

CHAPTER XVI

THE END OF THE LOOM

WHEN the door had closed behind them, the little old lady stood with head inclined, listening to the sound of their footsteps. Then, creeping to the high window that looked over the Rio Marin—that same window at which, nearly a year before, she had stood with her husband watching Jill's departure, she pressed her face against the glass, straining her eyes to see them to the end.

It was very dark. For a moment, as John helped Jill into the gondola, she could distinguish their separate figures; but then, the deep shadow beneath the hood enveloped them and hid them from her gaze. Yet still she stayed there; still she peered out over the water as, with that graceful sweeping of the oar, they swung round and swayed forward into the mystery of the shadow beyond.

To the last moment when, melting into the darkness, they became the darkness itself, she remained, leaning against the sill, watching, as they watch who long have ceased to see. And for some time after they had disappeared, her white face and still whiter hair were