

## THE SILENT WITNESS

not alone in the approaching morning light, but in the light of past events which, if the last words spoken by those lips now sealed in death were true, could no longer be kept secret, what would be the world's verdict? Murder! fratricide! and I? Great God! of what avail would be any plea of mine in the face of such damning evidence?

"I rushed to the tower-room, and hastily opening my safe, took from a private drawer therein a key and with trembling fingers fitted it into the lock of a large metallic box which contained the family jewels, and which for more than twenty-five years had held the old will executed by my father on his death-bed. I had seen it there less than forty-eight hours before, and in my desperation I now determined to destroy it. My very haste and eagerness delayed me, but at last the cover flew back, revealing the gleaming jewels, but—the will was not there! Unable to believe my own eyes, I drew my fingers carefully back and forth through the narrow receptacle where it had lain, and among the satin linings of the various compartments, but in vain; the will was gone! My brother had spoken the truth, and the will was doubtless in the possession of his son, who, under its terms, was now himself heir to the estate. The room grew dim and the walls themselves seemed to whirl swiftly about me as, with great difficulty, I groped my way back to the library, where I stood gazing at that strange counterpart of myself, till, under the growing horror of the situation, it seemed to my benumbed senses as though I were some disembodied spirit hovering above his own corpse. The horrible illusion was like a nightmare; I could not throw it off, and I would then and there have gone stark, staring mad, but that there came to me out of that awful chaos of fancies a suggestion which seemed like an inspiration. 'It is Hugh Mainwaring,' I said to myself, 'Hugh Mainwaring died to-night!'