

## The Story Page

### Mary Ann Slicer's Legacy.

BY ELIZABETH PRESTON ALLAN.

"There—there, boys! Stop your fussing. If there's one thing I can't abide, it's to see boys squabbling,—more particular if they happen to be brothers. No, you can't either of you ride that there cutter. If you can't guide your own tempers straight, how am I going to trust you with my dumb creatures? Here, Moses, get up and start this machine going."

Ross and Edgar stood back crest-fallen. They had lost their chance to drive the reaper around Mr. Figgat's wheat-field, but there was no help for it. Good-humored to a fault though the farmer was, when he said a thing it was said, and few people ventured to question the old man's decisions.

But Ross felt a little sore about this rebuke.

"Didn't you ever quarrel when you were a boy, Mr. Figgat?" he asked reproachfully.

The farmer turned and looked at Ross with surprise, then his eyes seemed to look quite beyond the boy in knee-pants and blouse, away down a vista of nobody knows how many years. Finally he broke into a hearty laugh:

"I did," he said,—"once I did quarrel with my only brother for a whole day; but by sunset it turned into a huge joke, and whether I laughed at Bill most, or whether he laughed most at me, I dunno to this day."

"How was that, Mr. Figgat?" Edgar asked, thinking secretly that a good story might make up for the lost ride.

"Well, it was this way," said the farmer, taking off his straw hat to wipe the glistening beads of moisture away. "Father was sent for one day to hear a will read. 'Twas Cousin Mary Ann Slicer's will, and Bill and I took a great interest in it. We knew if father was sent for, it must be because he was named in the will, and we had big thoughts of what it might bring us."

"But as father and mother said nothing to us about it, we daren't ask any questions. That's the way children did in old times. So we went off to our work of weeding the garden, and there we did more talking than work."

"We 'lowed it wouldn't be less than a hundred dollars, and to us a hundred dollars looked like a whole fortune. 'I guess pap'll get a horse and buggy,' said I, 'so we can drive ma to church, like Mrs. Simpson, 'stead of goin' in the spring-wagon.'

"'Horse and buggy,' says Bob very scornful,—'much good that would do! I'm going to ask him to send me to the Valley High School, where I'll get a chance to go to college.'

"'And how much good,' says I, 'would that do the rest of us, to have you spoutin' long words at us that we couldn't understand.'

"Well, Bob sassed me back, and I give him as good as he sent, until mother heard us, and sent me to pick stones out of the three-cornered lot, and Bob to carry water to the men in the field. But every chance we got we jeered each other. I made signs like a dandy, walking with a cane in my hand and cigar in my mouth, and Bob, he pretended to be driving a fiery horse, swelling out his cheeks to look like Mr. Simpson."

"But I wasn't enjoying myself a bit, and I'm sure Bob wasn't. You see, we were used to being partners. The work came easier, because we helped one another, and as for the play,—well, it just wasn't any play worth counting, the day we quarreled."

"When supper-time came around, there was father, looking just the same as ever. We gazed hard at his pockets, but they showed no sign of bulging. At last Bob made the plunge. Bob was always pluckier than me. 'Pap,' says Bob, 'what did Cousin Mary Ann Slicer leave you in her will?'

"Our father looked as much surprised as if the setter dog had spoken, but he was too much taken aback to reprove Bob's forwardness. 'She left me her big bell-metal, apple-butter kettle,' said he, 'the one I've always borrowed from her in the fall.'

"I looked at Bob, and his face was as red as fire. I didn't know whether he was going to burst out laughing or crying. I felt my own face in a blaze too, and I was about as near one as 't'other; but fortune favored us,—not with a legacy from Cousin Mary Ann Slicer, but with the tinkle of cow-bells in the front yard."

"Boys!" mother said, as much excited as if a hundred dollars was at stake, 'there's Pollie in the front yard. She'll eat ever' flower I've got!'

"Bob and I had already bolted through the window, and Pollie did not even get a chance to smell the sweet-peas, if that's what she was after."

"I say, Bud," old Bob said to me when we made the side gate fast, 'as you ain't going to ride in a buggy, and I ain't going to college s'pose we go down and finish our new dam before dark.'

"I agreed with a whoop of joy, and I was so glad to get out of that fuss with my pard that I never got into

another's long as we lived under one roof,—nor afterwards, for that matter."

"Did you ever get the buggy, Mr. Figgat?" asked Ross.

"I had the pleasure of driving my old mother to church many a Sunday, year in and year out in a buggy bought with my own earnings," said the farmer, "which was a long sight better for me than if Cousin Mary Ann had left us a coach and four."

"And Bob,—how about Bob?" asked the other young listener.

"Bob!" exclaimed Mr. Figgat in surprise, "don't you know the Hon. Robert Figgat of the state Senate?"

"Oh-h-h!" cried the boys.

"Of course, you know him," said the Hon. Robert's brother proudly. "He took himself to college, and that's the reason he's come out on top. Bless him! he's the best man at the capital. We're pards yet, and me and him have often agreed that, if Cousin Mary Ann had left us a hundred dollars a day it wouldn't have paid us for what we would 'a' lost if we had quarreled over it. Here, Moses, stop that machine, and give the boys a chance. All right, Edgar; let Ross try his hand,—your turn'll come."—Sunday-School Times.

### The Little Folk.

A Children's Christmas Story.

BY MARY MURRAY.

"Are you crying, Mollie?" Tommy asked from his little cot. Mollie raised her head from under the clothes. "I want muvver, Tommy, I do want muvver so much. I'm very lonesome," and her voice died away in a faint wail.

"Don't cry, little Mollie, I'll come in your bed and muvver you," Tom said, sliding to the floor, and passing the uncurtained window. "God has hung out his lamp, Mollie," he said, solemnly. "He knows we are lonesome; perhaps mother's told him."

Mollie tumbled out of her cot, too, and stood beside him, angel-like in her white night-gown, looking with bright, rapt eyes at the sailing moon. But soon her former trouble returned and great tears rolled down her cheeks.

"I want muvver," she sobbed.

Tommy took her golden head in both his arms and pressed it hard to his breast. "There I'll muvver you," he said, bravely trying to keep back his own tears. "Let's get into your bed, Mollie, and I'll tell you something. I'll never hit you again, Mollie—Mother didn't like us to quarrel."

"I'm not crying about that," Mollie said, scrambling back into her cot, "'cause I know it was only play, but my dolly's broke her arm an' I don't know what to do for her."

"Poor little Mollie," Tom said, stroking her hair as he had seen his mother do.

"Stop crying and I'll tell you something—something very nice."

Mollie choked down her sobs, and sat up in bed, with Tom's arms around her, and the broken doll on her knee.

"What is it?" Tommy, she asked.

"Gran'pa told it to me," said Tommy. "It's about Moses."

"Little baby Moses in the bulrushes?" Mollie asked, eagerly. She loved the picture in the great Bible they looked at on Sundays.

"Yes Moses when he was a man. It's not all about Moses, though; it's a plan of mine, Mollie, to get mother back again."

"Oh, Tommy, how nice!" Mollie cried, clasping her hands in joy.

"Yes; I've thought about it a lot, Mollie, and we'll do it to-night," said Tom. "You can come too."

"Where?" Mollie asked, excitedly.

"Gran'pa told me as we walked home from church last Sabbath—you were with nurse last Sabbath morning—"

"Yes, Tommy."

"Well, we passed a big, big holly tree. And Gran'pa told me it was called, 'Christ's thorn,' and that God showed himself to Moses in the burning holly tree." And I've thought, and thought, and thought," he said, earnestly.

"Yes, Tommy, said Mollie.

"Well let's go and ask God to send mother back. P'raps he'll hear us better there, and can find the way."

"Won't it be cold, Tommy?" Mollie said, shivering.

"God'll warm us. And maybe he'll burn up the tree, like he did for Moses," he answered, firmly. "Don't be afraid, Mollie, I'll take care of you."

Mollie began to cry. "I'm frightened, Tommy," she whispered, and I'm wery, wery cold."

"Oh, we'll put on our clothes first. I'll dress you,

Mollie. And maybe God'll help poor dolly's arm, too, if we ask him."

"Do you think he will? I'll take dolly with me," Mollie answered. They had soon dressed themselves and crept down the dimly lighted staircase into the hall. Sounds of singing in faint waves from the kitchen, for it was Christmas Eve, but no one noticed the children's exit, for their grandfather was visiting a sick parishioner, and their nurse had gone to the kitchen to enjoy herself with the others.

In a few minutes the two little figures almost as black as the shadows they cast on the frozen snow, had left the house far behind, and hand in hand were speeding rapidly in the direction of the holly tree. It was not long before they had reached it, but not before Mollie had fallen and bruised her knee badly and become wet with snow. Tommy cheered her as well as he could with the manful courage of seven years.

"I am sure God will hear our prayer, Mollie," he said. "See, here is the holly. We must kneel down and clasp our hands."

"Do you think God will light it at once?" Mollie asked, in awe-struck tones.

"No, we must wait a bit," Tom said, and side by side they knelt under the snow hidden boughs. As they waited, the moon hid behind a cloud and a few feathery flakes of snow began to fall.

"Lord, we're waiting, please," Tommy cried. But no answer came save the chill wind hurling and creaking through the boughs, and shaking down snow on the suppliant little ones, so they shut their eyes tightly and waited a while longer, half dreading and half hoping to open them. The sound of approaching footsteps fell on their ears, and Tommy rose jubilantly.

"It is coming now, Mollie," he cried.

It was only their white-haired grandfather returning from his visit. He lifted Mollie in his arms, his eyes filling with tears at the thought of their faithful request, as they explained their plan to him.

"Hush, my darling," he said, tenderly, "in God's own time you will be together again." And then he bent down and kissed Tommy to comfort him, for the little boy was crying. Never before had Tommy felt how much his grandfather loved him, for the old clergyman had half forgotten how to show his affection until to-night, and the little boy stole his hand into his and squeezed it tightly. Mollie had fallen to sleep in her grandfather's arms, and they walked in silence back to the house. Lamps were blazing in the windows, and the hall door was wide open, sending out a stream of golden light into the night. As they entered, a girl came running forward to meet them.

"Father, thank God, you have found the children," she cried, warmly. "I have only just arrived, and when I went upstairs their beds were empty. Is this Mollie?" and she began to kiss the sleeping child.

Mollie awoke and clasped her round the neck, blinking sleepily into the beautiful face bending over her.

"Is it muvver come back?" she whispered.

A great tear splashed down on her face.

"No, my darling, I am only your aunt," the girl answered, sadly.

Tommy came forward and took her hand.

"God has sent you till we go to mother," he said reverently.—Presbyterian Review.

### Work Away.

Jim was a poor little newsboy. He wanted to buy a cake for his little sister because it was her birthday. But if he sold all his papers, he would not have any money to spare; his mother needed it, for she was poor. "I wish I could raise three cents extra," he said to Will, his little comrade.

"Work away, then," sharply answered Will, and he ran off crying his papers.

Jim ran off shouting his also. He sold a great many of them; and when he was tired, Will's words, "work away," would come back to him, and he would go on again.

It was beginning to grow dark when he went into a horse-car. All the people in it had papers or shook their heads at him except one young lady. She looked at the little boy, and bought a paper from him. It cost one cent. She handed him a five-cent piece. Jim was going to give her the change, when she smiled at him and said: "The rest is for you."

Then he ran to buy the little frosted cake for his sister. Kitty gave him some of it, and as they were eating it he said: "I wish that lady knew." And then he thought how glad he was that he had "worked away" instead of giving up.—Child's Hour.

### The Longest Day.

It is quite important when speaking of the longest day in the year to say what part of the world we are talking about, as will be seen by reading the following list