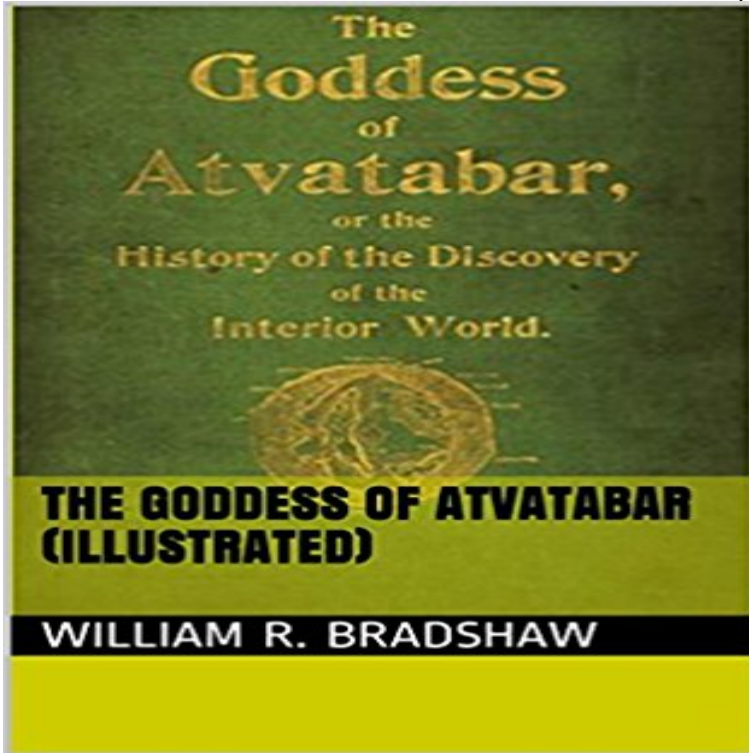


THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR (illustrated)



It is proper that some explanation be made as to the position occupied by the following story in the realm of fiction, and that a brief estimate should be made of its literary value. Literature may be roughly classified under two heads the creative and the critical. The former is characteristic of the imaginative temperament, while the latter is analytical in its nature, and does not rise above the level of the actual. Rightly pursued, these two ways of searching out truth should supplement each other. The poet finds in God the source of matter; the man of science traces matter up to God. Science is poetry inverted: the latter sees in the former confirmation of its airiest flight; it is synthetic and creative, whereas science dissects and analyzes. Obviously, the most spiritual conceptions should always maintain a basis in the world of fact, and the greatest works of literary art, while taking their stand upon the solid earth, have not feared to lift their heads to heaven. The highest art is the union of both methods, but in recent times realism in an extreme form, led by Zola and Tolstoi, and followed with willing though infirm footsteps by certain American writers, has attained a marked prominence in literature, while romantic writers have suffered a corresponding obscurity. It must be admitted that the influence of the realists is not entirely detrimental; on the contrary, they have imported into literature a nicety of observation, a heedfulness of workmanship, a mastery of technique, which have been greatly to its advantage. Nevertheless, the novel of hard facts has failed to prove its claim to infallibility. Facts in themselves are impotent to account for life. Every material fact is but the representative on the plane of sense of a corresponding truth on the spiritual plane. Spirit is the substance; fact the shadow only, and its whole claim to existence lies in its relation to spirit. Bulwer declares in one of his early productions that the Ideal

is the only true Real. In the nature of things a reaction from the depression of the realistic school must take place. Indeed, it has already set in, even at the moment of the realists apogee. A dozen years ago the author of John Inglesant, in a work of the finest art and most delicate spirituality, showed that the spell of the ideal had not lost its efficacy, and the books that he has written since then have confirmed and emphasized the impression produced by it. Meanwhile, Robert Louis Stevenson and Rider Haggard have cultivated with striking success the romantic vein of fiction, and the[10] former, at least, has acquired a mastery of technical detail which the realists themselves may envy. It is a little more than a year, too, since Rudyard Kipling startled the reading public with a series of tales of wonderful force and vividness; and whatever criticism may be applied to his work, it incontestably shows the dominance of a spiritual and romantic motive. The realists, on the other hand, have added no notable recruits to their standard, and the leaders of the movement are losing rather than gaining in popularity. The spirit of the new age seems to be with the other party, and we may expect to see them enjoy a constantly widening vogue and influence. The first practical problem which confronts the intending historian of an ideal, social, or political community is to determine the locality in which it shall be placed. It may have no geographical limitations, like Platos Republic, or Sir Philip Sidneys Arcadia. Swift, in his Gullivers Travels, appropriated the islands of the then unknown seas, and the late Mr. Percy Greg boldly steered into space and located a brilliant romance on the planet Mars. Mr. Haggard has placed the scene of his romance She in the unexplored interior of Africa. After all, if imagination be our fellow-traveller, we might well discover El Dorados within easy reach of our own townships.

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