

LUCIA'S ROMANCE

Martino's confectionary "round the corner" had always been a place of enchantment to the children of the neighborhood.

It was not, of course, alone in the window, or its delights might have palled upon those to whom it was so utterly unattainable.

The neighborhood, it may as well be said at once, was not aristocratic, was not exclusive, was not even clean.

In this, the kingdom of childhood, the Italian confectioner stood supreme, especially at the holiday time, when its window burst into an exuberance of marvelous products.

Among the most constant frequenters of the window and the most enthusiastic admirers of its marvels, was Lucia Mallon, who, it must be owned, devoured the good things displayed therein much more frequently with her eyes than with her pearly little teeth.

Lucia often stood before the confectioner's window, raising one little bare foot and then another from the ground when the pavement began to grow cold, arrayed in the poorest and shabbiest of frocks, only kept together by the mother's patient industry.

She sighed, thus it may be seen, for the unattainable, and her daring dreams even scaled to the third story of the cake.

Having thus sung her way, as it were, through the May-time of childhood, plucking the flowers upspringing in the arid soil about her, she reached the June of early womanhood.

The whole neighborhood, leaving aside the envious and malicious, who should not be permitted to form part of any neighborhood, took a pride in Lucia's beauty.

THREE Trying Times in A WOMAN'S LIFE WHEN MILBURN'S HEART AND NERVE PILLS

are almost an absolute necessity towards her future health. The first when she is just budding from girlhood into the full bloom of womanhood.

particularly the special temperament, wherein the Mallons had their abode and the courtyard upon which their windows looked, were very much interested to discover that the girl had a beau.

"I will tell you all just before the banns are called, but not till then." She spoke thus, usually, when surrounded in the evening by an audience composed of many of the children of the vicinity, with whom she was a favorite and who could never realize she had really grown up.

In spite of environment, Lucia's was certainly a very pretty little romance. Its hero was a young man, somewhat older and graver than the girl he had chosen.

Lucia, my adored one! he cried, using those epithets which in the fervid Italian tongue come so naturally to the lips.

Antonia was satisfied at last, and they sat in a happy silence, looking out over the water, watching the sunset fading away and withdrawing its radiance from the thick clustering roofs and spires of the city upon the river's banks.

She sat down upon the edge of the dock, clad in a simple frock of dark red, which brought out her marvelous coloring and accentuated the glint of her bronze-tinted hair.

Before the banns were called Lucia kept her promise of disclosing her lover's identity to such denizens of the quarter, old and young, as chanced to be assembled in the courtyard after supper.

beside her, and for his sake would have been willing to give up everything. As she looked out over the water, the salt breath of the distant sea bringing a slight color to her cheek, the lover said, suddenly:

"You are so very beautiful, Lucia, and I am not worthy of you. You should have married a great signor, who would have taken you into his world."

Lucia, opening her eyes wide, turned them in astonishment upon her lover. "Why, you foolish Antonio," she cried, "what would I do among lords and ladies?"

"They would worship your beauty even as I do, ma mie," declared Antonio, fervently.

"My beauty!" she exclaimed, "and always my beauty. Why do you let these fancies trouble your mind when you are offering me so much, and are going to make me the envy of every girl in the quarter?"

"What I am giving you is not much," he said, sadly. "You do not know your own value. Pray God you never may when it is too late. If you were to change, then—"

"I am a Christian," Lucia said, solemnly, "and when we are married I shall have the grace of the sacrament. A wife does not change after that, even if the husband is bad, which you will never be."

"If the good God has given me beauty," she went on, "it was not for anything like that. It was, perhaps, to make you love me, as I love you."

"There was something inexpressibly winning in the look and tone with which these words were said. Antonio raised his head.

"You do love me, then?" he asked. "With all my heart and soul," she answered.

She had never told him so much before in so many words. She had been gently reticent, captivately reserved, letting her tenderness and her pleasure in her lover's society show itself, as it were, in pretty glimpses, passing gleams. It moved Antonio strangely to hear her confess this now, in the soft loveliness of the twilight.

"Lucia, my adored one!" he cried, using those epithets which in the fervid Italian tongue come so naturally to the lips.

"Oh," sighed the lover, "you love me less than I love you, since you can think of time." He made no further objection, however, for he knew that it was wise of Lucia always to return homeward with the first stars that peeped out in the sky.

"I brought you here that you might name our wedding day, Lucia, and you have not yet done so."

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