

mother. She had a soft, low voice, and a sweet and gracious face, which at once gained their hearts. Gracie especially felt the quiet charm of this dear old lady, and before long they were wandering in thought far away, and Mrs. Vernon was telling Gracie of her past life in Boston, and asking after Boston news. Vernon talked with the boys, but kept his ears and eyes open, and noticed everything that Gracie said or did.

And now a new arrangement was made. Mrs. Vernon insisted that Gracie should go home with her, and stay with her until her aunt should come to Venice. A young girl like Gracie, she said, should not be left alone without friends in a great hotel. Her persuasions were not without effect. Gracie herself felt a little timid at the idea of being all alone, with no friends except Clive and David, and Mrs. Vernon seemed to her like a mother. And so, with many apologies and excuses, she at last accepted the kind invitation. Meanwhile Vernon had been giving the same invitation to the boys. At first they declined with many thanks; but Vernon was so urgent that at last they accepted it, and at length the whole party retired from the Hotel Zeno.

And now, once more in a boat, they passed down the Grand Canal, which presented a more striking appearance as they went on. At length the canal broadened into a wide expanse of water; and close by, on their left, they saw a landing-place, which