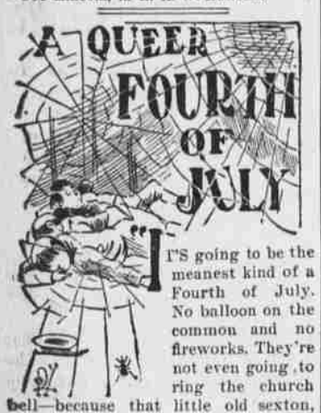
A GLORIOUS FOURTH.

LITTLE Adelbert
arose at four
And crept downstairs to the big
front door,
And down the walk
to the garden
gate,
And there he started
to celebrate.
With bursting cracker and roaring gun
He waked the neighbors, every one:
He scared the cat out of all her sense,
And blew the slats off the picket fence,
And came to breakfast with one black eye,
And said: "Hooray, for the Fourth of
July!"

He ate with hurry and frantic haste,
For never a minute had he to waste;
Then out again to the fray he sprang
And turned things loose with a mighty
"bang!"
He fizzed and spluttered and boomed and
crashed,
While dishes rattled and windows smashed;
And when, all grimy and sore and lame,
Torn and tousled, to lunch he came,
On his swollen lips was the joyous cry:
"Ain't I glad it's the Fourth of July!"

All that day, till the twilight's close,
The powder-smoke from the garden rose;
All day long, in the heat and dust,
Little Adelbert "banged" and "bust,"
Till, just as the shadows began to creep,
He blew himself in a senseless heap.
Burnt and blistered and minus hair,
They brought him in for the doctor's care;
But, late that night, he was heard to sigh:
"I wish every day was the Fourth of July!"
—Joe Lincoln, in L. A. W. Bulletin.

A QUEER FOURTH OF JULY



"IT'S going to be the meanest kind of a Fourth of July. No balloon on the common and no fireworks. They're not even going to ring the church bell—because that little old sexton, Sandy McVie, is too lazy, I suppose."

Truman Bluford, generally known among his comrades as True Blue, was excitedly announcing this dismal news to Rob Tripp and Tenney Cole, in his father's store.

"There's no patriotism in Cherryfield. They've all forgotten how our fathers fought and bled," said Rob Tripp, who liked to read nothing but stories of battle, and meant to fight something when he grew up, if it were only Indians.

"It will be as still as Sunday, I know. What is the Fourth of July, without a racket?" said Tenney Cole, dejectedly.

"I tell you, boys, something ought to be done!" said True.

That was what the boys liked about True. He was always ready to do something. Older people were inclined to think he was a little too ready to do mischief, but the boys were generally ready to follow where True led the way.

"We might ring the church bell," said True.

That wasn't much to do, Rob thought; it sounded rather tame. Still, it would be fun to wake the stupid Cherryfield people out of the naps which they had no business to be having on Fourth of July morning, and startle the selectmen, who had decided that there should be no ringing of bells.

"How could we get into the church?" asked Tenney Cole, who was of a practical turn of mind.

"Break in, of course," replied True, coolly. "You can't expect to have all that fun without—well, without hearing something about it afterward. We could break a window in the porch; and when we once got hold of the rope, wouldn't we make people think the bell was bewitched! They'd blame Sandy McVie for not being on the watch, too. It would be a good joke on the old rascal. He's got us into enough trouble by telling of us."

True's father was coming from the back part of the store, so the boys lowered their voices and walked quietly out at the door; while behind the counter, from the stooping posture in which he had been measuring for himself a gallon of molasses, arose Sandy McVie. He looked after the boys, with all the shrewd little wrinkles in his face drawing themselves up into hard knots.

"A good joke on the old rascal, eh?" he muttered. "There's never any knowing how a joke may turn out, my fine fellows! You're fixing a Fourth of July celebration for yourselves that'll be more than you bargained for, if I'm not mistaken."

The boys went on, all unconscious that Sandy McVie had been a listener to the conversation that was certainly not intended for his ears.

"It would be a good thing if we could get into the church without breaking a window," said Tenney Cole. "There's little Rose McVie now. Let's ask her where her father keeps the key."

"Hanging on a nail in the closet, under his coat," replied the little girl, on being questioned.

"Couldn't you get it for us, Rosy, and not let anybody know it, if we gave you the greatest lot of candy you ever saw, and a bunch of torpedoes for to-morrow?"

Rosy was a very small person, with a very large appetite for candy, to say nothing of a strong desire to celebrate with the proper amount of noise the anniversary of her country's independence. Her eyes grew big and round at the alluring prospect, and she nodded emphatically her willingness to undertake the errand. So it was settled that she should bring them the key that night, after her father had hung up his coat in the closet, so there would be no danger that he would go there again and discover the absence of the key.

That afternoon Sandy McVie and his son, a stout lad of 18, paid a visit to the church. Archie, the son, came out, looking very warm and tired.

"Better have let them do it, and then make them smart for it, than to take all that trouble," he grumbled. "Or just give their fathers a hint of what they are up to."

"Since they are so fond of jokes, I'm willing they should have a bit of a one," said the sexton, rubbing his hands, gleefully. "They'll catch it fast enough for breaking the church window."

Rosy McVie stole out of the house that night after dark and delivered the church key into True's hands, receiving in return an amount of candy and torpedoes that had cost a large share of the boys' Fourth of July savings. But they were all satisfied that it was money well spent, for they had learned from sad experience that the results of breaking windows were never amusing.

It was about half-past four o'clock on the morning of the Fourth when the three boys unlocked the church door. It was very quiet for a Fourth of July morning. Now and then came the banging of a gun, the feeble popping of firecrackers and torpedoes, and the dismal shriek of a fish horn; but there were very few people astir.

"This stupid old town will get a waking up in a minute now. And people ought to thank us. It's a burning shame to have it so still. You may be sure they're making things lively over at Borrowsville by this time."

Borrowsville was a town on the other side of the river, where the boys meant to assist in the celebration after they had waked up Cherryfield.

"They won't thank us, you know," said Tenney Cole. "Boys never are appreciated."

"I don't expect it will be just exactly thanks that we shall get," said True, drily, as he turned the key in the lock behind them. "Anybody that's afraid had better back out now."

Nobody backed out. Six hands seized the bell rope. There was "a long pull, a strong pull and a pull all together."

But no sound followed. They looked at each other in silent amazement and tried it again. They could feel that the bell swayed backward and forward; but it did not ring. What could be the reason?

"Somebody must have muffled it!" exclaimed Rob.

"We'll go up and see what's the matter, anyway," said True.

A long, long flight of steep and narrow stairs led to the first landing in the church steeple. Beyond that was a ladder leading to the bell loft. There was a trap door which they pushed open, and all scrambled up to the loft.

"If here isn't a go! The tongue is gone from the bell!" cried True. "Now who do you suppose did that?"

"Rosy must have told on us. I just wish we hadn't given her all that candy," lamented Tenney.

The great bell hung there empty, powerless to arouse any Fourth of July enthusiasm, and looking as sad as if it realized its dumbness.

"I should just like to catch the fellow that did that," said Rob, flourishing his fist at an imaginary foe, as he did so, unfortunately striking the trap door with his elbow, and causing it to fall with a crash. It was somewhat dark in the loft, now that the trap door was closed, the only light coming from a little round window, like a porthole in a vessel, far above their heads.

"Lift up the door, Rob. We may as well go down. Whoever took that tongue out wouldn't leave it where we could find it, you may be sure," said True.

But when Rob tried to lift the door, lo and behold! it stuck fast. The iron ring which had once served as a handle was broken off, and there was no way by which they could get a sufficiently firm hold to pull with any considerable amount of strength. They tried to pry it open with their knives, but only succeeded in breaking them. And time was wearing away, and the Borrowsville celebration must be getting toward its liveliest.

"It's of no use to holler. Nobody could hear us," said Tenney, despairingly.

"It's a pretty place to spend the Fourth in!" said Rob, with a groan. "How long do you suppose it will be before they miss us at home and come to look for us?"

"Why, they'd never think of coming here to look," replied True. "And my mother said I might stay all night with my cousins over at Borrowsville. She won't expect me home till to-morrow, and your folks will think you've stayed with me. Anyway, they would never think we were up in the church steeple."

"But when she knows we're lost, Rosy McVie will tell, if she hasn't already," said Tenney.

"She won't. She's too much afraid of her father to tell that she gave us the key," averred True.

"But he'll find out that the key is gone, and then he'll suspect that we are here," said Tenney, who was determined to look on the bright side.

"Next Sunday, maybe! We shall be starved to death before then!" said Rob, who was not proving himself as brave as his desire for fighting had led his comrades to suppose.

"Somebody must have got wind of what we meant to do, or the tongue wouldn't have been taken out of the bell," said Tenney; "and no one could be mean enough to keep us here for long on the Fourth of July."

"Sandy McVie is mean enough for anything," declared Rob; "and perhaps they have only taken the tongue out to repair it, or something of that kind."

Sandy McVie meanwhile arose at five o'clock and took a walk around the church. There was no broken window.

"So they gave it up, the young rascals, and have probably gone over to Borrowsville to do their celebrating," said the sexton to himself, and felt a disappointment that he should be denied the grim satisfaction of bringing the young rascals to justice. "Well, Cherryfield will be the quieter for their being out of it to-day," he added, to console himself.

If not exactly out of Cherryfield, they were certainly too far above it to interfere with its quiet. A faint echo of distant Fourth of July noises came tantalizingly to their ears now and then. The minutes dragged along heavily. They had no means of telling time, and an hour seemed like a day; but night finally came, the dimness deepened to utter darkness, and, stretched upon the floor, they all fell asleep. Being boys, they could sleep, although the floor was hard and keen gnawings reminded them that they had gone breakfastless, dinnerless and supperless.

When True awakened, a little shaft of sunlight shone through the small window, away up in the dimness of the steeple. It danced upon the cobwebs that covered the dusty beams until they looked as if made of gold thread. A great, long-legged spider was dragging a hapless fly into his web. The spider's web had been partially torn away, and the dust had been brushed from the beams in the corner near it. There was a little scaffold in the corner covered with shavings and chips, evidently left there when the last repairing was done. But somebody had been up in that corner lately. How otherwise could the dust have been brushed away and the spider's web broken? True wondered idly what anybody could have been there for, and then a sudden thought struck him that sent the blood rushing to his head, and made him for a moment feel faint and dizzy. In another moment he was climbing up those beams nimbly as only a squirrel or a boy could climb. He put his hand under the heap of shavings and chips, and it touched something very hard and cold. He dashed off the chips and shavings with which it was covered, and disclosed the bell tongue.

True wanted to shout for joy, but he knew that he needed all his strength just now, and restrained himself. He could not have lifted the bell tongue, even if he had not been obliged to cling to a beam with one hand, but he could draw it along to the edge of the scaffolding, and then with one mighty effort, he pushed it off. It came to the floor with a crash that seemed as if it might arouse all Cherryfield, and certainly did effectually arouse the two sleeping boys, who sprang to their feet, Rob with a vague impression that it was the report of a cannon, and that his time had now come to fight something. It was a happy moment when they realized that the bell tongue was found, though Tenney did grumble that they "ought to have been smart enough to find it yesterday." True thought that if he hadn't been awake when that sunbeam struck the corner, they never would have found it, for who would have thought that anybody would carry it away up there to hide it?

It was no small undertaking to replace the tongue in the bell, but, after much lifting and struggling, it was done, however. Then they all pulled with a will, and a clang that almost deafened them came from the bell. Sleeping Cherryfield was aroused in a very few minutes, and asked, in amazement, what was the matter. The new fire engine was taken out with a rush and clamor. But where was the fire? People ran wildly about and nobody semed to know. The most mystified man was old Sandy McVie, who ran out of the house in a maze of bewilderment, and declared that the bell was bewitched. How else could it ring without a tongue? And how could any human being get into the church when the door was securely locked, and no window broken, as anybody could see?

And still the bell rang wildly and clamorously, as such a sober-minded old church bell was never known to ring before. The spirit of half a dozen Fourths of July seem to possess it. People on the outskirts of the town began to think that the selectmen had repented of not celebrating the Fourth, and were making amends by celebrating the 5th, and they came hurriedly driving into the village to see what was the matter.

At length somebody more courageous than Sandy McVie insisted upon going into the church to investigate, and Sandy went to get the key. The discovery that it was gone put a new face upon the matter, and Sandy's suspicions reverted to the boys whose plans he had overheard, and he volunteered to break open a window and lead the search.

Rosy McVie at that time was pulling the bedclothes over her head, and wondering what would become of her, and resolving never again to touch a key or anything else that she had no right to, for all the candy in the world. Candy was good, but, oh, how bad was the terror she was suffering now! And Rosy is not likely to forget her resolve, although she was never found out. The boys agreed that they would "never be so mean as to tell on a girl, anyway," and they were always supposed to have stolen the key from Sandy McVie's closet themselves.

When they heard the footsteps of their rescuers the boys ceased to ring the bell. It was easy enough to open the trapdoor from beneath. While the boys were wondering anxiously whether it ever could be opened, Sandy McVie's head popped up out of it like a Jack-in-the-box. Rob's father came next, and Rob—who meant to fight Indians—threw his arms around his neck and—cried. Rob's father had suffered some anxiety about him, but thought he had stayed at Borrowsville with True.

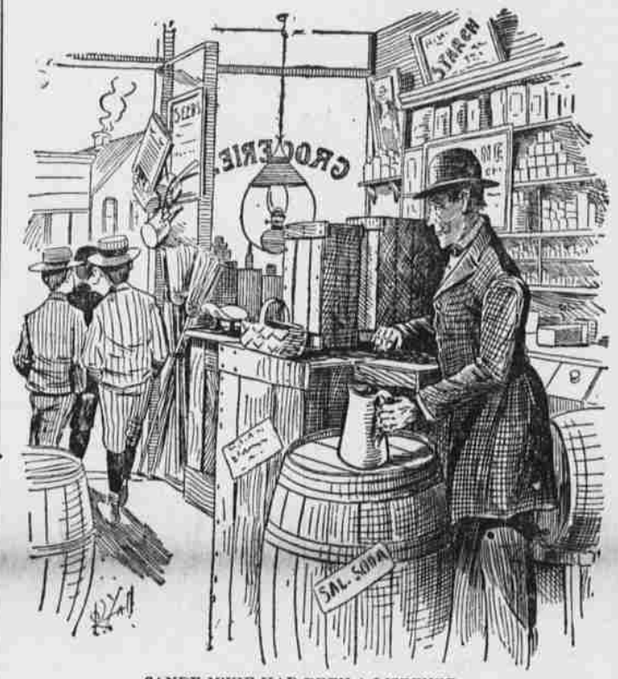
Everybody agreed that the boys had been sufficiently punished by their imprisonment and the loss of their Fourth of July fun. Even Sandy McVie said "he guessed they wouldn't be apt to do it again." But he may have been somewhat softened by the compliments which True paid him on his skill in hiding the bell tongue.

The boys didn't care to say much about their adventure. They felt as if the trick they had tried to play had been turned upon themselves. When True's Borrowsville cousins asked him what kind of a Fourth he had had, he replied, carelessly:

"Oh, a sky-high one!"

Which was certainly truer than the cousins, who had their own opinion of Cherryfield celebrations, believed.

But those three boys will never ring another church bell without leave.—Sophie Swett, in Golden Days.



SANDY M'VIE HAD BEEN A LISTENER.

ODD FOURTH OF JULY FROLIC

The Reviving of a Quaint Old English Custom with Many Patriotic Features.

Katherine Bell Tippets, writing of "A Patriotic Garden Party," in Woman's Home Companion, describes the chief diversion of the afternoon thus:

"After the formalities the hostess led the way to the well-shaded lawn where a liberty-pole had been erected with Phrygian cap of liberty at its top. Innumerable red, white and blue streamers had been fastened under the liberty-cap and stretched in every direction over the lawn and the ends tied to trees, arbor, chairs, tables or any convenient objects. A sufficient number had been left fluttering from the pole to serve as starting points. To these were pinned slips of paper, each bearing the first line of some patriotic song, poem or address, and a number to show how many other slips were needed to complete the quotation. The rest of the lines had been pinned to the scattered streamers.

"Each guest selected a familiar line and began a tour of inspection of the other red, white and blue streamers, which was kept up until all the lines called for had been collected, when a new line could be selected from the liberty-pole, and when made up, a third, and so on, up to the expiration of time allowed. The selections were taken from such patriotic poems as 'America,' 'The Star Spangled Banner,' 'Warren's Address,' 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' and 'The Song of Marion's Men.'

"A large bell hung aloft was rung as a signal for the beginning of the game, and soon the lawn was the scene of laughter and activity, which became patriotism under the influence of the growing sentiments expressed on the slips of paper.

"When the limit of time was up the collected quotations were examined and a prize of a silk liberty-cap was given and placed on the head of the one who had compiled the greatest number of verses or sentences. So thoroughly imbued were the compilers with their work by this time that it naturally followed to join hands around their successful competitor and unite in singing 'America.'"

Independence Day.

Fling out the flag, the starry flag,
The banner of the free!
The symbol of the land we love,
The land of liberty!
Our fathers with their willing blood
Baptized that banner gay,
So let it stream, its stars agleam,
On Independence day!

From brave New England's rugged shore
Washed by Atlantic's waves,
To western lands whose pebbly strands
The fair Pacific laves—
From Minnesota's swamps and swales
To southern hummocks gay,
Fling out afar the stripes and stars
On Independence day!

Fling out the flag, the dear old flag,
The flag our grandsires won!
The emblem of the land we love,
The land of Washington!
The blood of heroes thrills our hearts
And bids us haste away,
To consecrate with fitting state
Our Independence day!
—Helen W. Clark, in N. Y. Ledger.

Why He Is Happy.

Why does the kid look proud and smile,
As to the woodshed he retires?
Because since early dawn he's been
Responsible for eighteen fires.
—Golden Days.

"The Night Before the Fourth."

He sleepless lies with swearing tongue
Because the old church bell is rung
By some mischievous elf,
Nor thinks he of that olden time
When, just as midnight's stroke would chime,
Adown the lightning-rod he'd climb
To ring that bell himself.
—L. A. W. Bulletin.

Taking His Revenge.

Rafferty—An' wuz it th' Choinese thot invinted foirecrackers?

Wun Lung (proudly)—Lessir!

Rafferty (smiting heavily)—Thin take thot, yer Mongolian brute! Oi sot down on a lighted bunch av thim yisterday.—Golden Days.

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