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## Mysterious Message And Other Historical Stories.

(H. F. SHORTIS.)

(Continued.)

### MYSTERIOUS STORY.

When the box was found, it was found to contain a folded parchment, containing writing in letters of gold and silver. The ancient text was said to be deciphered, but records that the priest in question, one of the best artists of the age, was the author of various sculptures, representing scripture subjects, on the capital front of the High Altar; and the sculptured pulpit, which was a great ornament of the church, was his chisel. The artist-curate had been, also in matters spiritual, one of the greatest men of his time. The body measured, from the tip of the head to the sole of the foot, seven feet eleven inches, Rhensish measure. The feet nearly covered by a cassock, rested on a folio volume parchment—the first leaf of which bore the title: "Chronicon Saeculi XI." To the educated or illiterate mind alike the above must convey that human agency had nothing to do with the miracle revealed above, and it proves conclusively that the circumstances may be attributed to the supernatural.

tacks of the Prussian hordes during the late war. Napoleon knew them well when he stated that a Prussian was hatched from a cannon ball.

### THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT.

It was (and still is) with undiminished life and vigor, the piety, zeal and wonderful talent of such faithful servants of God, as that of the sculptor-priest of Urbach, that the Church raised the people from the lowest depths of barbarism, passed them through the alembic of purity and charity, and placed them on the high-road of eternity. And it was the knowledge of those facts that drew from the lips of the Grand Old Man and Prime Minister of England, William Ewart Gladstone, a few years previous to his death, that beautiful and well-deserved tribute, when he stated: "She (Catholic Church) has marched for fifteen hundred years (since the days of Constantine) at the head of civilization, and has harnessed to her chariot, as the horses of a triumphal car, the chief intellectual and material forces of the world; her greatness, glory, grandeur and majesty have been almost, although not absolutely, all that in these respects the world has had to boast of. Her children are more numerous than the children of the sects combined; she is every day enlarging the boundaries of her vast empire, her altars are raised in every clime and her missionaries are to be found wherever there are men to be taught the evangel of immortality and souls to be saved. And this wondrous church, which is as old as Christianity and as universal as mankind, is to-day after its twenty centuries of age, as fresh and as vigorous and as fruitful as on the day the Pentecostal fires were showered upon the earth."

### A MARINE DEMONSTRATION.

Another case, and if it does not rank amongst the supernatural, I fail

to account for it. It is a simple and true story, and can be vouched for by many who are living to-day. I can remember the vessel clearly and distinctly, but, unfortunately, the mystery occurred so long ago that the details have escaped my memory, although I heard the old folks describe the event many a time, in fact, it was a subject of general conversation. Probably I was five years old, and I remember the name of the vessel, which was the *Eliza*, owned by Captain Patrick Strapp of Harbor Main, father of the beloved Rev. Brother Strapp of St. Bonaventures College, who has been for so many years the idolized teacher of the pupils attending that historic and venerable institution. I should say that the event occurred nearly sixty years ago. The *Eliza* was a brigantine of about 135 tons, and was employed in the prosecution of the seal and cod fisheries by her owner for many years. After she was lost, Captain Strapp purchased the brigantine *Ransom*, a splendid vessel, and I was on board of her scores of times. But it is with the *Eliza* I have to do in my story of a supernatural occurrence, and if it was not supernatural, what was it? Wireless telegraphy was not thought of for forty years or more after the event I am about to record, and even if the wireless were in full swing as it is to-day, with all its manifold blessings in saving life at sea, and other great benefits conferred by it upon humanity, it would not in any way account for the mysterious notification that Capt. Strapp received upon the voyage. I am about to describe, and a mystery it has remained to this day, and I presume will remain so till the end of time.

### THE MESSAGE ON THE SLATE.

About 1860 Capt. Strapp in the *Eliza*, left with a cargo of codfish for the West Indies, and for several days nothing of any importance occurred, the weather being fine and there was every indication of the good ship *Eliza* making a quick run to market. Suddenly a heavy gale sprung up, but the *Eliza* was a staunch and well-built vessel, used to buffeting with winds, seas and ice, and managed to come through without the loss of a sail or anything of any importance. After seeing that everything was all right on deck, Capt. Strapp went below to take an hour's well earned rest, but before doing so he went to the slate which was on the cabin table, and upon which he would write down any occurrence of interest previous to entering such in the ship's log-book. What was his surprise upon taking up the slate to discover written thereon in plain, unmistakable language: "Go immediately to latitude—longitude—a ship is sinking condition, and save crew." Capt. Strapp was astounded at what he saw on the slate, and immediately called the mate and asked him "what was the meaning of this?" The mate, a most reliable man and thorough sailor, was thunderstruck, and, of course, replied that he knew nothing whatever about it, as he had not been in the cabin for hours. The second mate could not read or write, nor could the steward. Capt. Strapp began to feel somewhat uneasy, but he rubbed the writing off the slate, and as usual with seafaring men, being busy, he forgot all about it in a few minutes. A short time after he went to the slate again and received a great shock when he discovered the same words written thereon, ordering him to hurry and rush to the assistance of the ship, giving the latitude and longitude as before. "In the name of God I'll go" said the Captain, and gave orders to alter the course of the *Eliza* and steer for the location given on the slate. After some hours sailing the *Eliza* sighted a large ship in a sinking condition, sails carried away, boats gone and crew exhausted by their terrible sufferings—all provisions spoiled by the salt water. Capt. Strapp bore down on the sinking ship, just in time, rescued the crew and conveyed them safely to the port to which the *Eliza* was bound.

### THE REALLY OCCULT.

I am sorry I cannot give the full details of the wonderful and mysterious occurrence which has been a source of argument from that day to comparatively a few years ago. I have asked Brother Strapp, but he knows only the outlines such as I do, and I have asked many old timers, but they, while they remember the event, can add nothing to what I know myself. So there stands the mystery. But Mr. Frederick Martin, the veteran chief engineer of the S.S. *Fiona* for so many years, who possesses a most retentive memory, has given me a most interesting bit of information, which, to say the least, only intensifies the mystery. Mr. Martin remembers the occurrence distinctly, and has informed me that when the mate of the abandoned ship was brought on board the *Eliza*, he gazed round in a dazed condition, and informed Capt. Strapp that as he became exhausted he dreamed that he and his comrades were rescued by the very ship *Eliza*, after he had written a message on the slate in her cabin. Capt. Strapp was astounded, and going over to the table, took up the slate and asked the mate if that was his writing? The mate was no less surprised than Capt. Strapp, and unhesitatingly replied that it was his own hand-writing, and proved it to the satisfaction of

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### Heyday of the Muskrat.

The modest muskrat has at last obtained his proper meed of appreciation. His coat, the "Hudson seal" of commerce, has become the most fashionable of furs, and costs just about treble the price that it fetched before the war.

For the latter fact there is another reason, viz., that the extraordinary cold of winter before last froze multitudes of muskrats to death, thereby reducing very largely the available supply of the animals.

The value of the muskrat to-day seems strange to many a middle-aged Canadian who trapped these little animals, about a quarter of a century ago, when he was a lad attending high school, and received from 10 to 25 cents a skin.

Some muskrats are stream-dwellers, and make their homes in burrows in the banks thereof. But mostly they live in swamps, and build for themselves houses of twigs and refuse vegetation two or three feet high. The house has a hole, for entrance and exit, beneath the surface of the water; and in winter time the occupants make their way out under the ice to look for water-lily roots, mollusks or other food.

In the winter before last, however, the ice over many marsh areas froze right down to the bottom, so that the poor rodents, unable to get food, starved to death.

A muskrat is nearly as big as a fair-sized cat. It "molts" in summer, shedding its hair, and its new

pelage is not well grown until early in the following year. Skins taken in February and March (known to the trade as "spring" pelts) are in best condition and fetch the highest price.

About seventy skins are required to make one of those long and beautiful coats that are so much admired nowadays. But the average person who buys a muskrat coat does not realize that one may be worth more than twice as much as another, even when the two are fashioned exactly alike. How far this is true may be judged by the prices paid for skins at the great annual fur auction in St. Louis last September. On that occasion 552,396 muskrat pelts were sold in wholesale lots at \$2 apiece for "fall" skins, \$3.95 for "springs," \$3.60 for "spring dark," \$3.90 for "spring, extra large," and \$5.10 for "spring extra large and dark."

### Train Movements.

A train left Spruce Brook yesterday at noon for Port aux Basques to clean up the road in that section. It is expected to have the cross country service again working inside another couple of weeks.

An express from Millertown Junction reached the city at 2 o'clock this morning.

A train with passengers to connect with the S.S. *Clyde* at Placentia, left the city at the usual hour this morning.

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