

leaning against her confidentially and looking out over the sea. Hermione put her arm round the girl's shoulder.

"There! Don't you see?" She pointed. "It has passed Casa Pantano."

"I see! yes, that is Gaspare, and Monsieur Emile in the stern. They won't be late for lunch. I almost wish they would, Madre."

"Why?"

"I'm not a bit hungry. Ruffo wouldn't eat the dolce, so I did."

"Ruffo! You seem to have made great friends with that boy."

She did not speak rebukingly, but with a sort of tender amusement.

"I really have," returned Vere.

She put her head against her mother's shoulder.

"Isn't this odd, Madre? Twice in the short time I've known Ruffo, he's obeyed me. The first time he was in the boat. I called out to him to dive in, and he did it instantly. The second time he was under water, at the very bottom of the sea. He looked as if he were dead, and for a minute I felt frightened. So I called out to him to come up, and he came up directly."

"But that only shows that he's a polite boy and does what you wish."

"No, no. He didn't hear me either time. He had no idea I had called. But each time I did, without hearing me he had the sudden wish to do what I wanted. Now, isn't that curious?"

She paused.

"Madre?" she added.

"You think you influenced him?"

"Don't you think I did?"

"Perhaps so. There's the sympathetic link of youth between you. You are gloriously young, both of you, little daughter. And youth turns naturally to youth, though I'm afraid old age doesn't always turn naturally to old age."

"What do you know about old age, Madre? You haven't a grey hair."

She spoke with anxious encouragement.

"It's true. My hair declines to get grey."

"I don't believe you'll ever be grey."

"Probably not. But there's another greyness—Life behind one instead of before; the emotional——"

She stopped herself. This was not for Vere.

"They're close in," she said, looking out of the window.

She waved her hand. The big man in the stern of the boat