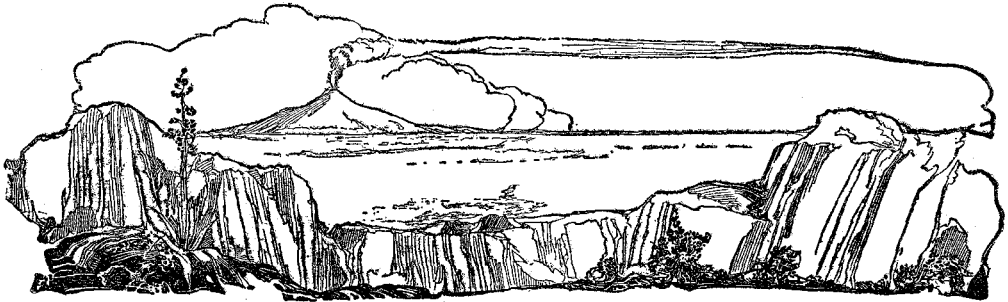


Atmosphere

by Eleanor Mercein Kelly
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"Toya the Unlike," "White Alec," etc.



A Complete Novelette

LITTLE, gleaming white houses were huddled so closely together on the hillside that the roofs of the lower served as terraces for the upper ones. A twisting, narrow passage lost itself among them in arcades like tunnels, to become presently a mountain path, down which women with great bundles on their heads stepped with a fine, free swing, leading donkeys. On every side, dominating all other colors with the intensity of its blue, stretched the Mediterranean.

These things were what Leila Farland saw whenever she glanced up from the letter she was writing to her husband—which was often.

Near the table where she was writing sat Violet, Lady Jerrold, with the Marchese di Fraschi, chattering as vivaciously as if she were a young and pretty girl, though it was many years since she had been a young and pretty girl. Leila put the two into her letter. It was rather pleasant to write the titles, and she knew that Henry would like to mention them carelessly to the men at the club.

What she did not write was that the elderly Englishwoman's cheeks were quite obviously rouged, and that she was smok-

ing a cigarette; and that the Italian, while he murmured with Lady Jerrold, managed to keep his eye rather firmly fixed in her own direction.

He was not the only man in the room who made his approval known, after the frank continental fashion which Mrs. Farland felt that she should—but did not—resent. The lounge of the Hotel Quisisana is a meeting-place, a sort of clubroom, for all the birds of passage that make their winter habitat at Capri, and a newcomer is noted there with a certain interest.

Leila Farland was a graceful woman, oddly virginal-looking despite her thirty years, with eyes of the limpid blue that Latins find so singularly appealing. Her manner was reserved, even shy, and quite lacking in what Europe calls, perhaps unjustly, "Americanisms." Now and then an acquaintance paused for a word with her in passing; and presently the whole room knew that she was writing a letter to her husband.

It gazed upon her with renewed interest. So there was a husband, then! He was rich, of course, for her frocks were charming. He must also be old, perhaps in his dotage; else, why was his wife per-

mitted to travel thus alone, without the protection even of a maid?

She was not an adventuress; she was not that anomaly known as the "American widow," neither one thing nor the other, marriageable and yet wedded. The existence of a husband in the background made her distinctly respectable, and distinctly piquant.

The letter was slow in writing. Across the bay a little paddle-steamer, with curving wake and trailing plume of smoke, puffed its leisurely way toward Naples. Leila watched it with a feeling of guilt. How often she had followed it so with her eyes, saying to herself:

"To-morrow!"

She thought vaguely of the lotus-eaters, of the land where it was always afternoon.

Just below the window where she sat, a youth with a guitar, his curls tied in a gay handkerchief, a rose tucked behind his ear, had paused to serenade one of the kitchen-maids. His eye, like that of every true artist, roamed afield for a wider audience. He saw Leila, and twanged with renewed gusto.

"*O sole mio!*" he sang, *appassionato*.

At this hour, Leila thought, Henry would be coming home from the office, his pockets bulging with evening newspapers, his waistcoat bulging, his cheeks bulging—altogether rather a bulging person, poor Henry! He would be wanting to know if dinner was ready, and, if not, why not. Surely he paid enough to get decent service! Not that he was blaming her at all; he would speak to the cook himself.

"*O sole mio!*" sang the melting tenor.

A voice almost as melting murmured in Leila's ear:

"Of what is *la bella signora* dreaming?"

It was Fraschi. His prowess was observed with interest by the room at large. She started.

"I was just wondering," she said at random, "what '*sole*' means. Is it the soul, or a sort of fish?"

She had not meant to be witty. She was quite startled by the burst of laughter from Lady Jerrold, in which, after a moment of bewilderment, Fraschi joined, throwing back his head, the white teeth flashing in his dark young face.

"Ah, I have my punishment for the impertinence!" he said. "But," he added in a lower voice, "*madame* does not blame me for my jealousy of the letter?"

"I was writing to my husband, *marchese*," Leila replied sedately.

"Even so!" murmured the Italian.

"Come, come," cried Lady Jerrold, "you haven't written a word for ten minutes. It's a hopeless task, my dear, and we've no time to lose if we're to drive to Anacapri before sunset."

"Are we to?"

"Fraschi's arranged a party for tea—you and me and M. Charpentier."

"Oh, but really I must finish my letter!" demurred Leila. "I told Henry I'd write to him every day."

"Every day? Good Heavens!" murmured Lady Jerrold.

Leila felt a vague necessity of defending her husband.

"He did not ask me to; but really it was rather good of Henry to let me come, you know. Think how lonely he must be!"

"Let us hope," murmured Lady Jerrold, "that he is not too lonely!"

She exchanged with Fraschi a broad and cynical smile. Leila flushed. She would have liked to explain to them that Henry was not that sort. But suppose they should inquire:

"What sort?"

She sometimes found it difficult to hold her own in conversation with these people. What was the use of trying to explain things to people who shrug?

When she came back with her hat and wrap, she found the *marchese* waiting alone beside a little *vettura*, in his hand a bouquet of the huge purple blossoms that made the modest pansies of her own garden seem no longer worthy of the name. He presented them to her with a bow, and she, feeling very much a woman of the world, fastened one in his buttonhole. The *vetturino* on the box turned to watch her as she did it, beaming down on them in fatherly approval.

"But where are the others?" she asked.

He explained that Lady Jerrold and the little Frenchman were already *en route*.

Leila hesitated, her foot on the carriage-step.

"But surely there is room for four in this carriage?"

"*Macché*, no!" protested the *marchese*. "Have I not with great care chosen a *vettura* in which there is *not* room for four?"

His frankness was so boyish that she

laughed; but still she hesitated. At every window of the hotel there seemed to be watching faces.

"*Madame* is not afraid to drive with me alone?" he murmured.

"Oh, no," she said with dignity, and entered the carriage. "I was only wondering what people might think."

He snapped contemptuous fingers.

"In Capri people do not think. There is not time."

She was amused. It had seemed to her that if there was nothing else in Capri, there was time.

The little vehicle flew along the narrow street, scattering pedestrians right and left, the whip cracking, the horses galloping, as Italian horses always gallop when they do not crawl. After them ran begging children, shouting those of the national airs that appeal most strongly to the purses of *forestieri*. Some overtook them, and hung perilously to the carriage-springs, still breathlessly singing, until Fraschi leaned over the back and drove them away.

Soon the houses were left behind, and the horses, not lessening their pace in the least, breasted at a gallop the steep road that winds along the face of the cliff toward the upper town. This island highway was so narrow in places that pedestrians must needs press close against the cliff to let a vehicle pass.

At one such place they saw jogging toward them the smallest of donkeys, bearing the fattest of priests. His reverence had an open book in one hand, which he was reading. Their coachman did not pause; the priest did not look up from his breviary; the donkey eyed them with the patient indifference of its kind and jogged sedately forward.

A collision seemed inevitable. The coachman broke into a torrent of invective; the priest, looking up with a start, answered him in kind; yet still neither paused. Fortunately, however, at the critical moment the donkey took matters into its own hands, leaped like a goat, priest and all, up the side of the cliff—and they were safely past.

"Your blessing, father!" cried Fraschi, his shoulders shaking.

The priest, still furiously muttering, lifted his hand in the sign of the cross; and then all three of them, priest, marquis, and coachman, burst simultaneously into a shout of laughter.

Leila was astonished.

"I thought you Catholics were always so respectful to your priests!"

"Eh, but he was such a fat one, and on so small a beast!" Fraschi murmured deprecatingly.

They galloped on. The pounding hoofs, the cracking whip, the beseeching "*A-ah!*" of the driver as he encouraged the little animals to further effort—all had a rather exciting effect, so that Leila would have liked to sing aloud, as a child does when it goes driving. Her companion did suddenly sing aloud, trolling out a rollicking little air that is called in Naples "*La Bella Gina*." The coachman patted time to it, wagging his head from side to side, until at last, unable to bear it longer, he burst into the chorus, which the two finished together with great spirit.

Leila, pink with laughter, clapped her hands. The coachman turned and bowed, with the air of a Caruso.

"*Ancora?*" he suggested.

"Yes, yes! Do sing again!"

The two consulted together gravely like virtuosi, and after some clearing of throats began the song which, despite its trivial prettiness, so often brings tears to Italian eyes—"*Addio, la bella Napoli*."

Leila listened dreamily.

"If Henry could only see me now!" she thought.

Galloping up a strange mountainside toward nightfall, alone with a strange man—she who had barely talked with any man alone since her marriage—while he and his coachman warbled duets!

"On the whole," she thought, "it is just as well that Henry cannot see me now!"

Suddenly the song stopped, the horses were jerked back on their haunches, and the coachman swept the horizon with a dramatic whip.

"*Ecco, eccellenza!*"

They had come to the farthest edge of the island, face to face with the sinking sun. The sea was golden with it, little lapping waves of molten light. Far as the eye could reach the Mediterranean lay, a golden ocean, with a brooding shadow on the southern horizon that hung over Africa. To the right, seeming very near, rose the lofty cone of Vesuvius wearing the crown of smoke that is at once a memory and a menace.

Across the face of the sun passed slowly a fleet of fishing-boats, heavy with what

the peasants call "the gifts of God." And then from every campanile on the island, and from others over the bay, came a soft clash of bells, ringing the Angelus.

Leila bowed her head with the two Italians, and wished to pray; but only vague words came to her unaccustomed tongue. She roused herself with an effort, as if from some spell.

"Had we not better hurry? Lady Jerrold will be waiting."

"Also, which is worse, the tea will be growing cold. It is true! *Avanti, Tino!*" said Fraschi with a sigh. "But *madame* has seen the sun saying '*Addio, la bella Napoli!*' And we have prayed together," he added contentedly.

They came into another region of villas, small houses nestling rather close together among the olives, yet with an air of intimate seclusion, like neighbors in a crowded street who achieve the effect of privacy by ignoring one another's existence. Fraschi narrated the histories of some of these houses as they passed, and Leila blushed a little.

"After all, I am a married woman," she reminded herself primly. "I must not be provincial."

In one of them, he told her, a certain queen was wont to spend one week out of the year *incognita*, in company with a beloved friend.

"Is it not a sad little story?" said Fraschi sympathetically. "One week out of the year; and the years pass, and they grow old! He has the duties of a husband, a father; she, her empty life of the court. Yet for a few days they are together, and forget. Many people come to Capri to forget, *signora*."

Leila did her best to think of it as a sad little story. In novels, even in history, it was possible to condone the weaknesses of a queen. But in real life—among people one actually knows? Fortunately, she told herself, a queen is not a person one actually knows.

Occasionally the fatherly coachman turned to add items of interest to Fraschi's narrative, until the *marchese* addressed him suddenly in fluent staccato. Tino immediately turned his back, chuckling:

"*Sì, sì, signor marchese! Sì, sì, sì, eccellenza, sì!*"

"What makes him go off that way, like a leaking soda-bottle?" asked Leila, amused. "What did you say to him?"

"I said to him one of your English proverbs." Fraschi turned a demure gaze upon her. "I said to him, 'Two makes company, three makes a crowd.'"

Tino did not speak again; but he had the alert air of a mule who travels with one ear turned backward.

II

LEILA was rather glad when they drew up with a flourish at the little hotel where they were to meet Lady Jerrold. But Lady Jerrold was not there; nor, said the *padrone*, who knew her well, had she been there that day.

"She must have misunderstood the place," said Leila. "Are there other tea-rooms?"

"But certainly! We shall search them all," cried Fraschi gaily.

His manner bred a certain suspicion in Leila; and when a thorough search of Anacapri failed to reveal any trace of Lady Jerrold she made her accusation.

"You never expected to find her! She did not mean to come! It was all a ruse between you," she cried indignantly, feeling very much like a heroine in a play.

He confessed, with apology and contrition, but without shame. Could *la bella signora* forgive him? How else was he to have a word with her alone, while they watched, all those others, like cats ready to spring upon a little, little mouse?

His extravagance made her laugh despite herself, and he took her laughter for forgiveness. He kissed her hand.

"Ah, then, *madame* is not angry? How anxious I have been, how miserable, lest the *signora* should be angry!"

She pulled her hand away sharply.

"But I am angry—very angry indeed, Fraschi!"

She was not quite sure what to call him, whether "*signor*" or "*marchese*," and she compromised on the name she had heard Lady Jerrold use. It had unexpected results. His face grew radiant.

"Ah, *madame* gives me my name! How beautiful it is upon your lips—'Fraschi!' But the little name is better. Will you not call me Paolo? Yes, yes!" he pleaded, in a coaxing voice like a child's. "Say it for me! Then I shall know that we are friends, that I am forgiven. Only once—'Paolo!'"

She laughed again. What an absurd boy it was!

"Well, then—Paolo."

"And I," he murmured, "shall call you *Lé-ila*. Ah, the charming name! *Lé-ila—mia bella Lé-ila!*"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," she said with dignity. "You will remember, please, that I am a married woman, much older than you are." This took some courage. "You will kindly continue to call me Mrs. Farland."

He shrugged.

"As *madame* desires. But in my heart," he said firmly, "I shall continue to call you *mia bella Lé-ila!*"

The dusk was already upon them, and it would be dark before they reached the lower town.

"There will not be time for tea," she said. "I fear we shall even be late for dinner. Do tell Tino to make all possible haste!"

Then he laid before her, beseechingly, his entire plan, the plan which he and Lady Jerrold had perfected while she wrote her letter.

"It is a little *trattoria*, a simple café of the people, known to artists, but to the tourist—never. There you shall find *gnocchi* that have not their equal in Italy. Caterina was formerly cook in the house of a gourmet. *Dio mio*, what a salad! And the wild asparagus, and a bit of Gorgonzola; figs, apricots, a small bottle of the sparkling *Lacrima Christi*, eh? All out under the medlar-tree, with stars for candles. Afterward, singing, the tarantella. You will like to live for one hour as my people live, *signora*? It will be something to tell those countrymen of yours who go about poking their long noses into all things and seeing nothing. It is difficult to see with the nose."

She hesitated longingly.

"But it will be so late when we get back, so dark!"

"Dark? No, because I have ordered for us a little moon to light our way. And late?"

He shrugged—a gesture that should be included in the dictionary of every Latin language because it can be made to say so many things.

"Who cares?" it said this time.

Indeed, who was there to care? Leila told herself that this was her last day at Capri.

"If I stay to dinner with you, it will be upon one condition."

He gave a sigh of relief. Tino also sighed, in sympathy; it had been an anxious moment.

"The condition, *madame*?"

"That you will not make love to me, Paolo!" she said, feeling more than ever like an actress in a play.

He bowed gravely.

"I shall converse with *madame* as with my respected mother. But," he added with an engaging candor, "with the *mama* one is naturally very affectionate!"

Their table was spread in the little garden of the *trattoria*, with no lights except the stars and the glow from the kitchen near by, where the *padrone* and his wife, Caterina, flew about, chattering like magpies, in the excitement of having excellencies to dine. Between courses the *padrone* hovered over them solicitously, rubbing his hands with pleasure to see how well the excellencies ate; until Tino, who ate in the kitchen, leaned from the window and admonished him roundly.

"What is that absurd creature sputtering about now?" demanded Leila.

"He repeats the English proverb," said Fraschi. "Two makes company, three makes a crowd."

With their coffee appeared Caterina, perspiring and proud, eager to learn the reception of her *gnocchi*.

Leila had but one Italian phrase, and she used it.

"*Bello—è molto bello!*"

The woman laughed with delight, and said something to Fraschi.

"She congratulates me," he translated, twirling his mustache. "And now, Caterina, the grandchildren!"

She came back to them, in a moment, with a perfectly naked baby in each arm, awakened evidently for the occasion, their little black eyes blinking, their tiny mouths distended in large yawns. Fraschi held out his arms for them eagerly, dandled them on his knees, poked them and tickled them, until the yawns became crows of glee. There was a yearning, an almost brooding tenderness in his face, such as the old masters have painted into the face of St. Joseph, and painted from life. It is a people among whom the paternal instinct is strong and unashamed.

Leila watched him, amazed. She herself would not have dared such liberties with strange babies. Indeed, babies embarrassed her, especially naked ones. She

thought them very nice, but she did not want to touch them.

"To think," sighed Fraschi, "that I, who have almost thirty years, have as yet no *bambini*! You, *signora*, have been many times a mother?"

"No." Leila flushed slightly. "Not at all."

"Is it possible? *Dio bonino!* What sort of husband is this," he demanded indignantly of the world at large, "who gives to his wife no infants?"

"Ah, *la povera!*" murmured Caterina; but Leila did not understand her.

Word had gone forth that excellencies were dining at the tavern, and presently the tinkle of a mandolin was heard, supported gallantly, if uncertainly, by a tambourine and a guitar. Leila listened, puzzled for a moment by the tune they played. Then she clapped her hands.

"It's the 'Washington Post'—they are trying to play the 'Washington Post'!"

"The American national anthem? But that is very courteous," said Fraschi approvingly, and ordered wine for the musicians.

He lifted his glass to the mandolin-player, who gracefully toasted him in return.

"And now," he cried, "we must have the tarantella!"

The *padrone* was desolated. If one had but known the *signor marchese* was coming! It was a *festa*, and their son and his wife, all the young people, had gone to the lower town, where things go more gaily. There was not in Anacapri a couple fit to dance the tarantella.

"But you, Caterina? Surely you have not forgotten the tarantella, you who have been the pride of all the island?"

The woman giggled, protesting. She so fat, she the mother of twins?

"Madonna! I should wobble like a jelly!"

And her man was too old now, she went on to lament; his knees creaked, he panted—

"I, I am not too old for the tarantella!" cried Fraschi. "My knees do not creak! *Eccomi!*"

He whipped off his coat. Delighted, the *padrone* ran to bring a scarf to tie about his hips, a silk handkerchief for his head. He kicked off his shoes, explaining to the astonished Leila:

"One does not dance well in shoes!"

So she saw her first tarantella, the dance of invitation, of repulse, of final acceptance, which is more a play than a dance. The *marchese* entered into it with as much zest and grace as if his partner were not a fat and middle-aged peasant, who puffed as she danced and truly wobbled like a jelly, yet played her part with an arch, shy coquetry that had once made her the toast of the studios.

An ever-increasing group crowded about the dancers, applauding, crying out in sympathetic excitement.

At the close the tambourine held many *soldi*, and Leila, who had no purse with her, impulsively flung into it the pansies at her belt. There were pleased murmurs among the peasants, and Caterina thrust them into her heaving bosom with exclamations of gratitude.

"*La bella signora* has the seeing heart," said Fraschi, nodding his head in approval.

Almost in silence they drove at last down to Capri. Tino, who had drunk too freely of the red wine of the island, improvised tenor solos all the way, and occasionally looked down on them paternally, as one who would say:

"Do not restrain yourselves on my account, children!"

But Leila was thoughtful, and Fraschi far too *simpatico* to disturb a woman in such a mood.

She had had her first glimpse of democracy, of a sort that is impossible in a land where men are born free and equal, and where those at the top must be at some pains to keep those beneath from crowding them. There was something that warmed the heart about these simple people, as grateful for flowers as for *soldi*, who received a nobleman among them with a friendliness as free from humility as was his from patronage. She thought of other things, too—Fraschi's charming gallantry with the fat peasant woman, his tenderness with the two sleepy babies.

"You like them, my Capresi?" he asked once, divining her thoughts.

"Yes—and I like you, Paolo!"

Unconsciously her voice was very soft. Perhaps it was hard for him at that moment to remember his promise; but Fraschi had his wisdom. Only, as they parted at the door of her hotel, he lifted her hand to his lips and kissed the palm.

"Oh! Good-by," she said, a little startled.

"*A rivederci, Lé-ila bellissima,*" Fraschi murmured.

She saw no reason for telling him that she was going to leave Capri on the morning boat.

She was packing her trunk, despite the lateness of the hour, when there came a tap at the door of her room, and Lady Jerrold entered, yawning.

"I meant to wait up for you, like a nice duenna, but Charpentier was such a bore," she said. "At our age one needs a certain amount of sleep. Wasn't it a horrid trick we played you, dear?"

"Yes," said Leila.

The older woman's eyes opened wide.

"I do believe she's vexed with me! Hadn't you a good time, then? Was Paolo too dreadfully tiresome?"

The color flooded Leila's face.

"No," she said honestly; "but he was—embarrassing."

Lady Jerrold gazed at her enviously.

"My word! I'd give ten years off my life—off the tail end of it—to blush like that again. And what hair! If poor Paolo could see you now—that's a very charmin' peignoir, my dear—it would be all up with him!"

"Don't, please," murmured Leila in sharp distaste.

The other's voice changed. She laid a hand on Leila's shoulder.

"What a quaint little puritan it is! There, there, you must not mind Fraschi. He always makes love to women. It's his only language for us—even us old ones. And I'm a harmless, meddlin' creature who like to see people amuse themselves. I assure you there are no conventions in Capri. Kiss and be friends! I'll not play tricks again."

In surprise, and a little awkwardly, Leila put up her face to be kissed. There were a certain kindness and a broad humanity about the painted old woman which she found irresistible.

"To-morrow I shall send my Fanchon to do that wonderful hair of yours. It's a shame to waste it! Ta-ta!" She put her head in at the door again. "I'm takin' you up with me to lunch at Maxim Borky's villa to-morrow, where they all live together in brotherly love and bare feet, and all that sort of thing, you know. No hats, or collars, or stays. I fancy they eat well, though, and it ought to be amusin'."

The door closed finally, drowning Leila's faint protest:

"But I am leaving Capri on the afternoon boat!"

Before she got into bed she finished the letter to her husband. She added as a postscript:

I am leaving Capri the day after to-morrow.

III

WEEKS passed, and still the little paddle-steamer made its way to Naples twice daily without Mrs. Farland. She had almost lost her sense of guilt in watching it. After all, she had come to see the world, and in Capri one sees the world with very little trouble.

She and Lady Jerrold were living together in a tiny *casa*, entered through a courtyard where gay flowers bloomed about a little pool, presided over by a noseless Venus. The maid, Fanchon, and a cook who went with the house, made them very comfortable. Fraschi and others dined with them frequently.

The suggestion had come from Lady Jerrold.

"It's frightfully dear, stoppin' at a good hotel, and of course the cheap ones are quite impossible. You're rich, aren't you? Why not take a bit of a house I know about, and let me share expenses with you? You'd find it a lot more amusin', and cheaper, too."

It proved more amusing, but hardly cheaper.

"I've no head for figures," Lady Jerrold would murmur, when accounts came in to be paid. "Will you attend to this, my dear, and let me know my share of the screw?" With which the matter would end.

Leila, who was not without the national shrewdness in money affairs, consulted her husband, rather troubled by the casualness of her companion. His answer was laconically characteristic:

Am increasing your letter of credit. Let the old lady work you, so long as she's giving you a good time. Peeresses come high.

Leila settled her increasing bills with no further compunction. But one phrase of her husband's letter made her feel, for some reason, uncomfortable. The English-woman was undoubtedly "old." She admitted to sixty, and there were certain

wrinkles about her ears that defied even Fanchon's cleverness. She was also, indubitably, a "lady," though not perhaps of a type recognizable by Henry without assistance. Nevertheless, the term "old lady" seemed singularly unsuited to express the personality of Violet, Lady Jerrold.

Her acquaintance was wide and catholic, varying from the Borky establishment to a pair of elderly Pennsylvanians named Perkins, who had taken a rather famous villa and were doing their best to transform it into an imitation of "home." At vast expense and trouble they had refurnished the *sala* with furniture of the type known as golden oak. They had removed the beautiful bougainvillea from their pergola for fear of "bugs," and the ancient marbles from the garden in the interests of morality.

"All in the nood, my dear," explained the old lady to Leila. "Never would have done for mixed society!"

The Pennsylvania couple were surprisingly popular among the shifting population of the villas and the studios. It was quite the fashion to drop in upon them for an eight-o'clock breakfast consisting chiefly of hot waffles and sausages, and to brag afterward of what an indigestion one had got.

"I can't understand it," said Leila once to Lady Jerrold. "At home people—of this sort, you know—would hardly notice them. They're so commonplace!"

"Exactly," said the other. "Funny old Babes in the Wood! It's refreshin'. And besides," she murmured, blowing a ring of smoke toward the ceiling, "they buy every picture that is offered to them."

Leila smiled, a little shocked by the other's cynicism.

"Surely not the 'nood' ones?"

"When their voices are heard approaching a studio," said Lady Jerrold—"fortunately, they can be heard, you know—the artist seizes a brush, flies to the nearest masterpiece, and *v'là*, with one stroke Venus is ready for the best Pennsylvania society. It's quite simple."

Leila had moments of wondering whether her own success with Lady Jerrold's friends might not be due in some degree to the novelty of commonplaceness; but she was grateful for it upon any terms. Her life had not developed in her that most useful and comforting of weaknesses,

vanity. Of too subtle and elusive a type of beauty to have appealed to youths, she had married at twenty without any real heart-experience, and the world of men had been thereafter a sealed book to her. This fact Lady Jerrold's casual questioning elicited, greatly to the amazement of the Englishwoman.

"But," she demanded, "is there no sort of society in Squedunk, or Tallahassee, or wherever it is you live?"

"Milwaukee," murmured Leila. "Oh, yes! I go to women's parties—lots of them; but Henry comes home from the office very tired, and likes to doze after dinner. We don't often go out of the house at night."

"One has heard that American men are like glowworms—they only appear after nightfall. But must you sit at home and watch your Henry doze? Ghastly! How do you amuse yourself?"

"Well, luncheons, and teas, and bridge—"

"With women? Must be like eatin' nuts without salt. What else?"

"I read, but I'm afraid I'm not very intellectual. I've tried philanthropy, committees, social service—all that sort of thing; and culture."

"Eh?" said Lady Jerrold.

"Oh, lectures on things," explained the other vaguely. "Art, music, drama, French, psychology, eugenics—"

"Perfectly thrillin'!" murmured Lady Jerrold, and yawned. "No wonder Europe is full of semidetached American females. How did you escape?"

Leila explained that her health was not quite up to the mark. She had been eating and sleeping badly, taking no interest in anything—nerves probably.

"Bored, my dear!" interpolated Lady Jerrold.

It was Henry's idea that she should come to Europe alone. He hated travel himself, and thought that a certain amount of independence and responsibility might be good for her. She had demurred. The idea of depending entirely on herself was rather terrifying.

Henry had laughed at her.

"Nonsense! You've got a pretty level little head on your shoulders," he had told Leila. "Whenever you get into a tight place, use it!"

"And so saying, he opened the doors of the cage, and the fair young martyr

stepped into the arena.' What price the lions?" murmured Lady Jerrold cryptically. "Your Henry is either a fool or a wise, wise man. Depends on what he wants!"

IV

DAYS slipped into weeks imperceptibly, and Leila learned the meaning of *dolce far niente*. They made engagements and kept them or not, as they chose. They ate odd meals in odd places; moonlight supper in the ruins of an ancient imperial pleasure-house on one of the steep crests of the island; midnight breakfast in the garden of a writer who slept only by day; dinner in the studio of an artist who was also his own cook, and equally poor at both professions.

They sailed around the island in a picturesque felucca, with the sculptor Charpentier, who had a passion for masquerade, dressed for the rôle of skipper. He succeeded in empaling the felucca upon a rock, from which perilous situation they were rescued only after Frasci, stripping quite calmly to the nethermost garment, had swum ashore to summon aid. Leila, despite her panic, could not help noting for the first time the beauty of the male human body, the rippling of muscle under satin skin, the slender, powerful grace of young limbs.

It was after this episode that she bought for herself a small replica of one of the Herculanean bronzes—that youthful Apollo who stands poised with bent head and lifted finger, as if above the sounds of the world he were listening to something afar off.

"What do you suppose he hears—bird-songs, the ocean?" she said once, rather shyly, to Lady Jerrold. For all her cynicism, the old worldling was never difficult to talk with.

"Sirens, probably. The resemblance to Paolo is very marked!"

Leila blushed a little. She had not been unaware of the resemblance.

The charm of the life was its unexpectedness. People drifted in and out of Leila's ken without arousing question or remark. She never knew who might be her next *vis-à-vis* at dinner—a Hindu swami, a Russian nihilist, a Greek, some mysterious traveler with a great name which he was not using, a dreamy-eyed boy from the Paris studios.

She was glad of the little French she had acquired in the pursuit of culture, though it was rarely necessary. All her new acquaintances seemed to possess the gift of tongues.

She confessed her ignorance, with some humility, to a man who sat beside her at luncheon one day—an elderly Russian, who conversed with various people about the table, each in a different tongue.

"You make me feel so crude," she said.

He looked at her gravely.

"Ah, yes, crude! The flower is crude, the sunset cloud, the star, the universe—all crude, unfinished, in process of becoming something else. So you are not a linguist, *madame*? And why should you be one? Among men there is a universal language. No, not Esperanto—I mean a language of the eyes. Do you not find that if you are unable to speak to us in our tongues, we are at some pains to speak to you in yours?"

It was true. Leila began to be excitingly aware of a quality in herself which she had not before suspected. Brilliant as these people were, famous, some of them, they seemed glad enough of her modest, inconspicuous company. They were as willing to talk to her as she to listen. Could it be that she had charm? A heady thought for one who had basked hitherto only in the mild approval of a Henry Farland!

She began to take keen interest in her appearance; to the relief of Fanchon, who had despaired over her indifference to those details, those little touches of the toilet which, as every Frenchwoman knows, make all the difference between success and failure.

"*Mon Dieu!* If she has but her bath and the fresh ribbon in her *camisole*, it is enough," the maid had complained to her mistress. "I say to her beseechingly, 'Rouge, *madame*—the merest *soupçon*?' She replies, 'Why shall I have rouge? My cheeks are already pink.' I say, 'But consider *les messieurs*! It is so flattering to them, rouge—so consoling to their vanity.' She replies with coldness, 'I am a married woman, Fanchon, and my husband does not care for rouge.' Oh, *là là!* As if one rouged for the husband!"

Leila found rouge rather more becoming than she had thought. She discovered, too, with Fanchon's aid, that earrings brought

out very nicely the oval of her face. She had her photograph taken in them for Henry.

Whatever interesting uncertainty there might be about her *vis-à-vis* at table, she could always be quite sure that Fraschi made one of the party. He had become her recognized *cavaliere servente* in a society that goes invariably two by two.

"Nonsense!" Lady Jerrold laughed, when Leila confessed her scruples on the subject. "Naturally one has to have a man around, and why not Paolo as well as another? I'm here to act as dragon. Don't be missish, my dear! And what could you do about it—say 'Unhand me, villain,' when he's never handed you, so to speak?"

It was true that he had never "handed" her. There were subtleties in his method of pursuit quite new to Leila's limited experience. Henry had not found subtlety necessary.

If she touched a wine-glass to her lips, Fraschi managed stealthily to exchange glasses with her and to drink from the same spot. Her gloves, her handkerchiefs, were constantly disappearing, to appear later, at sentimental moments, in the possession of the Italian. She found notes from him in the oddest places—under her pillow, tucked into her bath-slippers. Freshly gathered flowers came in on her breakfast-tray, impassioned verses were folded into her dinner-napkin.

It was all so extravagant that she could not take him seriously. She was reminded of an affair of her early youth, when a certain schoolboy lover had been wont to leave cinnamon-balls in her desk and flat, white hearts of chewing-wax tucked into books, in token of his adoration. It was ridiculous; but nevertheless it was rather exciting.

One night she was again talking to the elderly Russian, with whom she had made great friends, when she was aware of a foot touching hers beneath the table. She moved; again the foot touched hers.

"Madame winced," said the observant Russian. "You are in pain?"

"It's my foot. Some stupid man keeps stepping on it, and I'm wearing new slippers," she explained in all innocence.

Her clear voice traveled around the table. There was an instant's pause, and then there came an irrepressible shout of laughter, while she was aware of Fraschi, direct-

ly opposite, fixing her with a reproachful, tender gaze.

She blushed furiously. The Russian, to cover her confusion, talked on steadily; but Leila, with a newly acquired art of giving attention in several directions at once, managed to overhear a conversation across the way.

"Take care, take care, Paolo! Not too fast! I told you it was a puritan. You'll frighten little *Miss Muffet* away." The speaker was Lady Jerrold.

"*Macché!* 'Is it a soul, or a sort of fish?'" murmured Fraschi ruefully. The phrase seemed to have made a deep impression on him.

It was at this dinner that a curious incident occurred. An Austrian woman, famous for her wit, had been keeping one end of the table enthralled by her conversation, when suddenly, almost in the midst of a speech, she leaned back in her chair and went to sleep. Nobody paid the slightest attention to her. When the others rose from the table, she remained, still placidly slumbering.

"What could it have been?" asked Leila, round-eyed, on the way home. "Was she ill? Had she been—drinking too much wine?"

"Oh, hardly that. Opium, I fancy. I've not tried it myself," said Lady Jerrold impartially; "but it seems often to get them that way, quite of a sudden."

Leila gazed with some awe at a lady who numbered opium-eaters among her casual acquaintance.

On a third occasion she sat next to the Russian, this time by choice. The dinner was Charpentier's—a magnificent affair, got up in true Capri fashion on an hour's notice.

Leila, leaning over the wall that buttressed their steep hillside garden, had noticed the elderly Frenchman hurrying up the street below, his neat spats fairly twinkling in his haste, his mustache and imperial bristling with excitement. In his hand he held an open letter.

"Lady Jerrold! Please come here and look at your *cavaliere servente*," she called. "Something seems to have happened to him."

He was in the act of ringing at their garden gate. Lady Jerrold leaned over and cried solicitously:

"What is the matter, Charpentier? Your wife is not about to descend, what?"

"*Mon Dieu*, no!" he cried back. "Picture to yourself—I have sold a statue! The first in ten years! Name of a name, what am I to do with all this money? I think I shall pay my debts!"

"Don't be foolish, Charles," advised the lady delightedly. "You can pay debts any day. We have nothing to do to-night. You shall give us a banquet!"

The banquet was set in an atelier in which every object was a thing rare and valuable, even to the chairs, and to the wine-glasses on the table. The very maids who served them were *objets de vertu*, charming little creatures in antique Neapolitan costume, who sang shy choruses between the courses, with the versatile Charpentier wielding the baton. If he was not a great sculptor, he was at least a great connoisseur.

The favors were tiny stilettos, their Damascene blades almost as slender as hatpins, their hilts set with semiprecious stones.

"It is to be hoped," murmured the host, "that *mesdames* will find my little gifts useful—"

There was an outcry.

"As paper-cutters," he finished.

Leila had chosen for her table companions the elderly Russian and Fraschi—somewhat to the chagrin of Charpentier, who was not Lady Jerrold's *cavaliere* entirely from choice.

"Again this pig of a Slav!" murmured the Italian in her ear. "Presently I shall find myself jealous."

"And then?" Leila asked demurely.

"Then I shall seize him by the beard," muttered Fraschi, "and tweak his nose!"

Leila laughed aloud. The picture of the grave and dignified gentleman on her left being tweaked was irresistible.

Leila's laugh was a pleasant thing both to hear and to see. It wrinkled up her small nose and turned her eyes into long, blue slits; and people who heard it usually smiled without knowing why. But Fraschi did not smile.

"You will laugh just like that, perhaps, when the Slav and I meet upon the field of honor, *Lé-ila mia?*"

"Probably," she said; "but I am not your Leila. What shall you use—swords or pistols?"

"Bombs," he said gloomily. "The anarchist will naturally have the choice of weapons—old *birba!*"

Leila turned merrily to her other companion.

"The *marchese* accuses you of being an anarchist. Is it true? Is that why?"—she had a sudden temptation to try her new wings—"is that why you never ask us into that mysterious villa of yours—because you are making bombs and things?"

A bland serenity overspread the elderly Russian's face. Leila was aware that a hush had fallen upon the table. She was a little frightened.

He smiled down at her gravely, as at a child.

"To prove the injustice of *monsieur's* accusations," he said, "I shall at once throw open the doors of the mysterious villa. Olga Feodorovna"—he leaned forward and spoke to a vivacious, pale lady farther down the table—"I am asking Mrs. Farland and some friends to *déjeuner* with us to-morrow. You have no engagement, I hope?"

"But it will be charming," replied the lady, and nodded brightly at Leila.

When they reached home, Lady Jerrold followed Leila into her room, her eyes sparkling.

"What ho, what ho!" she murmured. "How we advance! But you must not—no, really, you must *not*—go about accusing people of being mysterious. It isn't safe. The poor, brave Radischev! Mme. Smirnoff will certainly put poison in his tea for this—or yours, or somebody's. Scratch a Russian, you know, and you'll find a Tatar!"

"But why?" demanded the bewildered Leila.

"Have you ever," said Lady Jerrold musingly, "heard of a thing called 'oblo-movism'?"

"No. What is it—a disease?"

"A state of mind. Have you read Gogol? He expresses it in his character of *Oblomov*; but all Russians have it more or less, as they have catarrh. It is their fate. On the surface, gaiety, wit, insouciance—but let something go wrong, and puff, out with the world, like a candle! You Americans have a phrase for it, too—'What's the use?' Only you don't put out the world for it. You have some sense of proportion."

"I don't understand," said Leila, "what this has to do with Mme. Smirnoff and Prince Radischev's party."

Lady Jerrold gave her a curious look.

"I don't believe you do. In plain words, my love, the Smirnoff is jealous."

"Of her uncle? You told me he was her uncle!"

"Cousin, cousin—surely I must have said cousin! Olga is a trifle *passée* to be a niece any longer."

Leila stared at her, paling.

"You mean to tell me—"

"I mean to tell you nothing. There is an Italian proverb that says, 'Keep the mouth closed and the eyes open'; but I have made up a better one—'Keep the eyes closed, too!'"

"You mean to say," persisted Leila, stammering, "that people here—accept that sort of thing?"

The Englishwoman shrugged. It is a contagious gesture.

"Why not? Mme. Smirnoff is very agreeable, and he is—Prince Radischev. We are not our brother's keeper, in Capri at least. My dear," she went on with unaccustomed earnestness, "you really should not carry about with you the standards of Chickamauga, or Keokuk, or whatever the place is. They'll simply make you uncomfortable. Of course, in a clean, brand-new country like yours, virtue flourishes like the green bay-tree. Why shouldn't it, with divorce as easy to come by as marriage, what? If you've made a mistake, you've simply to hurry back to the grab-bag and try another chance. Beautiful! But with us things are more complicated. We've position to consider, tradition, priests. If we make our mistakes—and who doesn't?—our only hope is to get away occasionally to some little playground of the world, like this, and forget ourselves, safe from the eye behind the neighbors' window-shade. I told you there were no conventions in Capri. There is one—we never peer from behind our window-shades."

Leila listened, shivering a little. The soft, crisp English voice was not at all cynical, only kind. She remembered the unfortunate queen of Fraschi's 'sad little story.' She thought of Prince Radischev, courteous, sympathetic, almost fatherly, the sort of man she would have liked to call her friend.

Truly, as Lady Jerrold said, Capri was one of the world's playgrounds. From the first these people had seemed to her like children playing in the sun; but they were playing a game she did not understand.

"I am rather homesick," she said at last. "I shall not go to Prince Radischev's party."

"Perhaps that would be wise," murmured her companion.

Leila kept her word. Instead she went to luncheon with Fraschi.

"Let's get old Tino to drive us up to the *trattoria* in Anacapri again," she suggested.

He had the gift, inestimable in a companion, of making her feel frivolous and care-free.

"So! You remember Caterina's *gnocchi*," he cried, delighted.

"And the grandchildren," murmured Leila.

In fact, the twins had occupied a surprising share in her thoughts. Babies were rare among her acquaintance.

At the *trattoria*, the *padrone* received them as old friends, and led them, beaming, into the kitchen itself, where his daughter sat feeding one of her progeny, while the other roared hungrily on a bench near by.

"One sees that he will be a *basso profondo*, that one!" said the proud grandfather.

Leila picked up the *basso profondo* to comfort him—with surprising success. He at once ceased his wails and buried his face in a businesslike manner upon her breast, having but one conception in his primitive brain as to the uses of the sex.

The *padrone*, chuckling, took him away; but Fraschi smiled at her gently, as if he understood quite well the curious thrill that had passed through her when the baby made its mistake.

The luncheon was not a success. Leila could not forgive her friend for being so *simpatico*. She had the true Anglo-Saxon distrust of anything in herself that resembled emotion. If such ebullitions must occur, she instinctively preferred to keep them to herself.

V

At the little Casa Fiore it was the custom for Leila and Lady Jerrold to have their morning coffee together, while Fanchon brushed their hair and listened, discreetly, to their desultory conversation. The maid found it improving to her English. Leila, on her part, felt that in these conversations she was vicariously seeing a

great deal of the world—not to mention the flesh and the devil.

Sometimes they discussed Fraschi.

"To get him at his best, you ought to see him with his mother," said Lady Jerrold. "It's rather nice. Each year he takes her for a week to Aix les Bains, ostensibly for the cure—your Roman is an inveterate gambler, even the elderly female ones. But not many chaps would care to appear with their mothers at the Villa des Fleurs, what? She's a typical noble of the old school, bearded like a pard, and *très grande dame*. She lives in one or two rooms of an old palace on the Via Babuino. By the way, the Fraschi are Romans; you must never call them Italians! The other rooms she lets out, unconsciously, as it were, in apartments. The palace, of course, is Paolo's—all that his father left of a rather pretty fortune—but he has made it over to his mother, who lives on the rent of the apartments—or, rather, exists. But she keeps her carriage; oh, dear, yes! It would not occur to a Roman to do without her carriage—one must drive on the Pincio when the band plays. She shares it with two or three other noble paupers, turn and turn about. One day the Sereni liveries appear; the next the Malevogli; the next the Fraschi, with an ancient majordomo on the box, and a footman beside him, hired by the hour. The majordomo also does the cookin', and I dare say the washin'—though there wouldn't be much of that. Amusin', isn't it?"

Leila did not find it at all amusing. The thought of the gallant old noblewoman, facing poverty with her chin up, touched her deeply.

"If they are so wretchedly poor, why is Paolo idling here?"

"Cheaper than idling in Rome, my dear. There the Fraschi traditions would have to be maintained, and family traditions are rather costly."

"But," cried the American, "why does he idle anywhere? Why doesn't he *do* something?"

Lady Jerrold gave her an odd look.

"He's doing what he can, my dear. Give him time. Of course, a suitable marriage will solve their problem. Once we thought it was all arranged. There was a phlegmatic young pork person from Sheboygan, or Kalamazoo—one of your remarkable cities—"

"Probably Chicago," said Leila.

"Possibly. But just at the crucial moment a certain *ballerina*—an old friend of Paolo's—distracted his attention somewhat, and as the pork lady was constitutionally unable to make allowances for the Latin temperament, negotiations were suddenly called off."

"I am glad of it!" cried Leila. "Think of poor Paolo tied to a phlegmatic pork person!"

"Eh, well! Paolo's wife will need a certain amount of phlegm, as well as a pocketbook," murmured Lady Jerrold. "The lady from Chicago had both. In fact," she admitted, in the resigned tone with which one refers to failures, "I myself selected her!"

Despite the cosmopolitanism of her circle, Leila had noticed more than once that it contained no English people, although there were English residents in plenty among the villas and the hotels.

She ventured once to comment upon this rather surprising fact. She had begun to learn that interrogation was a form of speech rarely used in Capri.

"Of course you meet no English people, and you never will, if I can help it," said Lady Jerrold emphatically. "The Briton *en masse*, on his native heath, is a rather impressive spectacle; but the traveling Briton, who has come forth to inspect the world and find it wanting—Heaven defend us!"

"He's no worse than the traveling American," said Leila rather ruefully.

"Oh, yes, he is! Infinitely! With the American, there's always the fascinatin' element of chance. You never can tell what he'll turn out to be. Like a mongrel pup, you know—may be a dachshund, or a poodle of sorts, or a perfectly good bulldog. Look at you," she said. "Who would have thought a drab little body like you would ever develop into a finished flirt?"

Leila laughed. The other's casual candor robbed her words of all offense, even to patriotism.

"We *are* rather a mongrel nation, aren't we?"

"And that's why you're the greatest nation in the world," cried Lady Jerrold. "You've got it all within yourselves—British pluck, French *esprit*, German steadfastness, Slavic genius—everything. The

trouble with us insular people is that we're so horribly ourselves all the time. We take certain qualities that we call 'British,' and we reproduce 'em over and over till they become abnormal, like the tail on a fox-terrier. Inbreeding! I tell you it's the ruin of any stock!"

She broke off, with a little gesture of apology.

"I seem to be talkin' in kennel terms," she said. "You see, my boys kept rather a fairish kennel, and I formed the habit of thinkin' that way."

"Your boys!" repeated Leila, surprised. "Have you sons?"

It had not occurred to Leila to think of her friend in the rôle of a mother.

"Do I look like the sort to produce daughters?" said Lady Jerrold. "Five of 'em, my dear. Nice chaps they are, too—or used to be. Haven't seen 'em for twenty years."

Leila looked her astonishment.

"I never go to England nowadays," said Lady Jerrold.

"But why not have them come to you?" asked Leila rather stupidly.

"Bring my boys to Capri? God forbid!" The other took a long whiff at her cigarette. "And if He didn't, Jerrold would, the pious man!" she added, with her usual nonchalance. "Look here! Speaking of children, when you were in the mad pursuit of excitement—culture, slummin', and all that—why didn't you try babies? Rotten for the figure, but interestin', no end. Why didn't you try it on, my dear?"

Fanchon left the room. She was really very discreet. Leila looked embarrassed; but it was easy to be perfectly candid with a woman who was shocked and surprised by nothing.

"I think—because I was afraid they would look like Henry."

The older woman did not smile.

"Nothing to blush about in that. Sounds to me like perfectly good—what-d'you-call-'ems?—eugenics. You've got the wrong man, that's all, or you wouldn't care if he looked like a chimpanzee. Better try another, my dear. Why not go back to the grab-bag?"

Leila looked up, startled.

"You mean—divorce Henry?"

"Why not? You have your own property. You're evidently bored to death with the man."

"Oh!" murmured Leila, aghast. "But that's no reason for divorce—Henry's never done anything!"

"How do you know?" smiled Lady Jerrold. "Sounds like an obligin' sort of chap, Henry. I wonder if it's ever occurred to you"—she leaned over and patted the other's knee—"that Henry may be as badly bored with you as you are with him?"

It had not; but thereafter it occurred to Leila quite often. She was not sure whether the idea pleased her or not. On the whole, she feared that it did. It made her feel less guilty about staying on in Capri.

VI

ONE morning Fanchon and the coffee arrived without Lady Jerrold. The maid murmured in explanation that her mistress was already dressed and about to *faire une promenade*.

Leila was astonished. She had often heard the other's views on the subject of early rising.

"Nobody's fit for human society before eleven o'clock," was her ultimatum. "The brain's in curl-papers, if the hair isn't. A brutal habit, public breakfast!"

Leila went forth to investigate. She found her friend hurrying out with every evidence of haste in her toilet, her dyed hair carelessly caught up, her cheeks unrouged. Seen so, in the early morning light, Lady Jerrold looked far more than the sixty years that she confessed; yet for the first time, Leila realized that she must once have been a very beautiful woman. Her face had lost for the moment its look of careless, mocking cynicism.

"I did not wish to disturb you, dear, but something very dreadful has happened. Radischev sent for me—Olga Smirnoff is dead!"

"Dead!" Leila's thoughts flew to the rumors she had heard of the Radischev villa. "Oh!" she gasped. "A bomb exploded, or something?"

Lady Jerrold shook her head.

"She killed herself with one of the little daggers we got at Charpentier's dinner."

Leila sat down suddenly.

"Killed herself! Lady Jerrold! You don't think I—"

"Had anything to do with it?" finished the other, and smiled gravely. "Oh, no. It was just oblomovism. She saw that the game was up. Poor Olga! I could have

told her the game was up a year ago. It never lasts very long, that game!"

Leila sat where she was for a long time, staring in front of her. She had thought of these people as children playing in the sun!

Once or twice Fanchon glanced out at her sympathetically. At last the French girl brought her hat and a parasol.

"It is verree shocking, verree *triste*, *n'est-ce-pas*, *m'dame*? *Mais—*"

She sketched a shrug that said more plainly than words, "It is another who is dead, not we."

"Will *madame* make a promenade, perhaps? That is always so soothing to the English."

Leila decided to accept the advice of the philosopher.

Presently she found herself in the quarter of the town where *forestieri* rarely penetrate, and the invariable post-cards and souvenirs in the windows of the little shops are replaced by pendent strings of honest garlic and those round, white goats'-milk cheeses which are the staple delicacy of the *contadini*.

Here life went on in all its phases with the frankness possible only to the south Italian. Women did their cooking on tiny charcoal braziers in the street, for fear of missing a word of the chatter that flew from door to door. Others crowded about a washing-tank, quarreling, laughing, singing, as their backs rose and fell to the hard work. Leila had to pick her way among sprawling infants, who rose with one accord and toddled after her, lisping demands for "*Soldi, soldi!*"

Leila thought that Fraschi had been mistaken when he said that it was difficult to see with the nose. In this quarter as much was visible to the nose as to the eye; particularly the presence of that respected domestic animal for whom the island is named. In a land that offers no pasturage for cows the goat is a household god.

As she passed a tiny courtyard that had its full complement of goat and drying rags and children and scratching poultry, the sound of a familiar voice made Leila start. She looked in. Leaning gracefully against a doorway, hatless, coatless, his hands spread apart with a skein of yarn draped upon them, stood the Marchese di Fraschi. In the doorway sat a young peasant woman who was winding the yarn into a ball.

It was the latter who glanced up first and saw Leila. She showed a handsome, sullen face which did not light up with the customary smile of the Italian woman as she said:

"*Buon giorno, signora!*"

Fraschi gave a dramatic start.

"*Madame! You!*" he cried, his face radiant. "It is an unexpected pleasure. If *madame* will but wait a little moment, until Maddalena finishes the ball? *Dio mio*, make haste, Maddalena!"

The woman snapped the yarn off short, and took the skein from him. She said something to the gaping children, who ran into the house and returned, bearing a coat, a hat, and the walking-stick without which no Italian gentleman makes a public appearance, even in *villeggiatura*.

"Do you often make morning calls in this neighborhood?" asked Leila as he joined her.

"It is here where I live," Fraschi replied. "I am the *pensionnaire* of Tino and Maddalena."

She looked at him aghast. She thought of the dirty courtyard, the noisy, ragged children, above all the goat.

"It is very picturesque," she said hastily.

"I do not live there because it is picturesque, but because it is cheap," he explained with the candor always so startling to those accustomed to mention money and all its works with the reticence of respect. "I have taught Maddalena to make good coffee, but she will never be a cook," he added regretfully. "Tino was an old fool to marry her!"

"You mean to say she is the wife of *our* Tino—that young woman? No wonder she looks unhappy!"

"But it was a very good marriage for Maddalena, a girl without a dower, with nothing but her face. A face," said Paolo, "is not something one needs in a wife—*macché*, no! It goes better if she is ugly; but Maddalena will never be ugly. *Corpo di Bacco!*" He warmed to his theme. "Were there ever such women as these of Capri? Their little, straight noses, their proud carriage of the head, their exquisite limbs—ah!" He blew a kiss from his finger-tips into space. "It is the beauty of Greek nymphs, done in flesh—which is better than marble. *Dio mio!* One remembers that Capri was once an isle of Greece."

A queer twinge of something very primitive stirred in Leila, not unlike the twinge she had felt when Caterina's grandchild mistook her for its mother, but far less pleasant.

"I find your Capri women a little too dark and too—oily for Greek nymphs," she said.

He agreed with her.

"Also," he murmured, coming closer to her side, "they have not the eyes of blue, like those shy blue flowers that grow upon cool mountainsides."

When she reached the Casa Fiore again, Leila was mortified to realize that for several hours she had quite forgotten poor Olga Feodorovna, lying dead with the toy dagger in her hand.

Lady Jerrold had returned from her sad errand, and welcomed Leila's companion with effusion. Fanchon also greeted him with a discreet smile.

"Now," she said to the cook, "things will go more gaily here. They have *trop de sentiment*, these English. Why should one think of foolish things when the sun is out?"

VII

A LETTER came one day which Leila opened with some eagerness. It was from Miss Evans, a brisk young American newspaper woman with whom she had been quite intimate on shipboard, owing to the inevitable attraction of opposites. Miss Evans had come with her to Capri, and had left her there very reluctantly, after a hasty glimpse of the Blue Grotto, to which one day had been allotted by the schedule on which she was "doing" Europe at railroad speed.

Now she wrote, urging Leila to join her.

You'll just about catch me in Florence, if you start at once. I hate to think of you wasting all this time in that poky island, with nothing to see but the grotto—no galleries or cathedrals or ruins to speak of. I have been doing three sights a day, regularly. Of course, my feet ache, and the back of my neck, but it's such a cultured ache! Atmosphere is oozing out of me at every pore, also local color, and copy. I shall be able to turn out a story a day when I get back to a typewriter.

Oh, by the way, you remember that old Englishwoman we saw at the hotel there, painted up like a mollygaw? I don't suppose you'll meet her, but if you do, mind your eye! She's the limit. I met some English people at a *pension* who knew all about her. The title's genuine

enough—you never can be sure of these wandering peeresses—but her husband won't let her come back to England because she eloped, my dear—with an Italian, of all things! Between them, they gambled away all their money, and now she supplements her income with bridge and Americans. She hangs around the big hotels seeking whom she may devour—

The letter fluttered out of Leila's nerveless fingers, and Lady Jerrold looked up from her own mail.

"What's the matter, child? You look rather hipped. Bad news?"

Leila heard herself saying, quite without her own volition:

"Will you please tell me—why you never go back to England?"

The other looked at her steadily.

"I think you know," she answered at last. She held out her hand. "May I see your letter?"

Leila picked it up and gave it to her.

Lady Jerrold read it through slowly. She even smiled a little as she murmured:

"So refreshin', these Americans!"

She handed it back.

"It's all quite true, my dear; but I've dropped bridge. So few of you play a decent game. Now, do tell me, what's a mollygaw?"

Leila stared at her in silence. Strangely enough, she felt no surprise. It was as if her life of the past month or two had been leading up to this, as to a climax. She was not thinking of Lady Jerrold. She was watching herself, curious to see what she would do.

The other waited, smoking her inevitable cigarette. Presently she said, with a little sigh:

"I suppose you'll be goin' on, my dear?"

Lady Jerrold had been very comfortable at the Casa Fiore.

Leila roused herself.

"No," she said uncertainly. "No—I don't think so. Why, you're not a *bad* woman! Nobody so kind and—and jolly could be a bad woman!"

"One may smile and smile and be a villain still, you know," remarked Lady Jerrold impartially.

Leila suddenly found that her eyes were full of tears.

"I d-don't care!" she stammered.

"What b-business is it of mine? I like you. Oh, Lady Jerrold," she cried, "it does make such a difference when you get to know people!"

The other nodded.

"Doesn't it?" she agreed; and that was their last word on the subject.

The Englishwoman, however, was not without her practical ideas of gratitude.

One afternoon, Leila, idling along in the Piazza—the central space of the little town—heard singing in the cathedral, and was tempted to venture in. She had never before entered a Roman Catholic church during service.

Just outside the doors there were some tables like the booths of a bazaar, where vendors were doing a brisk business in rosaries, candles, and head-scarfs. Within, she passed an image of the Madonna, dressed quite fashionably in brocade, with a lace veil over her head, and several strings of coral around her neck to ward off the evil eye. The naïve figure amused Leila a little; but after a moment or two she ceased to smile.

The interior was vast and dim, and at the far end some kneeling women suddenly began to chant in a weird, shrill monotone. When they paused, others began in a different key. To Leila's unaccustomed ears it sounded as barbaric as the rites of some heathen worship.

At the altar a priest was busy—the same fat man whom she had seen riding his small donkey, but looking now, in his purple robes, a strangely majestic figure. He stooped to kiss the altar, turned with outspread arms, and spoke in sonorous incantation.

Through the dimness people were constantly coming and going, apparently paying no attention to the service, quietly engrossed with their own prayers. There was none of the reverent formality that she had always associated with churchgoing. The worshipers entered and left as they chose, as if they had stepped in from the street for a little visit with a friend. And always the chant of the kneeling women rose and fell, died away, began again.

Near by she heard voices whispering in a confessional. Presently a young man came out and knelt in the pew where she sat, without recognizing her. It was Fraschi.

After a moment he rose and began to move slowly around the church, kneeling before a picture, crossing himself, and passing on to the next. He was making the Stations of the Cross.

She watched him, surprised and rather touched. It had not occurred to her to associate her *cavaliere* with piety. He looked curiously boyish, and yet more manly than she had ever seen him, kneeling so and saying his prayers. She thought vaguely of young knights at their vigil, of *Galahad* and the Holy Grail.

The national sense of humor, never very strong in Leila, was at that moment somewhat in abeyance.

Presently he left the church. After a decent interval, she followed. Dazed a little by the sunlight after the dimness of the interior, she paused at the top of the steps and looked for him. He was strolling across the Piazza, gallant and debonair, with a word for this person, a smile for that.

He paused at a flower-stall to replace his fading boutonnière, and the toothless crone who served him fastened the final choise upon his coat very coyly; whereat, to the pleasure of the bystanders, the *marchese* chuckled her under the chin. He strolled on into the park, and down a path that leads to the sands, singing under his breath "*La Bella Gina*."

Leila followed, smiling to think of his surprise when he discovered her, and quite unaware of the tenderness in her face.

But it was she who had the surprise. As he neared the rocks at the foot of the path, a woman's voice called softly:

"*Enfin! C'est toi, mon ami?*"

At the words, Fraschi cast away his cigarette with alacrity and disappeared around the rock.

Leila stood still, her face suddenly ashen. She was aware that her heart had begun to thump horribly, sickeningly. The feeling that had come to her when he praised the beauty of other women gripped her now by the throat. She could hardly breathe.

What was happening to her? She wanted to scream, to run around the rock and attack the woman who was there, to scratch her face, to pull her hair. Rage possessed her, pure and primitive.

She tried to tell herself that it was nothing to her whom Fraschi chose to meet behind the rocks; that it could not possibly matter to her, Leila Farland! But she knew that it did matter. She knew that she, lady as she was, woman of thirty, Henry Farland's wife, had fallen in love as violently and as suddenly as any housemaid.

"At least I shall not spy on him!" she said, with a piteous clutch at her dignity. "I shall go away!"

She could not go away. A nauseating curiosity possessed her to know who the woman was. It was not Maddalena, at least—she had felt a queer intuition about Maddalena—for this one spoke French! Great Heavens, how many of them were there?

She made another clutch at her dignity. One must not do the man an injustice. Surely he might meet a person by accident, or even by appointment, with another motive in his mind than—kissing, for instance?

She crept forward, step by unwilling step. She peered around the rock.

Fraschi did not notice her. If he had any motive in his mind other than kissing, it was not at the moment apparent. The woman in his arms was Fanchon, Lady Jerrold's maid.

Leila never knew how far she walked that day, nor where. She stumbled about quite blindly, in slippers that were not meant for walking, bruising her feet, wrenching her ankle, unconscious of any pain except the one at her heart; and that was less pain than loathing.

She was sick with horror of herself, and with shame. She tried to exorcise the thing that haunted her with thoughts of her husband, kind, fat, unsuspecting Henry, who had such confidence in her level head. But Henry was no longer real to her. He was like some character in a dream. Nobody seemed real to her except Paolo—Paolo praying, dancing, romping with babies; Paolo standing ready to dive, beautiful as the young bronze Apollo.

The loathing that filled her was not for him; nor even for Fanchon. Lady Jerrold had taught her one thing—to accept people as she found them.

She passed the Perkinses' villa in her aimless wandering, and a sudden wish to be with them came over her. Perhaps they would bring her back to realities—these good, commonplace, decent souls, whose morality, doubtless, was bound and bounded by the articles of the Presbyterian creed.

The garden gate was ajar, and she entered without ringing. Mrs. Perkins sat alone in her denuded pergola, gazing out across the water, and weeping. Leila

would have gone away without speaking, but that the old woman looked up and saw her.

"Come in, come in!" she cried, her voice tremulously eager. "My, but I'm glad to see somebody! Mr. Perkins"—she invariably spoke of her husband as of some passing acquaintance—"he's just gone down to watch the boat come in and see if there are any Americans. He does love to see Americans. And to think of his missing *you*!"

"I'll come in for a visit another day," murmured Leila. "I'm afraid you are in trouble—"

"No more 'n usual." The old woman's voice quivered, and tears threatened to start afresh. "I was just sitting here, thinking. At home the crocuses are beginning to poke their green noses up out in the yard, and the bluebirds are coming back, I guess. Look at this!" She waved a despairing hand about the beautiful garden. "Not a bud in it, and I don't believe there ever were any buds. Everything comes up full-blown and without a bit of smell. It's unnatural! As for birds, did you ever hear a bird singing in Capri?"

Leila admitted that she had not.

"Oh dear!" quavered Mrs. Perkins, suddenly breaking down. "Oh dear! I do like a spring that's a spring, and not a summer!"

Leila came out of herself with an effort.

"I wonder why you stay in Capri," she said gently. "I don't think you quite belong here."

"Of course we don't! Folks are real kind, but they're not home folks," sobbed Mrs. Perkins.

"Then why not go back to America?"

"Because—"

The old lady made a desperate effort to stop herself. She gulped and glanced around her in a frightened way; but the need of a confidante was greater than pride or discretion.

"Because the lawyers say we *can't*," she whispered tragically. "Not ever! It wouldn't be safe for Mr. Perkins."

So, indeed, Leila touched realities, if not the realities she had hoped to find. She knew now why the face of old Mr. Perkins had seemed familiar to her. It had appeared in the newspapers in connection with some financial scandal. She understood, too, a certain deprecating wistfulness in the American's manner, like that

of a stray dog who is not sure of its welcome.

She went away uncomforted, not being of that Christian majority who find their own troubles lessened by taking thought on the troubles of others.

Long afterward, one gleam of beauty came to her out of the sordid little tragedy. Evidently it had never occurred to the homesick wife that she might return to America without her Mr. Perkins!

VIII

SUNSET found Leila still roaming wearily about, lacking the courage to face Lady Jerrold's shrewd eyes or Fanchon's demure inquisitiveness. Already the peasant women who passed her with bundles on their heads were saying:

"Buona sera, signora!"

Soon it would be dusk; yet Leila moved on doggedly, with some vague idea of going all the way to Anacapri, to see Caterina and the twins. She was not thinking very clearly by this time; not even feeling very clearly. Physical weariness is an excellent narcotic.

She heard galloping hoofs coming up the narrow road, and pressed close against the cliff to let them pass. But they did not pass. They drew up beside her with a dramatic scattering of gravel.

"Ecco, eccellenza!" cried a voice, and Frascchi descended from the carriage.

"It is Papa Tino who is my friend!" he beamed. "He has seen you making a *passaggiata* up the mountain—he informs me—I hasten. But, *dio mio!*" he broke off, startled by the pallor of her face. "The signora is ill! Come, let me place you in the carriage—"

Leila said to herself that she must be quite natural, that he must never suspect what had happened.

"It is nothing. I have a headache," she said faintly. "I prefer to be alone, thank you!"

To her horror, her voice broke, and she knew that she was going to cry. She turned and fled from him, stumbling across the rough cliffside, praying to all her gods that he would not follow. But he did follow.

She began to run, in her panic, aware that her tragedy was becoming comedy, and that hysterics were very near.

"Signora, not so fast!" he begged plaintively. "Ah, signora! In patent-leathers, can one leap the crags like a goat?"

It broke down the last remnant of her self-command. She clung to the nearest olive-tree, sobbing and laughing uncontrollably, while Frascchi stared at her, round-eyed.

"Oh, go away!" she gasped. "Can't you see I don't want to speak to you, to have anything to do with you? I saw you, down there behind the rock, with that woman! I tell you I saw you!"

Light broke on him.

"That woman? *Dio mio*, it was Fanchon! Only Fanchon, who comes to bring me the key of your garden gate!"

"The key?" she whispered.

"But yes! It is a surprise, a secret. M. Charpentier has arranged a serenade *en troubadour*, in the ancient manner of my my people, *Lé-ila mia!* He and I, when the moon rises. A confederate is necessary—one cannot ring at the door-bell as for an afternoon visit. It is Fanchon—you see?—who brings the key."

Leila sat down against the olive-tree. In the revulsion of her feeling she went rather faint.

"But—I saw you kissing her! I followed—"

He laughed out boyishly.

"But of course! She is very pretty, the Fanchon, very kind. It is she who has been my friend, arranging the little *biglietti*, the flowers, bringing me word always where you shall be found. Naturally one kisses her. Shall I insult the child?"

His eyes had been growing brighter and brighter. Now he suddenly knelt beside Leila, greatly to the interest of the gazing Tino.

"You followed me—you watched! Why, my *Lé-ila*? Because you are jealous, because you love! Is it not so? Ah, *cara, carissima*, you love me, then? You love me?"

"No!" she gasped. "No, no! I don't! I can't!"

The telltale color flooded her cheeks, her forehead. She put up her hands to hide it. He took them away, and looked into her eyes. Then, very reverently, he lifted her hands to his lips. Slowly, almost unwillingly, she turned them over so that he should kiss their palms.

Tino, himself a lover and a gentleman, presented his back to the hillside, placed stones beneath the carriage-wheels, and settled himself comfortably with the stump of a cigar—quite a long stump. There

would undoubtedly be time to finish it. Meanwhile, the tariff was pleasantly, pleasantly mounting. All was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

It was very late indeed when Leila returned to the Casa Fiore, and Lady Jerrold, looking up from a game of solitaire, shook a finger at her.

"If I were the proper thing in dragons, I should shut you up on a bread-and-water diet! Where did you dine? I waited dinner for you quite half an hour, and at my age—"

She broke off as the other came into the circle of lamplight.

"Ah!" she said quietly, and asked no more questions.

Leila passed on into her room, quite unaware that she had not spoken any word. The older woman followed her friend with her eyes.

"Once," she thought, "I must have looked like that!"

With a little shiver she went back to her solitaire.

Leila lay in the darkness, her arms pressed close against her breast as if she held there something very precious. Recurrent waves of emotion swept her far into undiscovered waters. She murmured disconnectedly to herself, and believed that she was thinking.

Henry, poor Henry! Fortunately it would not be possible to hurt him deeply. His pride was too thickly padded, and his heart— What did he know of love? And what had she known, a wistful child who had stepped blindly out of her girlhood dreams into marriage, and now blindly into dreams again?

Moonlight came in at her window presently, the golden *chiaro di luna* that made such moonlight as she had known seem but a pallid ghost of radiance. She heard low voices in the garden, and the throb of a guitar. She was a little startled. She had not thought it possible that Fraschi would go straight from their hour together into this masquerade, this picturesque playing at love.

Then she smiled. Truly, it was Paolo—none the less a lover because he must needs dramatize the rôle.

His voice floated up to her, soft and caressing; and with it came the elderly tremolo of Charpentier, a trifle off the key, but now and then rising magnificently to

a climax. The serenade finally merged into Leila's dreams.

There was a tap at the door, and Lady Jerrold entered, chuckling.

"Isn't it too delicious? Do come to the window and take a peep at them! They're perfectly beautiful, in slashed doublets and hose; Charpentier warbling and walling up his eyes like a Carpaccio cherub—the one with the lute, you know. It's a genuine lute, too, and a genuine old *canzone d'amore*. Charles really does things rather well. You *must* come and throw them a kiss or something!"

Leila shook her head, with a certain shyness. She was not ready to see Paolo again quite yet, or before witnesses.

"Cruel girl! Then I'll do it for you. Really, they deserve some encouragement, the dears!"

Lady Jerrold draped herself in the window-curtains, and gracefully tossed flowers into the garden.

"There! I've hit Charles in the eye with a rose. It will be all bloodshot tomorrow; but he's kissin' the flower and tuckin' it into his chest. Silly ass! Won't it be amusin'," she chuckled, "to see his face when I tell him who threw that precious rose?"

But with the departing serenaders departed Lady Jerrold's usual flow of spirits. She came over and sat beside Leila on the bed. Her voice was grave and oddly hesitating.

"My dear," she said, "I want you to leave Capri."

Leila did not answer. She smiled to herself. She knew what Lady Jerrold meant; but it was too late to leave Capri.

"Sometimes," went on the hesitating voice, "a young horse looks over the paddock fence at fields and highroads, and thinks it would be a rather fine thing to run free a while. So he jumps the fence; but when he's tired of running free, and is ready for his stall and his oats, he finds he can't jump back into the paddock. He's gone lame or something. It's always easier to get out than to get in again. Don't jump your fence, my dear. Wait for the gate to be opened."

"I shall get a divorce, of course," Leila said quietly.

"How long will it take, do you suppose?" Lady Jerrold asked.

"I don't know. Henry will attend to all that sort of thing."

"H-m! Obligin' chap, Henry! And meanwhile, you'd best get away from Capri."

A few weeks ago, even a few days ago, Leila would not have understood; but now she answered with dignity:

"I think I can trust myself, Lady Jerrold."

"You're lucky," said the other. "And Fraschi—can you trust him?"

She went on without waiting for an answer from Leila.

"Every now and then a time comes to the most unthinking of us when we've got to think; and Capri's not the place for it. I've knocked about the world for a long time, my dear, and I know what effect climate, atmosphere, suggestion, can have on—well, on the point of view."

She got up and moved about the room in the dark, restlessly.

"God knows why I'm fool enough to put a spoke in my own wheel this way; but—well, we English like to see fair play. We like to give the fox his chance."

"A spoke in your own wheel?" repeated Leila, puzzled.

Lady Jerrold came back and sat beside her.

"Look here! Paolo's mother asked me to find a wife for him, do you see? And as one felt that one owed the poor woman something, I've done my best. The *jeune fille* doesn't interest Paolo at all. He needs the fillip of the forbidden sweet; and you *are* rather sweet, my dear. One would like," she said haltingly, "to see—Fraschi's son—happy."

An intuition came to Leila. She gasped at the thought. Paolo's father, and Lady Jerrold—

"His wife asked you to befriend her son?" she whispered.

"Oh, yes! Why not? I'm more in the world than she is; and as I said, one owes the poor woman something."

"Paolo—does he know about you and his father?"

"Naturally."

Leila lay silent, vainly grappling with the continental point of view. She realized that she was still hopelessly, almost painfully, primitive.

"I've got a plan for you," said Lady Jerrold, after a minute or two. "If Paolo knows where you are, of course he'll follow. You must slip away without seeing him, and send your letters back through

me. What do you say to taking a bit of a house I've got in Geneva? Of course, you can't travel about alone, Henry to the contrary notwithstanding. I'll let you have Fanchon. Oh, yes, I can spare her! I can spare her extremely well," she said, rather grimly, in answer to Leila's protest. Lady Jerrold was very observant. "In fact, I shall make Radischev a visit, I think, to cheer him up, and poor Olga's woman can maid me. What do you think of it? I can't answer for the condition of the house. There's a caretaker of sorts who would make you comfortable. He's French, and even the Swiss French can cook. The furniture is rather nice, and the garden; but it's years since I've been there. I don't know why I keep the place—goodness knows I can't afford it! We English cling to a bit of land, you know; and—well, I keep it—"

Her voice trailed away rather queerly. Leila put out a sympathetic hand through the darkness.

"It is where—he died?"

The other woman gave an unexpected laugh.

"Lord bless you, he didn't die! He went back to his wife. Men are that way."

Lady Jerrold rose abruptly and went to the window.

Leila lay very still. She knew, despite the laugh, that never in her life, neither with Olga Smirnoff nor with little Mrs. Perkins, had she touched so closely upon human tragedy.

"You see," said the woman at the window, "why I want you to get away, and think things over a bit and—wait for your divorce. The forbidden attracts. It does not hold!"

Leila followed her, and slipped an arm over her shoulders.

"I'll go," she whispered.

Lady Jerrold kissed her, a kiss that tasted of rouge and a little of salt.

So at last, early the next morning, the small paddle-steamer bore Leila Farland away from Capri, heavy-eyed from a night of strenuous packing, with Fanchon behind her, yawning but philosophical.

"One has it very cold in Geneva," was her only comment; "but it is at least nearer Paris!"

Leila stood on the deck, gazing wistfully at her receding Land of Afternoon, which was now a Land of Morning, looking as

fresh and clean and innocent as if it had just risen, white villas and all, out of the sparkling sea. She threw three kisses—one to Maddalena's house, where Paolo slept, all unconscious; one to the hillside tree where they had found their happiness; and one to a solitary, gallant figure on the end of the dock, with smoke wreathing her head like that of Vesuvius. It was Violet, Lady Jerrold, consoling herself with an early cigarette.

IX

FANCHON was right—in Geneva they had it very cold. Leila, wide-eyed with her first glimpse of the snow-clad Alps, stepped out of the railway-carriage into the full force of a wind that almost carried her off her feet. Through the streets clouds of dust whirled, and pedestrians hurried along with coat-collars up and red noses.

"How cross every one looks here," she exclaimed, a little depressed by the contrast with the smiling, chattering people she had left.

"But yes. It is the *bise* to-day," shivered Fanchon, referring to the wind known to the Genevese as the "broom of Geneva"—a keen blast that rushes down out of the Jura, sweeping before it dust and vapors, bringing on its wings the pure and icy ozone of the hills.

It is a wind that has had its effect upon the life, the history, the very religion of the city of Calvin. Philosophers have been nurtured there, scholars, even martyrs; but few poets or painters. The very French one hears in the streets has a curt, ungracious air, as if it were used more for business than for pleasure.

In silence Leila and her maid drove through the wide, gray, handsome thoroughfares. Even the rippling aquamarine of the lake had a sparkle that suggested ice. The plane-trees and the pollard willows showed only a faint green mist of leafage, though in Capri the world had been in full bloom.

Here and there stood groups of people gazing all in one direction with awe, as if at some miraculous vision in the distance. Leila gazed, too, but saw nothing except the eternal hills.

"What can they be staring at, Fanchon?"

"Doubtless at the Mont Blanc, *madame*. Geneva excites itself greatly when the Mont Blanc is visible."

Fanchon shrugged, scornfully. For her part, she went on to declare, it was a *farceur*, that mountain, capable of nothing, unworthy of serious attention, as was for instance, the Vesuvius. That, now, was a mountain! What *verve*, what *tempérament*!

"Almost too much temperament," murmured Leila, and put her head out of the window to gaze again.

Far away, lifted serenely above the darker hills, she saw one lofty white summit, impalpable as a cloud against the sky, which, as she looked, caught a glow of rose from the setting sun.

"The one beautiful thing in Geneva," she sighed; "and it isn't in Geneva!"

Presently, however, they turned out of the granite streets into a quarter known as the Petite Boissière, a charming region with a road wandering through it that is like a country lane. On one side spread the rolling lawns of what was once a great estate; on the other houses cluster, not too close for privacy, pleasant villas of the French type, with the warm gray walls, the steep roofs, the wide eaves that give such a suggestion of homelike comfort.

As they turned into this road, a faint fragrance came out to meet them, the unmistakable scent of green things lifting their heads from the moist earth. Near by a bird whistled a brisk, military note like that of the American robin.

"Spring!" thought Leila, filling her lungs with the breath of it. "I must write to poor Mrs. Perkins that she need not go home to find spring."

At one end of the Petite Boissière, slightly apart from the other houses, and well sheltered by the shrubbery of its garden, nestled a little villa of time-weathered pink stucco, with green jalousies. It had an air of frivolity, of slight artificiality, this gay, painted villa, suggesting past gallantries and *les belles dames du temps jadis*. Leila was not surprised when her taxicab stopped before it.

In response to Fanchon's determined ringing, the green door opened the merest crack, and an old man's head appeared, draped in a dusting-cap.

But yes, he admitted grudgingly, there had been a telegram from *madame*, the English milady. One does what is possible, but with two days of notice and only one arrangement of legs and arms, unfortunately, the best is not much.

Reluctantly he opened the door wider, and they entered. The *salon* was a long, shuttered room, with pale-gray walls, the furniture still shrouded in ghostly wrappings—only a chandelier of crystal uncovered, which glittered in the dimness like a pendant of icicles. There was an indescribable mustiness in the air.

"Brrh!" shivered Leila. "Perhaps it will be more cheerful up-stairs!"

The caretaker led them to a boudoir paneled in white to the ceiling, where Cupids disported themselves in a dim fresco, and where the chairs were covered in faded chints. Here, too, cold mustiness prevailed.

Fanchon suddenly rose to the occasion.

"*Tiens!* Why is there not a fire for *madame*? *Bête!* *Imbécile!* Is one to perish, then, of cold in this tomb of a sacred establishment?"

The caretaker shuffled away, his shoulders at his ears, muttering about the extravagance of English who wanted fires in March. Soon a few sticks crackled in the fireplace.

"And now, *mon vieux*, the tea," ordered Fanchon.

"The tea?" He rolled his eyes to heaven, as if this monstrous demand called indeed for divine interference.

"Name of a pig, yes—tea! You have perhaps never heard of tea, you, the servant of English? *Tiens!* You shall hear of it now, *mon brave gar*, and often!"

Presently, with her feet on the fender and a steaming cup at her elbow, Leila found courage to write a letter. Sitting there in the gay little faded boudoir, redolent of dead roses and dead loves, she wrote to ask her husband for her freedom. It was a thing she wanted to be done with as soon as possible, so that she might feel free to dream of Fraschi. Secrecy was foreign to her nature.

She wrote with perfect candor, confident of her husband's understanding. Despite his matter-of-fact, prosaic mind, Henry Farland had never yet failed her in understanding.

I will not ask you to forgive me. It was you who were wise enough to send me away to find myself; and I have found myself. Somehow, you and I have missed happiness together, dear Henry. You know it as well as I do. And now that I am finding mine without you, I believe you will be glad. You were always generous.

I believe, too, that you will yet find your own.

It's not too late; it never is, if only we don't forget that happiness is there somewhere for each of us—our birthright.

She left all the practical details to him—Henry was always so good at details. She sent the caretaker out into the teeth of the *bise*, muttering darkly, to mail the letter. Perhaps she felt that if she waited another day, another hour, in that strange, chill house, she might not have the courage to send it.

It was very lonely. She missed the stimulating, careless companionship of Lady Jerrold almost as much as she missed Fraschi. She kept away from the house as much as possible; for even with all the fires going, and every bowl and vase filled with fresh flowers, the rooms were curiously cheerless. Perhaps they were haunted by memories of people who had been happy there and were happy no longer. She thought—and was shocked by the thought—that Lady Jerrold had been foolish to bring her Italian lover to Geneva.

She walked along the quays, and stood watching the two-winged feluccas swooping like great gulls across the lake. She made a sentimental journey to Chillon, for the sake of Byron, and missed the sentiment in her interest in a party of Cook's tourists, who made the dungeons ring with the sharp vocal echoes of Kansas City and Dubuque.

Once in the streets she saw ahead of her the alert, tailored figure of a young woman in common-sense shoes, with a red guide-book under her arm. She followed warily, not quite sure of the resemblance; but as the young woman turned into a hotel, she saw that it was indeed her ship-board friend, Miss Evans.

Thereafter she avoided that neighborhood, although reluctantly. She would have liked to talk with Miss Evans, but had not the courage to brave the journalistic eye.

Indeed, she spoke to no one in that week of solitude except Fanchon, with whom she achieved an intimacy impossible with English-thinking servants who expect to be "kept in their place." The French maid, always sympathetic, always discreet, chattered incessantly while she brushed Leila's fine hair, or polished her nails, or massaged away the tiny wrinkles that were just beginning to show about her eyes and forehead.

These one-sided conversations added largely to Leila's knowledge of certain phe-

nomena which she classified under the heading of the "continental point of view." It appeared that Fanchon's one hope—indeed, her towering ambition—was to become mistress of a small establishment of the coiffure in a good quarter of Paris. Matrimony did not enter into her scheme of existence at all.

"*Je n'aime pas le ménage, moi!*"

Men were well enough in their way, but they spent too much money, they did not make good husbands. It was evidently her somewhat advanced opinion that women would make better husbands. And then, infants—what a danger!

"You do not want children, Fanchon?" asked her mistress curiously.

"Naturally no, *madame!*" Fanchon shrugged; but there were many luxuries possible to the rich which the poor must not consider. She quoted the Italian saying, "Many hands are a blessing, but not all in one dish."

She herself, it appeared, was the result of an unseemly ambition on the part of her parents, ragpickers in a small way of business. And what was the result? The ragpicking industry had failed through too much competition, and her parents had died of too little to eat.

"And at fifteen," continued Fanchon calmly, "I was obliged to sell myself to a Jew. Picture to yourself, *madame*—I, a good Catholic—to a Jew!"

But he was a very kind Jew, she admitted in response to Leila's horrified exclamation. He was a coiffeur of some skill, who had taught her the hair and the nails, and assisted her to find a situation with an English lady. French ladies, naturally, did not accept into their households one so handsome as herself, she explained complacently.

X

LEILA'S week of loneliness had a very clarifying effect on her mental vision. It was as if the *bise*, blowing steadily out of its snowy hills, swept the vapors from her brain, even as it swept the dust from the streets of Geneva.

She saw her friend Lady Jerrold for what she was—a *déclassée* woman of the world, rather pitiful in her cynical, frivolous old age. Nevertheless, Leila called her "friend." She saw that there must have been houses in Capri which she had never been invited to enter, whose occupants

looked upon her and her companions with aloof disdain; people of what Lady Jerrold would no doubt have called a "stodgy respectability."

She knew that she herself belonged to the stodgily respectable; and that Fraschi did not. Indeed, she saw the faults and weaknesses of her lover with illuminating distinctness, and yet she did not shrink from them. So she knew that she loved him!

The little bronze Apollo stood always within reach of her eyes. Its slender, muscular grace, the half smile, the drooping lids, the fine-arched nostril that spoke so distinctly of race, a look of pagan innocence about it—all gave her Fraschi as no photograph could have done.

Certain traits of his lingered much in her mind—his gay friendliness with humble folk, his tenderness with children. She said to herself that though life with Fraschi might not always go smoothly, it would never be dull.

She thought often of his mother, hoping that the gallant old woman had no prejudice against divorce and Americans. For the first time in her life, she realized the full pleasure of being rich. Money would do much for the Fraschi.

She planned to restore the palace in the Via Babuino to its former state. The old *marchesa* should have a new carriage in which to appear on the Pincio; should share it with nobody, not even with her daughter-in-law. In the season they would go to Aix-les-Bains, all three of them together, and gamble to their hearts' content at the innocent-sounding Villa des Fleurs.

Of Henry, too, she thought often; kindly, and rather wistfully, ashamed to realize how little he would miss her. She wondered how it had been possible for two people to live so close together and remain so far apart.

His business, his club, his comforts—if any of these had been taken from him, she could imagine Henry disconsolate; but from his wife he would part with, possibly, as much regret as it would cost him to give up his grand piano. Both were rather usual luxuries for men in his position, but after all, hardly necessary.

She remembered how eager her mother had been for the match; poor, anxious woman with the hand of death already upon her, terrified by the thought of leaving an orphan daughter to the mercy of

the world. Henry had been more her mother's friend than hers. It was really quite kind of him to take on a responsibility for which he had not cared.

Leila remembered her own vague yearnings and speculations, and afterward, when the first sick distaste was over, the dead, level flatness of the holy estate of matrimony.

"Perhaps," she thought, "things might have been different if Henry and I had lived in Capri, say!"

And then she laughed. The two ideas, of Henry and of Capri, were not at all compatible.

On the fifth day of what she termed her exile, the first mail came to her from Capri. There were several letters, among them one from her husband, forwarded by Lady Jerrold. It was a thick one, and she opened it in some surprise, for Henry usually confined himself to post-cards and cablegrams. It was too soon for him to have had her letter about the divorce.

A number of wall-paper samples fluttered out. Smiling faintly, she read the short note enclosed. Then she dropped it as if the paper burned her fingers.

"Oh! He isn't playing fair!" she gasped.

For Henry had actually written her a love-letter. It might not have been recognizable as such to one who did not know him, but Leila knew him rather better than she herself realized.

Had some curious prescience come to him across the sea? Did he, too, know her better than she realized? Once or twice before, this commonplace, matter-of-fact husband of hers had startled her by a seeming knowledge of thoughts that remained unspoken in her mind.

She forced herself to read the letter again.

DEAR LEILA:

Have decided to have several rooms done over before you come back from Europe. Enclosed find samples, and return the ones you like best. Have had the limousine gone over, too, and it looks fine.

When are you coming home? I went to the house to-day, but did not stay long. It made me feel queer, as if it was haunted. I looked in a closet and saw some of your dresses there, wrapped up in white things, like ghosts. When are you coming back?

I'm getting tired of club food. Nothing but men around, and they gossip too much. I am losing my appetite. Have taken up golf again,

and have dropped fifteen pounds. By the time you get back you'll hardly know me. When are you—

These last three words were crossed out.

One of the men at the factory got arrested the other day, on complaint of some neighbor, for beating his wife, and she appeared in court and went for the judge tooth and nail for interfering. Said she wouldn't give a curse for a man who didn't beat his wife if she went around with other men. Said no woman would. I believe she's right. So you behave, young lady, unless you want a beating.

Come home soon. Have you plenty of money?

Affec.,

HENRY.

P. S.—The sample with figures on it is for the room that opens out of your bedroom. How do you like it?

Leila looked at this sample, and started. The figures were of lambkins, geese, and ducklings. It seemed to be a nursery wall-paper!

That day the *bise* stopped blowing for a while, and Leila made her first Alpine ascent. She felt the need of such solitude as comes only to high places, above the sight and the sound of men.

The funicular carried her to the top of Salève, where she sat for hours, gazing down into the sunlight. At that height nothing seemed real but the sunlight. Far below lay the city, a sprawling shadow beside its thin blue thread of lake; and no whisper came up to prove that it was there. Vast, flowing silence surrounded her. The world was floating in it, mountains and clouds and sun together.

So, she thought, God may sometimes lean gazing at his universe, looking down through the haze of light at vague shadows that are worlds. What can he see of the comings and goings of men down there, the evil and the good of them, the joy, the sorrow? What does it matter to him, so long as men, with the butterflies and the planets, fulfil the destiny for which he created them? Bird-songs, and prayers, and tempests, all merged alike into the singing of the spheres!

Some children called and chattered near her, gathering periwinkles. She remembered Fraschi's voice, speaking of her eyes, which he had described as "blue like the shy blue flowers that grow upon cool mountainsides."

It made her feel less lonely and afraid.

After all, she, like the butterflies and the planets, had her appointed destiny.

XI

THE next morning a carriage stopped at the gate of Leila's villa. She paid no attention to it, for she had no friends in Geneva, until Fanchon came running to her, exclaiming:

"Regardez, mais regardez, madame!"

She looked out of the window. Fraschi was strolling up the garden path, a trifle pinched-looking with the cold, very smart in white spats and yellow gloves, his hat a little to one side. In his hand he held what was evidently a bouquet, prudently wrapped in newspaper. He swung his cane in time to the song he was humming—doubtless "La Bella Gina."

Leila gazed at him in a curious dismay.

"So Lady Jerrold told him where to find me, after all!" she exclaimed aloud.

"Mais non, madame! It was I," confessed Fanchon with complacency. "Madame had the air so *triste*, so forlorn; and *le pauvre monsieur* in Capri, also desolate! Merely the address on a *carte postale*—it was very simple. *Le voilà!* After all, madame, one is young but once, and not for long."

"You have been extremely impertinent!" exclaimed Leila.

What fools they had been, she and Lady Jerrold, to disregard his sworn confederate and ally! A sort of panic seized her, a feeling of helplessness, of self-distrust. She was so singularly alone in Geneva, in this strange, furtive house, with its air of past gallantries. There was nobody to protect her—

"Protect me—from Paolo?" she reminded herself proudly.

Nevertheless, the panic was there; and with it came a sudden anger against Fraschi. How had he dared to follow her on the invitation of a servant?

"You will go and tell *monsieur*," she said coldly, "that it will be impossible for me to receive him here. I am quite unchaperoned."

The maid shrugged to her ears, in grieved astonishment. When *monsieur* had traveled so large a distance? And looking so furiously *chic*? And with the little bouquet in his hand? How could *madame* find the heart?

The door-bell pealed.

Fanchon babbled explanations and apol-

ogies. She had meant kindly. *Madame* was without friends in Geneva; what could it matter if *les convenances* were not strictly observed where there were none to see? She herself was a model of discretion—she had been maid to many ladies. As for the *bête concierge*, she would answer for it that he never talked at all, even to himself. Moreover, he was already Fanchon's slave, that one! Let *madame* not alarm herself—

"You will do as I say, please," said Leila.

But when the crestfallen girl had gone with her message, a revulsion of feeling came over Leila. After all, it was Fanchon who should be punished, not Paolo. How could she blame him for the very qualities she loved in him—his emotional impetuosity, his boyish thoughtlessness, his longing for her?

They had not spoken together since their hour on the hillside. Letters were nothing. She would see him herself, just this once, and make him understand why he must go away from her for a while.

She ran down the stairs after Fanchon, her knees rather weak, her heart thumping with the thought of being near him again. With her hand on the portière of the salon, she paused. Fanchon was speaking.

"*Mon cher, comme tu n'est pas sage!*"

Even with her limited knowledge of French, it struck Leila as strange that a servant should venture to *tutoyer* the Marchese di Fraschi. Nor was it the first time she had heard that familiar and affectionate "*tu*." She recalled Fanchon speaking from behind the rocks—"C'est toi, mon ami?"

The kiss she had explained to herself, and forgotten—or, rather, had put away in her mental pigeonhole that was labeled "the continental point of view." But she knew from her grammar-books that the diminutive "*tu*" is used only to inferiors and to intimates.

Leila stood where she was and listened.

"Wait?" Fraschi was saying, also in French. "But thou knowest it is not in my nature to wait, my Fanchon! One must take ardor as one finds it. To-day I love; to-morrow, the next day, *chi lo sa?* I know myself too well, little one. Besides, at the moment I am homeless, on the branch."

"What, the jealous cat of a Maddalena—?"

"Exactly! She threatens to make representations to her husband; and as I have no wish to feel that long knife of Papa Tino tickling my ribs, why, I go away. It is ungallant, perhaps, but what would you? One does not meet a Tino upon the field of honor. Eh, you women, you women! Among you I shall yet die of a stiletto in the ribs. First it is Maddalena, jealous of the American. Then it is *la bella Lé-ila* weeping her pretty eyes red because of thee! Then—*macché!* It is the English Violet, jealous of both of you!" He laughed, twirling his mustache. "Else why does she whisk you out of my sight between a day and a day?"

Fanchon said something which Leila did not hear.

"Too old?" cried Fraschi. "*Dio mio*, they are never too old, and the old ones are the worst! But I cannot understand the ancient Violet! The idea is hers, the choice hers. If I so much as let my eye stray from *la bella Lé-ila*, she attacks me as if she were my mother. Yet, just as one has her like a ripe plum ready to drop into the open mouth, she jerks her out of my reach. And the world so full of open mouths!"

Fanchon murmured something about "divorce" and "*les convenances*."

"Ah, bah, divorce!" Fraschi made a gesture of derision, presumably in the direction of the law-courts. "Do you tell me that divorce has its conventions also? *C'est drôle, ça!* But divorce will not come the less surely, little one, because *madame* manages to compromise herself. *Au contraire!* And for love both must make sacrifices. *La bella Lé-ila* may lose her reputation, possibly; I must lose my freedom, even my religion, for the Holy Father still refuses to look upon that useful custom, divorce, with the eye of a man of the world. However, that is nothing," he added nobly. "Gladly would I sacrifice more than religion for *la bella Lé-ila*, snow-maiden that she is. And there is no time to be lost! Consider, Fanchon, my mother wishes to sell her carriage to pay my tailor's bill!"

"*Mon Dieu*, how that is tragic!" sighed the other.

Her sympathy was very consoling. Fraschi's voice took the tender note that Leila sometimes heard in her dreams.

"Eh, well! Whatever comes, one has always thee, my little one," he murmured.

Leila had heard enough. She mounted the stairs again, her knees still rather weak; but she felt no pain, no loathing, such as had come to her when she made her first discovery. She was conscious, rather, of an almost sickening relief, such as some creature might feel which had just escaped out of a trap.

She was thinking of herself very little, however, and of Fraschi not at all. Her mind was centered upon the fact that her letter to Henry might be expected to reach him that very day. If so, there was still time to act, for it would not yet be day-break in Milwaukee.

With hands that trembled in their haste, she got into a hat and wrap. She ran down the back stairs, through the kitchen—to the astonishment of the surly Swiss—and through a neighboring garden into the street beyond, leaving Fraschi to the consolations of Fanchon.

A taxicab happened to be passing. She hailed it, crying:

"To Cook's, *vite, vite!*"

The chauffeur, with one glance at her gold-mesh purse, bent to his wheel, and proceeded to fracture the liberal speed-laws of Geneva.

She sent a cablegram to Henry:

Do not open letter due to-day. Am starting home.

Then, in the reaction, her sudden energy left her, and she felt weak and ill. The thought of the pink villa nauseated her. She could not return to it. Suddenly she remembered her friend, Miss Evans.

She went to the hotel that she had seen Miss Evans entering, and inquired for her. She almost wept with relief when the *concierge* replied that the lady was staying there, and was in her room.

"Well, look who's here!" cried the newspaper woman heartily, looking up from her packing. "When did you blow in? I'm just—"

Then she broke off, and said in another voice, quiet and soothing:

"Here, my dear, let me move this tray off the bed, and you lie down for a little while. You're worn out. Too much sight-seeing, eh?"

Out of her professional experience with overwrought women, she went on talking in her cheerful voice:

"You caught me just in time. Off for Paris to-night—my last stopping-place,

and I'm glad of it. My, but little old New York will look good to me when I get back to it!"

Her capable hands were busy with a spirit-lamp.

"T-take me with you," stammered Leila, shivering uncontrollably. "Don't l-leave me alone, will you? I want to go wherever you g-go—"

"Then you will be going some!" laughed Miss Evans. She brought a steaming cup to the bed. "Here, drink this hot water, Mrs. Farland. Best pick-me-up in the world, warranted neither to inebriate nor to betray. I've done Europe to a frazzle on nothing stronger than hot water!"

Leila obeyed. Her teeth stopped chattering. A great sense of well-being, of safety, stole over her. She was all at once very sleepy.

"All my things are at the villa," she

murmured. "Could you lend me a night-gown?"

"We'll trot around and pack you up as soon as I've finished here," said the other briskly. "Plenty of time! The train doesn't leave till two o'clock."

"No, no!" gasped Leila. "I'll just write to Fanchon where to send everything. He might still be there!"

The journalistic eye gleamed.

"He?" repeated Miss Evans to herself; but to her credit be it said that she asked no questions, then or afterward.

"You just turn over and take forty winks," she said. "You need 'em. Geneva's frightfully bracing. Talk about atmosphere! There's too much of it here. It goes through you like a knife. Brrh! Listen to that *bise* rattling the windows!"

"God bless it!" murmured Leila Farland drowsily.

THE ROMANY BLOOD

LIKE a sea in storm
Or a stream in flood
Riots and rushes
The Romany blood.

Like an eagle caged
Or a hound in chains,
The lure of the far
Is in the veins.

The scorn of the roofs
That hide the stars;
The love of the fields—
No walls, no bars!

The trundling wheels
And the wagon bed
With gaudy blankets
Overspread;

At the misty close
Of the changing day,
A fire that's lit
By the weedy way;

The black pot hangs,
And the supper steams;
Then twanging strings,
And a pipe for dreams;

A hooting owl
And the cricket-call,
And the starlit heavens
Over all!

Silence the sea
And the stream's wild flood—
Still riots and rushes
The Romany blood!

Harry Lee