Tommatoo

By Fitz-James O'Brien

I.

THE HOUSE BY THE STONE-YARD.

A fairy that had lost the power of vanishing, and was obliged to remain ever present, doing continual good; a cricket on the hearth, chirping through heat and cold; an animated amulet, sovereign against misfortune; a Santa Claus, without the wrinkles, but young and beautiful, choosing the darkest moments to leap right into one's heart, and drop there the prettiest moral playthings to gladden and make gay,—such, in my humble opinion, was Tommatoo.

As yet I do not ask the reader to agree with me; for over him I have this one great advantage,—I know who Tommatoo is. When, however, he makes her acquaintance also, hears her twitter round the house, beholds the flash of her large dusky-gray eyes, is wonder-struck at the marvellous twinkling of her ever-dancing little feet, he can take his choice of all the personifications with which I began this story, and I feel convinced that he will select the most beautiful to enrobe Tommatoo.

There is (or rather *was*, six years ago, when the incidents to be narrated took place,—but I shall narrate them in the present tense) a vast flat of land stretching along the New York shore of the North River, close to where Thirty-Second Street vanishes into a swamp, in which unborn avenues are supposed to be slowly maturing. Although yet in embryo, they are already christened, and city engineers have imaginative ground-plans hanging on their walls, where Twelfth and Thirteenth Avenues are boldly represented, with as much minuteness as Fifth or Sixth. Should, however, any sanguine person be led by those delusive maps to seek for such mythical thoroughfares, Ponce de Leon, after his pursuit of the Fountain of Youth, would not offer a more striking example of ill-success. On reaching the spot where imagination depicted the long perspective of rails, with crowded and hurrying cars gliding smoothly to and fro, he would behold this vision of civic activity replaced by the dreary and mysterious waste I have spoken of, without even a sign-post pointing to the splendid future reserved for it by city surveyors.

This tract of land is perhaps the most melancholy and mysterious spot in the whole city. The different streets that cross the island pull up, as it were, suddenly on reaching this dreary place, seemingly afraid to trust themselves any further. The buildings that approach nearest to its confines are long low ranges of fetid slaughter-houses, where on Sundays bloated butcher-boys lounge against the walls; and on week-days one hears through the closed doors the muffled blow, the heavy fall of the oxen within; the groan, and the hard-drawn breath; and then a red, sluggish stream trickles out from under the doorway and flows into the gutter, where hungry dogs wait impatiently to lap it up. The murderous atmosphere, these smells of blood, seem appropriate enough as one approaches this desolate locality.

A great plain of red, swampy clay is covered here and there with numberless huge, helpless beams of timber,—some floating like dead rafts in the stream, and chained to the bank; others high and dry, blackening in the sun, and shadowing criminal-looking dogs that skulk in and out among them all day long. One or two immature piers jut out into the river here and there, and

grimy sloops that seem to have no particular trade, unless it is to rot calmly at their moorings, lie alongside, and grate and chafe lazily against the slimy logs. A few homeless boys, with smeared faces and thin, starved arms, who seem to have dressed themselves in the rags and kite-tails that flutter on telegraph-wires, lie on the sunny sides of the timber piles sleeping away hunger, or sometimes sit on the edges of the green piers languidly fishing for something which they never catch. Cinders most unaccountably prevail all over the place; they crackle under the feet, and the dogs gather round occasional piles of them, growling over a burned bone lying in the ashes: where they come from is not to be known. There are no houses, no factories, and the rotting sloops are so damp and slimy that it would be a mockery to suppose a fire had ever been lit in any one of them. Nevertheless the cinders prevail; and at certain hours in the day two or three crouching creatures wander slowly among the heaps, picking mysterious objects, with hands that seem themselves to have been burned into coke.

The place is also a species of morgue for dead dogs. Every cur that the Hudson drowns floats inevitably to this spot and is swept up on the swampy bank,—when the outlawed mongrels that skulk between the timber logs crowd around it, and perhaps identify the corpse. On Sundays you see a few low-browed, soap-locked loafers strolling among the piles, pitching stones into the water, and, if it is summer, stripping off their tattered shirts to have a swim; but on week-days the place is entirely dead. The starved boys and the shadowy rag-pickers flitting here and there give no air of life; they seem very thin and impalpable, and haunt the place like ghosts.

Further on this dreary swamp changes somewhat its character. The great balks of timber disappear, and a few shingle huts—so loosely built that the wind whistles through their walls with a shriek of triumph—are scattered here and there. Large masses of stone lie about, hewn into square blocks for house-fronts, and in the daytime the monotonous click of the stone-cutter's chisel shrills continually from the shingle huts. This straggling stone-yard, for such it is, is perhaps less desolate than the swamp further down, but at night—when the moon streams on the huge white blocks that lie there so cold and dead, and the huts are deserted by the workmen, and nothing moves but a shadowy dog that flits by, seen for an instant against the pallid stones—the place is inexpressibly weird and lonely.

Just on the confines of this stone-yard, in a rutty, half-made road that is bounded on both sides by burned-looking building-lots, where nothing hides the scalded earth but some unhealthy boulders, and occasional remnants of old shoes that are black and pulpy with decay, stands a small house built of unpainted shingles. It is two-storied, with a basement, and a somewhat imposing flight of steps up to the door; yet it wears a reckless and despairing aspect. I have no doubt when this house was built it had many youthful hopes of establishing a neighborhood and becoming a dwelling of respectability. It promised itself, perhaps, a coat or two of paint, and had visions of being the ancestor of a street. But year after year wore away, and it found itself still naked as when it was born. No companion dwelling lifted its head to cheer the solitude. On all sides the bleak river-winds tousled and smote its bare walls until its windows chattered with the cold. It grew weary of waiting for the neighborhood that never was to come, and seemed to care no longer what became of it. It let beardy mosses grow all over its haggard face. Its edges were chipped and ragged; its chimneys, no longer spruce and tapering, bulged and tottered to one side, like the crushed hat of a confirmed drunkard. It buttoned itself up no more about the chest with its snug, comfortable doors, but let them hang loose on one hinge, and flap about in the wind. It was evident to any one who saw it that the house near the stone-yard had gone to the bad.

Forlorn and seedy as it looked, this house was inhabited. The shivering, shrunken windows gleamed with lights by night, yet not cheerfully, but with a wild glare, like that which streams

from the eyes of those about to die. If the skulking men that prowled in summer evenings among the sheds of the stone-yard, whistling mysteriously to each other, had any taste for music, the house would have been to them a source of great wonder. Sometimes for hours together a wild and mellow music would stream upon the air, soaring over the dreary yard, wailing sadly along the waste river-grounds and by the rotting sloops until it reached the water, when it would float triumphally along, as if it knew that it was leaving the desolate place behind it, and bury itself deep in the sleeping groves that nodded on the distant Weehawken heights. The character of these melodious sounds was entirely mystical and strange. They were not born of violin or bugle, and yet seemed to have the souls of both instruments intermingling with another distinctly their own;—another soul, not merely instrumental, but human, passionate, luxuriant, as if all the utterances of a great Italian love—desire, entreaty, and triumph—were translated into aerial harmonies.

To you and I, reader, there need be no mystery in either house or music. That despairing-looking chateau was inhabited but by three people,—an old man, a young girl, and a youth of about twenty-one. As age is entitled to its traditional homage of precedence, I will first introduce to you the elder of the trio. I beg to present to your notice the maestro, Baioccho.

You could not possibly conceive a man made up with less waste of material than Signor Baioccho. Nature, when she formed him, must have been terribly short of stuff. There was too little of everything in his physical composition. He was abbreviated in every limb and feature. This, nevertheless, was fortunate, for had he been on a large scale he would have been insupportably ugly he was too small, however, to be repulsive, and so was only queer. But how queer he was, with his withered, pinched-up face, his sparse, stiff beard, which looked like a thin growth of thorns, and his quaint, convulsed figure, that gave one the idea that all inside of him was catgut and wheels, and hat something was continually breaking in his machinery! Yet, with all this likeness to a comic toy, how inexpressibly mournful was the countenance of Signor Baioccho! what terrible sorrow was hopelessly shut up in that wretched little frame

Baioccho had been a musician, and was now a cook. Years ago, when opera was young in New York, Baioccho came here from Italy with a company, set up an opera-house, was instantly successful, and made a fortune. Music was his religion, the lyric stage his temple, the conductor's desk his altar, the overture his mass. But he became a fanatic in his faith. He enlarged his house; he spent thousands of dollars on the production of new operas, and, as a matter of course, he became bankrupt. For the opera is like a Parisian mistress, the most charming, fascinating, bewildering of all creations, and invariably leaves you without a shilling at last. For many years poor Baioccho struggled to keep his feet. He led orchestras at second-rate theatres; he gave lessons on the piano and violin, always hoping, always dreaming of one day grasping again the magical baton, the sceptre of his world. It was a vain struggle, however; other maestri came over from Italy with still more wondrous and expensive singers than those Baioccho brought, and they built opera-houses, and bought newspaper puffs, and covered the dead walls with huge announcements of colossal successes; and the world, rushing on the heels of novelty, swept over the ancestor of American opera, and poor Baioccho found himself trampled on, bruised, and left to die.

It were too sad a task to enumerate the various steps which led Baioccho from Parnassus to the kitchen. An accomplishment of which in his palmy days he had been not a little proud, was now brought into requisition to save him from starvation; the hand that was too weak to hold the baton found itself still able to brandish the ladle. Those gay Italian tenors, those majestic bassos, little thought when, round his elegant supper-table long ago, they used to applaud his amateur

cookery, delicious *mayounaises*, harmonious salads, that the day would arrive when the poor conductor would don the white apron and cotton cap very seriously, and sweat all day in a restaurant kitchen through an eternal round of soups and roasts and *eatrées* ever the same. But so it was. Those who frequented Calcar's Restaurant would now and then behold a wizened little man stealing quietly from some mysterious passage leading to the kitchen, and sneaking up to the bar, where he would hastily swallow a potent draught of raw brandy, and shuffle back guiltily to the place whence he came. And they would see one or two old New-Yorkers looking pitifully after him, and saying to each other that they remembered poor Baioccho when he drove his carriage. He now trudged home every night on foot; and it was sad to see the old fellow, unsteady with drink, staggering down the rutty road to the house near the stone-yard, where the faithful Tommatoo kept watch until she heard his stumbling footstep, when, tripping to the door, she tenderly helped him up to bed.

So! we have come at last to Tommatoo. I have been longing to get to her for some time past, hut it would have been unkind to have deserted old Baioccho now that he is so poor. Salutation to his misfortunes!

Tommatoo was Baioccho's only child. In some quaint old Italian chapel, it may be by the shores of Sorrento, a smiling babe was one sunny day christened by the stout old Padre, and the name bestowed was Tomasina. Melodious as was this pretty name, the little girl that bore it, as soon as she reached lisping age, obstinately refused to be known by any cognomen but that of Tommatoo. This sounded awfully heathenish to old Baioccho, but she was apparently determined, and in time her imperious infant will had its effect on the family. She became Tommatoo to all intents and purposes, as far as household experience went, and even when she grew up to the age of reason did not seem anxious to reclaim her original appellation.

Tommatoo was one of those lovely, fair-haired Italians that one sees so seldom, but which once seen are never forgotten. At some antique period, when Alaric was king, some of the blood of his blonde race must have mingled with the olive-skinned Roman Baiocchi, and after centuries of rest suddenly bloomed in Tommatoo. Her eyes were a dark liquid gray, like a twilight lake. Her face was pale, yet not cold, for a southern fire seemed to smoulder beneath the skin, with a beautiful, subdued glow. Her mouth, small and moist and rosy, pouted over pearly teeth, half seen, and the curves of her smooth checks swept into a wickedly dimpled chin, that aided and abetted with all its might the criminal beauty of her bewildering lips. This sweet virginal face was set in a golden frame of luxuriant hair, that one of Raphael's saints might have envied.

Yet why speak of Tommatoo's beauty so rapturously? I shall have no enthusiasm left for that bright and joyous nature that burst from her as the sun bursts from a golden cloud, shedding its own lustre on everything, and infusing into all a portion of its own innate warmth. Every one has felt at times, when wandering through the fields, the intense joy experienced from the twittering of the birds amidst the branches and the glancing of their tiny forms through the leaves. Seine such pure and healthy influence did Tommatoo exercise over the little household. She twittered and sling, and, as it were, fluttered lightly through the rooms, until one could swear that the sun shone wherever she went. All day, while old Baioccho was absent attending to his culinary duties, compounding wondrous soups, and moving amidst the thick steams of the kitchen like an elf in some incantation scene, Tommatoo was putting the old house in order; sweeping up the little sitting-room, displaying its scanty furniture to the best advantage, and occasionally darting like a swallow into Mr. Gustave Beaumont's sanctum sanctorum.

It must be confessed that this was one of the household occupations that Tommatoo performed with the greatest willingness; for Mr. Gustave Beaumont was young, handsome, and played the most delightful melodies on his great instrument, invented by himself, entitled the Pancorno. The Pancorno was a singular piece of mechanism; hideously suggestive, in appearance, of some nameless instrument of torture from the dungeons of the Inquisition, yet in reality capable of soothing the most agonizing pains by the sweetness of its notes. By aid of some interior arrangement of tubes, the vibrations of the horn portion acted in turn upon what must have been a series of wires also concealed land which seemed to give the effect of a trio between flute, violin, and French-horn. It was from the Pancorno that the seraphic strains heard at night across the stone-yard floated so harmoniously, giving to the old house an air of being one of those enchanted abodes frequent in fairy tales, in which dwelt some spellbound prince, who thus summoned in music his faithful knights to his rescue.

Gustave was a clever young Frenchman, with an extraordinary passion for music, whom old Baioccho had known ever since he was a child. He was the son of the bassoon in one of the orchestras which the maestro had conducted in his palmy days; but one night the bassoon died in the middle of a rapid passage, and the little Gustave was left without a father, and but one friend, Baioccho. The old Italian took the bassoon's son home, brought him up as his own child along with Tommatoo; and when his fall came Gustave still shared his scanty means. To do the young fellow justice, he wanted to work, but the old man would not have it. "You are a genius, Gustave," he would say, "and, please the Virgin, you shall do something great." So Gustave did nothing great or small save the invention of the Pancorno, out of which he expected to reap a fortune, and he continued to live at the house by the stone-yard, having first scrupulously bargained with his entertainer to pay three dollars a week, which, as he did nothing but play on the Pancorno and make love to Tommatoo, it is needless to say he never earned and never paid. It quieted his conscience, however, and he used to say to himself that when he sold his invention for one hundred thousand dollars, that being the least he would take for it, old Baioccho should live like a prince.

And this is the last of the inmates of the house by the stone-yard.

II.

A FAMILY GROUP.

"Is that you, father?"

"Ah, the little Tommatoo! So you maintain the watch for the poor old father! Bless you, little angel!"

"Take care of the step, father. Take care."

"Put yourself easy, my child. I will be remindful of the step. I am very steadfast on my feet this evening."

And, as if to falsify his testimony, poor old Baioccho staggered up the steps leading to the hall-door, and would have fallen if Tommatoo had not caught one of his thin arms and held him up.

"It is nothing; it is nothing!" he exclaimed, as he tottered through the hall into the little parlor. "I can walk myself well enough. But it is the kitchen,—that dam kitchen! It has got into my head, my child. Where is the cognac?"

"Do you think it would do you any good, father?" asked Tommatoo, sorrowfully; "won't it make your head bad?"

"Ah, little dove! It does not comprehend. My child, the cognac is the life to me. When I stew and form dishes and mingle soups all day long in that dam kitchen, it gets into my head; and sometimes, *mon Dieu!* when I stand over the *regout,* and try to forget the place where I have found myself for a moment, the old times return upon me and I become very sad and sorrowful, so that I have to walk myself out to the bar and drink the cognac; and then, *per baccho!* I remember myself not, and I go back to my kitchen quite raised. Give me one little glass of cognac, my child?—one glass for the poor old father!"

Tommatoo fluttered over to a little cupboard that stood on one side of the room, and brought out a bottle and a wine-glass, and, pouring out some brandy, handed it to the old man.

He raised it tremulously to his mouth, and quaffed it off at a single draught; then, smacking his lips, he muttered, "Ah! the cognac is the soul to the old men like me!"

There was nothing disgusting in Baioccho's intoxication. The inebriety of the old musician was as cleanly as the tipsiness of a toy-man—had such been possible. His little eyes only twinkled the brighter, and his nose seemed longer and sharper and thinner, and his lips moved more rapidly; but that was all. His speech was not thick, nor were his ideas clouded. It was drunkeness idealized.

"What has my child to tell me of the day?" asked the old man, invigorated as it were by the *petit verre de cognac.*

Tommatoo drooped her eyelids, colored a little, and did not reply for a moment.

"Some one has been here," she said, at last.

"Which was it, little one?"

"It was—it was—" And the little one faltered.

"Diable!" cried the old man, leaping like an enraged cat from his chair, as if an idea had flashed upon him suddenly. "Ten millions of devils! was it not that brute Giuseppe?"

"It was, father," answered Tommatoo, soothingly. "Pray, don't fly into a rage. I could not help it."

"The wretch! the abandoned-by-God miserable fellow!" shouted old Baioccho, growing more and more excited each moment. "So he must place himself near my child, my angel, to steal her away from me! But we will see! What did he say to you?" he added, turning almost fiercely to Tommatoo.

"O, nothing more than what he has said to you. He said he loved me very much, and if I would marry him that he would take us all back to Italy, and that you should end your days in comfort."

"O, the serpent! His mother and his grandfather were snakes! You know not that man, Tommatoo! He is capable of roasting his father on a spit!"

"But, dear father, yell know I hate him. I will never marry any one but Gustave, and not that until you wish it. I laughed at Giuseppe, and told him to go away." And Tommatoo made an ineffectual attempt to give some idea of her stern manner to Giuseppe; but if the reality was at all like the representation, I don't think that the descendant of snakes was very much crushed.

"Ah, child! you are as innocent as the flower that grows under our feet!" and Baioccho looked down, but, finding no flowers, continued: "He will perform some mischief to us. I feel it in—in the air!" and the sharp eyes seemed to pierce into the depths of the gloomy room, and fasten on some spectral misfortune. "Now Gustave is a good boy. He will be a great man. His Pancorno shall be played in many universal cities, and the good fortune shall come to him. Thou shalt be the wife of Gustave, my small pet child!"

"But," said Tommatoo, with a half-smile, "I think he loves his Pancorno better than he does me."

"It is the love of time artist, *mignonne*. He loves it with his soul, but his heart—ah, that is thine!"

"Hark! there he is!" cried Tommatoo, hushing her father into silence as the liquid, delicious notes of the Pancorno stole through the house.

"Yes, let us listen. O heaven, how beautiful!" exclaimed the old musician, rapturously; then in a half-whisper added, "One little glass more of the cognac, *ma biche.*"

And there they sat in the dusk of the room, the old man warming his veins with the cognac, the young girl dreaming of her lover, and both listening to the music that bore them far away, out of the old house by the stone-yard, into a delicious land, where the sea lay like a mistress on the broad breast of time beaches, and the breath of the orange groves wandered like unheard music through the slopes and valleys.

"I think so of my home," murmured the old maestro, and I know that a tear fell through the twilight as he spoke,—"of my dear, dear home when I hear the music. Ah! why does not my brother—the brother of my youth—replace me in my dear Italy? He is more rich than a great many of Jews, and yet he will not spare his poor brother one scudo, Tommatoo. O, if I were the rich Pietro, and he the poor cook Giulio Baioccho, I would not count my zechins until he had what he wanted. If he would only promise to leave my little Tommatoo semething when he died, I would not care for myself. Ah, the bad brother! *Mignonne*, one other little *verre de cognac* for the poor old cook."

"Shall I go and tell Gustave that you have come home?" asked Tommatoo. "We must have supper soon, you know, father."

"Do, my beloved. Sweet as are the notes of the Pancorno, thy voice is sweeter still. Go and gladden the good Gustave with its music."

Tommatoo tripped to the door, perched for a moment on the threshold like a little bird hovering on the edge of its cage, then, after looking hack into the dusky room with a radiant smile that seemed to illuminate time twilight, she vanished, and in a few moments the notes of the Pancorno ceased, and there were light, pattering footsteps heard in its stead.

The old musician, when she was gone, buried his head in his hands, and seemed lost in meditation;—so lost that he neither heard nor saw anything around him; neither the footsteps that came softly toward him through the gloom, nor the tall cloaked form that stood beside him, until a hand laid on his shoulder startled him from his reverie, and he looked up.

"Who is that?" he asked, with a sort of astonished abruptness, as he in vain tried to distinguish the newcomer's features through the darkness.

"It is I,—Giuseppe," answered the figure in a very calm voice, and in Italian.

"What dost thou here again, outcast!" cried the old maestro, starting from his seat hurriedly and in great agitation. "I tell thee that thou shalt never wed my daughter. I know thee well. I know of thy prison life. I know of that bloody affair in Venice, when even the sacred stole of the priest could not shield his heart from thy accursed hand. Begone! or I will call for help, and have thee lodged in the jail."

"Come, come, Baioccho, no need of all this bad language. You wrong me, I swear you wrong me. I am not the man you take me for, nor do I wish to press my suit with Tommatoo. I come for other ends. I bear great tidings to thee. I bring thee great riches."

"Ah, boaster, you will not cajole me with your fine words!" cried the old cook, mockingly.

"If I do, may I forget my mother's grave!' exclaimed Giuseppe, earnestly. "Walk with me for ten minutes along the road, and if I prove not my words thou shalt never see my face again."

In spite of his detestation of his fellow-countryman Baioccho could not prevent his heart from leaping to his mouth at the mention of wealth. In a moment he saw himself emancipated from the accursed kitchen, his Tommatoo clad as became her beauty, Gustave's Pancorno brought before the public, and all three living happily in the dear Italy, making a music out of life itself.

"Well," said he, "I will go and walk with you. But why not tell it here?"

"Because houses are less safe to speak in than the universe," said Giuseppe. "You forget that I was once a conspirator, and am cautious."

"I remember it well enough," muttered Baioccho, as both left the house, "and the police of Venice remember it better."

They walked slowly toward the stone-yard. Neither spoke,—Baioccho disdaining to show any impatience, Giuseppe remaining silent for some motive of his own. So on through the stone-yard; amidst the white blocks that loomed like dim ghosts through time darkness; by the shingle huts that, with their jagged corners and irregular roofs, seemed in the darkness to crouch like strange animals, squatting upon the dreary earth; over rough masses of unhewn stone, through deep ruts left by cart-wheels in the soft clay, until they reached the river.

"Well," said Baioccho, at last, "how long am I to wait for this wondrous intelligence?"

"Your brother is dead," answered Giuseppe.

"What!" almost shrieked the old cook, "and—and—he left—"

"You everything."

"Holy Virgin be praised! " ejaculated the poor old fellow, clasping his hands and kneeling in the damp, cozy earth. "My dear Tommatoo will be rich."

"I have just arrived from Italy," continued Giuseppe. "I saw your brother. I found him dying. I spoke to him about you, and induced him to will to you the fortune which he was going to leave to the Church. Do you not think I deserve some reward for all this?"

"You shall have it. I swear it!" cried the old musician, fervently. "You shall name your own reward."

"Good. I want your daughter."

"Ah, traitor! that is what you demand!" cried the excitable old man in his shrill voice. "Never! never I never! No; you shall have money, but no Tommatoo, no Tommatoo."

"Tommatoo is your heir at law when you die," remarked Giuseppe.

"Certainly. I know why you want to wed with her, you fellow!"

"She will inherit very soon.

"Eh!" The old man did not exactly seem to comprehend, but peered up into Giuseppe's face.

"She will come into possession in ten minutes," added Giuseppe, and rapidly as lightning he passed a sort of handkerchief across Baioccho's mouth, stifling all utterance. The old man, though thin, possessed a great tenacity of muscle, and he struggled long and vigorously against his assailant. He twined about his legs, he crawled up his huge chest, he dug his bony fingers into his throat, all the while uttering through the gag upon his mouth terrible muffled cries of agony that were more dreadful from their being so suppressed. The youth and strength of Giuseppe told at last. The old man grew faint and almost ceased to struggle. In an instant Giuseppe seized him by the waist, lifted him clear off the ground, and swung him into the river. He watched him sink. "I think that Tommatoo is mine now," he muttered, as he turned and fled rapidly back through the stone-yard.

Baioccho sank, but speedily came to the surface. Instinctively he stretched out his hands, and suddenly one of them came in contact with some floating substance. He grasped it, and found it a drifting beam of timber that had become loosed from its moorings to the bank and was travelling

with the stream. With some difficulty he got astride of it and removed his gag. His first impulse was to shout for help, for he could not swim, and he was already some distance from the bank, and he put all his strength into a furious cry. The sound of his own voice echoing over that desolate shore seemed to tell him how little chance he had of obtaining assistance in that way, and, after shouting until his lungs were sore, he gave it up, and clung to the hope of being picked up by some boat.

The tide was running out rapidly, and a wind was blowing down stream, so that Baioccho could tell from the rippling of the waves around the beam that he was floating fast with the current. It was very dark. On either side of the bank he could see the faint lights in the houses, and now and then the black spectral hull of some sloop or schooner would suddenly appear to him as he floated past, and then vanish. All on the river seemed dead. There was not a sound of life. There did not seem a hope for the old musician.

Still he floated fast. Past the dreary black wharves, round which vessels made palisades of masts seen dimly against the dull sky. Past the shadowy groves of the Elysian Fields, that now, alas! seemed like the banks of Acheron. Past the cheerful Atlantic Gardens, where lights gleamed on the water, and people were making merry, while the poor old musician was floating to his death. Past the great hive of the city, that in the gloom seemed to lie upon time water exhausted with its day's labor. And so on out into the broad bay. Then for the first time Baioccho felt that he would be swept out to sea. He had not recoiled from his fate up to this time, for he was brave, and, 'after all, drowning was only death. But starvation—ah! that thought was too horrible, and for the first time a groan escaped from the poor musician. He then thought of Tommatoo, of Gustave, of their agony at his never returning,—their vague sorrow for his fate, which would never be known. Then he prayed to God that the murderer, Giuseppe, would be baffled in his designs on his dear child,—and then—

A dull, roaring sound along the water. A hissing of the air and of the sea. A red glare from what seemed like a fierce angry eye moving over the waves. A sparkle of foam, seen white through the gloom, and Baioccho saw the ferry-boat bearing right down on him. He shouted; he tried to stand upright on the timber log, but it slipped and turned; he took off his coat and flung it high in the air,—all to attract attention. But in vain. Closer, closer came the fiery eye. With what seemed to the old musician ever-increasing speed the sharp prow cut through the water. The funnel gave out short puffs of triumph, the wheels beat their paddles madly on the water, as if they knew what work they had to do, then a sudden, awful shriek from Baioccho. The projecting ledge of the boat shot over him. He touched it for an instant with his hand, and then went under.

III.

THE GRANDSON OF SNAKES.

"Father, Gustave will be down in a few minutes, and we will have supper!" cried Tommatoo, fluttering into the dark room like some pretty little nocturnal bird. "Father! why don't you answer? Why, where can he be? Ah, that cognac! He has perhaps taken too much while I was away,—poor father!" and Tommatoo hastily lit, with a lucifer match, a little fluid lamp, and held it high above her head while her eyes everywhere sought the expected recumbent form of the old musician.

"Why, he is not here!" she cried, in a tone half of astonishment, half of alarm. "O, where has he gone? Not out into this dark, dark night. God forbid! I will call Gustave";—and she ran

toward the door of the apartment. But ere she quite reached it she stopped and drew back, for a tall, dark figure filled the little doorway, and a pair of bright sinister eyes reflected back the lamplight.

"Ah, pretty one! you did not expect to see me again to-day, did you?" said the new-comer, in a half-mocking tone, and in Italian; "but you see how it is: I am fascinated, and haunt the spot where I will find you."

"Signor Giuseppe, my father does not wish you to come here; you know what I think, and yet you come. That I think is wrong";—and Tommatoo looked like a moralist of the Middle Ages, if one could imagine such a personage with beautiful blond hair, large dark-gray eyes, and the. neatest little waist in the world.

"Ah! none of you appreciate me," answered Giuseppe, advancing into the chamber. "Your father is a good man, but full of prejudices. I am progressive, and he does not understand progress,—that is all. But I am a good fellow, Signorina,—a capital fellow for all that."

He looked at this moment, standing close to the door and unclasping his heavy cloak, with his pale, unhealthy skin shining in the lamplight, and his eyes glistening with a furtive meaning, so truly the reverse of a good fellow that I am not surprised at the faint frown that perched for a moment on Tommatoo's forehead, and then suddenly slid off her smooth temples and was lost.

"I am going, Signor Giuseppe," she said, making a movement toward the door, between which and her the Italian was standing. "I wish you good evening."

"Stay a moment!" he cried, interposing. "Where is the worthy Baioccho?"

"He is not here. I do not know where he is. Let me pass, Signor. I am going to search for him."

"Perhaps he has taken too much of the delightful cognac of which he is so fond," said Giuseppe, sneeringly.

"My father is a good man, Signor!" cried Tommatoo, indignantly, "and his weaknesses should be respected. Let me pass, sir!"

"Not just yet, little one. I have something to say to you. You know that I love you. I told you so three months ago, before I went to Italy. I tell you so now that I have returned."

"I do not want to hear your confession, Signor. I wish to go and seek my father."

"Listen to me, Tommatoo,"—and he stretched his long arm across her till it fell like a great bar between her and the door. "Listen. If you become my wife, this is what I will do for you. I will take you to Italy, and you shall have a villa that the Prince Borghese might envy. We will have much money,—I shall be very rich indeed,—amid all Italy shall not contain finer horses, carriages, servants, than ours. I will be magnificent, Tommatoo, gorgeous, princely. Perhaps, too, I will purchase a patent of nobility,—it is to be done; there's the banker Torlonia. And how would my Tommatoo like to sit in state and be called Principezza? Ah! it would be glorious, would it not?"

So excited was he with the visions he had himself conjured up that Giuseppe stretched forth his arms, and, enclosing Tommatoo between them, drew her toward him, while a devilish glitter shone in his dark eyes.

"We are alone, sweet dove," he said, in a soft voice; "none in this silent house to watch us. Will you not vow to be my bride,—the bride of Giuseppe that loves you so, and who will make you a little countess? Ah! the little one is not so cruel after all."

But he mistook Tommatoo's terrified immobility for a timid though undemonstrative assent. To his utter astonishment, after a moment's silence, that young lady opened her mouth and shrieked, "Gustave! Hasten! Gustave, I am in danger!" with all the power of an excellent set of lungs.

“Whew! who the devil is Gustave?” muttered Giuseppe, astounded. “I thought that none lived in the house but those two. Who the devil is this Gustave?” And as he spoke he thrust his hand inside his coat as if feeling for some weapon.

There was an immediate response to Tommatoo’s call, in the shape of the descent of a pair of boots four stairs at a time. In a few seconds the boots had reached the door, and Gustave Beaumont, who stood in them, suddenly appeared on the scene of action.

“Diavolo!” ground Giuseppe between his teeth, as he beheld this new apparition. Then, taking a stride backward, he seemed like some wild amimal preparing for a spring.

“Qu’est ce que c’est? Qu’est ce que ce Monsieur la?” rapidly demanded Monsieur Gustave, looking rather ominously at Giuseppe, who, not understanding a word of French, preserved a grim silence.

“O Gustave! this man persecutes me. Protect me from him!” cried Tommatoo, bounding toward the young Frenchman and taking shelter as it were under his wing.

Soyez tranquille, enfant!” said Gustave, fondly enfolding her little form with his arm. “What the devil you do here, sare,” he continued, in English, seeing that Giuseppe had not replied to his previous interrogatories in French. “For why do you bring the fright to this young girl, sare? Who you are, sare? I demand to know. *Moi!* Gustave Beaumont!”

“I reply myself not, sir, to your interrogations, when they put themselves to me in a manner so insolent,” answered Giuseppe, haughtily, his eyes flashing through the gloom of the half-lit chamber.

“Ask him about our dear father, Gustave,” cried Tommatoo, earnestly, nestling up to the young musician’s side. “I left him here a few moments since, and he has disappeared. I feel sure that this bad man knows something of him. Ask him, dear Gustave.”

“One cannot know about all the world,” answered Giuseppe, before Gustave had time to interrogate him. “My business is not with the dd man. Look in the cellar where the strong waters are kept. He will be there.”

With a mocking laugh the Italian folded his cloak around him and strode toward the door. Gustave removed his arm from Tommatoo’s waist, round which it had stolen, and placed himself resolutely between Giuseppe and the door, and barred his passage.

“You shall not depart from here until we know about Signor Baioccho. You are suspected a great deal.”

“Let me pass away from here,” cried Giuseppe, advancing savagely, “or, by the head of the Virgin, you will meet with misfortune!” And placing his hand in his breast he half drew a small poniard.

Gustave saw the motion, and quick as thought sprang on the Italian, weaving his young, sinewy arms around his waist, and pressing his chin against his antagonist’s breast until he fairly howled with pain. Tommatoo, with one faint moan, sank on her knees on the ground, and one might see, by the clasped hands and the murmuring lips, dimly shown in the imperfect lamp-light, that the little one was offering up her prayers to heaven.

The pair now struggling were evenly matched as far as youth and size. But in point of endurance the Italian had decidedly the advantage. The sedentary life which the young Frenchman led had relaxed his naturally powerful muscular system; and consequently, although capable of a vast momentary effort, he was entirely unable to sustain a prolonged contest. For the space of two minutes nothing was heard in the room but the hard breathing of the struggling men the slipping of the feet on the uncarpeted floor; the sudden stamp, as one sought an advantage which the other as quickly frustrated. Gustave’s main object seemed to be to keep the Italian

from usnig his poniard, and this he sought to effect by pressing him so closely in his arms as to render it an impossibility to use his hands. For some time he was successful in this; but presently his want of tenacity of muscle showed itself in the relaxation of his grip and the quick recurrence of his breaths, almost amounting to panting. Inch by inch Giuseppe loosened his arm from the Frenchman's grasp, and inch by inch his hand moved toward his breast where the poniard lay, his eyes all the while flashing with a light that seemed to announce his approaching vengeance. In vain did Gustave strain every nerve to hold his own. The large drops of sweat gathered on his forehead; the blood flowed from between his lips, bitten in the agony of exertion; and his knees fairly shook with the power of a will that far exceeded the strength of the frame on which it was exercised. He could not last much longer. Giuseppe, in proportion as he beheld his adversary sinking, seemed to gain additional force. He at length extricated his arm. At length he grasped the poniard and plucked it from its sheath. Held aloft an instant over Gustave's head, it quivered in its descent; when, with a dull, heavy thud, some enormous weight fell on the back part of the Italian's head, the dagger was dashed from his hand, and he fell stunned and senseless on the floor.

"Sweet child, my life owes itself to you!" said Gustave, as he stood over the prostrate form of his antagonist, while he gazed with intense astonishment on Tommatoo, who, revealed to him by the Italian's fall, exhibited herself as the agent of that lucky event, assisted by an enormous bludgeon which she held in her hand.

"It was an inspiration of heaven, I think," said she simply. "I was praying to the Virgin, when I recollected that papa's big stick was in the corner; so I stole toward it, lifted it up, and struck that bad fellow with it,—only I did not think I could strike him so hard. I hope he is not very much hurt." And she looked pityingly down on the villain whom a moment before she would have gladly seen perish.

"*'Cré nom de Dieu!* He moves himself!" cried Gustave, beholding a slight indication of returning animation in the body of the Italian. "Quick, Tommatoo! ropes to bind him up! Bring me great, strong twines, for he is very dangerous, this fellow. Ha, rascal! you are there! You lie very low now, brigand! We will trouble ourselves with your care, sir. Yes, we will have the honor to conduct you to the bureau of the Chief of the Police, and there we will demand of you that you shall let us know all your villanies. Quick, child,—the twines! The fellow will get himself up very presently."

And so, chattering a sort of mingled monologue of reproach, triumph, and sarcasm, Gustave passed the rope which Tommatoo brought him around Giuseppe's body in so scientific and elaborate a manner that the wretched man was as incapable of motion as an Indian pappoose strapped to its board, and lay on the floor with nothing but the winking of his large, dark, villanous eyes to tell of his being animate.

Now came the great question, who was to go for the police. If Gustave went, Tommatoo would be left alone in that terrible house, with that terrible man, who might unloose that wonderful network of bonds in which Gustave had enlaced him. If Tommatoo went, she would have to thread her way alone through that dreary, dangerous locality; and she confessed she had not the courage to make the attempt. If they both went, who was to take care of the captive? So they, perforce, came to the conclusion that they must wait until morning; and accordingly Gustave, determined not to lose sight of his prize, lifted him on his shoulder as one would a bale of goods, and, carrying him up to his own room,—the room in which the Pancorno resided,—threw him into a corner. Then he and Tommatoo sat down gloomily to speculate and wonder over Baioccho's disappearance. It was in vain that they interrogated Giuseppe. That individual glared

at them from his corner like a coil of ropes with a pair of large eyes hidden somewhere in it, but would condescend to no reply. And so the hours passed, as they gloomily watched for the day.

Weary with speculation, and heart-sore enough with pondering over the fate of old Baioccho, Gustave, as the small hours wore on, could no longer resist his inclination to invoke the genius of the Pancorno to disperse the sad thoughts that hung like black clouds around him and Tommatoo; so he sat down to that mysteriously constructed instrument, and poured forth those wild improvisations that seemed to interpret some love-passage in the history of young Æolus. And when the sun broke faintly over the dreary stone-yard, and its first rays fell on the livid face of the Italian lying bound in the corner, it floated upward through the sky, buoyed by those harmonies that seemed to seek their native heaven.

IV.

THE PÆAN OF THE PANCORNO

The —th Ward Station-House. It was the early hour of the morning, before the over-night prisoners had departed to he judged by the immaculate justices presiding in the neighboring district police court, and the poor, sleepless-looking, blear-eyed people were emerging from the "lock-up" in the basement, still heavy with the poison, of bad liquor and spotted all over the face with the bites of mosquitoes that abound in all police stations. Along the walls of the general room hung rows of glazed fire-caps and locust-wood clubs, while, stretched in rank and file on the floor beneath, one saw a quantity of India-rubber overshoes, splashed with the mud gathered in the weary night-tramp on the heels of crime. What stories of city vice spoke in those dirty, flexible shoes! One saw the burglar at work with file and centre-bit, and accomplice keeping watch with pricked-up ears. The file grates and the centre-bit cuts, and the confederate strains his hearing as the grasshopper leaps from the wall; but none sees the dark shadows creeping round the corner, and the pavement yields no echo to the muffled feet; and the silent overshoes steal on until, with one quick leap and one heavy blow with the club, the burglar and confederate lie powerless on the ground.

The —th Ward Station-House was a dreary-looking establishment. The police captain in plain clothes, with a presentation watch in his pocket, attached to a presentation chain, and a presentation diamond ring on his finger, and a presentation pin in his shirt front, which having buttons did not seem to require it, sat on a high chair behind a high counter on which he measured out justice by the yard. Two or three sly-looking men, in plain clothes also, with a furtive glance in the eyes, and an air of always seeming to be looking round a corner that bespoke the detective, or "shadow," lounging on the stout chairs, picking their teeth and watching everybody, even the police captain, as if they were ready at any moment to detect anybody in something illegal. A pleasant-looking chain of handcuffs hung on the wall, some ten or twelve pair linked together,—cold, brutal-looking loops of iron that seemed to regret it was wrists and not necks that it was their duty to clasp. Sitting on the sill of the deep window, which opened into the street, were two little children crying lustily. They had been host or had run away, and in the face of the boy, a large-eyed French lad, some six years old, one could see the determination working that made him preserve, when questioned, a sullen silence as to his name and home. The other, a little girl,—thanks to the philoprogenitive organ of one of the police,—was munching a jam tart amidst all her grief, and slobbering the unwholesome pastry with her tears.

But chief of all the figures in that melancholy room were three persons who had, in the charge of a policeman, arrived at early dawn. Deep in one corner, the farthest from the door, sat Giuseppe, now carefully uncorded but still scowling out of his cloak, as if he might dart poisoned poniards out of his eyes; while before the high counter on which the prize police captain measured out his two-pennyworth of justice, stood Gustave and Tommatoo, who was weeping bitterly.

"You say that you left your father for but a few moments, and on your return he had disappeared?" inquired the prize captain, solemnly.

"Yes, sir!" sobbed Tommatoo. "My dear, dear father! What has become of him? O, that bad man!"—a wicked glance at Giuseppe in the corner.

"And when you returned you found the prisoner in the room where you had left your father?"

"Yes, sir; and I know that he knows where my father is,—I see it in his eyes. O, sir, make him tell,—make him tell. Pinch him until he tells,—beat him until he tells!

The prize captain smiled, condescendingly.

"Lieutenant!" he said, "telegraph a description of this Baioccho to the chief's office, with inquiries."

Immediately a thin policeman commenced working the telegraph that lay in one corner of the room, but the monotonous click of the instrument was but little consolation to the aching bosom of Tommatoo.

A half-hour passed—an hour—during which Tommatoo related over and over again the details of her little story to the prize captain. The subordinates of the office began to take an interest in her, and gathered round her as she sat nestling close to Gustave, who was completely amazed by the novelty of his situation, and each had a kind word for the little maiden.

An hour passed. Ah, how dreary! dreary to Giuseppe scowling in his cloak, carefully watched by two stalwart policemen; dreary to Gustave, who wondered how policemen could live without music; dreary to little Tommatoo, who, with swollen eyes, and heavy, sad heart, sorrowed for the old musician.

Presently there was a bustle. A carriage drove up to the door with policemen on the box, and Tommatoo's heart fluttered. The door of the vehicle opened, and out tottered Baioccho, feebly singing, crowing, dancing, with his old eyes twinkling with cognac, and a suit of gigantic clothes on, out of which he seemed to be endeavoring to scramble. In another instant Tommatoo was in his arms.

"Ah, *mon enfant, ma fille bien aimé!* the old father has brought himself back. *Per baccho!* brought himself back with the joy in his heart. The assassin failed in his work. Ha!"

This last exclamation was caused by a sudden rush for the door which Giuseppe had made the moment the old musician appeared. His attempt at escape was vain, however, for before he had made two steps he was collared, and a pair of handcuffs magically slipped over his wrists. He sat down again sullenly, but with a face white with terror.

"Ha! serpent that thou art!" cried Baioccho, placing himself before Giuseppe and shaking his withered old fist at him. "Thy time has arrived. Thou wilt hang for this. So you thought to drown the poor old maestro who never harmed you? But no! the God above is good, and when waves lifted themselves up to engulf me, and the boat of the passage came to knock me on the head, a heaven-descended rope put itself into my hand, and a blessed sailor pulled me up to the deck. O, no! I am not dead yet, and the sweet dove that you covet will find some other nest than thine!"

Then turning to the prize captain, the old man, still with one arm round his daughter, poured forth his voluble tale;—how Giuseppe had flung him into the river; how he was floating out to

sea when the ferry-boat had come down on him; and how, just in the nick of time, some one on board had discerned him in the water and flung him a rope;—all this mixed up in his extraordinary English, and interlarded with French and Italian imprecations on the head of Giuseppe, so that the prize captain was entirely bewildered, and all that he could do was to order the assassin into the lock-up, and bind over the old maestro to appear in evidence. This done, he and Gustave and Tommatoo, now chirping like a bird, went home together.

I would not like to count all the *petits verres de cognac* that the old musician took that night; but I know that Baioccho on that occasion danced the most singular dances, and sang the most eccentric songs, and told Tommatoo and Gustave at least fifty times the wondrous story of his adventures, and how his brother was, he believed, dead, and had left him all his wealth; and so the night closed on jubilation in the old house by the stone-yard.

Strange to say, Baioccho's brother was dead and had left him his heir. This, it was supposed, Giuseppe had learned in Italy, and had hastened home with the intention of profiting by an information of which he was the earliest recipient. Chance, however, frustrated his plans, and after a trial, in which Baioccho's eccentric evidence was a feature, the gates of the state prison closed over the assassin.

In time Baioccho realized his inheritance and bade farewell to the kitchen. The Pancorno was brought before the public, and every one remembers the sensation it created that winter at the Antique Concerts given at Niblo's. Women, while listening to its wonderful strains, could not help noticing how handsome was the young Frenchman who played on it; yet none saw the lovely face that every night gazed from the front row on the performer; but I know that Gustave Beaumont played all the better because he knew that Tommatoo, otherwise Madame Beaumont, was looking at him. Madame Beaumont! Tommatoo as a madame! Can you realize it? I can't.