

FOURTH OF JULY.

We put him to bed in his little nightgown. The worst battered youngster there was in the town...

A FOURTH OF JULY STORY

It was a wonder to all Snowden how Mrs. Ely and her daughter managed to live. They had a cow, it is true, but a procession of small boys came every night and morning to the widow's pretty cottage...

Not a hundred yards from this tinctest of cottages was an imposing stone gateway leading to the well kept grounds of Squire Melville. His grand house was closed all winter...

The battle of life had left Squire Melville cold, hard and unapproachable. With enough pride of another kind to make him take pleasure in exhibiting his glory to the eyes of his old associates...

There was a storm of angry words between them, for no man could listen calmly to abuse of his loved one. Then the older man, more politic than the younger, forced his tongue to a mildness that found no echo in his heart...

In the vine arched doorway of the little cottage, Letty stood with her flower-like face lifted as her eyes looked dreamily into the blue glory of the summer sky. Roses massed themselves above her, delicate sprays heavy with bloom waved about her...

A quick step sounded in the distance. It was James going down the stairs. He had been up to darken the diamond window. From behind a portiere she watched till he disappeared...

She lingered uncertainly, hardly knowing what to do next. Should she run down stairs again and out on the lawn to summon help? Perhaps even in the time she was gone the squire's room might be invaded...

The lights were turned low, but the room was filled with the ruddy glare of an eruptive Vesuvius in full play on the lawn. He had wrapped a dressing gown about him and was watching the display from his window...

A real or fancied sound in the next room brought Letty to her senses. Walking close to Mr. Melville she softly shake her resolve. Her only answer was the repetition of her determination never to enter a family without a welcome...

and quietly explained the position, reserving the unquieting fact that the enemy was already upon them. For Letty it was easy to climb out of the window, and from the balcony to an ornamental roof...

He threw the blinds open as he spoke. "Look over there, Letty, and think what might be the condition if you had not been so brave and generous. Those wretches, with that scoundrel James, are safely locked in the stable with a willing band of watchers guarding them...

The wild excitement of the evening had interrupted the pyrotechnic performances, but now, late though it was, some young men, remembering that the Fourth of July comes but once a year, fired the fuse of the framework of the grand finale...

It was a clear, balmy Fourth of July. Screened by the luxuriant vines which veiled the parlor window, Letty sadly watched the guests go by, their faces bright with the promise of pleasure in which she could have no share...

Night fell darkly, with no light but the soft gleam of stars. The fireworks would have a superb setting of blackness. Heavy foliage, low growing trees, forming what the neighbors had always called the grove, covered that part of Melville Court...

With a black waterproof thrown around her to obscure her white dress, and watched the preparations for a grand pyrotechnic display. The music of the band at first prevented her hearing any other sounds...

"Remember," he was saying hurriedly, "you are not to let yourself into the little side door till you see that light go out in that diamond shaped window on the third floor. Keep your eyes on that, mind..."

"An' after we's got ourselves inter de house how's we goin' to be sure we don't run into nobody?" said a brutal voice. "Because the moment the first firecracker pops there won't be a living sinner from cellar to garret that won't run out to see the fun, that is, except Mr. Melville..."

Then James hurried off and Letty listened, petrified, to a conversation which showed that the two men near by were quite aware that the squire's room, from which they were warned off, contained much the most promising booty...

"Never, under any circumstances, shall Letty Ely enter this house again," was the sentence the squire had pronounced in reply to Grace's intercession for her brother's sake...

In the few public gatherings of a patriotic kind which are still held upon that day, not only should matters of a partisan character be generally eschewed, but perhaps especially the discussion of reformatory ideas and economic theories...

There might, perhaps, be easily found some method, too, of linking the school with the Fourth of July. The movement in favor of raising the flag above every school house during school hours is an object lesson in patriotism of infinite value...

The exercises were held in a grove, if the weather permitted; the declaration was read—a sort of patriotic catechism which had been taught the children, embracing the chief facts attending the adoption of that instrument...

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