

## LITERATURE.

## THE HOME OF MY CHILDHOOD.

The home of my childhood these long years forsaken,  
Doth bless my fond gaze once again ere I die;  
But sad are the thoughts our old dwelling doth waken,  
A home 'tis no longer to mine or to me.

The green sprinkled with daisies, and kingcups before me,  
Where summer first woeed my frail footsteps to stray;  
But where are the arms o'er each hollow that bore me,  
The loved and the loving—all faded away.

Our gardens unchanged; and e'en the rose trees are blooming  
My own hands did plant when a merry wee boy;  
When I went a roaming, still sunshine or glooming,  
My father watched o'er them, his sorrow and joy.

You ruddy joined yet, over hung with green willow,  
Was framed by old jonny long time ere he died;  
Kind soul as they bore him so still from his pillow,  
I wondered and thought he looked towards me and sighed.

I gazed on our house till I seemed half believing  
The walls teemed with gladness and welcomed me here.  
The home of my Childhood my heart's to thee cleaving,  
The lays of lang syne to the last make thee dear.

Now strangers rule o'er thee, my kindred is departed,  
Like leaves in the cold blast of winter they fell;  
And I old and feeble, and half broken hearted,  
Have come ere I die but to breathe a farewell.

## THE BITTER WEDDING.

## A SWISS LEGEND.

One fine summer morning, many hundred years ago, young Berthold set out with a heavy heart from his Alpine hut, with a view of reaching, in the evening, the beautiful valley of Siebenthal, where stood his native village, and where he designed to be an unknown and silent guest at the dancing and festivity of certain merry makers.

"Ah!" sighed he, "it will be a bitter wedding. Had I died last spring, it were better with me now."

"Fiddle fiddle!" exclaimed a snarling voice from the road-side. "Fiddle fiddle! Where Master Almerich touches his fiddle, there it goes merrily; there is the hurly-burly, dirling the bottoms out of the tubs and pitchers! Good morning, my child! Come, cheer up, my hearty, and let us trudge on together in good fellowship."

The young herdsman had stopped when he first heard the croaking voice; and now he could not speak for laughing. An odd-looking, dwarfish figure, mounted upon one leg and a half, and propped upon a crutch, with a nose as long as one's thumb, made half a dozen wry faces as he hobbled up, quite out of breath, from a foot-path on the left side of the road. Behind the dwarf trailed an enormous fiddle, on which lay a large wallet—appurtenances which seemed to be attached to the little odd figure by way of ballast, lest the rush of the wind down the valley should sweep it away.

"Good morning!" Berthold at last roared out; "you are a merry fellow, master fiddler, and shall be a comfort to me to-day. In spite of my misfortunes, I could not help laughing at the sight of you and your huge fiddle. Take it not amiss; a laugh has been a rare thing with me for many a day."

"Has it, indeed?" rejoined the dwarf; "and yet so young! Perhaps you are heart-sick, my son?"

"Yes, if you will call it so," replied the herdsman. "Here, in our mountains and valleys, a great many fellows run about fancying themselves in love, while they are all the time eating, drinking, and sleeping, as sound as any marmot, and in one year's time will easily pass from Margaret to Rosamond. That is all a mockery. I would much rather die than forget Siegelind; though with me all rest and joy are forever gone."

"Ay, ay," replied Master Almerich. "I thought you were going to the dance, my hearty. I heard you crying out of a bitter wedding, and I thought to myself, 'Aha, he does not get the right one.'"

"Ah, that's true enough," replied Berthold; "he does not get the right one—that Hildebrand. I will tell you the whole matter, Master Almerich, as you seem to be going the same way, if I understood you aright."

"Ah, yes!" sighed the dwarf; "surely, surely, if I had only got a pair of stout legs. Look you here, my dear child, what a miserable stump is this for crawling down the mountain! I am asthmatic, too, and my throat has been enlarging these last fifty years; and that wallet has galled my back sore in climbing over the rough hills. Heaven knows when I shall get to the wedding. There was such a talking of that feast on the other side of the mountain, that, thought I to myself, I will go thither also, and make some money; so I took my fiddle, and began to crawl up the ascent; yesterday I became quite exhausted, and now I must lay me down here by the side of the road, and submit to fate. Tell me about the wedding when you return, my hearty,—if the wolves have not swallowed, or hunger killed me before that time."

With these words, the dwarf, apparently exhausted, sunk down, with a deep and melancholy sigh, on the nearest stone, threw his bundle on the grass, and stretched out his bony hand, as if to take a last farewell of young Berthold, who, in silence leaned upon his staff, gazing on the fiddler, and quite unable to comprehend what ailed him.

"Master," began the herdsman, "how you sink!—You have left all your gay spirits at home. Although it

is a weary journey for me as well as you, I will yet endeavour to carry your wallet and fiddle, so I may enjoy your company on the road. You must really hear what presses upon my soul—perhaps I may obtain some relief in speaking it out, and you will have some pithy word of comfort for me."

The dwarf thanked him heartily for his kind offer, and quickly transferred his wallet and fiddle to the stout shoulders of the herdsman; then took his crutch, whistled a merry tune, and trudged gaily on.

"It is a long story, this wedding," began the herdsman; "but I will be as brief as possible, for it still grieves me to the heart when I think about it; and whoever can understand it at all, understands it soon; my sufferings will soon be at an end, though I should talk the whole day about it."

"In the village there below us, old Bernhard has a pretty, sweet girl of a daughter, Siegelind; he has lived for many years in a nice little cottage, and his wife Gertrude with him, close by the stream, where the road strikes off into the wood. Their employment is to make wooden spoons for the herdsman, by which, and the help of a goat and a couple of sheep, they gain a scanty livelihood."

"Last winter, having gone thither and got some ashens spoons and cups nicely cut, I thought with myself, 'That will do exactly; my father is already old, and sends me with the cattle to the mountain in spring; and if I only behave there as becomes a herdsman, I descend in autumn, and marry Siegelind, and find myself a right free, happy man.'"

"Ah, Master Almerich, my words do poor justice to my heart; my feelings always get the start of them, and reason comes limping after."

"I beheld Siegelind, you see, moving actively about, wearing a cheerful countenance late and early,—all goodness and discretion from top to toe, and pretty too, overflowing with gay spirits, and merry songs without number; all that my eye, my ear, and my heart, drank in smoothly; she was satisfied, and the old people, too; so in summer I was to go to the mountain, and at harvest-home to the wedding; and she gave me this waistcoat to wear on the hills in remembrance of her."

"Meanwhile the spring came, and old Bernhard traversed the forest, selecting the finest stems for his carving work, and exerting all his skill to provide us with fine furniture against the wedding."

"So, one morning he was ascending the mountain merrily through those ravines, where there are some marvelously fine trees, when a little man, in an odd sort of dress, hastened to meet him, screaming violently, and beckoning and calling him so earnestly that he could not but go with him. They soon reached a barn, where he found the wife of the little dwarfish stranger lying sick and in extremity. Her he relieved and cured; but for me—bride, peace, and happiness were lost from that hour."

"Ah, good heavens!" exclaimed Almerich, "you are talking bravely, whilst I am almost starving; hop, hop, hop;—we are trudging incessantly on, and my stomach is as empty as a bagpipe; yesterday evening—nothing; this morning—nothing. O that brave wedding dance; the fiddle runs off, and Master Almerich is starving here!"

"Now now, the deuce!" bawled the herdsman; "what have you got here in this cursed wallet?" Here am I toiling on with this plagued bag, rubbing the very skin off my shoulder. I thought there were at least ham and cheese and fresh bread in it; if not, why should I be smothered under such a bundle of rags?"

"Softly, softly, my son," replied the fiddler, "there are treasures in it; and old barret-cap of Siegfried, and an old sword-belt of Dieterich, and a couple of old leather-soles of Ylsan, child! These are no every day concerns, my hearty! They are all sacred relics to him who understands the thing. They are worth a whole mountain of sweet wine, and seven acres of thick golden wheat to him who knows their value."

"It may be so," said the herdsman; "I only wish we had a few cups of milk in the place of your treasures; but if it is so with your stomach, my good master, look you here; I have a mouthful of meagre goat milk cheese, which I meant to serve me for the night; but never mind, I am little disposed to eat."

Berthold now produced his provisions, and Almerich devoured them as greedily as if he meant to swallow the herdsman after them by way of dessert. The bread was quickly devoured, and honest Berthold saw his supper devoured beforehand; then the fiddler wiped his mouth, leaped briskly up, was again in good spirits, and stumped away before the herdsman as briskly as if nothing had ailed him. All this, however, seemed very odd to Berthold; and when he again felt the annoyance of the wallet, he drew a sigh so deep, that it echoed back from the neighboring rocks.

"Lack-a-day!" said Almerich again, "the poor lad has lost his bride and his peace of heart. I have been so concerned about him that I could not eat a bit."

"That fellow could devour Stockhorn," thought Berthold, somewhat angrily; "the club-foot is not in his right senses, I believe."

"It was really too bad," began he, at last, aloud; "the dwarf in the barn returned a profusion of thanks to old Bernhard, and said, 'I am a foreign miner, and have lost the road, with my good wife; so I have nothing to reward you with for your kind services, save a little bit of cheese, and a few draughts of wine. So take that, and remember the poor fellow who gave you what he could, and will pray that Heaven may reward you further.'"

"To old Bernhard, the crumb of cheese and the few spoonfuls of wine seemed poor enough, and he accepted the little bottle and piece of cheese only to get rid of the importunity of the dwarf, who would take no refusal."

"Towards noon, Bernhard was proceeding to his village; the road was long, and, feeling fatigued, he lay down in the shade of a tree, took out the gift of the dwarf, and began to eat and drink. Meanwhile my evil stars bring

young Hildebrand, the most miserly fellow in the village in his way:—'God bless you, father Bernhard!' 'Thank you, my son!' Thus the conversation proceeded. The niggard sees the old man comfortably enjoying his repast, so he sits himself down beside him and takes a share. There they eat and eat for about an hour; the wine never gets less, and the cheese is never done, and both behold the miracle till their hair stands on end.

"All was now over, master fiddler, and poor Berthold was undone."

"Hildebrand chose words as polished as marble; they went down with Bernhard as smoothly as honey; my dear, sweet Siegelind was pledged to the rich miser, with the marvelous cheese for her dowry. The old man was quite beside himself; the young man talked finely; they were to outdo the whole village, and keep their secret to themselves; I was called a miserable wretch, and the spirit of mischief just brought me into their way in time to hear the whole sad story."

"Ah, good Heavens!" again exclaimed Almerich, "I am undone with cold; it is turning a cold rainy day, and my bones are too naked! Hew, hew! how the storm blows into my very soul. This day will be my death; I thought so before. Go, my son, I give you the fiddle as a present: leave me the wallet here; I will stretch myself out to die upon it."

"The mischief's in it!" grumbled Berthold; "if matters are to go on this way, we shall be a year and a day hence still travelling this cursed road. Hark ye, old boy; you are an odd fellow, with crutches, without meat and drink, and without a worsted coat, wandering through our rough country, with a fiddle as large as a ton, and a wallet as heavy as seven three stone cheeses! That may indeed be called a tempting of Providence! Why the deuce do you drag after you that ass's burden of old rubbish, and have not the convenience of a cloak in your bundle?"

"It is all very true," said Almerich; "I am not yet accustomed to be the lame, feeble man you see me.—Thirty years ago, I skipped like a leveret over hills and dales; but now, farewell to friend Almerich; I shall never leave this place; however, it is all one,—perish here, or die there, a dying bed is ever a hard one, even though it should be of down and silk."

"Now, really," replied Berthold, "you are too whimsical, fiddler! The cold blast never hurts a tough fellow who is accustomed to run about the mountains. There, slip into my coat, and walk smartly on, for a shower is approaching, and that rascally wallet is weighing me down."

"Patience, child, patience!" said Almerich, "that coat is quite warm from your shoulders,—I feel very comfortable in it,—slowly, gently; your story of the marvelous cheese and wine has quite restored me to warmth—how did the matter go on?"

"You rogue and rascal," thought Berthold to himself, and then continued his lamentable tale.

"How did it go on? Gertrude sang to the same tune as her husband; Siegelind grew sad, and lost her color and strength; the old boy urged the matter, and Hildebrand too. Bernhard was anxious to get the rich and proud son-in-law, and was in great fear lest the enchanted wine should soon dry up. The young fellow had money in his eye, and wished to turn the bewitched cheese to usury. Thus the wedding was determined on, and I was left in sadness upon my mountain. I tried to forget it; I thought Siegelind could not have borne me in her heart, otherwise she would not, to escape death and martyrdom have married the red-haired Hildebrand. Last night I could find neither rest nor sleep upon my straw. I must go and see her with my own eyes take that miser for her husband. Near the village I will wrap up my head, and dye my hands and cheeks with berries, so that nobody will know me; and in the bustle of the wedding, when every thing is turning topsy-turvy, not a living soul will care for poor Berthold. When all is over, I will, so it please Heaven, become wise again; or, if not, my head will turn altogether, and that will be a blessing too."

"My good child," said the dwarf, "all that will pass over. Now, I perceive that it will be a hard journey and bitter wedding, too, for you; it is, however, good luck, my child that you have me for a companion. I will fiddle till your heart leaps again; your sorrow grieves me as much as if it were my own."

Whilst talking thus, a few drops of rain fell, which proved the prelude to a heavy shower; and, although the travellers had already gone a considerable way, they were still far from the end of their journey, and, gush after gush, the rain poured upon their heads as from a spout.

Berthold trudged silently on, sighing frequently and heavily under his burden; he could have sworn that it increased a pound's weight every step; nevertheless it was impossible for his good nature to think of giving it back to the poor cripple in such a tempest. The moisture began to trickle through his waistcoat, and run in a cold stream down his back; he wished himself the dwarf and the wedding, all far enough, but stalked sullenly on through the mud, as if he had been wading through the highest Alpine grass.

The fiddler limped close behind him, croaking, occasionally, through his raven throat, an old spring song, which told of sunshine, and singing birds, and pleasure, and love. He then drew himself snugly together, and expatiated on the excellence of the herdsman's coat, which, he said, was quite water-proof; next he called to Berthold to step leisurely, to pay particular attention to the wallet and fiddle, and not to overheat himself.

The herdsman would have lost all patience and courage a thousand times over, in dragging his hundred weight of a load, and playing the fool to the crazy fiddler, if he had not been ashamed to throw away the burden which he had volunteered to carry, and to forsake the person whose company he had himself invited. But in his heart he vowed deeply and solemnly never again to lend