

'What are you doing?' asked the priest.

'Nothing,' she replied, and rubbed out what she had written.

Just then her father's window was thrown open, and he called out,—

'How is this? Still up?'

'Yes, father. It is such a lovely night, and I am not sleepy.'

'It looks black on the mountains. I fear it will rain to-morrow. When we return, we must remember the Pedulli-Ripa lessons. We went away without telling them.'

'Yes, father.'

'And Signora M—— is at home to-morrow.'

'We will go, father.'

'Do you happen to have seen my stick?'

'Here it is.'

'Will you bring it up, and my cigar-case which I left in the dining-room?'

'I am coming in a minute, father.'

She entered the dining-room, making a silent gesture to Don Innocenzo. He handed her the cigar-case, and she, knowing who had given it, took it without looking at it.

The priest thought to himself,—

'What did she write?'

He put out the lamp and waited till Steinegge had closed the window and the sound of footsteps had died away; then he took a small lantern, and bending down, scanned the gravel.

A word had been traced there, but the first half of it had been rubbed out. The last four letters remained; stiff, strange letters which the curate, after long study, made out to be—