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For the Blood Is the Life and Other Stories

By F. Marion Crawford

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SIR HUGH OCKRAM smiled as he sat by the open window of his study, in the late August afternoon. A curiously yellow cloud obscured the low sun, and the clear summer light turned lurid, as if it had been suddenly poisoned and polluted by the foul vapours of a plague. Sir Hughs face seemed, at best, to be made of fine parchment drawn skin-tight over a wooden mask, in which two sunken eyes peered from far within. The eyes peered from under wrinkled lids, alive and watchful like toads in their holes, side by side and exactly alike. But as the light changed, a little yellow glare flashed in each. He smiled, stretching pale lips across discoloured teeth in an expression of profound self-satisfaction, blended with the most unforgiving hatred and contempt for the human doll. Nurse Macdonald, who was a hundred years old, said that when Sir Hugh smiled he saw the faces of two women in hell--two dead women he had betrayed. The smile widened. The hideous disease of which Sir Hugh was dying had touched...



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