
Opening Extract from...

The Bay of Noon

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Virago

CHAPTER ONE

A military plane crashed that winter on Mount Vesuvius. The plane had taken off from Naples in fog; some hours afterwards it was reported missing. The search went on for hundreds of miles around – over the Ionian Sea, and at Catania, at Catanzaro. Two days later, when the fog lifted, we could see the wreck quite clearly, crumbled against the snow-streaked cone of the volcano, overlooking the airfield from which it had set out. No one had thought of looking close to home.

Since that time, so they say, we have developed better methods of keeping in touch. For it is twelve or fifteen years, now, since the accident took place.

When I was a child I used to be filled with envy when adults recalled events of twelve or fifteen years before. I would think it must be marvellous, to issue those proclamations of experience – 'It was at least ten years ago', or 'I hadn't seen him for twenty years'. But chronological prestige is tenacious: once attained, it can't be shed; it increases moment by moment, day by day, pressing its honours on you until you are lavishly, overly endowed with them. Until you literally sink under them.

A centenarian has told me that memory protects one from this burden of experience. Whole segments of time dropped

out, she said: 'Of five or six years, say, around the turn of the century, all I can remember is the dress that someone wore, or the colour of a curtain.' And I would be pleased, rather than otherwise, at the prospect of remembering Naples in similar terms – a lilac dress Gioconda wore one morning driving to Caserta, or the Siena-coloured curtains of the apartment in San Biagio dei Librai. But memory, at an interval of only fifteen years, is less economical and less poetic, still clouded with effects and what seemed to be their causes. The search is still under way in unlikely places – too assiduous, too attenuated; too far from home.

There was then, there is still, a big NATO establishment at Naples organized around the United States Sixth Fleet, with token components from other countries. When I was brought there from London to translate documents from Italian into English and to do some clerical sifting and sorting of coloured papers, there were already a number of English girls at the base doing similar things – Angelas and Hilarys and Rosemarys who had wanted to get away from Reading or Ruislip or Holland Park. For the most part those fugitive girls were in their twenties; and over them hung an immanence, a pale expectancy, as if their youth were yet to come to them. What passion they possessed for change had, in getting them to Naples, expended itself; once there, they relapsed into their natural obligingness. Breathlessly polite, they made among the drab or primary colours of military life their tender, uncherished strokes of pastel.

My work, though much like theirs, took place in a different building; my life, while no more nourishing, had been lived on a different continent. I had spent the war out of England. Although I was a child when that took place, there was always an implication to it, if not of defection at least of something regrettable. Even my brother used to say, 'Jenny spent the war in Africa,' in a way that at once apologized for and excluded me.

I arrived at Naples in autumn, a belatedly inserted item on the budget of a joint mission to study docking and airport facilities with a view to extending them. With a view to extending them, for no such mission ever pronounced the existing state of affairs to be adequate. The airfield – the same airfield that lay to the south, at the foot of the volcano, far from our offices – was to be, for example, enlarged to receive jet planes, which were coming into military use then. In addition, there were rockets, there were higher and higher explosives, there was the prospect of the nuclear submarine. Even in London where over translations of preliminary papers I learnt the terms I had never in either language known, it seemed implausible that such responsibilities should have devolved on Naples. Ignorant of the Mediterranean, hesitantly speaking an Italian sporadically acquired in Somaliland, I prepared to take the city's part with the loyalty of the native-born.

Our offices were part of a modern complex at Bagnoli, on the northern outskirts of Naples. Modern, I say, but the buildings now have dated in a remarkable way: it is their characterlessness that identifies them, and their resolute unawareness of place. In and around those buildings thousands of NATO personnel and their families lived out their term of exile, requiring nothing of Italy or its language, passing among themselves stale, trumpery talismans of home, recreating a former existence from the shelves of the PX until such time as they should – on other, equally alien shores – speak with nostalgia and authority of the Bay of Naples.

Having arrived with the advance segment of the mission, I was installed along with them – by one of those errors that are the mark of the highly organized – into a hotel in Naples itself, one of the good hotels on the seafront. It was error, then, that set me apart from the first. In the early weeks, when a car fetched us from the hotel before it was light and brought us home each evening after dark, when orders obliged us to idle

week-ends away in our empty office, we did not live in Naples so much as merely sleep in it. Yet I waited for the city, and its intervention, much in the way that those pale companions of mine awaited life itself.

In the fourth week I was lent – was detailed, as they said, for military precision runs to many syllables – for the day to a British civilian. A marine biologist having letters from Whitehall, he too needed pages translated while he waited for the Naples Aquarium to take him under what my Colonel repeatedly and delightedly called its wing. In the office next to ours a telephone was put down, a name was called. The name was out, sick with a virus; for it, mine was substituted. The following morning I did not take the car – the Vehicle, as the Colonel called it – in the dark to Bagnoli, but walked in winter sunshine the few steps from the Hotel Vesuvio to the Hotel Royal, and sent up my name through the concierge.

Of the morning I remember little: sitting with a pad and pencil in a glassed-in, blue-rugged hotel room – a room that was not, with its aquatic reflections, unlike an aquarium in itself – turning my eyes time and again to the bay; seeing it, because of what I was writing about, not as a blue surface filling a curve of land but as a dense and teeming jungle in which weeds and rocks and wrecks and a million creatures reproduced in strange counter-part the city of Naples itself. Echinoderms, I wrote of, and the Mysidae and the Squillidae, and compiled a list of publications on the Mollusca – these unknowns appearing more familiar in kind than did the accustomed daily litanies of troops and matériel; just as my companion, civil and aloof, seemed more compatible than the sullen hearties of the base. The work went quickly; it was not yet noon when my scientist gave up his silent assembling of the papers that were divided into rows across his bed, and said, 'You have caught me up.'

With a wad of completed pages in my hand, I rose – to show willing, a sort of coming to attention. He took the finished sheets and put them in a folder without checking them – a courtesy, I thought, like not seeming to count one's change. 'Can you go and play for a while? I have to put the next lot together, and something is missing. Could you be back here, say, at three?'

In this way I was set at liberty, and left the hotel as full of joyful purpose as if I had been going to an assignation. Until then I had not been once in the city in the middle of the day. But after weeks of surveillance the sense of freedom came as much from the fact that no one knew where I was, as from walking the seafront of Naples before noon on a fine December morning. The three hours at my disposal – a space of time that now, when all days are my own, often passes unnoticed – seemed then a gift, a luxury beyond which one need not forecast. I did not doubt that I would turn up again at the Hotel Royal at three. The only thing to be thought of was how to spend these hours of one's own.

I possessed a single introduction to Naples – one letter provided by a London acquaintance who had encouraged me to present myself at the address on the envelope. 'Somewhere in the thick of Naples,' said this wellwisher, who had never himself been there. The address was that of a woman whose name had become known – and was by then becoming forgotten – in connection with one of the post-war films from Italy. There was *Bicycle Thieves*, you remember; there was *Shoeshine*, there was *Open City*. And then there was a film called *Del Tempo Felice* that was made from an obscure little book, a sort of prose poem; and it was the author of this book whose name was on my envelope.

I had never read it, her book. I had seen her film, but I was then very young and had remembered its darkly photographed interiors and flickering close-ups for two reasons – because it

was the first time I had been to a film that used sub-titles; and the first time that I saw the lines of Dante from which the title was taken and which appeared, off-centre, on the screen along with the other credits, duly translated in sub-title but carrying, as sometimes happens, in their own, then unfamiliar, language the physical aspect of poetry that sends a shiver across the sight and skin.

And now that there was time to call myself to her attention, I could only think: a woman of this kind, with work, friends, admirers – a public, even – would hardly welcome a stranger with no better credentials than a note (a note which I had seen for myself began 'Dear Signorina') from a remote acquaintance at Ealing Studios.

The name – her Christian name, that is – had struck me; also the address, for there was a street number, then simply 'San Biagio dei Librai': Saint Biagio of the Booksellers. I had remarked on this address when the letter was handed to me. And the friend at Ealing – who had known the lady, it now came out, only outside Italy – said, 'Let's hope I got it right. I rather gather this is the good old family palazzo. I hope she'll do you proud.' All had, in fact, been in the realm of aspiration or surmise.

It occurred to me, as I walked back to the Hotel Vesuvio, that I might telephone this Signorina at once and see if she would have me. But the prospect of picking up the telephone and shattering her unsuspecting morning was more than I could face for her; and when I got up to my room I took out, instead of her address, a guidebook that had lain one month in the bureau drawer.

'The traveller who would know Naples,' – so the guidebook dictated, open on the hotel counterpane – 'must take himself to Spaccanápoli, the split of Naples, the street that traversed the city's nucleus in classical times, and is now called San Biagio dei Librai.'

Nevertheless it took some time to make the call. First I got cut off, and in the wire a low voice asked, though not of me, '*Tu, come giudichi?*' Then I heard the telephone ringing, ringing, and was about to hang up at the instant when the ringing exchanged itself for a voice. Tracing the hotel's stitched monogram with a nervous finger, I made myself known; and in English the voice cried, 'Good. Good that you called. Yes, come, come. Come now. Come for lunch. Are you coming in a taxi? – my street is up, you can't enter, it's the drains. Tell him to let you out at the Gesù Nuovo, the church. Then ask the way, it's only a few minutes on foot from there.'

Below the Gesù Nuovo there is a ramp of a street that rises to a corner where Degas once lived with his Neapolitan relatives. The ascent, oblique, suggests the piazza above by giving, as if through a door ajar on a high landing, a glimpse of the exorbitant, gem-cut façade of a church, with to the left a flash of red stucco, to the right an ornate obelisk, before it catapults you on to a scene that appears, from this method of approaching it, more bizarre than ever.

Had I been accompanied, I might have laughed out loud at the profligacy of imagination expended there; but solitude, which is held to be a cause of eccentricity, in fact imposes excessive normality, at least in public, and I crossed the piazza with no outward sign of interest and placed myself against the faceted stones of the church. From there one looked, then, across at the bombed shell of Santa Chiara, half-reconstructed, and at a derelict campanile on the one hand and a massive palace on the other; and this I did for some moments, only showing it was new to me by inquiring, of the priest who came to close the church, the way to San Biagio dei Librai.

The day had deteriorated, it was winter again, and the piazza was abandoned for the siesta. One pre-war Fiat, as lonely, as historic as the single car on an antiquated postcard, had been

parked in the middle of the square. And I, perhaps, walking away from the church door, would have something now of the same anonymous arrested look – captured, as the saying goes, in the picture; serving to show, merely, by human contrast, the dimensions of buildings, to date the photograph unwittingly with my clothes and hair; somebody purloined from a crowd to act as an example. The light itself had dwindled to the joyless sepia of an old photograph.

The picture is re-animated – rather, it dissolves to life – and I enter a passageway of a street, the narrow channel that flows out from the farther side of the square. Past a hundred shops and stalls that sold, as they are selling still, song records, coloured nylon sponges, the gauze and sugar paraphernalia of christenings and first communions, plastic Bambis, bolts of print material, gold jewellery and silver representations of arms and legs to be offered up to departmental saints; past open sacks of coffee beans, stacks of books new and seventh-hand, and barrows piled with handtools – through this I came, that afternoon, into San Biagio dei Librai. What could be closed was closing in a savage drum-roll of descending grilles; what could be wheeled was being trundled away. Over cobbled blocks – that were posted here and there with stone bollards intended to keep out the cars that expertly slid between them and rushed on to straddle a long trench of drainage repairs – I walked by palaces of stone and stucco, rusticated or red, white with grey facings, brown, orange, rose or ochre, no two alike, facing each other across the street's corridor as monumentally as if they had been rising, isolated, in some open place that did their proportions justice.

On the flanks of those palaces, smaller buildings had been grafted in every age except our own – in any unlikely opening, or any precarious ledge, apparently with the sole provision that they bear no resemblance to one another. Forgotten or overlaid, antiquity had been buried in the walls, making its laconic

signal – a sunken column, Greek, dark, smooth as silk, with acanthus capital; a Roman inscription, traces of a fortification, or crenellations that, centuries since, had been surmounted by a rooftop. In one vast courtyard was planted a colossal sculpture, Roman or Renaissance, of a horse's head; another ended in galleries of disintegrating frescoes.

It was a deep square of a building, hers; pale stucco divided into a dozen apartments, or a hundred. The *portiere*, coming out from his lunch with his fork, spooled with pasta, in his hand, directed me to the *pian' nobile*, taking me into the courtyard to point out, in a fold of that flaking parchment, the inner staircase I should take. There were several flights of deep stone steps, unlit, uncarpeted. Only on the last landing, in the spot where one paused to draw breath before ringing the bell, an oblong of shredding crimson had been placed before a pair of dark doors and carried dusty, tapering impressions of several days' shoes.

I rang the bell, heard nothing, rang again. The excitement of the street receded. Anti-climax brought back the sense of intrusion, as I stood there with the letter in my handbag like a warrant to search, to root out secrets.

From far off, as if it had been beyond the building, a woman's voice called, 'Tosca!' There was silence, there was movement, and the same voice calling, 'Tosca. Tosca.' The voice approached the door, so full and musical that it might have been introducing an aria. A bolt was drawn, a handle rattled, and the dark door opened.

Gioconda's appearance has become merged now with knowledge of her, with moods and events and questions, so that in describing it I feel I am giving a false impression and introducing, even to myself, a woman I do not know. If one says that she was rather tall, dark-haired, dark-eyed, with in winter a pale colouring, paler than apricot, one has described nothing more than a woman who is in all probability good-looking. Even in

giving these few facts I am getting off the track, for I myself would hardly recognize her from such a description: it is almost as if I were describing her skeleton, without the intercostal tissue that gave it life and singularity. Yet her physical beauty was as strong a part of her character as though she were personally accountable for the deep setting of the eyes or the long rise of the cheekbone. Its first and lasting impression was one of vitality and endurance. That is to say, of power: a power as self-contained, as unoppressive as that of a splendid tree.

In haste she had pulled both doors apart, and stood for an instant with a hand raised along each of them. A coiled weight of hair was prefigured in the upward, backward carriage of the head. She wore a sweater of some dark colour and a flannel skirt divided into pleats, as was then the fashion, and round her feet a heavy white cat was making the figure eight.

As we greeted one another and she stood aside, tripping the cat, to let me enter, Tosca – presumably it was Tosca – appeared at last from the furthest corner of a dim hallway and stood for a moment there like a figure barely discerned in the background of some dark canvas – a presence made mysterious, perhaps, simply by the fact that it is indistinct.

Gioconda brought me into a high room closed off from light and air by outer and inner shutters, and by the custom of southern cities unalterable on the coldest days; smelling of wax, of winter, of mildew and precautions against mildew. The walls were darkly red, narrowly banded at floor level with grey and topped with a two-foot frieze of a grey geometrical design whose regularity was flawed here and there by age or damp. There were thick curtains, thin carpets, worn velvet chairs and footstools. There were pictures, and a mesh-fronted bookcase of bound books paired with a glass-fronted cabinet of porcelain. Two small sofas were ranged by an immense cold fireplace that, like a dormant Vesuvius, presided over everything.

I took note, that first time, of all these fittings and fixtures I was never to notice again; imagining them, then, to have some bearing on her life as I was to know it. But she led me through the room as if it had been no more than a passage, into a small study filled with light and littered with papers and books. Plants and vases, pencils and matchboxes had arranged themselves there with a look of purposeful incongruity, like objects for a still-life grouped about an artist's studio. The windows were unshuttered, and a maltreated Empire desk, from which some of the bronzes were missing, stood between them. There was a cushioned chair, in bad shape, on which the cat at once circled itself; and a striped divan on which we sat, she and I, speechless and inquisitive like children at first school.

'So here you are,' said Gioconda, as if she had been awaiting my arrival for a long time – or as if, entering into my own point of view, she could regard my presence in her room as the fulfilment of an intention, even though not her own. It was curious to think, then, how I had for weeks been aware of her, while she had not known of my existence.

'Your street,' I said to her. 'Your street is marvellous.'

'Oh – this street . . .' She thought so too – so much so that good manners called for her to depreciate it. 'They're always telling me – my friends – Why don't you move? Because it's rough round here, you know, a kind of important squalor.'

'Not squalor exactly –'

'Not squalor!' she cried. 'If this street isn't squalor, I'd like to know what is.' We both laughed at her indignation, she putting her hand up to her mouth in a gesture so completely hers that the picturing of it brings her more before my eyes than any photograph could do – it was as if she were, quite irrationally, self-conscious about her mouth or her teeth, or unavailingly wished to be more moderate in her responses. 'This is Naples with a vengeance – and literally so, since we have the vendetta round here: I'm always hearing the grocer was stabbed, or that

they're on the lookout for the dry-cleaner. But there it is – it's what I'm used to, I couldn't live elsewhere.' Saying this, her expression clouded, as if being bound to that place was a disturbing rather than a stabilizing attachment. 'I was born here.' She turned to me and asked, again as if we were children exchanging information, 'Where were you born?'

It isn't so much where one was born (as a matter of fact, in my case, it was in Notting Hill Gate), but what one remembers. I told Gioconda how, as a child, I had been sent with other children on a ship to Cape Town to escape the Blitz. How my mother died at the end of the war and my brother came out to Africa to work in Somaliland, and I moved there with him, and at last went back to London.

'London is nice,' she said. 'I was there not so long ago. We'll talk about it another day, when there's more time.'

This assumption of our friendship moved me, in my loneliness, with a sort of joy – that this lovely, vital creature was to attach her life, however lightly, to mine. I was touched, but showed no pleasure – just as when I had stood in the Piazza del Gesù, and walked under the windows of San Biagio dei Librai. In fact I was often, later on, to act out with Gioconda a circumspection I did not feel: her abundance made others reticent; her openness evoked discretion.

'I'm called Jenny,' I told her, in answer to her question – for we were pursuing our child-like exchange, as if we might at any moment have come out with 'How old are you?' or 'What does your father do?'

'It's not your name, then?'

'Jenny is a bureaucratic accident. My name is Penelope. When I was put on board the ship for South Africa at the beginning of the war, I was called Penny. But there were so many of us – so many little Mollies and Timmies and Patties – that the woman in charge of us got the names mixed up. Jenny was as close as she ever came to mine. I was not of an age to

make an issue of it. I went on board as Penny and disembarked as Jenny.'

Gioconda said nothing – imagining, I knew, the journey. Whenever the matter came up, people expressed anguish over that uprooting of mine. Yet – although the sufferings of children are the worst, being inextinguishable – children themselves seldom have a proper sense of their own tragedy, discounting and keeping hidden the true horrors of their short lives, humbly imagining real calamity to be some prestigious drama of the grown-up world. Other, unconfided things were worse to me, at the time, than the actual fact of my removal to South Africa – for that searing displacement at least bore official sanction in the minds of adults and was shared with hundreds of others. The loss of my name, and for such a reason, did not offend me until much later; indeed – for even a child can wish for the illusion of a new identity, arriving in a strange country, purged of the past, starting afresh; in fact a child is more entitled to the delusion – I fancied, as I landed at Cape Town, that the voyage was enabling me to begin what, with no sense of comedy, I identified to myself as a new life. A double life, rather, for in my letters and my homesickness I remained Penny. As a little girl, however, I saw myself as such, insignificant in the convulsions of war, and believed I had no cause for complaint in a world where soldiers died and cities were devastated. It is only in retrospect I know myself to have been among the victims of war, and dare not mention that at the time I suffered, more grotesquely, over exclusion from a school party, or from the fear of punishment in connection with a torn blazer.

That stranded childhood comes back to me in curious ways with unlikely associations. The sea, for instance – in those years of war children were greatly aware of the sea and of those imperilled on it. It was the ocean, its impassability, that lay between me and the natural course of my life; between me and

home. The ships of my childhood figured like heroes in their disasters – the *City of Benares*, the *Jervis Bay*, the *San Demetrio*, the *Ark Royal*, the *Graf Spee*. We used to see ships, shabby, painted grey, put in at Cape Town harbour, to disappear in the night and perhaps for ever. We knew their shapes and tonnages, we accumulated stories of the Atlantic crossings and the Arctic convoys. We knew that the *Queens* could outpace any U-boat and carried eight thousand troops, and that you could stay fourteen days in a neutral port. By contrast it seems now that the sea has almost retired from our lives, and that ships are leading a marginal, twilight existence, like senior officials who resist being pensioned off.

Gioconda said, 'Yet I think you look more like Jenny than Penelope. I could never picture Penelope with that colour hair.'

'Sometimes, though, I still feel like Penelope. When I fill out a form, it feels appropriate.' I remarked on her own name.

'It is not uncommon in Italy. Or common either.' The cat, she said, completing the game of names, was called Iocasta; had been thus renamed, from Innocente, after conceiving kittens with its own son. In commendation or sympathy she snatched it up round the middle, with both hands, as a child might – gave it a squeeze and set it down again on its chair, where it smoothly resumed a wash interrupted in mid-lick. 'Come on to the terrace and tell me if it's warm enough to lunch out there.'

That room of hers gave on to a terrace, long and wide and sheltered at one end by a pergola draped with the wintry skeletons of vines and by wisteria that still showed, here and there, a purple tassel or a frond of green. At the other end there were stone boxes of marigolds. A table had been laid for us in the pale sun, and one of its legs was lengthened with a wedge of paper to meet the uneven tiles.

'It's heaven,' I said. We leant on the balustrade and looked down. On the opposite side of the cortile there were two or

three small businesses – a woodworker's, a printer's giving out a clackety rhythm, and a narrow archway marked '*Autoscuola*'.

'Yes, truly, it's a garage, a driving school,' Gioconda's hand went to her mouth. 'I suppose you qualify for the licence if you can get the car out of this courtyard.'

It was not, after all, the good old family palazzo. Her father had owned a larger part of it until the war. 'What I have now – they made an entrance, broke up the enfilade of main rooms – it's just what you've seen, with another room or two . . . The thing was to keep this.' She meant the terrace, patting the stone railing with the flat of her hand.

She still had relatives in Naples – 'Too many by far' – but they were cousins and second cousins. She had a sister she was fond of, much older, who lived at Nice. 'Luciana. She married a Frenchman. Before the war. He was killed in '44.' She broke off to lead me to the end of the terrace. 'From here you can see everything.'

It was almost true, this everything, for the arches and towers and polychrome domes were stacked there beside and behind each other like so much scenery backstage at a theatre, all painted by Monsù Desiderio. There was no tracing the streets that unrolled like ribbons among them, no accounting for the cloisters and vast gardens that appeared at intervals, like optical illusions in the foreshortened scene – the congested, backstage effect heightened by the fact that we were looking into the city and away from the sea. There was no outlook, in any usual sense; except to our left where, painted by a different hand, a segment of the Vomero rose up in tiers of fields and buildings.

'That red curve of houses follows the wall of the theatre where Nero sang.' The big thing below the cathedral had been a paleo-Christian temple. Those columns came from a temple of the Dioscuri, that church was the site of the Roman basilica. The question 'What is it?' took on, here, an aspect of impertinence; one might only learn what it had successively been.

Gioconda told me that San Biagio was the patron saint of throats; little children prayed to him about their tonsils, he had an attraction for singers with laryngitis. I recalled a variety of labral discs among the silver offerings on sale in the street, and knew these, now, to be throats.

When we sat down to our lunch, she asked me, 'How did you arrive in Italy?' and I told her how I had been flown to Milan with my military men for a conference there, and sent on by train. I was grateful to her for mentioning the journey. At that time, when the mere idea that I was, for example, on the Lombardy Plain could keep me enchanted through mile after mile of level countryside, the excitement of entering Italy had gone undivulged. And I enumerated the farms and castles and cities that lay along the length of Italy as if she herself had never known of them.

She filled our glasses, and said, 'I hope you'll be happy here,' as though she were responsible. That struck her too, for she remarked, 'I talk like a landlady who is taking in a new lodger.'

I told her I had seen nothing of Naples until that day, how it had come about that I was free to telephone her, and I looked at my watch. At once she asked when I could come again. I had to go to the airport on an errand the following Friday afternoon, and I said I could drop in on the way back.

'Yes of course, come, come,' she said, as she had on the telephone. 'Friday, a friend arrives . . . from Rome. He'll be so pleased to meet you.'

I wondered if it were the friend of so many photographs – in her room, on the desk, on the mantelpiece, ranged on a low bookcase; snapshots of a white, sunburnt smile on a stony beach, of muscular legs in shorts climbing a cliff-face, or bare arms tensed to suspend a heavy fish on a hook; one foot placed on a step or a rock, one hand bracing the trunk of a confident tree. The name she now said was new to me; though her glance, tentative, inquiring, might have suggested otherwise. I thought,

the map of her existence is soon to be flagged, for me, with these encampments and shrines, these centres of interest; and again the notion gave pleasure.

When I got up to go, she held out her hand. She surprised me by asking, 'What is he like, your biologist?'

'He's a Scotsman.'

'A sandy, bristly little chap, then?'

'Not at all. Lean, dark, restrained. Like a furled umbrella.'

'When he speaks, can one tell that he's from Scotland?'

'Sometimes. Some words quite a bit.'

'What's his name?'

'Tulloch. J. P. Tulloch. That's all I know.' This Neapolitan curiosity infected me, though, for in answering it I brought out more than I thought I knew. I said. 'He reminds me of my brother.'