

THE DARKTOWN DUEL

Related by One of the Seconds

Der was great kormeshun In de heart ob Andrew Jones, When he he'd dat Ebenezar Was er waitin' fo' his bones. Ole Kibosh Johnson's dawter Was de cause ob all de fuss; An' de wimmee an' de men folk On'y tried to make it wuss.

ENDED GLORIOUSLY.

The "Fourth" With Miss Polyphemia and Faithful Barty.

All day long the bell on Miss Polyphemia's shop door had been dancing and tinkling like mad. Boys gave such jerks! And it seemed to Miss Polyphemia that more boys had entered the shop that day than in the whole fifteen years that it had been a shop. She did not approve of boys, and had taken pains not to keep any thing on her shelves that could attract them. When she began business she had several jars full of licorice and colt's-foot sticks, and very bitter hoarhound drops which she expected to sell to old ladies who bought their sewing silk of her. But the boys discovered that a better bargain was to be had at Miss Polyphemia's than at the confectioner's around the corner, and they began to buy these dainties of her. The result was that Miss Polyphemia put the jars away in a closet when they were empty, and never had them refilled. She had rigidly avoided marbles and toys and slate-pencils, and no boys except those sent on errands, who were necessary evils, had ever darkened her doors until to-day.

one more before the Fourth of July. She might be able to live and preserve her senses through that, she thought, as she went into her little sitting-room behind the shop to refresh herself with a hasty cup of tea. She had just taken the first sip when jing-aling went the bell, a real boy's jerk. It was not a promising customer who stood before the counter when Miss Polyphemia went out; her practiced eye discerned that at once. It was hard to tell where the original material of his clothes ended and the patches began, and his freckled face looked thin and care-worn. Although he was clean and whole, it was written all over him from his thick crop of tow-colored hair to the toes of his boots that Poverty had him under her thumb. He inquired the price of Roman candles. "It is marked on them; if you had looked you would have seen," said Miss Polyphemia, severely. But she did repeat the price, as he raised a pair of brave blue eyes to hers. He took a few pennies from his pockets and counted them over twice with a dejected look. Clearly there were not enough, and counting them three times did not make them any more. "You haven't any for fifteen cents apiece, have you?" he asked, as if his last hope hung upon her answer. "No," said Miss Polyphemia, shortly; and the boy went out, opening the door so slowly and reluctantly that the bell scarcely tinkled. He stood on the sidewalk and gazed at the Roman candles. "I'll have one yet," Miss Polyphemia heard him say; and then he hurried off with a determined air. Miss Polyphemia felt something like pity for him, although he was a boy. Something in his frank blue eyes had seemed to give her an odd sensation about the heart. "Pshaw! it isn't as if he had wanted something to eat," she said to herself, angry at her softness. "If he had a Roman candle he'd only get into mischief—set a house afire or blow up all creation, most likely."

spectacles on the top of her head, and the largest American flag from her window wrapped around her as a shawl, her toilet evidently having been a hasty one. As soon as she caught sight of Barty she cried: "There he is! That's the boy who did it! Don't let him get away! I heard the crash, and when I looked out of the window I saw him running down Aldersey street as fast as he could go. And he's the very boy who said he would have one of those Roman candles, though he hadn't the money to pay for it. The hole in the glass is just where the Roman candles are. He could put his hand into the box." By this time the constable whom Miss Polyphemia was addressing had seized Barty by the collar, and was dragging him off to the lock-up in spite of his assertions of innocence. "That was a pretty bold job for a young rascal like you, but you Plumleyville boys are a bad lot, specially along about the Fourth of July. It's time one of you was made an example of." Barty tried to explain that he was going on an errand for his mother when Miss Polyphemia saw him running down Aldersey street, but the constable only said that "he was too good a boy to get up so early as that to do his mother's errands, and he guessed it wouldn't hurt him to have a day or two in retirement to meditate on the evils of too early rising." The lock-up was a little brick building on the main street, not far from Miss Polyphemia's shop. Never had Barty thought, when he had seen drunkards and thieves and fighting boys carried there, that such a fate could befall him. When he heard the key turn in the lock, and realized that he was shut up there alone, his heart sank down, down, and a great lump came up in his throat which it was very hard work to swallow, until he remembered that he was the man of his family, and mustn't be a baby, whatever happened. At noon the constable came, and put a huge loaf of bread and a jug of water in at the door; but he would not pay any attention to poor Barty's assertions that he was innocent. "If he was, he would have a chance to prove it when he was brought before the magistrate," the constable said, "and he would only have to wait for that until the day after the Fourth." The day after the Fourth! Barty had a stout heart, but he almost gave way to despair then. What would his mother and Jimmy think had become of him? They would probably hear, however. By this time it was known all over Plumleyville that he was in the lock-up. Could he ever obtain a situation after this? Would not the disgrace cling to him, even if he were not proven guilty? One big tear did get as far as the end of Barty's nose, but he dashed it scornfully away, and forbade another one to start. And by way of keeping up his heart, and as being appropriate to the time, if not exactly to the occasion, Barty whistled "Yankee Doodle."

annoying to open it or not, that poor boy should not stay there any longer. She declared, and as every body in Plumleyville knew that Miss Polyphemia would have her own way, the constable's wife thought she might as well give her the key. Barty, sitting dejectedly on one of the small cots which were the only furniture of the lock-up, heard the key click in the lock and saw with astonishment Miss Polyphemia, panting with haste, standing before him. "You didn't do it!" she exclaimed. "I guess I know that," said Barty, with some temper. "It was my dog and another dog. You have good, honest eyes. I might have known you were not a thief. What is your name, and where do you live? Bartlett Pilkins? Oh, that's it!" exclaimed Miss Polyphemia, as if she had made a great discovery. "And your father's name was Bartlett Pilkins, wasn't it?" "Yes'm; but he's dead," said Barty. Miss Polyphemia put her handkerchief to her eyes; there was something that felt like a tear in a corner of one of them. The truth was that Miss Polyphemia had once been engaged to marry Bartlett Pilkins, but she was considerably older than he, and people had told her that he only wanted the property that her father had left her, and she had dismissed him. Afterward she had been a little sorry, although he had never "amounted to much," according to Plumleyville report, and his family had come back to Plumleyville from the West—where he had gone when fortune went against him at home—very poor. "Your mother has a hard time to get along, don't she?" asked Miss Polyphemia. "Yes'm; but she won't when I get a little bigger!" said Barty, confidently. "There isn't much for a boy to do in Plumleyville; but I want an assistant in my shop. I didn't think of having a boy"—here Miss Polyphemia swallowed something in her throat that seemed very hard, and perhaps it was her prejudice against boys, for that never appeared again—"but I've taken a fancy to you, and I think you would be faithful, and could get along well with Lord George—who certainly will come home if he is alive—and some day, if I am not disappointed in you, I may make you my partner." Barty wanted to turn a somersault, and he wanted to throw his arms around Miss Polyphemia's neck, but he thought it more prudent to restrain himself. "Perhaps I can make amends to you for accusing you unjustly," continued Miss Polyphemia, "and for keeping you shut up here through the Fourth of July, which must have been hard for a boy." "It has been pretty tough," said Barty, frankly, "but I felt worst about my sick brother, Jimmy, who depends upon me to tell him all about it." "Was it for him that you wanted the Roman candle?" asked Miss Polyphemia. "Well, there are plenty of fireworks left, and I'll give you all you can carry, and you have all the evening to celebrate in now." And she took him to her shop and loaded him down with fire-works and crackers, and torpedoes, and trumpets, and flags, so that when he burst into Jimmy's room he looked like a walking Fourth of July. Such a jollification as they had that night! Lord George never saw before. Lord George returned to his overjoyed mistress after the noise had subsided, with only a few cuts upon his nose to tell of his troubles. He and Barty did get on famously together, and Miss Polyphemia has been heard to declare that she "wouldn't take his weight in gold for her clerk," although he is a boy, and she is fully determined to make him her partner. As for Jimmy, he has gone to a hospital, where he is under the care of a famous doctor, and the probability is that by next year he will see all the Fourth of July.—Harper's Young People.

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