

# Confusion in Naples\*

Norman Douglas

There was a curious little episode here. Oscar Wilde had arrived in Naples and was staying with his young friend<sup>1</sup> on the Posilippo [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> (? Villa Giudice).<sup>3</sup> This came to the ears of Matilda Serao, a literary woman who, with Scarfoglio, edited the *Mattino* newspaper. Somehow or other she also heard of my building the Villa Maya, and of Campo Alegre's arrival there in a shattered state of health. The first indication we had of this was when Rolfe, the Consul-General, sent me a cutting from the *Mattino* and said he had already written to rectify the blunder. From the cutting it appeared that Matilda had confused Campo Alegre with Wilde, and me – owing to a similarity of name – with his friend. She spoke of the arrival of Wilde at the Villa Maya, which she described as having been built by this friend, and added that Wilde must have been disgracefully treated in his English prison, as he could hardly stand on his legs. Even Rolfe's letter did not quite convince Matilda, for she came out with a second communication entitled *C'è o non c'è* – is it (Wilde) or is it not? I forget how the affair ended.

\* *Looking Back; An Autobiographical Excursion* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1934) pp. 461–2. Editor's title.

## NOTES

Norman Douglas (1868–1952), English writer.

1. Lord Alfred Douglas.
2. Posilippo. In a letter to Dalhousie Young written from Naples on 21 September 1897 Wilde said: 'I am living here without any money, and want to move into apartments at Posilippo as soon as possible.'
3. Wilde wrote a letter to Robert Ross on 1 October 1897 from 'Villa Giudice, Posilippo, Naples'.