

## *Sapphire Eyes*

HE was solitary and mysterious, and I was thought to be so, and that at once tells how we drifted together. My solitariness I grant, because it existed from two causes, neither of which was anything to be ashamed of: I did not desire to be pestered by the village scandalmongers, and was writing some papers for a magazine on the subject of botany — endeavoring, with mild insanity, to dress the matter in popular form; and my mystery was nothing more startling than rapid and weighty correspondence. My mail was assumed to be reports from my fellow conspirators of the Italian Carbonari; it was in reality something even more mischievous still—proof-sheets.

Hawksmere — a dark, morbidly suspicious and very proud man—nearly fell over me one day, as I was studying some plants beneath the brow of one of the hills on his domain; and our mutual apologies—I for my intrusion, and he for his awkwardness—served as sufficient introduction.

“So you are Mr. Osmond,” he said, with a faint smile. “They malign you in the village horribly; do you know that? My brother, a wise man in his way, has informed me in confidence that you are no less a personage than Rocco in disguise. Your seclusion has at once ruined and glorified you.”

“Mr. Hawksmere,” I returned, “you are quite as lucky. They look upon you as the good people of Motiers looked upon Rousseau—as a fiend, to be exorcised from their midst by showers of stones. The stones came to him, and, perhaps, they will come to you—in time.”

“I don’t fear them. But it is like this accursed world! Because I don’t choose to be intruded upon by a set of wretches, who could have no innocent motive, I am sure, in visiting me, I am to be stoned when accident and circumstances force me among them. Oh, this is a rare system of society!”

He set his teeth, a vicious light burned in his black eyes, and, with the metallic ring of his voice yet in my ears, I thought him by no means unsuggestive of a very dangerous type of misanthropy. Perhaps at another time I should have felt a pleasure in studying him; but now some green stuff in my hands reminded me that the humbler science of botany had a prior claim, and I made haste to end our interview.

“Well,” said I, “you perceive that my pursuits could scarcely find very enthusiastic sympathy among our good villagers. If they stone me, I shall consider myself a martyr—a sort of second St. Stephen.”

This shadowy jest brought back his smile again, and he made a movement as if about to pass on.

“Ah, yes! Botany—and very creditable employment it is. You want to be relieved of me evidently, so I shall go. But, I say, Mr. Osmond”—he had taken a few steps, but now returned, speaking very earnestly—“perhaps you may get a note from me to-morrow. It is uncertain: yet remain at your cottage till nine. Will you do this?”

I assented and he went away, his tall figure casting fantastic shadows on the grass, and the recent interview leaving a strange shadow in my soul. Somehow, I began to fear that I had made the acquaintance of a bad man. I returned to my green stuff, but it had lost its charm.

Next morning, the note came at seven, which was, of course, two hours earlier than I had looked for it. I think I do best to give it below. The writing was whimsical and odd, and the style, as you see, very much to the point:

“DEAR OSMOND: I had been rather interested in you previously, but our three minutes’ conference yesterday has brought you so fully within the circle of my thoughts, which are my life, that I must have you for a time bodily within the sphere of my actions—which (you will scarcely understand this as yet) are my death. Come to Mordyke, and burn your cottage behind you before leaving, so that, like Caesar’s soldiers and their burnt fleet, once in Britain, return is impossible. Once you know what advantages I have here, you will be content to remain. Be assured of this.”

At a proper hour, I went over with the fullest intention of thanking Hawksmere for his kind offer, and declining it. But the black portals that closed behind me, after I had made my way up the long avenue, shut me in from that instant as an inmate of Mordyke—sombre, strange, beautiful place that it was.

I was confronted by a massive staircase of ebony marble when I reached the end of the hall; but had scarcely placed my foot on the lowest stair when I heard the ponderous and magnificent chords of an organ, far above me, and the tones of a female voice dying away into sobs of unearthly melody, then rising from them and gathering into a grandeur that transfixed me.

I felt a touch on my shoulder, and shuddering, I turned, and saw Hawksmere. He seemed to have risen out of the earth, his approach had been so silent. His face was actually gray, and his eyes shone with lurid brilliancy, as he held up his finger, and cautioned me to lose no portion of the divine melody sweeping into our enraptured cars from the upward distance.

At last it ended, and, motioning me to follow him, he ascended. He turned to the left, and entered a strangely shaped room, and there, standing at a window, I beheld a lady, whom I knew instantly to be his wife.

Could she have been the singer? Something in her face told me not. She was not handsome, or intellectual-looking; but had a pale, tired countenance, and a weary, querulous manner, that could not have made a favorable impression upon anyone. We

greeted each other, however, with assumed pleasure, and then Hawksmere explained to her the object of my visit.

“But,” said I, interrupting him quickly, “this is all a mistake. I have merely come now to thank you, and decline.”

“Stay!” he returned. “You have not yet been made acquainted with the inducements I shall offer. Come after me.”

We passed out, and then to the right, and presently entered another chamber. An arch rested beyond. The furniture was magnificent; but what surprised and interested me most was the library, and, on the long table, a botanist’s collection of the most complete character of any I had ever met.

“Yours,” he said, pointing to it, “if you will remain here a week! Decide quickly.”

“But,” I persisted, “I don’t see what can be your motive in wishing to possess the society of such a very dreary fogy as I am. You don’t know me, Hawksmere. Perhaps you consider me an original. If you do, you were never more woefully mistaken. Off paper, and, perhaps, on it, I’m a bore of the worst kind.”

He laughed—such a laugh as it was—and touched the collection again.

“Here is the work of a lifetime—of old Boerdst’s lifetime—all yours for the little favor I ask. Listen to me, and I will tell you a long story in a few words. It will give you the key to everything.”

We sat down, and placing his hand on my knee, he looked steadily into my face and began:

“I was once a very good man, and, of course, a fool; and that was long ago. I believed in all the world, and loved my neighbor as myself. I met a woman, and worshiped her. We quarreled, because I was the incarnation of fiendish jealousy; and, both being too proud, we never made our difference up, until—until, Osmond” —he shaded his eyes, and I saw two bitter tears course slowly down his hollow cheeks—“until it was too late!”

This was really the first time I had ever seen human being in such depths of distress. The man by me was perfectly abject in his grief, and no stoicism could have prevented me from feeling much pity for him. Yet I uttered no words.

“Desperation,” he continued, recovering himself, “is the essence of my character. I will not analyze for your benefit just now what I mean by this. I can only say that that subtle spirit in me which dares everything, feels bound by no law, human or divine, springs forward through every peril to the accomplishment of a purpose, be it a saint-like sacrifice, or a demoniac revenge—was what prompted me to seek a punishment for the haughty cruelty of Marie de Fontanges. I went to a country inn, where I had often baited

my horses, and married the master's daughter. Yes, I married Clara Graham, whom I scarcely knew, and whom, at the moment I placed the ring on her finger and swore I loved and would always love, in my heart I detested, despised! And then I took her home, and into society, and flung her in the face of the one human being for whom a barter of my soul to eternal perdition would have been a small price!"

I stared at him in growing horror. He had risen, and was pacing the room furiously.

"By the next day, my mad rage and thirst for revenge had spent itself. You know what is said of the feeling after an opium dream—the torturing dejection, grief, fright, remorse; but, oh, man, man, the comparison would be feeble here!"

"This lady—Mademoiselle de Fontanges?"

"She did not marry—she saved me that, Osmond; and it was merciful, indeed; but the reproach of those eyes—those thrilling eyes of sapphire—filled all my wretched soul. I fled from mankind with the partner of my misery, and came here. I carried the ghastly corpse of a blasted love and an eternal hate chained to me, even to this spot. The eyes haunted me still; I could not rest, sleeping or waking; I was mad with longing; I hungered for a sight of her—of Marie, my darling soul! What have I just said? That the essence of my character is desperation. I proved it once more; I begged her to come to me at Mordyke! Yet, Osmond, reflect that this was done when I was certain that looking on her was hourly death—that looking on my wife beside her would be enduring by minutes the eternal agonies of the condemned!"

He fell into a chair exhausted. The folding-doors under the arch suddenly swung together, and shut with a loud crash.

"What was that?" he cried, starting up, and crossing to the spot whence the sound had proceeded, rapidly. I followed him, in strange trepidation.

"It must have been a listener," I said.

He drew wide the massive portals, and there stood a woman.

She was everything exquisite, and entrancingly beautiful, and with these words I have said all. Her eyes were marvelous, indeed. I halted, in mute rapture.

"Did you hear what has just passed?" asked Hawksmere, excitedly.

She looked at him in great surprise, and answered:

"No, Digby. I have just come from the organ. Have you been discussing secrets?" A very low musical laugh followed the last words; but she was evidently concerned about Hawksmere's wild manner.

The introduction which followed was not necessary. I had instantly recognized Marie de Fontanges. Those thrilling sapphire eyes must have betrayed her anywhere.

We fell into desultory conversation; but I made very close observation of the bearing of the two, now that I had heard the singular position of affairs existing between them. One thing I was most anxious to detect, and this was, whether she still loved him, and as passionately as he loved her. The truth was but too plain; her devotion was no less intense than his; only, perhaps, rather better concealed.

I do not know that we talked about anything very interesting; but the conversation lasted some time, and then Mademoiselle de Fontanges withdrew. Her fascination had not failed to affect even me, who had seen but this little of her, and by whom her sex had been, up to this hour, very mistakenly viewed. But what can you expect of a man who engages to make the technicalities of the science of botany popular?

At the moment she had quitted the apartment, Hawksmere seized my hand with eagerness.

“I perceive that her beauty has thrilled you,” he said, “and that you do not wonder at my madness. Ah, it was to confide in you, my friend, that I begged you to come here. Conceive the suffering I have endured in keeping my secret so long pent up in my own breast. You will remain now, of course?”

It was impossible to longer deny him, and he immediately sent over to the cottage for my things, and I was duly installed as his guest.

The dinner was late, rather to my inconvenience; but, eaten under such peculiar circumstances, that what was lost on one hand was certainly gained on another. I had determined to notice most closely the bearing of Mrs. Hawksmere toward Marie, as I shall take the liberty to call her; and this I did. The wife was pale, silent, and suffering very apparent agitation; Marie seemed gayer than when I had met her in the morning. Hawksmere appeared irritable and uneasy.

At last I was allowed to slip away for a short walk about the grounds and a cigar. Half an hour passed, by which time I had dawdled some distance off and back, and I was going in, when the tall drawing-room window in front of me was raised, and Mrs. Hawksmere stepped out upon the piazza.

Her cheeks were fire, but her lips pale as ashes. Her husband followed her.

“This is very foolish,” he said, as if at a loss for words.

“Foolish!” she echoed, with all the scorn she could command. “Ay, it is true that I am a fool. But there shall be an end, Hawksmere!”

“Do you threaten me?”

“Not you—not you!”

She clinched her white, little fingers and bit her ghastly, pallid lips till the blood started.

Another figure appeared in our midst, that of Marie. Smiles—but now strange, dangerous smiles—were dancing in her grand eyes still.

“Perhaps, madam,” she said, tauntingly, “it is I who am in peril?”

Could I, with any propriety, continue to witness this scene? I would have given anything in reason to have not been present at all; nay, how ardently did I begin to wish that Hawksmere’s life and mine were lying yet apart! I made haste to relieve myself of my acute embarrassment, and them of my presence.

“Let me retire,” I said, in much disorder. “These words you have just uttered are not for my ears. I regret that my studies have not claimed me sooner.” And speaking thus, I left them and sought my room.

It is not necessary to mention that Boerdst’s collection was to me, that evening, without the least interest. Mortification dyes my cheeks with blushes when I add that I so far forgot myself as to shake my fist at his plants, and call Boerdst an opprobrious name. But there are few of us who do not sometimes err.

I am fond of tobacco, though I never indulge myself extravagantly, and was this evening toiling at my seventh pipe, when—two hours having now elapsed—I heard, in the distance, some one praying. My door was ajar, and, though I could not distinguish the words, I could easily recognize the voice of Mrs. Hawksmere and the wailing, humble intonation of the human utterance when it beseeches heaven.

I irritably shut out the sound and resumed my soothing companion. The next interruption was the hasty entrance of Hawksmere himself.

His face was flushed and wild, his clothing all awry, and his language confused. Very evident it was that his dinner had not been so temperate as mine, nor, as to its epilogue, concluded so soon.

He struck his fist upon my table fiercely.

“I shall not endure this torment any longer!” he said, huskily. “For whom or what do I care, here or hereafter! Ah, Osmond, if you would let me give you two short lectures in my creed, you would become a convert. What says the phantom to Macbeth? ‘Be bloody, bold and resolute!’ It was good advice, and when he began to disregard it he began to fail. That shall henceforth be the motto of my belief.”

His wandering eyes now caught sight of the changes I had made in my chamber, by means of the articles brought from my cottage. He examined everything, talking at

random all the time, and finally began to finger some bottles. One he put to his lips. I went toward him quickly and plucked it away.

“Beware! That is, like them all, the deadliest poison. It is possible to be botanist and chemist both. Behold the results of experiments with certain of my plants.”

“And you,” he returned, looking at me sternly, “tempt people in this way, Osmond! Not one vial is labeled. Let us remedy the deficiency to-morrow.”

The last word was a cue for a fresh burst of his peculiar philosophy. He reasoned upon life and death, questioning the profoundest doctrines of Christianity; but through all his arguments ran an undercurrent of bitter hatred toward mankind.

I am rather patient—I have sat under lectures three hours long—but this night no orator, no subject, could have held me fifteen minutes. I wanted to think, alone. Never was the natural solitariness of my character so powerfully developed.

The only way to get rid of my companion was to propose a pipe on the lawn; he hated both, and would undoubtedly refuse. And so, indeed, it turned out.

“You insisted that I should exercise no ceremony, and be under no restraint. I have the alternatives: a smoke in the open air, or a sleepless night.”

I left him in the room and went below. How solemnly beautiful looked Mordyke! Although the air was uncomfortably chilly, I could not resist the temptation of remaining in it some time. At last, however, I returned to the building, and took my way again up the marble staircase. I turned to the right, and directly under the purple light which burned in front of my door, I stood face to face with Marie de Fontanges. She seemed startled for an instant; but immediately recovered, laughing unrestrainedly in her deliciously musical voice.

“Mr. Osmond,” she said, “I owe you a punishment for frightening me so! Good-night.”

She passed with a feathery footfall by me and was gone. How intensely silent was all the house! I paused for a moment to note this, and to give a thought to the fierce commotion agitating the souls of its inmates.

Then I re-entered my room.

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I opened my eyes on the morning sun shining in my windows. A clamorous knocking at my door had awakened me, and I hastened to seek the cause. One of the servants was standing in the corridor, pale and nervous, and he gave me a startling message from his master.

“Mr. Hawksmere begs your presence without delay, sir.”

Wondering greatly, I dressed and was hurrying downstairs, when I encountered Hawksmere, disturbed, and perhaps frightened.

“My wife and I,” he said, hastily, “have not occupied the same apartment for a long time. She was called this morning, but did not answer. The spring-latch, which can be worked both from the outside and in, is down; and if we wish to obtain entrance we must break open the door. Is not this strange?”

A terrible foreboding seized me.

“Let us do as you suggest,” I returned. “Call all as witnesses.”

This was not necessary, for the scared domestics were already assembled, shivering and anxious.

We gathered at the entrance to the chamber, whither I had first been taken on the day before, and with the blow of an iron mallet, Hawksmere struck off the lock and flung aside the door.

A ghastly sight presented itself to us. Mrs. Hawksmere lay on the bed, dead. Her husband fell at her side, and took her hand hysterically.

“Who has done this?” he cried, in much excitement. “Some fiend has poisoned her!”

He snatched up a goblet on a chair near the corpse, and gave it to me.

“Retain this,” he said; “it contains a medicine prescribed for her sleeplessness—wine of valerian. Perhaps the poison was introduced through its means.”

A thought, a fearful suspicion, seized me. I ran quickly to my room, and examined the bottle Hawksmere had fingered on the night before.

*It was empty!*

A test was applied to the sides of the goblet. From a faint pink color they instantly turned to a dull black. The proof was conclusive.

I went once more to the chamber of the dead, and told all.

“Hawksmere, the drug you tasted last night has been used for this dreadful work!”

A person suddenly swept into the apartment. It was Marie de Fontanges.

“How now?” she exclaimed. “What means all this?”



“It means, madam,” returned Hawksmere, “that my wife has been foully murdered!”

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Conceive the dreadful excitement at Mordyke from this moment. There was nothing, after the main horror, so terrible as the general bewilderment. It became me, as the person interested in the deceased the least closely, to recover as soon as possible my presence of mind. This, by force of will, I succeeded partly in doing.

My first action was to send to the village with the news of the murder, and my next to question the servants.

Hawksmere had once referred to his butler as “a wise man in his way,” and my own impressions, from the little I had seen of this person, were confirmatory. I sought him out, and took him to my room.

He was—naturally, under the fearful circumstances— quite suspicious and non-committal. I perceived this at once, by a pursing of the mouth, and a stiffness of carriage most unmistakable. My decision was, of course, to begin by reassuring him.

“Baker,” I said, very calmly, “you are an intelligent man, and must understand exactly the position in which we all stand here. A murder has been done, secretly, by some one in the house. Investigation will begin belowstairs, and the first matter in question will be as to the motive. Now, this will surely clear all the servants, because Mrs. Hawksmere was much loved among them, and the crime has evidently not been committed for the sake of robbery, since none has taken place. Satisfaction thus furnished so far, the law will analyze circumstances in another quarter. *I*, for example, shall be called upon to clear myself. This I can easily do by means of your master, and by the more powerful evidence of my situation here, and the peculiar facts surrounding it. You understand this readily?”

Baker bowed his head solemnly. His mouth had relaxed by this time, and the stiffness of carriage had become merely an attitude of strict attention. I continued:

“Next, Miss Fontanges will be brought into question. I believe I was the last person who saw her before retiring, and she was then on her way to bed. This will, doubtless, be sufficient to place her out of danger.”

Baker expressed the same conclusion.

“Now,” I pursued, my voice sinking lower, and my words falling with deliberation, “there will remain but one at whom the finger of suspicion may be pointed—your master!”

“My master!”

“Yes; and here, Baker, I shall pause. If you know anything in this world which will clear Mr. Hawksmere, be prepared at the inquest to name it; for, as sure as I sit in this spot, unless some subtle evidence intervene, he will be tried and convicted, before two months roll over his head, of the willful and cowardly murder of his wife.”

Poor Baker was much attached to his master. He burst into honest tears at my last words, and went weeping from the room.

The village authorities arrived with a precipitation which I can only account for by supposing that they felt the raptures of revenge in being now able to penetrate Mordyke, whether its owner wished or no.

The magistrate was a little, fussy, fat man, who wandered about, here and there, poking everything with his cane. He seemed to have a strong suspicion that none of us had yet thought there might be a murderer under the bed or up the chimney. He appointed the afternoon for the inquest; but by half an hour he had shown himself so perfectly imbecile, that I determined to telegraph for a detective from the metropolis. This I proposed to Hawksmere. He sprang at the offer with an eagerness that amazed me.

“We will go to the telegraph-station together,” he said.

We passed out of Mordyke’s great gates, and into the brown road leading to the village. A crowd had gathered on all sides, and, as we went through them, there was a singularly ominous murmur. I could not imagine what it foreboded until we had gone a few yards further, and then about our heads came a shower of stones.

“Remember our conversation of yesterday?” said Hawksmere.

Well did I remember it, indeed! We paid no attention to the insults of the rabble, but reached the office, and sent the necessary message. Then we returned to Mordyke.

In an hour a stranger arrived. He was a tall person, with a long face, and small, twinkling eyes. He said his name was Slocum. He looked rather like a minister; he was in reality the detective we had sent for.

His manner was most unsatisfactory. He did not exhibit the least symptom of interest in any part of the affair, but sauntered about, his hands in his pockets, whistling. It was especially irritating to find him hobnobbing with the servants, instead of attending to his business.

All he did in the room of the murder was to gather up the deceased lady’s portfolio and drawing-books. This done, he once more returned to the servants’ hall, and sat with Baker, drinking out of a pocket-flask of fearfully strong rum.

At last I felt it my duty to remonstrate.

“Squire,” said he—we had gone to my room for the conversation—“it’s a pesky queer business; darn my skin if it ain’t. You don’t know anything about it, of course. That’s why I hain’t thought it worth while to interview you.”

I not know anything about it! This was a nice idea, indeed. I told him I knew *all* about it.

He whistled.

“Well,” said he, “let’s hear.”

I gave him every word that I have put down here.

“You seem to sorter think things p’int to the boss, don’t you, now? Darned if you ain’t cute as a fox, squire. You’ve put the pieces of the puzzle together till they fit like a Chinese alphabet. But,” he added, with a solemn, innocent look upward, “the boss didn’t do it.”

“Did not? I am truly glad you think so. The opinion of a person of so much penetration and such industrious investigation,” I added, with satire by no means concealed, “is doubtless valuable. I hope the jury at the inquest will estimate it as highly as you yourself do.”

He bowed with a sincerity that was marvelous. He evidently considered my irony as a hearty compliment most earnestly meant.

“Thank you again, squire. What do you think of the French lady now?”

“Mademoiselle de Fontanges? Sir, you insult me by naming her in such a connection. She is my friend—respected and admired.”

“Yes; I forgot. You met her yesterday, I think you said. But don’t it look queer to you for two females to have a muss in the afternoon about a man, and for one on ‘em to die that same night suddint by pison? By *your* pison, squire; and you saw one on ‘em right near your room jist as you was goin’ in it? She was scared a little, likewise. Ahem!”

He gave a tremendous cough, and looked at the ceiling rather more innocently than before. The expression of his countenance was sweet and childlike indeed, and I thought how poorly adapted he was to the pursuit he had so perversely chosen.

“Well, squire,” he said, presently, getting up, “I guess I’ll go down to the village. I don’t see as I ken do anythink here till the inquest come off.”

He went away, and I was glad of it. But his words had startled me. Marie guilty! It was too horrible to think of. Yet the faintest shades of dread haunted me in spite of myself. I determined to seek her presence, and note her bearing during the march of the terrible drama in progress around her.

I found her alone in the library. At my entrance she looked up, and as the light of those matchless eyes fell upon me, I could have fallen at her feet in worship no less extravagant than Hawksmere's.

What could I say to her? I did not dare mention Slocum's hint, and yet, what if she were arrested and taken to jail?

Better anything a thousand times!

After we had conversed in brief whispers, I said:

"Mademoiselle, let me ask you to have courage, whatever happens. Would that neither of us had ever come here!"

She started in great surprise.

"You know my story?" she said, quickly.

"Yes, I confess it. Hawksmere has told me all. You are both to be pitied."

This acknowledgment produced at that instant the freedom of a perfect intimacy of years. She poured out her heart to me, and I was enabled to see what Hawksmere's and her own culpable and foolish pride had cost them.

I asked if I should tell the complete truth at the approaching inquest.

She paused a moment in reflection, and then answered:

"Yes—conceal nothing. I have no dread now."

I left her, more mystified than ever. Could she be guilty? And yet, the guilt certainly lay between her and her lover, who seemed as innocent as she. But against him there was such a fearful array of evidence of circumstance!

The inquest was organized at two o'clock. The fat little village magistrate was again in his glory.

Slocum, the detective, sauntered around, still unconcerned. I had made up my mind that his bill, when presented, must be extremely moderate, if he expected to have any of it paid.

What the testimony was may be easily judged. Hawksmere and Marie listened in silence. But when I was called and began, the flutter was great—not only with them, but generally.

I told my story as plainly as I hope I have told it here; and, I need not add, it had its effect.

Every word that dropped from my lips pointed to Hawksmere and the beautiful woman of his love.

I saw what the verdict was to be in the face of every soul in the room.

And all turned out as I feared.

“We find that the deceased, Clara Hawksmere, came to her death by poison, administered at the hands of her husband, Digby Hawksmere, and his accomplice, Marie de Fontanges.”

Such was the opinion of the jury. Such was the opinion of every spectator.

Hawksmere advanced, proudly. His dark face was lit up by a strange light, and he looked more noble than I had ever seen him.

“So you think that I murdered my wife—do you?” he said, with a contemptuous smile on all around him. “And that I was aided by this lady near me? Ah, you carrion! It is a victory for you to leave me thus—is it not? But such souls as mine are not bound by you and your cobweb customs and laws. Think of that, vermin!”

He raised a bright-barreled revolver, leveled it at Marie, and fired!

The shot passed by, and harmed her not. He did not observe this, but placed the muzzle of the weapon to his temple, and caught the trigger firmly with his finger.

He would have pulled, and been the next instant in eternity, but for a long, bony, sunburnt hand, which stretched itself across his shoulder, and plucked the pistol from him.

“Stop, boss,” said a voice I well knew. “You’re a buster, you air, and you ain’t goin’ to leave us yet.”

“What now?” cried the fat magistrate, trembling with terror and agitation.

“On’y this, commodore,” continued Mr. Slocum, somewhat severely— “that you hev been slightin’ me doorin’ these proceedin’s. Read that, squire.”

He handed me a paper written in a woman’s hand. Disturbed, and, indeed, frightened as I was, I managed to gasp out the following sentences:

“Yesterday I heard, at the folding-doors under the arch, all that passed between my husband and Mr. Osmond, the botanist.

Everything that I had long suspected was then confirmed. This night I listened again, and heard the dialogue regarding the poison distilled from the plants. At the moment the room was clear, I seized one of the bottles and drank its contents, to end my more than miserable existence. The future has no terrors for me greater than the agony I have experienced here. I forgive all.

“CLARA GRAHAM HAWKSMERE.”

So she had poisoned herself!

I sprang upon Slocum, and grasped his hand. He shook himself loose instantly.

“Squire,” said he, “you’re cute as a fox. But you forgot them portfoolyers. Let’s lick.”

He thrust under my nose his nasty rum-flask. But I certainly could not refuse to taste a drop.

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This is a cruel story, I know; but, as I have already remarked, what that is interesting can you expect from a man who engages to make the technicalities of the science of botany popular?

Yet everything, I am glad to say, ended well; for, after a long time, Hawksmere and Marie were married, and he became another man.

Slocum was at the wedding, and I mentioned casually that I thought Hawksmere had always been partly insane.

He declared he would cure him; and in about a week reappeared with a box of pills.

I stared in amazement

“It’s his liver,” said the detective, confidentially. “I’m interested, privately, in a good speckelation—’ Antimonial, Anti-bilious, Antiquarian Pills,’ sold only by Josiah Slocum—that’s my brother—Marblehead, Mass. Agencies everywhere.”

But Hawksmere, like myself, was dubious.

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Via Hathitrust