

CHAPTER II.

The next morning as Jim and I were discussing our coffee and rolls in the dining-room, the Bensons entered and passed our table on the way to their own. They bowed and said "good morning" quite cheerfully. On our way out to the balcony for our morning smoke, we stopped at their table and asked if we could be of any use. "I should be glad," I said, "if we can help you to enjoy Venice; we know it pretty well, and we have nothing in particular to do. Pray make use of us."

Mrs. Benson said: "You are most kind; our stay must be very short, as we are due in England in less than a fortnight. We shall be grateful for your guidance"; while the girls thanked us with charming smiles.

"You will find us just outside the window when you have finished the Continental interpretation of bacon and eggs," I said, "and we can discuss our plans."

"Now, Jim," I exclaimed, while we lit our cigars, "we must remain here for another week; if you are in a hurry to get back to England we can cut out Switzerland; it is not of great importance to go there, and as soon as we reach England you can run down to Dorset and see Kate Howard."