

known a mitred abbot who was nursed by them, and who told me that the term of affection served him as a temperature chart. When his temperature was dangerously high, he was addressed as 'dear'; when it became normal he was 'your lordship'!)

Apparently, there was no answer to Sister Lucy's question.

'He has just drunk some milk. There is nothing for you to do but to see he doesn't talk too much. He is rather feverish, poor dear,' murmured the Sister, as she left the room.

Caterina sat down, feeling rather frightened. The man lay staring at her in silence until she thought she must scream. Forgetting Sister Lucy's instructions, she plunged into conversation.

'Where do you come from? You are a foreigner, aren't you?' she asked.

'Yes, I come from Subiaco way,' he answered, still gazing at her.

'Well, what are you staring at?' she asked, tossing her head.

She was used to being stared at by her admirers, but this man's steady gaze was not so flattering.

'I've seen you before, but I can't remember where. Do you ever go up to the Capuccini.'

'Of course. I go to confession every fortnight to Fra Bernardino,' said Caterina, crossly, as if he ought to have known this interesting fact.

Silence again.

'Don't lie there staring. Talk about something. Tell me your name.'

'Angelo Formaggio.'

'How funny! Fancy being called 'cheese.' I wouldn't be called that for anything,' cried Caterina, giggling.

The way in which she tossed back her head, opened her mouth, and showed her splendid, even white teeth, awoke the man's memory.

'I know where I saw you. It was at the Villa Mondragone, this spring,' he said, slowly.

'Oh, were you there? Do you know Francesco Trento?' she asked, blushing vividly.

The man did not reply. He lay looking at her for a moment, and then he said in a cold voice: 'Oh, so you are Signorina Caterina, are you? I've often wanted to have a word with you.'

'Oh! what about?' asked Caterina, opening her eyes.

The man smiled for the first time, and Caterina thought it was a very disagreeable smile.

'I've often wanted to ask you if you knew what he lived on.'

Caterina jumped up.

'Now, you know, you are getting feverish, and the Sister said you were not to talk,' she said in a frightened voice.

'Then I will not tell you what Francesco said about you last Saturday night. Very well, then, Signorina, we will not talk.'

'Oh, but I want to know what he said,' cried Caterina eagerly, sitting down again.

'I met him coming back from work. It was pay-day, you know, only he does not get paid so much as we bricklayers, because ours is skilled labor—'

'I know all about that. Tell me what he said about me,' said Caterina, impatiently.

'You must not hurry a sick man, Signorina, he might get feverish, you know,' he said, with another malicious smile.

'Oh, do get on,' said Caterina, crossly.

'Well, we met a few comrades, and they proposed a little festa at the Tratoria del Sole, such as we often have when pay-day comes round. Well, Francesco said he would not come, for he had no money to spend on eating and drinking. The comrades thought he was a mean sort of fellow—'

'So he is, dreadfully mean!' interrupted Caterina, eagerly.

The man looked at her. There was such contempt in his eyes that she trembled. He really was a most disagreeable, strange man, and she wished with all her heart that Sister Lucy would finish her meditation, and come back.

'You greedy, selfish child!' said the man. 'Do you know what Francisco lives on, while you are flaunting in your finery? A few figs, a little spring water, is all he can afford. A plate of macaroni once a week is all he can afford, because his pretty Caterina must have her pretty ornaments to suit her pretty face. Why, the man starves himself. I suppose you think him a dull fellow because he doesn't smoke or drink, or waste his time sitting over a cup of coffee with the rest of us?'

Fortunately, he did not wait for an answer, for that was exactly what Caterina did think.

'I question whether he ever has enough to eat,' the man went on.

'Francesco not have enough to eat!' cried Caterina. Her childish heart was very vain, but very warm. 'Not have enough to eat!' Her eyes filled with tears.

'He went almost without food for a week to buy you that flowered scarf.'

'Oh, no, I don't believe it. Don't say such dreadful things,' she said.

'I haven't told you what he said last Saturday, yet, have I?'

'What was it? Something horrid, I suppose?'

'Well, I told him he looked as if a good meal would do him good,' and he only answered, 'Don't bother about me, old friend. You don't know what it is to love the most beautiful girl—'

'Beautiful! He said I was beautiful?' cried Caterina. 'And you say he goes without his meals?'

Then she burst into tears.

At this unlucky moment Sister Lucy must needs finish her meditation and come back.

'Dio!' she exclaimed. 'What are you doing, Caterina? What do you mean, upsetting the patient like this? Please go away at once. Oh, and there's a little boy with his mother asking for you.'

So Peppino had come back? Why had she sent him? How could she dream that Francesco starved himself, and said she was beautiful. But it was too late now!

Peppino and Peppino's mother were in the garden talking to Sister Elizabeth. Peppino presented an appearance which it would not be polite to describe in detail. He had evidently been severely knocked about; the intelligent reader can guess what he looked like.

Sister Elizabeth gently wiped his streaming face.

'Come with me, dear, and let me bind up that poor hand,' she said kindly.

'Sending a child of that age that way alone,' continued the woman, who had evidently been enjoying a lengthy and spirited monologue.

'What is the matter?' asked Caterina in dismay.

'What is the matter? What did you think would be the matter? What do you mean sending him all that way—'

'I gave him six maritozzi for going,' said Caterina quickly.

'Yes, upsetting his stomach with unwholesome food! Unwholesome maritozzi, unwholesome! You might know those boys would never let him go by with them in his hand!'

'Those boys! Who?'

'Why, that Antonio and that sister of his, and all that crew. They met the poor child, and when he wouldn't give them some they knocked him down and sat on him while they ate the lot. And here's the poor child half dead, and all your fault.'

'Oh, no, Signora, it's not quite so bad as that, is it Peppino? Besides, you know, Signora, he might have given them one, I think, especially as they are so unwholesome, and would upset his stomach,' said Sister Elizabeth, rather maliciously.

'You know nothing about it, Sister. How can you; you're only a foreigner,' replied the woman majestically.

'But, Peppino, where is the letter?' asked Caterina, in a tone of acute anxiety.

'She tore it up into little bits while they sat on me,' moaned the messenger.

Caterina's face cleared as if by magic.

'Dio sia benedetto!' she cried. 'Dear Peppino,