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A LEGEND OF THE APENNINES.

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Continued from our last Number.

“AND so I escaped suspicion; but, fearing that something might hereafter awaken it, I left Naples, and, repairing to Vienna, I entered into the service of the Emperor, who was then waging war with half the kingdoms of Christendom. It boots not to tell thee line by line, the history of the next few years. I had won renown and wealth—but the one was squandered in wild excesses; the other tarnished by acts which it would revolt thee to hear recounted. My career was a swift and fiery one; it might, too, have been glorious, but for the domination of those fearful passions which nature had implanted in my soul, and which had grown into giant strength since I quitted the household of the Duke du Conti. There was no kind hand stretched forth to check them; and the ever maddening thought that I, guiltless of the stain upon my birth, should yet, for a crime of which I was the helpless victim, forfeit a noble name, and station, and estates—and more than all, be forced to endure the coldness and the scorn of the only being on earth with whom I could claim kindred—this—this wrought within me to poison every virtuous purpose and resolve—quicken my jealous pride, rendering more fervid the angry and revengeful passions of my nature, and dragging me ever down from heights I had attained, to grovel at their base, and drown a sense of shame and wrong in the delirium of words, and deeds, and outbursts of passion, that woke a hell around and within me.

“Yet let him thank himself for what I am. I will tell him one day what I owe him—one day, when the time comes to cancel the deep and heavy debt that is his due. But let me hasten with my tale, for that which is to follow most concerns thyself. As I have said, my career was a varied one—alternating with glory and infamy—crime—and some few touches of a nature not yet wholly subdued to baseness. How it might have terminated, I know not, but darkly, I fear, when a circumstance occurred, which at once changed the tenor, not the color of my life. Heated by wine, I one day uttered words of insult touching the honour of a noble lady, whose brother, unknown to myself, sat at the same board with me. Fired with indignation, his first

impulse was to strike me to the earth, but I arose; only in time to lay him prostrate at my feet.

“Those around interfered to prevent the strife; but in the violence of his passion, he taunted me with my base birth, and loaded me with opprobrious epithets. I would have apologized for my offence, and forgiven his assault, but I could not overlook the abuse he lavished upon me, and drawing my sword I made a desperate thrust at his breast; he parried it skilfully, and the next instant I felt his weapon enter my side—the blood gushed forth, my head grew dizzy, and I fell senseless to the earth.

“I had received a terrible wound, and for many weeks I lay powerless upon a bed of pain—pain, however, less of the body than the mind; for, during that interval, the dreary and guilty past was unveiled to my view; and as I retraced its dark and fearful passages, the demon of remorse entered my soul, and filled it with agony beyond the power of words to speak. I recalled the home where my childhood was nurtured, and the gentle voice of her, who had been to me as a mother, seemed again to fall in blessedness upon my soul. An earnest desire to return to it once more, possessed me—only once, to ask her forgiveness, whose affection I had outraged, and then go forth into the world, a chastened and a better being. With returning health the wish grew stronger within me, and I waited only till I could bear the exertion, to set forth upon the journey.

“Five years had passed away, and brought me no tidings from Poli; the last remembrancer which I received came in the shape of a letter from the gentle Duchess, to which I had never replied. It breathed the tenderest affection, and blended expressions of pride, sorrow, and regret, for all that she had heard of good and of debasing in my course, with earnest entreaty, with tender counsel, with kind warning, and such reproof as her woman's heart only could bestow. During my illness, I had deeply accused myself for leaving without grateful acknowledgment, this proof of her unfailing love; and when, upon arriving at Rome, I learned that she, my only friend and benefactress, had died a twelve-