

***MÓR  
JÓKAI***

***'MIDST  
THE WILD  
CARPATHIANS***

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**Mór Jókai**

# 'Midst the Wild Carpathians

EAN 8596547018445

DigiCat, 2022

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# INTRODUCTION.

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Hungarians regard *Az Érdély arány kora* as, on the whole, the best of Jokai's great historical romances, and, to judge from the numerous existing versions of it, foreigners are of the same opinion as Hungarians. Few of Jokai's other tales have been translated so often, and the book is as great a favourite in Poland as it is in Germany. And certainly it fully deserves its great reputation, for it displays to the best advantage the author's three characteristic qualities—his powers of description, especially of nature, his dramatic intensity, and his peculiar humour.

The scene of the story is laid among the virgin forests and inaccessible mountains of seventeenth-century Transylvania, where a proud and valiant feudal nobility still maintained a precarious independence long after the parent state of Hungary had become a Turkish province. We are transported into a semi-heroic, semi-barbarous borderland between the Past and the Present, where Mediævalism has found a last retreat, and the civilizations of the East and West contend or coalesce. Bizarre, gorgeous, and picturesque forms flit before us—rude feudal magnates and refined Machiavellian intriguers; superb Turkish pashas and ferocious Moorish bandits; noble, high-minded ladies and tigrish odalisks; saturnine Hungarian heydukes, superstitious Wallachian peasants, savage Szeklers, and scarcely human Tartars. The plot too is in keeping with the vivid colouring and magnificent scenery of the story. The whole history of Transylvania, indeed, reads like a chapter

from the *Arabian Nights*, but there are no more dramatic episodes in that history than those on which this novel is based—the sudden elevation of a country squire (Michael Apafi) to the throne of Transylvania against his will by order of the Padishah, and the dark conspiracy whereby Denis Banfi, the last of the great Transylvanian magnates, was so foully done to death.

In none of Jokai's other novels, moreover, is the individuality of the characters so distinct and consistent. The gluttonous Kemeny, who sacrificed a kingdom for a dinner; the well-meaning, easy-going Apafi, who would have made a model squire, but was irretrievably ruined by a princely diadem; his consort, the wise and generous Anna, always at hand to stop her husband from committing follies, or to save him from their consequences; the crafty Teleki, the Richelieu of Transylvania, with wide views and lofty aims, but sticking at nothing to compass his ends; his rival Banfi, rough, masterful, recklessly selfish, yet a patriot at heart, with a vein of true nobility running through his coarser nature; his tender and sensitive wife, clinging desperately to a brutal husband, who learnt her worth too late; the time-serving Csaky, as mean a rascal as ever truckled to the great or trampled on the fallen; Ali Pasha and Corsar Beg, excellent types of the official and the unofficial Turkish freebooter respectively; Kucsuk Pasha, the chivalrous Mussulman with a conscience above his creed; the renegade spy Zülfikar, groping in slippery places after illicit gains, and always falling on his feet with cat-like agility; and, last of all, that marvellous creation, Azrael, the demoniacal Turkish odalisk, blasting all who fall within the

influence of her irresistible glamour, a Circe as sinuously beautiful and as utterly soulless as her own pet panther—all these personages of a, happily, by-gone age are depicted as vividly as if the author had known each one of them personally.

Finally, the book contains some of Jokai's happiest descriptions, and in this department it is generally admitted that the master, at his best, is unsurpassable. The description of the burning coal-mine in *Fekete Gyemantok*, of the Neva floods in *A szabadság a hó alatt*, of the plague in *Szomorú napok*, or of the Danube in all its varying moods in *Az arány ember*, stand alone in modern fiction; yet can any of these vivid tableaux compare with the wonderful account of Corsar Beg's aërial fairy palace, poised on the top of the savage Carpathians, or with the glowing picture of the gorgeous harem of Azrael, or with the fantastic scenery of the Devil's Garden, with its ice-built corridors, snow bridges, boiling streams, fathomless lakes, and rushing avalanches?

R.N.B.

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**BOOK I.**  
**BY COMMAND OF THE PADISHAH.**  
**'MIDST THE WILD CARPATHIANS.**



# **CHAPTER I.**

## **A HUNT IN THE YEAR 1666.**

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Before us lies the valley of the Drave, one of those endless wildernesses where even the wild beast loses its way. Forests everywhere, maples and aspens a thousand years old, with their roots under water; magnificent morasses the surface of which is covered, not with reeds and water-lilies, but with gigantic trees, from the dependent branches of which the vivifying waters force fresh roots. Here the swan builds her nest; here too dwell the royal heron, the blind crow, the golden plover, and other man-shunning animals which are rarely if ever seen in more habitable regions.

Here and there on little mounds, left bare during the long summer drought by the receding waters, sprout strange and gorgeous flowers, such perhaps as the earth has not brought forth since the Flood overwhelmed her. In this slimy soil every blade of grass shoots up like gigantic broom; the funnel-shaped convolvuluses and the evergreen ground-ivy put forth tendrils as stout and as strong as vine branches, which, stretching from tree to tree, twine round their stems and hang flowery garlands about the dark, sombre maples, just as if some hamadryad had crowned the grove dedicated to her.

But it is only when evening descends that this realm of waters begins to show signs of life. Whole swarms of water-fowl then mount into the air, whose rueful, monotonous croaking is only broken by the melancholy piping of the

bittern and the whistle of the green turtle. The swan, too, raises her voice and sings that melodious lay which now, they tell us, is only to be heard in fairy-land,—for here man has never yet trod, the place is still God's.

Now and again, indeed, sportsmen of the bolder sort presume to penetrate far into this pathless labyrinth of bush and brake; but they are forced to wind their way among the trees in canoes which may at any moment be upset by the twisted tangle of roots stretching far and wide beneath the water, and it is just in these very places that the swamp is many fathoms deep; for although the dark green lake-grass and the yellow marsh-flowers, with the little black-and-red efts and newts darting about among them, seem close enough to be reached by an outstretched hand, they are nevertheless all under water deep enough to go over the head of the tallest man.

In other places it is the dense thicket which bars the canoe's way. Fallen trees, the spoil of many centuries, but untouched by the hand of man, lie rotting there in gigantic heaps. The submerged trunks have been turned to stone by the water, and the roots of the lake-grass, the filaments of the flax-plant, and the tendrils of the clematis have grown together over them, forming a strong, tough barrier just above the water which rocks and sways without giving way beneath one's feet. The knotty clout-like film of the lake, stretching far and wide, seems, to the careless eye, a continuation of this barrier, but the treacherous surface no longer bears—one step further, and Death is there. This unknown, unexplored region has however but few visitors.

Southwards, the wilderness is bounded by the river Drave. The trees which line its steep banks dip over into its waves. Not unfrequently the fierce stream sweeps them into its bed and away, to the great peril of all who sail or row upon its waters.

Northwards, the forest extends as far as Csakatorny, and where the morass ends oaks and beeches of all sorts flourish. In no other part of Hungary will you meet with trees so erect and so lofty. The wide waste abounds with all sorts of game. The wild boars, which wallow in the swampy ground there, are the largest and fiercest of their kind. The red deer too is no stranger there, and huge, powerful, and courageous you will find him; nay, at that time, even gigantic elks showed themselves occasionally, and made nocturnal incursions into the neighbouring millet-fields of Totovecz; but at the first attempt to lay hands upon them, they would throw themselves into the innermost swamps, whither it was impossible to follow them....

On one of the brightest days of the year in which our story begins, a numerous hunting-party was bustling about an old-fashioned hunting-box which then stood on the borders of the forest.

The first rays of the sun had scarcely pierced through the thick foliage, when the grooms and kennel-keepers led out the hunters by their bridles and the hounds in leashes, which sprang yelping up to the shoulders of their keepers in joyful anticipation of the coming sport. The huge store-wagons, each drawn by from six to ten oxen, have already gone on before to fixed rallying-places, whither all the quarry is to be carried. The villagers for miles round have

been enlisted as beaters, and stand together in picturesque groups armed with axes, pitch-forks, and occasional muskets. A few smaller groups have been posted at regular intervals along the wood, with canoes made from the trunks of trees. Their duty is to scare the game back from the swamp, should it turn thither for refuge. Every man, every beast shows signs of that precipitancy, that ardour, that restlessness by which the true huntsman is always distinguishable; only a few of the older hands find time to sit by the fire and roast slices of bacon with perfect equanimity.

At last comes the signal for departure, the blast of a horn from the porch of the hunting-box; the retinue spring shouting upon their snorting horses; the unruly, barking pack drag the kennel-men hither and thither; the huntsmen wind up their heavy shooting muskets, and every one stands in eager expectation of their lord and his noble guests.

They have not long to wait. A cavalcade, with a few attendant pages, descends the hill. Foremost rides a tall, muscular man—the lord of the manor—the rest, as if involuntarily, linger some little way behind him. His broad shoulders and superbly-arched chest indicate herculean strength; his sun-burnt features are wonderfully well preserved, not a wrinkle is to be seen on them; his short clipped beard and his shaggy moustache, which is twisted sharply upwards, give his face a martial expression, and his very pronounced aquiline nose and coal-black, bushy eyebrows lend him a haughty, dictatorial air; while the dreamy cut of his lips, his mild, oval, blue eyes and high, smooth forehead throw a poetic shimmer over his peculiarly

chivalrous countenance. A round, unembroidered hat, surmounted by an eagle's plume, covers his closely-cropped hair; his upper garment is a simple green, shaggy jacket, which he wears open, thus allowing you a glance at his under-garment, a white buckskin dolman,<sup>[1]</sup> trimmed with silver braid. By his side hangs a broad scimitar in an ivory sheath, and the mother-of-pearl handle of a crooked Turkish dagger peeps forth from a scarlet girdle richly set with precious stones.

<sup>[1]</sup> *Dolman*. An Hungarian pelisse. A more magnificent kind, worn only on state occasions, is called the *attila*.

The pair which ride immediately behind him consists of a young cavalier and a young Amazon. The cavalier can scarcely have counted more than two-and-twenty summers, the lady seems even younger. A better-assorted couple you could find nowhere.

The youth has smiling, gentle, pallid features; rich chestnut-brown locks fall over his shoulders; a slight moustache just shades his upper lip; an eternal smile, nonchalance, not to say levity, are mirrored in his bright blue eyes; but for his brawny arms and his stalwart frame, the iron muscles of which protrude at the slightest movement through his tight-fitting dolman, you might take him for a child. His head is covered by a kalpag<sup>[2]</sup> of marten skin with a heron's plume in it; his dress is of heavy twisted silk stuff; down from his shoulders hangs a splendid tiger's skin, the claws meeting together round his neck in a gorgeous sapphire agraffe. He rides a pitch-black Turkish stallion, whose shabrack, richly embroidered with golden butterflies, is plainly the work of a gentle lady's hand.

[2] *Kalpag* or *Calpak*. A tall, skin cap of Tartar origin, part of the Hungarian national costume.

The Amazon, over whom the youth bends from time to time (doubtless to whisper some sweet compliment in her ear), is his very antithesis, and perhaps for that very reason tallies so well with him.

Hers is an earnest, dauntless, energetic countenance; her eyes are brighter than garnets; she loves to pout a little and arch her bushy but delicate eyebrows, which lend a proud expression to her features, and when she raises her flashing eyes and her coral-red lips expand into a peculiar enthusiastic smile, a heroine stands before you whose head, heart, and arm are as strong as any man's. Her jasper-black, braided locks, which fall half-way down her shoulders, are surmounted by an ermine kalpag, from the top of which waves a gorgeous plume of bird-of-paradise feathers. A light, lilac robe, meet for an Amazon, clings tightly to her slim waist, and sweeps down in ample, majestic folds over the flanks of her rose-white Arab. This robe is unbuttoned in front, so as to leave free her heaving bosom, which is covered right up to the neck with lace frills. Her short sleeves, richly trimmed with batiste, are fastened by intertwining gold cords. Over her left foot, which rests upon the stirrup, the long robe is thrown carelessly back, presenting us with a glimpse of her white satin, padded petticoat, and one of her little feet in its red morocco shoe. Her snow-white arms are half protected by silk embroidered buckskin gloves, which do not quite conceal the velvety skin, and the play of the well-developed muscles. Both form and face rather demand our homage than our love. A smile rarely rests on those features; the glance of her large, dark,

sea-deep eyes rests from time to time upon the youth who is bending over her, and then there beams from them such witchery, such tenderness—yet all the while her face is without a smile. A loftier, nobler longing is then visible on her face, a longing deeper than love, higher than the desire of fame—perhaps it is that self-consciousness of great souls who foresee that their names will be an eternal remembrance.

Behind the loving pair, ride side by side two cavaliers who, to judge from their dress, belong to the higher nobility. One of them is a man of about thirty, with a long, glistening black beard; he sits upon a full-blood Barbary charger, with a white star upon its forehead; the other is a sallow man advanced in years, whose long, light moustache is already touched with grey; an astrachan cap covers his high, bald, wrinkled forehead; his beard is carefully clipped, and his dress almost ostentatiously simple. No lace adorns his jacket, no fringe of any sort sets off the caparison of his good steed; his neckerchief, which peeps out of his dolman, might almost be considered shabby.

This man does not appear to stand very high in the estimation of his companion, and marks of annoyance at the neglect he suffers are plainly visible on his shrewd, not to say crafty, features. The reader would do well to study this man's face, for we shall often meet with him. Cold, withered features, thin fair hair and beard speckled with grey; a pointed, double chin; disdainful, contracted lips; keen and lively, red-rimmed, sea-green eyes; projecting eyebrows; a lofty, bald, shining forehead which, beneath the play of his emotions, becomes furrowed with wrinkles in all directions.

This face we must not forget; the others—the herculean horseman, the laughing youth, the stately Amazon—will only flit across our path and disappear; but he will accompany us all through our story, pulling down and building up wherever he appears, and holding in his hands the destinies of great men and great nations.

The bald-pate drew nearer to the cavalier trotting by his side, who was balancing his spear in one hand as if to test it, and said to him in a low tone, as if continuing a conversation already begun—

"So you will not interfere in the matter?"

"Pray don't trouble me with politics now," replied the other, with a gesture of angry impatience. "You cannot live a day without planning or plotting; but pray spare me for to-day! I want to hunt now, and you know how passionately I love the chase."

With these words he gave his horse the spur, galloped forward, and caught up the herculean horseman.

The other bit his lips angrily at this roughish flout, but immediately turned with a smile towards the youthful cavalier ambling in front of him.

"A splendid morning, my lord! Would that our horizon were only as serene in every direction!"

"It is indeed," returned the youth, without exactly knowing what he was saying, whilst his heroine bent over him with a darkening face, and whispered—

"I don't know how it is, but I am always suspicious of that man. He is continually asking questions, but never answers any himself."



At this moment the stately cavalier reached the hunting-party, returned their boisterous greetings, and halted close to them.

"David!" cried he to an old grey-bearded huntsman, who at once stepped forth, cap in hand.

"Put on your cap! Have the beaters taken their places?"

"Every one is in his place, my lord! I have also sent canoes into the swamp to scare back the game."

"Bravo, David! you know your business. And now set off with the dogs and the huntsmen, and strike into the path which we usually take. Our little company will be sufficient for my purpose. We mean to cut our way straight through the forest."

A murmur of surprise and incredulity began to spread among the huntsmen.

"Your pardon, gracious sir!" returned the old huntsman, who now took off his cap a second time, "but I know that way, and it is no good way for a god-fearing man. The impenetrable thicket, the bottomless waters, the sticky slime present a thousand dangers, and then there is the wide Devil's-dyke which goes right across the forest: no horse or horseman has ever leaped that dyke."

"We at any rate, my worthy old fellow, will go for it; we have done worse bits than that ere now. He who follows me will not come to grief; don't you know that I am Fortune's favourite?"

The old huntsman donned his plumed cap, and set out on his way with the others.

But now the bald-pate rode up to the hero's side.

"My lord!" remarked he calmly, but not without a touch of sarcasm, "I hold it a great blunder for a man to jeopardize his life for nothing, especially when he may turn it to good account. I know indeed that say and do are one with your lordship; but pray be so good as to cast a glance around, and you will perceive that we are not all men here; one of that sex is among us whom it were cruelty to expose to certain peril for the mere love of adventure."

During this speech, the hero gazed fixedly, not at the speaker but at the Amazon, and the fiery pride on his cheeks flamed up still higher when he saw how contemptuously the stately girl measured her unsolicited advocate from head to foot, and with what haughty self-confidence she chose a dart, adorned with ostrich feathers, from a bundle carried by a page, and then like a defiant matador planted the shaft firmly upon her saddle-bow.

"Look at her, now!" cried the hero. "Is that the girl you are so fearful about? I tell you, sir, she is my niece!"

The hero's exalted words rang far and wide through the forest like a peal of bells. There was, at that time, no voice in Hungary like his; so thunderous, so deep, and yet so melodious and penetrating.

The Amazon permitted the cavalier who had called her his niece to embrace her slim waist; she even allowed him to kiss her rosy red cheeks: in those days an Hungarian girl used to blush even when the kiss came from a kinsman's lips.

"Not in vain does my blood flow in her veins! Ha, ha! For valour I'll match her with the best of men. Have no fear for

her! The time is coming when she will face greater perils than any of to-day, and still hold her own."[\[3\]](#)

[\[3\]](#) The Amazon was Helen Zrinyi. She married first the young cavalier with whom we now meet her, Francis Rakoczy, and subsequently the famous Emerich Tököly, whose acquaintance we shall make presently. Her spirited defence of the fortress of Mohacz, 1689, against the Emperor is well known.

After these prophetic words, the rider pressed his spurs into his horse's sides; the wounded beast plunged and reared, but the pressure of a knee as hard as steel quickly brought it to reason.

"Follow me!" cried he, and the picturesque little group dashed after him into the depths of the forest.

Let us anticipate them. Let us go whither the stag rests at noonday in the shady groves, whither the heron bathes and the turtle basks in the sun.

What habitations are these which rise up before us, built upon piles, in groups of five and six, between the waters and the wilderness, little huts carved out of the stumps of trees with round, clay-plastered, red-thatched roofs? Who has built that dam there, so that the water may never fall too far below the thresholds of those tiny houses? Here dwell the diligent beavers whom Nature herself has taught the art of building. This is their colony. 'Tis they who have gnawed through the thick trees with their teeth; they who have brought those logs hither; they who have thrown up a bank to make a dam, and watch over its safety all the year round. Look there! One of them has just glided out of the lowest storey of his dwelling, which is under the water. With what mild and gentle eyes he looks around him! He has never yet seen man!

Let us go on further. In the shadow of an old hollow tree rests a family of stags. A buck and a doe with her two little fawns.

The buck has come forward into the sunlight; his stately form seems to give him pleasure; he licks his smooth, shiny coat again and again; softly scratches his back with his branching antlers, and struts about with a proud, self-confident air, daintily raising his slender legs from time to time: the undulating movements of his slim and supple form show off to the best advantage the play of his elastic muscles.

The doe lies lazily in the rank grass. From time to time she raises her beautiful head, and looks with her large black eyes so feelingly, so lovingly at her companion or at her sportive little ones, and if she perceives they have strayed too far, she utters an uneasy, plaintive sort of whine, whereupon the little creatures come bounding back to her helter-skelter, frisking and gambolling about their dam; they cannot keep still for a moment, all their limbs quiver and shake, and all their movements are so graceful, so lively, and so lovely.

Suddenly the buck stands motionless and utters a low cry. He scents danger and raises his nose on high; his distended nostrils sniff the air in every direction; he scratches up the ground uneasily with his feet; runs round and round in a narrow circle with lowered head, and shakes his antlers threateningly. Once more he stands perfectly still. His protruding eyes betoken the terror which instinctively seizes him. All at once he rushes towards his companion; with an indescribable sort of gentle whine they

rub noses together; they too have their language in which they can understand each other. The two fawns instantly fly in terror to their mother's side; their tender little limbs are trembling all over. Then the buck disappears into the forest, but so warily that the sound of his footsteps is scarcely audible. The doe however remains in her place, licking her terrified young (which return these maternal caresses with their little red tongues), and hastily raising her head and pricking up her ears at the slightest sound.

Suddenly she springs up. She has heard something which no human ear could have distinguished. In the far, far distance the forest rings with a peculiar sound. That sound is familiar to huntsmen. The hounds are now on the track. The beating-up has begun. The doe throws uneasy glances around her, but ends by quickly lying down in her place again. She knows that her companion will return, and that she must wait for him.

The chase draws nearer and nearer. Presently the buck comes noiselessly back, and turns with a peculiar kind of squeak towards his mate, who immediately springs up and scuds away with her young ones obliquely across the line of the beaters. The buck remains behind a little while longer, and tears up the ground with his antlers, either from fury, or on purpose to efface all traces of his mate's lair. Then he stretches out his neck and begins to yelp loudly, imitating the barking of the hounds, so as to put them on a wrong track, a stratagem which, as old hunters will tell you, is often practised by the more cunning sort of stags. Then, throwing back his antlers, he disappears in the direction taken by his mate.

Nearer and nearer come the beaters. The crackling of the down-trodden brushwood and the shouts of the armed men mingle with the barking of the dogs. The forest suddenly teems with life. Startled by the cries of the pursuers, scores and scores of hares and foxes dart away among the trees in every direction. Sometimes a panting fox makes for an open hole, but bounds back terrified before the fiery eyes of the badger which inhabits it. Here and there a grey-streaked wolf skulks along among the scampering hares, standing still, from time to time, with his tail between his legs, to look round for some place of refuge, and then, as the pursuing voices come nearer, running off again with a dismal howl.

And yet no one pursues these animals; the huntsmen are after a greater, a nobler prey, a stag with mighty antlers. The beaters draw nearer and nearer; the dogs are already on the track; the blast of a horn indicates that they are hard upon the stag.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" resounds from afar. The beaters, advancing from different directions, halt and fall into their places, completely barring the way. The din of the hunt approaches rapidly.

Shortly afterwards, a peculiar rustling noise is heard. The hunted stags, with their young ones, break through the thicket and disappear. A broad chasm lies between them and the beaters. Quick as lightning, both the noble beasts bound over the fallen tree-stumps which lie in the way, and reach the chasm. The pursuit is both before and behind, but the danger is greatest from behind, for there the herculean hero, the bold Amazon, and the ardent Transylvanian huntsman head the chase. The buck leaps across the broad

chasm without the slightest effort, raising both feet at the same time and throwing back his head; the doe also prepares for the leap, but her young ones shrink back in terror from the dizzy abyss. At this the poor doe collapses altogether; her knees give way beneath her, and bowing her head she remains beside her young. A dart, hurled by the Transylvanian huntsman, pierces the animal's side. The wounded beast utters a piteous cry, resembling the moan of a human being, but much more horrible. Even her slayer, moved by sudden compassion, forbears to touch her till she has ceased to suffer.

The two kids remain standing mournfully beside their dead dam, and allow themselves to be taken alive.

Meanwhile, the flying buck, shaking his heavy antlers with frenzied rage, rushes with bloodshot eyes upon the beaters who bar his way. The beaters, well knowing what this generally mild and timid beast is capable of in his valiant despair, throw themselves with one accord to the ground so as to allow him a free passage. A few of the dogs, indeed, go at him; but the now furious animal gores them with his antlers, hurls them bleeding to the ground, and then dashes off towards the swamps.

"After him!" roars the hero, in a voice of thunder, and he urges his horse towards the chasm over which the stag has just flown.

"Help, Jesu!" cry the terrified beaters on the opposite side; but the next moment their terror is changed to boisterous joy; the horse with his bold rider has come safely across.

Of the whole of his suite only two dared to imitate him, the stately Amazon and the gentle stripling. Both horses flew over the abyss at the same moment; the lady's long velvet robe flapped the air like a banner during the leap, and she threw a proud look behind her as if to inquire whether any man was bold enough to follow her.

Their suite thought it just as well not to risk their necks over such a piece of foolhardiness. Only the young Transylvanian made a dash at the chasm, although, as his horse had already injured one of its hind legs in the forest, he might have been quite sure that it was unequal to such an effort. Fortunately for him, just before the leap his saddle-girth burst and he was pitched across the chasm, just managing to scramble up the bank on the other side. His good steed, less fortunate, was only able to reach the opposite margin with its front feet; and after a wild and hopeless struggle, fell crashing back into the abyss below.

The three riders alone pursued the flying stag, which, now that he had got clear away, drew his pursuers after him into the marsh-lands. The hero was close upon his heels; the Amazon and her cavalier trotted a little on one side, for the forest was very dense here, and prevented them from going forward abreast. At last the stag forced his way into the thick reed-grown fens and took to the water, with the hero still in hot pursuit. The youthful riders were also on the point of plunging among the reeds, when two hideous, black monsters, fiercely snorting, suddenly confronted them. They had fallen foul of a brood of wild swine. The loathsome beasts had been lying, deaf to everything around them, in their bed of trampled reeds and slush, and only became



aware of the presence of strangers when the youth's horse, in bounding over them, trampled to death a couple of the numerous litter that lay crouching by the side of the sow. The rest of the speckled little pigs scattered squeaking among the reeds, while the two old ones, savagely grunting, advanced to the attack. The sow fell at once upon the slayer of her little ones; but the boar remained, for a moment, on his haunches; his bristles stood erect; he pricked up his ears, gnashed his tusks together, then, wildly rolling his little bloodshot eyes, rushed at the Amazon with a dull roar.

The youth flung his javelin at the sow from afar with a steady hand. The dart whirred through the air and then stuck fast, upright and quivering, in the horny skull of the impetuous beast, the point piercing to the very brain. The sow, not unlike a huge unicorn, ran forward a little distance; but its eyes had lost their sight, and it staggered past the rider only to fall down dead without a sound, a little distance off.

The lady calmly awaited the furious boar. She held her dart with a reversed grasp, point downwards, and drew tight her horse's reins. The noble steed stood perfectly motionless, but he pointed his ears, threw a sidelong glance at the boar, and at the very instant when the rabid beast had passed beneath the horse's belly, and was about to rip it asunder with a powerful upward heave of his gleaming tusks, the well-trained charger suddenly reared and sprang over his assailant; at the same instant the Amazon deftly stooped and hurled her dart deep between the shoulder-blades of the wild boar.

The mortally-wounded beast sank bellowing down into the long grass. Once more he would have rushed upon the girl, but the youth sprang, quick as light, from his horse, and gave him the *coup de grâce* with his dagger.

At that moment the blast of a horn was heard in the distance. The hero had brought down the stag. The other horsemen, who now overtook the leaders of the chase (but only after making a wide circuit), welcomed the hero of the day with loud cries of "Eljen!"<sup>[4]</sup>

<sup>[4]</sup> *Eljen!* = Long live!

The herculean horseman was mud-stained from head to foot, nor did the others look much better; only the Amazon's robe was spotless and untoned. Even at such times a girl knows how to take care of her clothes!

When the hero beheld the wild beast slain by his niece, which, as it lay stretched out stark and stiff before him, looked even larger than life-size, he was at first deeply affected, as if he now, for the first time, fully recognized the greatness of the peril to which his darling had been exposed, and he exclaimed, not without alarm—"My Nelly!" but immediately afterwards he stretched out his hand towards her with a smile, and gazed round triumphantly upon the bystanders.

"Did I not say she had my blood in her veins?"

Every one hastened to pay an appropriate compliment to the radiant heroine, who appeared to experience, on this occasion, something of that peculiar satisfaction which only belongs to the lucky huntsman.

The hero again looked proudly around till his eye fell upon the young Transylvanian, who was now sitting on a

fresh horse. Him he at once accosted, and pointing to the dead boar asked—

"Nicolas, my son! prithee tell me, does Transylvania produce such boars as that?"

Now, not to mention that the Transylvanian was already somewhat sore on account of his recent mishap, it was not to be expected that he, a Transylvanian born and bred, would for a single moment permit the assumption that any natural product of Hungary was superior to the like product of Transylvania to pass unchallenged, so he answered defiantly—

"Most certainly, and even finer ones."

Nothing at that moment could have more mightily offended the questioner than this curt answer. What! to tell an enthusiastic huntsman that he will find elsewhere game even finer than what he has just been lauding to the skies; game, too, which the darling of his heart has just slain! It was simply outrageous.

"Very well, my son, very well," growled the hero; "we shall see, we shall see!"

With obvious marks of annoyance on his face, he turned away from his contradictor, and ordered that the quarry should be conveyed at once to the hunting-box. Not another word did he exchange with any one but his Nelly; but her he literally overwhelmed with compliments and caresses.

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It was already late in the afternoon when the hunters sat them down to a simple but tasty repast spread upon a huge and level grass-plot in the midst of the wood. Wine and merry jests soon set everything right again; they talked of

everything at the same time, of war and the chase, of beautiful dames, of poetry (a fashionable subject then amongst the higher classes), and of the intrigues of courts; but even after all this blithe discourse the hero could not quite forget his grievance, and again he inquired impatiently

—

"So there really is excellent sport in Transylvania?"

The young Transylvanian began to feel this perpetual harping on the same string a little tiresome. He had never meant to be taken so literally. The bald-pate, remarking the growing tension, sought to change the conversation, and raising his beaker proposed the following toast—

"God keep the Turks in a good humour."

But the hero angrily overturned his glass.

"God grant no such thing!" cried he savagely. "I'm not going to pray for the goggle-eyed dogs now, after fighting against them all my days. The man who is always trying to change masters is a fool."

"Yet the Turk is a very gracious master to us," put in the young Transylvanian, with an ambiguous smile.

"Ha, ha! didn't I say so? With you, even Turks are bigger and finer than they are with us. Of course! of course! In Transylvania everything flourishes better than in Hungary: the boars are bigger, the Turks are daintier, than they are in this part of the country."

At this moment David, the old huntsman, approached the hero and whispered something in his ear. The hero's features brightened as if by magic, and springing from his seat he cried—"Give me my gun!" then, holding his long, silver-mounted musket in his hand, he turned towards his

guests with a radiant countenance. "All of you stay here. There is a colossal boar close at hand. You shall see him, my son," added he, tapping Nicolas on the shoulder. "Twice already have I vainly pursued the fellow; this time I mean to catch him. He is, I assure you, a descendant in the flesh of the Calydonian boar"—and with that, carried away by his enthusiasm, he hastened towards that part of the wood which the old huntsman had pointed out to him. David he presently ordered back: nobody was to accompany him.

"I know not how it is," whispered Helen to the youth at her side, "but I have a foreboding that my uncle is in danger. How I wish you were by his side!"

The youth said nothing in reply, but he instantly stood up and seized his gun.

"Pray don't go after him," remarked the Transylvanian, when he saw the young man about to hasten off. "You will only enrage him. He wants to do the whole business himself, and a man who has exterminated hordes of Tartars can easily dispose of a single brute beast."

And so they kept the youth back from going. The men went on drinking, and the lady remained in a brown study, glancing uneasily, from time to time, at the skirts of the wood.

Suddenly a shot resounded through the forest.

Every one put down his glass and glanced at his neighbour with a beating heart.

A few moments passed and then they heard the roar of a wild beast; but it was not the well-known roar of a mortally-wounded boar—no, it was a peculiar, gurgling, half-stifled sound that told of a fierce struggle.

"What is that?" was the question which rose to every one's lips. "Surely he would call out if he were in danger!" Then came a second shot. Every one instantly sprang to his feet. "What was that?" they cried. "Oh! let us go! let us go!" exclaimed the girl, trembling in every limb, and the whole company hastened in the direction of the shot.

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Our hero had scarcely advanced four or five hundred paces into the thicket when, at the foot of a mighty oak, he came upon the wild beast he sought. It was a gigantic boar, with span-long, glistening black bristles on its back and forehead; the tough hide lay, like plated armour, in thick folds about its huge neck; its feet were long and sinewy. Lazily grunting, it was making for itself a bed beneath the bushes in which its shapeless body was stretched out at full length, and it had found a place for its enormous head by rooting out with its tusks bushes as thick as a man's arm.

On hearing approaching footsteps, the monster irritably raised its head, opened wide its jaws, and cast a sidelong glance at its assailant.

Our hero knelt upon one knee so as to take better aim, and fired at the wild beast just as it suddenly raised its head, so that the bullet pierced its neck instead of its skull, wounding it seriously but not mortally.

The wounded boar instantly sprang from its lair, and gnashing its crooked tusks together so that sparks flew from them, rushed upon its foe. It would not have been difficult to have avoided such a furious attack by a skilful side-spring; but our hero was not the man to get out of any opponent's way; so he threw his gun aside, tore his dagger from its