Mór Jókai

Dr. Dumany's Wife

Publio

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Part I.

I. THE DUMB CHILD.

It was about the close of the year 1876 when, on my road to Paris, I boarded the St. Gothard railway-train. Travellers coming from Italy had already taken possession of the sleeping-car compartments, and I owed it solely to the virtue of an extraordinarily large tip that I was at last able to stretch my weary limbs upon the little sofa of a half-coupé. It was not a very comfortable resting-place, inasmuch as this carriage was the very last in an immensely long train, and one must be indeed fond of rocking to enjoy the incessant shaking, jostling, and rattling in this portion of the train. But still it was much preferable to the crowded carriages, peopled with old women carrying babies, giggling maidens, snoring or smoking men, and hilarious children; so I made the best of it, and prepared for a doze.

The guard came in to look at my ticket, and, pitying my lonely condition, he opened a conversation. He told me that the son of an immensely wealthy American nabob, with an escort well-nigh princely, was travelling on the same train to Paris. He had with him an attendant physician, a nursery governess, a little playfellow, a travelling courier, and a huge negro servant to prepare his baths, besides several inferior servants. These all occupied the

parlour-car and the sleeping compartments; but the little fellow had a parlour, a bedroom, and a dressing-room all to himself.

I did not pay much attention to the talk of the gossiping guard, and so he departed, and at last I could sleep. On the road I am like a miller in his mill. So long as the wheel turns, I sleep on; but the moment it is stopped, I start up and am instantly wide awake. We had reached a smaller station where the train usually stops for a few minutes only, when, to my surprise, there was a great deal of pushing and sliding of the cars backward and forward, and we halted for an extraordinarily long time. I was just getting up to learn what was going on, when the guard entered, lantern in hand.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but there is something amiss. The linch-pin of the parlour-car has become over-heated, and we had to uncouple the car and leave it behind. Now we are obliged to find a convenient place for the little American, until we reach some main station, where another parlour-car can be attached to the train. I am really sorry for you, sir, but this is the only suitable place we have, and the little fellow and his governess must be your travelling companions for a while."

"Well, when a thing can't be helped, grumbling is unreasonable, so good-bye sleep and quiet, and let us prepare to pay homage to the illustrious youth and his lady attendant," said I, smiling at the guard's earnestness. But still he hesitated.

"And pray, sir, what is your religion?" stammered he; "I have to tell the governess."

"Indeed!" My good-humour was rising still, and I continued smiling. "Tell the lady that I am a Swiss Protestant, and I hope she will not object, as I shall not try to convert her or her charge if they are of a different creed. Is there anything else you want to inquire into?"

"Yes, sir. The little gentleman's physician would also like to accompany his charge, and stay at his side."

"But there is only room for three."

"I know; but, sir, the doctor is a very liberal gentleman, and he told me that if anybody would be willing to exchange places with him, he would gladly repay his whole travelling expenses."

"That's liberal, certainly, and I have no doubt the fireman of the engine will thankfully accept his offer. You can tell him as much. And now go!"

The man went out, but right after him came the doctor - a very pleasant and distinguished-looking young man. He apologised for the guard's bluntness and his misinterpretation of his message. He had not meant to offend a gentleman, and so forth. He introduced himself as Dr. Mayer, family physician at the house of the so-called "Silver King," Mr. Dumany, the father of the little "Silver Prince." After learning that I did not smoke, and had no objection to children, he inquired my nationality. My astrachan fur cap and coat-collar made him take me for a Russian, but, thanking him for his good opinion, I stated that as yet I was merely a Hungarian. He did not object; but asked if we were free from small-pox, diphtheritis, croup, measles, scarlet-fever, whooping-cough, and such like maladies in our country at present. After I had satisfied him that even the foot-and-mouth disease had by this time ceased, he finally quitted me, but immediately returned, assisting a lady with both hands full of travelling necessaries to climb up into the carriage. After the lady came a grand stately-looking negro servant, with gold-braided cap and overcoat of white bear's fur, and on his arm, bundled up in rich velvet and costly fur, he carried a beautiful five-year-old boy, who looked like some waxen image or big doll.

The lady seemed very lively and talkative, and had a host of languages at command. With the doctor she conversed in German;

to the guide she spoke French; the negro she questioned in English, and to a maid who brought in some rugs and air-pillows she spoke Italian. All these languages she spoke excellently, and I am certain that if a dozen persons of different nationalities had been present she could have talked to them in their various dialects with the same ease and fluency. Of her beauty I could not judge, for she wore a bonnet with a thick veil, which covered her face to the chin.

Taking her seat at the opposite window, she placed the child between us. He was a pale, quiet little boy, with very red, thin, tightly-compressed lips, and great, melancholy dark-blue eyes. As long as the negro was occupied in arranging the rugs and pillows, he looked wholly unconcerned, and the smiles from the great black shining face did not impress him at all; but when the swarthy giant caught the two fair little hands in his own great black palm and wanted to kiss them, the boy withdrew his hands with a quick gesture and struck the ebony forehead with his tiny fist.

At last we were seated. The negro was gone, the guide went out and locked the door after him. Seeing that the open window was disagreeable to the lady, I volunteered to close it. She accepted gratefully, and at the same time expressed her regrets that, in consequence of the accident to the parlour-car, she had been compelled to disturb me. Of course, I hastened to say that I was not in the least incommoded, and only regretted that it was not in my power to make her more comfortable. She then told me that she was an American, and pretty well used to railroad accidents of a more or less serious character. Three times she had been saved by a miracle in railway collisions at home, and she assured me that in America about 30,000 persons were every year injured in railway accidents, while some 4,000 were killed outright.

We conversed in German, and, as the lady became more and more communicative, talk turned upon the subject of the child between us. She told me that Master James was deaf and dumb,

and could not understand a word of our conversation; hence restraint was unnecessary. I asked her if he was born with this defect, and she said, "No; until the age of three he could speak very nicely, but at that age he was thrown out of his little goat-carriage, and in consequence of the shock and concussion lost his power of speech."

"Then he will possibly recover it," I said. "I knew a young man who lost his speech in the same manner at the age of five, and could not speak up to his tenth year; then he recovered, and now he has graduated from college as senior wrangler."

"Yes," she said. "But Mr. Dumany is impatient, and he has sent the boy to all the deaf-and-dumb boarding-schools in Europe. Even now we are coming from such an institution in Italy; but none of all these different masters has been able to teach more than sign-talk, and that is insufficient. Mr. Dumany wants to give the German Heinicke method a trial. That professes to teach real conversation, based on the observations of the movements of the lips and tongue."

Of this method I also knew examples of success. I was acquainted with a deaf and dumb type-setter, who had learned to talk intelligibly and fluently, could read aloud, and take part in conversation, but in a piping voice like that of a bird.

"Even that would be a great success," she said. "At any rate, little James will be taken to the Zürich Institute, and remain there until he acquires his speech."

During this whole conversation the little fellow had sat between us, mute, and, to all appearance, wholly indifferent. His little pale face was dull, and his great eyes half closed. I felt sorry for him, and with a sigh of real compassion I muttered in my own native Hungarian tongue, "Szegény fiúcska!" ("Poor little boy!") At this I saw a thrill of surprise run through the child's little frame; the

great blue eyes opened wide in wonder and delight, and the closed cherry lips opened in a smile of joy.

I was struck with surprise, and did not believe my own eyes. The lady had not noticed anything, since she still kept her bonnet on and the thick veil tightly drawn over her face.

I took pity on her, and offered to go out into the corridor to smoke a cigarette, so that she might make herself a little more comfortable until we arrived at some large station, where she would enter another parlour-car.

She accepted thankfully, and, to my utter astonishment, the little boy raised his tiny hand, and caressingly stroked the fur collar of my coat. I bent down to kiss him, and he smiled sweetly on me; and when I got up and signed to him that he could now occupy both seats and stretch himself upon the little sofa, he shook his head, and crept into the corner which I had quitted. And there, as often as in my walk up and down the corridor I threw a glance into his corner, I could see the child's large dark-blue eyes following all my movements with an eager curiosity; the white little face pressed to the window-pane and the tiny hand never losing hold of the edge of the curtain, which he had purposely lifted, for the governess had pulled the curtain down the moment I left, possibly to take off her bonnet.

Mine was not a very pleasant situation in that corridor. I watched the rising and sinking of the moon, which phenomenon repeated itself about twice every hour, according to the serpentine windings of the road. I looked at the milky mist which surrounded the icy pinnacles of the great mountains, and grumbled over the intense darkness in the many tunnels, in which the roar and noise of the train is tremendously increased, thundering as if Titans were breaking out of their prisons below Mount Pelion.

As if they had not broken through long, long ago! What if the

old Grecian gods should come to life? should leave their marble temples, and gaze about on the world as it is at present? If Pallas Athene were told of America? If Helios Apollo could listen to Wagner's operas, and Zeus Jupiter might look into the great tube of the London Observatory, wondering what had become of that milky way which had been formed out of the milk spilled by Amalthea? If we could show him that we had caught and harnessed his heavenly lightning to draw our vehicles and carry our messages, and that, with the help of fire-eyed leviathans, we break through the rocky womb of his great mountains? And yet, how easy it would be for them, with a simple sneeze of their most illustrious and omnipotent noses, to raise such a tempest that earth and sea would rise and destroy man and his pigmy works at one fell stroke! I wonder if they never awake? I rather think they sometimes get up and shake their mighty fists at us. These cyclones look very suspicious to me!

The huge iron leviathan turns and twists itself like a Gordian knot; disappears and reappears, almost on the same spot, but higher up on the mountain, and then glides rapidly on along the brinks of fearful abysses, over long iron bridges looking like some fanciful filigree work, some giant spider's web, extending across great valleys, chasms, and precipices, over which great mountain rivers splash down, roaring and foaming in gigantic falls. What giant power has cleft the way for these waters - Vulcan or Neptune? Or was it laid down in Euclid's adventurous age, when the Titans went into bankruptcy?

The train increases its speed to regain the time lost in uncoupling the disabled parlour-car, and this increased speed is chiefly felt at the tail of the great iron dragon. I have to cling tightly to the brass rod in front of the windows. We pass the central station without stopping, the locomotive whistles, the lamps of the little watch-houses fly past like so many jack-o'-lanterns, and all at once we are enveloped by a thick fog

rising from beneath, where it had rested above the sea, and when the train has twice completed the circle around the valley, the noxious, dangerous mist surrounds us entirely.

But once more the creation of human hands conquers the spectre, and, puffing and whistling, the locomotive breaks through the dark haze. Once again the iron serpent disappears into the bowels of the rock, and as it emerges it crosses another valley and is greeted by a clear heaven and a multitude of brightly-glistening stars.

We are on the Rossberg. A devastated tract of the globe it seems. Our eyes rest on barren soil devoid of vegetation. Beneath a large field of huge boulders, imbedded in snow and ice, the Alpine vegetation thrives. The whole valley is one immense graveyard, and the great rocks are giant tombstones, encircled by wreaths of white flowers meet for adorning graves. At the beginning of the present century one of the ridges of the Rossberg gave way, and in the landslide four villages were buried. This happened at night, when the villagers were all asleep, and not a single man, women, or child escaped. This valley is their resting-place. Was I not right to call it a graveyard?

Above this valley of destruction the train glides on. Upon the side of the mountain is a little watch-house, built into the rock; a narrow flight of steps hewn in the stone leads up to it like a ladder. The moon, which had lately seemed fixed to the crest of the mountain, now plays hide-and-seek among the peaks. A high barricade on the side of the Rossberg serves to protect the railroad track against another landslide.

On the high ridges of the mountain goats were pasturing, and not far from them a shepherd's fire was blazing, and the shepherd himself sat beside it. I remember all these accessories as well as if they were still before my eyes. I can see the white goats climbing

up and pulling at the broom-plants. I can see the shepherd's black form, encircled by the light of the fire, and the white watch-house with its black leaden roof, the high signal-pole in front of it, above which all at once a great flaming star arises.

II. THE DARK GOD.

I was gazing at that shining red light, when all at once I felt a concussion, as if the train had met with some impediment. I heard the jolting of the foremost cars, and had time to prepare for the shock which was sure to follow; but when it did come, it was so great that it threw me to the opposite wall of the corridor.

Yet the train moved on as before, so that it could not have been disabled, as I at first thought. I heard the guards run from carriage to carriage, opening the doors, and I could see great clouds of steam arise from the puffing and blowing engines. The friction of the wheels made a grating noise, and I leaned out of the window to ascertain the nature of the danger. Was another train approaching, and a collision inevitable? I could see nothing, but suddenly I beheld the figure of the shepherd, and saw him raise his staff aloft. I followed the motion of his hand, and with a thrill of horror I saw a great ledge of rock sliding downward with threatening speed, while at the same time a shower of small stones crashed on the roof of the cars.

I did not wait for the guards to open my door. I had it open in an instant. From the other carriages passengers were jumping out at the risk of life and limb, for the train was running at full speed.

I hastily ran into the coupé to awaken my travelling companions, but found them up. "Madam," I said, "I am afraid that we are in danger of a serious accident. Pray come out quickly!"

"Save the child!" she answered; and I caught the little boy, took

him in my arms, and ran out.

The train was gliding perpetually on, and I bethought myself of the recommendation of one who is jumping from a running vehicle, to leap forward, because in jumping sideways or backward he invariably falls under the wheels. So I followed the recommendation and leaped. Fortunately, I reached the ground, although my knees doubled up under me, and I struck the knuckles of my right hand a hard blow. The child had fainted in my arms, but only from fright; otherwise he had received no harm. I laid him on the ground in a safe place, and ran with all my might after the train to help the lady out. She was standing on the steps, already prepared for the jump. I extended my hand to her, impatiently crying "Quick!" But instead of taking my proffered hand she exclaimed, "Oh! I have forgotten my bonnet and veil," and back she ran into the coupé, never again to come forth.

At that moment I felt a tremendous shock, as if the earth had quaked and opened beneath me, and this was followed by a deafening uproar, the clashing of stones, the cracking of wood and glass, the grating and crushing of iron, and the pitiful cries of men, women, and children. The great mass of rock broke through the protecting barricade and rushed right upon the engine. The huge, steam-vomiting leviathan was crushed in an instant, and the copper and steel fragments scattered everywhere. Three of the wheels were shattered, and with that the iron colossus came to a dead stop, the suddenness of which threw the carriages crashing on top of each other. This fearful havoc was not all. Through the breach which the great rock had made in the barricade, an incessant avalanche of stones, from the size of a cannon-ball to that of a wheelbarrow, descended upon the train, crushing everything beneath into fragments, pushing the unhappy train into the chasm below, into the valley of death and destruction. Like a huge serpent it slid down, the great glowing furnace with its feeding coals undermost, and then the whole wrecked mass of

carriages tumbled after, atop of each other, while cries of despair were heard on every side. Then I saw the rear car - that in which I had been sitting - stand up erect on top of the others, while on its roof fell, with thunderous violence, the awful shower of stones. Mutely I gazed on, until a large stone struck the barricade just where I stood, and then I realised that the danger was not over, and ran for shelter.

The stones were falling fast to left and to right, and I hastened to gain the steps which led to the little watch-house. Then I bethought me of the boy. I found him still insensible, but otherwise unharmed, and I took him up, covering him with a furred coat. I ran up the steps with him, so fast that not a thought of my asthma and heart disease slackened my speed.

There was nobody in the house but a woman milking a goat. In one corner of the room stood a bed, in the middle was a table, and on one of the walls hung a burning coal-oil lamp.

As I opened the door the woman looked up, and said in a dull piteous moaning -

"It is none of Jörge's fault. Jörge had shown the red light in good season, and yesterday he specially warned the gentlemen, and told them that a ridge of the Gnippe was crumbling, and would soon break down; but they did not listen to him, and now that the accident has come, they will surely visit their own carelessness upon him. It is always the poor dependent that is made to suffer for the fault of his superiors. But I will not stand it; and if Jörge is discharged and loses his bread, then - "

"All right, madam!" I said, "I saw the red light in time, and I shall testify for Jörge in case of need. Only keep quiet now, and come here. You must try to restore this child. He has fainted. Give him water or something; you will know best what to do."

In recalling these words to my memory and writing them down, I am not quite certain that I really spoke them; I am not certain of a single word or action of mine on that fearful night. But I think that I said the words I am relating, although I was so confused that it is possible I did not utter a word. I had come out of the house again, and saw a man running up and down on the narrow rocky plateau, like one crazy. It was Jörge the watchman; he was looking for the signal-post, and could not find it.

"Here it is, look!" I said, turning his face toward the high pole right in front of him. He gazed up wistfully, and then all at once he blubbered out -

"See! See, the red light! I gave the warning. They cannot blame me; they dare not punish me for it. It is not my fault!"

Of course, he thought of nothing but himself, and the misfortune of the others touched him only in so far as he was concerned.

"Don't blubber now!" I said. "There will be time enough to think of ourselves. Now let us learn what has happened to the others. The whole train has been swept down into the abyss below. What has become of the people in it?"

"God Almighty have mercy on their souls!"

"Yet perhaps we could save some of them. Come along!"

"I can't go. I dare not leave my post, else they will turn against me."

"Well then, I shall go alone," said I, and hastened down the steps.

I heard no screams, no cries, not a sound of human voices. The poor victims of the catastrophe were exhausted or frightened out of their wits, and gave no utterance to the pain they felt. Only the

never-ceasing clatter of the falling stones was heard, nothing else. Awful is the voice of the elements, and dreadful their revenge on their human antagonists! The thundering heavens, the roaring sea, are awful to behold and to listen to; but most fearful of all is the voice of the earth, when, quivering in wrath, she opens her fiery mouth or hurls her rocky missiles at pigmy men.

From the wrecked train a great many travellers had jumped like myself; but not all with the same happy result. They had mostly reached the ground more or less bruised, but at the moment of escape from the clutch of death we do not much feel our hurts. These unhappy victims, frightened as they were, had managed to creep and hide behind the untouched portion of the bulwark, and happy to have escaped from immediate death, sheltered from the tremendous cataract of stones, they remained quiet, trembling, awaiting the end of the catastrophe and the ultimate rescue. But what had meanwhile become of those who had stayed in the falling carriages?

There came a terrible answer to that question, and out of the old horror arose a new and still more terrible spectre. A demon with a cloudy head, rising from the darkness below, and with a swift and fearful growth, mounting up to the sky - a demon with a thousand glistening, sparkling eyes and tongues, a smoke-fiend!

The great boiler of the locomotive had gone down first. There it fell, not on the ground, but on a large fragment of rock, which pierced it completely, so that the air had free access to the fire. Upon the top of both boiler and tender, the coal-van had been turned upside down, and these had pulled all the carriages one on top of the other in the same way, so that the whole train stood upright, like some huge steeple. This dreadful structure had become a great funeral pile, the altar of a black pagan idol whose fiery tongues were greedily thrusting upward to devour their prey.

Then, as the smoke became blacker and blacker, a heart-rending, almost maddening sound of shrieking and crying rang out from that devilish wreck, so loud and piercing that it drowned the clatter of stones, the crackling of the fast-kindling coals, and the crushing noise of the metals. At the cry for aid of the doomed victims, all who had escaped and hidden behind the bulwark came forth, creeping or running, shrieking and gesticulating, forgetful of their own danger and pitiful condition, thinking only of those dear lost ones there in that abode of hell, and maddened at the impossibility of rescuing them. It was a wild hurly-burly of voices and of tongues, of despairing yells, hysterical sobs, heart-rending prayers; and as I stumbled over the twisted and broken rails, that stood upright like bent wires, and stooped over the bulwark, I beheld a spectacle so terrible that every nerve of my body, every heart-string, revolted at it. Even now they quiver at the ghastly recollection.

As the fire lighted up the horrible pile I could see that the first carriage atop of the coals was a shattered mass, the second crushed flat, while the third stood with wheels uppermost, and so forth to the top, and out of all of them human heads, limbs, faces, bodies, were thrust forward. Two small gloved female hands, locked as in prayer, were stretched out of a window, and above them two strong, muscular, masculine arms tried with superhuman force to lift the iron weight above, to break a way at the top, until the blood flowed from the nails, and even these strong arms dropped down exhausted. Half-seen forms, mutilated, bleeding, were tearing with teeth and nails at their dreadful prison. Then for a while the smoky cloud involved everything in darkness. A moment after, the red fiery tongues came lapping upward, and a red, glowing halo encircles the fatal wreck. The first and second carriages were already burned. How long would it take the flames to reach the top? How many of the sufferers were yet alive? What power in heaven or earth could save them, and how?

The hollow into which the train had fallen was so deep that, in spite of the erect position of the ill-fated pile, the topmost car - that containing the poor foolish American governess, who had lost her life in running back for her bonnet - was ten mètres below us, and we had not even a single rope or cord with which to hazard the experiment of descending. A young man, one of those few who had come forth unharmed, ran up and down the embankment, shouting madly for a rope, offering a fortune for belts, shawls, and cords. His newly-married bride was in one of those carriages, and hers were the tiny gloved hands that were stretched out of the window. "A rope!" cried he; "give me anything to make a rope!" But who heeded him?

A young mother sat on the tracks, fondly hugging a plaid shawl in her arms. Her babe was there in that burning pyre, but horror had overpowered her reason. There she sat, caressing the woollen bundle, and in a low voice singing her "Eia Popeia" to the child of her fantasy.

An aged Polish Jew lay across the barricade wall. His two hands were stretched downward, and there he muttered the prayers and invocations of his ancient liturgy, which no one there understood but himself and his God. The ritual prayer-bands were upon his thumbs and wrists, and encircling his forehead. His forked beard and greasy side-locks dangled as he chanted his hymns, while his eyes, starting almost out of their sockets, were fixed upon one of the carriages. What did that car contain? His wife? His children? Or his worldly goods, the fortune hoarded up through a life-time of cunning and privation? Who knows? Forth he chants his prayers, loudly yelling, or muttering low, as the ghastly scene before him vanishes in smoke and darkness, or glows out again in fearful distinctness.

Every one shrieks, cries, prays, swears, raves.

No; not every one! There, on the barricade, his logs doubled up Turk-fashion, sits a young painter with Mephisto beard and grey eyes. His sketch-book is open, and he is making a vivid sketch of the sensational scene. The illustrated papers are grateful customers, and will rejoice at receiving the sketch.

But this young draughtsman is not the only sensible person in the place. There is another, a long-legged Englishman, standing with watch in hand, reckoning up the time lost by the accident, and eyeing the scene complacently.

Some noisy dispute attracts my attention, and, turning, I behold a man, trying with all his might to overcome a woman, who attacks him with teeth and nails, biting his hands and tearing at his flesh, as he drags her close to him. At last he succeeds in joining both of her hands behind her back, she foaming, writhing, and cursing. I ask indignantly, "What do you want with the woman? Let her alone!"

"Oh, sir!" he said, showing me a sorrowful and tear-stained face, "for Heaven's sake, help me! I cannot bear with her any more. She wants to leap down and kill herself. Pray help me to tie her hands, and carry her off from here!"

By his speech I knew him for a Pole, and the woman's exclamations were also uttered in the Polish language. She was his wife; her children were there in that infernal pile, and she wanted to die with them.

"Quick! quick!" gasped the man. "Take my necktie and fasten her hands behind her." I obeyed; and as I wound the silken strip tight around the unhappy woman's wrist, her despairing gaze fixed itself in deadly hate upon my face, and her foaming lips cursed me for keeping her away from her children. As her husband carried her away, her curses pierced the air; and although I could not understand the words, I understood that she spoke of the "Czrny

Bog," or, as the Russians say, "Cserny Boh," the "Black God" of the Slavs - Death.

By this time the horrible tower was burning brightly, and the night was all aglow with the glaring light, and still those terrible shrieks from human voices resounded to and fro.

The young artist had a picturesque scene for his pencil, and kept making sketch after sketch. The burning wreck, the flying cinders, the red mist around the black pine woods on the rocky wall of the mountain, and that small span of star-lit heaven above; all those frightened, maddened, running, crouching, creeping men and women around, with the chanting Jew, in his long silken *caftan* and dangling locks, in the midst of them, made a picture of terrible sublimity.

But still the god of destruction was unsatisfied, and his fiery maw opened for more victims. The unhappy young husband had succeeded in tearing up his clothes and knotting the strips together. A compassionate woman had given him a shawl, which he fastened to the bushes. On this he descended into that mouth of hell. The perilous attempt succeeded so far that, with one mad leap, he landed on the top of the uppermost car with its pile of stones, and then, with cat-like dexterity and desperate daring, he scrambled downward to the third carriage. Quickly he reached the spot, and the poor little gloved hands of his darling were thrown in ecstasy around his neck. Someone had drawn up the cord on which he had let himself down, fastened a stout iron rod to it, and suspended it carefully. Happily it reached him, and with its aid he made a good-sized breach, widening the opening of the window; he worked with desperate strength, and we gazed breathlessly on. Now we saw him drop the rod again. The tender arms of his bride were around his neck, a fair head was thrust out, the whole form was emerging, when with a tremendous crash, and a hissing, spluttering, crackling noise, the whole fabric shook and trembled,

and husband and wife were united in death.

The great boiler had burst; the explosion had changed the scene again, and the young painter might draw still another sketch.

III. THE ENGLISHMAN.

That long-legged son of Albion whom I had previously observed, strolled up to my side and asked -

"Do you understand German, sir?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Then call for that shepherd. I want him."

I obeyed, and the shepherd, who had complacently eyed the scene as something that was of no consequence to him, came slowly and wonderingly up.

He was in no hurry, and my coaxing "Dear friend" and "Good friend" did not impress him at all; but when the Englishman showed him a handful of gold coins he came on quickly enough.

"Tell him," said the Englishman, "to run to the next railway station, give notice of the accident, and return with a relief train for succour. Tell him to be quick, and when he returns I will give him two hundred francs."

"Yes," said the man; "but who will take care of my goats meanwhile?"

"How many goats have you?"

"Six."

"And what is the average price of a goat?"

"Fifteen francs."

"Well, here is the price of your goats in cash. I give you one hundred francs - ten more than your goats are worth. Now run! How far is it?"

"A good running distance, not very far." The man pocketed his money and turned, when an idea struck him. "Could you not take care of my goats anyhow, till I return?" he asked.

Smart fellow! He kept the money for his goats, and tried to keep the goats into the bargain.

"All right," said the Englishman, "I will take care of them. Never fear. Go!"

"But you must take my stick and my horn; the goats will get astray when they do not hear the horn."

"Then give it to me, and I will blow it," said the Englishman, with admirable patience, and, taking the shepherd's crook and horn, he gave the man his red shawl to use as a signal-flag.

As the shepherd at length trotted on and disappeared, that unique, long-legged example of phlegm and good sense sat down by the shepherd's fire, on exactly the same spot where the shepherd had sat, and began watching the goats.

I returned to the mournful scene which I had quitted when the Englishman came up to me. It was a terrible one, and no marvel that even the painter had closed his sketch-book to gaze upon it in silent awe. The entire valley below showed like a giant furnace, or some flaming ocean of hell. Huge fiery serpents came hissing and snarling up to the barricade, and great flakes of fire were flying

about everywhere, scorching and kindling as they fell. The chill, keen, mountain air had become heavy and warm in spite of the winter, and a loathsome, penetrating odour arose and drove us away from the horrible place. No one remained but the Polish Jew. He did not move away. He had risen to his knees on the barricade wall, and his hands, with their prayer-bands, were uplifted to heaven. Louder and louder he chanted his hymns, raising his voice above the thundering roar of the crackling fire, the rolling stones, and the last despairing cries of the doomed ones. The fur on his cap, his forked beard and dangling locks were singed by the falling cinders, and his skin scorched and blistered, yet still he chanted on. But when at last he saw that his prayer was in vain, all at once he sprang up, and seemed to strike at the flames with both palms; then, spitting into the fire "pchi!" he fell down senseless.

By this time the heat was so oppressive that it was dangerous to stand anywhere near the barricade, and even for the sake of saving a man's life from such a horrid fate, it was impossible to venture among the falling cinders and rolling stones. All that the few of us who had escaped with sound limbs and bodies could do was to carry our less fortunate, wounded or maimed fellow-travellers up into the little watch-house.

This we did, and then came those seemingly endless minutes in which we waited for the relief train. Once the Englishman blew the horn for the goats, and we thought it was the whistling of the expected train. How terribly that disappointment was felt! and what sinful, subtle, and sophistical thoughts crowded into our heads, burdened our hearts, and oppressed our spirits in those awful minutes!

What terrible thing had these poor victims done to deserve such fearful punishment? What heinous crime had they committed to be sentenced to death and destruction by such a painful, torturing process? Whose sin was visited on the guileless heads of little

infants and innocent children who had perished in those flames? Could not they have been spared? or that loving and beautiful young couple, just on the brink of life and happiness, and now sent to eternity together by such a fearful road, into the mouth of hell when they had thought themselves before the open gate of Paradise? What had that unhappy mother done? or all these old and young men and women, in full health and spirits, enjoying life and happiness, surrounded by happy relatives, full of happy plans and hopes? What had they done to deserve this fate, those poor servants of the public convenience, the guards, the engineer, and the other officials, who could have saved their own lives easily, and in good time, if they had abandoned their fatal posts, and had not preferred to die in doing their duty? Why had not these been saved for the sake of their wives and children, now widows and orphans, abandoned to the charities of a merciless world? Who and where is that awful Deity into whose altar-fire that conjuring Jew had spat, because He would not listen to his invocations? What dreadful Power is it which has pushed down that rock-colossus to destroy so many human lives? Is it the Czrny Bog of the Samaritans, the Lord of Darkness and Doer of Mischief, whose might is great in harm, whose joy is human despair, and who is adored with oaths and curses?