

manly, which proved the vocalist to be no man. Vere knew at once that a boy was singing, and she felt that she must see him.

She got up, went into the little garden at the edge of the cliff, and looked over the wall.

There was a boat moving slowly toward her, not very far away. In it were three figures, all stripped for diving, and wearing white cotton drawers. Two were sitting on the gunwale with their knees drawn up nearly to their chins. The third was standing, and with a languid, but strong and regular movement, was propelling the boat forward with big-bladed oars. This was the singer, and as the boat drew nearer Vere could see that he had the young, lithe form of a boy.

While she watched, leaning down from her eyrie, the boat and the song stopped, and the singer let go his oars and turned to the men behind him. The boat had reached a place near the rocks that was good ground for *frutti di mare*.

Vere had often seen the divers in the Bay of Naples at their curious toil. Yet it never ceased to interest her. She had a passion for the sea, and for all things connected with it. Now she leaned a little lower over the wall, with her eyes fixed on the boat and its occupants.

Upon the water she saw corks floating, and presently one of the men swung himself round and sat facing the sea, with his back to the boat and his bare legs dipping into the water. The boy had dropped down to the bottom of the craft. His hands were busy arranging clothes, or tackle, and his lusty voice again rang out to the glory of "*Napoli, bella Napoli*." There was something infectious in his happy-go-lucky light-heartedness. Vere smiled as she listened, but there was a wistfulness in her heart. At that moment a very common desire of young and vigorous girls assailed her—the desire to be a boy; not a boy born of rich parents, destined to the idle, aimless life of aristocratic young Neapolitans, but a brown, badly dressed, or scarcely dressed at all boy of the people.

As often light-hearted, careless. But was she ever as light-hearted and careless as that singing boy? She supposed herself to be free. But was she, could she ever be at liberty as he was?

The man who had been dipping his feet in the sea rested one hand on the gunwale, let his body droop forward, dropped into the water, paddled for a moment, reached one of the floating corks, turned over head downwards, describing a circle which showed his chocolate-coloured back arched, kicked up his feet and disappeared. The second man lounged