

They put the horse to the wagon, and drove off over the frozen highway which much travel had beaten perfectly smooth. Of course their whole conversation was about what they were to see in Trenton, of their prospective pets, what they would do, and how much money they would make another year. Uncle Benny underwent a crossfire of questions, and listened to hopes and fears, most incessant and diversified. But what else could such hopeful boys be expected to indulge in? It was the first real jubilee of their lives, and the ride was memorable for them all.

As they neared the city, they heard the beating of drums and the firing of distant musketry. Coming still nearer, the firing continued, and then Uncle Benny informed them that that day was the anniversary of the great battle of Trenton, when Washington surprised and captured the Hessians, and that the military companies of New Jersey and Pennsylvania were then holding their annual celebration of that memorable event, by repeating in the streets and suburbs of Trenton, the same movements, the same attacks, retreats, and surrender, as in the battle itself. The boys begged him to whip up and get in so that they might witness the whole affair, as they had been so shut up at home as never to have had seen such a company of soldiers together. The old man, ever ready to confer a pleasure, hurried up the horse, and had him snug at a livery stable just as the sham-battle was fairly under way.

Then the boys saw a body of troops marching down State Street. These represented a party of the Hessians who had been suddenly routed out of their quarters by the Continentals. As they came down, they occasionally faced about and discharged their muskets at an imaginary body of the Continentals coming in from the country. Then another division of Americans came down, by a different street, upon a second party of the Hessians, exactly as it had been when the real battle was fought. These also fired, as did the Hessians, and for some time the crackling of guns rattled briskly through the city. Then came bayonet charges and countercharges, followed by the retreat and complete surrounding of the Hessians. Presently the boys saw them lay down their arms and surrender to the Americans on the very spot where the enemy had surrendered in 1776. It was an unexpected treat for the boys to witness this exciting exhibition, and for a time they thought nothing of the errand on which they came to Trenton.

As might be supposed, the streets were thronged with citizens, while the doors and windows of the adjoining houses were occupied by spectators of the scene. The ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the crowd threw up their hats and shouted as

they perceived the victory to be complete. When the Hessians surrendered, they were treated with quite as much attention as rebel prisoners of the present day have undeservedly experienced. Instead of having their arms taken from them, their pockets searched, and being marched off to prison, the Continentals escorted them to the neighboring taverns, where they got the best kind of a dinner. It is quite probable their captors were equally hungry and thirsty after the terrible battle they had fought, and out of compliment to their prisoners went through a similar exercise with toddy-sticks and carving-knives. The boys were surprised to find, when the battle was over, that nobody had been hurt; but had they remained in town until night, they would have seen a great many wounded men limping about the streets, some of whom appeared to have been shot about the head or in the neck, and who limped so badly as to require both sides of the pavement to enable them to keep on their feet. There had been instances of these wounded men limping over even into the gutter. But the boys witnessed none of these exhibitions, they thought the sham-battle the grandest incident of their lives.

Beside the citizens, there was a large crowd of people from the country, who had come in to be spectators of the celebration. Though it had been regularly kept up, yet they did not seem to tire of it, and flocked in just as regularly as the anniversary came around. Getting out of this dense crowd Uncle Benny took his party down Greene Street to the narrow old stone bridge that crosses the Assanpink Creek. As the boys were greatly interested in all they saw, and as the old man had recently been reading to them this part of the history of the Revolution, no doubt in his own mind intending to take them to see these very things, he pointed out the bridge as being the same old one where the British had several times attempted to cross and get at Washington on the heights upon the other side of the creek, and that here it was they had each time been driven back with terrible slaughter. Here, too, it was that the young girls, dressed in white, had scattered flowers in the road in front of the great hero, and sung their beautiful welcome, when he was passing over the bridge after the war had closed.

They stayed a long while on the bridge, listening to what he said of it, and talking over these old times.

"Here, boys," said the old man, "is the same bridge, here are the same streets, on which these great battles were fought, but the men who fought them are all gone, not one of them is now alive unless it be a solitary old pensioner. Even the young girls are all gone."