

copied it into his note-book, he left the reading-room. Then, as he was recrossing the hall near the foot of the principal staircase, he paused. He found himself possessed by a sudden desire to visit the Egyptian Rooms upstairs. He had several times inspected the exhibits in those apartments, but never since his return from the land to whose ancient civilization they bore witness.

Cairn was not pressed for time in these days, therefore he turned and passed slowly up the stairs.

There were but few visitors to the grove of mummies that afternoon. When he entered the first room he found a small group of tourists passing idly from case to case; but on entering the second, he saw that he had the apartment to himself. He remembered that his father had mentioned on one occasion that there was a ring in this room which had belonged to the Witch-Queen. Robert Cairn wondered in which of the cases it was exhibited, and by what means he should be enabled to recognize it.

Bending over a case containing scarabs and other amulets, many set in rings, he began to read the inscriptions upon the little tickets placed beneath some of them; but none answered to the description, neither the ticketed nor the unticketed. A second case he examined with like results. But on passing to a third in an angle near the door, his gaze immediately lighted upon a gold ring set with a strange green stone, engraved in a peculiar way. It bore no ticket, yet as Robert Cairn eagerly bent over it, he knew, without the possibility of doubt, that this was the ring of the Witch-Queen.

With his eyes fixed on the gleaming stone, he sought to remember. That he had seen this ring before, or one exactly like it, he knew, but strangely enough he was unable to determine where and upon what occasion. So with his hands resting upon the case, he leant, peering down at the singular gem. And as he stood

thus, frowning in the effort of recollection, a dull, white hand, having long, tapered fingers, glided across the glass until it rested directly beneath his eyes. Upon one of the slim fingers was an exact replica of the ring in the case!

Robert Cairn leapt back with a stifled exclamation.

Antony Ferrara stood before him!

"The Museum ring is a copy, dear Cairn," came the huskily musical, hateful voice; "the one upon my finger is the real one."

Cairn realized in his own person the literal meaning of the overworked phrase, "frozen with amazement." Before him stood the most dangerous man in Europe—a man who had done murder and worse, a man only in name, a demon in nature. With his long, black eyes half closed, his perfectly chiselled ivory face expressionless, and his blood-red lips parted in a mirthless smile, Antony Ferrara watched Cairn—Cairn whom he had sought to murder by means of hellish art.

Despite the heat of the day he wore a heavy overcoat, lined with white-fox fur. In his right hand—for his left still rested upon the case—he held a soft hat. With an easy nonchalance he stood regarding the man who had sworn to kill him—and the latter made no move, uttered no word. Stark amazement held him inert.

"I knew that you were in the Museum, Cairn," Ferrara continued, still having his basilisk eyes fixed upon the other from beneath the drooping lids, "and I called you to join me here."

Still Cairn did not move, did not speak.

"You have acted very harshly towards me in the past, dear Cairn; but because my philosophy consists in an admirable blending of that practised in Sybaris with that advocated by the excellent Zeno; because whilst I am prepared to make my home in a Diogenes tub, I, nevertheless, can enjoy the fragrance of a rose, the flavour of a peach—"