

## A LIFE FOR AN APPLE.

Mischief Wrought Again by the Little Round Red Fruit that Brought Woe into the Garden of Eden.

Rudely "Joe" Smith a Terror to the Seventh Ward—First Purloins a "Three-or-Five" from Antonio Oliveri's Stand, on Catharine Street, and Then, to Revenge a Thrashing He Got, Lays in Ambush for the Italian and Inflicts a Mortal Wound.

A little red round apple—the same fruit which wrought such woe in the Garden of Eden and in the old mythological world—played its discordant part again in a tragedy at the corner of Catharine and Hamilton streets in this city Sunday. To be sure, the little red round apple of the episode in question was only of that humble species which the sons of Italy designate as "three for five," but it did its nefarious

work just the same and as completely as if it were a piper or a "sheep's nose."

This little red round apple until 3 o'clock on last Sunday afternoon peacefully reposed on the stand of Antonio Oliveri, who sells figs, dates, oranges and "peanuts" in front of the saloon at No. 73 Catharine street, a block or two west of the East River. He has sold his small beer trade there now for two years and has managed to save up

in that time almost as much as a hundred dollars against the day when he will set sail for Napoli, whence he came to this country nine years ago, and buy for himself a snug little trattoria on the borders of the Mediterranean.

How could he suspect that in an evil day, one of those hard, thick-skinned Michigan apples, of which he had handled so many in his nine years' experience in America, was to play its historic rôle once more. It lay there—that mischievous apple on his stand, peacefully, quietly, beneath the rude-tiny placard, stuck into a splinter of wood which recorded the fact that it was one of the lot, "three for five," where it had quietly reposed for twice twenty-four hours. Then a Seventh Ward tough happened to pass by. Hence this story.

"Joe" Smith, of No. 35 Hamilton street, was that tough. He strolled by Antonio's stand about 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon. No one about the Seventh Ward can say just how many east side whistles he had on board the day before yesterday, but when he passed the door of No. 73 Catharine street he was in a hilarious mood. When "Joe" Smith is hilarious, the denizens of the ward have learned by experience that it is best to leave him severely alone. Yet poor, unfortunate Antonio Oliveri had not learned that yet. He was to learn it, however, like many another of the ward in which "Joe" Smith was born, from actual experience.

"Joe" Smith came reeling and rolling along down towards the river front. He got to the Italian's fruit stand. There he steadied himself for a moment and then made a lunge for the counter. He picked up the apple and was going to put it in his pocket—the pocket of his brand-new overcoat, which he had bought only the evening before out of his week's earnings. He reeled away again.

Antonio glanced at him for a moment, and having watched him pick up the fruit and walk away again without depositing the money that the Italian was accustomed to get for one apple out of the lot marked "three for five," demanded, his parment. To-day Antonio is lying in his home, at No. 33 Eliza street, very near to death, while Smith is sleeping off his early Sunday potations in some place that the police cannot locate, and is a fugitive from justice.

When Oliveri demanded payment for the apple which Smith had picked up, the latter refused to settle his account. Antonio has the fiery Neapolitan blood surging through his veins. He jumped on his despoiler and the two men had a rough and tumble fight. There was no policeman present at the moment. Officer Sullivan hastened to the spot as soon as the news of the quarrel reached him. But Smith had made away in the few minutes that elapsed, and he found that the Italian was straightening himself out after the struggle. Everything was quiet by that time, but Antonio had not succeeded in get-

ting his pay for his apple. What was worse Smith before he broke away had gathered up a handful of dry fruit. So Antonio was minus not only the price of the apple, but a couple of cents' worth of figs or dates as well. "Tony" mourned, real, genuine Italian tears flowed, but what could he do?

Antonio had jammed Smith up against the lamp-post at the corner, and if the latter had not broken away would have scolded his smart new overcoat in the mud of the gutter. The Neapolitan got the better of the Bowery boy for the nonce, because "Smithy," as his pals call him, was not "on his legs." When Tony went back to his stand he had lost the worth of an apple and a fistful of dry fruit that he could never put to the account of that anticipated trattoria on Naples Bay, but he had obtained some satisfaction. He had drubbed that Seventh Ward tough who had defrauded him.

It was night. Catharine street was wrapped in shadow except where the gas jets dimly made a small circle of light about the heads of their posts. At the corner of Hamilton and Catharine streets the stars from Antonio Oliveri's oil lamp, joined with the daylight across the pavement, illumined his fruit stand very brilliantly. But the shadows behind it were all the blacker. They were as black, in fact, as the heart of the man bent on murderous impulses, who was lurking around the side wall of the house before which Tony's stand was set.

The Italian had worried a good deal about the pilfering of his wares during the afternoon. But he had gone home to his signora about 5 o'clock, had filled his empty stomach with a heaping plate of spaghetti, had dropped his sorrow in a flask of strachino and had come back to his apple and dates again, almost forgetful of the annoyance the drunken Americano had caused him. Placidly he went on selling his peanuts, his oranges, his figs and his dates. It was raining dimly and trade was not very brisk. But he gathered in enough pennies to wipe out his sorrow over the loss of the afternoon, and he began to set about closing up for the night.

The hands of the clock in the saloon nearby pointed to 9 o'clock. Tony had just thought himself to lock up and go home, since the night was so bad and so few people were abroad. And that Americano was lurking all the while in the shadows around the corner.

Officer Corrigan, of the Madison street station-house, who had replaced Officer Sullivan, heard as he was patrolling his beat a few blocks away from the corner the sounds of a quarrel. He hastened to the corner of Catharine and Hamilton streets. He found the Italian covered with blood and surrounded by a couple of sympathetic friends, who were wildly gesticulating and shrieking for the "police, police." There was a big ugly cut on Tony's left cheek, another across his forehead and a third wound under his

left eye. Smith, who had jumped out upon him from the shadows, had disappeared into the shadows and the rain again.

He has not since been discovered, though the police of the Madison street station-house are searching for him. He was known to have passed Sunday night at a lodging-house at the junction of Park Row and Mulberry street, but he left the place early Monday morning and had not since been heard from up to a late hour last evening.

It was learned from some of the inhabitants of the Seventh Ward who saw him after the onslaught Sunday evening that he, too, was bleeding badly, like the Italian. That may have been the story of his friends, who hoped to shield him. But Tony Oliveri's wounds are not conjectural. He was very seriously cut up, and yesterday he was very low. Officer Sullivan had him taken to the nearest drug shop when he appeared on the scene, and the wounds were quickly dressed, yet not before a good deal of the Neapolitan's hot blood had been spilt. And all Tony Oliveri's troubles—his loss of temper, loss of blood and loss of business—came about on account of a little red, round one-and-a-half-cent apple.

The chances are now that he will die and that "Joe" Smith will be a murderer. The wounds that were inflicted were evidently those of a keen half blade, and Tony's assailant must have had it open in revengeful madness when he sprang out of the

shadows like a leopard to make the Italian suffer for the work of the early afternoon.

Smith bears a bad reputation in the ward, and when he is in his cups he is a man to avoid as one would the plague. He has been a principal in three previous stabbing affairs. Once, while drunk, he knocked a "growler" of beer out of the hands of a small boy who was carrying it to his home at No. 34 Hamilton street, and a short time later a woman, for whom the lad was acting as a messenger, stabbed him while sitting on the steps singing "Annie Rooney." The wage of the neighborhood had it that the woman knifed him on account of the song.

At another time a man named Nicholas Kounts lunged a knife at him in the same street in a drunken quarrel and Smith was laid up in the hospital for a long time. He pretends to earn a living by working for his father out in the Jersey swamps—culling husks, but always shows himself in the Seventh Ward Saturday nights to show what he makes in whiskey. He is only twenty-four years of age, but has already made a record for himself that entitles him to a high place in the ranks of the east side toughs.

The Italian is dying. The American is a fugitive from justice. And that little red, round one-and-a-half-cent apple is the disturbing cause that may send one to the grave and the other to the jail—both.