

and looking down to the dim sea, from which only the night before Ruffo's voice had floated up to her, singing the song of Mergellina. Only the night before! And it seemed to her centuries ago.

"Madre!"

Vere spoke to her. Vere was beside her. But she gazed beyond her child to Ruffo, who stood with his cap in his hand, and his eyes, full of gentleness, looking at her for recognition.

"Ruffo!" she said.

Vere moved to let Ruffo pass. He came up and stood before Hermione.

"Ruffo!" she said again.

It seemed that she was going to say more. They waited for her to say something more. But she did not speak. She stood quite still for a moment looking at the boy. Then she put one hand on his shoulder, bent down and touched his forehead with her lips.

And in that kiss the dead man was forgiven.

EPILOGUE

ON a radiant day of September in the following year, from the little harbour of Mergellina a white boat with a green line put off. It was rowed by Gaspare, who wore his festa suit, and it contained two people, a man and a woman, who had that morning been quietly married.

Another boat preceded theirs, going towards the island, but it was so far ahead of them that they could only see it as a moving dot upon the shining sea, when they rounded the breakwater and set their course for the point of land where lies the Antico Giuseppone.

Gaspare rowed standing up, with his back towards Hermione and Artois, and his great eyes staring steadily out to sea. He plied the oars mechanically. During the first few minutes of the voyage to the island his mind was far away. He was a boy in Sicily once more, waiting proudly upon his first, and indeed his only, Padrona in the Casa del Prete on Monte Amato. Then she was quite alone. He could see her sitting at evening upon the terrace with a book in her lap, gazing out across the ravine and the olive-covered mountain slopes to the waters that kissed the shore of the Sirens' Isle. He could see her, when night fell, going slowly up the steps into the lighted cottage, and turning on its threshold to wish him "Buon riposo."

Then there was an interval—and she came again. He was waiting at the station of Cattaro. Outside stood the little