

6 THE CASTLE OF THE SHADOWS

more abruptly than was his custom in speaking to her.

"I never saw such a deserted place!" exclaimed the girl. "We have ridden ever so far into the valley now—two miles at least—and there hasn't been a sign of human habitation; not a person, not a house except the little ruined tower we passed a few minutes ago, and that old château almost at the top of the hill. Look! the last rays of the sun are touching its windows before saying good-bye to the valley. Aren't they like the fiery eyes of some fierce animal, glaring watchfully down at us out of the dusk?"

Pointing upward, she turned to him for approval of her fancy, and to her surprise saw him pale, as if he had been attacked with sudden illness.

"What is the matter?" she asked quickly.

"Nothing at all," he replied. "A slight chill, perhaps."

"No, there is more than that," Virginia said slowly. "I'm sure of it. I've been sure ever since we stood on the bridge looking up this valley. You wanted to go on. You could hardly bear to stop, and when I proposed riding in you made excuses."