

QUEEN MARY ANN

By Mabel Follin Smith
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By Mabel Follin Smith

MARY ANN was ironing vigorously when I entered. "Miss Clare," she said, "which name do you like best for a girl, Irene or Maud?" "I really don't know," I said. "They are both pretty."

"I like fine names," said Mary Ann. "They don't cos' no mo' than common ones. All my chillen has splendid names—the best I could find. An' I was thinkin' if I had another baby what would I name it. If it's a boy, I'll name him Romney. I like Romney; it sounds fine. But if it's a girl I hasn't decided between Maud an' Irene."

"Yes, your children have fine names, Mary Ann. Where did you find them?" "Found 'em all in novels, Miss Clare. When I was a girl down there on the



"WE HAD A REAL NICE CHRIS'MUS TREE," old plantation in Virginia, my missus—Miss Clayton—she had all the novels I guess that ever was printed, an' I read all of 'em that had purty paper covers printed in red an' blue an' yaller. Hasn't you noticed that a novel ain't real good unless it has a heap of color on the cover? Them plain covered novels deals too much with po' folks. Laws, I don't have no occasion to read about po' folks. I sees enough of them. What's the name of this here English novel writer the white folks talk so much about?"

"George Elliot?" I ventured. "No, not him. It's somethin' like Dickson or Dickerson."

"Dickens?" I said. "Yes, that's the name. Now, I tried to read one of Mr. Dickens' novels, an' he started off with a po' boy livin' with a blacksmith. That was enough for me. I don't want to read about paupers an' blacksmiths. Why, I can see a blacksmith right down the street here in this village, an' the po'house back of Tarrytown is jes' filled with paupers."

"I wants to read about rich folks an' lords an' ladies an' princes, livin' in style; about how the Prince Mortimer rides up to the castle on his gayly-comparisson horse an' carries off the Lady Grenadine, an' how the ole lord follers 'em with a hunderd men in armor, an' how Prince Mortimer gets away an' has the laugh on his father-in-law; about the grand balls an' masquerades; about people who uses fine words an' men that's always bowin' an' scaplin' befo' the ladies an' fightin' over 'em an' worshippin' 'em; about fine ladies in fine clothes, with nothin' to bother 'em but a whole lot of men makin' love to 'em."

"Yes, I learned a heap from them novels. From 'em I named my oldest boy Roland, an' the next Rupert, an' the last one Aubrey. An' then I named the girls Claudia an' Lucille an' Rosalind an' Geraldine. Them names do sound grand, don't they?"

"To tell you the truth, Miss Clare, I do like things fine an' grand. I ain't got no patience with common things. If I was white an' rich, I'd put on mo' style than 'most any white woman in New York, I reckon. I wouldn't be afraid to wear diamonds in the daytime, an' lots of 'em, an' feathers an' lace an' furs. An' I'd carry my head high an' throw out my chest an' try to look distinguished, I tell you."

And Mary Ann did draw her tall figure "to its full height," as they say in the novels, as she walked from the stove to the ironing table with sparkling eyes and a distinguished air, laughing merrily and thereby showing a mouth full of fine teeth.

I had known that Mary Ann, a mulatto with a nice figure and comely features, was good looking, but I had not realized her possibilities in the way of style before.

"My lovin' grand things don't come so much from the novels I've read as from my 'magination. I don't suppose if I was white I could have mo' 'magination than I has."

"You see, in my 'magination I can be jes' as rich an' fine an' white—why, I can be jes' as white as white folks."

Miss Clare, an' pretty an' young. "An' then all the good times I have in my 'magination! I don't have the trouble that goes with really havin' things I build great, big, splendid houses, palaces an' castles, an' then I jes' let 'em go an' don't bother about repairin' 'em or payin' taxes. When I wants another house, I jes' build it out of my mind. That's a good deal easier an' cheaper than takin' care of the ole ones."

And Mary Ann laughed as she moistened her finger and tried the heat of the iron.

"None of my horses ever has the colic or goes lame," she continued, "an' no body has any finer ones. You jes' ought to see me sailin' in my 'magination through Fifth avenue behind my prance in' steeds, while people stop to look at me an' say, 'I wonder who that gorgeous an' lovely creature is.'"

"An' then the travelin'! While I'm washin' an' ironin' here in this ole laundry I jes' soar off to Saratogy an' Newport an' England an' Paris an' Asia an' Afriky. Well, no, I don't go much to Afriky. It ain't stylish enough for me. But I go to the north pole hot days jes' to cool off. I don't find no difficulty in reachin' the pole. I've climbed that pole many a time in my 'magination."

And Mary Ann again laughed merrily over the pleasant pictures which she had drawn.

"Did I ever tell you about the fun we had las' Chris'mus, Miss Clare? I didn't? Well, I must tell you about that."

"You see, we was kind of po' last Chris'mus. Your folks had done gone to the city, an' I hadn't no extra work, an' the chillen all needed winter clothes, an' we had only 45 cents left for Chris'mus, an' Peter he said that we couldn't affo'd no Chris'mus tree, but I said: 'Go 'way, Peter. I'm goin' to have a Chris'mus tree.' So I went out in the village the night before Chris'mus an' found a po' little runty tree that nobody would'n buy, an' I got it for 3 cents, an' I fixed it up with a lot of little baubles that your mommer had given me, an' we had a real nice Chris'mus tree."

"An' then I said: 'Now, chillen, we ain't got very much for Chris'mus—that is, not much *actually*—an' so we must draw on our minds for what we need. Now, just foller my lead, an' we'll have the greatest Chris'mus that ever any family ever had with only 45 cents.'"

"I'd bought some stick candy an' a little cheap present for each one, an' then I brought out a package of old letters my sister had writ to me from home in Virginia."

"Now, chillen, I said, 'I want you to understand that all through this Chris'mus I'm a queen, an' poppy he's a king, an' you're all princes an' princesses, an' that we're to have everything to eat an' drink an' wear an' look at that the mind can think of.'"

"They all sent up a whoop an' seemed mightily tickled, an' Roland, he says: 'Mommer, you're to be Queen Mary Ann, an' poppy he's to be King Peter—no,' says he, 'poppy's to be Peter the Great. I've just been readin' about Peter the Great at school.'"

"Then I takes up the bundle of letters, an' I says, 'We must first read the congratulations of the season from our friends.' The first letter I read was from Queen Victoria—that was before the queen died, you know—to Queen Mary Ann, callin' me her dear cousin an' honored friend an' tellin' me that she had sent me a diamond necklace worth \$700,000 as a testimonial of her undyin' love an' affection."

"An' then the Prince of Wales wrote to King Peter the Great, sendin' him valuable presents, includin' some elephants an' tigers. An' then all the royalties from all over Europe sent Chris'mus gifts an' lovin' messages to Prince



"SHE HAD SENT ME A DIAMOND NECKLACE WORTH \$700,000."

Roland an' Prince Rupert an' Prince Aubrey an' the Princesses Claudia an' Lucille an' Rosalind an' Geraldine.

"Then after awhile we got down to the presents an' letters from our humble subjects at home in America that sent their love to the lovely an' noble Queen Mary Ann, to the brave an' august King Peter the Great an' to all the noble, imperial an' royal princes an' princesses."

"An' then we had the Chris'mus

feast. I ordered up all the royal porters an' waiters an' butlers to set the royal table, an' the royal buglers to bugle, an' the royal servin' men to serve all the temptin' dishes an' drinks to tickle all our royal an' noble appetites. An' we eat an' we drunk an' feasted on all of the finest things we could think about, an' none of us was sick from overeatin' afterward. That's one of the good p'int about feasin' in your 'magination, Miss Clare. There ain't no injurious consequences afterward to your indigestion."

"Oh, we had a great time! We spoke to each other nice an' polite. 'Will our royal mommer, the noble Queen Mary Ann, deign to do this or to look at that!'"



"THEN WE HAD THE CHRIS'MUS FEAST."

Will his imperious highness King Peter the Great grant this favor? an' so on.

"Whatever we wanted we just had—in our minds. I never had so much fun before, an' the chillen all said that if we'd had \$5 to spend it wouldn't have been better."

Sensible Women.

Here is what a gentleman said in a speech recently, and the worst of it is that it is true: "The responsibility of redeeming this world rests with sensible women, and it will take a long time because there are so few." It is not altogether woman's fault, however. Pike county, Ind., will show at the world's fair a cube of coal eleven feet thick.

An Old Favorite

LITTLE BOY BLUE

By Eugene Field



HE little toy dog is covered with dust, But sturdy and staunch he stands; And the little toy soldier is red with rust, And his musket moulds in his hands. Time was when the little toy dog was new, And the soldier was passing fair; And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue Kissed them and put them there.

"Now, don't you go till I come," he said, "And don't you make any noise!" So, toddling off to his trundle-bed, He dreamt of the pretty toys; And, as he was dreaming, an angel song Awakened our Little Boy Blue— Oh! the years are many, the years are long, But the little toy friends are true!

Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand, Each in the same old place, Awaiting the touch of a little hand, The smile of a little face; And they wonder, as waiting the long years through In the dust of that little chair, What has become of our Little Boy Blue, Since he kissed them and put them there.

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