

STELLA FREGELIUS

A TALE OF THREE DESTINIES

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BY

H. RIDER HAGGARD

*"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes, et inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus; strepitumque Acherontis avari."*

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Dedication

My dear John Berwick,

When you read her history in MS. you thought well of "Stella Fregelius" and, whilst I hesitated, urged her introduction to the world. Therefore I ask you, my severe and accomplished critic, to accept the burden of a book for which you are to some extent responsible. Whatever its fate, at least it has pleased you and therefore has not been written quite in vain.

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

*Ditchingham,
25th August, 1903.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author feels that he owes some apology to his readers for his boldness in offering to them a story which is in no sense a romance of the character that perhaps they expect from him; which has, moreover, few exciting incidents and no climax of the accustomed order, since the end of it only indicates its real beginning.

His excuse must be that, in the first instance, he wrote it purely to please himself and now publishes it in the hope that it may please some others. The problem of such a conflict, common enough mayhap, did we but know it, between a departed and a present personality, of which the battle-ground is an aching human heart and the prize its complete possession; between earthly duty and spiritual desire also; was one that had long attracted him. Finding at length a few months of leisure, he treated the difficult theme, not indeed as he would have wished to do, but as best he could.

He may explain further that when he drafted this book, now some five years ago, instruments