

"A game! Who was your playmate?"

"Never mind."

But her bright eyes went for the fraction of a second to Ruffo, who close by in the boat was lying at his ease, his head thrown back, and one of the cigarettes between his lips.

"What! That boy there?"

"Nonsense! Come along! Madre has been sitting at the window for ages looking out for the boat. Couldn't you sail at all, Gaspare?"

Artois had let go her hands, and now she turned to the Sicilian.

"To Naples, Signorina, and nearly to the Antico Giuseppone coming back."

"But we had to do a lot of tacking," said Artois. "Mon Dieu! That boy is smoking one of my cigarettes! You sacrilegious little creature! You have been robbing my box!"

Gaspare's eyes followed Artois' to Ruffo, who was watching them attentively, but who now looked suddenly sleepy.

"It belongs to Madre."

"It was bought for me."

"I like you better with a pipe. You are too big for cigarettes. And, besides, artists always smoke pipes."

"Allow me to forget that I try to be an artist when I come to the island, Vere."

"Yes, yes, I will," she said, with a pretty air of relenting. "You poor thing! here you are a king incognito, and we all treat you quite familiarly. I'll even go first, regardless of etiquette." And she went off to the steps that led upward to the house.

Artois followed her. As he went he said to Ruffo in the Neapolitan dialect:

"It's a good cigarette, isn't it? You are in luck this morning."

"Sì, Signore," said the boy, smiling. "The Signorina gave me ten."

And he blew out a happy cloud.

There was something in his welcoming readiness of response, something in his look and voice, that seemed to stir within the tenacious mind of Artois a quivering chord of memory.

"I wonder if I have spoken to that boy in Naples?" he thought, as he mounted the steps behind Vere.

Hermione met him at the door of her room, and they went in almost directly to lunch with Vere. When the meal was over Vere disappeared, without saying why, and Hermione and Artois returned to Hermione's room to have coffee. By this time the day was absolutely windless, the sky had become