

Independence Bell

There was tumult in the city,
In the quaint old Quaker town
And the streets were rife with people,
Pacing restless up and down; —
People gathering at corners,
Where they whispered each to each,
And the sweat stood on their temples,
With the earnestness of speech.

As the bleak Atlantic currents
Lash the wild Newfoundland shore,
So they beat against the State-House,
So they surged against the door;
And the mingling of their voices
Made a harmony profound,
Till the quiet street of Chestnut
Was all turbulent with sound.

“Will they do it?” “Dare they do it?”
“Who is speaking?” “What’s the news?”
“What of Adams?” “What of Sher-
man?”
“Oh, God grant they won’t refuse!”
“Make some way there!” “Let me nearer!”
“I am stifling!” “Stifle, then!”
When a nation’s life’s at hazard,
We’ve no time to think of men!”

See! See! The dense crowd quivers
Through all its lengthy line,
As the boy beside the portal
Looks forth to give the sign!
With his small hands upward lifted,
Breezes dallying with his hair,
Hark! With deep, clear intonation,
Breaks his young voice on the air.



Hush’d the people’s swelling murmur,
List the boy’s strong, joyous cry!
“Ring!” he shouts, “RING! *Grandpa*,
RING! OH, RING FOR LIBERTY!”
And, straightway, at the signal,
The old bellman lifts his hand,
And sends the good news, making
Iron music through the land.

How they shouted! What rejoicing!
How the old bell shook the air,
Till the clang of freedom challenged
American patriots everywhere.
That old bell now is silent,
And hush’d its iron tongue,
But the spirit it awakened
Still lives, — forever young.

And while we greet the sunlight,
On the fourth of each July,
We’ll ne’er forget the bellman,
Who, twixt the earth and sky,
Rung out OUR INDEPENDENCE:
Which, please God, *shall never die!*
—Unknown