

had most fearfully manifested themselves.

What was that?

Cairn ran to the window, and, leaning out, looked down into the court below. He could have sworn that a voice—a voice possessing a strange music, a husky music, wholly hateful—had called him by name. But at the moment the court was deserted, for it was already past the hour at which members of the legal fraternity desert their business premises to hasten suburbanward. Shadows were creeping under the quaint old archways; shadows were draping the ancient walls. And there was something in the aspect of the place which reminded him of a quadrangle at Oxford, across which, upon a certain fateful evening, he and another had watched the red light rising and falling in Antony Ferrara's rooms.

Clearly his imagination was playing him tricks, and against this he knew full well that he must guard himself. The light in his rooms was growing dim, but instinctively his gaze sought out and found the mysterious silken cord amid the litter on the table. He contemplated the telephone, but since he had left a message for his father, he knew that the latter would call him up directly he returned.

Work, he thought, would be the likeliest antidote to the poisonous thoughts which oppressed his mind, and again he seated himself at the table and opened his notes before him. The silken rope lay close to his left hand, but he did not touch it. He was about to switch on the reading-lamp, for it was now too dark to write, when his mind wandered off along another channel of reflection. He found himself picturing Myra as she had looked the last time that he had seen her.

She was seated in Mr. Saunderson's garden, till pale from her dreadful illness, but beautiful—more beautiful in the eyes of Robert Cairn than any other woman in the world. The

breeze was blowing her rebellious curls across her eyes—eyes bright with a happiness which he loved to see.

Her cheeks were paler than they were wont to be, and the sweet lips had lost something of their firmness. She wore a short cloak, and a wide-brimmed hat, unfashionable, but becoming. No one but Myra could successfully have worn that hat, he thought.

Wrapt in such love-like memories, he forgot that he had sat down to write—forgot that he held a pen in his hand, and that this same hand had been outstretched to ignite the lamp.

When he ultimately awoke again to the hard facts of his lonely environment, he also awoke to a singular circumstance; he made the acquaintance of a strange phenomenon.

He had been writing unconsciously!

And this was what he had written:

"Robert Cairn, renounce your pursuit of me, and renounce Myra; or to-night—"

The sentence was unfinished.

Momentarily he stared at the words, endeavouring to persuade himself that he had written them consciously, in idle mood. But some voice within gave him the lie. So that with a suppressed groan he muttered aloud:

"It has begun!"

Almost as he spoke there came a sound from the passage outside, that led him to slide his hand across the table and to seize his revolver.

The visible presence of the little weapon reassured him, and, as a further sedative, he resorted to tobacco—filled and lighted his pipe—and leaned back in the chair, blowing smoke-rings towards the closed door.

He listened intently, and heard the sound again.

It was a soft *hiss*!

And now he thought he could detect another noise—as of some creature dragging its body along the floor.

"A lizard," he thought. And a