

festooned from the ceiling the horrible tentacles and head of a devil fish; and almost unnoticed under a heavy antique desk in the corner was the body of a green-plumed parrot. With the exception of the latter everything was in order. Evidently the captain had committed suicide. At least so everyone thought—with one exception.

Leaning with one arm upon the mantel was an old grey haired man with a strangely warped and bent figure. The village folk called him The Sphinx because he was always so silent. His piercing grey eyes were shifting here and there about the room, as though taking in at a glance every detail. Finally he saw the parrot. Without any apparent motive and very leisurely he edged his way across to the desk. Then with a sudden swoop, which no one noticed, he snatched the dead parrot from the floor and hastily concealed it beneath his cloak. A moment later he left the cottage and wended his way down the silent street. Some few rods away he turned into a narrow alley and soon entered a low, weather-stained house set back from the street. Once inside the heavy door and secure from observation his tongue was loosed.

“Fame at last!” he cried, excitedly. “At last are my years of labor to be rewarded. They say it was suicide, but I shall show them that it was murder. Yes, murder. We shall see! We shall see!”

And muttering thus to himself, he descended a stairway leading into the cellar of the house. At the end of the stair, a heavy oaken door confronted him. He unlocked it and entered the room beyond. Around its four walls were ranged rows upon rows of labeled flasks and bottles. Upon the table in the middle of the room stood many strange instruments, microscopes, lances, mirrors, knives—in short, it was the old man’s workshop.

Having refastened the door and tried it, he turned with feverish haste to his work, pausing only to exchange his coat for a wide apron. Then, with the air of one who is master of his art, he took up the parrot and placed it on the table before him. Carefully selecting a keen knife from a case before him, he began his experiment, upon the result of which rested his fondest hopes. With infinite care and caution he took out an eye of the dead bird. Then, yet more carefully, he cut the orb in two laterally. That hemisphere to which the optic nerve was attached he took up and dropped into a beaker of brownish liquid.