

he locked it and returned it to its place. Then he carefully retied the key on its silken string and placed the corpse in a reclining position on its side. Then with great care he drew the knife from the gaping wound and cleaned it with a rag of sail cloth taken from the chest. This rag he burned in the grate and scattered the ashes. Then from the inexhaustible contents of the oak chest he brought out an Italian stiletto. This he twirled in the pool of blood on the floor until it was reeking, and then dropped it carelessly, yet methodically, by the side of the dead captain, near his outstretched right arm. Then, as though satisfied with his work, he gave a glance about the room and disappeared through the yawning blackness of the window, which he let fall noiselessly into place behind him. But he had forgotten one thing — Satan, the parrot.

Next morning when Captain Bascom failed to show himself at the village inn, as was his wont, there was consternation among its idler hangers-on. Never in the history of the town had the captain failed to make his appearance promptly at eight. As the minutes passed and the old sailor did not come, conjectures as to his absence arose in many minds.

"Mebby he's sick and can't come," said the landlord, whose daily duty it was to serve the captain's grog.

"Sick nuthin'," said another. "Why the captain ain't had a sick spell since he's been here."

"But he's not young any more," insisted the landlord. "When sech takes sick they goes mighty quick."

So, finally, as the morning wore on, three of the captain's cronies were detailed to inquire into their comrade's unusual absence. In a few moments they returned, with blanched faces, to tell the news. They had found him dead upon the floor, a victim, apparently, of his own will.

The report spread through the village like a tempest, and in less than a half hour the little room which had been the captain's sole lodging was crowded to the utmost with awe-struck, gaping village folk.

About the walls hung various objects of strange and uncouth design, collected during the captain's rambles over land and sea. Here stood out a rosette of assegais; there a bank of Zulu shields; in a corner the white serrated weapon of an enormous swordfish; on the mantlepiece, strangely carved and hideous Chinese gods;