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CHAPTER IV. FRATERNAL AMENITIES.

The season was waning toward its latter end. Mrs. Hesselgrave and Kathleen were on the eve of flight for their regular round of autumn visits in the country before returning to their winter quarters at Venice.

Kathleen's success was merely a private affair. Her pictures were sold largely for the gratification of her own acquaintances. It is true, being a timid and retiring girl, she never thrust her work inopportunely upon her hosts.

On this particular evening, however, Kathleen was tired with packing. Her head ached slightly, and she was anxious to be kept as undisturbed as possible.

Reggie flashed his cuffs and regarded them with just pride. "That's no matter," he answered curtly. "Every lady is a lady, and should dress like a lady, no matter what her income, and she can't do that under \$200 a year. You take my word for it."

"As your salary's \$20," Kathleen put in, "I'm naturally careful. And by such strict bits of economy I expect in the end to keep down my expenditure on dress to \$200."

"You don't think a fellow can do it on less, do you?" Reggie continued once more in an argumentative spirit.

"Yes, I do," Kathleen replied. "I certainly think a man to do it. I can't afford to spend so much. I think he should be ashamed of himself for talking such nonsense."

"Oh, don't, Reggie!" his sister cried, shrinking away and clapping her hands to her aching head. "You comb my brain! I'm too tired to argue with you."

snapped his mouth to like a patent rat-trap. "Then I must be content to dress otherwise than as a lady should!" Kathleen responded quietly. "For I can't afford a maid and to tell you the truth, Reggie, I really don't know that I should care to have one!"

"What Reginald might have answered to that, we do not know. It remains an unknown fact in the history of his adventures, for just at that minute the neat caper of the little waiting maid of the Kensington lodgings opened the door with a flourish and announced, 'Mr. Mortimer!'"

"Why, by making your sister earn the money to keep you," but native kindness from saying so, he only replied: "I'm sure I don't know, my dear. I often wonder, for I can't afford it, and I earn more than you do."

"Whether she's got it or not," Reggie responded at once, with profound contempt for such un ladylike morality.

"Oh, just strutting out for a bit," her brother answered bravely, "till the mumps come back. I thought you might have seemed to be hitting it off on high art very well together."

"I expect you soon't miss me," Kathleen said, with a look of defiance. "Oh, don't let him stay on my account," Mortimer echoed, with polite anxiety, giving Kathleen a pleading look.

"So for the next half hour poor Rufus sat on, still discussing art, which is a capital subject when you want to talk of it, but which, when it is to be confessed, when it interests incoherently at the exact moment of time when you're waiting to ask the young woman of your choice whether or not she'll have you."

"After Mrs. Hesselgrave had returned for a few minutes, somewhat later, the young man rose to go. It was no use waiting now. Kathleen was fumed in, as it were, by a double thorn-hedge of mother and brother. Yet he paused by the open door and held Kathleen's hand for a second in his own as he said: 'This we shall meet in Venice.' He said at least respectfully. 'In Venice in October.'"

"No," the American answered, brightening up at that little spark of seeming interest in his private pursuit. "I shall be Venice this summer. I make it my business to go there, and what lovely windows it has!" Kathleen exclaimed, glancing up at these deep recessed quatrains! How exquisite they look, with the canary creeper climbing up the great stone mullions to the tracery of the arches! Don't you love the blue posts they moor their boats to?"

"I wonder if they've begun their Friday afternoons yet," Mrs. Hesselgrave went on, following like the track of her own reflections. "We must look and see, Kathleen, when we go back to our lodgings."

"October 1st," Rufus Mortimer remarked, leaning back luxuriously on the padded seat of his own private gondola, the Cristoforo Colombo. "The summer's too hot here, and the winter's too cold. In October and April are perfect points. I never saw Venice before so such absolute perfection."

"But Kathleen called him back anxiously. "Where are you going to, Reggie?" she asked, with unexpected affection. "I was often so eager for the pleasure of his society."

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Hesselgrave interposed, with a glance at the first floor. "That's their house, Mr. Mortimer. They're charming people and immensely wealthy. That big red place there, just round by the Leyards'."

"There are things," he said, gazing at her with his big brown eyes, "much more important in one's life than the fact of the architect! Don't you love the blue posts they moor their boats to?"

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maritime looking young man didn't move in exactly the same exalted sphere as to which she and hers had always been accustomed. He hadn't at all the air of a cavalry officer, and to Mrs. Hesselgrave's mind your cavalry officer was the measure of all things. So she shuddered from him unobtrusively. But Kathleen noticed the shrinking, and being half afraid the nice too, she was even more polite to him than she might otherwise have been in consequence of her mother's unspoken slight.

"Well, tell us all about it," Mortimer began at once, with the utmost cordiality. "Oh, yes, here, we see. How have you managed to come here? It was only yesterday I was telling Mrs. Hesselgrave at the academy how you weren't sure whether things would turn out so as to enable you to return here, and she said she so much hoped you'd manage to come here again."

"We should be patting so near one another this year, no doubt," Kathleen said, with a pleasant smile, "we'd be able to see something of one another's work and one another's society."

"Arnold Willoughby's face flushed with genuine and unexpected pleasure. Could it be really the fact that this pretty and pleasant mannered artist girl was genuinely glad he had come back to Venice? And a poor painter, with only his art to bless himself with? To Arnold Willoughby, after his wide a waking to fuller experience of the ways and habits of men and women, such unadorned interest and a seemed wild incredible. He glanced at her timidly, yet with a face full of pleasure. "That was very, very kind of you," he answered rather lowly, his kindness always overcame him. Then he turned to the American. "Well, it was like this, you see, Mortimer," he said, "I sold my pictures."

"Not the 'Choggia Fisherboat'?" Kathleen cried, quite interested. "Yes, the same you saw that day I met you at the academy," Arnold answered, with secret delight that the pretty girl should have recognized the name and subject of his maiden effort.

"I thought you'd sell it," Kathleen replied, really radiant. "I am so glad you did. Mr. Mortimer told me your return to Venice and your success in art very largely depended upon your chance of selling it."

"Kathleen, my dear," Mrs. Hesselgrave interposed in her chillest voice, "do take care what you say. You see you're letting your shawl hang over into the water?"

"Kathleen lifted it up hurriedly and went on with her conversation, unheeding her mother's hint. Indeed she fell fast upon her. "I knew you'd sell it," she continued with girlish enthusiasm. "It was so good. I liked it immensely. Such rich color on the sails and such delicate imagination!"

"Oh, technique anybody can get nowadays," Kathleen answered, with warmth. "If he goes to the right place for it. It's a matter of feeling. What he can't buy or be taught is his own special sense of form—poetical color perception."

"And how much did it give you for it?" the American asked point blank, with his customary directness. "An Englishman would have said, 'I hope the terms were satisfactory.'"

"Arnold Willoughby still retained too much of the innate self-confidence of the born aristocrat to think it necessary for him to conceal any such thing. He smiled himself sufficiently good for him to say, 'If he could do it, he could also acknowledge it.'"

"Oh, I just went to sea again," he answered faintly. "I got a place as a B. B. on a Norwegian steamer, headed for Dieppe, dead plank and so forth, and the hard work and fresh air I got in the North sea have done me good, I fancy. I'm ever so much stronger than I was last winter."

"Some time to interpose in this very pleasant and doubtful conversation, and now she could restrain her desire no longer. "You do it for your health, then, I suppose?" she ventured to say, as though on purpose to save her own self respect and the credit of Rufus Mortimer's society. "You've been ordered it by your doctor?"

"Oh, dear, no! To do for my livelihood," Arnold Willoughby answered, "I'm not in the least ashamed. I'm a sailor by trade. I go to sea all summer, and I paint all winter. It's a very good alternation. I don't sit idle."

"This was too much for Mrs. Hesselgrave. She felt that Mortimer, though he was perfect right, of course, to choose his own friends where he liked, ought not to have expressed deep respect for such strange acquaintances. "Dear me!" she cried suddenly, looking up at the big brick tower that rose sheer just in front of them, "here we are at the Friari! Kathleen, didn't you say you wanted to go in and look again at that picture of What's-his-name's—ah, yes, Timotheo's—in the Scuola di San Rocco? Oh, thank you so much, Mr. Mortimer. We won't trouble you to wait for us. Kathleen's a terrible girl for foot-overs Venise. She can't get from place to place in the most wonderful fashion, from end to end of the town, by those funny little calls. It was a kind of you to give us a lift so far. Here, Kathleen, step out! Good morning, Mr. Mortimer. Your gondola's just charming. Good morning, Mr. Arnold. I forgot your friend's name. Oh, of course, Mrs. Willoughby."

"The inevitable gondola with a boatman was holding the gondola by this time to the bank and extending his hat for the expected penny. Mrs. Hesselgrave stepped out, with her coat and hat, and looking at a dignified young man, she stepped after her onto the slippery stone pavement grown by the water's edge. As she did so she turned with her sweet slight figure and waved a friendly goodbye to the two painters, the rich and the poor impartially. "And I hope, Mr. Mortimer," she called out in her cheeriest tone, "you'll bring Mr. Willoughby with you next week to our usual tea and talk to me on Wednesday."

"As for poor Mrs. Hesselgrave she stood speechless for a second, dumfounded with dismay, on the steps of the Friari. What could Kathleen be thinking of? That dreadful man! And this was the very misfortune she had been bent on avoiding!"

"The Macdonalds are back, I see," Mrs. Mortimer remarked, with a look of surprise. "Yes, they are. They've just returned from their summer sojourn in the mountains. They're in the city now, and I expect to see them soon."



Illustration of a man and a woman in a room, possibly a scene from the story.