

THE CASTLE OF THE SHADOWS

CHAPTER I

WHERE DREAMLAND BEGAN

ACCORDING to the calendar it was winter; but between Mentone and the frontier town of Ventimiglia, on the white road inlaid like a strip of ivory on dark rocks above the sapphire of the Mediterranean, it was fierce summer in the sunshine. A girl, riding between two men, reined in her chestnut mare at a cross road which led into the jade-green twilight of an olive grove. The men pulled up their horses also, and all three came to a sudden halt on a bridge flung across a swift but shallow river, whose stony bed cleft the valley.

The afternoon sunshine poured down upon them, burnishing the coils of the girl's hair to