

THE DAY WE CELEBRATE

TEN LITTLE FINGERS.

Ten little fingers toying with a mine—
Bang! went the powder, and then there were nine.

Nine little fingers fixing rockets straight—
Zip! a kick backward, and then there were eight.

Eight little fingers pointing up to heaven—
Roman candle "busted," and then there were seven.

Seven little fingers, punk and powder mix—
Punk was ignited, and then there were six.

Six little fingers for a "slizzer" striver—
One went off with it, and then there were five.

Five little fingers loading for a roar—
Boom! went the cannon, and then there were four.

Four little fingers with a pack made free—
Crash! went a cracker, and then there were three.

Three little fingers found the fuse burned blue—
Bombshell too previous, and then there were two.

Two little fingers having lots of fun—
Pistol exploded, and then was one.

One little finger, fooling with a gun—
Didn't know 'twas loaded, and then there was none.



They ran errands, sold garden truck, peddled papers, and this latter was no mean field of commercial venture during the prevailing war excitement in the village.

"Better have a quiet Fourth of July, boys," suggested their mother gently, the day before.

"All right," nodded thoughtful Ned cheerfully. "With father away, I suppose it's best."

"Yes'm," assented Tom vaguely, "but what a thundering report that old musket would make!"

Ned attended to the morning papers that arrived from the city.

Tom took in the "extras" that came in through the day.

The former was eating supper with his mother, the latter absorbed in reflections of the absent, almost the missing one, now.

Suddenly there was a terrific hullabaloo, comprised of shouts, firecrackers, hurrahings.

Ned ran to the window.

"For mercy's sake!" he ejaculated.

"What is it, Ned?" rather startled, and tremblingly inquired Mrs. Wilson, arising more slowly.

"It's Tom!"

"He isn't hurt, or—"

"Acts as if he was crazy!"

Tom did. In full view, he was coming down the dusty road.

Trooping after him were a dozen or more vociferous youngsters with whom he had ever been a favorite.

They were making the welkin ring, and many a lad was burning his fingers in his ardor to help swell the commotion, and was using up the prized ammunition of the morrow.

Tom burst into the room, drenched with perspiration, panting for breath, but with eyes alight with emotion and vitality.

"See here!" challenged Ned.

"No—look there!"

Tom flung his bundle of extras upon the table.

His mother nearly fainted. Even a casual glance showed at the top of the glaring headlines a name familiar.

"John Wilson,"—"here"—"daring deed."—oh, it was news from the absent one, but was it news of glory, but also of death?

"Father!" she choked.

"Is all right!" piped Tom. "Read here, Ned—read here! Father was 'looking for work'—say, mother! he found it!"

"Where? Where?" faltered the suspense-racked wife and mother.

"Battleship—you know what a boss gunner he is! Met the enemy, pulled another 'gun string in another nick of time' and—"

Coherent consideration of the news the paper gave proved that Tom had not exaggerated.

Skill and opportunity had combined to give John Wilson a chance to "knock out" a Spanish ironclad "at the right minute."

He had concededly turned the tide of favor leading up to the capture of a richly freighted consort.

"Prize money—why, he can pay off the mortgage!" cried the exuberant Ned.

"Promotion—it will glorify his later days!" murmured Mrs. Wilson thankfully.

"Where's the gun?" demanded irrespressible Tom.

"Hold on! What gun?" interfered Ned "Father's old musket."

"Why—"

"We're going to celebrate!"

"No—he left orders—fire it off when Cuba is free!"

"Free!" fairly yelled the sanguine and excited Tom. "With such men as him peppering the foe, she's practically free already!"

"Well, I suppose—" began Ned, in faint demur.

Above all other reports that boomed in the morning of July Fourth, 1898, that fired by proud, patriotic Tom Wilson secured to him the loudest ever was.

"Wonder if they heard that in Cuba?" he gloated.

"They're hearing some other reports from his owner, I reckon," smiled Ned.

"Say!" declared the ardent Tom, "didn't it make a thundering report?"

The Grand Old Fashioned Way.
Get ready, boys, to make a noise
On independence day,
For we're about to have it out
In grand old fashioned way.

At dawn we'll raise our flag ablaze
And cannon thunders roar
We'll give the cheer that crimson bars
Reflected on the sky.

Then while bells clang and anvils bang
And cannon thunders roar
We'll give the cheer that crimson bars
Reflected on the sky.

We'll yell and screech and make a speech
About our glorious nation
And brag that we on land or sea
Can whip all creation.

Fourth of July Poem.



A pistol toy
Gave much joy,
To small boy—
Bang!



He'll no more fire—
Went up higher,
And the choir—
Bang.

—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Old Glory.

To the true lovers of our country the American flag is the most beautiful emblem of a nation's glory that floats in the breeze.

To its defenders in the past it means more than mere glory, as it symbolizes a union of States and hearts, purchased by blood and treasure freely given, for the country's welfare. Its contemplation brings to our memory the scenes of strife on land and sea, where Old Glory was ever in the van.

UNCLE SAM'S FOURTH OF JULY INCUBUS.



WHEN CUBA IS FREE.



"ON'T touch it, Tom!" "It would make a thundering report!" "Never mind that—loading that gun was one of the last things father did before he left home."

"I know that," nodded Tom Wilson, looking pretty sober and solemn, "but it would make a thundering report!"

"You've said that twice!"

"And I'd love to hear the old musket just once!"

"Marble you will."

"To-morrow—the Fourth?"

"Who knows? Says father, when he rambled the last wild home in the old revolutionary riddle, 'We'll fire that off when Cuba is free!'"

"She's just as good as that, isn't she?" challenged Tom.

"Never you mind—we're going to mind father."

Ned Wilson's word went, for he was the eldest, and there was no further demur.



A FAMILIAR NAME IN THE OLARINO HEADLINES.

Besides that, duty engrossed the two boys the rest of that day.

Other fellows had nothing more arduous to do than prepare for "the biggest Fourth since the Centennial."

The Wilson lads, however, were "helping mother," and, mere novices at labor, they had not learned the ropes yet.

Things had gone from bad to worse with honest John Wilson for several years back.

He had a glorious civil war record behind him—was one of the gallant Cumberland's crew, that fated ship that went down in a blaze of patriotic glory that set fire to a nation's hopes and ardor.

A long spell of illness had caused his getting behind in his payments on the neat cottage home.

"Tell you what, Nance," he had said to his wife along in the early days of May, "I've an idea."

"Tell it, John," encouraged his wife.

"I'm going to see my step-brother, Tracy."

"Down East?"

"Down East."

"Why not write?"

"I've done that and it did no good. No, I'll risk the powers of persuasion. He has thousands. But for a slip of the pen he would have been compelled to share them with me, and he knows it. I'll try and get him to take up the mortgage here, and ease us along till we can get the boys on their feet, earning and helping."

"And if he refuses, John?" suggested Mrs. Wilson anxiously.

"Why, then I suppose I'm sort of stranded."

"All your money gone, and away from home?"

"Well, maybe work is readier there than here. Never fear, Nance, I'll find a place somewhere."

Mrs. Wilson gave her husband a quick look.

There had come into his eye a certain stern, yet proud, sparkle she used to see, when, fresh from the war, he was wont to tell how he turned the tide of a naval battle off the Carolinas by "pulling the gun string just at the right minute."

She said nothing, however. She heard nothing more from him after his departure until about the first of June.

Then he sent the merest line: "I am looking for work in New York City."

Mrs. Wilson was uneasy. Wars and rumors of wars had set John restless for months before his departure.

His last word had been "Cuba." The solicitous wife trembled, prayed, waited. Meantime, like deserving sons of a man with a heart of oak, her two sons, Ned and Tom, "pitched in."

They found the ladder growing slim, and set at work to repair it.

OUR STORY TELLER

"IT."

I WAS called "It." Try as I would, I could find no patron saint in the calendar who answered to that name, and there was really no excuse for "It" but the negligence of the Johnson family to christen its children. They bestirred themselves early only in the case of my elder sister, who was named Maggie. Even I, the youngest of a batch of five never knew the second child, a boy, by any other name than "Brother." Then came "Sis," the third, and "Babe," another boy, and finally I, the last of the Johnson brood. "It" rang in my baby ears long before I knew what was meant. I suppose that being the real baby it would have caused confusion in the household, where there was already a "Babe," and so they substituted "It," for that was my title by right of succession.

I never knew my mother. She died soon after I opened my blue eyes to the world. Perhaps if she had lived my nomenclature would not have been so slightly treated. Maggie, the eldest, a quiet, faithful girl, took charge of us at mother's death. Father was a teamster and away all day from the little family, for whom he provided generously out of his splendor earnings. He, too, called me "It" when he took me in his lap and rubbed his harsh, stubble beard over my baby cheeks or pinched my little fists with his big, horny fingers. Maggie gave me a mother's care, as she did the other children, and I had really no trouble about my incomplete name until I went to school for the first time.

"Your name is what?" asked the teacher, when my turn came in a long line, stretching from the foot of her desk to the last bench in the room. "It Johnson," I answered promptly. "It Johnson?" she repeated, with a doubling shake of the head. "Little girl, you must have forgotten your name."

"No," I gasped, for a lump in my throat almost choked me. To be the first in the whole room who had any difficulty about her name was mortifying even to a little 6-year-old.

"Have you any brothers or sisters in this school?"

"Yes, my big brother is in No. 3."

"Go upstairs and bring him down to me."

I trundled off, perplexed, to find "Brother" up to the top floor I climbed and soon espied him in a front seat of Room No. 3, the door of which stood wide open. He answered the summons of my vigorously beckoning finger and I confided to him the dilemma I was in about my name.

"Well, 'It,'" he said, "you are in a bad fix. You never had any other name."

"But isn't your name 'Brother' and nothing else?"

"No, I've been christened James besides."

"James?" I queried. "I thought that was father's name?"

"And it's my name, too—James Johnson."

Then for the first time I learned that "Brother's" name was James, that "Sis" had been christened Cordella, and that "Babe, the infringer," was Andrew in the baptismal record. Only poor, little, slighted me was "It" and nothing more.

"Brother" made matters clear to the teacher, and she laughingly inscribed the name of "It" Johnson upon the big roll book of the school.

I passed through my school days as "It." Then, tired of book learning, I went to work in a shoe factory.

"Brother" was a teamster now, like father. "Sis" was married and lived in the country. "Babe" had run away to enlist in the army, and there was no body home but father and Maggie and me, for James was boarding in another part of the city, where most of his hauling had to be done.

I hadn't been in the factory long when the old phrase "you're it" was revived on the vaudeville stage, and, of course, the young men about the place teased me by applying it to me, a

time. One night Maggie was taken ill. I nursed her till daybreak. Then I fell into a sound sleep at the foot of the bed, and was awakened only by my sister's anxious cry that it was long past rising time. I hurried away without a morsel of breakfast and reached the factory just three minutes late. Mr. Parkinson stood at the desk, noting my time.

"My sister was ill all night," I stammered, blushing to the roots of my hair. He must have read in my eyes the penitence expressed for having crossed him in his efforts to promote promptness.

"All right, little girl," he said, with a kindly glance from his handsome brown eyes. "I'll forgive you this time."

As I turned to go to my place I saw Rosina in the doorway. She had heard the foreman's remark. An evil expression spread over her darkly beautiful countenance. All day she pursued me with her jealous, grudging eyes. At noon she held a confab with three of her stanchest admirers and their sneering faces, bent upon me, boded me no good.

"You'd better go home early," advised Becky, my particular chum.

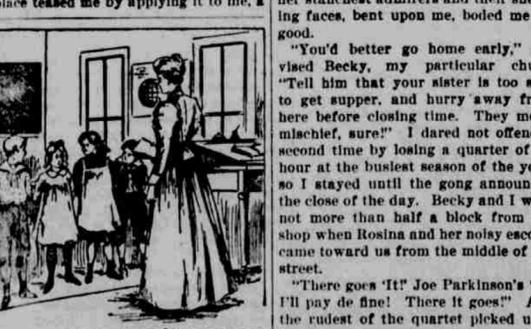
"Tell him that your sister is too sick to get supper, and hurry away from here before closing time. They mean mischief, sure!" I dared not offend a second time by losing a quarter of an hour at the busiest season of the year, so I stayed until the gong announced the close of the day. Becky and I were not more than half a block from the shop when Rosina and her noisy escorts came toward us from the middle of the street.

"There goes 'It' Joe Parkinson's 'It'! I'll pay de fine! There it goes!" And the rudent of the quartet plucked up a handful of mud and plastered my back with it. I turned to run back to the factory, when out of the darkness the arm of a man shot squarely into my assailant's face.

"The foreman knocked him down!" whispered the excited Becky. "I'm glad of it!" And we took to our heels and made good time in getting home.

As I crept into my bed that night the sweet thought that he had defended me kept me awake many hours. When I slipped into dreamland at last it was with his face bending over me, his lips whispering that he loved me, me—poor, nameless, insignificant "It."

AS HE PLACED THE WORK IN MY OUT-STRETCHED ARMS.



"YOUR NAME IS WHAT?" ASKED THE TEACHER.

real "It," and "It" from her birth to her sixteenth year.

"You're it," they shouted as they came up with me in the street. "You're it!" said their mischievous eyes as I entered the shop and passed the foreman to go to my table. The foreman was strict and permitted no noisy conduct inside the factory. He was a serious-looking man, with a young face but the mien of one beyond his years. He called each girl by name as he parceled out the work and told her what to do. "Mollie! Rosina! Gerlie!

Next morning I dashed to the factory long before the opening hour to thank him for his gallant defense. To my utter dismay a stranger was at his desk. I gave him my number and passed on. Soon the other girls arrived in groups of two and three. Their faces were grave and they seemed to discuss with subdued voices a calamity.

"What has happened?" I gasped, filled with anxious forebodings.

"Mr. Parkinson's been arrested," said Becky. The blow he dealt the scapegrace who insulted me was more effective than he had meant. The fellow was lying unconscious at his home. It was even feared that his injuries would result in death. His two companions had sworn out a warrant against the foreman. Neither they nor Rosina made their appearance at the shop that day.

Even now I cannot bear to dwell on the miserable days that followed. Joe Parkinson languished in prison, while the victim of his gallantry slowly recovered. I went to him with a breaking heart. He stretched out his hands through the bars and drew me towards him until he kissed my forehead. I was a woman at last, and my cup of love and suffering was full.

"I can bear it all, little one," he said, manfully. "It was all for you!"

He was acquitted at the trial. On the day of his release we were quietly

married, and that night he left me to go to the far West and commence life again.

It did not take him long to get a start, and I soon joined him in the cozy little home he had prepared for me.

"You!" he cried, as in the days of old. Only now he clasped me in his arms and kissed me. "Little wife!" he added. "Dear little wife!"

And it was "It" no longer.

WHO ARE "DE QUALITY?"



THE FOREMAN KNOCKED HIM DOWN.

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WHO ARE "DE QUALITY?"

Social Distinctions of the Old Regime Still Held by the Free-born Negro.

Lillian Bell gives this characteristic dialogue between two colored women in the opening chapter of "Yessum," a vivid story of Southern life appearing in the Woman's Home Companion.

"On Saturday afternoon the 'wash' of the Northern delegates to the Baptist convention was being borne through the streets of Memphis on the heads of two black, pendulous colored women.

"What you gwine do, Sis' Richdy, if dem Northern ladies gibs you firs 'bout scorchin' dat skirt?"

"I ain't skeered 'bout what dem Northern ladies gwine say to me 'bout nuthin', Sis' Golden, retorted the other. 'Don't you know dey say dat colored folks is jes as good as white folks is, an' dat up Norf if a colored lady got a sizz dress she gibs invited to de white folks' parties jes' like de quality?"

"Git out wid you, Sis' Richdy. I ain't no sich softy as to b'lieve yo' fool talk."

"Tain't no fool talk, Sis' Golden. Hit's de Gawd's trufe. 'Cordin' to dat de ladies won't dare say nuthin' to me 'bout dat scorchin' skirt, 'case it would be lake deir sassin' an' anurr. An' if dey did talk sass to me,' she added, emboldened by the other's evident admiration, 'I'd jes' up an' sass 'em back. 'Deed I would. If dey tink I'm as good as dey is, I jes' gwine show 'em dat I is.'"

"For de lan's sake, Sis' Richdy, I never did see you so uppity befo'. But I reckon you wouldn't dare talk so if it was ole Miss Beauchamp's ruffled petticoat you done burnt!"

"Lawd, Sis' Golden, I reckon not," cried the woman. "Miss Beauchamp is de quality, one of de sho' 'nuff high-steppin' ladies. I don't reckon de time will ever come when we'll hyer huh a-claimin' dat niggers is huh equals. She hol's dat hard up as high as she ever done when de Beauchamps owned de whole place. An' when she comes in town she lifts huh dress an' picks huh way lake she jes' 'spise to touch de dirt with dem l'il feet of huh. She got a look in huh eyes, ole as she is, much as to say 'you niggers, step round' hyer. You may be as good as de Northern ladies, but as for me, you has been my slaves, an' in min' you is still!"

Vegetarian Cats.

At the vegetarian jubilee in London recently some remarkable exhibits were made. One was a vegetarian cat, a sleek and handsome pussy, who, having been brought up in a vegetarian family, had not only learned to love vegetable food, but had forgotten the feline taste for mouse flesh. Mice of the plumpest and most tempting appearance could run across the floor with perfect impunity in the presence of this vegetarian tabby. She just winked sleepily at them and gave a contemptuous curl of her anti-carnivorous tail. A new race of cats is thus brought into sight—the reformed feline who will not eat meat nor kill mice. But the new vegetarian breed of cats will never become popular with the ladies.

There are tricks in all trades with the exception of the one you are engaged in.

It is easier to let the hair grow long than it is to write a good poem.