

Genoa,—all these cities lay before them; and greater than all, one which drew them onward with a stronger fascination. For of all the cities of the old world none had ever seemed so attractive and so wonderful as Venice. Its unique situation; its romantic history; its splendid monuments; its canals, gondolas, towers, and palaces; its dark secrets; its alluring mystery,—all served to throw a spell over their minds.

There was but one opinion, therefore, among the boys as to Venice; but their views were widely different as to the time of starting. Frank and Bob preferred waiting in Florence for another week, and then going straight to Venice without stopping at the intervening cities; Clive and David, on the other hand, much as they loved Florence, were anxious to visit Bologna, Ferrara, and Padua. Prolonged argument only made each side more eager in the assertion of its own preferences. The question was argued long and hotly, and only ended in each side maintaining its own view, and blaming the other for obstinacy.

David and Clive talked the matter over, and at length came to an important decision. This was, to go on ahead, leaving the others behind. They could then visit the intervening cities, and afterwards they could all join one another at Padua or Venice. But to this plan it was first necessary to obtain Uncle Moses' consent.

No sooner was it mentioned than Uncle Moses