

A PLUNGE INTO DANNEMORA.



"**F**AST, mine goot sir!" cries my driver, in his eagerness to be off; "we shall hardly get there by noon, unless we make haste."

"And what if we don't?" ask I, getting into the carriole.

"What if we don't!" echoes the Master of the Horse, scandalised at my unpatriotic apathy. "Why, the *explosions* are at noon

—the finest sight of all! all the English gentlemen go to see *them!* Good Heaven! is not the Herre Pastor ready yet?"

The question is answered by a jolly laugh from the old pastor himself, who jumps in beside me with a nimbleness over which his seventy-five years seem to have no power. The driver shakes his reins, the horses' bells jingle merrily, and away we go!

We are bound on a visit to the great mine of Dannemora, perhaps the most striking "sight" in Sweden; and, with the triple preparation of a good night's rest, a glorious summer morning, and such a breakfast as one can only get from a hospitable Lutheran pastor in patriarchal Sweden (comprising every national dainty from reindeer-tongue to fresh salmon), I am just in the humour for enjoying the expedition to the full. And certainly it is very enjoyable. Fresh air, bright sunshine, the luxury of swift motion; shadowy depths of green forest, through which a charming little brook goes dancing and sparkling among its smooth round stones; and in the foreground the neat little red-tiled houses* of the village, clustering—like chickens about the mother-hen—around the quaint old church, at one end of which stands the little many-gabled parsonage that we have just quitted. There is an atmosphere of old-world simplicity and repose (only too rare now-a-days in tourist-haunted Europe) about every feature of this primitive little place, with its black and white crossbeams, its sly little diamond-paned windows, its tilt-covered wagons lumbering behind teams of broad-horned oxen, and its queer, many-cornered market-place, overshadowed by one huge patriarchal tree. Here and there groups of sturdy labourers, in steeple-crowned hats and blue woollen stockings, stand chatting as they may have done in the days when a Reign of Terror hung darkly over beautiful Stockholm, and when the last of the blood-royal was skulking in the mines of Dalecarlia. From such little nooks as this came the stout soldiers who, under "Father Gustav Adolf," turned to flight, upon many a hard-fought field, the godless janissaries of Tilly and Wallenstein; and a single glance at the

firm, helpful, manly faces of these stalwart villagers is quite sufficient to show that, even in this peaceful age, the good old Svenske blood has not yet grown cold.

The highways of Eastern Sweden are as solid as those of granite-paved Finland itself; and, with such a team upon such a road, we make very short work of the distance, though to the devouring impatience of our charioteer the time doubtless seems long enough. However, even he is satisfied when we pull up at length, with a good ten minutes to spare, in front of a long, low, wooden building not unlike a warehouse, at the door of which the director-in-chief of the mine steps forward to greet us with a very hearty welcome.

"Glad to see you, Mr. K—," says he, in perfectly good English. "I thought you'd be coming about this time—nobody ever thinks of missing the explosions. We're just going to begin blasting now—will you come and look?"

I enter accordingly, and am led up to a kind of little sentry-box in the far corner, mounted by four steps, like the stairs of a pulpit. My host, with a knowing smile suggestive of a "great surprise" in store for me, motions to me to go up, and I do so unsuspectingly; but my first glance downward strikes me like a sudden shock. This innocent-looking pulpit masks a sheer precipice of 600 feet, over which I find myself hanging as if suspended in mid-air, with the whole of the wonderful panorama below outspread before me like a map. Notwithstanding the ghostly haze which rises from the masses of eternal ice below, I can see, as distinctly as if in a model under a powerful microscope, the ladders and barrows, and the swarm of human ants moving ceaselessly to and fro. But the pickaxes fall and the barrows roll without the slightest noise—for at that tremendous depth all sounds are extinct for those above; and this utter absence of sound, in a scene so crowded with life and bustle, has in it something very weird and unearthly.

"There's the realisation of our old Norse legends, which you are so fond of," remarks the old pastor stepping up beside me. "You remember how Helgi looked down into the 'secret places of Swarheim,' and beheld the trolls and gnomes burrowing in the deepest caverns of the earth? Well, here you have it all, just like a photograph."

"And a very picturesque one, too. But see! Why are they all running like that?"

"Getting under cover, you know. The train's going to be fired."

The tiny figures scatter in every direction; and in a few seconds the whole of that creeping ant-hill of busy labour lies void and lifeless as a sepulchre, making the scene still more weirdly impressive. Then all at once the universal hush is broken by a burst of sound such as no words can convey—like the loudest thunder of artillery blended with the sound of a mighty gong—and

* In many parts of Sweden the whole house is painted bright red, producing a very picturesque effect.

the echoes take it up, and roll it through every channel of the great gulf below, until each cleft and cranny seems to have a voice of its own. The dead hush that follows weighs upon our ears like a burden; and amid its utter silence we hear the *splash* of the falling rocks torn up by the explosion. Seven times is the great outburst repeated, till the overwhelming accumulation of sound overpowers even me, despite my experience of the echoes of Turkish cannon in the Bosphorus, and tropical thunder among the Brazilian Cordilleras. I seat myself upon the steps, and await the close of the concert.

"There's an end of it at last," says the pastor, laughing; "and now, as the rocks seem to have done flying about, I suppose we may as well go down."

"But what are we to go upon?" ask I. "Shall we have to take a flight on the back of a troll, or will Odin oblige us with a lift on the 'light-footed Sleipnir?'"

"You'll see directly," answers the old gentleman, with a chuckle. "Do you hear that chain rattling? That's our equipage coming up."

Sure enough, when I rise to look over into the pulpit, I find it completely blocked by an enormous wooden bucket, as big as an ordinary chest of drawers, and strongly undergirded with bands of iron. My companion and I scramble in. The miner who is to have the honour of being our chaperon perches himself above us, clinging fast to the rope. The signal is given, and we begin slowly to descend.

I will not attempt to describe that descent. There are things of which no description can convey even a shadow, and this was one of them. We are indeed "like them that go down alive into the pit"—a passage which recurs to me with tenfold force as we sink away from the busy, green, sunny world, and the cold, silent cavern engulfs us deeper and deeper in its dismal gorge. At the mouth of the pit we are surrounded by multitudes of little birds, which flutter around us as if bidding us farewell; their beautiful plumage, that glances in the sunlight as they flit to and fro, contrasting strangely with the dismal shadows into which we are about to plunge; but as we descend, even these leave us, and we are utterly alone. An immense solitude—a crushing, overwhelming silence. I think I never conceived the idea of perfect silence before. Even in the stillness of midnight, or of a calm in the lonely tropical seas, you have echoes, vibrations—the shadows, as it were, of sounds that have been—but here there is neither sound nor echo; it is the stillness of mid-air combined with the stillness of the grave. In that enormous isolation, even the presence of my comrades gives me no feeling of companionship—with two men close beside me, I am as utterly solitary as if I were quite alone.

We are now midway. The cheerless dimness which rises from below, gives a wan ghastly look to every crag and hollow of the great wilderness of buried mountains through which we are passing. Strange and monstrous forms, such as those with which the grim fancy of the Norseman peopled his native solitudes, loom giant-like through the leaden haze. Grim faces scowl at us as we pass; clawed hands start

forward, as if to bar our way; gaping jaws gnash at us, and huge half-seen monsters seem striving to topple loose crags upon our heads; but in all this multiplicity of furious life there is not the faintest sound! It is a hell in dumb show!

Suddenly the bucket is jarred by a heavy shock, which shakes it from top to bottom. We have just grazed a huge jutting crag, vast and shadowy as the fragment of some ruined planet—such as Martin would have peopled with the remnants of nations fleeing from the terrors of the Last Judgment.

And now at length, after an interval which seems immeasurable, sounds from below begin to break the tremendous silence. We hear, faintly at first, but ever more and more distinctly, the stroke of pickaxe and spade, the rumble of the barrows rolling to and fro, the cheery shouts of the workmen; and the sense of having been exiled from human companionship for a limitless space of time is so intense, as to defy even the palpable realities of time and space. Moment by moment, the shadows below grow less and less dark, the tiny figures of the workmen more and more distinct, the features of the strange panorama larger, and firmer, and clearer—till at length, with a violent shock, our bucket dashes itself upon the great sheet of ice and gravel at the bottom, and the journey is over. Instinctively I look at my watch, and start to find that the whole descent has occupied only seven minutes.

"I know now what men mean when they talk of living a lifetime in one moment," remark I to my companion as we disembark.

"Right!" answers he emphatically. "So do I."

When the first shock of the new impression is over, I begin to look curiously at the specimens of the "coming race" that flock around me as I alight—the famous miners of Dalecarlia, among whom Gustavus Vasa sought shelter in the evil days of long ago, and whose brawny arms lifted him once more into the throne from which he had been hurled. They are a wild-looking set—black, and grim, and ragged, and bearded as the gnomes of Swartheim; but, save in the stunting of their growth, this strange life seems to have told but lightly upon them. The rents in their rough clothing display muscles which few men would care to encounter; and there is no want of life in the jolly shout with which they welcome the arrival of their old friend the pastor—evidently a prime favourite with the whole gang.

"You see," explains a huge yellow-bearded Cyclops, with a patch over his right eye—knocked out by a splinter of flying metal some years ago—"You see, it's turn and turn about with us and the Herre Pastor; when he comes down-stairs, he visits us; and when we go up-stairs, we visit him."

"You go up pretty often, then?"

"Yes, we're better off than our horses; when they come down, they stay."

"Have you many horses in the mine?"

"Plenty, or we couldn't get our loads along; iron ore's heavy stuff. Most of them get blind after a bit; but they work well for all that."

"See now, min Herre," breaks in the old pastor,

with his jolly laugh, "do you notice any likeness between our friend Bjorn here and his daughter, who poured out your coffee this morning?"

"What?" exclaim I, "your servant—that pretty little Thyra, who ought to have her portrait in the Stockholm Gallery?"

"She's my daughter," says the old Cyclops, with a gleam of fatherly pride lightening through the blackness of his gnome-like visage; "and, as you say, she'd make a rare picture.—Herre Pastor, shall I show the English gentleman over the mine?"

"Do, my good fellow, and I'll go too."

And away we go accordingly—onward, ever onward, beneath huge arches that yawn like the mouth of a sepulchre; between overhanging crags that seem already toppling to crush us in their fall; past the black mouths of subterranean galleries, like little embrasures in the great bastions of rock that shut us in; while, at every step, the light of our guide's lamp is reflected on all sides in a blaze of glory—green, blue, yellow, purple—like a dream of the "Arabian Nights." Not an inch of roof or wall but sparkles like a diamond; and with vista after vista of splendour ceaselessly opening before me, I am ready to imagine myself the veritable Aladdin, following his *soi-disant* uncle upon that memorable expedition to the enchanted cavern, of which we all know the result.

But at this point our cicerone interrupts us with a shout of warning, and hustles us by main force into a little shed in a cleft of the rock, with the satisfactory explanation that "we shall be smashed if we don't make haste."

"What, another blast?" ask I.

"Only one this time—that big rock up yonder," says the Cyclops, pointing to a huge pinnacle which projects far overhead, like the turret of some mediæval castle. "See—there it goes!"

And again the dead silence is broken by that tremendous roar, which, now that we are actually in the midst of it, sounds tenfold louder than ever. The great rock unfurls itself like the leaves of a book flying open, and explodes in blocks big enough to crush a house. One fragment, fully half a ton in weight, comes thundering down close to the shed wherein we are ensconced, tearing up the ice and gravel with a horrible grinding crash, that bears grisly testimony to our probable fate had we remained outside. The old miner laughs grimly.

"That came down pretty well, didn't it? We can come out now—it's all over."

And out we come accordingly. The pastor and my guide hold a whispered consultation, which ends in their announcing that they must show me one thing more before I go, and marching me through a long, low, gloomy corridor, in the crannies of which we catch an occasional glimpse of miners hard at work, for the most part in silence, but breaking out ever and anon with a snatch of some hearty old native song. At length, as we turn a sharp corner, there breaks upon us a solemn subdued light, like that of some vast cathedral, falling full upon a gigantic face that projects itself from the opposite wall—a veritable human face, vast with all the vastness of the elder world, fixed in a grand passionless calm.

"How came that here?" ask I, looking at the mighty figure with involuntary reverence.

"No one knows," answers the old miner in an awestricken whisper. "Men say it was here before ever the mine was worked, and will be here still when all is done and forgotten; but I can't tell how that may be."

And this (a fit pendant to all that had gone before) was the last sight which I saw in the mine of Dannemora.

NON-COLLEGIATE STUDENTS AT CAMBRIDGE.



WE cannot begin our subject better than by quoting from the prospectus, which is issued from time to time by the University (and which may be had on application from the Rev. R. B. Somerset, 31, Trumpington Street, Cambridge), referring to non-collegiate students:—"Students are admitted members of the University without being members of any college or hostel.

Such students keep terms by residing in Cambridge with their parents, or in lodgings duly licensed, and are entitled to be matriculated, examined, and admitted to degrees in the same manner, and with the same status and privileges, as students who are members of colleges. They are under the jurisdiction of the Vice-Chancellor and Proctor, and are required to pay due obedience to all academical regulations." These students are controlled and superintended by a Board appointed by the University, and consisting

of a certain number of resident graduates, one of whom acts as Censor. The Censor bears the same relation to non-collegiate students that the tutor of a college bears to the college undergraduate. To him the student goes for information and advice; and if he desires to present himself for any University examination, he must do so through the Censor.

We will suppose the case of one who comes up to the University as an unattached student. On his arrival at Cambridge, he first of all calls on the Censor, whose address he has previously obtained, and produces a testimonial as to character, with a reference to two respectable persons, and, if a minor, a statement from his parent or guardian that the student has his permission to reside in the University as a non-collegiate student. Should the testimonial and reference be deemed satisfactory by the Board, he is admitted by that body. He then immediately begins to "keep his term." This phrase means residence in a duly licensed lodging-house at Cambridge for a certain time (at least two-thirds of each term;