

"It does not matter whether it is a man or a woman. We must do something with our hands. We have got to. Papa told the Signora he should strike her at once unless she put down the red parasol and was silent. What did she do, the imbecile? She stuck out her face like this,"—he thrust his face forward with the right cheek turned towards Artois—"and said, 'Strike me! strike me!' Papa obeyed her. Poom, poom! He gave her a smack on each cheek before every one. 'You want education!' he said to her. 'And I shall give it you.' And now she may bring a *processo* too. But did you really think we were street singers?" He threw himself back, took the cigarette from his mouth, and laughed. Then he caught hold of his blond moustache with both hands, gave it an upward twist, at the same time pouting his big lips, and added:

"We shall bring a *causa* against you for that!"

"No, Doro, you and I must never quarrel. By the way, though, I want to see you angry. Every one talks of the Panacci temper, but when I am with you I always see you smiling or laughing. As to the Marchese, he is as lively as a boy. Viviano——"

"Oh, Viviano is a buffone. Have you ever seen him imitate a monkey from whom another monkey has snatched a nut?"

"No."

"It is like this——"

With extraordinary suddenness he distorted his whole face into the likeness of an angry ape, hunching his shoulders and uttering fierce simian cries.

"No, I can't do it."

With equal suddenness and self-possession he became his smiling self again.

"Viviano has studied in the monkey-house. And the monk looking the other way when he passes along the Marina where the women are bathing in the summer! He shall do that for you on Sunday afternoon when you come to Capodimonte. It makes even mamma die of laughing, and you know how religious she is. But then of course men—that does not matter. Religion is for women, and they understand that quite well."

The Marchesino never made any pretence of piety. One virtue he had in the fullest abundance. He was perfectly sincere with those whom he considered his friends. That there could be any need for hypocrisy never occurred to him.

"Mamma would hate it if we were saints," he continued.

"I am sure the Marchesa can be under no apprehension on that score," said Artois.

"No, I don't think so," returned the Marchesino, quite seriously.