

OUTCAST OF MILAN

CHAPTER I.

THE ROBBER KNIGHTS.—THE OUTCAST'S STORY.

The tenth century was drawing to a close, and the monarchs of Europe were taking a respite from the labors of war and conquest.

Toward the close of a pleasant day in mid-summer, a young man sat alone upon the green-sward, beneath an olive tree, not many miles north of Milan.

The outcast has a charmed body," cried one of the robbers, as he drew back from the fray, with his lance shattered, and his sword broken.

"Where-to-night?" he muttered, in a half-mournful tone. He took out his purse—a net-work of silk and gold—and held it up between his eye and the horizon.

"Now, gentlemen," said our hero, as he wiped his sword upon his doublet, and returned it to its scabbard, "you can pursue your way in peace. I do not think the rascals will trouble you again."

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Two years I taught the use of the lance, axe and sword; and some of the best swordsmen in Milan have been my pupils."

"You must have been very young for such exercises," remarked the Partilla.

"No, I was not," returned our hero; "but my father was accounted the most excellent teacher in all Lombardy; and as I was strong of my age, with the advantages of early and constant education, I became an expert very soon after I advanced from boyhood."

"Good!" exclaimed Theodore, with real boyish delight. "If that is the case we can help you more surely. We have seen enough of your prowess to know that you would be next to invincible if you were armed in true knightly style."

"I should like to try," said Orlando modestly. "But," he quickly added, in a mournful tone, "that privilege is forever denied me. I am not a knight, and never can be."

"There is no knowing what may happen in the time to come," suggested Ludwig Eberhard.

"I wish to make a bargain with you," said Theodore. "If you ever get back to Milan, will you make me a shirt of mail like that which you now wear?"

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