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TOWANDA:

Saturday Morning, April 13, 1855.

Selected Poetry.

WE WATCHED HER BREATHING.

BY THOMAS HOOD.

"She sleeps;
Her smile hath passed away,
As dies a ripple on the sea."
We watched her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As on her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.
So silently we seemed to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her being out.
Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied;
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.
For when the moon came, dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed,—she had
Another man than I for.

SEVENTEEN.

Just seventeen! the sweetest age
That's entered on fair beauty's page;
Lips like the rosebud clove in train,
Eyes like twin stars beneath some cloud,
That comes their sparkling light to shroud;
Rich tresses of the auburn glow,
Free waving o'er a brow of snow,
And the bosom heaving, swelling;
Where trickling Cupid holds his dwelling;
Of woman's life, no year, I ween,
Like soft, sweet, pointing SEVENTEEN!

Selected Tale.

[From Cook's Journal.]

MATEO FALCONE.

The people of Corsica are amongst the most peculiar in Europe. They remind one of the middle ages—of its lawlessness, ferocity, revengefulness, feudal contentions, and savage warfare. Corsica is a department of France, but it has nothing French about it. Corsica is Italian—and more Italian than Italy itself. It is what Italy may have been hundreds of years ago, before it was civilized by arts, manners, and education. Napoleon was a Corsican, and never a Frenchman, though he made France and its glory the stepping-stone to his ambition. The Corsicans to this day are little better than a colony of banditti—it is parcelled out, as it were, among some two hundred robber chieftains, each confining himself to his particular district, from which he draws a revenue of irregular imposts, and permanent black mail. Deadly feuds are still common amongst these "noble families"; and the private wars which decimated Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, have still their counterpart in that island, and display themselves in a perpetual play of sanguinary outrages or nothing. Yet, as recently as 1848, we did hear of a terrible encounter which took place between the Filippi and Petrucci—the two great families of Venozola, a few miles from Bastia, in which two persons were killed and a large number wounded. The rule of retaliation being customary in Corsica, ten persons were afterwards taken off by private assassination in consequence of this quarrel, one of the persons killed being a priest, a partisan of the Filippi, who was shot while descending the steps of the altar.

The Corsican nobles live in houses or castles which are regularly fortified and garrisoned—and this is the case even when they live in towns—the rival families sometimes, as in the case of the two families above named, living on opposite sides of the same street, so that in times of hot feud, a mouse dare scarcely venture out of the opposite and rival house, without being a mark for sundry rifles from the other side of the way. When the villagers move out of doors, all of them belonging to one or the other faction, they take their rifles with them as a matter of course; and they shoot at their enemies, or are shot at by them, with equal sang froid. Deadly enmities are caused by slight matters. For instance, a young gentleman, the son of a M. Malaspina, sought the hand of the daughter of an old gentleman belonging to the opposite faction. The youth was refused, and forthwith shot the old gentleman; on which the relatives of the murdered man waged the usual Corsican vendetta of the murderer, and all his kin, the issue of which was that M. Malaspina, the father of the would-be bridegroom, was shortly after assassinated. This occurrence took place only a few years back.

Such being the character of the nobles, that of the common people may easily be imagined. Small banditti abound in all parts of Corsica, which are frequently taken into the pay of the chiefs on the occasion of a feudal outbreak. At other times they plunder for themselves, and carry on their own feuds. Every man of them walks armed in broad daylight, and is ready to send a bullet through a rival on a moment's notice. Yet, would you believe it, there is an almost religious sense of "honor" prevailing amongst these banditti,—when hunted by the *gendarmes*, they will peril their lives in the defence of their fellows,—and on such occasions, to conceal, and if need be, defend a robber by force of arms, is regarded almost in the light of a sacred duty. Keeping in mind these circumstances, the reader will be able to understand the dark tragedy which we are now about to relate. It is no mere invention, but an actual occurrence, the leading facts of which were published in the French papers a few years since; and we may add, is thoroughly characteristic of the savage and ferocious features of Corsican life.

A little to the north-west of Porto Vecchio, the land rises rapidly from the seashore towards the interior; and after some three hours' walk-

ing through tortuous roads, sometimes cut across by ravines, and in many places obstructed by rocks, the traveller at length reaches an extensive copse, known in the island as the *Marquis of Porto Vecchio*. The copse is so dense in many places, so twined and interlaced together by strong creepers, that even the sheep fail to penetrate them.

When a Corsican kills another Corsican in a feud or quarrel, he takes to the copse; and if he be provided with gun, powder, and ball, he will be able to live there for sometime in perfect security. The shepherds all provide the fugitive with bread, cheese, and chestnuts, and he has nothing to fear from the relatives of the deceased, except when he next descends to the towns to lay in a fresh store of ammunition.

Mateo Falcone lived on the skirts of this copse, in the year 18—. He was a man moderately well to do in the world—a sort of farmer, though he did not work himself; he lived on the produce of his flocks, which his shepherds, a kind of nomadic race, pastured among the neighboring hills. Mateo was about fifty years of age at the date of our narrative. Imagine a little thick-set man, with frizzled hair, black as jet, an aquiline nose, compressed lips, and large black lustrous eyes. His dexterity with his gun was cited as extraordinary, even in a country where most of the natives are expert marksmen. At a hundred and twenty paces he could send a bullet through the shoulder or head of a deer with precision and certainty. His fire was as deadly at night as by day, and some of his reported feats of dexterity in this way would appear incredible to those who have not travelled in Corsica.

Mateo Falcone was a warm friend, but a deadly enemy. Kindly and charitable amongst his neighbors, he lived at peace with them, and was much respected in the Poto Vecchio district, notwithstanding several feats performed with his deadly rifle, which would not have added to his respectability among a less savage community. For instance, it was currently related of him, that at Corte, from which place he had married his wife, he had summarily disembarrassed himself of a rival, almost as good a shot as himself, and who was formidable alike, in love as in war; at least, Mateo got all the credit of a certain rifle bullet which surprised this rival of his, as he was one day sharing himself before a little mirror hung in his window-frame. But the affair having blown over, Mateo married the object of his rivalry; and his wife, Guiseppe, brought him, first, three daughters, (at which Mateo was much annoyed,) and lastly, a son, whom he named Fortunato. He was the hope of the family, and the inheritor of the family name. The daughters were all well married; and Mateo, at need, could reckon upon the pominals and carbines of his sons-in-law. The son, Fortunato, was, at the date of our story, only ten years old, and he already gave indications of a good disposition and character.

One day, in autumn, Mateo set out early, with his wife, to visit one of his flocks, which was grazing in a distant part of the copse. Little Fortunato wished to accompany him, but the place was too far off, so the boy was left to take care of the house. Mateo had been gone some hours, and the little boy was lying basking in the sun, gazing at the blue mountains in the distance, and congratulating himself that, on the coming Sunday, he should go to the neighboring town to dine with his uncle, the corporal, when he was suddenly roused by the report of a gun. He rose and looked across the plain, towards the place from whence the noise proceeded. Other shots followed, fired at irregular intervals, and always coming nearer and nearer. At last, along the path which led from the plain, towards the house of Mateo, there appeared a man wearing a pointed bonnet, such as the Corsican mountaineers usually wear; he was a bearded, middle-looking fellow, covered with rags, and he dragged himself along with difficulty, leaning heavily on his carbine. He had just received a musket bullet in his thigh.

This man was a bandit—a proscribed Corsican—who, having set out by night, to buy gunpowder in the neighboring town, had fallen into an ambuscade of gendarmes. After making a vigorous defence, he began to retreat, firing upon his pursuers, who followed him from rock to rock, and gained rapidly upon him; but his wound seriously impeded his flight, and despairing of reaching the copse, in his wounded state, he forthwith made for the dwelling of Mateo.

"You are the son of Mateo Falcone?" said he to Fortunato, as he drew near.
"Yes."
"Then I am Gianetto Sanpiero. I am pursued by yellow-necks. Hide me, for I can proceed no further."
"And what will my father say, if I conceal you without his permission?"
"He will say that you have done well."
"How do I know that?"
"Come," said the man, eagerly, "hide me quickly; they will be here directly."
"Wait till my father comes."
"Wait! Curses! Hide me at once, or I kill you."
Fortunato replied with the greatest nonchalance—"Your gun is discharged, and you have no more charges in your cartouche-box."
"But I have my dagger."
"And can you run as quick as I?" asked the boy, springing lightly beyond the bandit's reach.

"Ha! you are not, then, the son of Mateo Falcone. He would never let me be arrested at his door."
The boy appeared moved. "What will you give me," said he, approaching the man, "if I conceal you?"
The bandit felt within a leather pouch that he wore round his waist, and drew forth a five-franc piece, which he had doubtless intended to spend on ammunition. Fortunato smiled at sight of the money. He took it, and said, "I will hide you, then; fear nothing."
Very near to the house was a hayrick, into a hole in the bottom of which Fortunato directed the bandit to creep. Then hastily covering up the opening, the boy brought the cat and its litter of kittens, and placed them

over the hiding place. Seeing traces of blood along the path, he ran and sprinkled dust over them, and then lay down again in the sun, as if asleep.

In a few minutes, six voltigeurs, commanded by an adjutant, appeared before the door of Mateo. This adjutant happened to be a distant relative of Falcone. He was called Tiodoro Gamba; he was an active fellow, some what of a terror to the bandits, several of whom he had tracked and captured.

"Good-day to you, my young cousin," said he, accosting Fortunato. "Dear me, what a big boy you have grown! Have you seen a man pass this way, just now?"
"Yes, I am big; but I have not grown so tall as you yet, cousin," said the boy, assuming a simple air.

"Oh! you will be very soon; but tell me—have you seen a man pass by?"
"Yes, a man with a pointed black cap, and a red and yellow waistcoat?"
"Have I seen a man pass by?"
"A man with a pointed black cap, and a red and yellow waistcoat?"
"Yes! answer me quick, and don't repeat my questions."

Thus speaking, he brought the watch nearer to the boy's eyes, till it almost touched his pale cheek. One might see the struggle going on in his bosom, between covetousness and the rights of hospitality—regarded as almost sacred by Corsicans. His breast heaved, and he seemed ready to choke. The watch was still before his eyes; it turned round and swung before him, almost touching the point of his nose. At last, little by little, the boy's right hand raised itself towards the watch; the tips of his fingers touched it; and then it rested within his hand, without the adjutant quitting the end of the chain. The dial was azure; the case had been newly polished; shining in the sun, it appeared all on fire.

The temptation was too strong, and it mastered the boy.
Fortunato raising his left hand, pointed with his thumb over his shoulder at the hayrick against which he was leaning. The adjutant instantly comprehended the meaning of the sign. He let go the chain, and Fortunato found himself the possessor of a watch! He sprang up with the agility of a young deer, and bounded off some ten paces from the hayrick, which the voltigeurs were now busily searching.

They soon saw the hay stirring; and then a man, all bloody, with a dagger in his hand, emerged from the bottom of the rick; but as he attempted to gain his feet, his stiffened wound prevented from holding himself upright, and he fell. The adjutant threw himself upon the man and snatched his dagger from him, and in a few seconds, despite a still desperate resistance, the bandit was tightly bound with cords—a king's prisoner.

Gianetto, lying on the ground, bound like a fagot, now turned his head towards Fortunato, who by this time had drawn nigh. "Ah, traitor, son of—!" His reproach was delivered in a tone of infinite contempt, rather than of anger. The boy threw at him the piece of silver which he had received from the robber as the price of his concealment, as if conscious that he did not now deserve to retain it; but the bandit took no notice of the act. He coolly said to the adjutant, "My dear Gamba, I cannot walk; you will be obliged to carry me to the town."

"Why," said Gamba, "only a few minutes ago, you ran like a roebuck; but be at your ease; I am well pleased to have taken you, and I would be willing myself to carry you a league upon my back. Nevertheless, comrade, we will make a litter of branches for you, and spread your cloak over it; we shall be able to get horses at the farm of Crespoli."

"Good!" said the prisoner; "and put a little straw upon the litter, that I may be somewhat comfortable."
While the voltigeurs were thus busy, some constructing the litter, others in dressing Gianetto's wound, Mateo Falcone and his wife suddenly appeared at the turn of the path which led into the copse. The wife was heavily laden with a great sack of chestnuts, while her husband strutted on before, carrying only his gun in his hand, with another slung in his shoulder-belt; for it is thought unseemly amongst men of his class in Corsica to carry any other burden than fire-arms.

At sight of the soldiers near his house, Mateo's first thought was that they had come to arrest him. But wherefore? Had he done anything of late to embroil him with the authorities? No; he could call to mind nothing. He enjoyed a good character—as characters go in Corsica. He had a very fair reputation; but there he was a Corsican and mountaineer; and there are perhaps few of such who, if they ransack their memory, will not find recorded there some peccadillo or other—such as a musket shot, a dagger stroke, and such small matters. But then Mateo, at this present time, had his conscience even clearer than most people in this respect; for it was now some ten years since he had drawn trigger on a man.—Being always wary, however, he put himself in a position of defence, and determined to advance cautiously.

"Wife," said he to Guiseppe, "set down the sack, and hold yourself in readiness." She did so in an instant. He unsling his second gun, and gave it to her to hold. Carrying the other in his hand, he advanced slowly towards the house, ready at the slightest hostile demonstration to throw himself behind the biggest trunk of a tree he could find, from the cover of which he might securely deliver his fire. His wife quietly followed his steps. The business of a good help mate in Corsica, we may remark, is, in case of a fight, to charge the arms of her husband.

On the other hand, the adjutant was very much concerned at seeing Mateo advance in this manner, with cautious steps, his gun in his hand, and his finger on the trigger. If, by chance, Gianetto, his prisoner, should prove a relative, no matter how distant—of Mateo or his wife, then said the adjutant to himself, the contents of those two guns will certainly be lodged in two of us, as sure as a letter by the post, and much quicker, even though I am his relative.

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Fortunato, glancing at the watch with the corner of his eye, looked like a cat to whom a whole chicken is offered. He fancied that his cousin was only mocking him, and he durst not clutch the watch. From time to time he turned his eyes away from it, as if to avoid the temptation; and the expression of his face seemed to say, "How very cruel this pleasure is!"

But the adjutant seemed to be quite in earnest, and still he held out the watch. At length Fortunato cried, "Why do you mock me so?"
"By heavens! I do not mock you! only tell me where Gianetto is, and this watch is yours."

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"Good!" said the prisoner; "and put a little straw upon the litter, that I may be somewhat comfortable."
While the voltigeurs were thus busy, some constructing the litter, others in dressing Gianetto's wound, Mateo Falcone and his wife suddenly appeared at the turn of the path which led into the copse. The wife was heavily laden with a great sack of chestnuts, while her husband strutted on before, carrying only his gun in his hand, with another slung in his shoulder-belt; for it is thought unseemly amongst men of his class in Corsica to carry any other burden than fire-arms.

At sight of the soldiers near his house, Mateo's first thought was that they had come to arrest him. But wherefore? Had he done anything of late to embroil him with the authorities? No; he could call to mind nothing. He enjoyed a good character—as characters go in Corsica. He had a very fair reputation; but there he was a Corsican and mountaineer; and there are perhaps few of such who, if they ransack their memory, will not find recorded there some peccadillo or other—such as a musket shot, a dagger stroke, and such small matters. But then Mateo, at this present time, had his conscience even clearer than most people in this respect; for it was now some ten years since he had drawn trigger on a man.—Being always wary, however, he put himself in a position of defence, and determined to advance cautiously.

"Wife," said he to Guiseppe, "set down the sack, and hold yourself in readiness." She did so in an instant. He unsling his second gun, and gave it to her to hold. Carrying the other in his hand, he advanced slowly towards the house, ready at the slightest hostile demonstration to throw himself behind the biggest trunk of a tree he could find, from the cover of which he might securely deliver his fire. His wife quietly followed his steps. The business of a good help mate in Corsica, we may remark, is, in case of a fight, to charge the arms of her husband.

On the other hand, the adjutant was very much concerned at seeing Mateo advance in this manner, with cautious steps, his gun in his hand, and his finger on the trigger. If, by chance, Gianetto, his prisoner, should prove a relative, no matter how distant—of Mateo or his wife, then said the adjutant to himself, the contents of those two guns will certainly be lodged in two of us, as sure as a letter by the post, and much quicker, even though I am his relative.

"Well, will you have this watch or not, my little cousin."
Fortunato, glancing at the watch with the corner of his eye, looked like a cat to whom a whole chicken is offered. He fancied that his cousin was only mocking him, and he durst not clutch the watch. From time to time he turned his eyes away from it, as if to avoid the temptation; and the expression of his face seemed to say, "How very cruel this pleasure is!"

But the adjutant seemed to be quite in earnest, and still he held out the watch. At length Fortunato cried, "Why do you mock me so?"
"By heavens! I do not mock you! only tell me where Gianetto is, and this watch is yours."

Fortunato still smiled incredulously, and fixing his black eyes upon those of the adjutant, he fancied he saw there an expression of that good faith which his words pretended.

"May I lose my epaulette," cried the adjutant, "if I do not at once give you the watch on the condition I have named. Comrades, you are witnesses; and I cannot go back from my word."

Thus speaking, he brought the watch nearer to the boy's eyes, till it almost touched his pale cheek. One might see the struggle going on in his bosom, between covetousness and the rights of hospitality—regarded as almost sacred by Corsicans. His breast heaved, and he seemed ready to choke. The watch was still before his eyes; it turned round and swung before him, almost touching the point of his nose. At last, little by little, the boy's right hand raised itself towards the watch; the tips of his fingers touched it; and then it rested within his hand, without the adjutant quitting the end of the chain. The dial was azure; the case had been newly polished; shining in the sun, it appeared all on fire.

The temptation was too strong, and it mastered the boy.
Fortunato raising his left hand, pointed with his thumb over his shoulder at the hayrick against which he was leaning. The adjutant instantly comprehended the meaning of the sign. He let go the chain, and Fortunato found himself the possessor of a watch! He sprang up with the agility of a young deer, and bounded off some ten paces from the hayrick, which the voltigeurs were now busily searching.

They soon saw the hay stirring; and then a man, all bloody, with a dagger in his hand, emerged from the bottom of the rick; but as he attempted to gain his feet, his stiffened wound prevented from holding himself upright, and he fell. The adjutant threw himself upon the man and snatched his dagger from him, and in a few seconds, despite a still desperate resistance, the bandit was tightly bound with cords—a king's prisoner.

Gianetto, lying on the ground, bound like a fagot, now turned his head towards Fortunato, who by this time had drawn nigh. "Ah, traitor, son of—!" His reproach was delivered in a tone of infinite contempt, rather than of anger. The boy threw at him the piece of silver which he had received from the robber as the price of his concealment, as if conscious that he did not now deserve to retain it; but the bandit took no notice of the act. He coolly said to the adjutant, "My dear Gamba, I cannot walk; you will be obliged to carry me to the town."

"Why," said Gamba, "only a few minutes ago, you ran like a roebuck; but be at your ease; I am well pleased to have taken you, and I would be willing myself to carry you a league upon my back. Nevertheless, comrade, we will make a litter of branches for you, and spread your cloak over it; we shall be able to get horses at the farm of Crespoli."

"My father, my father, do not kill me!"
"Say thy prayers!" repeated Mateo, in a terrible voice. The boy, sobbing and weeping, repeated the *Pater* and the *Credo*. His father, in a loud voice, responded *Amen*, at the end of each prayer.

"Are these all the prayers that you know?"
"My father, I still know the *Ave Maria* and the *Litany*, which my aunt taught me."
"It is very long—but never mind, go on."
The boy said the *Litany* in a faint voice.

"Have you done?"
"Oh, my father, mercy! Pardon me! I will never do the like again! I will pray my cousin, the corporal, to get Gianetto forgiven."
He went on speaking. Mateo raised his gun and letted it at the youth, saying, "May God pardon thee!" The boy made a desperate effort to rise and run to his father's knees. But there was no time. Mateo fired, and Fortunato fell dead.

Without casting one glance at the corpse, Mateo took the road towards his home for a scale wickerwork to dig a grave for his boy.—He had not gone