

VENDETTA;

The Story of One Forgotten.

CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

"The Signor Ferrari then hung away the unfortunate Giacomo with such force that he fell in a heap on the pavement and broke his lantern to pieces. The old man set up a most piteous groan, but the Signor cared nothing for that. 'He was mad, I think. Get to bed!' he cried, 'and sleep—sleep till you die!' Tell your mistress when you see her that I came to kill her! My curse upon this house and all who dwell in it! And with that he ran so quickly through the garden into the high road that I could not follow him. There after halting unsteadily for a few paces, he suddenly fell down, senseless."

"Eccellenza, I could not leave him there without aid. I drew my cloak well up to my eyes and pulled me back down over my mouth and nose. I could not recognize me. Then I took water from a fountain close by and dashed it on his face. He soon came to himself, and, taking me for a stranger, thanked me for my assistance, saying that he had had a sudden knock. He then drank greedily from the fountain and went on his way."

"You Eccellenza, at a little distance. He next visited a common tavern in one of the back streets of the city and came out with two men. They were well dressed—they had the air of gentlemen spoiled by bad fortune. The Signor talked with them for some time, and seemed much excited. I could not hear what he said, but at the end, when these two strangers consented to appear as seconds for Signor Ferrari, and they at once left him, to come straight to this hotel. And they are arrived, for I saw them through a half-opened door as I came in, talking to the Marquis D'Avencourt."

"I was silent. There was something in the simple narration that touched me, though I remain as before, cold, stern, and relentless as ever. After a few moments I said, 'You have done well, Eccellenza. You are aware how grossly this young man has insulted me—and that his injurious treatment can only be wiped out in one way. That way is already arranged. You can set out those pistols you cleaned.'"

"The Marquis makes no objection, I shall not. But you must promise not to interrupt any of the proceedings by so much as an exclamation." I promised readily, and when I joined the Marquis he followed, carrying my case of pistols. "He can be trusted, I suppose," asked D'Avencourt, glancing keenly at him while shaking hands cordially with me. "Yes," he replied, "I replied laughingly. 'He will break his word if he is not allowed to bind up my wounds!'"

"I saw you are in good spirits, Conte," remarked Captain Freccia as we took our seats in the carriage. "It is always the way, I fear, is not quite so comfortable. And he professed me a cigar, which I accepted. Just as we were about to start the fat landlord of the hotel rushed towards us, and laying hold of the carriage door—"Eccellenza," he observed in a confidential whisper, "of course this is only a matter of coffee and glorias? They will be ready for you all on your return. I know—I understand." And he smiled and poked a great many times, and laid his hand on the side of his nose. We laughed heartily, assuring him that his perspicuity was wonderful, and he stood on the broad steps in high good humor, watching us as our vehicle tumbled heavily away."

"Evidently," I remarked, "he does not consider a duel as a serious affair." "No," he replied, "Freccia. He has known too many sham fights to be able to understand a real one. D'Avencourt knows something about that too, though he always kills his man. But very often it is sufficient to scratch one another with the sword-point so as to draw a quarter of a drop of blood, and honor is satisfied. Then the coffee and glorias are brought, as suggested by our friend the landlord."