

Choice Literature.

MY LATTICE.

My lattice looks upon the North,
The winds are cool that enter;
At night I see the stars come forth,
Arcturus in the centre.

The curtain down my casement drawn
Is dewy mist, which lingers
Until my maid, the rosy dawn,
Uplifts it with her fingers.

The sparrows are my matin-bell,
Each day my heart rejoices,
When from the trellis where they dwell
They call me with their voices.

Then, as I dream with half-shut eye
Without a sound or motion,
To me that little square of sky
Becomes a boundless ocean.

And straight my soul unfurls its sails
That blue sky-sea to sever,
My fancies are the noiseless gales
That waft it on for ever.

I sail into the depths of space
And leave the clouds behind me,
I pass the old moon's hiding-place,
The sun's rays cannot find me.

I sail beyond the solar light,
Beyond the constellations,
Across the voids where loom in sight
New systems and creations.

I pass great worlds of silent stone,
Whence light and life have vanished,
Which wander on to tracts unknown,
In lonely exile banished.

I meet with spheres of fiery mist
Which warm me as I enter,
Where—ruby, gold and amethyst—
The rainbow lights concentre.

And on I sail into the vast,
New wonders aye discerning,
Until my mind is lost at last
And suddenly returning,

I feel the wind which cool as dew
Upon my face is falling,
And see again my patch of blue
And hear the sparrows calling.

—Frederick George Scott, in *The Week*.

A LISTENER AGAINST HIS WILL.

The shades of nightfall were beginning to creep over the old Swiss town of Lucerne, several hundred years ago, when a tall, active boy of fourteen came with a quick step, but with the set, stern look of one who felt that he was bound on a dangerous errand, along one of the streets that led down to the lake.

To any one in our own day, indeed, his errand would not have seemed so very terrific, for it was nothing more than the exploring of a rocky cave that lay close to the water's edge; but the boldest men of that ignorant age would have thought such an undertaking serious enough.

Local tradition called this grotto "The Wizard's Cave," and declared that, like every cavern, glen, wood and ruin of those superstitious days, it was haunted. In fact, it was believed to have been the chosen home of a terrible sorcerer, who had practiced unholy rites of magic, called up evil spirits, murdered numbers of children whom he had decoyed into his den, and done many other things which, strictly speaking, he ought not to have done. And although this disreputable old gentleman was no longer there (if, indeed, he ever had been there at all), his supposed haunt was as well guarded by the terror of his memory, as if it were garrisoned by all the spectres with whom he was believed to have been so intimate.

But Kaspar Stein was one of the boldest as well as shrewdest lads in the town, and such an adventure was just the thing to suit him. He had often heard Father Joseph, the good old pastor of the place, declare that a man who feared God need fear nothing else; and the idea of making his way after dark into a place which most men were very shy of approaching even in broad daylight, was irresistibly attractive to

the brave boy's daring spirit. In short, he had fully made up his mind that, come what might of it, he would see for himself what the inside of that cave was like.

Meanwhile, the growing shadows were fast deepening into darkness, and by the time Kaspar came up to the mouth of the dreaded cavern, its interior, gloomy enough even at mid-day, was as dark as the inside of a tunnel.

But for this our hero cared little, for he had already provided for it. With his flint and steel he quickly struck a light, kindled a huge splinter of resinous pine-wood that he had brought along with him, and, armed with this primitive torch, went boldly forward into the dismal den.

Brave as he was, however, he could not restrain a start when a leathery wing brushed his face, and a black, formless shadow flitted past him with a shrill, unearthly screech, athwart the tiny circle of light into the deeper gloom beyond. But he had seen a bat many a time before, and he was laughing heartily the next moment at his own causeless panic, though he felt inclined to shudder again as he heard his laugh sent back in hoarse and hollow echoes from every cleft and cranny of that gloomy dungeon, like the mockery of evil spirits.

Low and narrow at first, the cave grew higher and wider as the bold boy went on; and it ended at last in a kind of natural chamber, nearly circular in shape, the vaulted roof of which was upheld by eight or nine pillarlike masses of stone, worn by time and damp into strange goblin shapes.

This recess was supposed to have been the actual den of the redoubted wizard; and Kaspar, having seen it, and finding nothing more for him to do, was just about to retrace his steps towards the outer air, when he was startled by a sound of voices at the mouth of the cave. Who could these intruders be, and what could they want there? But whoever they might be, it was plain that they were coming right into the cave; and the shrewd lad quickly made up his mind that men who came to such a place, at such an hour, must be after no good. They might very possibly be a gang of robbers who had come hither to hide their plunder; and, in any case, it would be just as well for him not to let them catch him there. So he at once put out his light, and cowering down in a dark nook behind the farthest pillar, lay as still as a mouse.

Hardly had he done so when stealthy steps were heard along the stony floor of the cavern, a light gleamed through the darkness, and into the pillared recess came gliding a number of shadowy forms, all of whom were armed (as our hero saw from his hiding-place with secret dismay), for the light of a lantern carried by the foremost man was flashed back from sword blades and dagger points and the steel heads of short hunting spears.

Here was a dilemma!

At any moment he might be discovered; and if he were discovered he had no mercy to hope for from such men. For the first time the brave lad began to repent of his bold undertaking; but the first words that he caught of their talk put every other thought clean out of his head.

"The Austrians are already on their march to help us, and if we do our part success is sure."

Our hero's bold heart beat faster, for these few words told him that the men before him were far worse than mere robbers—they were traitors and plotters against the state. In spite of himself the boy gave a slight start, and the movement dislodged a small piece of stone, which fell rattling to the ground.

"Hark! what was that?" cried one of the conspirators; "methought something stirred in yon corner. Can any one have overheard us?"

"If anyone has," cried a second man fiercely, "it's death to us or to him! Let me deal with him!"

He sprang forward with uplifted sword, and in a moment poor Kaspar would have been discovered and cut to pieces, had not a huge bat, scared by the movement, gone flapping and screeching across the cave into the deeper shadows.

The plotters laughed hoarsely at this absurd issue of their alarm, and satisfied that this bat had been the cause of the sound that had startled them, troubled themselves no more about the matter, and went on with their talk, while our hero, with death staring him in the face, listened attentively to every word they said.

And in truth what he heard was well worthy of attention, for in a few moments he had learned that these villains were plotting to betray the town of Lucerne to the Austrian Emperor (from whose oppression it had but recently freed itself), and to restore the tyrannical nobles whom the stout-hearted Swiss peasants had lately driven out. An Austrian force was already on its way to surprise the town, the gates of which were to be opened to it by traitors; and in order to effectually cripple any attempt at resistance on the part of the citizens, all of the leading men among them were to be murdered by the plotters that very night!

At this last disclosure, the most terrible of all, poor Kaspar's feverish anxiety became almost unbearable. He held in his hands the secret that would save the whole town from destruction, and yet he had no chance of using it; and the plot was to be carried out that same night! What if these ruffians were to send off some of their number to begin the work of murder at once, while the rest remained to complete their arrangements, and thus keep him imprisoned in his hiding-place!

The thought was maddening; and the brave boy, driven to distraction by the idea of sitting idle while his countrymen were being cut off by treason, made up his mind that the only thing for him to do was to burst in amid the murderous gang, dash the lantern from the hand of the man who held it, and then try to break through them in the darkness and gain the mouth of the cave.

It was a wild and perilous scheme, and had little or no chance of success, but so desperate had our hero become at the imminence of the danger that menaced his friends and the whole town, that he was just about to make the attempt, when, to his indescribable relief, this council of darkness showed signs of breaking up. The man with the lantern (who seemed to be the leader of the gang) held up his light, and moved slowly back along the gloomy passage, followed by his comrades.

Then Kaspar, taking a bold resolution, mingled unperceived with the assassins in the darkness, and reached the mouth of the cave without being detected. As he issued from it his eye caught a light in an adjoining building, where the heads of the various 'trading guilds' of the town were wont to sit up rather late over their supper; and thither he hastened with all possible speed.

His tale was soon told, and readily believed. An hour later all the plotters were prisoners, and the town was saved. The Austrian invaders, finding their plot baffled, made a hasty and disorderly retreat; and the memory of the bold boy whose courage and coolness saved Lucerne is held in honour there to this day.—Harper's Young People.

PEGGY.

The sun was shining on the river and the broad fields, and there was a faint haze in the atmosphere suggestive of Indian summer, yet it was far too early for this fair, lone season to cross the hills.

Leon was reading. At his back, towering above him, was a solid wall of lime-stone showing traces of fossil imprints and fire long centuries ago burned out, on its uneven surface. A glimmer of dewy grass was visible along the summit and several juniper bushes and young cedars grew at the edge. A few rods distant above a modern bridge lay a large mill-pond, its waters reaching below the bridge into a hollow like a big, brown bowl. There was no perceptible current in this lower pond, the dam was here, but just below it the river appeared flowing shallow past the mill and carelessly onward full of sparkles and foam through a wide rocky gorge. The ledge on which Leon sat was directly above the lower pond and overlooked the opposite bank, the old mill, and the country for some miles about. Beyond the mill, in a sunny hollow, lay a field of great pumpkins fast turning yellow. The Canadian farmer knows well how to economize, for in this same field a fine crop of corn

had been raised among the pumpkins. It had recently been cut, and the dull green sheaves, bronzed and tinged with Indian red were standing there now, thick, and looked like a band of wild Indians, bedecked with war-feathers, preparing for a sun-dance or some other pow-wow.

On the bank by the mill stood a small grey-white house where the miller lived, his wife was just inside the door ironing, and snatches of song drifted from her lips across the water. The miller's son came out of the big mill door occasionally with always a whistle, some old song, and Leon might have heard these sounds as well as the plaintive voice of a phoebe pilfering insects from spider-webs spun here and there in jagged places on the gray wall about him, but he was reading "Ninety-Three," believing its author inimitable, wherefore he heard nothing. The miller's wife having ironed the last big collar, curled it into a circle with deft fingers, slipped it on a rod to dry thoroughly, and went upstairs.

That morning, like many other mornings, Peggy had got up late, dressed in a hurry and ran down stairs to have her frock buttoned, had taken a mere bite of a breakfast and gone out to play. Her night-gown lay in a round heap on the carpet, in a circle just as she had stepped out of it. It was a pale blue one, shades lighter than Peggy's eyes, and there was a woolly odor about it like that of a humming-bird's nest. The mother picked it up and touched to her lips the soft, blue frill that had rested so often on Peggy's white, warm throat, then put it away. Every morning she did likewise, murmuring sometimes: dear little Peggy, or thinking that perhaps it was wrong to let the child acquire the habit of leaving her night-gown on the floor, but the after-thought was sure to follow that should she correct it she herself would lose by it, for it was a pleasure on entering the room in the morning to find the blue gown lying there, always in a circle.

When Peggy went out into the sunshine the first thing which attracted her attention was a chick-a-dee hopping about in a hedge. It was chirping, and Peggy cried gleefully: dee, dee, dee, shaking her chubby hands towards it. Just then her brother came up from the mill and in passing daubed her little nose with flour.

"Go away, go away!" she cried, rubbing her nose and stamping her small foot on the sod. She would have followed him and tried to hurt him with her tiny hands had she not been afraid of him catching her up in his white arms as he had done not long since, dusting her curls and her blue frock with flour.

Presently the chick-a-dee flew on and Peggy followed it from bush to bush up the road and out of sight toward the upper pond.

Leon was still reading—the children were being passed down the ladder out of La Tourge—when suddenly he heard a cry of distress, a child's cry. He looked about, passed his hand over his eyes and looked again but saw no one, and believing the voice to have been imaginary continued reading. In the course of half an hour he had read to the end and closed his book, and sat thinking. In his heart was a mighty doubt. Was it right that men should at all times "fulfil the law?"

A wind had risen and some scarlet leaves blew down about him from a maple growing somewhere above, and several drifted below to the clear brown water where they were blown about like fairy sailors. Across the water, a man came down the road bearing in his arms a child. As he approached the grey-white house he stood still a moment to put back from her face a wet, yellow curl, and to place her cold little hands on her breast. Then he went slowly on to the door, not thinking but walking anywhere, crushing some white flowers growing in the grass. He was wondering how he should meet the mother.

—Helen M. Merrill, in *The Week*.

In China a boy begins his schooling at five years of age, and is at his study nearly twelve hours a day, seven days in a week.

Thoughts come and go, some never to return. What some of us would have given at the time for an Esterbrook pen to jot down a fleeting inspiration?

The Japanese tattooers now produce in colors an exact photograph of any cherished friend whose image the tattooed person may desire to have constantly with him.