

Literature, &c.

The American Magazines.
FOR SEPTEMBER.

From the Columbian Magazine.

THE WITCH CAPRUSCHE.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLETT.

In the dark ages, when Paganism ruled over the land and the light even of civilization but faintly shone, there lived a king in Denmark, whose name has not descended to later times. Yet he governed a fair country and possessed much power. At the period of this story he was in the decline of life, and had been twenty years a widower. His only child was a daughter, the beautiful Ruscha, whose mother had died in giving her birth.

In all of the neighboring kingdoms the fame of the princess Ruscha's beauty was widely spread; and many were the noble suitors for her hand. But the princess was proud and imperious as fair; she rejected every proposal of marriage, and treated her lovers with so much scorn, that almost all were incited to hate and speak ill of her. She thus raised up enemies on every side.

The old king was much incensed at this conduct and sharply reproved his daughter. "Was it not enough," he said—"that thou wouldst not make choice of one of thy suitors—but thou must be repulsed with such bitter contempt! Thy haughty bearing and evil tongue have converted these friends into foes. Murmur not therefore, at what I shall do: I am old and feeble; a few years—and I must depart from this earth to take my place among the heroes of Valhalla and drink the mead of Odin. Thou art young, and a woman; who will shield thee, when I am gone from the powerful warriors—thy enemies? By the hammer of Thor do I swear, thou shalt choose thee a husband—who may be thy protector and king in my place. If thou dost still refuse to do this I swear by the Odin's golden horn, out of which heroes drink, I will name me a successor! I will not suffer thee, ungrateful girl, to rule my people according to thine own capricious will!" When the king had thus spoken, he went out leaving the princess alone. Her face was crimson with anger, and her blue eyes flashed resentment. She paced the room for some time with unquiet steps; for the thought that the sovereignty might be wrested from her was too painful for her to bear. At length she threw herself into a seat and sat long with her fair head drooped upon her hands. Then starting up, as if she had suddenly formed a resolution she retired to her own apartment.

For many days after the old king showed much severity toward his daughter and his harsh rebukes were frequent. At length she informed him she was willing to choose a consort. "Let all the neighboring princes and nobles and those who have sought me in marriage," she said, "be invited to the court—that I may make choice among them." But her father answered, "Not so, by Odin and Freia! The princes and nobles of the neighboring countries have no longer any pleasure in thee! I counsel thee to choose one of thy own kinsmen. What sayest thou to Bue, the stout, or Eric—or Swed, the squinter?"

The princess curled her haughty lip in scorn but answered not. But after some days she signified her choice. The person she selected was not among her rejected suitors. It was Toke Jarl, surnamed the slender; he was of princely descent, possessed a large patrimony of land and was moreover distinguished for courage and manly beauty. He was richer than Ruscha's own kinsmen, so that the old king made no objections to his becoming the husband of his daughter and his declared successor. He despatched messengers to Toke Jarl to announce to him his good fortune. Toke was well pleased with the intelligence and praised the blue eyes and the ripe judgment of the princess. He ordered some of the best horses and his finest oxen to be led as a present to the king, with thanks for the honor done him; and announced that he would the next day present himself as a suitor before the beautiful Ruscha, who should never have reason to repeat her choice.

The marriage was celebrated with due splendor at the king's castle, where Toke Jarl proved himself a veritable hero; for he drank not only his father-in-law under the table, but also his cousins Bue, the stout, Eric, and Swed, the squinter; without showing himself the slightest symptom of inebriation. After this achievement he took the fair bride from her maidens and led her to the nuptial chamber.

Ruscha was not happy, even after her union with the object of her choice. Ambition was her ruling passion; and she longed to feel the golden circlet of royalty upon her brows, even before it could lawfully become hers by the death of her father. An evil spirit possessed her, and she hated the good old king from the day he had so harshly reproved her and proposed a marriage with one of her cousins.

She knew that Toke Jarl loved her passionately; and resolved to make him her instrument for the gratification of her wicked desires. She assumed a deep melancholy—and a grief worn aspect—as if she shed many tears in secret. "What ails thee, Ruscha?" would he ask; and she would make no reply. When Toke would swear by Thor and Odin that if any one had vexed her he should die. The cunning princess wept more bitterly, and whispered, "Couldst thou take away the life of the king, my father, and escape the infamy of being called his murderer?"

Toke Jarl started and looked earnestly and anxiously upon his wife. "It is the king," she continued, "who torments me day by day. I must die if he is suffered to live. Know also,

Toke, that he is about to disinherit me and thee, and to declare Eric his successor."

The brow of Toke Jarl grew black, "Then hast said it!" exclaimed he. "It shall be done!" And he went out hastily.

The same day one of his slaves, a Finlander by birth, stole from the armory of Eric an arrow marked with his name. Toke Jarl went forth into the woods with this arrow, where the king was accustomed to hunt.

When at evening the monarch returned not, men were despatched in search of him. They found his corpse in the wood, the arrow buried in his side. The body was brought back with loud lamentations; the people ran tumultuously to the palace gates; every one recognized the arrow, and the cry was, "Eric, the bloody Eric, hath slain our good king! Death to the murderer!" Toke Jarl despatched officers to arrest his wife's cousin, and had his head stricken off in the sight of all. Then he was proclaimed king and solemnly crowned, with Ruscha his wife.

The guilty pair were now at the height they had longed to reach; but happiness came not with power. On the contrary, both grew every day more and more gloomy and dejected, and each one distrusted the other. "If the queen scrupled not to doom her own father to death," thought Toke Jarl, "much less would she hesitate to compass my destruction!" And Ruscha reflected with equal reason, that he who had basely taken away an old man's life at her prompting, would as readily sacrifice her whenever his love should be transferred to another. They looked on each other therefore with suspicious eyes; the king watching closely every word and action of his consort, and jealously preventing her from any interference in the concerns of the kingdom, lest she should win from him the hearts of the people.

The queen hated her husband more and more every day and would gladly have rid herself of him but that she feared to undertake any deed of violence. The people loved their young sovereign, who ruled them wisely though he was severe even to cruelties in the matters of punishment.

Ruscha however was deceitful and cunning, and pondered day and night on the means of accomplishing her wishes without drawing suspicion on herself. One day she wandered alone in the forest, in the depths of which dwelt an old woman, whom common rumour accused of intercourse with evil spirits of the wood. The virtuous feared and shunned her, but the queen now sought her abode and was not long in finding her. The old woman was picking up sticks. She looked up as she saw her fair young visitor and a smile curled her withered lips.

"I am the queen," said Ruscha coming at once to the object of her visit. "I seek thy aid against Toke Jarl, my husband."

"What hath he done?" asked the witch.

"He practices treason against my life. I would be beforehand with him."

The old woman dropped her bundle of sticks, and stood upright looking full into the eyes of the queen. "I can do nought for thee," she said "till thou form a compact with me and those with whom I am leagued. Thou must sign this compact and give me thy blood; then shall thy veins be filled with the fire that animates immortal spirits and thou shalt never taste of death."

"Wilt thou promise me then, revenge on Toke Jarl?" asked Ruscha, her blue eyes flashing fire. The old woman nodded. "Then I will comply with thy conditions," said the queen; and the wood-witch led the way to a cave hidden from sight by very thick bushes and foliage that shut out the beams of sun even at noon day. Within the recesses of this cave the deep darkness was rendered more horrible by hideous shapes that flashed like tongues of flame before the sight, and by the sullen glare of the fire over which hung the caldron of infernal preparations. When the queen reappeared from that den of demons, a change had taken place in her looks; her skin before so delicately fair, had a strange dazzling glow, as if tinged with the reflection of sunset; her eyes were much darker and flashed with almost intolerable brightness. With a light step and joy in her face she returned to the city and the palace; having promised before she parted with the witch, to visit her on the seventh day of every month to renew the league into which they had entered.

From that hour king Toke Jarl was attacked with illness. During the day he suffered not, but as soon as night came, the most agonizing pains tortured him in all his limbs. It seemed to him as if molten metal, instead of blood, flowed through his limbs. The anguish was so intense that it threatened to destroy him. He grew every day more emaciated, and wandered like a spectre about his palace. All the science of his physicians could avail nothing.

The little Finnish slave, hopeless of relief for his master from ordinary means, determined on a desperate remedy. He went about through the woods, and upon the mountains, and gathered herbs in the moonlight, from which he prepared a drink and administered it to the king, who lay helpless on his couch and knew not what was done to him. After a while the pain abated; Toke Jarl rose up in bed and looked around him.

"What has been done to me?" he asked.

The Finnish slave threw himself on his knees before the king. "My gracious lord," he cried, "I know now what is your malady! I have sought the most poisonous herbs impregnated by the moonbeams and banded by evil spirits and distilled them into a drink of which you have taken. The potion has done you no harm, but driven away your pains. This would not have happened had your malady been a natural one. Now know I that my lord the king is bewitched; and I know moreover that

if he find not means to break the spell his life will be sacrificed and the land will have to seek another ruler.

Toke Jarl sprang in horror from his couch. "By Thor's hammer and the horn of Odin I swear," cried he, "if thou dost help me to discover who hath done me this evil turn, from that hour thou shalt be free, and the highest noble at my court!"

But the boy quietly seated himself on the footstool by the royal couch, and answered, "My lord and master, I would always remain your slave and servant, and receive from your hands my wheaten bread and honey, and cured bear's flesh and as much old mead as I can drink. May this be, I will speak my whole mind."

Toke Jarl nodded, and the boy went on: "Consider, my lord, how long it is since this bad demon had power over you! Was it not from that very hour when my royal lady the queen was missing all day from the palace and returned late, saying she had lost herself in the wood? Has she not three times since wandered in the same wood, and been lost, and returned at night? By all your gods, my king, and their horns and their hammers, of which I know nothing, I do believe that my lady the queen knows but too well the way to the dwelling of the old witch Runna, who can conjure all the wood spirits, and has for a servant, a dark looking elf, a little demon with red tongue always hanging out of his mouth."

The king grew paler and paler while his servant was speaking. Then he seated himself upon the bed side, and mused a while. At length he said, "Thou art right; yes, I do believe thou art right. May all good and evil spirits help me to take vengeance on my faithless wife. Tell me, boy, hast thou observed when the day returns?"

"The day after to-morrow, my lord."

"It is well; and the hour, knowest thou it?"

"I do, my lord. We will follow the queen and hear what she will say to old Runna."

"Well said, boy; now give me another draught of thy poison drink that I may go to sleep. Yonder golden horn is full of excellent mead, drink thou to my health."

Griep administered to the king another draught of the medicine, and the monarch fell into a slumber, while the boy crouched on the low stool, sipped the mead from the golden horn and pleased himself with the prospect of abundance of honey, wheaten bread and bear's flesh.

The next day and the following, queen Ruscha observed that the king gained strength visibly in spite of the power of her spell. The poison draught of the little Griep had restored him.

Her dismay was excessive. She longed impatiently for the seventh hour of the evening, and as soon as the West was crimson with sunset she departed, attired in a plain dress and her face concealed by a veil. She left the city, and with steps trembling from eagerness hastened into the forest.

Griep led the king also by a secret and shorter path through the wood close to the old witch's cave. There hidden among the bushes, but near enough to hear all that was said, they awaited the arrival of the queen.

Ruscha came at length, stood before the cave and called "Runna" three times. At third call a sullen rumbling noise was heard within the cavern; the iron door, which had been closed, opened slowly and the old witch appeared.

"What wouldst thou?" she asked.

"Help," cried Ruscha. "Thy spell has no longer any effect. For the last three days Toke Jarl has been on the recovery. In vain every night by thy direction I have strewed coals around his waxen image and enveloped it in poisonous vapours; he has seemed yesterday and to day stronger than ever."

The hag knit her brows; "If it be as thou say'st," she replied, "there must be a counter spell at work more potent than mine. If this avail not, thou must deprive the king of life at once."

"And lose the pleasure of tormenting him?" cried the evil queen. "But how can it be done?"

The witch laughed bitterly, for she was piqued at the failure of her magic in the first instance. "Were he a hero as mighty as the great Thor himself," said she, "he must yield to the word of power which I shall give thee."

Ruscha's eyes sparkled. "Oh, give it me, good Runna," she exclaimed.

Runna pronounced the word of power. The king listened breathlessly. "When thou dost meet Toke Jarl," continued the witch, "fix thine eyes steadily upon his; utter the word and call him by name. He will fall instantly struck down by its magic. Now, fare thee well. My spirits summon me."

The witch vanished, and Ruscha turned from the cave on her way homewards. At the entrance of the wood she suddenly encountered the king standing in a threatening attitude, with his drawn sword uplifted. She started back with a scream of terror; but with scornful mockery he shouted the word given her by Runna, adding her own name; and at the same time dealt her a furious blow with the sword, which cleft her head. Ruscha sank to the ground; Toke Jarl fled to his castle, wiping the blood from his sword with his hand, ere he returned it to his sheath. Soon his hand began to burn, as if scorched with fire. In vain he plunged it into water and moist earth; the horrible burning extended to his arm, gradually spreading over his whole body; and before many hours elapsed he expired in dreadful torments.

Ruscha could not die, as the witch had assured her, nor could she live like the other inhabitants of the earth. To this day it is said she wanders about her native country, a being who belongs neither to the living nor the dead.

Many persons have averred that she has been seen wandering at night, in white fluttering garments, with face beautiful but ghastly pale, her veil red with blood that continually flows from the gaping wound in her head. Old and young in Denmark believe in her existence, and that she sometimes appears. From the circumstance that the "word of power" given her by Runna, was supposed to sound like "Cap," that has become the popular prefix to her name, and she is universally known as the fair but evil witch Caprusche.

From the same.

TO A TRANSPLANTED FLOWER.

BY HENRY A. CLARK.

ONCE rambling o'er a sunny hill,
I found a wild flower blooming there,
With gentle care and wondrous skill,
Each leaf was made as passing fair,
Each hue was painted and each fibre wove
As fairest flower that lady tends with love.

Such is the goodness of our God—
Though "many a flower must bloom unseen,"

Yet all that blossom from the sod,
Are fair and beautiful and green;
Alike his kindness to the forest flower
And to the loveliest in the garden bow.

Plant of the wildwood! far away
I bore thee from thy forest home.
The morning lark—the chattering jay,
And dark brown thrush no more may come

To sip the dew which cloudless twilight
Leaves thee,
Or watch the hues each sunny morning give
Thee.

Between a violet and a rose,
I placed thee in a garden fair,
Where every gentle wind that blows
Might waft sweet kisses on the air;
Companionship I thought would joy restore
And make thee mourn thy forest home no more.

Alas! I saw thee droop and die,
I saw thy hues grow dim and pale;
I heard the wind that rustled by,
Thy melancholy fate bewail,
And o'er thee bent thy sisters of the bow
As if they wept the lovely forest flower.

I wonder not the poor flower died,
For never—though that home be rude
In wild wood deep, on rough hill side,
In dark and lonely solitude—
Oh, never can there be to man, an earth
So green, or sky so pure, or stranger heart.

So welcome, and so warm and bright,
As where his boyhood's years fled by.
Like golden rays of purest light
Shed from a cloudless morning sky.
To every heart the cherished home of birth
Is dearer—lovelier than all else of earth.

From the Boston Atlas.

PULPIT PORTRAITS OF POPULAR
PREACHERS.

BY A COSMOPOLITAN.

EDWARD IRVING.

Who has not heard of Edward Irving? the eloquent, the gifted, the pious, the erratic Irving? It was my good fortune, whilst in London, frequently to hear him preach, both before and after his secession from the Church of Scotland, and never shall I forget the manner, the matter, and his manner. I once, also, met him towards the close of his life, in the social circle, and I will endeavor to give the reader some account of him as a man and a minister.

He was, as every one knows, at one period, pastor of a Scotch Church, in London, and there it was that I first heard this remarkable individual. One Sunday morning I proceeded, two hours before the time for the commencement of the services of the church, and even, at that early hour, hundreds were waiting until the doors should be opened, all eager to obtain admission.—Long before the crowd was let in, the carriages of Duke this, Lord that, and Sir something the other, drove up, and disgorged their freights of wealth, and fashion, and beauty, for Irving was then the rage, and undergoing the process of being spoiled. He was, indeed the great Sunday Lion of London, and what would the fashion-hunters of the modern Babylon do, without an idol. Have one they must, and have one they will, whether it be a specimen of mental greatness, or something the other, drove up, and disgorged their freights of wealth, and fashion, and beauty, for Irving was then the rage, and undergoing the process of being spoiled. He was, indeed the great Sunday Lion of London, and what would the fashion-hunters of the modern Babylon do, without an idol. Have one they must, and have one they will, whether it be a specimen of mental greatness, or something the other, drove up, and disgorged their freights of wealth, and fashion, and beauty, for Irving was then the rage, and undergoing the process of being spoiled. He was, indeed the great Sunday Lion of London, and what would the fashion-hunters of the modern Babylon do, without an idol. Have one they must, and have one they will, whether it be a specimen of mental greatness, or something the other, drove up, and disgorged their freights of wealth, and fashion, and beauty, for Irving was then the rage, and undergoing the process of being spoiled.