

Little Novels Of Sicily

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FIRST PUBLISHED in a single volume in 1883, the stories collected in Little Novels of Sicily are drawn from the Sicily of Giovanni Vergas childhood, reported at the time to be the poorest place in Europe. Vergas style is swift, sure, and implacable; he plunges into his stories almost in midbreath, and tells them with a stark economy of words. Theres something dark and tightly coiled at the heart of each story, an ironic, bitter resolution that is belied by the deceptive simplicity of Vergas prose, and Verga strikes just when the readers not expecting it. Translator D. H. Lawrence surely found echoes of his own upbringing in Vergas sketches of Sicilian life: the class struggle between property owners and tenants, the relationship between men and the land, and the unsentimental, sometimes startlingly lyric evocation of the landscape. Just as Lawrence veers between loving and despising the industrial North and its people, so too Verga shifts between affection for and ironic detachment from the superstitious, uneducated, downtrodden working poor of Sicily. If Verga reserves pity for anyone or anything, it is the children and the animals, but he doesnt spare them. In his experience, it is the innocents who suffer first and last and always. The Little Novels of Sicily have that sense of the wholeness of life, the spare exuberance, the endless inflections and overtones, and the magnificent and thrilling vitality of major literature.-- The New York Times In these stories the whole Sicily of the 1860s lives before us . . . and whether his subject be the brutal bloodshed of an abortive revolution or the simple human comedy that can attend even deep mourning, Verga never loses his complete artistic mastery of his material.-- The Times Literary Supplement

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