



A Fourth of July Confession

BY CHARLES EUGENE BANKS.
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"Mr. Arnold, I don't think you believe what you say."
"Indeed I do, Miss Darlington."
"Fourth of July is a farce? Then you really think that?"
"I mean to say that all the money spent in firing off crackers and burning rockets has no useful purpose."
"It expresses our feelings, I think, and that is all anything can do for us in this world."
"I do not agree with you. There are many simpler and more sensible ways of giving expressions to our emotions than by filling the air with noise and smoke. It is childish. Grown people ought to be able to show their patriotism in a more sensible way."
"Fudge. You are getting as dry and uninteresting as those old books you bury yourself in most of the time. I believe in life. Books are all well enough in their way, but that is generally a very tiresome way."
The young man stooped to the side of the path and picked up a dry twig, held it before his eyes for a moment and then snapping it sharply threw the ends into the air.

"Why isn't that as good an expression as though it had been tightly rolled paper with a little saltpeter confined at its heart? If I break the stick with a devotional thought concerning the Declaration of Independence I shall experience as sublime a thrill as though I had fired off a cannon."
"You might, Mr. Wiseman, but we are not all so gifted with imagination. Most of us require something outside of ourselves to move us sublimely."
The hot blood surged into the face of the young man at the retort. He turned his gaze full on the girl at his side, but she was already turning away, calling softly to a robin hopping in the shade of an old apple tree that grew beside the gate leading into the farmhouse grounds.

"Milly!" he called, reproachfully.
"Wait till George Lounsbury comes home from New York to-morrow and you'll see what the Fourth of July means to a man with red blood in his veins. He was up last year and brought more than a hundred dollars' worth of fireworks. I don't believe any one went to bed that night at all. The sky was filled with red fire and I realized for the first time what it meant to be an American."
"You mean the son of Farmer Lounsbury, I suppose?"
"Yes. He's a great man now, although he was born and grew up in this illiterate neighborhood."
"Milly—"

"Miss Darlington, if you please, Mr. Shakespeare. Does your dingy old leather-covered book tell you that a young man has the right to address a young lady that he met only four weeks ago with as much familiarity as though she was his sister?"
The girl tossed her pretty head with an air that might have been learned in the court of a queen, although she had little knowledge of the ways of the world outside of Mohawk Valley. But was she not a woman, young, pretty, proud, whimsical—as most pretty young women are? And what need had she for instructions in the art of coquetry? To the serious young student who had come into the neighborhood with no other idea than that of earning a modest living by teaching in the public school she had knowledge enough and to spare. He loved her, of course. There was no escape from that. She knew it, too, as well as though he had told her so. How could he when she met every attempt of his to utter what filled his heart with good-natured rallery. But he had not been discouraged. "She will listen to me some day," he told himself over and over again as he walked over the hills or sat in his little room with an unread book in his hand. A woman does not like to be easily won. His reading told him that. He had never dreamed of a rival. The few young men of Randall seemed to feel that she was not for them and treated her with marked reverence or surly disdain. What was this she had been saying but now? George Lounsbury! A real man, with red blood in his veins. He felt the blood freezing in his heart.

"Is he—is Mr. Lounsbury a friend of yours?"
"A friend of mine? Indeed he is. I have known him ever since I was a child. He is a great man now. Cashier in a bank in the city and trusted with tons of money. Wait till you see how things will move when he arrives."
He did wait, although with no pleasant anticipations. And that night he saw the rockets streaking across the sky and heard the honest country folk

cheer the neatly dressed, smooth-spoken young man who set off whole packages of fire-crackers with far less thought that one of the wealthiest among them would have struck a match. And when it was all over, when the last red flame had faded out of the sky, the last pin-wheel had spit out its spiteful little life, the last bunch of fire-crackers popped and danced over the singed and trampled lawn, Arnold walked home alone through the woods, carrying the burnt end of a single cracker tightly clutched in his hand.

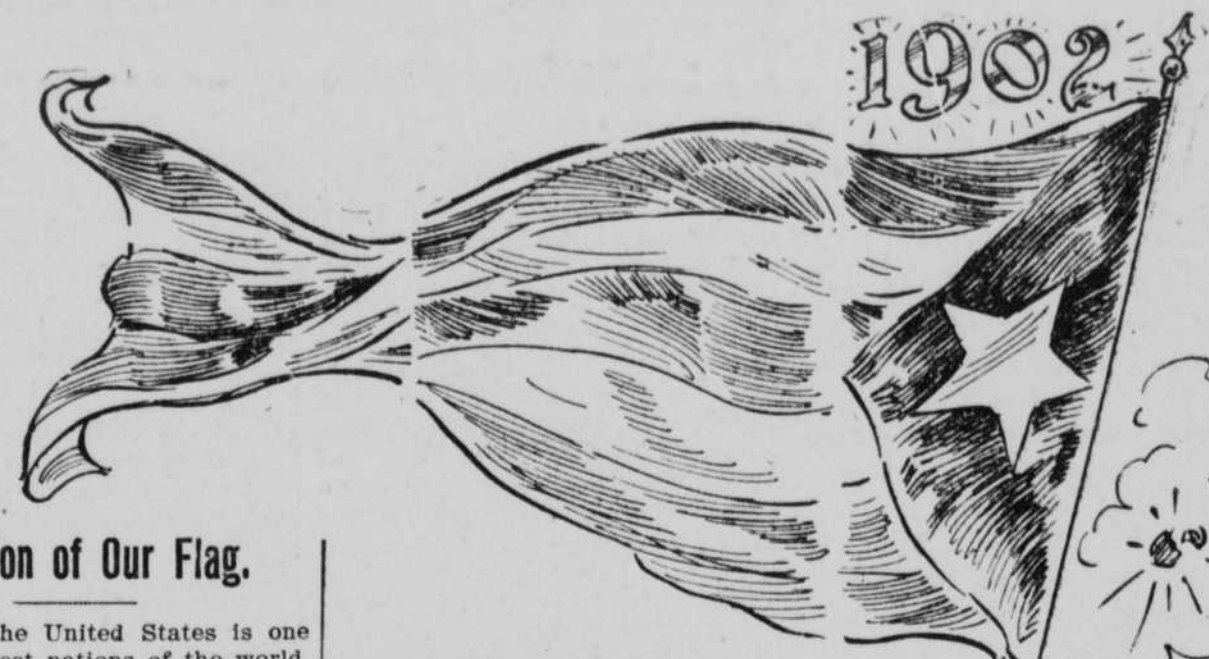
After all had he not been right when he told Milly that all this celebration was "noise and fury, signifying nothing"? She had boasted to him that Mr. Lounsbury would bring a hundred dollars' worth of fireworks from the city to voice the patriotism of the neighborhood. And her boast had been made good. A hundred dollars! Why, that was more than he was to get for the three months' term of teaching in the Randall district school. A hundred dollars! What could he not have done with the money that had been consumed in an evening, for the glory of patriotism? He thought of the long, dreary struggle behind him, and the dark, dreary, tedious days ahead and a great bitterness clutched at his heart and an unfamiliar oath rose in his throat and demanded that he give it tongue. What was all this boasted liberty if it brought nothing to one and so much to another? Why should this young country boy be favored by fate so that the best positions in a great city were his for the asking, while he, the student, the scholar, the man with a real purpose and a high aim, was left to win his way among such hopeless surroundings? Hopeless, indeed. For she who had awakened in his heart new aspirations, made even the frowning future bright with promise, she had turned from him with scarcely a word to join in the praise and adulation that was showered upon the successful man of the world.

She was heartless. He was sure of that now, and it was well that he had found no opportunity during the bustle of the day and evening to give her the written declaration he had found it impossible to make in spoken words. At least he was saved the humiliation of a refusal. Let it be burned with all the other useless things of the day. He ran his hand into his pocket. It was empty. The letter he had penned in a fever of hope and despair was gone. He must have dropped it on the lawn. The thought of some one finding and reading it brought the blush to his cheek and sent him back over the fields with impatient strides. He left the beaten path and climbing the snake fence that divided the pasture land from the orchard hurried forward in the shadow of the trees. As he came out upon the lawn a white bit of paper gleaming in the dew-wet grass caught his eye and he sprang forward and eagerly caught it up. It was the envelope that had held his letter, but it had been opened and the letter was gone.

It is said that every man has one murder in his heart which he will be ready to commit if the proper moment arrives. To the great majority this moment never presents itself; only one in ten thousand is therefore forced to face the gallows. Whether this be true or not it was fortunate that the person so suddenly to face the young schoolmaster at that moment was beyond the power of his hands. A man would have to be a devil indeed to wish harm to a fine young woman with the fresh color of the country on her cheeks, the light of roguery in her eyes and the moonlight clothing her as a garment. And then if she laugh merrily and the next instant throw her arms about his neck and tell him he is "an old goose," he isn't likely to wish harm to his worst enemy.

"I read your letter all through, you silly old thing, and there isn't a word of truth in it. If there was I should be caught up to heaven this minute. You were awfully scared when you found some one had opened it? Oh, I could see your eyes flash even in the moonlight. And you swore, too. I heard you; don't deny it. That's what decided me. Up to that time I was afraid you were too good to be human. There's just one thing more you must do before I'll promise not to refuse you. You've got to admit that the Fourth of July is the grandest day in the year and promise to celebrate it like a true American every year with real fire-crackers."
"I shall always hold the day sacred in my heart, dearest," he said, solemnly. "It has brought me—"

"Slavery, sir, slavery. But, there, I'll try to make your chains as light as possible, and—Frank, I love you better than all the rockets in the world."



Evolution of Our Flag.

Although the United States is one of the youngest nations of the world, its flag is one of the oldest among the powers. The country's standard, with its thirteen stars and stripes, which was first unfurled June 14, 1777, just 125 years ago, has remained practically unchanged through the progress and growth of the country of which it saw the birth. The star-spangled banner which now floats over Uncle Sam's possessions on lands and seas, is unaltered, with the exception of the number and arrangement of the stars, from the one which Betsy Ross, at Gen. Washington's request, made at her home, No. 239 Arch street, Philadelphia.

The device of a rattlesnake was



First Flag Made by Betsy Ross. popular among the colonists, and its origin as an American emblem is a curious feature in our national history. It has been stated that its use grew out of a humorous suggestion made by a writer in Franklin's paper—the Pennsylvania Gazette—that, in return for the wrongs which England was forcing upon the colonists, a cargo of rattlesnakes should be sent to the mother country and "distributed in St. James Park and other places of pleasure." Col. Gadsden, one of the marine committee, presented to congress on the 8th of February, 1776, "an elegant standard, such as is to be used by the commander-in-chief of the American navy," being a yellow flag with a representation of a rattlesnake coiled for attack.

Another use for the rattlesnake was upon a ground of thirteen horizontal bars, alternately red and white, the snake extending diagonally across the stripes, and the lower white stripes bearing the motto, "Don't Tread on Me." The snake was always represented as having thirteen rattles. One of the favorite flags also was of white with a pine tree in the center. The words at the top were: "An Appeal to God," and underneath the snake were the words: "Don't Tread on Me." Several of the companies of minute men adopted a similar flag, giving the name of their company, with the motto, "Liberty or Death." The Connecticut troops, who took part in the exciting times that followed Lexington and Bunker Hill, had a state banner with the state arms



The Flag As Altered in 1795. and motto, "Qui transtulit sustinet." The troops of Massachusetts adopted the words, "An Appeal to Heaven." Early New York records speak of different standards; indeed, the regiments from the different states, hastening to Washington's aid, flaunted flags of numerous devices, having only local interest and being only used on the occasion that originated them. The first striped flag was flung to the breeze in America at Cambridge, Mass., Washington, headquarters, Jan. 2, 1776. It had thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, and the united crosses of St. George and St. Andrew on a blue field. When reported in England it was alluded to as the "thirteen rebellious stripes."

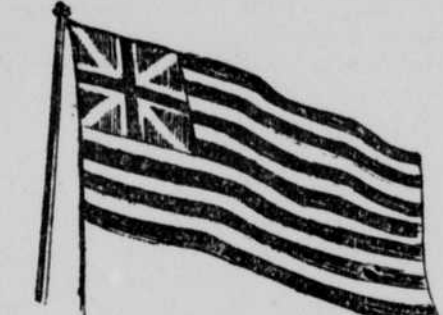
In 1775 a navy of seventeen vessels, varying from ten to thirty-two guns, was ordered. The senior of the five first lieutenants of the new Continental navy was John Paul Jones. He left it on record that the "Flag of America" was hoisted by his own hands on his vessel, the Alfred, the first time it was ever displayed by a man-of-war. This was probably the same design as the Cambridge flag used in January, 1776.

We now come to the time when the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew were taken from the Union flag and a blue field with white stars substituted for the symbol of English authority. One hundred and twenty-five years ago this June 14 the American congress, in session at Philadelphia, resolved "that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; the union to be thirteen stars, white, on a blue field, representing a new constellation, the stars to be arranged in a circle."

There are many traditions afloat concerning the origin of this design, but the one in which there is undoubtedly the most truth is that which credits the idea of the design to Washington. The General found in the coat-of-arms of his own family a hint from which he drew a design for the flag. The coat-of-arms of the Washington family was two red bars on a white ground, and three gilt stars above the top bar. The American flag, once decided upon, was rushed through in a hurry, for the army was in need of a standard.

Betsy Ross enthusiastically undertook the work, and in a few days a beautiful star-spangled banner was ready to be unfurled. She had made one alteration in the design submitted by Washington. The General had made his stars six pointed, as they were on his coat-of-arms. Betsy Ross made her stars with five points—and five points have been used ever since. For several years Mrs. Ross made the flags for the government.

The first using of the stars and stripes in military service, it is claimed, was at Fort Stanwix, renamed Fort Schuyler, now Rome, New York, 1777. Aug. 2 of that year the fort was besieged by the British and Indians; the garrison was without a flag, but one was made in the fort. The red stripes were of a petticoat furnished by a woman, the white for stripes and stars were furnished by an officer, who gave his shirt for the purpose, and the blue was a piece of



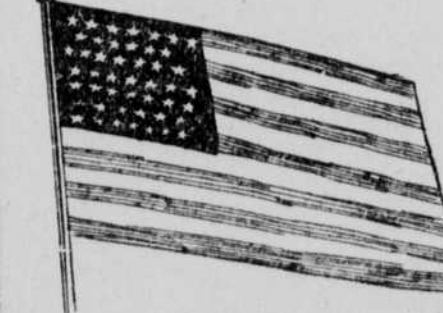
Flag of the Colonies. Col. Peter Gansevoort's military cloak. Three women worked on the flag, and it was raised to victory on the 22d of August, when the redmen and the English were defeated at the fort.

The next record of the using of the Stars and Stripes is on the first anniversary of American independence, which was celebrated at Philadelphia, Charleston, S. C., and other places, July 4, 1777. The banner was used at the battle of the Brandywine Sept. 11, 1777; at Germantown, Oct. 4 of the same year, and it also floated over the surrender of Burgoyne. This flag cheered the patriots at Valley Forge the next winter; it waved at Yorktown and shared in the rejoicings at the close of the war.

Some of the first flags were made under difficulties and at great cost, the greatest ingenuity being required on occasions to secure the necessary materials for the banners. History tells us that Madame Wooster and Mrs. Roger Sherman made the first national flag for the Connecticut troops used in the army from their own dresses.

As long as the states remained thirteen in number the original design of the circle of stars was all right, but when, in 1791, Vermont, and in 1792 Kentucky were taken into the Union, it was decided to arrange the stars in the form of one huge constellation.

In 1795 it was decided to add a stripe as well as a star for each state which came into the Union, consequently in that year Vermont and Kentucky were marked on the flag,



The Flag As It Is Today. one by a white and the other by a red stripe; but some wise prophet, looking ahead some twenty or more years, saw that this plan of adding a stripe as well as a star for each state added to the Union would mean a constant changing of the flag, which would, in a few years, become so large and ungainly that its beauty would be lost. A committee in 1812 was elected by congress to decide upon a permanent design for the flag, and the result was that the thirteen original stripes were again used, the stars arranged on the blue field in the form of a square, with one constellation for each new state. In 1818 this plan was formally adopted by congress, and the flag, with its thirteen stripes and stars corresponding in number to the states in the Union, became the established emblem of America.

