while under my long clank. "The widow." A widow that has kept

it fourteen years? 'The same.' In eighteen hours I was there. I recognized two of the old men, but they not me. I rushed into the house. She was at her day-book writing, not changed. Only graver, and with silver in her black hair. "My own little Olga, in the best style of old days. She did not turn to look at me, but threw up her arms and fell forward on the table. I rushed to her and felt her heart, with mine, too, all but ceasing to beat. In a moment she came to herself—our lips fast glued together. This was in fifty-three. This is sixty-nine. Sixteen years gone like a day. We have made up for the past, little lord."

"But, would you believe it? That wretched government at Petersburg insists that I am dead, and that the Donski station is kept by my widow. Or else they say the cuirassier riding-master must be dead, and with him his pension. My widow accepts this situation with a smile, for neighbors know better than to believe the government, but she keeps the books, signs the receipts, and pays the taxes. I draw my pension in my cuirassier name. A great Petersburg noble who was passing here last week, told me that he didn't believe one word of my story, but that the postmistress and I were 'quiet in the fashion.' What did he mean?"—Macmillan's Magazine.

How Soils and Forests Change.

It is a matter of history that Charlemagne hunted in the forest of Gerardmen, then consisting of oak and beech, though now the same forest contains only pines of various species. On the Rhine, between Landau and Kaiserslautern, oak forests of several centuries old are gradually giving way to the beech, while others of oak and beech are yielding their ground to pine. In the Palatinate the Scotch fir (Pinus sylvestris) is also succeeding the oak. In the Sura and in the Tyrol the beech and the pine are seen to succeed each other, and the same alternations are witnessed in many other districts. In all these cases there is no exhaustion of soil as in the growth of old field pines in Virginia, North Carolina and other southern states after oak. The rotation of natural plants without the interference of man is not explained by assuming the consumption of alkalis by beech, oak and maple and their restitution by pines, where all the leaves, limbs, bodies and roots of trees rot where they grow. This operation should make the soil better for deciduous trees the longer they draw mineral food from moving water, and gaseous food from moving atmosphere. Obviously there is an element of local change of species which is not understood.

Napoleon III.

In the "Memoirs of Odilon Barrot" occurs this sketch of the character of Napoleon III.: "One of the principal traits of the character of this predestined personage, who was fated to reconstruct the empire, was his knowledge how to yield; that was the quality which chiefly distinguished him from the first Napoleon, and therein alone lay all his strength. To possess a will as inflexible as fate itself, to dread no initiative however bold it might be, but at the same time to know how to halt, to adjourn, to draw back without any embarrassment either of personal vanity or of pride, these are contradictory qualities which, when they are united in one person, make of that person an exceptional being. These qualities were marvelously appropriate to the situation of Louis Napoleon, who, having neither the genius of the first Napoleon nor his victorious prestige, was forced to obtain by dint of cunning and patience that which the other had been able to bear away in lofty combat."

During the disorders of the 24th of February Prince Jerome Bonaparte, the father of the present prince, came to Madame Barrot and demanded the loan of her carriage, in which to show himself to the people, declaring that only a Bonaparte could calm the tumult and disarm the insurrection. His proposition was rejected as absurd, "and yet," adds Odilon Barrot, "he was only a little in advance of the times."

The Production of Cheese in the United States.

The whole amount of cheese made in the United States in 1870 was 162,927,382 pounds, of which 109,435,229 pounds were made in factories, and 53,492,153 pounds on farms. The principal states producing cheese were New York, 100,676,014 pounds; Ohio, 24,153,856; Vermont, 7,814,879; Illinois, 5,734,004; Massachusetts, 4,131,309; and California, 3,335,074. There were 1,313 factories devoted to the manufacture of cheese, employing 4,607 hands. The capital invested amounted to \$3,690,075; wages paid during the year, \$7,506,565; gallons of milk used, 116,466,405; value of all materials used, \$14,089,284; of cheese produced, \$16,710,599; other products, \$63,000. The number of cows supplying one factory ranges from 100 to more than 1,600, the average being about 400. In 1871 a factory in Chataqua county, N. Y., had registered as the whole number of cows, 1,734. During the year ending June 30, 1873, 66,204,024 pounds of cheese, valued at \$7,752,918, were exported from the United States, of which 52,056,926 pounds went to England, and 8,429,396 to Germany.—Appleton's Cyclopaedia.

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