

"Lepoli is useful so far as he goes but it is not far enough," was the sum total of his thoughts, further completed with a determination to visit Potenza to-morrow.

The determination came too late. Giorgio Matoni did not visit Potenza on the morrow, instead he took a further journey, probably more curious.

As he was sitting beneath the vines next morning eating a late breakfast, or early lunch, of fruits, bread, and black coffee served with epicurean daintiness by the unsightly Margetta, his eyes, wandering to the door left open by his handmaid, were arrested by the substantial vision of a grey-clothed, soft-hatted Englishman—or there about,—the particular stranger of his meditations on the previous night. Matoni had given plentiful proof in his life he was not a nervous man, so it was strange he should now at least appear agitated.

"Good-morning," said the visitor politely. "I could make no one hear, and finding the door open I ventured in."

His Italian was idiomatic, but it did not come trippingly to his tongue, and the slow utterance gave Matoni time to recover his habitual bland smile.

He rose, bowed very low, and assured the stranger he was welcome, would he partake of breakfast, and would he honour him with his name.

"I think, Signor Matoni, you can make a shrewd guess at it; we have corresponded. I thank you, but I have breakfasted."

He handed a card across the table. Somehow it fell to the ground between them. The hander's fingers were firm enough but the receiver's strangely flabby. He stooped and picked it up with difficulty, and read "Mr. Malcolm Strangeway," and pencilled below: "Café Pergola, Potenza."