

Independence Bell

(Author Unknown)

There was a 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 Sherman?"
"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 !"
So they beat against the State-House,
While all solemnly inside,
Sat the continental congress,
Truth and reason for their guide,

O're a simple scroll debating,
Which, though simple it may be,
Yet, should shake the cliffs of England,
With the thunders of the free,
Far aloft in that old steeple,
Sat the bellman old and gray,
He was weary of the tyrant,
And his iron sceptered sway,
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 little hands uplifted,
Breezes dallying with his hair,
Hark! with deep, clear intonation,
Breaks his young voice on the air.
Hushed the people's swelling murmur,
List the boy's exultant cry!
"Ring!" he shouts, "Ring! grandpa, '
Ring! Oh, ring for Liberty!"
Quickly at the given signal
The old bellman lifts his hand,
Forth he 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 ruffled
The calmly-gliding Delaware!
How the bonfires and the torches
Lighted up the night's repose,
And from the flames, like fabled Phoenix,
Our glorious Liberty arose!

That old State House bell is silent,
Hushed is now its clamorous tongue ;
But the spirit it awakened
Still is living, ever young;
And when we greet the smiling sunlight
On the fourth of each July,
We will ne'er forget the bellman
Who, betwixt the earth and sky,
Rung out loudly, "Independence";
Which, please God, shall never die !