



THAT DEVIL OF A BOY.



The stories of slaughter that the old soldier could tell his little son are so awful that they would make a sensitive child weep with horror and pity. But all the stories of war on sea and land shrink into insignificance before the dreadful massacre of men and women, for which that relentless enemy of life, consumption, is each year responsible.

Scientists state that one-fourth of the adult men and women in the civilized world have in their bodies the seeds of this grim destroyer. A single grain of dirt taken from a city street, under the microscope sometimes reveals as many as a million of the minute but murderous bacilli of consumption. There has never been but one medicine discovered that will prevent and cure this disease. It is Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It acts directly on the lungs, driving out disease germs and building new and healthy tissues. It allays inflammation of the mucous membranes. It is the great blood-maker, flesh-builder and nerve tonic. It cures 98 per cent. of all cases of consumption and diseases of the air passages. All medicine dealers sell it.

Mrs. Louisa Steinmann, of 6th St., Brooklyn, N. Y., writes: "Three years ago I was so sick I could not eat, sleep or walk, for I coughed all day and night. My weight was reduced from 120 to 127 pounds. The first night that I slept four hours at one time, was after I had taken three boxes of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. The offensive matter expectorated grew less every day and when I had taken the whole of one bottle I could sleep all night without coughing, and have been well ever since and weigh 178 pounds."

When someone is sick in the family and the doctor is called in, what is the first question he asks? "Are the bowels regular?" That's the question, isn't it? If a wife and mother will see to it that every member of the family is troubled with constipation a prompt resort is had to Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets, there will be mighty little sickness in the family. One little "Pellet" is a gentle laxative and two a mild cathartic. They cure constipation and biliousness and never gripe. They regulate and invigorate the stomach, liver and bowels. Found at all medicine stores.

PASQUALE was his name. He was a little devil, that boy. At least the people of the bend said so after the episode of Keg Alley. He had never seen the skies of Italy, but Camilla, his sister, was born there. That was before his father killed the policeman, and long before his mother went to live in Keg Alley. He was only seven, but he knew there was no one else left in the ally except the kitten—rather the cat. For although the animal was but a few months old, it had never been a kitten.

There are no kittens in Mulberry Bend. One day a gentleman friend of the family—Pasquale, Camilla and the cat—brought a new hand organ. That night all of the ladies and gentlemen who were honored by his acquaintance sat about upon doorsteps and curbstones and admired its melody.

It was a new organ but it did not disdain old tunes. Gradually the discordant noises and clatter of feet subsided, and the Bend grew sober under the spell of organ music, while every cobbler of its length reeked with some story, and the glare of smoky oil lamps wedded the stench of decaying melons and of fish.

Pasquale sat upon the curb with a swarm of other humans and listened.

His garments were entirely appropriate to the sultry midsummer night. His ragged little shirt was supplemented by trousers once worn by Uncle Dominic, who kept the fish stall at the corner. Their legs shortened by the scissors, and worn by Pasquale, they had really quite the grand air. In one skinny arm he clutched close to his breast the sickly, sore-eyed kitten which was already a cat.

She had already met her mouse. So she clung closely to Pasquale with her little sharp claws, and eyed askance the other gamins of the gutter of Mulberry Bend.

Digging her brown toes into the debris of the stones and laughing, her white teeth gleaming in the dust, stood Camilla. Pasquale was ill shaped; his ugliness asserted itself; but Camilla was cursed with a certain amount of beauty. She was a wanton looking young animal, already 14. Her eyes held a little lurking devil, born there before they ever saw the light. Her shining purple black hair rioted in its wild locks, and her walk was that of a feminine gamin. Like the other girls of her age, she wore a calico skirt, a gaudy cotton waist and kerchief, while about her slim neck was a string of beads.

Suddenly the organ groaned, hesitated and broke into another tune.

"Ah sure, what is it?" asked the little Irish girl of Pasquale.

But he shook his dark head, while from the other side of him a boy piped an answer. "Love not!" said the boy.

"Love-a-not," repeated Pasquale, slowly, and then looked at his kitten. He listened a moment, and shook his head, and softly kissed it.

An hour later, after searching in vain for Camilla, he and the kitten went fast asleep behind some empty beer kegs. A little later

another child crawled in beside them. I was Camilla, and she wore some new glittering beads of colored glass.

And in the Bend was still the hoarse noise of voices singing, grinding of organs and clatter of feet. Thugs, pickpockets and women of the pavement in their most depraved type shouldered the children of Italy. All night the soiled stream of life flowed on, beating, beating, beating, and surging into the arteries called Keg Alley, Nannygoat Alley and "Fifty-nine." And through the narrow rifts between the tops of the grim tenements a blue strip of star spangled sky looked down.

No wonder the stars are pale.

And the kitten stretched itself lazily, licked industriously for a moment at the dirt upon Pasquale's pallid face, and then gazed winkingly up at the midnight sky. And Pasquale slept with the quiet of death, though Camilla grew restless and muttered in her dreams, while two scarlet spots glowed upon her cheeks like windflowers upon a Tuscan slope.

And around the corner in a low dive a drunken, sodden creature, whom nature had crowned with the royalty of motherhood, sang with some tipsy sailors.

Nature is a fine satirist and enjoys well a bit of a joke. That her jokes are cruel is our misfortune.

And so the children slept.

A few days later Pasquale lost his kitten. Stealthy, cunning of eye, he sought her everywhere and said nothing. There was a strange weight in his breast, and at night when he lay in his corner behind the kegs he was lonely. For Camilla was late now always. Once it was well on in the gray of the morning before she came. She threw herself heavily beside Pasquale and fell asleep at once, breathing heavily.

Pasquale raised himself softly and leaned over her for a minute. There was an odor about her breath which made him think of his mother. And he noticed that she wore a very gay neckerchief of silk which was altogether new. Then he thought again of his kitten, and his heart grew like lead, while looking up he saw that the stars had gone and that it was already day.

That day he wandered around the corner into Keg Alley. He felt a strange desire to find his mother. He had heard—he had seen—the mother of the little Irish girl fold her arms about her and press her to her breast with a sort of animal mother instinct. She had beat her an hour later, but she had kissed her first, and would kiss her again. And Pasquale had lost his kitten and wanted his mother.

Down in the alley he paused hesitatingly before a door. As he did so it was opened suddenly, and a man—a young man—threw an inert, small mass of something living against an opposite brick wall, with a curse. And in the room he saw an unkempt woman sitting with reddened eyes. She was laughing, and she was his mother. And then the door closed with a bang.

Pasquale knew what it was which the man had thrown out, and he knew what the black, ugly drops were upon the bricks and why the little heap of fur, after a long shudder, lay so still.

Pasquale was only 7, but he knew the classics of crime and death.

He held his hand before his face and fled.

He never quite knew how he passed that day.

Children know agony—who doubts it? At night he stole back to the same place.

He saw there was a light in the one window of the den. Just outside two Chinamen were haggling over the price of a very dead fish. A shadow on the shawl which

spinned over the square of glass suggested Camilla. He knew then that the kitten had followed her. Just where it had fallen in the morning he found it. He turned it over carefully. Its under side had flattened. It had in a few hours become a bas relief of life. Its little red tongue protruded, and its eyes gleamed glassily. Pasquale had torn out one sleeve of his shirt; in that he wrapped it. It was approaching midnight when he finally buried it. As he came out into the Bend with a cowed, bowed head he heard the new hand organ grinding out the old tune.

"Love-a-not," said Pasquale to himself.

And then suddenly he found that he was hungry. Watching his opportunity, he soon managed to steal a morsel of dried fish and some bananas. Sitting behind his rampart of empty beer kegs he ate them, and finally fell asleep. That night the ribbon of sky blazed out in stars and faded into empty gray, but Camilla did not come at all.

Time swallowed up the weeks. By day Pasquale wandered about, played in the gutter, swore, fought, and lived the life of the gamins of the Bend. Sometimes he saw Camilla, and wondered a little that she found so much to laugh at. However, it grew to be sweeter than the sweetest thing in life to have her give him a hasty kiss, or even to scold him. She was all he had now, and since his kitten's death he had never wished to see his mother.

As for the man who had killed it, he had seen him once lay his hand on Camilla's shoulder; and such a flood of miserable rage had inundated his being as had rendered him helpless for hours. He could only lie, and choke, and groan, hiding behind a deserted shed.

Oh, to kill him!

To see his black blood drip, drip on the stones! The spots left by that of the kitten were still visible on the brickwork, and as they had run down they had seemed to form a dagger with a handle like a cross.

But in spite of the death of the kitten and the song, "Love Not," with its meaning for Pasquale, he still loved that sister, that merry, laughing sister. And the nights when she stole to him and threw her thin, brown arm over him as he lay in his retreat were the happiest hours of his life. Her lips might reek of cheap gin, but that was no nothing. He knew she loved him and no one else did. She was all that was left to him—this child of 7.

Camilla had grown strange. She seemed to laugh very little and her walk was weary and lagging. But she still came to him at times and petted him in her rough way.

Then suddenly her visits ceased. And most singular of all, he never saw her at day passing at the stalls to beg of the people who sold that all might live. For three days he stole down the alley where the door was and the window with the shawl pinned over it. Once he saw his mother open it and whisper something to the man he hated, and the man had hastened away looking about him stealthily as he went, but not seeing

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the boy over near the wall, where the brown stain of the dagger was.

And he thought of the days when he had been seeking his kitten.

The next night when it was quite dark he ran breathlessly down the alley to the window. The shawl was down. Within the room he could see his mother talking to a man, and could see that she was drunk, leaning and muttering at the shadows.

And the shadows were many, the only light being that of a tallow candle thrust into the mouth of a beer bottle. It had been cut to allow it to enter, and the knife, a common case knife, lay beside it on a chair at the head of a pallet of straw.

And on the straw?

Yes. You have guessed it! Camilla.

And over her the shawl dragged from the window lay with hideous smoothness, disclosing a certain starkness of the slim feet. And though her eyes were closed there was still upon them and upon her sharp cheek bones a daub of cheap rouge.

After Pasquale saw the feet which had been the feet of Camilla he remembered nothing more.

That there was a crowd, that the man was cursing and binding a wound, that he had bitten human flesh to the bone, and that his own arm was broken when they tore him from Camilla's side, he knew.

Before they took him out of the only environments he had ever owned, he begged a singular favor. He staggered across the alley to the wall, and with a thumb which reeked with the blood of the man, he daubed into fresh prominence the faded brown mark like a dagger which showed faintly upon the bricks.

He was a singular little devil, that boy!

And as the wheels of a great wagon bore him swiftly away he muttered furiously to himself, with alternate curses and weeping, some words which no one understood.

But possibly they were the words he breathed so constantly in his delirium at the hospital. The nurse said they were: "Love-a-not."

And Pasquale died.

And they said that it was better so, as he was really such a little devil. There could have been nothing ahead worth living for in his case. The doctors said that he was of the class who are criminal before birth.

I do not know, but I wish I had Pasquale's chances for mercy before the great white throne.

I—who have known from childhood of the sea of glass, the golden streets and gates of pearl, who have believed in what some wise fools call a fairy tale, and who have never attempted murder—I envy that little devil of a Pasquale the look I believe he will receive from the great pure Christ, and the invitation I believe he will receive to sit on the steps of the throne.

And I am sure he will be given a cushion lest the jewels with which it is laid prove uncomfortable to his tired boyish limbs, and that he shall be given Camilla, and—who knows?—perhaps a mother.

And—yes—I also believe that he will hug to his happy heart a purring, sleek, shining eyed angel kitten.

And this in spite of the fact that he was such a little devil. JOHANNA STAATS.



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