

ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES

THE STORY OF AN EAST SIDE SHOE-STRING SELLER.

The little pedler of shoestrings was notable for several characteristics. She was a bright-eyed child and pretty, but that does not serve to identify children even in the Bowery, where the type of the juvenile merchant is comparatively common. It was her clothes which gave her the greatest distinction. Her dress had once been ambitious, for remnants of close clipped ruffles peeped out of the seams; but the day of its respectability was long past. She was a very, very ragged little girl, and little girls so ragged are uncommon, even in lower New-York. Five or six great rents in the dress defied darning, or would have defied it had any attempt been made to gather together the gaping wounds. The dirt of the street was incrusting over the original brown of the cloth, and made a combination which would have been as attractive to the artist as alarming to the sanitarian. Under the skirt of this garment appeared two long, thin legs, encased in stockings many sizes too large for them. These terminated in a pair of boots unsuitable in size and otherwise, for they were evidently the cast off property of an able bodied boy, many years her senior. The little girl did not seem troubled by feminine vanity. The serious business of life demanded her attention and necessity urged her forward, regardless of slipping feet, to dispose of her wares before night.

"Shoestrings, sir?" The face she turned was bright enough, the skin a clear olive and the hair a rich brown; but it was nothing short of startling for all that. Mature enough for twenty, yet, like a hunted animal, it suggested tragedy. An inquiry as to her age accompanied the purchase of shoestrings.

"Ten years old, sir," came the answer.

"And you go to school, of course?" This to make her talk a while longer, before starting off again on her rounds.

"No, sir. I used to go till two months ago, but the teacher says my dress is too ragged."

The child seemed frightened by the question, and, mindful of the foreigner's fear of truant officers and the Gerry society, it occurred to the seeker after information to lead the child into a restaurant where he was known and his reliability could be vouched for. This done by the genial proprietor, who seemed to know the child well, the questioning was resumed.

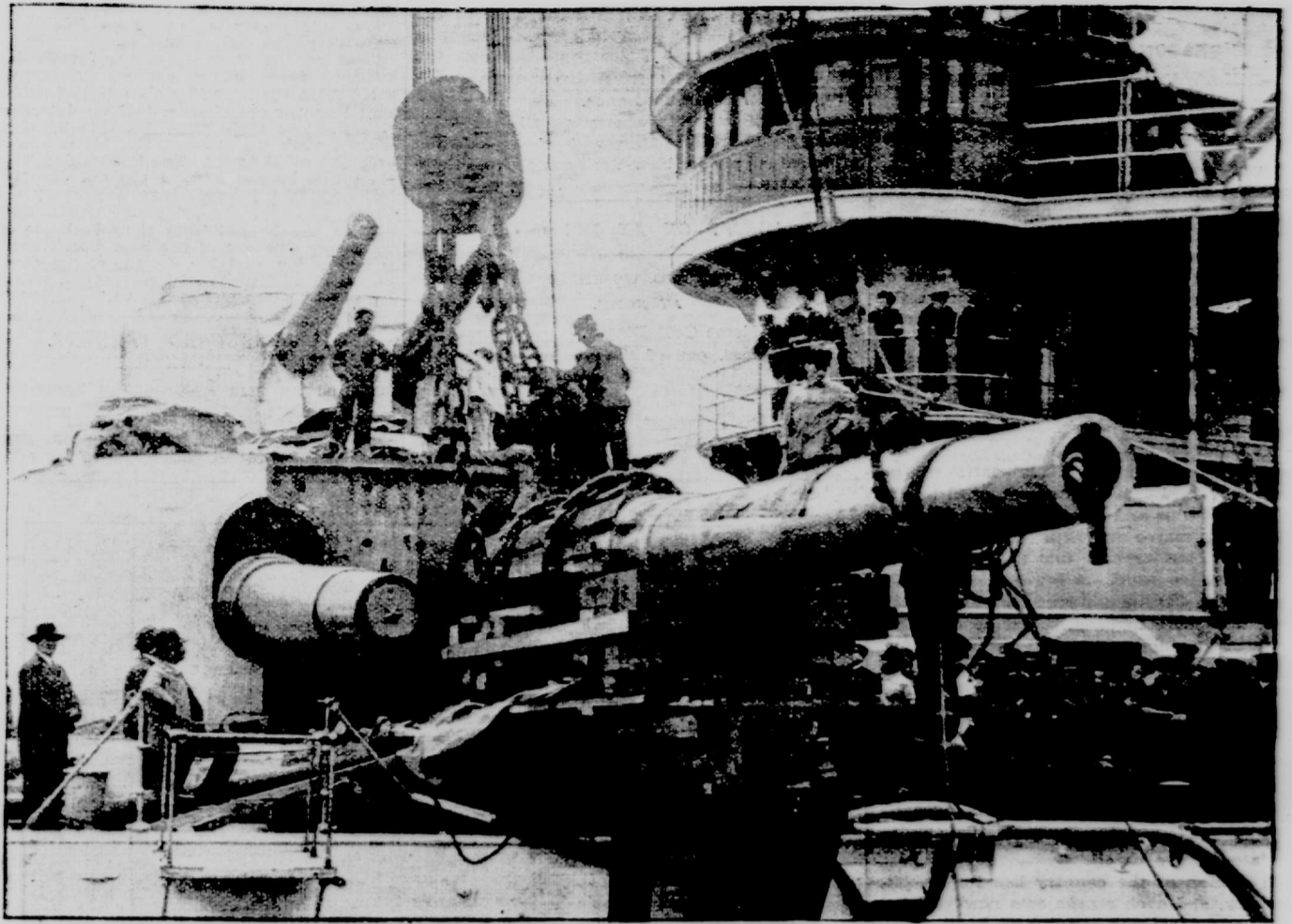
"You have a father and mother, haven't you?"

"My father's dead. He died two months ago." Food, the familiar room, the kindly face of her friend the proprietor and the evident sympathy of her questioner began to loosen the child's tongue. She volunteered a few details. "I came home from peddling one day and he was lying on the bed, and when I spoke to him he couldn't answer. So they took him to the hospital—and he died. And they never told us when he was buried. I never knew," she insisted, "when they buried my father." A sense of wrong seemed to fill her young soul, but she made an effort to be just. "My mother, she was sick. They must have thought it would frighten her. She was sick a long time, my mother."

The scared blue eyes were bright with intelligence and the mouth curved into smiles readily enough when once the dread of an "agent" in disguise was removed and she became convinced that her listener was friendly and sympathetic. She felt her wrongs, but she did not whine about them. Having to leave school struck her as the worst of the suffering, for she had all an immigrant's ambition to rise in the world by means of education. "If I don't go to school I'll forget all I know, and I was in the second primary, too," she explained. One wondered at the teacher who had chosen to send the child away rather than take the small trouble of asking among her friends for a decent dress; but there was no doubt that the child's present condition was a little too much for even the democratic atmosphere of a public school. "I ain't got no other dress, and how could I help it?" she not unnaturally complained. As to baths, they cost 10 cents; and 10 cents meant more than a day's food.

"I buy my shoestrings for 10 cents," she volunteered, "and I sell them for 12. I sell almost all in one afternoon; but sometimes I take some home. I used to peddle on the Bowery, but they don't buy no shoestrings there. Not one I used to sell. A lady that lives in our house she gave me these boots. No, sir, they don't hurt me. 'Cept the nails. Oh, there's lots of nails in 'em. The gentleman that keeps this place he bought me shoes one day, but my sister she went to the Weisenhaus [meaning an orphan asylum], so I gave her the shoes. I was in the Weisenhaus once. They give you lots to eat. I wish I could go back."

A visit to a shoe store revealed the fact that the child's stockings in their better days had apparently been part of some man's bicycle equipment. There were five or six inches to spare, rolled up in the heel of the shoe. By the time she was fitted out she was almost laughing, and perfectly garrulous. The promise of a dress in which to go back to school filled her cup of bliss, and she did not resent any number of questions regarding family affairs. There were six children in the family, all under thirteen, with a new baby. The two boys were in some home; the child herself seemed the support of the family. That morning they had breakfasted on "two cents bread and a penny milk."



SHIPPING THE BIG GUN IN THE FORWARD TURRET OF THE BATTLESHIP KEARSARGE.

They would have more bread at night. A charitable society paid the rent. The kindness received had been their salvation; but from various remarks of the child, it had hardly been of the sort which warmed the hearts of both giver and receiver. They were just "cases." Perhaps if the good women of the organization felt too keenly the sorrows they see they would be nervous wrecks in a month; but the whole business chilled the heart.

"I like the ladies that live in our house best," said the child, with engaging frankness. "But they're poor themselves, so what can you do? One lady in our house, she cooked for us when my mother was sick. She was kind. The ladies from uptown, they gave my mother a baby to nurse, 'cause its mother, she was dead. But my mother, she couldn't do it, so she gave it back. They gave her \$2 for doing it, and she kept the baby four days, so she gave back \$1, when she gave them the baby. Since then they ain't come any more." A vision of the charity worker calmly giving to a starving woman two babies to care for rose before the listener. It appeared to be charity "behaving itself unseemly," as the apostle declared it did not do.

"You know," went on the little maid, in a hushed voice, "my father died of hunger, I think." Her eyes gleamed brightly as she raised them to the face above her. "I think he died of hunger," she repeated. "And he was only forty. He got sick working in a sweat-shop."

There seemed to be nothing lacking to complete the tragedy. The horrors of civilization seemed concentrated. The listener could bear no more, and making an appointment for another day, sent the child away. The golden brown hair shone in the sun as he watched her making her way with dangling shoestrings through the crowd. "When she grows up and that bright brain develops," he thought, "the picture of her father lying speechless on the bed, dying of hunger, will grow more and more vivid in her mind. What then?" As if to offer an answer a pushcart man brought his wares within range. He was selling books, and the cart was dotted with "Moribund Society and Anarchy."

CASTOR OIL FOR MOSQUITOES.

From The Youth's Companion.

In Venezuela the castor oil plant growing around houses is believed to keep mosquitoes away. In that country the plant grows to the size of a tree, and is perennial, whereas in more temperate climates it attains a height of only four or five feet. But United States Consul Plunacher, at Maracaibo, thinks the plant would be equally effective against mosquitoes anywhere. By keeping the branches and seeds of the plant in a room, he says, the pests are driven away.

SARCASTIC.

From Moonshine.

"Why did you leave your last place?"

"Master was too sarcastic."

"How was that?"

"Well, I told him I seen a snail on the garden path, an' he says to me, 'You must have met it.'"

STILL ROOM FOR MORE.

From The Atlanta Constitution.

"Brethren," said a man in meeting, "so many sinners are dying every day I have come to the conclusion that hell is full." He sat down, when an old deacon in the Amen corner raised the hymn, "There's a place reserved for you, brother—a place reserved for you."

MUSSOLINO STILL FREE.

ADVENTUROUS CAREER OF THE MOST NOTED ITALIAN BRIGAND.

Rome correspondence of The London Post.

Weeks and months pass, and yet the famous brigand Mussolino, who roams or roamed in the mountains above Aspromonte, in Calabria, is still at large. The reports of his death are discredited. Probably they are circulated in the hope of diverting the attention of the authorities.

The Italian newspapers, which regard the Boers as miraculous heroes because they succeeded in escaping capture by the British army in the Transvaal, might with advantage reflect that for the last nine months the Italian Government has set nearly five hundred men—carabinieri, soldiers and police—to hunt Mussolino, and that up to now they have succeeded only in losing all traces of the famous brigand. Since February he has not even been heard of, and the authorities have not the faintest idea where to look for him.

The conditions of the problem are similar to those existing in the Transvaal—a large number of men operating over a considerable district, in search of an enemy perfectly acquainted with the locality, agile, and favored by the population. Thus the Mussolino "phenomenon" attracted first the attention and then the scorn of the Italian public. The name "phenomenon" is not misplaced, because Mussolino would long ago have been captured but for the extraordinary social conditions prevailing in Calabria.

There should be no misconception as to the word brigand. Mussolino is not the brigand who stops travellers or tourists and holds them to ransom, or who indulges in highway robbery. Foreigners and tourists can go through the whole of Calabria with perfect safety without ever imagining a brigand to be in their neighborhood, unless they happen to read the local newspapers, or to come across unusually large carabinieri or infantry patrols. Mussolino is an escaped convict—according to popular belief unjustly condemned—who is "wanted" both because of his escape, and because since his escape he has murdered nearly all the persons who, as witnesses, magistrates or jury, had anything to do with his condemnation. But if he was unjustly imprisoned in the last instance, he was by no means a saint.

At fifteen years of age he belonged to the mala vita, and was watched by the police; in March, 1894, when only seventeen years old, he was imprisoned for lawbreaking, and three years later for housebreaking. At the end of 1897 and the beginning of 1898 he was repeatedly imprisoned for inflicting wounds on his fellow townsmen. His condemnation for attempted murder at the end of 1898 was merely a logical, though perhaps on the evidence an unjust, continuation of his criminal career. His escape from prison marked the beginning of his murderous vendettas which were to gain for him the title and rank of "grand captain" of the Calabrian Picciotteria.

The Picciotteria is something different from the Sicilian Mafia and the Neapolitan Camorra, though to some extent it combines the features of both. The Mafia is not a vast organized criminal society, but rather a spontaneous grouping together of rowdies and bullies in various localities for the purposes of defying the law, getting justice done to its members, and sometimes of levying blackmail.

The Camorra is less respectable than the Mafia, does not, as a rule, commit sanguinary crimes, and turns its attention to making money in a thousand ways for the cowardly rascals who belong to it. The Picciotteria is, like the Camorra, an organized association, but its sentiments are more like those of the Mafia. "One for all and all for one" may be said to be its motto. It is composed of unruly characters whose disposition leads them to set the law at defiance and co-operate in securing immunity from punishment for crimes which they singly or jointly may commit.

Unlike the Camorra, the Picciotteria commits the most daring crimes, including burglary, arson and murder; unlike the Mafia it is divided into sections, has "tribunals of justice," a treasury, and a supreme council. Its members are known as picciotti, but among themselves are called frati, or brethren. They use conven-

tional language and have organized a system of universal espionage. Some time since the government struck a heavy blow at the Picciotteria by arresting at one stroke and securing the condemnation of more than two hundred and sixty of its members; but the glorious exploits of Mussolino have caused it again to spread, and he is recognized as its head with the rank of "grand captain."

While the police and carabinieri are searching for Mussolino the Picciotteria acts as police for its "grand captain," and keeps him minutely informed of every movement of every patrol. Often picciotti take on themselves to "guide" the police, whom they carefully lead by difficult routes to places as far as possible from Mussolino's whereabouts. The celebrated loyalty of the Calabrian character renders it impossible to obtain trustworthy information. Mussolino is a Calabrian, and every Calabrian would feel himself to be betraying a brother if he gave accurate information to the authorities.

Though the district is poor, and fabulous rewards have been offered for trustworthy news of Mussolino, only two individuals have been tempted. These have had to suffer for their defection, and the government most unwisely has made difficulties about paying them their rewards. Besides, the authorities have not a single authentic portrait of the brigand, who is often able to enter villages swarming with carabinieri and soldiers, and, as he is known to all the villagers, who refuse to betray him, but unknown to his would-be captors, he enjoys complete immunity.

REPLACING A THIRTEEN-INCH GUN.

A REMARKABLE PIECE OF WORK ACCOMPLISHED ON THE BATTLESHIP KEARSARGE.

The great 13-inch gun which was a part of the battleship Kearsarge's original armament was damaged some time ago and had to be removed to make place for a new gun. It was a difficult and an expensive piece of work, but under the direction of Naval Constructor Capps it was accomplished rapidly and at greatly reduced cost. Instead of dismembering the ponderous double turret, a section just large enough to allow a passageway for the gun was removed and the monster gun was drawn out.

The new gun was placed in position last Tuesday, and that part of the unique work was as successful as the removal of the damaged piece. A hundred-ton derrick at the side of the battleship picked up the new gun, which had been placed on the edge of the dock, and raised it to the height of the aperture in the turret, and in thirty-three minutes the great mass of metal was resting on a runway on the ship's deck, whence it was pulled through the opening into the turret. So nicely was the turret cut that there was less than a quarter of an inch to spare at each side of the gun. It took four hours to place the gun in position. The whole work was accomplished in five weeks at a cost of about \$6,000. Competent naval constructors estimated that the work would take several months and cost from \$60,000 to \$75,000.

ENJOYMENT.

From The Detroit Journal.

She enjoyed the dinner. Hugely?

Deliriously, quite!

For her gown, it fit so lovely

That she couldn't eat a bite.

SOCIAL GEOMETRY.

From The Philadelphia Press.

Miss Freeman—Why, I thought you knew her. She lives in the same square with you.

Miss Hutton—Perhaps; but she does not move in the same circle.