

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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For the Young.

Rhymes of the Kings and Queens of England," by Mary Leslie, (published by William Briggs, Toronto,) will be found a great aid to history lessons. The rhymes halt, but the facts they contain are so well strung together that the individual character of each reign is better conveyed than in most of the histories provided for children. For instance, has not the following summary of the time of George II. the merit at least of distinctness?

A king with a clever, handsome lady mated,
A king who bravely fought at Dettingen,
A king who "boetry and bainting" hated.
Most practical and commonplace of men.

Little enough we care about the man,
But much of interest marks King George's reign—
Walpole's corruption, Chatham's noble plan,
Lord Clive in India, and the war with Spain.

The South Sea scheme, the British credit shaken,
The rising of the gallant young Pretender,
The death of Wolfe when strong Quebec was taken,
The whole of Lower Canada's surrender.

Lord Chesterfield then lived and wrote his "letters,"
Whitefield and Wesley preached on the hillside,
Charles Wesley wrote his hymns and sang the letters
From hard hearts bound in sin and locked in pride.

As for the English Church, may we never see,
A church so dead-alive as this again;
There was no teaching, kindly, sound and free,
The church was ruled by evil, selfish men.

Pitt, Earl of Chatham, the "great Commoner,"
Was the grandest soul throughout King George's reign,
The one who roused the sleeping lion, the summoner,
Of Englishmen to nobler deeds again.
—Montreal Witness.

THE SPIRE OF ST. STEPHEN'S.

BY EMMA W. DENERRITT.

It needs but a steady head and a clear conscience and the thing is done." These were old Jacob's words.

"The clear conscience is not lacking, thank God. But all these weeks of watching by a sick bed and the scanty meals have made the head anything but steady. If it were but three months ago, my courage would not fail me, but now—"

The boy broke off abruptly, and, stepping back several feet, stood looking up at the stately spire that towered above him. Fair and shapely it rose, with gradually receding buttress and arch, until it terminated at a point over 400 feet above the pavement.

All day long little groups of men had straggled across the platz and gathered in front of the great cathedral, elbowing one another and stretching upon tiptoe to read the notice nailed to the massive door. Many were the jests passed around.

"Does the old sexton think men are flies, to creep along yonder dizzy height?" asked one.

"The prize is indeed worth winning," said another. "but," he turned away with an expressive shrug of his shoulders, "life is sweet."

"When I try to reach heaven 'twill be by some less steep and dangerous way," laughed a third, with an upward glance at the spire.

"It makes a strong man feel a bit queer to go up inside as far as the great

bell and look up at the network of crossing ladders, but to stand outside and wave a flag! Why the mere thought of it is enough to make one's head swim," said the first speaker. "Jacob Wirtig is the only man in all Vienna who has the nerve for such a part."

"But he served a good apprenticeship. He learned the knack of keeping a steady head during his early days of chamouss-hunting in the Tyrol. But why does he seek to draw others into danger? For so much gold many a man would risk his life."

"I can understand it, Caspar. Twice before, on some grand occasion, has old Jacob stood on the spire and waved a flag as the Emperor passed in the streets

eyes rivetted on the beautiful spire, and now the setting of the sun had found him a third time at his post. The platz was deserted, but the streets beyond were thronged with people hurrying to their homes. Was it fear or the chill of the night air that sent a shiver over the slender figure of the boy as he stood, letting his eyes slowly wander from the top of the spire to the base of the tower beneath, as if measuring the frightful distance? But as he turned away with a little gesture of despair there rose before him the vision of a wan and weary face as white as the pillow against which it rested, and he heard the physician's voice as he gently replaced the wasted hand on the coverlet, "The fever has

noble structure, "who knows? It may look more difficult than it really is. 'Tis but a foothold of a few inches, but 'tis enough. If I were near the ground I should feel as safe as if I were on the floor of the great hall in the stadhous. Why, then, should I fear up yonder?"

The boy made a step forward and, slipping back the little cap from his locks, stretched out his clasped hands toward the sky. "Oh, Jesus, be near to help and save."

He replaced the cap and hurried across the platz to the crowded thoroughfare beyond. At the end of three blocks he turned into a narrow street and stopped in front of a high house with steep, tiled roof. The lamp in the swinging iron bracket over the door gave such a feeble light that he was obliged to grope his way through the hall to the stairs.

At the second landing he paused for a moment, fancying that he heard a light footfall behind him, but all was still, and he hastened on to the next floor. Again he stopped, thinking that he caught the sound of a stealthy, cat-like tread on the steps below. "Who's there?" he called out, but the lingering echo of his own voice was the only answer.

"How foolish I am!" he exclaimed. "It is but the clatter of my shoes on the stone stairs." Up another flight, and down the long, narrow entry he went, and still he could not shake off the feeling that he was being followed.

At that moment a door opened, and a woman peered out, holding a candle high above her head. "Is that you, Franz?" she said. "My brother has been expecting you this half-hour." By the flickering light of the candle Franz could see that there was no one in the entry. He turned, impelled by a strong desire to search the tall cupboard near the stairs and see if any one had concealed himself within, but the dread of being laughed at kept him back, and he followed the woman into a room, where a grey-haired man sat, leaning wearily against the back of his chair.

"You may go now, Katrina," said the man, motioning to an adjoining room, and when the door closed he turned to Franz, trembling with eagerness. "Well, have you decided?"

"I will try, Master Wirtig."

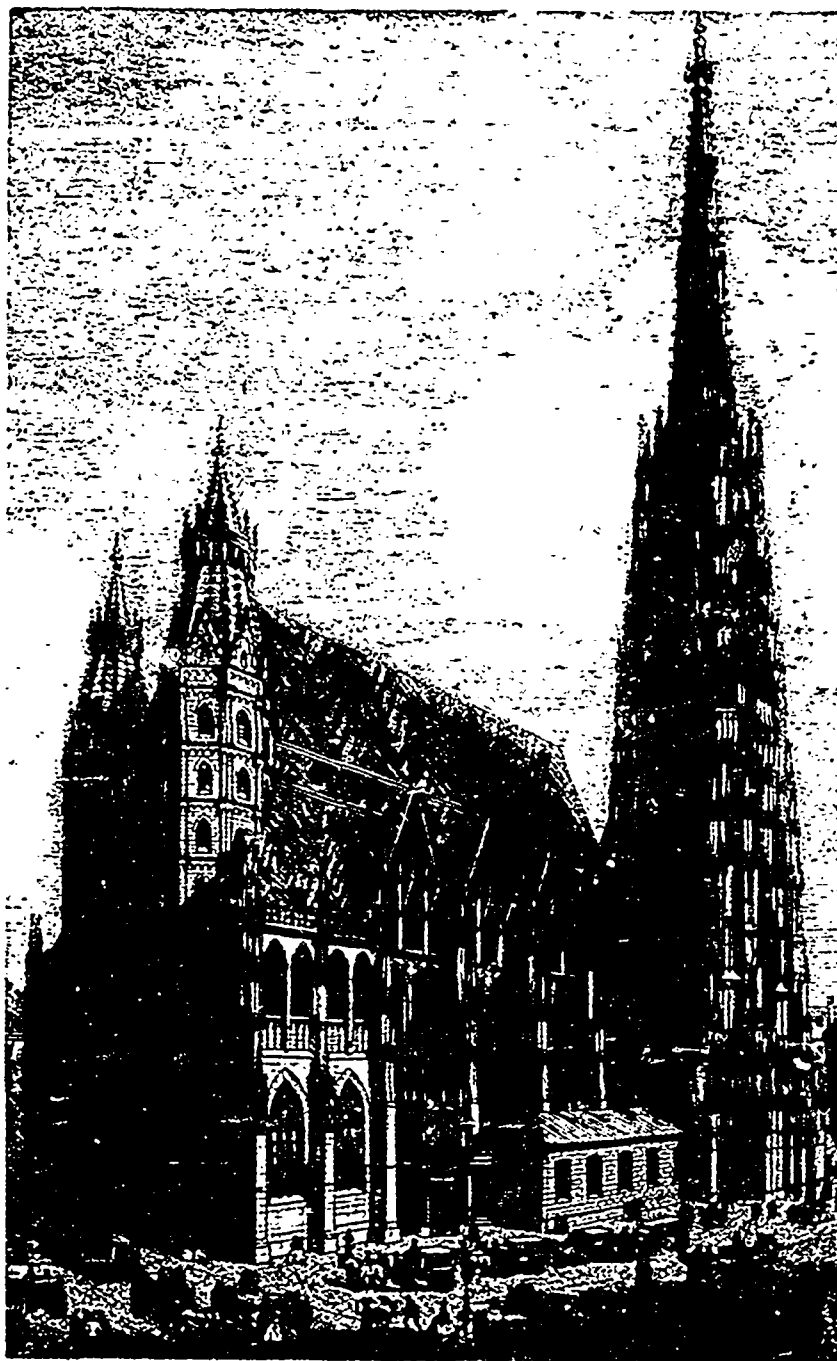
The old sexton wrung his thin hands nervously. "But if you should fall?"

"In God is my trust," answered the boy, calmly. "But one 'if' is as good as another. Why not say 'If you succeed?' It sounds more cheery."

"God grant it!" answered the man, sinking back in his chair. "I had the thought that it would be some hardy young sprig who should accept my offer, some sailor or stonemason, whose calling had taught him to carry a steady head. I never dreamed that it would be a mere lad like your elf, and worn out, too, with the care of thy sick mother. Even now I feel I do thee a grievous wrong to listen to thy entreaties."

"Think not of me, Master Wirtig. Think rather of my mother. Shall we not let her die when a few moments on yonder spire would furnish the means to make her well? The kind physician who would have helped me was smitten with the fever yesterday, and there is no one to whom I can go."

"Had I been as prudent as I ought I could have aided thee. But this lingering illness has used up what I had put aside. Here is a little for thy present need—some broth for thy mother and a bite for thyself, for thy cheeks look as touched as if thou hadst not eaten a good meal for a fortnight." He pulled out a covered basket from under the table and continued. "I shall arrange with Nicholas, for he has worked with me so long that he is as familiar with the ladders as myself, to go with thee up to the little sliding window and pass out the flag. Thou must let thyself down outside the window until thy toes touch the ledge below. Then thou must creep cautiously around to the opposite side of the spire and wave the flag. Look always straight before thee, or up at the sky. Thy safety lies in not glancing below. I believe in my heart



ST. STEPHEN'S CATHEDRAL, VIENNA. THE SPIRE THAT FRANZ CLIMBED.

below. And now, after all the fighting and the victory, when there is to be a triumphal entry into the city and a grand review and such rejoicing as was never known before, he feels in honour bound to supply the customary salute from the cathedral. And since this miserable fever which has stricken down so many in the city, has left him too weak to attempt it, he is trying, as you see by this notice, to get some one to take his place. He offers all the money which the Emperor never fails to send as a reward, to say nothing of the glory. I'll wager a florin that he'll offer in vain. But come, let us be going. There's too much work to be done to be loitering here."

Twice before on that day, once in the early morning and again at noon, had the boy stood as if spellbound, with his

gone, my boy, and all she needs now to make her well and strong is good care and plenty of nourishing food. The money offered by old Jacob would do all that and much more. It would mean comfort for two or three years for both mother and son, with their simple way of living.

When the lad again faced the cathedral it was with an involuntary straightening of his shrinking figure. "With God's help I will try," he said aloud, with a determined ring to his voice, "and I must go at once to let Master Wirtig know. Now that I have finally decided, it is strange how the fear has flown. It is the hesitating that takes the courage out of me. After all," he paced back, back, back until he was far enough from the cathedral to get a good view of the

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