

## THE LOCK OF HAIR.

I hold in my hand a lock of hair,  
A single lock of the deepest gray,  
A lock that was cut from a well-loved head  
That has lain in the grave for many a day.

My eyes are dimming, I cannot help  
The feelings I have of grim despair,  
For I long to see the face once more  
On which once fell this lock of hair.

Sleep on in the grave and take sweet rest,  
The bitter tears for thee I shed,  
As I think of the day they came and gave  
Me the lock they had cut from my mother's head.

My thoughts are away in the happy past,  
When she was young, and I was a boy,  
And I still recall her tender love,  
And her pride of me, and her faith and joy.

I remember well the great blue eyes,  
And the face unmarked by grief or care,  
And this lock, tho' now of so deep a gray,  
Once lived in a head of golden hair.

I remember the way she coaxed, and nursed,  
And soothed me so oft with her gentle talk;  
It was she who laughed with fond delight  
When my infant feet first tried to walk.

It was she who knelt by the little cot,  
And prayed for me over and over again,  
And wept like a child herself if she thought  
I suffered the slightest cark or pain.

It was she who sang me the evening hymns  
That I think of now to this very day,  
And I fancy still I can hear her voice,  
As I gaze on this lock of silver gray.

It was she, when I passed from her side and went  
Into a world of noise and strife,  
Who ever prayed for the son she loved,  
And thought so much of his ways and life.

And I can by year, as time flew on,  
And I grew up to be older and older,  
The days went by, but I knew her love  
For me had grown warmer but never colder.

And when they told me that she was dead,  
I could not shudder, or move, or cry,  
But I prayed myself on that bitter day,  
And I longed myself to die.

And since that day I have held most dear,  
And I do not exchange it for life I say,  
For it's all I have of a mother's love,  
This little lock of silver gray.

Toronto. A. D. STEWART.

## GEIER-WALLY:

A FABLE OF THE TYROL.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HARD WOOD.

When Wally again opened her eyes she was surrounded by the deepest gloom: the fire was extinguished, the bells were silent, the Asche thundered in the ravine far below, and high above her head glittered a star. She looked up to it as she lay motionless on her back, and it gazed down upon her like the eye of Providence. A wondrous consolation breathed through the night. The wind swept over her feverish brow with a soft, cool touch, and she started up and began to collect her thoughts. It could not be very late, for the moon had not yet risen. So the fire had been quickly extinguished. It must surely be so; how could flames spread when so many were on the spot ready to aid in putting them out? She knew not how it was; she searched the inmost depths of her soul, and could not feel guilty. She had only done it to defend herself in deadly peril, to escape from her persecutors by giving them something else to do. She was well aware that they would call her incendiary—but was she? She raised her eyes to the star above her head. It seemed as if, for the first time in her life, she was alone with God, and the words He uttered were those of pardon. The clear night sky looked peacefully down upon her; it was for the sake of that sky she had done the deed. Only beneath this lofty starry dome had she room to breathe; to remain imprisoned in the close cellar, without light, for weeks and months, until she would take refuge in the house of her hated suitor and publicly beg her father's pardon on her knees—this was more than death; it was an impossibility.

The girl, who for six months, had been entirely alone in the rude asylum of the glaciers, who had watched through the night with the wild companions, storm, hail and rain, who dwelt there; whose brow was kissed by the light of heaven before it touched the earth; around whom the thunder roared in all its terror, ere its strength was dispersed in the air; the girl who almost daily risked her life as she sprang over bottomless chasms in the rocks to save a goat—this girl could no longer yield to the ideas and tyranny of little minds, could not allow herself to be bound like an animal; she was forced to defend herself to the death. Men had no longer any rights over her, they had rather off and made her the companion of the elements; what marvel that she summoned one of the wild comrades—fire—to aid her in the struggle against men? She could not clearly express all this; she had never learned to think about her own nature; she knew not *why* it was, but she felt that God was not angry with her, that He from His lofty throne judged her by a different standard from that of men; had not everything she had thought grand when in the depths seemed small and pitiful as she gazed from her mountain peaks? How, then, must it be with Him on the heights of Heaven? God alone understood her; the people below might think her a criminal, God absolved her.

She rose, shook the burden from her soul, and became once more the old Wally, resolute and confident, strong and free.

"Now, Hansl, what shall we do?" she asked the eagle, to whom, for want of any other com-

panion, she had become accustomed to speak aloud. Hansl darted after some nocturnal reptile, seized and swallowed it.

"You are right," said Wally, "we must seek our bread. You are safe; you can find it everywhere; but I?" Suddenly Hansl grew restless, rose high in the air, and seemed to gaze at something in the distance.

Wally remembered that, now the fire was extinguished, she might be pursued, and must go on as quickly as possible. But whither? Her first thought was Sölden. But a deep flush crimsoned her face; might not Joseph think she was running after him? And was he to see her in disgrace, poor, driven from her home, scouted and derided as an "incendiary?"

No, he must not see her so, he least of all. Better to wander to the ends of the earth. And without any further reflection she took the eagle on her shoulder—the only property she possessed—and set out in the direction from which she had come in the morning—toward Heiligkreuz.

She had walked two hours; her feet were sore and she was utterly exhausted when the steeple of Heiligkreuz rose before her in the gloom, and, like the lantern in a lighthouse, the rising moon shone through the open belfry and showed the wanderer the right way.

Staggering from fatigue, she dragged herself through the sleeping village to the church. Now and then a dog barked as she glided by. Whoever caught her now would take her for a thief. She trembled, as if she were really one. What had the proud Wally Stromminger become?

The parsonage stood behind the church. Beside the door was a wooden bench, and from the small boxes by the little window hung the withered leaves and stalks of the mountain pinks. Here Wally intended to wait till morning; the priest would at least protect her from ill treatment. She threw herself on the bench; Hansl perched on the arm over her head, and after a few moments nature asserted her rights and she fell asleep.

"Merciful Heaven, what sort of foundling hast thou given me?" said a voice in Wally's ear; and when she opened her eyes it was broad daylight, and no less a personage than the priest himself stood before her.

"Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ," faltered Wally, in an embarrassed tone, springing from the bench.

"In eternity—amen. My child, how did you come here, who are you, and what strange companion is this?" One might almost be afraid of you," said the reverend gentleman, smiling.

"Your reverence," said Wally, simply. "I have a heavy load on my conscience, and would like to confess to you. My name is Wallburga, and I am the daughter of Stromminger, who owns the Hochstuf on the Sonnenplate. I have run away from home. I had a quarrel with Vincenz, and beat a hole in his head, and then I set my father's barn on fire."

The priest clasped his hands in horror. "God help us! what stories are these? So young, and already so wicked!"

"Your reverence, I'm not naturally wicked; indeed I'm not, I can't hurt a fly; but they drove me to it," said Wally, looking at the priest with her large honest eyes, till he could not help believing her, whether he desired to or not. "Come in," said he, "and tell me about it, but leave that monster outside!" he meant the eagle. Wally tossed the bird into the air; it flew on the roof, and she followed the priest into the little house. He took her into his own room.

It was very quiet and peaceful. In an alcove stood a rude wooden bedstead with two flaming hearts, which, to the priest's eyes represented the hearts of our Saviour and the Virgin Mary. Over the bed was a china cup for holy water, and a shelf containing religious books. Around the room were several more shelves with other books, an old writing-desk, a brown wooden bench behind a large heavy table, several wooden chairs, a stool under a larger crucifix bearing a garland of edelweiss, and a few gay lithographs of the Pope and various saints. From the ceiling hung a cage containing a cross-bill. An old-fashioned bureau, with brass-horn heads, whose mouths held rings for pulling out the heavy drawers, was the principal ornament, and on this bureau were all sorts of beautiful things. A shrine with a carved saint, a little glass case containing a wax figure of the Christ Child in a red silk cradle, a tiny glass spinning wheel, and a faded bouquet of artificial flowers, like those made in a convent, in a yellow case under a glass shade. Next came a little box of bright shells, then a manger formed of moss and glittering stones, with tiny carved figures of men and animals. Beside these sacred objects there was no lack of beautiful cups and mugs; and, lastly, on the right and left of the manger, stood two crystal salt cellars. And the whole array was as clean as if there were no such thing as dust in the world. This bureau, with its various ingenious trinkets, was the altar which the lonely priest, six thousand feet above the sea and modern culture had raised to the God of beauty. There he probably often stood, when the snow whirling outside and the storm shook the little wooden house, gazed thoughtfully at the pretty tiny world, shook his head with a smile, and said, "What cannot men make?"

Wally thought the same, as, in passing, her eyes wandered timidly over the wonderful little objects. Rich as her father was, such things had never appeared in his house—what could the rude peasants have done with them? Never in all her life had she seen anything of the kind, she to whom a spinning wheel standing beside her scythes and pitchforks had seemed the em-

bodiment of elegance. She really felt as if she could not move in the little room without breaking something—as if she must be particularly careful here. She involuntarily tried to take off her heavy, iron-nailed mountain-shoes at the door, in order not to spoil the smooth white floor, but the priest would not allow it; so she stepped as lightly as she could, and sat down on the extreme end of the bench he offered her. The reverend gentleman's clear, kind eyes rested steadily upon her, and saw that she could not remove her astonished gaze from the ornaments on the bureau. He was an excellent judge of human nature. "Would you like to look at my pretty things first? Do so, my child, or you will be unable to fix your attention on the grave subjects we wish to discuss."

He led Wally to the mysterious bureau, explained everything, and told her where he obtained them all.

Wally did not trust herself to speak, but looked and listened with the utmost reverence. When, as the last and best of all, they reached the manger, the priest said:—"See, this is Jerusalem behind, and these are the three kings who went to see the Christ Child. Look, there is the star that guided them, and there—there is the little child lying in the manger, as yet unconscious that it is born to suffer for the sins of the world. It cannot think, and has brought no recollection of its heavenly home, because the Son of God must become a true human child like any other, otherwise men might have said it was no merit to be good and patient like Jesus Christ, when He was the Son of God, and had divine power, and that such a pattern could not be imitated by ordinary mortals. Unfortunately, they say so often enough, and continue to sin." Wally gazed at the little naked child, with its gold-paper glory, lying in the manger so patiently, and listened to the words of the priest; and she thought of the stern, gloomy "Lord on the Cross" as a poor, helpless human child, born to suffer, she pitied it, and was sorry that she had been "so hard" upon the poor crucified form yesterday beside Lukard's death-bed. "But why did He submit to it all?" she said, involuntarily, more to herself than the priest.

"Because He wished to show men that they must not repay evil with evil, or seek to revenge themselves; for God has said, 'Vengeance is mine,'" Wally blushed and cast down her eyes.

"Now come, my child," said the wise man, "make your confession."

"It will be very short, your reverence," replied Wally. And honest as she had always been, she related without palliation, though in a low, timid voice, how everything had happened, and soon the whole became clear to the confessor. A powerful picture of life sketched with bold strokes, unrolled before him, and he pined the noble young creature who had run wild amid rugged crags and rude men.

When Wally had finished, he sat for a long time in silence, gazing thoughtfully into vacancy. His eyes rested on an old worn book on the shelves nailed against the wall, a portrait of a stranger whom he had hospitably entertained. On the binding, in gilt letters were the words, "Niedelungen-Lied."

"Your reverence," said Wally, who had mistaken the thoughtful expression of his features for one of reproach, "it was because too much came upon me at once; my heart was full of anger about poor Lukard, and then he struck Klettenmader, too. You know I couldn't see the old man beaten, and if it happened over again, I should do just the same. And I'm not an incendiary if they do call me one. Do you think so? If I set fire to my home in broad daylight, with all the people there, it can't burn much. I didn't know how to help myself, and then I thought if they had to put out a fire they couldn't run after me. And if that is a sin I don't know what I'm to do in a world where the people are so wicked and do me all sorts of wrong."

"You must do like Jesus Christ: bear and suffer," said the priest.

"You know, your reverence," said Wally, "if the Lord Jesus Christ allowed everything to be done to Him, He knew *why*. He wanted to teach the people something. But I should not know why I did it, for nobody in Oetzthal will bear anything from me. And if I had allowed myself to be locked into the cellar ever so patiently, it would have been useless, for nobody would have taken any example from it, and it might perhaps have cost me my life."

The priest hesitated a moment, then fixed his kindly searching eyes on Wally and shook his head. "You unruly child, would you like to begin the struggle again with me? You have been so disturbed and irritated that you foresee opposition and enemies everywhere. Take breath, and remember where you are; you are with one of God's servants, and God says, 'I am love'; that shall be no empty word to you. I will show you that it is true. I will tell you that, even if all men hate and condemn, God loves and pardons you. Rude men, rugged mountains and fierce storms have made you what you are, and that the dear God knows well, for He looks into your heart and sees it is good and honest, whatever faults you have committed. And He knows that no garden flowers grow in the wilderness, and rude axes can perform no delicate carving. But now listen. When our Lord and Master finds such coarse work on an especially good piece of wood, which seems to Him worth the trouble of making into something better, He takes the knife Himself and carves the bungling human work into some

beautiful object. Now, I think you will beware of hardening your nature still more, for you see when our Lord has made a few strokes and finds the wood too hard, He grows weary of the trouble and casts the task aside. Take heed, my child, that your heart is soft and yielding under God's fingers. When a hard pressure seems unendurable to you, be docile and think you feel the hand of God working upon you. And when some keen pang cuts deep into your soul, think that is God's knife cutting out the irregularities. Do you understand me?"

Wally nodded rather doubtfully. "Well," said the old man, "I will make it plainer. Which should you rather be, a rustic staff, with which we can kill people, and which, when it grows rotten, we break and burn, or a delicate image of some saint, like yonder one, which we put in a shrine and devoutly reverence?"

Now Wally understood him, and nodded eagerly. "Why, of course, I'd rather be the image of a saint."

"Now, you see! Rude hands have fashioned you into a rough staff, but God can carve you into the image of a saint, if you do what I have just told you."

Wally looked at the priest in astonishment. She felt very strangely—pleased and yet ready to weep. After a long silence, she said, timidly, "I don't know how it is, but everything is very different here with you, your reverence. Nobody ever talked so to me before. The priest from Sölden always scolded and talked about the devil and our sins, and I didn't know what he meant, for I had never done anything wicked then. But you talk so I can understand, and I think, if I could stay with you, it would be best for me. I'd work day and night, and earn my bit of bread."

The priest reflected for a time, then sorrowfully shook his head. "It will not do, my poor child. When I consider the matter, I see it cannot be. If I can forgive you in the name of God, I must not before men; for God sees the intention, men only the act. The priest is one man in the confessional; another in the parish. In the confessional he is the mouthpiece of the *misericordia*, in the parish the mouthpiece of the *lex*. He must, by word and example, incite men to honor and keep the law. Think what people would say if the priest should receive an incendiary into his house! Would they understand why I did so? Never, they would only conclude that I took the incendiary under my protection. And if we afterward had any great fire I should be forced to reproach myself bitterly for having encouraged the people to do it, by my indulgence to you. And you perceive this and accept it without murmuring, as the inevitable result of your act."

"Yes," replied Wally in a hollow tone, while her eyes grew red with suppressed tears. Then she hastily rose and said, abruptly, "I thank you kindly, your reverence, and wish you a good morning."

"Why? why?" cried the priest, "are you off at once? Don't you think it might be nearer through the wall than the door? If I were in your place I would rather go through the wall."

Wally paused in confusion and fixed her eyes on the door. The old gentleman gazed at her in comic surprise. "How much pain it will cost, before that hot blood is calmed! Must you run off at once? Did I say I would leave you to your fate, because I did not wish to keep you in my house? First breakfast with me, for people must eat and Heaven knows how long it is since you have tasted food. Then we will talk again." He went to a sliding window that opened into the kitchen, and told the old maid servant to prepare breakfast for three, then sat down to his desk and wrote for Wally the names of several people, whom he knew to be worthy people.

"See, there is a list of honest men and women in Oetzthal and Gurgenthal," he said to the young girl; "seek service with them. Far back among the mountains, nothing is yet known of your crime, and before they hear the story you can have proved yourself a good servant, so that they will close their eyes to it. You need not refer to me, you are as large and strong as a man; they will gladly hire you. You can work and make yourself useful, if you choose. But you must learn to *obey*, must accommodate yourself to their ways and habits. I do not ask you to return to your father and allow yourself to be locked up in the cellar, for that would be an unworthy punishment and do you more harm than good. Neither do I ask you to marry Vincenz out of obedience to your father's will, and make yourself miserable for life. But I do expect you to control your wild nature in the service of worthy people, and once more become a useful member of human society. Will you promise me this?"

"I'll try," said Wally, "or I'm inviolably honest."

"Well, that is all I ask at present, for I am well aware that you cannot promise more with a good conscience. But try honestly, and always remember that the dear God throws the wood away when it is too hard! I will go to your father this very day, and try to persuade him to forgive and be reconciled to you, or at least no longer persecute you. Send me word where you are, that I may write and tell you how matters stand."

Old Mariann brought in the breakfast, and the priest asked a blessing. Wally also folded her hands devoutly and prayed fervently that God would help her to become good and upright; she was in most sacred earnest, she would so gladly have been worthy, if she had only known how to set about it.