



### CHAPTER III.

#### LA BELLA NAPOLI.

**P**ATIENCE on a monument smiling at grief, was no doubt a very prettily behaved young person but she never appealed to my sympathies any more than the amiable woman; those worthy qualities, however, would have stood us in good stead, while waiting the permission of the powers that be, to land at Naples one warm summer day in midwinter.

Eventually we did land, and were plunged headlong into a mad hub-bub of unintelligible Italian (none too soft), amidst the chaos of the customs house. I, though with no claims to amiability, being a frivolous person forgot to lose my temper in the greater amusement of watching the confused throng of cheating Italians, and wild American and Canadian men and women let loose amongst them. I may add, that having a friend at court may in part account for my calm demeanour. Nevertheless, in spite of the aforesaid friend, we were kept hour after hour knocking our heels about in the dust of this small pandemonium, not half large enough for its requirements, till amusements palled

and our tempers showed danger signs. We cast scheming eyes upon our bicycles, longed to snatch them from their cases and speed away from under the noses of the officials, hurling defiance as we flew. At last, pale and bedraggled, we were told we could not get them till the next day, the why of which I was not informed.

Our luggage was passed and we stepped out into the air under the fond impression we were free. We proceeded a hundred yards, accompanied by a body guard of dirty, ragged, howling men, when at the gate of the *dogano* we were stopped by a perky little man in grey-blue, who after much agitation of face, and voice, and arms, packed us back to the customs house. I was completely mystified but afterwards discovered we had to run the gauntlet of two sets of customs—the government and city officials respectively, who had little contests over our prostrate bodies, so to speak, as to whether our luggage should be passed or not. Finally we were allowed to go in peace and the next day returned to tackle the knotty question of our wheels.

More talk, principally of hands and arms, ensued (the Italians do more talking in a given time on any given subject than any other nation on the face of the earth). The Italian fact gradually sifted through our Canadian brains, that if we had taken the bicycles out the previous day we would have had to pay only forty-two francs deposit money each; in the