

12 THE CASTLE OF THE SHADOWS

Dalahaides used to keep open house, and spend a great deal of money at one time, so that their ruin threw a gloom over the country even colder than the evening shadows. The father took his own life in shame and despair, the mother died of grief, and only a girl is left of the four who used to be so happy together."

"But what of the fourth—the brother?" In spite of herself, Virginia's voice sank, and the penetrating chill of the valley crept into her spirit.

"He is worse than dead," answered Roger evasively. "By Jove! Loria is right. It *is* cold here. Let us turn back."

"I should like to buy that château," announced the American girl, as calmly as if she had spoken of acquiring a new brooch.

"Good gracious! What next?" exclaimed Sir Roger. "But you're not in earnest, of course."

"I am in earnest," said she. "I should love to have it. It's an ideal house, set on that great rocky hill, and ringed round with olive groves. Though the sun is gone so soon from the bottom of the valley, where we are, the château windows