

That cry—what did it recall to Hermione? Gaspare's cry from the inlet beneath the isle of the Sirens when he was bringing the body of Maurice from the sea. As she had trembled then, she began to tremble now. She felt exhausted, that she could bear no more, that she must rest, be guarded, cared for, protected, loved. The boat touched shore. Gaspare leaped out. He cast an eager, fiery look of scrutiny on his Padrona. She returned it. Then, suddenly, he seized her hand, bent down and kissed it.

She trembled more. He lifted his head, stared at her again. Then he took her up in his strong arms, as if she were a child, and carried her gently and carefully to the stern of the boat.

"Lei si riposi!" he whispered, as he set her down.

She shut her eyes, leaning back against the seat. She heard Artois get in, the boat pushed off, the splash of the oars. But she did not open her eyes, until presently an instinct told her there was something she must see. Then she looked.

The boat was passing under the blessing hand of San Francesco, under the light of the Saint, which was burning calmly and brightly.

Hermione moved. She bent down to the water, the *acqua benedetta*. She sprinkled it over the boat and made the sign of the cross. When they reached the island Artois got out. As she came on shore he said to her:

"Hermione, I left the—the two children together in the garden. Do you think—will you go to them for a moment? Or——"

"I will go," she answered.

She was no longer trembling. She followed him up the steps, walking slowly but firmly. They came to the house door. Gaspare had kept close behind them. At the door Artois stopped. He felt as if to-night he ought to go no farther.

Hermione looked at him and passed into the house. Gaspare, seeing that Artois did not follow her, hesitated, but Artois said to him:

"Go, Gaspare, go with your Padrona."

Then Gaspare went in, down the passage and out to the terrace.

Hermione was standing there.

"Do you think they are in the garden, Gaspare?" she said.

"Sì, Signora. Listen! I can hear them!"

He held up his hand. Not far away there was a sound of voices speaking together.

"Shall I go and tell them, Signora?"

After a moment Hermione said:

"Yes, Gaspare—go and tell them."

He went away, and she waited, leaning on the balustrade