

VENDETTA;

The Story of One Forgotten.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Continued.

I understood her. She wanted to get back her own lot—her own share in some chance...

"Absence strengthens love, they say," I observed with a forced smile. "Alas! it does so in our case. Farewell, dear madame! I shall be glad to see you again."

"Oh, yes," she replied, "there is nothing else to do." I held her hands closely in my grasp. The engagement ring on her finger, and the diamond signet on my own, flashed in the light like the crossing of swords.

"Yes, yes," I continued more calmly; "you must not forget to pray for him—he is young and not prepared to die."

"Why! what makes you look so pale?" she asked suddenly, turned away white.

"I am sorry," began Nina feebly. "I hastened to her side."

"I regret beyond measure that it is my misfortune to have hands like those of your late husband."

"I think I will go to my room," she said, not regarding Mrs. Marguerite, who stood rigidly erect, immovably featured, with her silver curls glittering coldly on her still breast.

"Good-bye, Cesare! Please forget my stupidity, but I have a great deal to say to you."

unnecessary. To mock a *raguense* is a common amusement with young girls and women of the world. I am accustomed to it, though I feel its cruelty more than I ought to do.

"You think it was all affection for you, no doubt," she said. "A very natural supposition, and I should be sorry to undeceive you."

"You seem an earnest man—maybe you are destined to be the means of saving Nina; I could say much, yet it is wise to be silent."

"I looked at her with a surprised expression. She had just said that she was not a fortune teller, and now she was speaking as if she were one."

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my curse with him! He is dead now—and surely if the spirits have heard me his soul is not in heaven!"

"Thus she spoke with flashing eyes and purposeful energy, while with her strong brown arms she threw open the door and bade me view the sitting-room I had seen through the window."

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view was indeed superb—from the leafy bosom of the valley, the green hills like smooth, undulating billows trolled upwards, till their emerald verdure was lost in the dense purple shadows and tall peaks of the Apennines;

"I felt that I must see her face, and for that reason went back to the church door and waited till she should pass out. Very soon she came towards me, with the same light smile."

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would have days of unwearying contentment, rendered beautiful by the fragrance of flowers, the evening breeze would softly by the tinkle of the mandoline, and the sound of his wife and children's singing.

"What fairer fate could a man desire?—what life more certain to keep health in the body and peace in the mind? Could I not help him escape the grey towers of the Monte Vergine itself, had grown a stern with long hair, and a brooding upon his vengeance—could I not aid in bringing joy to others? If I could, my mind would be somewhat lightened of its burden—a burden grown heavier since Guido's death, for from his blood had sprung forth a new group of Ferris, that lashed me to my task with scorpion whips of redoubtable crash and passionate ferocity."

"I understood, and no doubt you would be glad to return to the life of your boyhood?"

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