

brutally out of a room! She could bear it no more, and she dropped her hands. As she did so the boy's dark head rose above the sea.

Vere uttered a cry of joy.

"Bravo! Bravo!"

She felt as if he had returned from the dead. He was a wonderful boy.

"Bravo! Bravissimo!"

Serenely unconscious of her enthusiasm, the boy swam slowly for a moment, breathing the air into his lungs, then serenely dived again.

"Vere!" called a woman's voice from the house—"Vere!"

"Madre!" cried the girl in reply, but without turning away from the sea. "I am here! Do come out! I want to show you something."

On a narrow terrace looking towards Naples a tall figure appeared.

"Where are you?"

"Here! here!"

The mother smiled and left the terrace, passed through a little gate, and almost directly was standing beside the girl, saying:

"What is it? Is there a school of whales in the Bay, or have you sighted the sea-serpent coming from Capri?"

"No, no! But—you see that boat?"

"Yes. The men are diving for *frutti di mare*, aren't they?"

Vere nodded.

"The men are nothing. But there is a boy who is wonderful."

"Why? What does he do?"

"He stays under water an extraordinary time. Now wait. Have you got a watch, Madre?"

"Yes."

"Take it out, there's a darling, and time him. I want to know—there he is! You see?"

"Yes."

"Have you got your watch? Wait till he goes under! Wait a minute! There! He's gone! Now begin!"

She drew into her lungs a long breath, and held it. The mother smiled, keeping her eyes obediently on the watch which lay in her hand.

There was a silence between them as the seconds passed.

"Really," began the mother presently, "he must be——"

"Hush, Madre, hush!"

The girl had clasped her hands tightly. Her eyes never left the sea. The tick, tick of the watch was just audible in the stillness of the May morning. At last——