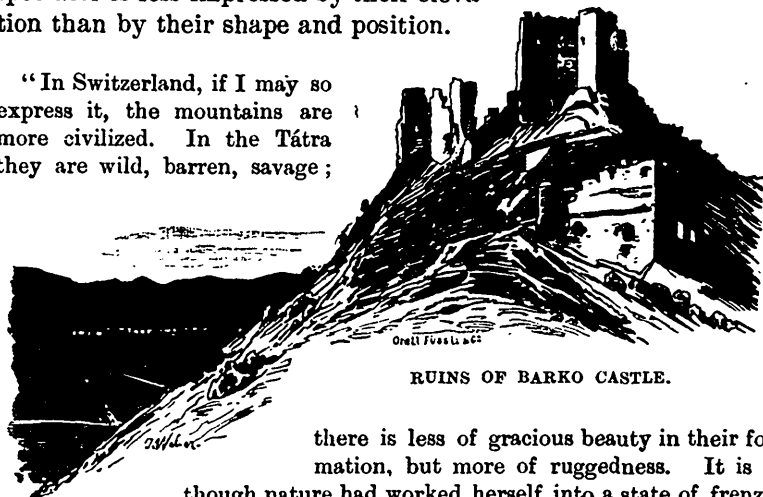


"As we stepped into it, clad in our white, sepulchral vestments, and assisted by a dark and muscular Charon, it was difficult to believe that we were not about to cross a veritable Styx: the black waters in which the torches were reflected, the curious dress of our attendants, with their singular Slav physiognomies, together with our own ghost-like garments, all favoured the illusion. The salt is exceedingly compact, and, as a rule, unmixed, except near the surface, with any extraneous matter. . . . Some of the chambers have attained the size of from one to two thousand feet in width, and one hundred feet in height. Numerous fossils are continually being found in the rock, which is believed to be of a tertiary formation."

Almost due south of Wieliczka, forming the border-line between Galicia and Hungary, rises the Tatra chain of mountains. Of less elevation than the peaks of Switzerland, these mountains rise thousands of feet above the level of perpetual snow. But the spectator is less impressed by their elevation than by their shape and position.

"In Switzerland, if I may so express it, the mountains are more civilized. In the Tatra they are wild, barren, savage;



RUINS OF BARKO CASTLE.

there is less of gracious beauty in their formation, but more of ruggedness. It is as though nature had worked herself into a state of frenzy, and created them, without either forethought or arrangement."

These barren summits appear to be devoid of vegetation. No Alpine flower lifts up its delicate petals to the light. All is desolate, as if smitten with a curse. Apparently our authoress has invented a superstition of her own, for her volumes are dedicated "To all who love mountains, by one who worships them."

The most impressive features of Hungary must be its vast plains and its mighty rivers. These mighty European prairies cover an area of over thirty-seven thousand English square miles, level as a summer lake. Some of these plains are in a high state of cultivation; some are mere swamps; and others are only sandy wastes. The Alföld, which is, when interpreted, "the low-lands," in contradistinction to the Felföld, or the "high-lands," is the name of the portion of the country lying east of the Danube.