

APRIL

(From the German of Geibel.)

Thou balmy April evening,
I love thy beauty rare;
The clouds obscure the heavens,
A star shines here and there.

The breath of love is filling
The zephyrs as they blow;
The fragrance of the violet
Is wafted from below.

O for a strain of music
To suit the pensive hour—
Some cadence low and tender
To tell its soothing power!

GOWAN LEE.

TOMMATOO.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

A FAMILY GROUP.

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 new-comer'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-countrymen 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 the 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, "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, oozy 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! 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 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 the water exhausted with its day's labour. 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 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 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 over 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 black 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 blonde 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,—and 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 Tortonia. And how would my Tommatoo like to sit in state and be called Princessa? 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 animal preparing for a spring.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est? Qu'est-ce que ce Monsieur là?" 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 old 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 lamplight, 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 had 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 foot on the uncarpeted floor; the sudden stamp, as one sought an advantage which the other quickly frustrated. Gustave's main object seemed to be to keep the Italian from using his poniard, and this he sought to effect by pressing him so closely in his arms as to render it impossible 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.

"*C'est 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 honour 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 papoose strapped to its board, and lay on the floor with nothing but the winking of his large dark, villainous 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