II.

THE SEA.

The fat old porter knocks. Ah me, once more it is dark. Get up again before dawn. A dark sky outside, cloudy. The thrilling tinkle of innumerable goat-bells as the first flock enters the city, such a rippling sound. Well, it must be morning, even if one shivers at it. And at least it does not rain.

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That pale, bluish, theatrical light outside, of the first dawn. And a cold wind. We come on to the wide, desolate quay, the curve of the harbour Panormus. That horrible dawn-pallor of a cold sea out there. And here, port mud, greasy: and fish: and refuse. The American girl is with us, wrapped in her sweater. A coarse, cold, black-slimy world, she seems as if she would melt away before it. But these frail creatures, what a lot they can go through!

Across the great, wide, badly paved, mud-greasy, despairing road of the quay side, and to the sea. There lies our steamer, over there in the dawn-dusk of the basin, half visible. "That one who is smoking her cigarette," says the porter. She looks little, beside the huge City of Trieste who is lying up next her.

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Our row-boat is hemmed in by many empty boats, huddled to the side of the quay. She works her way out like a sheepdog working his way out of a flock of sheep, or like a boat through pack-ice. We are on the open basin. The rower stands up and pushes the oars from him. He gives a long, melancholy cry to someone on the quay. The water goes chock-chock against the urging bows. The wind is chill. The fantastic peaks behind Palermo show half-ghostly in a half-dark sky. The dawn seems reluctant to come. Our steamer still smokes her cigarette--meaning the funnel-smoke--across there. So, one sits still, and crosses the level space of half-dark water. Masts of sailing-ships, and spars, cluster on the left, on the undarkening sky.

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Climb up, climb up, this is our ship. Up we go, up the ladder. "Oh but!" says the American girl. "Isn't she small! Isn't she impossibly small! Oh my, will you go in such a little thing? Oh dear! Thirty two hours in such a little boat? Why no, I wouldn't care for it at all."

A bunch of stewards, cooks, waiters, engineers, pan-cleaners and what-not, mostly in black canvas jackets. Nobody else on the ship. A little black bunch of loutish crew with nothing to do, and we the first passengers served up to be jeered at. There you are, in the grey light.

"Who is going?"

"We two--the signorina is not going."

"Tickets!"

These are casual proletarian manners.

We are taken into the one long room with a long table and many maple-golden doors, alternate panels having a wedge-wood blue-and-white picture inserted--a would-be Goddess of white marble on a blue ground, like a health-salts Hygeia advertisement. One of the plain panels opens--our cabin.

"Oh dear! Why it isn't as big as a china-closet. However will you get in!" cries the American girl.

"One at a time," say I.

"But it's the tiniest place I ever saw."

It really was tiny. One had to get into a bunk to shut the door. That did not matter to me, I am no Titanic American. I pitched the knapsack on one bunk, the kitchenino on the other, and we shut the door. The cabin disappeared into a maple-wood panel of the long, subterranean

state-room.

"Why, is this the only place you've got to sit in?" cried the American girl. "But how perfectly awful! No air, and so dark, and smelly. Why I never saw such a boat! Will you really go? Will you really!"

The state-room was truly rather subterranean and stuffy, with nothing but a long table and an uncanny company of screw-pin chairs seated thereat, and no outlet to the air at all, but it was not so bad otherwise, to me who have never been out of Europe. Those maple-wood panels and ebony curves--and those Hygeias! They went all round, even round the curve at the dim, distant end, and back up the near side. Yet how beautiful old, gold-coloured maple-wood is! how very lovely, with the ebony curves of the door arch! There was a wonderful old-fashioned, Victorian glow in it, and a certain splendour. Even one could bear the Hygeias let in under glass--the colour was right, that wedge-wood and white, in such lovely gold lustre. There was a certain homely grandeur still in the days when this ship was built: a richness of choice material. And health-salts Hygeias, wedge-wood Greek goddesses on advertisement placards! Yet they weren't advertisements. That was what really worried me. They never had been. Perhaps Weego's Health Salts stole her later.

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We have no coffee--that goes without saying. Nothing doing so early. The

crew still stands in a gang, exactly like a gang of louts at a street-corner. And they've got the street all to themselves--this ship. We climb to the upper deck.

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She is a long, slender, old steamer with one little funnel. And she seems so deserted, now that one can't see the street-corner gang of the casual crew. They are just below. Our ship is deserted.

The dawn is wanly blueing. The sky is a curdle of cloud, there is a bit of pale gold eastwards, beyond Monte Pellegrino. The wind blows across the harbour. The hills behind Palermo prick up their ears on the sky-line. The city lies unseen, near us and level. There--a big ship is coming in: the Naples boat.

And the little boats keep putting off from the near quay, and coming to us. We watch. A stout officer, cavalry, in grayey-green, with a big dark-blue cloak lined with scarlet. The scarlet lining keeps flashing. He has a little beard, and his uniform is not quite clean. He has big wooden chests, tied with rope, for luggage. Poor and of no class. Yet that scarlet, splendid lining, and the spurs. It seems a pity they must go second-class. Yet so it is, he goes forward when the dock porter has hoisted those wooden boxes. No fellow-passenger yet.

Boats still keep coming. Ha-ha! Here is the commissariat! Various sides

of kid, ready for roasting: various chickens: fennel like celery: wine in a bottiglione: new bread: packages! Hand them up, hand them up. "Good food!" cries the q-b in anticipation.

It must be getting near time to go. Two more passengers--young thick men in black broad-cloth standing up in the stern of a little boat, their hands in their pockets, looking a little cold about the chin. Not quite Italian, too sturdy and manly. Sardinians from Cagliari, as a matter of fact.

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We go down from the chill upper-deck. It is growing full day. Bits of pale gold are flying among delicate but cold flakes of cloud from the east, over Monte Pellegrino, bits of very new turquoise sky come out. Palermo on the left crouches upon her all-harbour--a little desolate, disorderly, end-of-the-world, end-of-the-sea, along her quay front. Even from here we can see the yellow carts rattling slowly, the mules nodding their high weird plumes of scarlet along the broad weary harbour-side. Oh painted carts of Sicily, with all history on your panels!

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Arrives an individual at our side. "The captain fears it will not be possible to start. There is much wind outside. Much wind!"

How they love to come up with alarming, disquieting, or annoying news! The joy it gives them. What satisfaction on all the faces: of course all the other loafers are watching us, the street-corner loungers of this deck. But we have been many times bitten.

"Ah ma!" say I, looking at the sky, "not so much wind as all that."

An air of quiet, shrugging indifference is most effectual: as if you knew all about it, a good deal more than they knew.

"Ah si! Molto vento! Molto vento! Outside! Outside!"

With a long face and a dramatic gesture he points out of the harbour, to the grey sea. I too look out of the harbour at the pale line of sea beyond the mole. But I do not trouble to answer, and my eye is calm. So he goes away, only half triumphant.

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"Things seem to get worse and worse!" cries the American friend. "What will you do on such a boat if you have an awful time out in the Mediterranean here? Oh no--will you risk it, really? Won't you go from Cività Vecchia?"

"How awful it will be!" cries the q-b, looking round the grey harbour,

the many masts clustering in the grey sky on the right: the big Naples boat turning her posterior to the quay-side a little way off, and cautiously budging backwards: the almost entirely shut-in harbour: the bits of blue and flying white cloud overhead: the little boats like beetles scuttling hither and thither across the basin: the thick crowd on the quay come to meet the Naples boat.

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Time! Time! The American friend must go. She bids us goodbye, more than sympathetically.

"I shall be awfully interested to hear how you get on."

So down the side she goes. The boatman wants twenty francs--wants more--but doesn't get it. He gets ten, which is five too much. And so, sitting rather small and pinched and cold-looking, huddled in her sweater, she bibbles over the ripply water to the distant stone steps. We wave farewell. But other traffic comes between us. And the q-b, feeling nervous, is rather cross because the American friend's ideas of luxury have put us in such a poor light. We feel like the poorest of poor sea-faring relations.

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Our ship is hooting for all she's worth. An important last-minuter comes

surging up. The rope hawsers are being wound clankily in. Seagulls--they are never very many in the Mediterranean--seagulls whirl like a few flakes of snow in the upper chill air. Clouds spin. And without knowing it we are evaporating away from the shore, from our mooring, between the great City of Trieste and another big black steamer that lies like a wall. We breathe towards this second black wall of steamer: distinctly. And of course an individual in an official cap is standing on the bottom of our departure ladder just above the water, yelling Barca! Barca!--shouting for a boat. And an old man on the sea stands up to his oars and comes pushing his clumsy boat with gathering speed between us and the other black wall. There he stands away below there, small, firing his clumsy boat along, remote as if in a picture on the dark green water. And our black side insidiously and evilly aspires to the other huge black wall. He rows in the canyon between, and is nearly here.

When lo, the individual on the bottom step turns in the other direction. Another boat from the open basin is sweeping up: it is a race: she is near, she is nearer, she is up. With a curvet the boat from the open rounds up at the ladder. The boat between the gulf backs its oars. The official individual shouts and waves, the old man backing his oars in the gulf below yells expostulation, the boat from the open carries off its prey, our ship begins slowly to puddle-puddle-puddle, working her screw, the man in the gulf of green water rows for his life--we are floating into the open basin.

Slowly, slowly we turn round: and as the ship turns, our hearts turn. Palermo fades from our consciousness: the Naples boat, the disembarking crowds, the rattling carriages to the land--the great City of Trieste--all fades from our heart. We see only the open gap of the harbour entrance, and the level, pale-grey void of the sea beyond. There are wisps of gleamy light--out there.

And out there our heart watches--though Palermo is near us, just behind. We look round, and see it all behind us--but already it is gone, gone from our heart. The fresh wind, the gleamy wisps of light, the running, open sea beyond the harbour bars.

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And so we steam out. And almost at once the ship begins to take a long, slow, dizzy dip, and a fainting swoon upwards, and a long, slow, dizzy dip, slipping away from beneath one. The q-b turns pale. Up comes the deck in that fainting swoon backwards--then down it fades in that indescribable slither forwards. It is all quite gentle--quite, quite gentle. But oh, so long, and so slow, and so dizzy.

"Rather pleasant!" say I to the q-b.

"Yes. Rather lovely really," she answers wistfully. To tell the truth there is something in the long, slow lift of the ship, and her long, slow slide forwards which makes my heart beat with joy. It is the motion

of freedom. To feel her come up--then slide slowly forward, with a sound of the smashing of waters, is like the magic gallop of the sky, the magic gallop of elemental space. That long, slow, waveringly rhythmic rise and fall of the ship, with waters snorting as it were from her nostrils, oh God what a joy it is to the wild innermost soul. One is free at last--and lilting in a slow flight of the elements, winging outwards. Oh God, to be free of all the hemmed-in life--the horror of human tension, the absolute insanity of machine persistence. The agony which a train is to me, really. And the long-drawn-out agony of a life among tense, resistant people on land. And then to feel the long, slow lift and drop of this almost empty ship, as she took the waters. Ah God, liberty, liberty, elemental liberty. I wished in my soul the voyage might last forever, that the sea had no end, that one might float in this wavering, tremulous, yet long and surging pulsation while ever time lasted: space never exhausted, and no turning back, no looking back, even.

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The ship was almost empty--save of course for the street-corner louts who hung about just below, on the deck itself. We stood alone on the weather-faded little promenade deck, which has old oak seats with old, carved little lions at the ends, for arm-rests--and a little cabin mysteriously shut, which much peeping determined as the wireless office and the operator's little curtained bed-niche.

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Cold, fresh wind, a black-blue, translucent, rolling sea on which the wake rose in snapping foam, and Sicily on the left: Monte Pellegrino, a huge, inordinate mass of pinkish rock, hardly crisped with the faintest vegetation, looming up to heaven from the sea. Strangely large in mass and bulk Monte Pellegrino looks: and bare, like a Sahara in heaven: and old-looking. These coasts of Sicily are very imposing, terrific, fortifying the interior. And again one gets the feeling that age has worn them bare: as if old, old civilisations had worn away and exhausted the soil, leaving a terrifying blankness of rock, as at Syracuse in plateaus, and here in a great mass.

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There seems hardly any one on board but ourselves: we alone on the little promenade deck. Strangely lonely, floating on a bare old ship past the great bare shores, on a rolling sea, stooping and rising in the wind. The wood of the fittings is all bare and weather-silvered, the cabin, the seats, even the little lions of the seats. The paint wore away long ago: and this timber will never see paint any more. Strange to put one's hand on the old oaken wood, so sea-fibred. Good old delicate-threaded oak: I swear it grew in England. And everything so carefully done, so solidly and everlastingly. I look at the lions, with the perfect-fitting oaken pins through their paws clinching them down, and their little mouths open. They are as solid as they were in

Victorian days, as immovable. They will never wear away. What a joy in the careful, thorough, manly, everlasting work put into a ship: at least into this sixty-year-old vessel. Every bit of this old oak wood so sound, so beautiful: and the whole welded together with joints and wooden pins far more beautifully and livingly than iron welds. Rustless, life-born, living-tissued old wood: rustless as flesh is rustless, and happy-seeming as iron never can be. She rides so well, she takes the sea so beautifully, as a matter of course.

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Various members of the crew wander past to look at us. This little promenade deck is over the first-class quarters, full in the stern. So we see first one head then another come up the ladder--mostly bare heads: and one figure after another slouches past, smoking a cigarette. All crew. At last the q-b stops one of them--it is what they are all waiting for, an opportunity to talk--and asks if the weird object on the top of Pellegrino is a ruin. Could there be a more touristy question! No, it is the semaphore station. Slap in the eye for the q-b! She doesn't mind, however, and the member of the crew proceeds to converse. He is a weedy, hollow-cheeked town-product: a Palermitan. He wears faded blue over-alls and informs us he is the ship's carpenter: happily unemployed for the rest of his life, apparently, and taking it as rather less than his dues. The ship once did the Naples-Palermo course--a very important course--in the old days of the General Navigation Company. The General Navigation Company sold her for eighty thousand liras years ago,

and now she was worth two million. We pretend to believe: but I make a poor show. I am thoroughly sick to death of the sound of liras. No man can overhear ten words of Italian today without two thousand or two million or ten or twenty or two liras flying like venomous mosquitoes round his ears. Liras--liras--liras--nothing else. Romantic, poetic, cypress-and-orange-tree Italy is gone. Remains an Italy smothered in the filthy smother of innumerable Lira notes: ragged, unsavoury paper money so thick upon the air that one breathes it like some greasy fog. Behind this greasy fog some people may still see the Italian sun. I find it hard work. Through this murk of Liras you peer at Michael Angelo and at Botticelli and the rest, and see them all as through a glass, darkly. For heavy around you is Italy's after-the-war atmosphere, darkly pressing you, squeezing you, milling you into dirty paper notes. King Harry was lucky that they only wanted to coin him into gold. Italy wants to mill you into filthy paper Liras.

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Another head--and a black alpaca jacket and a serviette this time--to tell us coffee is ready. Not before it is time, too. We go down into the subterranean state-room and sit on the screw-pin chairs, while the ship does the slide-and-slope trot under us, and we drink a couple of cups of coffee-and-milk, and eat a piece of bread and butter. At least one of the innumerable members of the crew gives me one cup, then casts me off. It is most obviously his intention that I shall get no more: because of course the innumerable members of the crew could all just do

with another coffee and milk. However, though the ship heaves and the alpaca coats cluster menacingly in the doorway, I balance my way to the tin buffet and seize the coffee pot and the milk pot, and am quite successful in administering to the q-b and myself. Having restored the said vessels to their tin altar, I resume my spin chair at the long and desert board. The q-b and I are alone--save that in the distance a very fat back with gold-braid collar sits sideways and a fat hand disposes of various papers--he is part of the one-and-only table, of course. The tall lean alpaca jacket, with a face of yellow stone and a big black moustache moves from the outer doorway, glowers at our filled cups, and goes to the tin altar and touches the handles of the two vessels: just touches them to an arrangement: as one who should say: These are mine. What dirty foreigner dares help himself!

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As quickly as possible we stagger up from the long dungeon where the alpaca jackets are swooping like blue-bottles upon the coffee pots, into the air. There the carpenter is waiting for us, like a spider.

"Isn't the sea a little quieter?" says the q-b wistfully. She is growing paler.

"No, Signora--how should it be?" says the gaunt-faced carpenter. "The wind is waiting for us behind Cape Gallo. You see that cape?" he points to a tall black cliff-front in the sea ahead. "When we get to that cape

we get the wind and the sea. Here--" he makes a gesture--"it is moderate."

"Ugh!" says the q-b, turning paler. "I'm going to lie down."

She disappears. The carpenter, finding me stony ground, goes forward, and I see him melting into the crowd of the innumerable crew, that hovers on the lower-deck passage by the kitchen and the engines.

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The clouds are flying fast overhead: and sharp and isolated come drops of rain, so that one thinks it must be spray. But no, it is a handful of rain. The ship swishes and sinks forward, gives a hollow thudding and rears slowly backward, along this pinkish lofty coast of Sicily that is just retreating into a bay. From the open sea comes the rain, come the long waves.

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No shelter. One must go down. The q-b lies quietly in her bunk. The state-room is stale like a passage on the underground railway. No shelter, save near the kitchen and the engines, where there is a bit of warmth. The cook is busy cleaning fish, making the whiting bite their tails venomously at a little board just outside his kitchen-hole. A slow stream of kitchen-filth swilkers back and forth along the ship's side. A

gang of the crew leans near me--a larger gang further down. Heaven knows what they can all be--but they never do anything but stand in gangs and talk and eat and smoke cigarettes. They are mostly young--mostly Palermitan--with a couple of unmistakable Neapolitans, having the peculiar Neapolitan hang-dog good looks, the chiselled cheek, the little black moustache, the large eyes. But they chew with their cheeks bulged out, and laugh with their fine, semi-sarcastic noses. The whole gang looks continually sideways. Nobody ever commands them--there seems to be absolutely no control. Only the fat engineer in grey linen looks as clean and as competent as his own machinery. Queer how machine-control puts the pride and self-respect into a man.

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The rain over, I go and squat against the canvas that is spread over the arched sky-lights on the small promenade deck, sitting on the seat that is fixed to the sky-light sides. The wind is cold: there are snatches of sun and spits of rain. The big cape has come and is being left behind: we are heading for a far-off cape like a cloud in the grey air. A dimness comes over one's mind: a sort of stupefaction owing to the wind and the relentless slither-and-rearing of the ship. Not a sickness, but a sort of dim faintness. So much motion, such moving, powerful air. And withal a constant triumph in the long, slow sea-gallop of the ship.

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A great loud bell: midday and the crew going to eat, rushing to eat. After some time we are summoned. "The Signora isn't eating?" asks the waiter eagerly: hoping she is not. "Yes, she is eating," say I. I fetch the q-b from her berth. Rather wanly she comes and gets into her spin chair. Bash comes a huge plate of thick, oily cabbage soup, very full, swilkering over the sides. We do what we can with it. So does the third passenger: a young woman who never wears a hat, thereby admitting herself simply as one of "the people," but who has an expensive complicated dress, nigger-coloured thin silk stockings, and suede high-heeled shoes. She is handsome, sturdy, with large dark eyes and a robust, frank manner: far too robustly downright for Italy. She is from Cagliari--and can't do much with the cabbage soup: and tells the waiter so, in her deep, hail-fellow-well-met voice. In the doorway hovers a little cloud of alpaca jackets grinning faintly with malignant anticipation of food, hoping, like blow-flies, we shall be too ill to eat. Away goes the soup and appears a massive yellow omelette, like some log of bilious wood. It is hard, and heavy, and cooked in the usual rank-tasting olive oil. The young woman doesn't have much truck with it: neither do we. To the triumph of the blow-flies, who see the yellow monster borne to their altar. After which a long long slab of the inevitable meat cut into innumerable slices, tasting of dead nothingness and having a thick sauce of brown neutrality: sufficient for twelve people at least. This, with masses of strong-tasting greenish cauliflower liberally weighted with oil, on a ship that was already heaving its heart out, made up the dinner. Accumulating malevolent triumph among the blow-flies in the passage. So on to a dessert of

oranges, pears with wooden hearts and thick yellowish wash-leather flesh, and apples. Then coffee.

And we had sat through it, which is something. The alpaca blue-bottles buzzed over the masses of food that went back on the dishes to the tin altar. Surely it had been made deliberately so that we should not eat it! The Cagliarese young woman talked to us. Yes, she broke into that awful language which the Italians--the quite ordinary ones--call French, and which they insist on speaking for their own glorification: yea, when they get to heaven's gate they will ask St. Peter for:

"OOn bigliay pour ung--trozzième classe."

Fortunately or unfortunately her inquisitiveness got the better of her, and she fell into her native Italian. What were we, where did we come from, where were we going, why were we going, had we any children, did we want any, etc. After every answer she nodded her head and said Ahu! and watched us with energetic dark eyes. Then she ruminated over our nationalities and said, to the unseeing witnesses: Una bella coppia, a fine couple. As at the moment we felt neither beautiful nor coupled, we only looked greener. The grim man-at-arms coming up to ask us again if we weren't going to have a little wine, she lapsed into her ten-pounder French, which was most difficult to follow. And she said that on a sea-voyage one must eat, one must eat, if only a little. But--and she lapsed into Italian--one must by no means drink wine--no--no! One didn't want to, said I sadly. Whereupon the grim man-at-arms, whom, of course,

we had cheated out of the bottle we refused to have opened for us, said with a lost sarcasm that wine made a man of a man, etc., etc. I was too weary of that underground, however. All I knew was that he wanted wine, wine, wine, and we hadn't ordered any. He didn't care for food.

The Cagliarese told us she came now from Naples, and her husband was following in a few days. He was doing business in Naples. I nearly asked if he was a little dog-fish--this being the Italian for profiteer, but refrained in time. So the two ladies retired to lie down, I went and sat under my tarpaulin.

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I felt very dim, and only a bit of myself. And I dozed blankly. The afternoon grew more sunny. The ship turned southwards, and with the wind and waves behind, it became much warmer, much smoother. The sun had the lovely strong winey warmth, golden over the dark-blue sea. The old oak-wood looked almost white, the afternoon was sweet upon the sea. And in the sunshine and the swishing of the sea, the speedier running of the empty ship, I slept a warm, sweet hour away, and awoke new. To see ahead pale, uplooming islands upon the right: the windy Egades: and on the right a mountain or high conical hill, with buildings on the summit: and in front against the sea, still rather far away, buildings rising upon a quay, within a harbor: and a mole, and a castle forward to sea, all small and far away, like a view. The buildings were square and fine. There was something impressive--magical under the far sunshine and the

keen wind, the square and well-proportioned buildings waiting far off, waiting like a lost city in a story, a Rip van Winkle city. I knew it was Trapani, the western port of Sicily, under the western sun.

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And the hill near us was Mount Eryx. I had never seen it before. So I had imagined a mountain in the sky. But it was only a hill, with undistinguishable cluster of a village on the summit, where even now cold wisps of vapour caught. They say it is 2,500 feet high. Still it looks only a hill.

But why in the name of heaven should my heart stand still as I watch that hill which rises above the sea? It is the Etna of the west: but only a town-crowned hill. To men it must have had a magic almost greater than Etna's. Watching Africa! Africa, showing her coast on clear days. Africa the dreaded. And the great watch-temple of the summit, world-sacred, world-mystic in the world that was. Venus of the aborigines, older than Greek Aphrodite. Venus of the aborigines, from her watch-temple looking at Africa, beyond the Egatian isles. The world-mystery, the smiling Astarte. This, one of the world centres, older than old! and the woman-goddess watching Africa! Erycina ridens. Laughing, the woman-goddess, at this centre of an ancient, quite-lost world.

I confess my heart stood still. But is mere historical fact so strong,

that what one learns in bits from books can move one so? Or does the very word call an echo out of the dark blood? It seems so to me. It seems to me from the darkest recesses of my blood comes a terrible echo at the name of Mount Eryx: something quite unaccountable. The name of Athens hardly moves me. At Eryx--my darkness quivers. Eryx, looking west into Africa's sunset. Erycina ridens.

There is a tick-tocking in the little cabin against which I lean. The wireless operator is busy communicating with Trapani, no doubt. He is a fat young man with fairish curly hair and an important bearing. Give a man control of some machine, and at once his air of importance and more-than-human dignity develops. One of the unaccountable members of the crew lounges in the little doorway, like a chicken on one foot, having nothing to do. The girl from Cagliari comes up with two young men--also Sardinians by their thick-set, independent look, and the touch of pride in their dark eyes. She has no wraps at all: just her elegant fine-cloth dress, her bare head from which the wisps of hair blow across her brow, and the transparent "nigger" silk stockings. Yet she does not seem cold. She talks with great animation, sitting between the two young men. And she holds the hand of the one in the overcoat affectionately. She is always holding the hand of one or other of the two young men: and wiping wisps of wind-blown hair from her brow: and talking in her strong, nonchalant voice, rapidly, ceaselessly, with massive energy. Heaven knows if the two young men--they are third-class passengers--were previous acquaintances. But they hold her hand like brothers--quite simply and nicely, not at all sticky and libidinous. It

all has an air of "Why not?"

She shouts at me as I pass, in her powerful, extraordinary French:

"Madame votre femme, elle est au lit?"

I say she is lying down.

"Ah!" she nods. "Elle a le mal de mer?"

No, she is not sea-sick, just lying down.

The two young men, between whom she is sitting as between two pillows, watch with the curious Sardinian dark eyes that seem alert and show the white all round. They are pleasant--a bit like seals. And they have a numb look for the moment, impressed by this strange language. She proceeds energetically to translate into Sardinian, as I pass on.

We do not seem to be going to Trapani. There lies the town on the left, under the hill, the square buildings that suggest to me the factories of the East India Company shining in the sun along the curious, closed-in harbour, beyond the running, dark blue sea. We seem to be making for the island bulk of Levanzo. Perhaps we shall steer away to Sardinia without putting in to Trapani.

On and on we run--and always as if we were going to steer between the

pale blue, heaped-up islands, leaving Trapani behind us on our left. The town has been in sight for an hour or more: and still we run out to sea towards Levanzo. And the wireless-operator busily tick-tocks and throbs in his little cabin on this upper deck. Peeping in, one sees his bed and chair behind a curtain, screened off from his little office. And all so tidy and pleased-looking.

From the islands one of the Mediterranean sailing ships is beating her way, across our track, to Trapani. I don't know the name of ships but the carpenter says she is a schooner: he says it with that Italian misgiving which doesn't really know but which can't bear not to know. Anyhow on she comes, with her tall ladder of square sails white in the afternoon light, and her lovely prow, curved in with a perfect hollow, running like a wild animal on a scent across the waters. There--the scent leads her north again. She changes her tack from the harbour mouth, and goes coursing away, passing behind us. Lovely she is, nimble and quick and palpitating, with all her sails white and bright and eager.

We are changing our course. We have all the time been heading for the south of Levanzo. Now I see the island slowly edging back, as if clearing out of the way for us, like a man in the street. The island edges and turns aside: and walks away. And clearly we are making for the harbour mouth. We have all this time been running, out at sea, round the back of the harbour. Now I see the fortress-castle, an old thing, out forward to sea: and a little lighthouse and the way in. And beyond, the

town-front with great palm trees and other curious dark trees, and behind these the large square buildings of the south rising imposingly, as if severe, big palaces upon the promenade. It all has a stately, southern, imposing appearance, withal remote from our modern centuries: standing back from the tides of our industrial life.

I remember the Crusaders, how they called here so often on their way to the East. And Trapani seems waiting for them still, with its palm trees and its silence, full in the afternoon sun. It has not much to do but wait, apparently.

The q-b emerges into the sun, crying out how lovely! And the sea is quieter: we are already in the lea of the harbour-curve. From the north the many-sailed ship from the islands is running down towards us, with the wind. And away on the south, on the sea-level, numerous short windmills are turning their sails briskly, windmill after windmill, rather stumpy, spinning gaily in the blue, silent afternoon, among the salt-lagoons stretching away towards Marsala. But there is a whole legion of windmills, and Don Quixote would have gone off his head. There they spin, hither and thither, upon the pale-blue sea-levels. And perhaps one catches a glitter of white salt-heaps. For these are the great salt-lagoons which make Trapani rich.

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We are entering the harbour-basin, however, past the old castle out on

the spit, past the little lighthouse, then through the entrance, slipping quietly on the now tranquil water. Oh, and how pleasant the fulness of the afternoon sun flooding this round, fast-sleeping harbour, along whose side the tall palms drowse, and whose waters are fast asleep. It seems quite a small, cosy harbour, with the great buildings warm-colored in the sun behind the dark tree-avenue of the marina. The same silent, sleeping, endlessly sun-warmed stateliness.

In the midst of this tranquillity we slowly turn round upon the shining water, and in a few moments are moored. There are other ships moored away to the right: all asleep, apparently, in the flooding of the afternoon sun. Beyond the harbour entrance runs the great sea and the wind. Here all is still and hot and forgotten.

"Vous descendez en terre?" shouts the young woman, in her energetic French--she leaves off holding the young men's hands for the moment. We are not quite sure: and we don't want her to come with us, anyhow, for her French is not our French.

The land sleeps on: nobody takes any notice of us: but just one boat paddles out the dozen yards to our side. We decide to set foot on shore.

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One should not, and we knew it. One should never enter into these southern towns that look so nice, so lovely, from the outside. However,

we thought we would buy some cakes. So we crossed the avenue which looks so beautiful from the sea, and which, when you get into it, is a cross between an outside place where you throw rubbish and a humpy unmade road in a raw suburb, with a few iron seats, and litter of old straw and rag. Indescribably dreary in itself: yet with noble trees, and lovely sunshine, and the sea and the islands gleaming magic beyond the harbour mouth, and the sun, the eternal sun full focussed. A few mangy, nothing-to-do people stand disconsolately about, in southern fashion, as if they had been left there, water-logged, by the last flood, and were waiting for the next flood to wash them further. Round the corner along the quay a Norwegian steamer dreams that she is being loaded, in the muddle of the small port.

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We looked at the cakes--heavy and wan they appeared to our sea-rolled stomachs. So we strolled into a main street, dark and dank like a sewer. A tram bumped to a standstill, as if now at last was the end of the world. Children coming from school ecstatically ran at our heels, with bated breath, to hear the vocal horrors of our foreign speech. We turned down a dark side alley, about forty paces deep: and were on the northern bay, and on a black stench that seemed like the perpetual sewer, a bank of mud.

So we got to the end of the black main street, and turned in haste to the sun. Ah--in a moment we were in it. There rose the palms, there lay

our ship in the shining, curving basin--and there focussed the sun, so that in a moment we were drunk or dazed by it. Dazed. We sat on an iron seat in the rubbish-desolate, sun-stricken avenue.

A ragged and dirty girl was nursing a fat and moist and immovable baby and tending to a grimy fat infant boy. She stood a yard away and gazed at us as one would gaze at a pig one was going to buy. She came nearer, and examined the q-b. I had my big hat down over my eyes. But no, she had taken her seat at my side, and poked her face right under my hat brim, so that her towzled hair touched me, and I thought she would kiss me. But again no. With her breath on my cheek she only gazed on my face as if it were a wax mystery. I got up hastily.

"Too much for me," said I to the q-b.

She laughed, and asked what the baby was called. The baby was called Beppina, as most babies are.

Driven forth, we wandered down the desolate avenue of shade and sun towards the ship, and turned once more into the town. We had not been on shore more than ten minutes. This time we went to the right, and found more shops. The streets were dark and sunless and cold. And Trapani seemed to me to sell only two commodities: cured rabbit skins and cat-skins, and great, hideous, modern bed-spread arrangements of heavy flowered silk and fabulous price. They seem to think nothing of thousands of liras, in Trapani.

But most remarkable was bunny and pussy. Bunny and pussy, flattened out like pressed leaves, dangling in clusters everywhere. Furs! white bunny, black bunny in great abundance, piebald bunny, grey bunny:--then pussy, tabby pussy, and tortoiseshell pussy, but mostly black pussy, in a ghastly semblance of life, all flat, of course. Just single furs. Clusters, bunches, heaps, and dangling arrays of plain-superficies puss and bun-bun! Puss and bun by the dozen and the twenty, like dried leaves, for your choice. If a cat from a ship should chance to find itself in Trapani streets, it would give a mortal yell, and go mad, I am sure.

We strolled for ten more minutes in this narrow, tortuous, unreal town, that seemed to have plenty of flourishing inhabitants, and a fair number of Socialists, if one was to judge by the great scrawlings on the walls: W. LENIN and ABASSO LA BORGHESIA. Don't imagine, by the way, that Lenin is another Wille on the list. The apparent initial stands for Evviva, the double V.

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Cakes one dared not buy, after looking at them. But we found macaroon biscuits, and a sort of flat plaster-casts of the Infant Jesus under a dove, of which we bought two. The q-b ate her macaroon biscuits all through the streets, and we went towards the ship. The fat boatman hailed us to take us back. It was just about eight yards of water to

row, the ship being moored on the quay: one could have jumped it. I gave the fat boatman two liras, two francs. He immediately put on the socialist-workman indignation, and thrust the note back at me. Sixty centimes more! The fee was thirteen sous each way! In Venice or Syracuse it would be two sous. I looked at him and gave him the money and said: "Per Dio, we are in Trapani!" He muttered back something about foreigners. But the hateful, unmanly insolence of these lords of toil, now they have their various "unions" behind them and their "rights" as working men, sends my blood black. They are ordinary men no more: the human, happy Italian is most marvellously vanished. New honors come upon them, etc. The dignity of human labour is on its hind legs, busy giving every poor innocent who isn't ready for it a kick in the mouth.

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But, once more in parenthesis, let me remind myself that it is our own English fault. We have slobbered about the nobility of toil, till at last the nobles naturally insist on eating the cake. And more than that, we have set forth, politically, on such a high and Galahad quest of holy liberty, and been caught so shamelessly filling our pockets, that no wonder the naïve and idealistic south turns us down with a bang.

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Well, we are back on the ship. And we want tea. On the list by the door it says we are to have coffee, milk and butter at 8.30: luncheon at

11.30: tea, coffee or chocolate at 3.00: and dinner at 6.30. And moreover: "The company will feed the passengers for the normal duration of the voyage only." Very well--very well. Then where is tea? Not any signs! and the alpaca jackets giving us a wide berth. But we find our man, and demand our rights: at least the q-b does.

The tickets from Palermo to Cagliari cost, together, 583 liras. Of this, 250 liras was for the ticket, and 40 liras each for the food. This, for two tickets, would make 580 liras. The odd three for usual stamps. The voyage was supposed to last about thirty or thirty-two hours: from eight of the morning of departure to two or four of the following afternoon. Surely we pay for our tea.

The other passengers have emerged: a large, pale, fat, "handsome" Palermitan who is going to be professor at Cagliari: his large, fat, but high-coloured wife: and three children, a boy of fourteen like a thin, frail, fatherly girl, a little boy in a rabbit-skin overcoat, coming rather unfluffed, and a girl-child on the mother's knee. The one-year-old girl-child being, of course, the only man in the party.

They have all been sick all day, and look washed out. We sympathise. They lament the cruelties of the journey--and senza servizio! senza servizio! without any maid servant. The mother asks for coffee, and a cup of milk for the children: then, seeing our tea with lemon, and knowing it by repute, she will have tea. But the rabbit-boy will have coffee--coffee and milk--and nothing else. And an orange. And the baby

will have lemon, pieces of lemon. And the fatherly young "miss" of an adolescent brother laughs indulgently at all the whims of these two young ones: the father laughs and thinks it all adorable and expects us to adore. He is almost too washed-out to attend properly, to give the full body of his attention.

So the mother gets her cup of tea--and puts a piece of lemon in--and then milk on top of that. The rabbit boy sucks an orange, slobbers in the tea, insists on coffee and milk, tries a piece of lemon, and gets a biscuit. The baby, with weird faces, chews pieces of lemon: and drops them in the family cup: and fishes them out with a little sugar, and dribbles them across the table to her mouth, throws them away and reaches for a new sour piece. They all think it humorous and adorable. Arrives the milk, to be treated as another loving cup, mingled with orange, lemon, sugar, tea, biscuit, chocolate, and cake. Father, mother, and elder brother partake of nothing, they haven't the stomach. But they are charmed, of course, by the pretty pranks and messes of the infants. They have extraordinary amiable patience, and find the young ones a perpetual source of charming amusement. They look at one another, the elder ones, and laugh and comment, while the two young ones mix themselves and the table into a lemon-milk-orange-tea-sugar-biscuit-cake-chocolate mess. This inordinate Italian amiable patience with their young monkeys is astonishing. It makes the monkeys more monkey-like, and self-conscious incredibly, so that a baby has all the tricks of a Babylonian harlot, making eyes and trying new pranks. Till at last one sees the southern Holy Family as an

unholy triad of imbecility.

Meanwhile I munched my Infant-Jesus-and-Dove arrangement, which was rather like eating thin glass, so hard and sharp. It was made of almond and white of egg presumably, and was not so bad if you could eat it at all. It was a Christmas relic.--And I watched the Holy Family across the narrow board, and tried not to look all I felt.

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Going on deck as soon as possible, we watched the loading of barrels of wine into the hold--a mild and happy-go-lucky process. The ship seemed to be almost as empty of cargo as of passengers. Of the latter, we were apparently twelve adults, all told, and the three children. And as for cargo, there were the wooden chests of the officer, and these fourteen barrels of wine from Trapani. The last were at length settled more or less firm, the owner, or the responsible landsman seeing to it. No one on the ship seemed to be responsible for anything. And four of the innumerable crew were replacing the big planks over the hold. It was curious how forlorn the ship seemed to feel, now she was ready for sea again. Her innumerable crew did not succeed in making her alive. She ran her course like a lost soul across the Mid-Mediterranean.

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Outside the harbour the sun was sinking, gorgeous gold and red the sky,

and vast, beyond the darkening islands of the Egades group. Coming as we did from the east side of the island, where dawn beyond the Ionian sea is the day's great and familiar event: so decisive an event, that as the light appears along the sea's rim, so do my eyes invariably open and look at it, and know it is dawn, and as the night-purple is fused back, and a little scarlet thrills towards the zenith, invariably, day by day, I feel I must get up: coming from the east, shut off hermetically from the west by the steep spikes of the mountains at our back, we felt this sunset in the African sea terrible and dramatic. It seemed much more magnificent and tragic than our Ionian dawn, which has always a suggestion of a flower opening. But this great red, trumpet-flaring sunset had something African, half-sinister, upon the sea: and it seemed so far off, in an unknown land. Whereas our Ionian dawn always seems near and familiar and happy.

A different goddess the Eryx Astarte, the woman Ashtaroth, Erycina ridens must have been, in her prehstoric dark smiling, watching the fearful sunsets beyond the Egades, from our gold-lighted Apollo of the Ionian east. She is a strange goddess to me, this Erycina Venus, and the west is strange and unfamiliar and a little fearful, be it Africa or be it America.

Slowly at sunset we moved out of the harbour. And almost as we passed the bar, away in front we saw, among the islands, the pricking of a quick pointed light. Looking back, we saw the light at the harbour entrance twitching: and the remote, lost town beginning to glimmer. And

night was settling down upon the sea, through the crimsoned purple of the last afterglow.

The islands loomed big as we drew nearer, dark in the thickening darkness. Overhead a magnificent evening-star blazed above the open sea, giving me a pang at the heart, for I was so used to see her hang just above the spikes of the mountains, that I felt she might fall, having the space beneath.

Levanzo and the other large island were quite dark: absolutely dark, save for one beam of a lighthouse low down in the distance. The wind was again strong and cold: the ship had commenced her old slither and heave, slither and heave, which mercifully we had forgotten. Overhead were innumerable great stars active as if they were alive in the sky. I saw Orion high behind us, and the dog-star glaring. And swish! went the sea as we took the waves, then after a long trough, swish! This curious rhythmic swishing and hollow drumming of a steamer at sea has a narcotic, almost maddening effect on the spirit, a long, hissing burst of waters, then the hollow roll, and again the upheaval to a sudden hiss-ss-ss!

A bell had clanged and we knew the crew were once more feeding. At every moment of the day and presumably of the night, feeding was going on--or coffee-drinking.

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We were summoned to dinner. Our young woman was already seated: and a fat uniformed mate or purser or official of some sort was finishing off in the distance. The pale professor also appeared: and at a certain distance down the table sat a little hard-headed grey man in a long grey alpaca travelling coat. Appeared the beloved macaroni with tomato sauce: no food for the sea. I put my hopes on the fish. Had I not seen the cook making whiting bite their own tails viciously?--The fish appeared. And what was it? Fried ink-pots. A calamaio is an ink-pot: also it is a polyp, a little octopus which, alas, frequents the Mediterranean and squirts ink if offended. This polyp with its tentacles is cut up and fried, and reduced to the consistency of boiled celluloid. It is esteemed a delicacy: but is tougher than indiarubber, gristly through and through.

I have a peculiar aversion to these ink-pots. Once in Liguria we had a boat of our own and paddled with the peasant paddlers. Alessandro caught ink-pots: and like this. He tied up a female by a string in a cave--the string going through a convenient hole in her end. There she lived, like an Amphitrite's wire-haired terrier tied up, till Alessandro went a-fishing. Then he towed her, like a poodle behind. And thus, like a poodly-bitch, she attracted hangers-on in the briny seas. And these poor polyp inamorati were the victims. They were lifted as prey on board, where I looked with horror on their grey, translucent tentacles and large, cold, stony eyes. The she-polyp was towed behind again. But after a few days she died.

And I think, even for creatures so awful-looking, this method is indescribably base, and shows how much lower than an octopus even, is lordly man.

Well, we chewed a few ends of oil-fried ink-pots, and gave it up. The Cagliari girl gave up too: the professor had not even tried. Only the hard-headed grey man in the alpaca coat chewed animatedly, with bouncing jaws. Mountains of calamaio remained for the joyous blue-bottles.

Arrived the inevitable meat--this long piece of completely tasteless undercut in innumerable grey-brown slices. Oh, Italy! The professor fled.

Arrived the wash-leather pears, the apples, the oranges--we saved an apple for a happier hour.

Arrived coffee, and, as a magnificent treat, a few well-known pastries. They all taste wearily alike. The young woman shakes her head. I shake mine, but the q-b, like a child, is pleased. Most pleased of all, however, are the blue-bottles, who dart in a black-alpaca bunch to the tin altar, and there loudly buzz, wildly, above the sallow cakes.

The citron-cheeked, dry one, however, cares darkly nothing for cakes. He comes once more to twit us about wine. So much so that the Cagliari girl orders a glass of Marsala: and I must second her. So there we are, three

little glasses of brown liquid. The Cagliari girl sips hers and suddenly flees. The q-b sips hers with infinite caution, and quietly retires. I finish the q-b's little glass, and my own, and the voracious blow-flies buzz derisively and excited. The yellow-cheeked one has disappeared with the bottle.

From the professorial cabin faint wails, sometimes almost fierce, as one or another is going to be ill. Only a thin door is between this state-room and them. The most down-trodden frayed ancient rag of a man goes discreetly with basins, trying not to let out glimpses of the awful within. I climb up to look at the vivid, drenching stars, to breathe the cold wind, to see the dark sea sliding. Then I too go to the cabin, and watch the sea run past the porthole for a minute, and insert myself like the meat in a sandwich into the tight lower bunk. Oh, infinitesimal cabin, where we sway like two matches in a match box! Oh strange, but even yet excellent gallop of a ship at sea.

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I slept not so badly through the stifled, rolling night--in fact later on slept soundly. And the day was growing bright when I peered through the porthle, the sea was much smoother. It was a brilliant clear morning. I made haste and washed myself cursorily in the saucer that dribbled into a pail in a corner: there was not space even for one chair, this saucer was by my bunk-head. And I went on deck.

Ah the lovely morning! Away behind us the sun was just coming above the sea's horizon, and the sky all golden, all a joyous, fire-heated gold, and the sea was glassy bright, the wind gone still, the waves sunk into long, low undulations, the foam of the wake was pale ice-blue in the yellow air. Sweet, sweet wide morning on the sea, with the sun coming, swimming up, and a tall sailing bark, with her flat fore-ladder of sails delicately across the light, and a far-far steamer on the electric vivid morning horizon.

The lovely dawn: the lovely pure, wide morning in the mid-sea, so golden-aired and delighted, with the sea like sequins shaking, and the sky far, far, far above, unfathomably clear. How glad to be on a ship! What a golden hour for the heart of man! Ah if one could sail for ever, on a small quiet, lonely ship, from land to land and isle to isle, and saunter through the spaces of this lovely world, always through the spaces of this lovely world. Sweet it would be sometimes to come to the opaque earth, to block oneself against the stiff land, to annul the vibration of one's flight against the inertia of our terra firma! but life itself would be in the flight, the tremble of space. Ah the trembling of never-ended space, as one moves in flight! Space, and the frail vibration of space, the glad lonely wringing of the heart. Not to be clogged to the land any more. Not to be any more like a donkey with a log on its leg, fastened to weary earth that has no answer now. But to be off.

To find three masculine, world-lost souls, and world-lost saunter, and

saunter on along with them, across the dithering space, as long as life lasts! Why come to anchor? There is nothing to anchor for. Land has no answer to the soul any more. It has gone inert. Give me a little ship, kind gods, and three world-lost comrades. Hear me! And let me wander aimless across this vivid outer world, the world empty of man, where space flies happily.

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The lovely, celandine-yellow morning of the open sea, paling towards a rare, sweet blue! The sun stood above the horizon, like the great burning stigma of the sacred flower of day. Mediterranean sailing-ships, so mediaeval, hovered on the faint morning wind, as if uncertain which way to go, curious, odd-winged insects of the flower. The steamer, hull-down, was sinking towards Spain. Space rang clear about us: the level sea!

Appeared the Cagliari young woman and her two friends. She was looking handsome and restored now the sea was easy. Her two male friends stood touching her, one at either shoulder.

"Bonjour, Monsieur!" she barked across at me. "Vous avez pris le café?"

"Pas encore. Et vous?"

"Non! Madame votre femme...."

She roared like a mastiff dog: and then translated with unction to her two uninitiated friends. How it was they did not understand her French I do not know, it was so like travestied Italian.

I went below to find the q-b.

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When we came up, the faint shape of land appeared ahead, more transparent than thin pearl. Already Sardinia. Magic are high lands seen from the sea, when they are far, far off, and ghostly translucent like ice-bergs. This was Sardinia, looming like fascinating shadows in mid-sea. And the sailing ships, as if cut out of frailest pearl translucency, were wafting away towards Naples. I wanted to count their sails--five square ones which I call the ladder, one above the other--but how many wing-blades? That remained yet to be seen.

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Our friend the carpenter spied us out: at least, he was not my friend. He didn't find me simpatico, I am sure. But up he came, and proceeded to entertain us with weary banality. Again the young woman called, had we had coffee? We said we were just going down. And then she said that whatever we had today we had to pay for: our food ended with the one day. At which the q-b was angry, feeling swindled. But I had known

before.

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We went down and had our coffee notwithstanding. The young woman came down, and made eyes at one of the alpaca blue-bottles. After which we saw a cup of coffee and milk and two biscuits being taken to her into her cabin, discreetly. When Italians are being discreet and on the sly, the very air about them becomes tell-tale, and seems to shout with a thousand tongues. So with a thousand invisible tongues clamouring the fact, the young woman had her coffee secretly and gratis, in her cabin.

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But the morning was lovely. The q-b and I crept round the bench at the very stern of the ship and sat out of the wind and out of sight, just above the foaming of the wake. Before us was the open morning--and the glisten of our ship's track, like a snail's path, trailing across the sea: straight for a little while, then giving a bend to the left, always a bend towards the left: and coming at us from the pure horizon, like a bright snail-path. Happy it was to sit there in the stillness, with nothing but the humanless sea to shine about us.

But no, we were found out. Arrived the carpenter.

"Ah, you have found a fine place--!"

"Molto bello!" This from the q-b. I could not bear the irruption.

He proceeded to talk--and as is inevitable, the war. Ah, the war--it was a terrible thing. He had become ill--very ill. Because, you see, not only do you go without proper food, without proper rest and warmth, but, you see, you are in an agony of fear for your life all the time. An agony of fear for your life. And that's what does it. Six months in hospital--! The q-b, of course, was sympathetic.

The Sicilians are quite simple about it. They just tell you they were frightened to death, and it made them ill. The q-b, woman-like, loves them for being so simple about it. I feel angry somewhere. For they expect a full-blown sympathy. And however the great god Mars may have shrunk and gone wizened in the world, it still annoys me to hear him so blasphemed.

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Near us the automatic log was spinning, the thin rope trailing behind us in the sea. Erratically it jerked and spun, with spasmodic torsion. He explained that the little screw at the end of the line spun to the speed of travelling. We were going from ten to twelve Italian miles to the hour. Ah, yes, we could go twenty. But we went no faster than ten or twelve, to save the coal.

The coal--il carbone! I knew we were in for it. England--l'Inghilterra she has the coal. And what does she do? She sells it very dear. Particularly to Italy. Italy won the war and now can't even have coal. Because why! The price. The exchange! Il cambio. Now I am doubly in for it. Two countries had been able to keep their money high--England and America. The English sovereign--la sterlina--and the American dollar--sa, these were money. The English and the Americans flocked to Italy, with their sterline and their dollari, and they bought what they wanted for nothing, for nothing. Ecco! Whereas we poor Italians--we are in a state of ruination--proper ruination. The allies, etc., etc.

I am so used to it--I am so wearily used to it. I can't walk a stride without having this wretched cambio, the exchange, thrown at my head. And this with an injured petulant spitefulness which turns my blood. For I assure them, whatever I have in Italy I pay for: and I am not England. I am not the British Isles on two legs.

Germany--La Germania--she did wrong to make the war. But--there you are, that was war. Italy and Germany--l'Italia e la Germania--they had always been friends. In Palermo....

My God, I felt I could not stand it another second. To sit above the foam and have this miserable creature stuffing wads of chewed newspaper into my ear--no, I could not bear it. In Italy, there is no escape. Say two words, and the individual starts chewing old newspaper and stuffing

it into you. No escape. You become--if you are English--l'Inghilterra, il carbone, and il cambio; and as England, coal and exchange you are treated. It is more than useless to try to be human about it. You are a State usury system, a coal fiend and an exchange thief. Every Englishman has disappeared into this triple abstraction, in the eyes of the Italian, of the proletariat particularly. Try and get them to be human, try and get them to see that you are simply an individual, if you can. After all, I am no more than a single human man wandering my lonely way across these years. But no--to an Italian I am a perfected abstraction, England--coal--exchange. The Germans were once devils for inhuman theoretic abstracting of living beings. But now the Italians beat them. I am a walking column of statistics, which adds up badly for Italy. Only this and nothing more. Which being so, I shut my mouth and walk away.

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For the moment the carpenter is shaken off. But I am in a rage, fool that I am. It is like being pestered by their mosquitoes. The sailing ships are near--and I count fifteen sails. Beautiful they look! Yet if I were on board somebody would be chewing newspaper at me, and addressing me as England--coal--exchange.

The mosquito hovers--and hovers. But the stony blank of the side of my cheek keeps him away. Yet he hovers. And the q-b feels sympathetic towards him: quite sympathetic. Because of course he treats her--a bel

pezzo--as if he would lick her boots, or anything else that she would let him lick.

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Meanwhile we eat the apples from yesterday's dessert, and the remains of the q-b's Infant-Jesus-and-dove cake. The land is drawing nearer--we can see the shape of the end promontory and peninsula--and a white speck like a church. The bulk of the land is forlorn and rather shapeless, coming towards us: but attractive.

Looking ahead towards the land gives us away. The mosquito swoops on us. Yes--he is not sure--he thinks the white speck is a church--or a lighthouse. When you pass the cape on the right, and enter the wide bay between Cape Spartivento and Cape Carbonara, then you have two hours sail to Cagliari. We shall arrive between two and three o'clock. It is now eleven.

Yes, the sailing ships are probably going to Naples. There is not much wind for them now. When there is wind they go fast, faster than our steamer. Ah Naples--bella, bella, eh? A little dirty, say I. But what do you want? says he. A great city! Palermo of course is better.

Ah--the Neapolitan women--he says, à propos or not. They do their hair so fine, so neat and beautiful--but underneath--sotto--sotto--they are dirty. This being received in cold silence, he continues: Noi giriamo

il mondo! Noi, chi giriamo, conosciamo il mondo. We travel about, and we know the world. Who we are, I do not know: his highness the Palermitan carpenter lout, no doubt. But we, who travel, know the world. He is preparing his shot. The Neapolitan women, and the English women, in this are equal: that they are dirty underneath. Underneath, they are dirty. The women of London--

But it is getting too much for me.

"You who look for dirty women," say I, "find dirty women everywhere."

He stops short and watches me.

"No! No! You have not understood me. No! I don't mean that. I mean that the Neapolitan women and the English women have dirty underclothing--"

To which he gets no answer but a cold look and a cold cheek. Whereupon he turns to the q-b, and proceeds to be simpatica. And after a few moments he turns again to me:

"Il signore is offended! He is offended with me."

But I turn the other way. And at last he clears out: in triumph, I must admit: like a mosquito that has bitten one in the neck. As a matter of fact one should never let these fellows get into conversation nowadays. They are no longer human beings. They hate one's Englishness,

and leave out the individual.

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We walk forward, towards the fore-deck, where the captain's lookout cabin is. The captain is an elderly man, silent and crushed: with the look of a gentleman. But he looks beaten down. Another, still another member of the tray-carrying department is just creeping up his ladder with a cup of black coffee. Returning, we peep down the sky-light into the kitchen. And there we see roast chicken and sausages--roast chicken and sausages! Ah, this is where the sides of kid and the chickens and the good things go: all down the throats of the crew. There is no more food for us, until we land.

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We have passed the cape--and the white thing is a lighthouse. And the fattish, handsome professor has come up carrying the little girl-child, while the femalish elder brother leads the rabbit-fluffy small boy by the hand. So en famille: so terribly en famille. They deposit themselves near us, and it threatens another conversation. But not for anything, my dears!

The sailors--not sailors, some of the street-corner loafers, are hoisting the flag, the red-white-and-green Italian tricolor. It floats at the mast-head, and the femalish brother, in a fine burst of feeling,

takes off his funny hat with a flourish and cries:

"Ecco la bandiera italiana!"

Ach, the hateful sentimentalism of these days.

The land passes slowly, very slowly. It is hilly, but barren looking, with few trees. And it is not spikey and rather splendid, like Sicily. Sicily has style. We keep along the east side of the bay--away in the west is Cape Spartivento. And still no sight of Cagliari.

"Two hours yet!" cries the Cagliari girl. "Two hours before we eat. Ah, when I get on land, what a good meal I shall eat."

The men haul in the automatic log. The sky is clouding over with that icy curd which comes after midday when the bitter north wind is blowing. It is no longer warm.

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Slowly, slowly we creep along the formless shore. An hour passes. We see a little fort ahead, done in enormous black-and-white checks, like a fragment of gigantic chess-board. It stands at the end of a long spit of land--a long, barish peninsula that has no houses and looks as if it might be golf-links. But it is not golf-links.

And suddenly there is Cagliari: a naked town rising steep, steep, golden-looking, piled naked to the sky from the plain at the head of the formless hollow bay. It is strange and rather wonderful, not a bit like Italy. The city piles up lofty and almost miniature, and makes me think of Jerusalem: without trees, without cover, rising rather bare and proud, remote as if back in history, like a town in a monkish, illuminated missal. One wonders how it ever got there. And it seems like Spain--or Malta: not Italy. It is a steep and lonely city, treeless, as in some old illumination. Yet withal rather jewel-like: like a sudden rose-cut amber jewel naked at the depth of the vast indenture. The air is cold, blowing bleak and bitter, the sky is all curd. And that is Cagliari. It has that curious look, as if it could be seen, but not entered. It is like some vision, some memory, something that has passed away. Impossible that one can actually walk in that city: set foot there and eat and laugh there. Ah, no! Yet the ship drifts nearer, nearer, and we are looking for the actual harbour.

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The usual sea-front with dark trees for a promenade and palatial buildings behind, but here not so pink and gay, more reticent, more sombre of yellow stone. The harbour itself a little basin of water, into which we are slipping carefully, while three salt-barges laden with salt as white as snow creep round from the left, drawn by an infinitesimal tug. There are only two other forlorn ships in the basin. It is cold on deck. The ship turns slowly round, and is being hauled to the quay side.

I go down for the knapsack, and a fat blue-bottle pounces at me.

"You pay nine francs fifty."

I pay them, and we get off that ship.