

ate the whole of the room. One step forward he took, then—the soft rapping was repeated.

"Who's there?"

This time he cried the words loudly, and acquired some new assurance from the imperative note in his own voice. He ran to the switch and pressed it down. The lamp did not light!

"The filament has burnt out," he muttered.

Terror grew upon him—a terror akin to that which children experience in the darkness. But he yet had a fair mastery of his emotions; when—not suddenly, as is the way of a failing electric lamp—but slowly, uncannily, unnaturally, the table-lamp became extinguished!

Darkness! Cairn turned towards the window. This was a moonless night, and little enough illumination entered the room from the court.

Three resounding raps were struck upon the door.

At that, terror had no darker meaning for Cairn; and had plumbed its ultimate deeps; and now, like a diver, he arose again to the surface.

Heedless of the darkness, of the seemingly supernatural means by which it had been occasioned, he threw open the door and thrust his revolver out into the corridor.

For terrors he had been prepared—for some gruesome shape such as we read of in "The Magus." But there was nothing. Instinctively he had looked straight ahead of him, as one looks who expects to encounter a human enemy. But the hallway was empty. A dim light, finding access over the door from the stair, prevailed there, yet it was sufficient to have revealed the presence of anyone or anything, had anyone or anything been present.

Cairn stepped out from the room and was about to walk to the outer door. The idea of flight was strong upon him, for no man can fight the invisible—when, on a level with his eyes, flat against the wall, as though

someone crouched there—he saw two white hands!

They were slim hands, like the hands of a woman, and, upon one of the tapered fingers, there dully gleamed a green stone.

A peal of laughter came chokingly from his lips; he knew that his reason was tottering. For these two white hands which now moved along the wall, as though they were sliding to the room which Cairn had just quitted, were attached to no visible body; just two ivory hands were there—and *nothing more!*

That he was in deadly peril, Cairn realized fully. His complete subjection by the will-force of Ferrara had been interrupted by the ringing of the telephone-bell. But now, the attack had been renewed!

The hands vanished.

Too well he remembered the ghastly details attendant upon the death of Sir Michael Ferrara to doubt that these slim hands were directed upon murderous business.

A soft swishing sound reached him. Something upon the writing-table had been moved.

The strangling cord!

Whilst speaking to his father he had taken it out from the drawer—and when he quitted the room it had lain upon the blotting-pad.

He stepped back towards the outer door.

Something fluttered past his face, and he turned in a mad panic. The dreadful, bodiless hands groped in the darkness between himself and the exit!

Vaguely it came home to him that the menace might be avoidable. He was bathed in icy perspiration.

He dropped the revolver into his pocket, and placed his hands upon his throat. Then he began to grope his way towards the closed door of his bedroom.

Lowering his left hand, he began to feel for the door-knob. As he did so, he saw—and knew the crowning horror of the night—that he had made