

THE MONKEY'S PAW

A Dramatic Reading

by
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Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Mr. and Mrs. White, the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess.

Mr. White looked up from the game. "Hark at the wind. I should hardly think that he'd come. Of all the beastly, slushy nights, this is the worst."

"There he is," said Herbert, as heavy footsteps came toward the door.

The old man rose with hospitable haste, and opened the door. He re-entered the room, followed by a tall, burly man.

"Sergeant-Major Morris." (introducing him)

The man shook hands, and took the proffered seat by the fire.

"Twenty-one years of it. When he went away he was a slip of a youth in the warehouse. Now look at him."

"He don't look to have taken much harm," (said Mrs. White, politely)

"I'd like to go to India myself." (said the old man)

The sergeant-major shook his head. "Better where you are."

"I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers. What was that you told me the other day about a monkey's paw, Morris?"

"Monkey's paw?" (said Mrs. White, curiously)

"Well, to look at," (fumbles in pocket) "it's just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy." (Proffers it) "But it had a spell put on it by an old fakir. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three separate men could each have three wishes from it."

"Well, did you have the three wishes granted, sir?" (said Herbert)

The soldier's face whitened. "I have." (he said, quietly)

"And has anybody else wished?" (asked the old lady)

"The first man had his three wishes. Yes. I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That's how I got the paw."

"If you've had your three wishes, it's no good to you now, Morris." (said the old man) "What do you keep it for?"

"Fancy, I suppose.--It has caused enough mischief already."

"If you could have another three wishes, would you have them?"

"I don't know.--I don't know."

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---