

The Ivory Idol.

DO you believe in magic? In the tales of Indian mysticism? At any odds it need not prevent your listening to a story.

I have always been attracted by the study of magic, by curious amulets and charms, in fact, by anything which savored of, or pertained to, the practices of the so-called witches. I had come into possession of the Ivory Idol, from a sailor who had returned but lately from India, that country of mystery and magic. The tale he told me was curious—nay, “unbelievable in our western civilization. “The idol,” he said, “has the peculiar power of granting any wish wished upon it, but each wish is accompanied by some misfortune, which causes the fulfillment of the wish, and is brought about by some natural means. For instance, a Rajah once owned the idol and wished for immortality. He lived over one hundred and forty years, and then wished for death—his life had been miserable, trouble on every side; he existed; he didn’t *live*. Believe me or not as you will, but I warn you not to wish on the Ivory Idol, or you’ll be sorry ever after; nothing but misfortune has followed its path.”

With this warning he left me, and I saw no more of him. The idol, which I held in my hand, was a squat figure of Buddha, about four inches high, carved from ivory, and set upon a block of ivory, into which a number of curious designs were cut, the Indian marks representative of life and death. I looked at the idol as it lay in my hand—the face, hard and cruel, was adorned with a rather cynical smile, such a smile as you might expect the devil to wear while looking at the souls of the damned in hell. I slipped the idol into my pocket and strolled up town.

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“Well,” I said, “that’s the story as he told it to me; it sounds rather fantastic, I’ll admit, but personally I think there is some truth at least in it. One thing certain. I’m not going to fool with the idol—I have a very respectful fear of India’s magic, however impossible some of it may seem.

I was speaking to Tom Madison, at whose house I was spending the evening. Tom had been married about two months, and was entirely devoted to his wife, who, I might say, was as much attached