



## THE WITCH'S HEAD

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD.

He did not think it necessary to add that he had not had the luck to see a shot fired himself. "Why should he?"

"By the way, if you are going to see Sir Ernest, do you think you could give him a private message from me? I have a reason for not wanting him to be overheard."

"Oh, yes, I dare say I can. Nothing would give me greater pleasure."

"You are very good." Another glance.

"Will you tell him that I wish he would take a fly and come to see me? I shall be in all this afternoon."

A pair of jealousy shot through the girl's slender body, but she comforted herself with the reflection that the fine woman like that could not care for a child fellow.

"Oh, certainly, I will tell him."

"Thank you," said she extended her hand.

He took it, and, intoxicated by those superb eyes, ventured to press gently. A mild smile took possession of Eva's mind, that may in another young could have developed such an amount of physical impudence.

But she did not resent the pressure. What did she care about having her hand squeezed when it was a question of seeing Ernest?

Poor, deluded cherub!

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

Within minutes after the departure of Lieut. Jäger, Eva began to fly up at the door. Then came an interval, and the sound of two people walking up the steps, one of whom stumbled a good deal; then a ring.

"Is Mrs. Plowden at home?" said a clear voice, the well remembered tones of which sent the blood to her head, and then back to her rush.

"Yes, sir."

"Wait here, myman. Now, my good girl, I must ask you to give me your hand, for I am not in a condition to find my way home."

"I'm not lacking in strength of hand," he said quickly. "I have not yet got used to talking to people in the dark."

She sat down on the sofa beside him, feeling frightened and yet happy. For awhile they remained silent, apparently they could find nothing to say, and after all silence seemed to be most comfortable. She looked at him; there was no fear in his eyes, but her eyes rested upon his hands, upon a look of unutterable tenderness. "You're a good boy," she said.

"Oh, Ernest, how you aggravate me! You get you surprised to see my message?" she asked, gently.

"Yes; it was like getting a message from the devil. I never expected to see you again. I thought that you had quite passed out of my life."

"So you had forgotten me?"

"Yes, I do; but I still remember happiness."

"So she had not quite forgotten him after all."

"Listen, " Ernest went on, gathering himself together, and speaking strongly enough now, with a strange suppressed energy that frightened her. "How you came to do what you have done is a mystery to me."

"It is done; do not let us speak of it. I was not looking to blame," she broke in.

"I mean that that man is dead, and you will take me for a liar if I tell you."

"You do not do me justice, Ernest. You do not tell me why I ask it, but I will tell you that you are ready for it."

"Well, then, Doll—now don't be angry, dearest."

"Oh, Ernest, how you aggravate me!" she cried, gently.

"Why do you say such a thing to me? You know, Eva, that it is impossible for me to forget you; I almost wish that it were so."

"I meant that you had passed out of my outward life, for out of my mind you can never pass."

Ernest held her hand and was silent, and yet his words did not bring him happiness.

"So she had not quite forgotten him after all."

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