

# **THE FURNACE**

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The furnace by R. Macaulay

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**R. MACAULAY**

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BY <sup>DE MIE  
ROSE</sup> R. MACAULAY

AUTHOR OF 'ABBOTS VERNEY'

'Le métal précieux qu'on trouvera un jour au fond des cendres. . . .'

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1907

TO THE  
OTHER CITIZENS OF SANTA CATERINA,  
VARAZZE,

WHO, AT PRESENT SCATTERED LABORIOUSLY OVER  
THREE CONTINENTS,  
INTEND, IN THE SPACIOUS DAYS OF LEISURE  
THAT AGE SHALL BRING,  
TO INHABIT AGAIN THE RED HOUSE BEYOND THE TOWN  
AND NAVIGATE THE WHITE CANOE.

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# THE FURNACE

## CHAPTER I

### YOUTH IN THE CITY

'Val più aver amici in piazza  
Che denari nella cassa.'

*Proverb.*

ROYALTY was arriving in the harbour in a steam-yacht. It had, that is, already arrived in the harbour; it was now disembarking on the pier. It was an interesting event. An edified crowd watched it; representatives of the Press jotted down their impressions; some took photographs. A few drew pictures instead. The representative of the *Marchese Peppino*, an illustrated paper widely perused in certain circles, drew pictures; one might gather that it was his inten-

tion to be funny, later, when he had leisure to amplify. *Marchese Peppino* always had that intention, and its readers, whose judgment of humour was possibly, however, not of the most delicate or polished type, considered that it usually fulfilled it. The drawings now in process of production were, before they were amplified at leisure, really quite like life; later they would become less so, but no doubt more entertaining. They seemed to be a little funny even now. A man looking over the artist's shoulder giggled and dug him in the ribs. The artist was a nonchalant young man, who did not seem to be amusing himself particularly, but to be working in a wholly professional and business-like spirit. He had quick eyes and clever fingers, and presumably, since he did his job really well, a suitably developed sense of the ludicrous.

Royalty left the pier. It was, presumably, going to have lunch before it admired Naples. That was certainly as well; it gave the representatives of the Press a respite, during which they, too, if they had

the inclination and the wherewithal, might have lunch.

The representative of the *Marchese Peppino* sat down on an inverted basket and continued to record impressions, while the crowd thinned slowly.

A facetious young man, passing the artist, made a show of being doubled up with helpless laughter—a mirth presumably anticipatory in nature and complimentary of intent. When he wearied of the compliment he clapped the journalist on the shoulder and observed:

‘We shall split our sides on Thursday, ne?’

He cherished an immense admiration for the pictorial staff of the *Marchese Peppino*. The staff gave him his usual melancholy look from under quick brows, and said:

‘Have you seen my sister?’

‘Just now, talking over there with La Corrini.’

From the group indicated by the jerked thumb the staff’s sister emerged. She strolled up to her brother. There did not seem to be any particular difference