

## Lucy Larcom



(5.3.1824 – 17.4.1893)

Zum Leben:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy\\_Larcom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy_Larcom)

Die in Beverly, Massachusetts, als neuntes von zehn Kindern geborene Lucy Larcom wirkte an verschiedenen Schulen als Lehrerin und Erzieherin. Sie verfasste eine in den USA viel gelesene Darstellung ihrer Kindheit, *A New England Girlhood*, sowie verschiedene Bücher über religiöse Themen. Das aus ihren frühen Jahren stammende Gedicht über Kriemhild belegt ihre Kenntnis der deutschen Literatur.

[GG; Mai 2020]

### CHRIEMHILD.<sup>1</sup>

YOU know the strange old Nibelungen story,  
The fitful, billowy song of love and hate,  
Of rare Chriemhild, and her rose-garden's glory  
By wrath laid desolate?

Glad shines that garden, with its leagues of roses,  
Midway the old time and the new between;  
Yet not a flower its silken bar encloses,  
So sweet as the Rose-Queen.

She walks there in the young world's radiant morning,  
Intwining hero-garlands, redly gay,  
For twelve strong knights, who, armed, for battle-warning,  
To watch the garden stay.

She seeks, undaunted, its remotest edges,  
Cut from the forest's still and murky gloom,

<sup>1</sup> "Below, on each side of the door, are two beautiful groups. That to the right of the spectator represents Siegfried and Chriemhild. She is leaning on the shoulder of her warlike husband, with an air of the most inimitable and graceful abandonment in her whole figure: a falcon sits upon her hand, on which her eyes are turned with the most profound expression of tenderness and melancholy; she is thinking upon her dream, in which was foreshadowed the early and terrible doom of her husband." — Mrs. Jameson. — *Description of the New Palace at Munich.*

Where, close to haunted glens and caverned ledges,  
The freshest roses bloom.

Black shadows, in behind the beech-leaves hidden,  
That lean to clutch the sunshine's falling gold,  
And dim, deep thickets, by white glimmerings thridden,  
Send her no thrill of cold.

And she can hear, by woman's fears unshaken,  
The warrior pine's long requiem on the air,  
And winds astray, that from lone hollows waken  
A wail, as of despair.

She can pluck roses, unaware of danger,  
Since innocence keeps watch and ward within:  
To evil dreads a careless, happy stranger,  
Unvisited of sin.

One night a dream alighted in her bower:  
A mystic falcon perched upon her hand;  
Daring and beautiful, he curbed his power,  
As waiting her command.

Then two fierce eagles through the azure swooping,  
Plunged into that brave bird their cruel claws,  
And snatched him from her sight, with sorrow drooping;  
Ah! bitter was the cause!

For Siegfried was that falcon, her heart's chosen,  
Though yet in maiden thought forsworn, unseen;  
An honored wife — a widow horror-frozen —  
So reads thy fate, sweet queen.

Sweet queen! alas, alas! sweet queen no longer:  
In fury and in anguish ends the dream;  
The lurid lines of destiny burn stronger,  
And hide her beauty's beam.

Gaze long upon the dear, sad face before you,  
For never lovelier lady will you see  
In dew, and balm, and freshness bending o'er you, —  
The Rose of Burgundy.

'T is on the wall of a Bavarian palace;  
A fresco by a master-limner wrought;  
You see Chriemhild herself, ere wasting malice  
Had all to ruin brought.

She clings to Siegfried, holding on her finger,  
The falcon of her vision, — ominous bird!  
While far off, where her chieftain's glances linger,  
The rush of doom is heard.

Behold the nucleus of the old song's glory.  
This is the picture of Chriemhild to keep;  
For you can only finish the wild story,  
To shudder and to weep.

Link not her name with Etzel's barbarous splendor,  
Nor the bold Nibelung race she snared to death:  
Embalm her memory, womanly and tender,  
In love's most sacred breath!

You happier women of these later ages,  
With white hands by her hideous guilt unsoiled, —  
Had she read forward her own history's pages,  
Like you she had recoiled.

Who hears, in that young, rapturous inspiration,  
When every thought takes up its harp and sings,  
The undertone of demon-visitation  
Muttering beneath Love's wings?

Mean jealousies her queenly bosom fluttered,  
Wakening to war the monstrous brood of crime,  
Dragon with fiend, until her tale is uttered,  
A fear unto all time.

Nay; end it with this portrait of a woman,  
To whom is possible yet a perfect lot.  
When beauty once has blossomed in the human,  
Its blight remember not!

Even blotted so, her story is immortal.  
Transfigured by her love, Chriemhild shall stand,  
Alway with Siegfried at the palace-portal,  
The dream-bird on her hand.

Quelle:

The Poetical Works of Lucy Larcom. With Illustrations. Boston and New York 1884.



Lucy Larcom  
Mill Girl, Teacher, and Poetess  
1826-1893

Lucy Larcom was born in 1826 by the seashore in Beverly, Massachusetts, the second youngest of nine sisters. Her father, Benjamin Larcom, was a merchant and sea captain who was well known for his piety. He took great pains to teach his children from the Bible and every Sunday afternoon was spent in Bible lessons. When Lucy was only 9, her father died and left the family without adequate provision. Her mother, Lois Barrett Larcom, moved the family to the mill town of Lowell. Here Mrs. Larcom kept a boarding house for the mill girls, making it more than just a boarding house, but a home.

After moving to Lowell, Lucy's formal schooling ceased as she joined her sisters in the mill to help with family finances. She entered one of the mills as a "doffer". A "doffer" was one who took off empty bobbins and put on full ones. She continued working at various mill jobs for the next ten years.

Lucy loved books and literary pursuit. While living in Beverly, she had learned to love good books. She delighted in "Pilgrim's Progress" and poured over English poetry. She was well trained in the Bible and continued religious reading throughout her life. Her love of learning led her to take advantage of every opportunity to enlarge her studies. While she worked at the mill some kind of reading and literary club was formed by the mill girls and several of them wrote papers to be read at the meetings. It was then that the poet Whittier was editing a paper in Lowell and became interested in these young women who were thirsting after knowledge. In fact, she became lifelong friends with Whittier's sister.

When Lucy was about twenty years old she traveled to Illinois with her favorite sister, Emiline. There she taught district school in a vacated log building. She received forty dollars for three months of work, which was thought to be a good wage. She continued in that job for three years until she had a chance to further her education.

In 1849, Lucy was able to attend the Monticello Female Seminary in Godfrey, Illinois for three years. Upon finishing her education at this institution, Lucy returned to her home town of Beverly to teach. After teaching private classes for a few years, she was called to a position in Wheaton Female

Seminary, where she taught for six years with much success. While in Wheaton she taught English literature and rhetoric where she made suggestions to the administration for improvement in courses and lecturing. She also taught moral philosophy, logic, history, and botany, and in addition she founded the college newspaper.

Maintaining this rigorous schedule proved too much for her and her health began to fail. She resigned from teaching and turned to literary work. She edited „Our Young Folks” a notable children’s periodical of the day published by Ticknor & Fields, who put out the Atlantic Monthly. Lucy also had work published in other leading periodicals.

Lucy was a poetess of friendship and nature. Her girlhood days at Beverly, with its seaside and beautiful scenery, largely influence the substance and style of her writing. Her work was also spiritually uplifting and full of typical nineteenth century expressions of sentiment. Always considering her poetry an extension of her faith, her deep love for God and her Christian faith pervaded her writings. In fact, she had once claimed that she would write only hymns if the magazines would take them. In her last three years she wrote three prose works of Christian inspiration that were well received.

While her writings were quite extensive, perhaps her greatest work, for which she is chiefly remembered, was her autobiographical sketch „A New England Girlhood”, which covered her life until 1852 and captures the classic pattern of small-town upbringing and values. Miss Larcom died in 1893 from a heart ailment when she was sixty-seven years old. While she died in Boston, she was buried in an unmarked grave in Central Cemetery in Beverly, Mass.