

affair of mine; he did not charge you with anything—he only asked me to prevent you from following him.”

“Quite so,” snapped Cairn irritably, and dashed off along the gallery in the hope of overtaking Ferrara.

But, as he had feared, Ferrara had made good use of his ruse to escape. He was nowhere to be seen, and Cairn was left to wonder with what object he had risked the encounter in the Egyptian Room—for that it had been deliberate, and not accidental, he quite clearly perceived.

He walked down the steps of the Museum, deep in reflection. The thought that he and his father for months had been seeking the fiend Ferrara, that they had sworn to kill him as they would kill a mad dog, and that he, Robert Cairn, had stood face to face with Ferrara, had spoken with him, and had let him go free, unscathed, was maddening. Yet, in the circumstances, how could he have acted otherwise?

With no recollection of having traversed the intervening streets, he found himself walking under the archway leading to the court in which his chambers were situated; in the far corner, shadowed by the tall plane-trees, where the worn iron railings of the steps and the small panes of glass in the solicitor's window on the ground floor called up memories of Charles Dickens, he paused, filled with a sort of wonderment. It seemed strange to him that such an air of peace could prevail anywhere, whilst Antony Ferrara lived and remained at large.

He ran up the stairs to the second landing, opened the door, and entered his chambers. He was oppressed to-day with a memory, the memory of certain gruesome happenings whereof these rooms had been the scene. Knowing the powers of Antony Ferrara he often doubted the wisdom of living there alone, but he was persuaded that to allow these fears to make headway would be to yield a point to the enemy. Yet there were

nights when he found himself sleepless, listening for sounds which had seemed to arouse him; imagining sinister whispers in his room—and imagining that he could detect the dreadful odour of the secret incense.

Seating himself by the open window, he took out from his pocket the silken cord, which Ferrara had dropped in the Museum, and examined it curiously. His examination of the thing did not serve to enlighten him respecting its character. It was merely a piece of silken cord, very closely and curiously plaited. He threw it down on the table, determined to show it to Dr. Cairn at the earliest opportunity. He was conscious of a sort of repugnance; and prompted by this, he carefully washed his hands as though the cord had been some unclean thing.

Then he sat down to work, only to realize immediately that work was impossible until he had confided in somebody his encounter with Ferrara.

Lifting the telephone receiver, he called up Dr. Cairn, but his father was not at home.

He replaced the receiver, and sat staring vaguely at his open note-book.

II.

For close upon an hour Robert Cairn sat at his writing-table, endeavouring to puzzle out a solution to the mystery of Ferrara's motive. His reflections served only to confuse his mind.

A tangible clue lay upon the table before him—the silken cord. But it was a clue of such a nature that, whatever deductions an expert detective might have based upon it, Robert Cairn could base none. Dusk was not far off, and he knew that his nerves were not what they had been before those events which had led to his Egyptian journey. He was back in his own chamber—scene of one gruesome outrage in Ferrara's unholy campaign. For darkness is the ally of crime, and it had always been in the darkness that Ferrara's activities