The Legend of Moll.

BEING A GRAVE STORY, BY J. GLUNN, UNDERTAKER.

MANY, many years ago, when Boston could still be said to be in her youth, when she clustered lovingly about her three hills, and even yet retained part of her water-front free from the turmoil of commerce, when the Back Bay was simply broad, flat marshes, daily inundated by the tides; when there were plenty of Revolutionary heroes to tell their own heroic deeds,—in short, in the good old times which our grandfathers may never hope to see glair, and the like of which they assure us—no may never hope to see at all,—in those good old times Copp's Hill was aristocratic. When one goes down there of an afternoon for a walk along its degenerated and noisy streets, and comes upon so many of the scenes of the activity of our country's heroes, it seems as if all that Boston ever produced of pre-eminent worth had been connected with this dirty labyrinth.

The old houses, I warrant you, were whilom witnesses of many a deed of sturdy valor in the years around the Revolution. Here you will see the homes of the men who were partipators in the Boston Tea Party. There is the house from which stole Robert Newman to hang the light in the Old North Tower, that Paul Revere might warn the men of Middlesex. Many of these stones could tell of the shock of the battle of Bunker Hill, and more than one tombstone still bears the marks of the British soldiers' bullets.

After the war there came many years of quiet, and the children who had played of yore around the tombstones came again and played, till they grew up and other children took their place. Many a pretty tale, I wist, could these gray slabs relate of childish glee, of love, of age supported over the rolling ground by loving, nilial hands; and they would tell you, if you but had the ear to listen and to understand, of the weary travellers from far-off lands who have rested upon the soft hillside. They would tell you of one who often came to rest her tired limbs upon the grateful turf; how she would lean upon one of the tombstones and talk to herself for hours. Poor Moll was a strange creature, who talked to herself because she could get no other listener, except, sometimes, the children who came to play around her. The children grew to be fond of having her near them, and would, when they were weary, come and sit by her and listen in wonder to her strange talk. She seemed to them to be in another world than theirs, to talk of things of which they heard, to be sure, in their own homes and at church on Sundays, but which they never could understand. Poor, crazy Moll was confident that she was soon to be bodily released from her earthly ills and rise to everlasting bliss without the intervention of the dark grave. She never formulated her belief like this, and she would often wander in her uncertain brain to other thoughts; but she would always return to this as the key-note of her song.

The cemetery on Copp's Hill was Moll's favorite haunt, and here she was wont often to pass the night, lying on the bare ground, sheltered only by some kindly tomb. She would wander from hamlet to hamlet, and from town to town, and then return to this, her resting place, as if she were afraid to go too far from it. One day in early fall she had been seen many miles from Boston, hurrying along the road in the direction of the city. She seemed to have more purpose than was usual with her, for she could scarcely stay to answer the questions of those she met as to whither she went so hurriedly. She mumbled some sort of answer, however, to all,—one heard only the word "deliverance," another only "woe," and then turned and shook his head after the first-disappearing figure. Moll reached the city at nightfall. After she had eaten a crust of bread for her supper, her purpose, whatever it might have been, seemed to leave her, and she wandered about the city in her old aimless way.

As the night closed in a wind sprang up that enveloped the sky in clouds. Fitful gusts came round the corners of the streets like great, soft, tangible substances, warm, yet with chilling