

"There he is!" cried the girl. "Quick! How long has he been under?"

"Just fifty seconds."

"I wonder—I'm sure it's a record. If only Gaspare were here! \ Then will he be back from Naples with Monsieur Emile?"

"About twelve, I should think. But I doubt if they can sail." She looked out to sea, and added: "I think the wind is changing to scirocco. They may be later."

"He's gone down again!"

"I never saw you so interested in a diver before," said the mother. "What made you begin to look at the boy?"

"He was singing. I heard him, and his voice made me feel——" She paused.

"What?" said her mother.

"I don't know. *Un poco diavolesca*, I'm afraid. One thing, though! It made me long to be a boy."

"Did it?"

"Yes! Madre, tell me truly—sea-water on your lips, as the fishermen say—now truly, did you ever want me to be a boy?"

Hermione Delarey did not answer for a moment. She looked away over the still sea, that seemed to be slowly losing its colour, and she thought of another sea, of the Ionian waters that she had loved so much. They had taken her husband from her before her child was born, and this child's question recalled to her the sharp agony of those days and nights in Sicily, when Maurice lay unburied in the Casa del Prete, and afterwards in the hospital at Marechiaro—of other days and nights in Italy, when, isolated with the Sicilian boy, Gaspare, she had waited patiently for the coming of her child.

"Sea-water, Madre, sea-water on your lips!"

Her mother looked down at her.

"Do you think I wished it, Vere?"

"To-day I do."

"Why to-day?"

"Because I wish it so much. And it seems to me as if perhaps I wish it because you once wished it for me. You thought I should be a boy?"

"I felt sure you would be a boy."

"Madre! How strange!"

The girl was looking up at her mother. Her dark eyes—almost Sicilian eyes they were—opened very wide, and her lips remained slightly parted after she had spoken.

"I wonder why that was?" she said at length.

"I have often wondered too. It may have been that I was always thinking of your father in those days, recalling