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THE TWENTY-FOURTH OF MAY.

BY B. ATHOL.

"A salute at sunrise! Oh, of course," I murmur drowsily, "it's the Queen's Birthday," as the first boom shakes the house to its foundations, and sudden thoughts of earthquake enter my somnolent brain.

I turn over for another nap, remembering how many a time and oft, I have seen our most noble reeve accompanied by the choicest spirits of the community wending their way through the early mists to one end of the village where our cannon lay, supported by two pieces of cordwood, in their wake an army of small boys whose excitement and loyalty no morning breezes could cool.

I am somewhat worn out with yesterday's preparations, and would fain snatch another hour's repose; but just as I am nicely going off there is another boom. Then I hear scampering of feet along the hall, which comes to a stop at my door.

"Nellie," in a very loud whisper. There is no use pretending I don't hear them. Four boys, with moderately good lungs, and a will, have a way of making themselves heard, if necessary. So I say, "Well?" in a short, decided tone.

"Where's that piece of pie that was left last night; mother said we might have it. We're going to see the cannon fired off and want something to eat. Hurry up."

I am half tempted not to tell; but then it's the Queen's Birthday, and really, on such occasions, one can't expect to sleep all day.

A few minutes later, having fortified

themselves with pumpkin pie, they are yelling and whooping down the street, eager to swell the ranks of the reeve's followers.

We keep open house on the 24th; not entirely from choice, I confess.

If I could only induce my acquaintances from the country to choose another day to visit me! Throughout the year upon other occasions they may come or they may not, but I never yet knew anything keep them away on the 24th of May. On that day we have an influx; from early morn till afternoon the cry is, "Still they come." I'm sure I'm always delighted to see my friends from the country, but if any other day would suit them as well on which to take out their pay for occasional jugs of milk, cabbages, pumpkins and other agricultural sundries, it would be an inexpressible relief to me."

But in the meantime—

"Entertainment for man and beast;
Meals at all hours,"

is the motto of the day.

By the time breakfast is over, and the younger members of the family arrayed in their best attire—we never appear in everyday garb on the Queen's Birthday—I find the first detachment of my country cousins has arrived.

After they have washed off the dust of travel, and refreshed themselves with a glass of iced lemonade, we hold a consultation in the parlor and arrange our programme for the day.

"At one o'clock," so the advertisement