

Tyranny of Steel

Chapter 8

Chapter 8: Four-Field System

After returning from Ludwig's shop, Berengar spent the rest of his waking hours for the day perfecting agricultural designs. The first improvement he would have to make for the agricultural system of Kufstein would be the four-field System which was instrumental in sustaining a large population.

Currently, the three-field system was in use, which essentially operated as a form of crop rotation that left one field empty or fallow and used the other two fields to grow oats, beans, wheat, and rye. The four-field system was a huge advantage that led to the agricultural and industrial revolutions. If this world were left to its own devices, it would be centuries until they naturally developed such a crucial system.

The four-field system was like it sounded; it had four fields divided into Legumes, Roots, Leafs, and fruit. This allowed for an increase in food production, due to the legumes and roots, the soil would maintain or increase its fertility over time. On top of all of these things, it also allowed for the continued growth of food stock for livestock, allowing them to be bred year-round, as certain roots like turnips and beats were notoriously hardy plants capable of being grown during the winter season.

Berengar intended to fully implement the four-field system within the next month. Especially considering that after a month from now, he will have access to a quality phosphate fertilizer which will only increase the yield of his crops. If all went as planned this year, they would be able to have ample food storage. Within a few years, the Barony of Kufstein might even become the breadbasket of Austria.

After spending time drafting the plans for Agriculture, Berengar noticed that the sun had long since passed, it was late at night now, and it was just about time for him to take a bath and head to bed. After all, he had a lot of work that needed to be done tomorrow. However, just as he was about to ask the servants to prepare a bath for him, Berengar heard a slight knock on his door.

Cautious that it might be another ploy from his brother Lambert, Berengar inquired about the individual's identity before opening his door.

"Who is it?"

The response surprised him; it was a meek and feminine voice, one that still held the high-pitched tone of a child.

"It's me..."

Berengar immediately recognized the voice to belong to his little sister Henrietta, who had only recently turned ten, thus advancing into the very beginning of adolescence. A warm smile spread across his face as Berengar approached the door and opened it. In the doorway stood a little girl dressed in an extravagant pink night gown and holding onto an old ragdoll that had been in her hands since birth. It was her favorite toy and also her best friend.

Though the doll had aged poorly, the dress was of exquisite make, and Berengar immediately questioned how his family could afford such frivolities after having inspected the ledgers. It appeared his father was deeply concerned about appearances and wasted money on luxurious clothing.

Nevertheless, Berengar looked at Henrietta with questionable eyes; it was late at night; she should already be asleep by now. Why was she at his doorway? His paranoia took hold, and he did not leave the room, merely peeking out of the narrowly opened door.

"What's wrong?"

Henrietta held her doll tightly to her chest as a worrisome look spread across her doll-like face.

"I can't sleep. Can you tell me a story?"

Berengar sighed, he had intended to take a bath and then get some sleep, but it appeared his little sister needed him. After all, he was grateful to have a little sister; in his previous life, Berengar or Julian as he was known then was an only child, so he desired to get along with his new siblings. However, Lambert had already made that an impossibility in his case. On the other hand, Henrietta was different; she appeared to have a good relationship with Berengar. As such, he was more than happy to tell her a story.

After walking out of the door, he began to take off in the direction of Henrietta's room. However, he quickly noticed Henrietta had stayed behind in his doorway; confused about her actions, he immediately turned around and asked about it.

"Henrietta, why are you still standing there?"

The young girl stiffened up at her big brother's response and peered down the long corridor with a petrified look on her face.

"The hallways are scary at night..."

After seeing her too scared to move, Berengar backtracked to her location and grabbed ahold of her small hand as he led the little girl to her room. Though he could not see it, the girl smiled as she walked down the hallway hand and hand with her big brother. She

concluded then and there that she had been overthinking things. He was still the same kind and caring older brother she had always known.

After arriving at her room, Berengar opened the door and walked the girl to her bed, where he picked her up and tucked her in. For a second, he forgot how frail his body was and struggled dearly to accomplish the deed. After tucking the girl into her bed where she was comfortable, Berengar began to spin the tale of Leonidas and the three hundred Spartans who had protected Greece from a Persian Invasion at Thermopolaye Pass.

Truthfully he did not know if that was historically accurate in this world or not, but it did not matter. It was an interesting story of the heroism and bravery of man regardless of if it were true or not. Only after the girl had fallen asleep did he end his story. Seeing the girl fast asleep, he kissed her on the forehead.

"Sweet dreams, my dear sister."

After parting from her room, he immediately informed the servants to prepare a bath for him. After they had finished, he thoroughly enjoyed it before heading back to his quarters and sleeping himself. The night would go by peacefully, the sun would rise, and the rooster would crow awaking the peasant class, as well as Berengar, who once more engaged in his daily exercise routine.

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After finishing his exercise and taking his morning bath, Berengar had breakfast with his family once more. After finishing his meal, he directly headed to town. He had two purposes in his visit today. One was to form a relationship with the local farmers, and another was to buy lard and lots of it. He was going to invent pomade even if it killed him; he was sick and tired of parting his hair, he would rather slick it back like he used to do in his past life.

After reaching the town, Berengar approached the nearest farm, where he saw a man in his thirties operating the plow as he began to make ready for planting. After all, it was early spring, and the time to begin planting had just begun. Berengar took notice of the man who was hard at work and decided to approach him.

"Excuse me, what is your name?"

The man saw that Berengar was speaking and looked around to see who he might be speaking to until he realized he was the only one in the vicinity. He carefully lifted a finger and pointed at himself with a jaw slightly ajar, gawking at Berengar as he could not fathom the Baron's son speaking to a lowly peasant like him.

"Yes you, how may I refer to you?"

"Milord, my name is Gunther..."

Berengar reflected upon the name for a moment and smiled at the large and burly man as he complimented him.

"Gunther, a strong name, it surely suits you. I am Berengar; it is a pleasure to meet you!"

Gunther could not believe his ears; the Baron's son and heir said it was a pleasure to meet him, a lowly peasant? How could this be? He accidentally voiced his thoughts and immediately winced expecting retaliation.

"A pleasure to meet me? How?"

Berengar's smile froze; he did not realize the peasant class had so little sense of self-worth. He would clearly have to explain to the man how important his job is.

"Of course it is a pleasure! I see a man desperately plowing the field in the dawn of spring. Working hard to ensure that the realm has enough food to eat, to survive the winter, and to prosper as a region. I can't help but feel proud to meet a hardworking individual such as yourself."

he was not lying; in his previous life, Berengar had seen too many slackers succeed in life because of their connections, while hard-working men lived a life of poverty and daily struggle. He could not help but admire a hard-working and competent man who provided for his family, despite the horrible conditions a medieval peasant endured, which would drive a modern man to suicide.

After hearing the young lord's kind words, Gunther was truly shocked; the man's reputation was well known throughout these parts, even by the peasant class. Despite this, when meeting him for the first time, Berengar was nothing like what Gunther had expected him to be.

Berengar could see that Gunther was amazed by his behavior. Thus, he shifted the direction of the conversation in his favor.

"Tell me, Gunther, have you ever thought of using four fields instead of three?"

Gunther nearly scoffed at the young lord's remark, he may be the baron's son, but he knows nothing of agriculture, something Gunther and his family had been doing for centuries.

"Milord, with all due respect, if we were to use four fields, then the soil would erode and eventually be useless."

A smirk appeared on Berengar's face. This wasn't just a farmer who learned what his forefather's taught and did not understand the underlying principles of why it was so. At least in terms of his profession, this was an educated farmer someone who clearly understood why one should not do as Berengar had suggested.

"If I were to tell you that if you created a four-field rotation separated into the category wheat, turnips, barley, and clover. Would it not solve such a problem."

He was testing Gunther's knowledge of his craft; after all, Berengar had no use for fools who did what they were told because that was the tradition. He needed thinkers, men who could grasp ahold of new technologies and implement them on his behalf. Defying all odds, the first farmer he came across was such a man.

Gunther's eyes lit up; it was already well known that legumes could enhance the soil of the fields they were planted in. Thus they were already used in the three-field system. However, the more he thought about Berengar's words, the more he realized the young lord was correct. If they used these four crops as the staple of their agricultural system, they would be able to maintain or possibly increase the fertility of the soil while growing food year-round and sustaining the breeding of livestock throughout the year.

The poor farmer gazed at Berengar with a new sense of admiration; however, what Berengar said next shocked the man to the core.

"I see you approve, then come, let us introduce this innovation together."

Afterward, Berengar dismounted from his horse, rolled up his sleeves, and picked up a hoe where he stood aside Gunther and worked alongside a lowly peasant to introduce the agricultural innovation that would bring the Barony of Kufstein into an agricultural revolution.

Despite his natural infirmity, he helped plow and seed the field throughout the entire day alongside the poor farmer; by the end of the hard day's worth of labor, the four-field system was implemented on this single farm, and Berengar was exhausted beyond his limits. Yet, he was satisfied on a deeply personal level. The life of a pampered noble was ill-suited for a man such as himself. Gunther stared at the young lord in disbelief; nobody in the entire village, not even his wife nor his kids, would believe he had just plowed and seeded a field alongside the Baron's son and heir. Thus an unlikely friendship between a lowly peasant farmer and a young lord was born. One which would last a lifetime.