Mor Jokai

Timar's Two Worlds

Publio

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BOOK FIRST.—THE "ST. BARBARA."

CHAPTER I.
THE IRON GATE.

A mountain-chain, pierced through from base to summit—a gorge four miles in length, walled in by lofty precipices; between their dizzy heights the giant stream of the Old World, the Danube.

Did the pressure of this mass of water force a passage for itself, or was the rock riven by subterranean fire? Did Neptune or Vulcan, or both together, execute this supernatural work, which the iron-clad hand of man scarce can emulate in these days of competition with divine achievements?

Of the rule of the one deity traces are visible on the heights of Fruska Gora in the fossil sea-shells strewn around, and in Veterani's cave with its petrified relics of saurian monsters of the deep; of the other god, the basalt of Piatra Detonata bears witness. While the man of the iron hand is revealed by long galleries hewn in the rock, a vaulted road, the ruined piers of an immense bridge, the tablets sculptured in bas-relief on the face of the cliff, and by a channel two hundred feet wide, hollowed in the bed of the river, through which the largest ships may pass.

The Iron Gate has a history of two thousand years. Four nations—Romans, Turks, Roumanians and Hungarians, have each in turn given it a different name.

We seem to approach a temple built by giants, with rocky pillars, towering columns, and wonderful colossi on its lofty frieze, stretching out in a perspective of four miles, and, as it winds, discovering new domes with other groups of natural masonry, and other wondrous forms. One wall is smooth as polished granite, red and white veins zigzagging across it like mysterious characters in the handwriting of God. In another place the whole face is rusty brown, as if of solid iron. Here and there the oblique strata suggest the daring architecture of the Titans. At the next turn we are met by the portal of a Gothic cathedral, with its pointed gables, its clustered basaltic columns. Out of the dingy wall shines now and again a golden speck like a glimpse of the Ark of the Covenant—there sulphur blooms, the ore-flower. But living blossoms also deck the crags. From the crevices of the cornice hang green festoons. These are great foliage-trees and pines, whose dark masses are interspersed with frost-flecked garlands of red and gold.

Now and then the mouth of some valley makes a break in the endless, dizzy precipice, and allows a peep into a hidden paradise untrodden by man.

Here between two cliffs lies a deep shadow, and into this twilight shines like a fairy world the picture of a sunny vale, with a forest of wild vines, whose small red clusters lend color to the trees, and whose bright leaves weave a carpet below. No human dwelling is visible; a clear stream winds along, from which deer drink fearlessly; then the brook throws its silver ribbon over the edge of the cliff. Thousands pass by the valley, and each one asks himself who lives there.

Then follows another temple more huge and awful than the first; the towering walls drawing closer by three hundred yards and soaring three thousand feet into the sky.

That projecting needle at the top is the "Gropa lui Petro," the grave of St. Peter; the two gigantic forms on either side are his apostolic companions; yonder monster opposite is the "Babile," and the one which closes the vista is the "Golumbaczka Mali" or Dove-rock; while the gray pinnacle which towers above is the high Robbers' Peak, "Rasbojnik Beliki."

Between these walls flows the Danube in its rocky bed. The mighty mother-stream, accustomed far above on the Hungarian plains to flow with majestic quiet in a bed three miles wide, to caress the overhanging willows, to look on blooming meadows and play with chattering mills, is here confined in a pass only a hundred and fifty fathoms in width.

With what rage it rushes through! He who traveled with it before recognizes it no longer; the grisly giant is rejuvenated into

heroic youth. Its waves leap along the stony bed, from which sometimes a great bowlder projects like a witch's altar, the huge "Babagay," the crowned "Kassan." On this it bursts with majestic fury, roaring round it with swirls which hollow deep abysses in the bottom; thence it rushes, hissing and seething, across the slabs of rock which stretch obliquely from side to side of the channel. In many places it has already mastered the obstacles which barred its way, and flows foaming through the open breach. There, it has burrowed beneath the wall of the ravine, and by its continuous current has washed out a channel below the overhanging rock. Here, it has carved islands out of the stubborn granite, new creations, to be found on no chart, overgrown with wild bushes. They belong to no state—neither Hungary, Turkey, nor Servia; they are ownerless, nameless, subject to no tribute, outside the world. And there again it has carried away an island, with all its shrubs, trees, huts, and wiped it from the map.

The rock and islets divide the stream, which between Ogradina and Plesvissovicza has a speed of ten miles an hour, into many arms; and the sailor has need to study these intricate and narrow passages, for there is but one deep-water channel through the rocky bed—in-shore none but the smallest boats can float.

Among the small islands between the lesser branches of the Danube, singular constructions of human hands are mingled with the grand works of nature; double rows of palisades made of strong trunks of trees, which, joined in the form of a V, present their open side down stream. These are the sturgeon-traps. The marine visitors swim up stream into the snare, and on and on into the ever-narrowing trap—for it is not their custom to turn back—until they find themselves in the death-chamber from which there is no release.

The voices of this sublime region are superhuman. A perpetual universal tumult; so monotonous, so nearly akin to silence and yet so distinct—as if it uttered the name of God. How the great river dances over the granite shores, how it scourges the rocky walls, bounds against the island altars, dives rattling into the whirlpool, pervades the cataract with harmony!

The echo from the mighty cliffs raises this eternal voice of the waters into an unearthly melody, like organ notes and thunder dying away. Man is silent, as if afraid to hear his own language amidst this song of the Titans: sailors communicate by signs, and the fishermen's superstition forbids talking here under a penalty. The consciousness of danger impels all to silent prayer.

At any time the passage between these dark precipices, towering on either hand, might give the sensation of being ferried along under the walls of one's own tomb; but what must it be when that supreme terror of the sailor, the Bora, sweeps down! A continuous and ever-increasing gale, which at certain seasons makes the Iron Gate impassable.

If there were only one cliff it would be a protection from the wind; but the draught of air confined between the two is as capricious as the wind in the streets of a town; at each corner it takes a new departure, now it stops suddenly, then bursts out of a corner as from an ambush, seizes the ship, carries away the steering-gear, throws the whole towing-beam into the water, then shifts again, and drives the wooden vessel before it as though it were going down-stream—the water throwing up clouds of spray as blinding and fine as the sand of the desert in a simoom.

At such times the sighing church-music of the gale swells to the thunder of the Last Judgment, in which is mingled the death-cry of departing spirits.

At the time to which this history refers there were no steamers on the Danube. Between Galatz and the junction with the Main, over nine thousand horses were employed in towing ships up-stream; on the Turkish Danube sails were also used, but not on the Hungarian branch. Besides these a whole fleet of smugglers' boats traded between the two countries, propelled only by strong arms. Salt-smuggling was in full swing. On the Turkish side the same salt was sold for five gulden, which cost six and a half on the Hungarian shore. It was brought by contraband back from Turkey to Hungary, and sold here for five and a half gulden. So every one profited by this comfortable arrangement.

The only one not satisfied was the government, which for its own protection established custom-houses along the frontier, in which the male population of the neighboring villages had to keep guard armed with guns. Each village supplied watchmen, and each village had its own smugglers. While the young men of the place were on guard, the old ones carried the salt, and so both trades were kept in the family. But the government had another important object in its strict watch on the frontier—security from the plague.

The terrible Eastern plague!

In these days we know nothing of it, for it is a hundred and fifty years since a vain widow in Semlin brought an infected shawl, and fell dead as she went to church in it. But we have to thank the regulations which shut the door against it for this immunity. For each contact with a new people has endowed us with a new disease. From China we received scarlet fever, from the Saracens small-pox, from Russia influenza, from South America yellow fever, and from the Hindoos cholera. But the plague comes from Turkey.

Therefore, along the whole bank, the opposite neighbors can only communicate with each other on condition of observing strict preventive measures, which must add considerable interest to their daily life.

If the plague breaks out in Brussa, everything living or dead is officially declared infected: whoever has been in contact with it comes under the same ban, and must be in quarantine for ten or twenty days. If the cable of a left-bank ship touches the cable of a right-bank vessel, the whole crew of the former is unclean, and she must lie for ten days in the middle of the stream; for the plague might pass along the ropes from one to the other, and be communicated to the whole crew.

And all this is carefully watched. On each ship sits an official called a "purifier." A terrible person, whose duty it is to keep an eye on every one, what he handles, what touches him; and if a passenger has been in contact with any person, or any material of hair, wool, or hemp on the Turkish side (for these substances carry infection), even with the hem of his garment, the health-officer must declare him under suspicion, and on arrival at Orsova must drag him from the arms of his family and deliver him over to quarantine.

Woe to the purifier if he should conceal a case! For the slightest neglect, fifteen years' imprisonment is the penalty.

It would appear, however, that smugglers are not liable to the plague, for they have no purifier on board, and if the disease should break out a hundred times over in Brussa, they would still ply day and night between the two banks. We must remember, however, that St. Procopius is their patron. Only the Bora disturbs their retail trade; for the swift current through the Iron Gate drives the rowing-boats toward the southern shore. Of course smuggling is done by tow-boats too, but that belongs to wholesale traffic, costs more than friendly business, and so is not for poor people: in them not only salt, but also tobacco and coffee are smuggled across the frontier.

The Bora has swept the Danube clear of vessels, and has thereby so raised public morality and obedience to law, that for the last few days there has been no occasion for forgiveness of sins. Every vessel has hastened into harbor, or cast anchor in mid-stream, and the watchmen can sleep in peace as long as this wind makes the joints of their wooden huts creak. No ship can travel now, and yet the corporal of the Ogradina watch-house has a fancy that ever since day-break, amidst the blustering wind and roaring waters, he can detect the peculiar signal tones which the speaking-trumpet sends for many miles, and which are not drowned even by the voice of the thunder; the haunting, mournful blasts which issue from the long wooden tube.

Is some vessel declaring its approach, so that no other ship may meet it in such weather in the narrow channel of the Iron Gate? Or is it in danger and calling for help?

This ship approaches.

It is an oaken vessel of ten to twelve thousand measures burden: deeply laden it would appear, for the waves wash over the bulwarks on each side.

The massive hull is painted black, with a white bow, which ends in a long upstanding spiral beak plated with shining tin. The upper deck is shaped like a roof, with narrow steps up to it, and a flat bridge leading from one side to the other. The forward part of the raised deck ends in a double cabin, containing two rooms, with doors to right and left. The third wall of the cabin shows two small windows with green painted shutters, and in the space between them the maidenly form of the martyred St. Barbara is painted on a gold ground, with a pink dress, light-blue mantle, red head-dress, and a white lily in her hand.

In the small space between the cabins and the thick coils of rope on the prow of the ship, stands a long green wooden trough filled with earth, in which lovely blooming carnations and stocks are planted. A three-foot iron railing shuts in the little garden, and on its spikes hang garlands of wild flowers. In the middle burns a lamp in a red glass globe, near to which is a bundle of dried rosemary and consecrated willow-catkins.

On the forepart of the vessel stands the mast, to whose center rings the tow-rope is attached; a three-inch cable, by which thirty-two horses on the bank are trying to move the heavy ship up-stream. At other times sixteen horses would have sufficed here, and on the upper reaches twelve would be enough, but in this part and against such a wind even the thirty-two find it hard work. The horn signals are for the leader of the team-drivers; the human voice would be powerless here: even if the call reached the shore, no one could understand it amidst the confused echoes.

But the language of the horn is intelligible even to horses; from its now drawling, now abrupt, warning, or encouraging tones, man and beast understand when to hasten or slacken their speed, or when to stop altogether.

For in this narrow ravine the lot of the vessel is very uncertain; it has to struggle with gusts of furious wind, variable currents, its own weight, and the rocks and whirlpool which must be avoided. Its fate lies in the hands of two men. One is the pilot who steers; the other is the captain, who amidst the roar of the elements signals his orders to the towing-team by blasts on the horn. If the signal is misunderstood the ship either runs on to a rock, glides into the rapids, goes to pieces on the southern shore, or strands on some newly formed sand-bank, and sinks with every soul on board.

The steersman is a six-foot weather-beaten sailor with a very red face, whose color on both cheeks comes from a network of veins with which the white of the eye is also transfused. He is always hoarse, and his voice knows only two variations, either a loud bellow or a low growl. Probably this is what obliges him to take double care of his throat. Prevention by means of a red comforter tightly wound round his neck, and cure by means of a brandy-flask occupying a permanent position in his coat pocket.

The captain is a man of about thirty, with fair hair, dreamy blue eyes, and a long mustache, the rest of his face clean shaven. He is of middle height, and gives an idea of delicacy; with this impression his voice accords, for when he speaks softly it is like a woman's.

The steersman is called Johann Fabula; the name of the captain is Michael Timar.

The official "purifier" sits on the edge of the rudder bench; he has drawn a hood over his head, so that only his nose and mustache

appear: both are red. History has not recorded his name. At present he is chewing tobacco.

One of the ship's boats, manned by six rowers, has taken out a line from the bow, and the united efforts of the oarsmen materially assist the towing of the vessel.

At the door of the double cabin sits a man of fifty, smoking a Turkish chibouque. His features are Oriental, with more of the Turkish than the Greek type; his dress, with the striped kaftan and red fez, is like that of a Servian or Greek. It will not escape an attentive observer that the shaven part of his face is light in contrast to the rest, which is the case with a person who has lately removed a thick beard. This is Euthemio Trikaliss, under which name he appears in the way-book. He is the owner of the cargo, but the ship itself belongs to a merchant of Komorn called Athanasius Brazovics.

Out of one of the cabin windows looks the face of a young girl, and so becomes a neighbor of St. Barbara. One might fancy it was another sacred picture. The face is not pale but white—the inherent whiteness of marble or natural crystal. As an Abyssinian is born black, and a Malay yellow, so is this girl born white. No other tint disturbs the delicate snow; on this face neither the breath of the wind nor the eye of man calls up a blush. She is certainly only a child, hardly more than thirteen; but her figure is tall and slender, her face calm as if hewn out of alabaster, with severely antique lines, as if her mother had looked always at the Venus of Milo. Her thick black hair has a metallic gleam like the plumage of the black swan; but her eyes are dark-blue. The long delicate eyebrows almost meet over the brow, which gives her face a curious charm; it is as if these arching brows formed a black aureole round the brow of a saint.

The girl's name is Timéa.

These are the passengers of the "St. Barbara."

When the captain lays his speaking-trumpet aside, and has tried with the lead what water the ship has under her, he has time to chat with the girl as he leans against the iron railing round the picture.

Timéa understands only modern Greek, which the captain can speak fluently. He points out to her the beauties of the scenery, its grim, cruel beauties: the white face, the dark-blue eyes, remain unchanged, and yet the girl listens with fixed attention.

But it seems to the captain as if these eyes gave their thoughts not so much to him as to the stocks which grow at St. Barbara's feet. He breaks off one and gives it to the child, that she may listen to what the flowers tell.

The steersman sees this, away there by the tiller, and it displeases him. "You would do better," he growls in a voice like the rasping of a file, "instead of plucking the saint's flowers for that child, to burn a holy willow-wand at the lamp, for if the Lord drives us on to these stone monsters, even His own Son won't save us. Help, Jesu!"

This aspiration would have been uttered by Johann Fabula, even if he were alone; but as the purifier sat close by, there followed this dialogue:

"Why must the gentry pass the Iron Gate in such a storm?"

"Why?" answered Johann Fabula, who did not forget his laudable habit of aiding the collection of his thoughts by a gulp out of the wicker brandy-flask. "Why? For no other reason but being in a hurry. Ten thousand measures of wheat are in our hold. In the Banat the crops failed; in Wallachia there was a good harvest. This is Michaelmas; if we don't make haste, November will be upon us, and we shall be frozen in."

"And why do you think the Danube will freeze in November?"

"I don't think—I know. The Komorn calendar says so. Look in my berth, it hangs by my bed."

The purifier buried his nose in his hood, and spat his tobacco juice into the Danube.

"Don't spit into the water in such weather as this—the Danube won't bear it. But what the Komorn calendar says is as true as Gospel. Ten years ago it prophesied that frost would set in in November; so I started at once to get home with my ship—then too I was in the 'St. Barbara'—the others laughed at me. But on the 23d of November cold set in, and half the vessels were frozen in, some at Apathin, and others at Foldvar. Then it was my turn to laugh. Help, Jesu! Hard over, he—e—e—!!"

The wind was now dead ahead. Thick drops of sweat ran down the steersman's cheeks while he struggled to get the tiller over, but he asked for no help. Then he rewarded himself with a pull at his bottle, after which his eyes looked redder than ever.

"Now if the Lord will only help us to pass that stone pier," groaned he in the midst of his exertions. "Pull away, you fellows there! If only we can get by this point!"

"There's another beyond."

"Yes, and then a third, and a thirteenth, and we must keep our mass-money ready in our mouths, for we are walking over our open coffins all the time."

"Hark ye, my good friend," said the purifier, taking his plug out of his mouth, "I fancy your ship carries something besides wheat."

Master Fabula looked askance at the purifier under his hood, and shrugged his shoulders. "What's that to me? If there's contraband on the ship, at any rate we sha'n't stop in quarantine, and we shall get on pretty quick."

"How so?"

The steersman made a circle with his thumb behind his back, on which the health-officer burst out laughing. Could he possibly have understood this pantomime?

"Now, look you," said Johann Fabula, "since I was here last, the course of the river has altered; if I don't let her go a bit free we shall get into the new eddy which has formed under the 'Lovers' Rock.' Do you see that devilish monster which keeps swimming close to us? That's an old sturgeon—he must be at least five hundred-weight. If this beast keeps up with us, he'll bring us ill-luck. Help, Lord! If only he would come near enough for me to get the grappling-iron into him! The skipper is always sneaking up to the Greek girl instead of blowing his horn to the riders. She brings us misfortune—since she has been on board, we've had nothing but north wind; there's something wrong about her—she's as white as a ghost, and her eyebrows grow together like a witch's. Herr Timar, blow to the teamsmen, ho—ho—ho!"

But Timar did not touch the horn, and went on telling legends of the rocks and water-falls to the white maiden.

Beginning from the Iron Gate up to Clissera, each valley, each cave on both banks, every cliff, island, and every eddy in the stream has its history: a fairy tale, a legend, or an adventure with brigands, of which books, or sculptured inscriptions, or national songs, or fisherfolks' tradition tell the story. It is a library in stone, the names of the rocks are the lettered back of the volumes, and he who knows how to open them may read a romance therein.

Michael Timar had long been at home in this library. With the vessel committed to his charge he had often made the passage of the Iron Gate, and every stone and island was familiar to him.

Possibly he had another object with his legends and anecdotes besides the satisfaction of the girl's curiosity. When a highly strung creature has to pass through a great danger, which makes even a strong man's heart quake, then those who know the danger try to turn the attention of the ignorant person into the kingdom of marvels. Was it perhaps thus?

Timéa listened to the story of the hero Mirko with his beloved, the faithful Milieva; how they fled to the peaks of the Linbigaja Rock out in the Danube; how there he alone defended the precipitous approach to his refuge, against all the soldiers of his pursuer Hassan; how they lived on the kids brought by the eagles to their nest on the cliff, cared not for the roar of the breakers round the base of their island, and felt no fear of the white surges thrown up by the compressed force of the narrowed current. Mariners call these woolly wave-crests the "Lovers' Goats."

"It would be better to look ahead than astern," growled the steersman, and then exerted his voice in a loud call, "Haha! ho! skipper, what's that coming down on us?"

The captain looked round, and saw the object pointed out by the pilot. The ship was now entering the Tatalia Pass, where the Danube is only two hundred fathoms wide, and has a rapid incline. It looks like a mountain torrent, only that this torrent is the Danube. And besides, the stream is here divided in two by a mass of rock whose top is covered with bushes. The water forks in two arms on the western side, of which one shoots under the steep precipice of the Servian bank, while the other discharges through an artificial channel a hundred yards wide, by which the large vessels pass up and down. In this part it is far from desirable that two ships should meet, for there is barely room for them to pass in safety. To the northward lie hidden rocks where a ship might strike, and to the southward is the great whirlpool formed by the junction of the two branches; if this should seize a vessel, no human power could save her.

So that the danger which the steersman had announced by his question was a very real one.

Two ships meeting in the Tatalia Pass with the river so high and under such a pressure of wind!

Michael Timar asked for his telescope, which he had lent to Timéa to look at the place where Mirko had defended the beautiful Milieva.

At the western curve of the river a dark mass was visible in the stream.

Michael looked through his glass, and then called to the steersman, "A mill!"

"Holy Father! then we are lost."

A water-mill was driving down on them; probably the storm had loosened its chains from the bank. Obviously it was without pilot or oarsman, who must have fled to the shore; so it drifted blindly on, sweeping away the mills it met on its way, and sinking any cargo-boats which could not get out of its road.

How could they escape between Scylla and Charybdis?

Timar said not a word of this to Timéa, but gave her back the glass, and told her where to look for the eagles' nest whose ancestors had fed the lovers. Then he threw off his coat hastily, sprung into the barge where the rowers were, and made five of them get into the small boat with him; they were to bring the light anchor and thin cable with them, and cast off.

Trikaliss and Timéa did not understand his orders, as he spoke Hungarian, which neither of them knew.

The captain shouted to the steersman, "Keep her steady; go ahead!" In a few moments Trikaliss also could see what was the danger. The drifting mill came floating swiftly down the brawling stream, and one could see with the naked eye the clattering paddle-wheel, whose width occupied the whole fairway of the channel. If it touched the laden ship both must go down.

The boat with the six men still struggled up against the current. Four of them rowed, one steered, and Timar stood in the bow with folded arms.

What was their insane design? What could they do in a little boat against a great mill? What are human mind and muscles against stream and storm?

If each were a Samson, the laws of hydrostatics would set at naught their strength. The shock with which they touch the mill will recoil on the skiff; if they grapple it they will be dragged away by it. It is as if a spider would catch a cockchafer in its web.

The boat, however, did not keep in the center, but tried to reach the southern point of the island.

So high were the waves that the five men disappeared again and again in the hollows between, then the next moment they danced on the foamy crest, tossed hither and thither by the willful torrent, seething under them like boiling water.

CHAPTER II.
THE WHITE CAT.

The oarsmen consulted in the boat what was to be done.

One advised cutting through the side of the mill below the water-line with an ax, so as to sink it: but that would do no good; the current would drive the wreck down on to the ship.

A second thought they ought to grapple the mill with hooks, and give it a list away, so as to direct it toward the whirlpool: but this counsel was also rejected, for the eddies would drag the boat down too.

Timar ordered the man at the tiller to keep straight for the point of the island where the Lovers' Rock lies.

When they approached the rapids he lifted the heavy anchor and swung it into the water without shaking the boat, which showed what muscular strength the delicate frame contained. The anchor took out a long coil of rope with it, for the water is deep there. Then Timar made them row as quickly as possible toward the approaching mill. Now they guessed his design—he meant to anchor the mill. Bad idea, said the sailors; the great mass will lie across the fairway, and stop the ship; besides, the cable is so long and slight that the heavy fabric will part it easily.

When Euthemio Trikaliss saw from the vessel Timar's intention, he dropped his chibouque in a panic, ran along the deck and cried to the steersman to cut the tow-rope, and let the ship drift down-stream.

The pilot did not understand Greek, but guessed from the old man's gestures what he wanted.

With perfect calmness he answered as he leaned against the rudder, "There's nothing to grumble at; Timar knows what to do." With the courage of despair Trikaliss drew his dagger out of his girdle in order to cut the rope himself; but the steersman pointed toward the stern, and what Trikaliss saw there altered his mind.

From the Lower Danube came a vessel toward them: an accustomed eye can distinguish it from afar. It has a mast whose sails are furled, a high poop, and twenty-four rowers.

It is a Turkish brigantine.

As soon as he caught sight of it, Trikaliss put his dagger back in his sash; if he had turned purple at what he saw ahead, now he

was livid. He hastened to Timéa, who was looking through the glass at the peaks of Perigrada. "Give me the telescope!" he exclaimed in a hoarse voice.

"Oh, how pretty that is!" said Timéa, as she gave up the glass.

"What?"

"On the cliffs there are little marmots playing together like monkeys."

Euthemio directed the telescope toward the approaching vessel, and his brows contracted; his face was pale as death.

Timéa took the glass from his hand and looked again for the marmots on the rocks. Euthemio kept his arm round her waist.

"How they jump and dance and chase each other; how amusing!" and Timéa little knew how near she was to being lifted by the arm that held her, and plunged over the bulwarks into the foaming flood.

But what Euthemio saw on the other side brought back into his face the color it had lost.

When Timar arrived within a cast of the mill, he took a coil of the anchor-rope in his right hand; a hook was fastened to its end. The rudderless mass came quickly nearer, like some drifting antediluvian monster—blind chance guided it; its paddle-wheel turned swiftly with the motion of the water, and under the empty out-shoot the mill-stone revolved over the flour-bin as if it was working hard.

In this fabric devoted to certain destruction, there was no living thing except a white cat, which sat on the red-painted shingle roof and mewed piteously.

When he got close to the mill, Timar swung the rope and hook suddenly round his head, and aimed it at the paddle-wheel.

As soon as the grappling-iron had caught one of the floats, the wheel, driven by water-power, began to wind up the rope gently, and so give the mill a gradual turn toward the Perigrada Island; completing by its own machinery the suicidal work of casting itself on the rocks.

"Didn't I say Timar knew what he was about?" growled Johann Fabula; while Euthemio in joyful excitement exclaimed, "Bravo! my son," and pressed Timéa's hand so hard that she was frightened and even forgot the marmots.

"There, look!"

And now Timéa also noticed the mill. She required no telescope, for it and the ship were so near together that in the narrow channel they were only separated by about sixty feet.

Just enough to let the diabolical machine get safely past.

Timéa thought neither of the danger nor of the deliverance, only of the forsaken cat.

When the poor animal saw the floating house and its inhabitants so near to it, it leaped up and began running up and down the roof-ridge, and to measure with its eye the distance between the mill and the ship, whether it dared jump.

"Oh, the poor little cat!" cried Timéa, anxiously, "if we could only get near enough for it to come over to us."

But from this misfortune the ship was preserved by its patron saint, and by the anchor-rope, which, wound up by the paddle-wheel, got shorter and shorter, and drew the wreck nearer the island and further from the vessel.

"Oh, the poor pretty white cat!"

"Don't be afraid," Euthemio tried to console her; "when it passes the rock the cat will spring ashore, and be very happy living with the marmots."

Only unluckily the cat, keeping on the hither side of the roof, could not see the island.

When the "St. Barbara" had got safely past the enchanted mill, Timéa waved her handkerchief to the cat, and called out first in Greek, and then in the universal cat's language, "Quick, look, jump off, puss-s-s-s;" but the animal, frantic with terror, paid no heed.

At the very moment when the stern of the ship had passed the mill, the latter was suddenly caught by the current, swung round so that the grappled wheel broke, and the liberated mass shot like an arrow down the stream. The white cat sprung up to the ridge.

"Ah!"

But the mill rushed on its fate.

Below the island is the great whirlpool.

It is one of the most remarkable eddies ever formed by the river giants—on every map it is marked by two arrows meeting in a corner. Woe to the boat which is swept in the direction of either arrow! Round the great funnel the water boils and rages as in a seething caldron, and in the middle of the circle yawns the bare abyss below. This whirlpool has worn a hole in the rock a hundred and twenty feet deep, and what it takes with it into this tomb, no one ever sees again: if it should be a man, he had better look out for the resurrection. And into this place the current carried the mill. Before it reached there it sprung a leak and got a list over; the axle of the wheel stood straight on end; the white cat ran along to the highest point and stood there humping its back; the eddy caught the wooden fabric, carried it round in wide circles four or five times, turning on its own axis, creaking and groaning, and then it disappeared under the water. With it the white cat.

Timéa shuddered and hid her face in her shawl.

But the "St. Barbara" was saved.

Euthemio pressed the hands of the returning oarsmen—Timar he embraced. Timar might have expected that Timéa would say a friendly word; but she only asked, pointing to the gulf with a disturbed face, "What is become of the mill?"

"Chips and splinters!"

"And the poor cat?" The girl's lips trembled, and tears stood in her eyes.

"It's all up with her."

"But the mill and the cat belonged to some poor man?" said Timéa.

"Yes; but we had to save our ship and our lives, or else we should have been wrecked, and the whirlpool would have drawn us into the abyss, and only thrown up our bones on the shore."

Timéa looked at the man who said this, through the prism of tear-filled eyes.

It was a strange world into which she gazed through these tears. That it should be permissible to destroy a poor man's mill in order to save one's own ship, that you should drown a cat so as not to get into the water yourself!—she could not understand it. From this moment she listened no more to his fairy stories, but avoided him as much as possible.

CHAPTER III.
A DANGEROUS LEAP WITH A MAMMOTH.

Indeed Timar had but little time for story-telling; for he had hardly got his breath after the exertions of his perilous achievement, before Euthemio gave him the glass and pointed where he was to look.

"Gunboat—twenty-four oars—brigantine from Salonica."

Timar did not put down the telescope till the other vessel was hidden from him behind the point of the Perigrada Island.

Then suddenly he let it fall, and, putting the horn to his lips, blew first three, then six sharp blasts, at which the drivers whipped up their horses.

The rocky island of Perigrada is surrounded by two branches of the Danube. The one on the Servian side is that by which cargo-ships pass up; it is safer and cheaper, for half the number of horses suffice. By the Roumanian shore there is also a narrow channel, with just room for one vessel, but here you must use oxen, of which often a hundred and twenty are harnessed. The other arm of the river is again narrowed by the little Reskival Island, lying across the stream. (Now this island has been blown up in part, but at the time of our story the whole still existed.) Through the narrows between the two islands the river shoots like an arrow; but above, it lies between its rocky walls like a great lake. Only this lake has no smooth surface, for it is always in motion, and never freezes in the very hardest winter. Its bottom is thickly sown with rocks; some are under water, while other uncouth monsters project many feet above it.

This is the most dangerous part of the whole voyage. To this day, experienced seamen, English, Turks, Italians, at home on all seas, adventure themselves with much anxiety in this rock-strewn channel. Here the majority of shipwrecks occur. Here in the Crimean War the splendid Turkish man-of-war "Silistria" was lost. She had been ordered to Belgrade, and might have given a new turn to affairs if she had not received a thrust in the ribs from one of the Reskival rocks, so enthusiastic in their peace policy that they obliged her to stay where she was.

Yet this lake, with its dangerous bottom, has a passage through it which but few ships know, and still fewer care to use.

This short cut enables mariners to cross from the channel on the Servian side to the Roumanian shore. The latter channel is divided by a ledge of rock from the Upper Danube, and you can only enter it at Szvinicza, and come out at Szkela-Gladova.

This is the dangerous leap with a floating mammoth.

The captain blows first three, and then six blasts on his horn; the drivers know at once what it means, the leader of the team has dismounted—with good reason too—and they all begin with cries and blows to hurry on the horses. The vessel goes swiftly against the stream.

The horn blows nine times.

The drivers flog the horses furiously: the poor beasts understand the call and the blows, and tug till the rope is nearly strained to breaking. Five minutes of such effort are more exhausting than a whole day's labor.

Now twelve blasts of the horn sound in rapid succession. Men and horses collect the last remnant of their strength. Every moment one fancies they must break down. The towing-rope, a three-inch cable, is as taut as a bow-string, and the iron bolt round which the rope is wound is burning hot with the friction. The captain stands by with a sharp ax in his hand.

When the vessel gained its greatest impetus, with a single blow he severed the cable at the bow.

The tense rope flew whistling like a giant fiddle-string into the air; the horses of the towing-team fell down in a heap, and the leader broke its neck—his rider had wisely dismounted. The ship, relieved of the strain, altered its course suddenly, and began, with its bow to the northern shore, to cut obliquely across the river.

Sailors call this bold maneuver the "Cross-cut."

The heavy bulk is now propelled neither by stream nor oars; even the current is against it. Merely the after effect of the shock it has received drives it over to the other bank.

The calculation of this impulse, with the distance to be traversed and the resistance which lessens the speed, would be a credit to any practical engineer. Common sailors have learned it by rule of thumb.

From the moment when Timar cut the tow-rope, the lives of all on board were in the hands of the steersman.

Johann Fabula showed now what he could do. "Help, Lord Christ!" he muttered, but he did not keep his hands in his lap. Before him the ship rushed with winged speed into the lake formed by the Danube. Two men were now required at the tiller, and even these could hardly bridle the monster in its course.

Timar stood on the prow and sounded with the lead, in one hand holding the line; the other he stretched up, and showed the pilot with his fingers what water they had.

The steersman knew the rocks they were passing over just as well as he could have told exactly how much the river had risen in the last few weeks. In his hands the helm was safe; if he had made a single false movement, if only by an inch, the vessel would have received a shock which would stop her for a moment, and then she and all on board would have been driven head over heels into the Perigrada whirlpool, where the ship and the beautiful white girl would have joined the mill and the beautiful white cat.

Safely past the shallows of the Reskival rapids! Yet this is a bad place. The speed is less, the effect of the motive power already paralyzed by the force of the stream, and the bottom sown with sharp rocks.

Timéa leaned over the bulwarks and looked down into the water. Through the transparent waves, the bright-colored rocks, a huge mosaic of green and yellow and red, looked quite close. Between them shot silvery fishes with red fins. She was fascinated.

Deep silence fell over the scene; each knew that he passed over his grave, and would owe it to God's mercy if he did not find his monument down below. Only the girl felt no emotion of fear.

The vessel had arrived in a bay of rocks. Sailors have given them the name of "gun-stones"; perhaps because the sound of the breakers reminds one of the cracking of musketry fire.

Here the principal branch of the Danube concentrates itself in a deep bed. The sunken rocks are too far under water to be dangerous. Below, in the dark-green depths, one may see the slow and indolent forms of the dwellers of the sea—the great sturgeon and the hundred-pound pike, at whose approach the bright shoals of small fish scatter in haste.

Timéa gazed at the play of the aquatic population; it was like a bird's-eye view of an amphitheater.

Suddenly she felt her arm seized by Timar, who dragged her from the bulwarks, pushed her into the cabin, and shut the door violently.

"Look out! Halloo!" shouted the crew as with one voice.

Timéa could not imagine what was happening that she should be so roughly treated, and ran to look out of the cabin window.

It was only that the ship had passed safely through the "gun-rocks," and was about to enter the Roumanian channel; but from the little bay the water rushes so furiously into the canal that a regular water-fall is formed, and this is the dangerous moment of the "Leap."

When Timéa looked out of the cabin window, she only saw that Timar stood at the bow with a grappler in his hand. Then suddenly a deafening noise arose, a huge foam-crowned mountain of water struck the fore part of the vessel, splashed its spray right against the window, and blinded Timéa for a moment. When she looked out again, the captain was no longer to be seen.

There were great cries outside. She rushed out of the door and met her father. "Are we sinking?" she cried.

Timéa had seen that: the big wave had washed him away before her eyes. But her heart beat no faster when she heard it.

Curious! When she saw the white cat drowned, she was in despair, and could not refrain from tears, and now when the water had swallowed up the captain, she did not even say "Poor fellow!"

Yes, but the cat had cried so pitifully, and this man defies the whole world; the cat was a dear little animal, the captain only a great rough man. And then the cat could not help itself; but he is strong and clever, and can certainly save himself. That's the only good of a man.

After the last leap the ship was safe, and swam in the smooth water of the canal. The sailors ran with grappling-irons to the boat to seek the captain. Euthemio held a purse up as a prize for the rescue of Timar. "A hundred ducats for him who rescues the captain!"

"Keep your hundred ducats, good sir!" cried the voice of the man in question from the other end of the ship. "I'm coming."

Then they saw him climbing up the stern by the rudder-chains. No fear of his being lost!

As if nothing had happened, he began giving orders. "Let go!"

The three hundred-weight anchor was thrown over, and the ship brought up in the middle of the channel, so as to be hidden by the cliffs from the upper reaches of the river.

"And now ashore with the boat," Timar ordered three oarsmen.

"Change your clothes," advised Euthemio.

"Waste of time," answered Timar. "I shall soon be wet again; now I am thoroughly soaked. We have no time to spare."

The last words he whispered into Euthemio's ear.

The man's eyes glittered as he agreed. The captain sprung into the boat and rowed himself, so as to get quicker to the post-house on the bank, where towing-teams could be engaged. He collected hastily eighty oxen. Meanwhile, a new towing-rope was attached to the vessel, the oxen harnessed, and before half an hour had passed, the "St. Barbara" was on her way again through the Iron Gate, and on the opposite side of the stream.

When Timar returned on board, his exertions had dried his clothes.

The ship was saved, perhaps doubly saved, and with it the cargo, Euthemio, and Timéa.

But what are they to him that he should work so hard? He is only the captain and supercargo, and receives a scanty salary as such. It can not matter to him whether the vessel's hold is full of wheat or contraband tobacco or real pearls; his wages remain the same.

So also thought the "purifier," who, when they reached the Roumanian canal, resumed his interrupted conversation with the steersman.

"You'll allow, neighbor, that we were never nearer all going to destruction together than we were to-day."

"There's some truth in that," answered Fabula.

"But why should we try the experiment whether we could get drowned on St. Michael's day?"

"H'm!" said Johann, and took a short pull at his brandy-flask. "What salary do you get, sir?"

"Twenty kreutzers a day," answered the purifier.

"Why the devil do you come here to venture your life for twenty kreutzers a day? I didn't send for you. I get a gulden and my food; so I have forty kreutzers more reason to venture my life than you. What does it matter to you?"

The health-officer shook his head, and threw back his hood, so as to be more easily heard.

"Listen," he said; "it strikes me the brigantine is chasing you, and the 'St. Barbara' is trying to escape."

"H'm!" coughed the steersman, clearing his throat, and becoming suddenly too hoarse to make a sound.

"Well, it doesn't matter to me," said the purifier, with a shrug. "I'm Austrian born, and I don't like the Turks. But I know what I know."

"Well, then, will the gentleman listen to what he doesn't know?" said Fabula, who had suddenly recovered his voice. "Certainly the gunboat is chasing us, and that's why we are showing him our heels. For, look you, they wanted to take the white-faced maiden into the sultan's harem, but her father would not consent; he preferred to escape with her from Turkey, and now the object is to reach Hungarian territory as quickly as possible—there the sultan can't touch her. Now that's all about it, so no more questions, but go to St. Barbara's picture, and light the lamp again if the water has extinguished it; and don't forget to burn three consecrated willow-twigs, if you're a good Christian."

The purifier drew himself up slowly, and looked for his tinderbox, and then he growled in his beard—

"*If* I am an orthodox Catholic? But they say you are only a Papist on board, and a Calvinist directly you set foot on shore; that you pray in the ship, and can hardly wait for dry land before you begin cursing and swearing. And they say too that your name is Fabula, and that Fabula means just the same as a pocketful of lies. But of course I believe all you have told me, so you need not be angry."

"You're quite right there; but now you be off, and don't you come back till I call you."

The twenty-four rowers in the gunboat required three hours to get from the point where first the "St. Barbara" was seen to the Perigrada Island, where the Danube divides into two arms. The cliffs of the island masked the whole bend, and on board the brigantine nothing of what had passed behind them could be seen.

Even below the island the gunboat had met with floating wreckage, which the eddy had thrown to the surface. This was part of the sunken mill, but could not be distinguished from the remains of a vessel. When the brigantine had passed the island a reach of a mile and a half lay open before her; neither in the stream nor by the bank was any large craft to be seen; near the shore were only barges and rowing-boats.

The man-of-war went a little higher, cruised about in the river, and then returned to the shore. There the Turkish first-lieutenant inquired of the watchmen about a cargo-vessel passing by. They had seen nothing, for the ship had not got so far. Presently the brigantine overtook the "St. Barbara's" towing-team, and of them also questions were asked. They were all good Servians, and explained to the Turks where they could find the "St. Barbara."

"She has gone down at the Perigrada Island with her cargo of fruit and all her crew; you can see here how the tow-rope parted."

The Turkish brigantine left the Servian drivers, who were all lamenting because no one was left to pay their wages. (In Orsova they know full well they will come up with their ship and tow her on.) But the commander, being a Turk, of course turned about and went down-stream.

When the brigantine got back to the island the sailors saw a board dancing on the water which did not float away. They fished it out: a rope was fastened to it by an iron hook, for the board was a float from the mill-wheel. Then they heaved up the rope, which had an anchor at its other end. This also was got in, and on its cross-piece, painted in great letters, there was the name "St. Barbara."

Now the whole catastrophe was quite clear. Her towing-rope had broken, she cast her anchor, but it could not hold her, she drifted into the whirlpool, and now her timbers float on the surface, but her crew rests below in the deep pool.

Mashallah! We can not follow her there.

CHAPTER IV.
A STRICT SEARCH.

The "St. Barbara" had escaped two dangers—the rocks of the Iron Gate and the Turkish brigantine; two remained, the Bora and the quarantine in Orsova.

Above the bay of the Iron Gate, the powerful stream is confined by its steep banks in a chasm only a hundred fathoms wide, through which the pent-up current forces its way, in parts with a fall of twenty-eight feet.

Up above the mountain peaks, three thousand feet in air, the eagles circle in majestic flight across the narrow strip of sky visible, whose pure azure, seen from the awful depths below, looks like a glass vault, and further yet rise more and higher peaks.

It is a sight, I trow, to call up spirits from hell. The impotent vessel, which has neither hands nor feet, nor yet fins, which, like an overladen nutshell, floats upward in this narrow channel against wind and stream; and in it a handful of men, trusting in their intelligence and their strength. Here, too, even the Bora can not harm them, for the double range of cliffs keeps off the wind. The steersman and the towing-team have easier work now.

But the Bora was not asleep. It was already afternoon. The chief steersman had given over the tiller to his deputy, and had gone to the galley, which was in the stern. There he was busy preparing a "thieves' roast," of which the recipe is to spit on a long skewer a piece of beef, a piece of ham, and a piece of pork alternately, and then turn the skewer above an open fire till the meat is cooked.

All at once the narrow strip of sky visible between the almost touching cliffs grew dark. The Bora will not be defied.

Suddenly it drives down before it a storm which overcasts the blue sky, so that it is pitch dark in the valley. Up above masses of cloud; dark rocks on either hand. Now and then a dazzling flash darts through the heights, followed by a short abrupt thunderclap, as if the narrow gorge could only contain one chord of the awful concert; then again the lightning shoots into the Danube just in front of the ship, and by its fiery rays for an instant the whole rocky cathedral looks like the flaming gulf of hell, and the thunder rolls, with a crash as of a world destroyed, from one end of the resounding Titan's hall to the other. Rain falls in torrents, but the vessel must go on.

It must get on, that it may have left Orsova before night.

They can only see by the flicker of the lightning. Even with the horn they dare not signal, for it might be heard on the Roumanian side. But inventive man has found a way out of this difficulty.

The captain goes into the bow, gets out his flint and steel, and begins to strike out sparks. This fire can not be extinguished by rain; it can be seen by the drivers through the darkness, and as often as the steel strikes a spark they know at once what to do; they also make signals from the bank by sparks. This is the secret telegraph of sailors and smugglers at the Iron Gate. And this silent language has been brought to perfection by the shore population on each side of the river.

Timéa liked the tempest. She had drawn her Turkish hood over her head, and looked out of the cabin window. "Are we in a cavern?" she asked the captain.

"No," answered Timar, "but at the door of a tomb. That high peak, which glows in the lightning flashes like a mountain of fire, is the grave of St. Peter, the 'Gropa lui Petro.' And the two other monsters near it are the 'Two Old Women.'"

"What old women?"

"According to the legend, a Hungarian and a Wallachian woman quarreled as to which of their two countries could claim the tomb of St. Peter. The apostle could not sleep in his grave for their squabbling, and in his anger he turned them into stone."

Timéa did not smile at the grotesque legend. She did not see anything ridiculous in it. "And how do they know that this is the grave of an apostle?" asked she.

"Because here many healing herbs grow, which they collect to cure all sorts of diseases, and send them great distances."

"So they call him an apostle, who even in his grave does good to others?" Timéa questioned.

"Timéa!" sounded from the cabin the imperious call of Euthemio. The girl drew back her head from the window, and closed the circular shutter. When Timar looked round again, he saw only the saint's picture.

The vessel continued her course in spite of the storm.

Suddenly the dark ravine was left behind, and as the two rock walls trended further apart the gloomy vault overhead disappeared. Just as rapidly as the Bora had brought up the black thunderclouds, so quickly had it swept away the storm; and, all at once, the travelers saw stretched before them the lovely Cserna valley.

The cliffs on both shores were covered to their summits with vineyards and fruit orchards; the landscape glittered in the glow of the evening sun; out of the green distance shone while houses, slender spires, and red roofs, and through the crystal rain-beads

gleamed a gorgeous rainbow.

The Danube had lost its uncanny aspect. In its wider bed it could spread itself out comfortably; and on the western reaches of its sea-green mirror the travelers saw the reflection of Orsova on its island—for them the fourth, and greatest, bugbear.

The day had already sunk into twilight when the "St. Barbara" arrived at Orsova.

"More wind to-morrow than even to-day," grumbled the steersman, looking at the red sky.

There the evening clouds were piled like an avalanche, in all shades of fiery and blood red, and if the glowing mist-veil parted through the rent, the sky was not blue but emerald-green. Below, mountain and valley, forest and field, gleamed in the sunset reflex with radiance which hurt the eye, unable to find a shady point of rest. The Danube rushing on beneath, like a fiery Phlegethon, and in its midst an island with towers and massive buildings, all glowing as if part of a huge furnace, through which every creature, coming from the pestilential east to the frontier of the healthy west, must pass as through purgatory.

But what most fixed the attention of the crew under this stormy sunset was a black-and-yellow striped boat, which was being rowed from the shore to the ship.

The Szkela is the double gate through which the neighboring inhabitants of both sides of the Danube speak, bargain, and do business together.

The "St. Barbara" had cast anchor before the island, and awaited the approaching boat, in which were three armed men—two with muskets and bayonets—besides two rowers and the steersman.

Euthemio paced anxiously up and down the small space in front of the cabin. Timar approached him and whispered, "The searcher is coming."

Trikaliss drew from his leathern pouch a silk purse, and took out two *rouleaux*, which he pressed into Timar's hand. In each were a hundred ducats.

Before long the boat was alongside, and the three armed men came on board. One is the overseer of taxes, the inspector, whose office it is to search the cargo for anything contraband or a prohibited importation of arms; the other two are custom-house officials, who render armed assistance, and serve as a check on the inspector to see if he carries out the search properly.

The purifier is the official spy, who reports whether the two officers have properly controlled the inspector. Then the latter three form a tribunal, which takes the evidence of the purifier as to whether he has detected the passengers in any infectious communication. This is all very systematically arranged, so that one organ should control the other, and each be mutually under inspection.

As a legal fee for these functions the chief has to receive a hundred kreutzers, each of the customs officials fifty, and the purifier also fifty—which certainly is a moderate fee enough.

As soon as the inspector reaches the deck, the purifier comes toward him: the former scratches his ear and the latter his nose. No contact takes place.

Then the inspector turns to the captain, and both the other officials ground their arms. Still three paces apart! One can't tell whether the man has not got the plague.

The examination begins.

"Where from?"

"Galatz."

"Name of ship's owner?"

"Athan Brazovics."

"Owner of cargo?"

"Euthemio Trikaliss."

"Where are the ship's papers?"

The reception of these is carefully arranged. A pan of live coals is brought, and strewn with juniper-berries and wormwood: the

aforesaid papers are held over it and well smoked, then taken by the inspector with a pair of tongs, read from as great a distance as possible, and afterward returned. Nothing wrong, apparently, with the ship's papers.

The pan is carried away, and in its place a jug of water is brought. It is a capacious earthenware pot, with a mouth through which the largest fist can pass. It serves to facilitate the transmission of the tax. As the oriental plague is more easily communicated by coins than by anything else, the sailors coming from the Levant must throw the money into a jug of water, in order that the western health-officer may take it out cleansed: just as at the Szkela every one must fish the money he receives out of a basin.

Timar thrust his clinched fist into the water, and brought it out open.

Then the inspector puts his hand in, draws it out as a clinched fist, and transfers it to his pocket. He does not need to look at it by the sunset light to see what manner of money it is. He knows it by the size and weight. Even a blind man knows the feel of ducats. He does not change a muscle.

After him come the custom-house officials. These also with serious faces fish up their fee from the bottom of the jug.

Now for the turn of the purifier. His countenance is stern and forbidding. It hangs on a single word from his lips, whether the ship may have to lie ten or twenty days in quarantine with all her passengers. There are cold-blooded men like that who have only an eye to duty.

The inspector demands, in a surly, dictatorial tone, that the entrance to the lower deck be opened. His desire is obeyed. They all three go down; but none of the crew may follow them. When they are alone, the three strict servants of the law grin at each other. The purifier remains on deck, and only laughs in his sleeve.

They unfasten one of the many sacks, in which certainly there is only wheat. "Well, I hope it's moldy enough," remarks the inspector. "Probably there is only wheat in the other sacks, and very likely even more worm-eaten."

A document is now drawn up describing the search: one of the armed officials has the writing materials, and the other the form to be filled in. All is accurately set down. Then the inspector writes something on a bit of paper, which he folds and seals with a wafer, on which he presses the official seal. He writes no address on the note.

Then, after they have rummaged in every hole and corner where nothing suspicious is hidden, the three searchers rise to the light of day once more. At least to moonlight; for the sun has set, and through the hurrying clouds the moon ever and anon peeps down, and then vanishing, plays hide-and-seek with the world.

The inspector calls for the captain and gives him to understand—still in a severe official manner—that nothing suspicious has been found on board: then he requires the purifier, in the same manner, to declare the condition of the ship's health.

With an appeal to his oath of fidelity, the purifier bears witness that every person on board, as well as the cargo, is free from infection.

A certificate that the papers are in order is prepared, and the receipts for the fees are handed over. A hundred kreutzers to the inspector, two fifties to the customs officers, and fifty to the health-officer. Not a kreutzer is wanting. These receipts are delivered to the owner of the cargo, who has never left his cabin the whole time—he is at supper. He also must countersign the receipts. From these signatures and indorsements, the shipowner and the honorable officials in question mutually learn that the captain gave away as many kreutzers as he received, and that not one remained sticking to his fingers.

Kreutzers! Well, yes; but about the gold?

The thought may well have passed through Timar's head, how would it be if of the fifty ducats which this dirty lot were to fish out of the jug he were only to put in forty (a fabulous sum to such fellows)? No creature would know that he had kept back ten. Indeed he might easily retain half of the whole sum, for who is there to control it? Those for whom the money is intended are quite enough rewarded with half.

Another thought possibly answered thus. "What you are doing is without doubt bribery. You don't corrupt them with your own money, but Trikaliss gives it because his interests imperatively require it. You hand over the gold, and are as innocent of the bribery as the water-jug. Why he wants to bribe the inspector you do not know. Whether the ship carries contraband goods, whether he is a political refugee, or the persecuted hero of a romantic adventure, who in order to assist his escape strews gold in handfuls, what does it matter to you? But if one single gold piece sticks to your fingers, you become an accomplice in all which burdens another's conscience. Keep none of it."

The inspector gave permission for the vessel to proceed, in token of which a red-and-white flag with a black eagle on it was hoisted to the masthead. Then, after thus officially certifying that the ship from the Levant was quite free of infection, the inspector, without any previous ordeal by water, pressed the captain's hand and said to him: "You come from Komorn? Then you know Herr Katschuka, chief of the commissariat department? Be good enough to give him this note when you get home. There is no address on it—not necessary, you won't forget his name; it sounds like a Spanish dance. Take him the letter as soon as ever you get there. You

won't be sorry."

Then he clapped the captain most graciously on the shoulder, as if to make him his debtor for life, and the whole four left the ship and returned to Szkela in their black-and-yellow boat.

The "St. Barbara" could now continue her voyage, and if all her sacks from the keel to the deck had been filled with salt or Turkish tobacco, and all her passengers covered with small-pox or leprosy from top to toe, no one could stop her any more on the Danube.

Now, however, there was on board neither contraband goods nor contagion, but—something else. Timar put the unaddressed note into his pocket-book and wondered what it contained.

This was what was written—

"Brother-in-law,—I recommend to you the bearer of this letter. He is a man of sterling worth."

CHAPTER V.
THE OWNERLESS ISLAND.

The towing-team left behind on the Servian bank crossed over the same night in ferry-boats to the Hungarian side with their severed hawser, spreading everywhere the news that the tow-rope had parted of itself at the dangerous Perigrada Island, and the ship had gone down with every soul on board. In the morning there was no longer a sign of the "St. Barbara" in the harbor of Orsova. If by chance the commandant of the Turkish brigantine had had an idea of rowing up the channel from the Iron Gate to Orsova, he would not have found what he sought; and above, as far as Belgrade, only half the Danube belonged to him: on the Hungarian side he had no jurisdiction, but the fortress at New Orsova belonged to him.

At two o'clock in the morning the "St. Barbara" left Orsova. After midnight the north wind generally stops; the favorable time must be utilized, and the crew had received a double ration of brandy to keep them in a good humor.

The departure was quite silent: from the walls of the New Orsova fort sounded the long call of the Turkish sentries. The horn gave no signal till the Allion point had disappeared behind the new mountain-chain.

At the first blast Timéa came from her cabin, where she had slept for a few hours, and went, wrapped in her white burnoose, to the bow to look for Euthemio, who had never lain down all night, nor entered his cabin, nor even—which was more remarkable—smoked at all. He was not allowed to light any fire on board the ship, so as to avoid attracting attention to the vessel at the Orsova fortress.

Perhaps Timéa felt that she had to make up for a fault, for she addressed Timar, and asked him about the wonders of both shores.

The instinct of her childish heart whispered to her that she owed this man a debt of gratitude.

Dawn found the ship near Ogradina. The captain drew Timéa's attention to a monument eighteen hundred years old. This was "Trajan's Tablet," hewn in the precipitous cliff, held by two winged genii and surrounded by dolphins. On the tablet is the inscription which commemorates the achievements of the godlike emperor. If the peaks of the great "Sterberg" have vanished from the Servian shore, there follows a fresh rock corridor, which confines the Danube in a ravine five hundred fathoms wide. This mountain hall goes by the name of "Kassan." Cliffs of two to three thousand feet high rise right and left, their curves lost in opal-colored mist. From one precipice a stream falls a thousand feet out of a cave, like a delicate silver streak, dissolved in spray before it reaches the river. The two rock faces run on unbroken, only in one part the mountain is split, and through the rift laughs the blooming landscape of an alpine valley, with a white tower in the background. It is the tower of Dubova: there is Hungary.

Timéa never turned her gaze from this spectacle until the ship had passed, and the mountains had closed over the exquisite scene, hiding the deep chasm in their shadows.

"I feel," she said, "as if we were going through a long, long prison, into a land from which there is no return."

The precipices grow higher, the surface of the Danube darker, and, to complete the wild and romantic panorama, there is visible on the northern face a cave whose mouth is surrounded by an earthquake with embrasures for cannon.

"That is Veterani's Cavern," said the captain. "There, more than a century ago, three hundred men and five cannon held out for forty days against a whole Turkish army." Timéa shook her head. But the skipper knew more still about the cavern.

"Forty years ago our people defended that cave in a bloody struggle against the Turks; the Osmanli lost over two thousand men among the rocks."

Timéa drew together her delicate eyebrows and threw the narrator an icy-cold glance, so that all his eloquence died in his throat.

She hid her mouth with her burnoose, turned from Timar, went into the cabin, and did not reappear till evening. She only looked through the little window at the toppling crags on the bank, the massive watch-towers now deserted, the wooded cliffs of the Klissura valley, and the rock-colossi projecting from the stream, as they swept by her. She did not even ask for the history of the octagonal castle-donjon, with three small ones beside it inside a bastion. And yet she would have heard the fate of the lovely Cecilia Rozgonyi, the danger of King Sigismund, and the defeat of the Hungarians. This ruin is the Galamboczer Tower.

From first to last this double shore is a petrified history of two nations, mutually shadowed by a mad vagary of fate with the lust of conquest, which makes them fly at each other's throats directly a war begins.