

THE EYE OF SATAN

It was near midnight and Parletville was wrapped in slumber. From one cottage, however, a solitary ray of light pierced the surrounding gloom. Evidently Captain Bascom had unusual business to keep him thus long awake.

"Satan," he was saying to a big, green parrot which stood on the mantel, "it was jest sech a night as this that Mis' Bascom departed this airth. Jest so quiet and dark. Why—oddso—it's ten year ago this very night. No wonder I felt sorter restless, Satan. I don't believe in sperrits, but if ever they was to go prowlin' and caperin' 'round, Maria's ghost 'ud ha'nt me tonight."

The parrot blinked sleepily and walked to the other end of the mantel-piece.

"Gettin' sleepy, are ye? Well, we'll 'turn in,'"

"Yes, sleepy. Let's 'turn in,'" croaked the bird.

The old captain laughed softly as he turned to a heavy iron-bound chest in the corner. From a jumble of odds and ends he drew out a worn daguerreotype. It was the portrait of a woman of middle age, of portly build and figure, with a kindly face. Beneath it was written, "Maria."

"It's the only picter I've got of her, Satan," said the old man, drawing his horny hand across his dimming eyes, "but she looks jest as natcheral as life. Ah, well, old-bird, I'll soon be with her. The time ain't long any more." Yet he little knew how prophetic were his words.

Just as he turned to replace the miniature in the chest, there came a rap upon the window pane. Captain Bascom started up. The great lid fell shut with a crash.

"Who's there?" he cried, advancing tremblingly toward the curtained window. Evidently Maria's ghost had come to earth at last.

"Open up, captain. Don't you know an old mate's voice,"

At that sound, the captain paled visibly. Then he went forward and quickly threw open the window. Immediately a thin, wiry body wriggled sinuously through the aperture and confronted him. The visitor was a dark-skinned, shifty-eyed man perhaps fifteen years younger than the captain.