

A LEGEND OF VENICE.

"Dear child, thy heart is open unto me.

Thou hast a secret lover, Theodore :

Doth not in this thy conscience trouble thee ?"

"Nay father, it doth not !—though I forebore
To tell. Thou knowest 'tis God's secrecy

Hath touched my lips! Wouldst have me that deplore ?

—Mother of God! Whatever be my fate,

I cannot from my love be separate!"

"My child! Thou art in unforgiven sin,

Except thou wilt renounce thy lover here!"

"Ah, never that! Even now, my heart doth win

Heaven's joy—for perfect love hath cast out fear."

"Daughter, I cannot sanction this! Thou'st been

Deceived! He'd marry thee, wert thou so dear!"

"My father, he hath kept far better faith ;

For we have sworn to love in life and death."