

[General Information]

1

Vermont

Mary Tomasi

63 Barre Street

Montpelier, Vt. The Granite Worker

Well, anyway, the good friend Raffaello he have one fine funeral yesterday before he is put away from us. All the men from the stone shed are there, and lots from the other shed', beside some one or two from almost every Italian family in Barre. The line of car it win' down two street to the church, one of the bes best funeral I ever see. Sure I know. I count the car. Amalia, she say, "Don't you count them, Giaco. It is bad luck, maybe it mean you will die." I laugh [?] and say, "Ho, that is nothing new. Some day we all die." That is true, no? But jus' just the same it make me think back when I was kid in the ol' old country. There is my little girl cousin Costanzia, she is ten year ol' old, an' and one day she have this bad pain in her side. All that day she is complain, an' and the nex' next day she is vomit so much and so weak an' hot all over that she stay in bed. My aunt an' and uncle, they are ready to hitch up the donkey and go down to the Villa to bring up the doctor. But Costanzia she is scare [?] of doctor, an' and she cry an' and say it is nothing, her side hurt because yesterday morning the goat he bump her when she is go to pick flowers on the cliff. Well, they believe her, an' they think she is so sick because she is scare'. So they put the donkey in the barn, an' they heat up a flat stone an' wrap it in a cloth an' put it on the side that hurt. They stay up all that night to heat the stone when it get col', an' in the 2 morning Costanzia is sick to die. This time she does not have the streng' to tell them no when they go to get the doctor. The doctor come, but he come too late, an' the little Costanzia is dead ten minute after he get there. He does not say what the sickness is that

Library of Congress

kill her, but he is very mad when they say that the goat is bump her. He say that is a lie, it is not a bump from a goat, it is a sickness inside her, an' he make them feel very bad when he tell them that maybe the hot stone do a lot of harm to her. Well, I do not know for sure what the sickness is, but she act a lot like my boy last year when he have the appendicite' an' have to have the operation. His is what they call the pus case an' when I say to the doctor, "Why not put the hot bottle on his side to stop the pain," he say, "No, it is the worse you can do. It will help make the the bag of pus break. It will poison him." So I think maybe it is that what kill the little Costanzia[. Oh, yes, I was go' to tell why I think of Costanzia when I count the car at the funeral of Raffaele. You see, over there we are up in the hills an' one mile from the town which is call' the Villa. They have the undertake [?] there, but when I was a boy, they do not embalm in the hills like they do in the other towns in Italy or like they do here. When Costanzia die in the morning, they sen' for him quick. He wash her clean, an' close down her eyes, comb her hair, dress her in the new dress an' put her in the plain wooden box. It is a nice box though, carve' an' work' pretty an' then varnish'. The nex' morning already they have the funeral because it is summer an' very hot. Well, there are no car an' no carriage at 3 that funeral. Four stronger an' older cousin of Costanzia (one is my brother) carry her in the box to the Villa. We all walk behin' her two by two. Her family, then the aunts, uncles an' cousin, an then mos' all the hillside who are [?] her frens. We make a long line. At the bridge the cousin put the box down on a fresh green spot under a tree, an' one of them run to the Villa to bring the priest. He come dress' in his long black dress. The cousin they pick up Costanzia again, an' with the priest behin' them they cross the bridge to the church. But it is while we are stan' there under the tree an' wait for the priest that my cousin Rodrigo, a brother of Costanzia, he take it in his head to count all who are in the funeral line. Another brother say to him that it is bad to do that, that it is like to tempt the Dio for another funeral. Rodrigo say, "No, there is a big crowd here. I want to count them, then tomorrow I will tell Mama the number an' it will make her feel some glad in her heart that there is so many who like the little Costanzia an' have come to say goodbye to her" Well, it is a strange thing, but in two month Rodrigo he is dead, too. He is struck by the lightn' when he is walk to school to the Villa. Right away

Library of Congress

quick the story is run aroun' the village that Rodrigo is dead hisself because he count the people at the funeral of his sister. [...?] Me? Ho, I do not believe that is why he have to die, but jus' the same yesterday when I count the car at the funeral of my fren' Rafaelo, I think of Costanzia an' Rodrigo. I cannot help it. So when I count to fifty an' I see with a quick look from the corner of my eye there is only a few more car than fifty, I do not finish the count. I 4 say to myself; jus' not to tempt the Dio an' jus' to please the wife, I will not finish the count. [...?] This Raffaello who is die is a good fren' of mine. We grow up almos' like brother in the ol' country, an' we go to school together. I would not be much surprise if he is at that funeral of little Costanzia many year ago. I come over here a few year before him, an' it is me who write to him an' tell him to come on over an' work here in the shed to make money. The night before las' night when I stay at his house all night to watch, I cannot help but think of it, an' wonder that maybe if I do not write to him he is still perhaps alive in the ol' country. But no, I don not really believe that. When it is his time, it is his time. [...?] The house that night is full of men who have come like me to watch Raffaello. We take turn. About six of us we stay in the room with him for an hour, an' the others they go in the din' room or kitchen to eat an' drink a little so they will stay awake. An' they tell stories of how good this Raffaello he always was. [...?] Sure, we do like that in the ol' country, too. Over there they are a great many relations in the same village an' in the villages nearby, an' when they hear that one is dead they all come to the house right away to comfort an' watch. Sometime they bring their own food an' drink. Anyway the meal in the house are not have at the regular time. They jus' keep food an' drink on the table all the time for the different ones who keep come in. Mos'ly the drink is wine. But the women, lots of them, they 5 like the coffee we use' to make so much from the barley we grow. My mother, she use' to roast the barley good till it was nice an' brown, then she pound it with a stone in a big granite bowl. Just before I come away she buy a real hand grinder; that make it much easier. The coffee is cook in boiling water, an' strain', an' we drink it like the coffee here with sugar an' cream. I remember there was a rich family that come to the Villa to live every summer. The doctor there he sen' them up all the time to our house to get the barley coffee an' drink it. [...?] Me, sometime now I have the pain in my stomach -the burn,

Library of Congress

an' my doctor here he tell me to drink the barley water. But he does not tell me to roast the barley like we do in the ol' country. [...?] When I drink it Amalia, she say to me. "See, the stomachs they have to be treat' the same all over. What is good for those over there is good for those here, too."