

Select Tale.

THE WITCH WIFE.

BY U. G. WHEATIER.

When a boy, I occasionally met at the house of a relative in the adjoining town, a stout red nosed old farmer of the neighborhood. A fine tableau he made of a winter's evening, in the red light of a birch log fire as he sat for hours watching its progress, with sleepy half shut eyes, changing his position only to reach the cider mug on the shelf near him. Although he seldom opened his lips save to assent to some remark of his host, or to answer a direct question, yet at times, when the cider mug got the better of his taciturnity he would amuse us with interesting details of his early experiences in the Ohio Country.

There was, however, one chapter in these experiences which he usually held in reserve, and with which, the stranger intermeddled not. He was not willing to run the risk of hearing that which was the frightful reality turned into ridicule by scoffers and unbelievers. The substance of it, as I received it from one of his neighbors, forms as clever a tale of witchcraft as modern times have produced.

It seems that when quite a young man he left the homestead, and strolling westward, worked his way from place to place until he found himself in one of the French settlements on the Ohio river. Here he procured employment on the farm of a widow; and being a smart active fellow, and proving highly serviceable in his department, he rapidly gained favor in the eyes of his employer. Ere long, contrary to the advice of the neighbors, and in spite of some discouraging hints touching certain matrimonial infelicities experienced by the late husband, he resolutely stepped into the dead man's shoes; and the mistress became the wife, and the servant was legally promoted to the head of the household.

For a time matters went on cosily and comfortably enough. He was now lord of the soil; and he had laid in his crops of corn and potatoes, salted down his pork, and piled up his wood for winter's use, he naturally enough congratulated himself upon his good fortune, and laughed at the sinister forebodings of his neighbors. But with the long winter months came a change over his love's young dream. An evil and mysterious influence seemed to be at work in his affairs. Whatever he did after consulting his wife, or at her suggestion resulted favorably enough; but all his schemes and projects were unaccountably marred and defeated. If he bought a horse it was sure to prove spavined or wind-broken. His cows either refused to give down their milk, or giving it perversely kicked it over. A fine sow which he had bargained for, repaid his partiality by devouring like Saturn, her own children. By degrees a dark thought forced its way into his mind. Comparing his repeated mischances with the anti-nuptial warnings of his neighbors, he at last came to the melancholy conclusion that his wife was a witch. The victim in Motherwell's ballad of the Demon Lady, or the poor fellow in the Arabian tale who discovered that he had married a ghoul in the guise of a young and blooming princess, was scarcely in a more sorrowful predicament. He grew nervous and fretful. Old dismal nursery stories and all witch lore of boyhood came back to his memory and he crept to his bed like a criminal to the galleys, half afraid to fall asleep lest his mysterious companion should have a notion to transform him into a horse, get him shot at the sixity and ride him to a witch meeting. And as if to make the matter worse, his wife's reflections seemed to increase as his troubles thickened upon him. She aggravated him with all manner of caresses and endearments. This was the drop to much. The poor husband recoiled from her as from a waking nightmare.

His thoughts turned to New England; he longed to see once more the old homestead, with its tall well-sweep and buttered rich bottom lands of his new home for his father's rocky pasture, with its crop of stunted mulleins. So one cold November day, finding himself out of sight and hearing of his wife, he summoned courage to attempt an escape, and resolutely turning his back on the west plunged into the wilderness towards the sunrise. After a hard and long journey he reached his birthplace, and was kindly welcomed by his old friends. Keeping a close mouth about his unlucky adventure in Ohio, he soon after married one of his schoolmates, and by dint of persevering industry and economy, in a few years found himself in possession of a comfortable home.

But this evil star still lingered above the horizon. One summer evening on returning from the hay field, who should meet him but

his witch-wife from Ohio! She came riding up the street on her old white horse, with a pillow behind the saddle. Accosting him in a kindly tone, yet not without something of gentle reproach for his unhandsome desertion of her, she informed him that she had come all the way from Ohio to take him back again.

It was in vain that he pleaded his later engagements; it was in vain that his new wife raised her shrillest remonstrances, not unmingled with expressions of vehement indignation at the revelation of her husband's real position; the witch-wife was inexorable; so he must and that speedily. Fully impressed with a belief in her supernatural power of compelling obedience, and perhaps dreading more than witchcraft itself the effects of the unlucky disclosure on the temper of his New England helpmate, he made a virtue of the necessity of the case, bade farewell to the latter amidst a perfect hurricane of reproaches, and mounted the white horse, with his old wife on the pillow behind him. Of that ride Burger might have written a counterpart of his ballad:

"Hand, tramp, along the shore they ride,
"Splash, splash, along the sea."

Two or three years had passed away bringing no tidings of the unfortunate husband, when he once more made his appearance in his native village. He was not disposed to be very communicative; but for one thing, at least, he seemed willing to express his gratitude. His Ohio wife having no spell against intermittent fever, had paid the debt of nature and left him free, in view of which his surviving wife, after manifesting a due degree of resentment, consented to take him back to her bed and board; and I could never learn that she had cause to regret her clemency.

GENERAL SCOTT ON THE EASTERN WAR.—The Washington correspondent of the Charleston Mercury writes as follows:

"I had recently the pleasure of hearing the criticism of General Scott on the war of the Crimea. I look upon Scott as one of the great captains of the age, and I listened with great interest to his ideas. He says the allies committed a great blunder in delaying the attack upon Sebastopol as long as they did; that immediately after the raising of the siege of Silistria, they should have attacked Sebastopol, at which time there was a comparatively small force in the Crimea; that the allies cannot take Sebastopol unless they receive reinforcements, giving them a superiority of force to the extent of from thirty to fifty per cent; that the Russian regular soldiers are the best troops in the world for defence; they never fly, but perish unless ordered to retreat. He thinks the allies labor under great disadvantage in having two commanding generals; that the road to victory is through unity of design. The inference I would draw from General Scott's idea is that Sebastopol will not be taken; for I doubt whether the allies can throw such a preponderance of force there as is necessary. The General further said that the allies could not re-embark now without immense loss of men, and all the materials of war in camp except the weapons in their hands."

The old man was toiling through the burden and heat of the day in cultivating his field with his own hand, and depositing his promising seeds into the fruitful lap of yielding earth. Suddenly there stood before him, under the shade of a huge linden tree, a vision. The old man was struck with amazement.

"I am Solomon," spoke the phantom, in a friendly voice. "What are you doing here, old man?"

"If you are Solomon," replied the venerable laborer, "how can you ask this? In my youth you sent me to the ant; I saw its occupation, and learned from that insect to be industrious and to gather. What I then learned I have followed out to this hour."

"You have only learned half your lesson," resumed the spirit. "Go again to the ant, and learn from that insect to rest in the winter of your life, and to enjoy what you have gathered up."—German Allegory.

PROFANITY OF DOESTICKS.—We recently heard a very pious and upright old lady, who was in the habit of reading frequently from newspapers for the entertainment of her children, reading some of Doestick's letters. She read one with much apparent satisfaction, till she came to the name of one of Doestick's friends, whereat she suddenly ceased, and with sorrowful countenance studied the word for some minutes, but at length exclaimed:

"Well, it is Dan Phool; I can't make anything else of it."

Doesticks is "done for" in that family.

Interesting Sketch.

NAPOLEON AND THE SWISS GIRL.

[From Madame Janet's Napoleon.]

The following adventure occurred in the brilliant days of Napoleon's empire:

It is well known that he was fond of going about Paris early in the morning, accompanied only by the Duke de Frioul, and was always greatly pleased when he escaped being recognized. About six o'clock one morning in the month of March or April he left the Elysee early, in company with Duroc. They bent their course toward the Boulevards, and on arriving there, the Emperor observed that they had got out very early, as all the shops were yet closed. "I must not play the Haroud-al-Raschid so early," said he; "besides, I believe it was always at night that he wandered forth with his faithful Giaffar." When they arrived at the Passage du Panorama, some of the shops were already opened. One of them particularly attracted the Emperor's attention. It was the celebrated *magazin* of Florence alabaster, which was kept then as it is now, by M. L. and his sister, natives of Switzerland. There was at that moment nobody in the shop but a servant girl, who was sweeping it, and whose movements were much constrained by the fear of breaking any of the brittle but valuable articles around her. The Emperor was amused at the cautious way in which she performed her task, and after he had stood looking at her for some time, he said, "Ah ca! who keeps this shop? Is there neither master nor mistress here?"

"Do you want to buy anything?" said the girl, suspending her labor. Then leaning on her broom she rested her chin on her two hands, and stared the Emperor full in the face, apparently half inclined to laugh at his eccentric appearance. Certainly it would be difficult to imagine a more comical figure than Napoleon presented in his Haroud-al-Raschid costume, as he used to call it. He wore the famous gray frock coat; but it was not the coat itself, it was the make of it which rendered it so singular. The Emperor would never allow his clothes to be in the least degree tight; and consequently his tailors made his coats as if they had measured them upon a sentry-box. When he married Maria Louisa, the King of Naples prevailed on him to have his clothes made by his tailor. The Emperor wore them most courageously for a short time; but he could endure the torture no longer, and he begged for mercy. He submitted the question to the Empress, who as long as she could ride on horseback, and take four or five meals a day, was always good humored and willing to agree to anything. She therefore granted Napoleon full power to dress according to his own fancy; saying that she liked the Emperor as well one way as another. Perhaps she would have spoke more correctly had she said, *she did not like him any better one way than another.*

With the loose frock coat above described, the Emperor wore a round hat slouched over his forehead, to prevent his being recognized. His unfashionable appearance, joined to his abrupt and unceremonious manner, led the servant to conclude, at the first glance, that he wished only to purchase some trifle worth about ten or fifteen francs, and that it was certainly not worth while to call her young and pretty mistress for so paltry a customer. But the Emperor thought differently, and after looking about him for a few minutes he asked in an authoritative tone whether there was any one to whom he could speak. Mademoiselle L., who had just risen, at that moment came down stairs. On seeing her, the Emperor was struck by her beauty and elegant appearance; and in truth she might well have vied with the finest woman of the imperial court. "Parbleu, madame," said the Emperor, touching the brim of his hat (for he could not venture to take it off lest he should be known), "it would appear that you are not very early folks here. A good shopkeeper should look after her business better." "That would be very true, sir," replied Mademoiselle L., "if business were going on well. But as it is, it matters very little whether we are in our shops or not." "Is trade then so very bad?" said Napoleon examining various things on the counter. "Ruined, sir, totally ruined. I know not what will become of us." "Indeed I had no idea that France was in so pitiable a condition! I am a foreigner; I wish to make a few purchases, and at the same time I should like to hear from some agreeable person as yourself some particulars respecting the state of business in Paris. What sort of vases do you call these?" "Those are the medice's form," replied Mademoiselle L., "they are very beautiful. What is the price of them?" Mademoiselle L. opened at once her ears

and her eyes. The vases were marked at three thousand francs. She told Napoleon the price of them, but he merely nodded his head, and then said, "Pray what is the reason that trade is so bad?" "Oh sir, as long as that little man, our Emperor, is so madly intent on war, how can we hope to enjoy either prosperity or happiness?" As she spoke these words, Mademoiselle L. threw herself into a chair, and the Emperor stood looking at her with the admiration and respectful interest which her beauty was calculated to excite. "Is your husband with the army?" inquired the Emperor. "I am not married sir; I live here with my brother, whom I assist in carrying on his business. We are not French, we are Swiss." "Ah! ah!" said the Emperor; and he uttered these exclamations with as much indifference as if he had been yawning. "Well, I will purchase these two Medice's vases. I will send for them at eleven o'clock. Take care to have them ready."

With these words, which were delivered in a truly imperial tone of authority, he touched the brim of his hat and darted out of the shop, beckoning the Duke de Frioul to follow him. "That girl is very interesting," said he to Duroc, as they left the Passage du Panorama. "When she told me she was a Swiss, I fancied I beheld before me one of the wives or sisters of the heroes of the Seutly. Do you think she knew me?" "I am confident she did not, sire. Her manner was too calm and too self possessed. She had no suspicion in whose presence she was."

At eleven o'clock, two porters, accompanied by a footman in imperial livery, arrived at the shop of Mademoiselle L. The footman was the bearer of a little billet, requesting that the lady would herself accompany the vases and receive the payment for them.

"And where am I to go?" said Mademoiselle L., trembling; for on seeing the Imperial livery she began to regret the freedom with which she had spoken to her customer in the morning. "To the Elysee Napoleon, mademoiselle," said the footman. The vases were carefully packed and delivered to the porters, and Mademoiselle L., accompanied by her brother, followed them trembling like an aspen leaf; yet she was far from suspecting the whole truth. On arriving at the Elysee Napoleon, they were immediately ushered into the Emperor's cabin. He took three bills of a thousand francs from his desk, and presenting them to Mademoiselle L., said with a smile, "Another time, mademoiselle, do not be so ready to murmur at the stagnation of trade." Then wishing her a good-morning, he retired into his interior apartment.

REMARKABLE DISCOVERY.—A curious work has lately been published in France on the popular literature of the country, but particularly of that class which is called "La Literature du Colportage," such as pamphlets, almanacs, hand books, chap books and others "for the million." The history of these almanacs is curious, and their contents still more so. As a specimen of the queer stories contained in them most of which, it is said, are implicitly believed, because they are printed in such reliable works, we quote the following.

A fisher for crabs, near Etreat, on the coast of France, having ventured out on the rocks which spread along the base of the steep cliffs, found in a little hollow basin a bottle which had been left there by the waters of the main sea. The bottle was carefully stopped. Having been broken by the crab fisher, he found in it a parchment on which were traced the following lines:

"I have now floated on these waters for eight and thirty days. Thank God, I am in good health, and also my children, but my animals give me a great deal of trouble. The fox will eat the chickens, the wolves bite the sheep, and the lions eat upon me now and then glances which do not at all raise my spirits. I begin to be very uneasy. I was certainly wrong not to bring a couple of Van Amburgs with me in the ark. Yesterday I sent out my rati to get me some news. The shabby fellow has not come back. The lion is looking at me and shooting out his tongue. How will it end? If I am eaten, I hope somebody will find this document. NOAH."

MOJE TROUBLE IN KANZAS.—One of the provisions of the Nebraska-Kansas bill vests in the Governor of Kansas the power of appointing justices of the peace and other local officers in the territory. The Governor in the exercise of this power, did not appoint such persons as suited the Missouri party, and accordingly the latter have held a meeting at Kickapoo City, at which they elected other justices to act instead of the legal ones. This is a new version of the squatter sovereignty.

COURTING IN CHURCH.

An eccentric rector remarked a gentleman at church who was not a parishoner, but who Sunday after Sunday placed himself in a pew adjoining that of a young widow.

On the first occasion, he detected him slyly drawing the lady's glove from off the back of the pew where she was accustomed to place it—her hand and arm were delicately fair.

By and by the lady's prayer book fell—of course accidentally—from the edge of her pew into the gentleman's. He picked it up—found a leaf turned down, and scanned a passage which evidently caused a smile of complacency.

Our minister saw all their movements, and continued to watch them with a scrutinising eye for two successive Sundays.

On the third, as soon as the collects were read, and while the beadle yet obsequiously waited to attend him to the chancel, our eccentric pastor, in a strong and distinct voice, said:

"I publish the bans of marriage between M—— and H——," deliberately pronouncing the names of the parties. "If any of you know any just cause," &c.

The eyes of the whole congregation were turned on the widow and the gay Lothario; the lady suffused with blushes, and the gentleman crimsoned with anger; she fanning herself with vehemence, and he opening and shutting the pew door with rage and violence.

The minister, meanwhile, proceeded to his accustomed duties with the same decorum and ease as if perfectly ignorant of the agitation he had excited.

The sermon preached—and the service ended, away to the vestry rush the parties at the heels of the pastor.

"Who authorised you, sir, to make such a publication of bans?" demanded they both in a breath.

"Authorised me?" said he, with a stare, that heightened their confusion.

"Yes, sir, who authorised you?" "Oh," said the minister, with a sly glance alternately at each, "if you don't approve of it, I'll forbid the bans next Sunday."

"Sir," said the lady, "you have been too officious already! Nobody requested you to do any such thing. You had better mind your own business."

"Why, pretty dear," said he, patting her on the cheek "what I have done is all in the way of business, and if you do not like to wait for three publications, I advise you, sir, turning to the gentleman—"to procure the licence, the ring, and the fee, and the whole may be settled as soon as to-morrow."

"Well," replied the gentleman, addressing the lady, "with your permission I will go to them, and we may be married in a day or two."

"Oh, you may both do as you please," prettily, but nothing loth, replied the widow. It was a day or two after that the licence was procured. The parson received his fee, the bridegroom his bride, and the widow for the last time threw her gloves over the pew, and it was afterward said all parties were satisfied.

WHERE CORK COMES FROM.—Cork is nothing more or less than the bark of evergreen oak, growing principally in Spain, and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean—in English gardens it is only a curiosity. When the cork-tree is about fifteen years old, the bark has attained a thickness and quality suitable for manufacturing purposes, and after stripping, a further growth of eight years produces a second crop—and so on at intervals, for even ten or twelve crops. The bark is stripped from the tree in pieces two inches in thickness, of considerable length, and of such width as to retain the curved form of the trunk when it has been stripped. The bark peeler or cutter, makes a slit in the bark with a knife, perpendicularly from the top of the trunk to the bottom; he makes another incision parallel to it, and at some distance from the former and two shorter horizontal cuts at the top and bottom. For stripping off the pieces thus isolated, he uses a kind of a knife with two handles and a curved blade. Sometimes after the cuts have been made he leaves the tree to throw off the bark by the spontaneous action of the vegetation within the trunk. The detached pieces are soaked in water, and are placed over a fire when nearly dry; they are, in fact, scorched a little on both sides, and acquire a somewhat more compact texture by this scorching. In order to get rid of this curvature, and bring them flat they are pressed down with weights while yet hot.

Now, then, Thomas, what are you burning off my writing table?" said an author to his servant. "Only the paper that's written all over; I haven't touched the clean," was his reply.