

LOVE'S REVENGE.*

A PASSAGE FROM A FRIEND'S LETTER.

BY E. L. C.

Alas! the love of women! It is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing;
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And, if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring
To them, but mockeries of the past alone.

Byron.

"THAT truth is often stranger than fiction no one can deny, I think—at least in the course of my own experience it has often been my lot to find the events of the wildest tale, surpassed by the almost incredible incidents of actual life," said Everard Peyton, as he laid from his hand the sheets of a voluminous letter, which for the last half hour he had been intently perusing.

"And pray, may I ask, what marvels are unfolded in that closely written missive, which furnish another proof of the real romance of these our prosaic lives?" asked his friend Arundel, who sat on the opposite side of the library table looking over a pile of newspapers and letters that had arrived by the last foreign mail.

"A strange adventure indeed," replied Everard, "which I will read to you. It relates to the young Count D'Estura of whom you have often heard me speak. In fact I was most intimate with him while in Rome; we saw each other daily, for his hotel was the resort of all strangers resident in the city, and their society would have attracted me thither, even had his mother and sister not been two of the most charming women in the world—the former quite a Corinne—the latter as beautiful and gifted as Sappho."

"Yet you came away heart-whole," said his friend smiling.

"Heart-less,—you might rather say," returned Peyton—"but you shall shrieve me some other time—at present this affair of D'Estura's absorbs me."

"Was he not betrothed to some fair and lovely lady of the land?"

"Yes, to the lady Claudia Di Guercini—the wealthiest heiress in Rome—and lovely enough too, one would have thought, to fix the roving inclinations of any reasonable man. But listen

and you shall hear Moreton's letter, which cannot be void of interest even to one unacquainted with the parties concerned."

And resuming the sheets which lay before him, he commenced reading aloud as follows:—

"An affair has recently occurred here, which has caused the greatest excitement in the imperial city, especially among the higher class of the community, to which privileged order, its principal actor, the Count D'Estura, belonged. You were on intimate terms with him during your stay here, I believe, and knew, of course, that he was regarded as one of Fortune's prime favorites, on account of his betrothal to so fair, wealthy, and virtuous a lady as the daughter of the old Marquis Di Guercini—the lady Claudia, whom doubtless you have seen.

"The circumstances which have, as it were, grown out of this connexion, form now the one topic of discourse, and create an interest which renders even the pageants and amusements of the carnival insipid in comparison; while the endless variety of shapes in which the tale is repeated is equal only to the number of listeners it obtains—I will give you but one of them, which is, I believe, the authentic one—and which, as I have read it in the manuscript of a friend familiar with its minutest details, has been thrown into the form of a miniature romance—I copy it for you, *verbatim*.

"Conrad D'Estura had but just attained his fourteenth year, when he was betrothed to Claudia Di Guercini, only two years his junior. Being an orphan and an heiress, she was placed in a convent to be educated, but at the age of eighteen she was to leave it, in order to receive the hand of her youthful bridegroom. He, in the meantime, was to complete his studies at Padua, and then to spend a year or two in travel before the period fixed for his marriage should arrive. The rank of the count was equal to that of his

* The following sketch is founded upon an actual occurrence of facts, which the imagination of the writer has very slightly embellished.