

***MÓR  
JÓKAI***



***TIMAR'S  
TWO  
WORLDS***

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# **Timar's Two Worlds**

EAN 8596547018490

DigiCat, 2022

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# CHAPTER I. THE IRON GATE.

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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 boulder 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.

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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.**

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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,