

2 THE CASTLE OF THE SHADOWS

gold, and giving a dazzling brilliancy to a complexion which for twenty years to come need not fear the light of day. She was gazing up the valley shut in on either side with thickly wooded hills, their rugged heads still gilded, their shoulders already half in shadow; but the eyes of the men rested only upon her. One was English, the other Italian; and it was the Italian whose look devoured her beauty, moving hungrily from the shining tendrils of gold that curled at the back of her white neck, up to the small pink ear almost hidden with a thick, rippling wave of hair; so to the piquant profile which, to those who loved Virginia Beverly, was dearer than cold perfection.

"Oh, the olive woods!" she exclaimed. "How sweet they are! See the way the sunshine touches the old, gnarled trunks, and what a lovely light filters through the leaves. One never sees it anywhere except in an olive grove. I should like to live in one."

"Well, why not?" laughed the Englishman. "What prevents you from buying two or three? But you would soon tire of them, my child, as you do of everything as soon as it belongs to you."