

2 THE GATES OF WRATH

and white blouses ; the water seemed as blue as the sky—all the world was smiling.

Except Mrs. Cavalossi, who was obviously uneasy and annoyed.

Yet she was still young ; apparently she had wealth ; and her beauty was conspicuous, dazzling, memorable. At the first glance you would have taken her for twenty-five or twenty-six ; but on further consideration you would decide, from the firm lines of her mouth, the mystery in the eyes, and her general air of experience, that she might be more. She was, in fact, thirty-four, and she had been a widow for seventeen years. A strange and enigmatic woman, the strangest and most enigmatic thing about her was that during all those years she had remained unmarried. It seemed incredible that she had not sooner or later yielded to the mere constant repetition of proposals which—you would have thought—must have come to a creature of such beauty. Then perhaps you would examine that oval face, neither dark nor fair, but something between the two, with its pearl-shaped hazel eyes, the marvellous profile of the Grecian nose, the exquisite firm mouth, with rich red lips, rather thin and compressed,