

He had a sense of humour, but it did not always serve him. Occasionally it was fitful, and when summoned by irony remained at a distance.

"It is true, Emilio, you have never seen me angry," he continued, reverting to the remark of Artois: "you ought to. Till you have seen a Panacci angry you do not really know him. With you, of course, I could never be angry—never, never. You are my friend, my comrade. To you I tell everything."

A sudden remembrance seemed to come to him. Evidently a new thought had started into his active mind, for his face suddenly changed, and became serious, even sentimental.

"What is it?" asked Artois.

"To-day, just now in the sea, I have seen a girl—Madonna! Emilio, she had a little nose that was perfect—perfect. How she was simpatica! What a beautiful girl!"

His whole face assumed a melting expression, and he pursed his lips in the form of a kiss.

"She was in the sea too?" asked Artois.

"No. If she had been! But I was with papa. It was just after we had been serenading you. She had heard us, I am sure, for she was laughing. I dived under the boat in which she was. I did all my tricks for her. I did the mermaid and the seal. She was delighted. She never took her eyes from me. As to papa—she never glanced at him. Poor papa! He was angry. She had her mother with her, I think—a Signora, tall, flat, ugly, but she was simpatica too. She had nice eyes, and when I did the seal she could not help laughing, though I think she was rather sad."

"What sort of a boat were they in?" Artois asked, with sudden interest.

"A white boat with a green line."

"And they were coming from the direction of Posilipo?"

"Ma sì! Emilio, do you know them? Do you know the perfect little nose?"

The Marchesino laid one hand eagerly on the arm of his friend.

"I believe you do! I am sure of it! The mother—she is flat as a Carabiniere, and quite old, but with nice eyes, sympathetic, intelligent. And the girl is a little brown—from the sun—with eyes full of fun and fire, dark eyes. She may be Italian, and yet—there is something English, too. But she is not blonde, she is not cold. And when she laughs! Her teeth are not like the keys of a piano from Bordicelli's. And she is full of passion, of flame, of sentiment, as I am. And she is young, perhaps sixteen. Do you know her? Present me, Emilio! I have presented you to all my friends,"