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Light up, and take a long, long draw,
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S. MILLEY.

The Fortune-Teller and the Sealer.

A TALE OF OLD ST. JOHN'S.
(By H. F. Shortts.)

In every age and every clime the people of this sub-lunar sphere are more or less tinctured with superstition, and even away back amongst the ancients, those heroes, whose deeds of arms have outlived all time—those historians, poets, etc., have transmitted their works to posterity, and whose literary skill is as much appreciated to-day as it was over two thousand years ago—those sculptors, engineers, etc., etc., whose wondrous works of art and science amaze the poor folk of the present-day, all had a weakness which, though somewhat of a different nature, possessed the same effect upon the defunct of centuries ago, as does their methods at present in vogue upon the minds of our own people. Two or three thousand years ago, with regard to superstition, there was no distinction between the rich and the poor—the consul and the soldier—the master and the slave. When we of the present day peruse the pages of Plutarch and find the greatest warriors ever the world produced having their fortunes told, by dressing the entrails of a calf, an ox or some other animal, and thereby risking the destiny of a nation upon the appearance of the interior portion of the beast. I say, when we see such immortals as the great Julius, Pompey, Pyrrhus, Gracchus, Scipio Africanus, etc., etc., doing such a thing, how can we in all conscience condemn our own poor fisherfolk and artisans who, at certain periods of the year, try their luck at a toss of the tea-cup or have the past, present and future told by fifty-two pieces of cardboard manipulated in the hands of a magician. For my own part I would certainly prefer the tea-cup or the pack to the terrible mixture stirred in the famous cauldron of the

Three Weird Sisters.

so graphically described by Shakespeare, and by the effluvia or otherwise the three "beauties" were enabled to foretell the future of the Thane of Cawdor and his ambitious better half—his wife. In olden times fortune-telling was carried out and believed in to a far greater extent than it is at present, although in some of the outports to-day may be found the tosser of the cup and the what-you-wish-and-what-you-don't-wish, holding their positions as proudly and lucratively as they did eighty years ago. In the large towns such as St. John's, Harlow, Charlottetown, and Brigus, in years gone by, the fortune-teller (generally a widow), was in all her glory, dressed in flounced silk dress and well-trimmed bonnet, not to speak of velvet hair-net or well-twisted curls. It was the duty of our magician to find out all she possibly could about the family, love, business and all other affairs of her victims. She attended church regularly and was foremost at a collection. She knew the captains of all our sealing fleet, and through her emissaries, managed to ascertain in what ships certain folks had procured a berth. In those days our sealers were rollicking, jovial fellows of the come-day go-day style, whose whole ambition was the frozen pans, almost sure of a bill of thirty or forty pounds should they manage to procure berths with the jowlers. Besides, they had nothing to do from the last of October until the last week in February, unless they took a trip to Sydney, Spain, Portugal or elsewhere. During their holidays they were always clean and comfortable, with the best woolen underclothing and gloves, manufactured from the raw by their mothers, wives, sisters or sweethearts. But this was before the era of novels and hand-organs. However, previous to departure, they would invariably patronize the fortune-teller, and strange to say, in most instances, she would tell them if they would make good bills or not. In my young days

Her Apparently Supernatural Powers would hold me in awe, and we used to give the great one a wide berth as she proceeded to prayers arrayed in her variegated silk dress, numerously flounced, and occupying the space in church of half dozen ordinary citizens. Hoop skirts were in vogue in those days I speak about. Since the increase of the rum fish trade with Brazil this mode of attire has been entirely done away with. But to come to my story. Here in St. John's about 30 years ago, one of these worthies pitched her tent, somewhere in the neighborhood of Apple Tree Well. By a system peculiarly her own, she managed to rush a great trade and consign all competitors to financial oblivion. Besides, this lassie (widow) possessed a fair share of good luck, jewellery and—tongue. Her establishment was high-class, and the select could visit certain portions of the house, play cards, drink rum, smoke, and in fact have a gala time, so long as they paid for what they had. It is said that her (widow's) husband occupied the position of scout to pick up all news and entice the innocent into her net. As may be readily understood, in those days St. John's did not possess a Court House, police force, dog tax, high licenses and all those other necessities of modern civilization that we possess to-day. Ah, no! Then, "Them," both spiritual and temporal, fell to the lot of the clergyman in charge, and seldom did he fail to make his influence felt, and with no other inducements than a well-polished black thorn or a contraction of the eyebrows. This particular "spiritualist," or whatever she was, had the

Tables Turned On Her One Day, and this is how it happened. For some years she had been reaping a rich harvest, and at last it came to the ears of the priest, Father Fitzgerald, of the old Palace (where the Star of the Sea Hall now stands). But he had no proof, and what was he to do? He disguised himself as an ordinary fisherman, with reefer, Hamburg boots, checkered mitts, etc., and proceeded to the castle to have his fortune told. Upon entering he was invited to a seat, and the "operation of the pack" commenced in the usual way. According to the "fate" of the

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cards, his reverence was to have a full measure of success at the fishery; that some person, red, black or brown, was thinking of him, but that the party he was thinking about did not admire him at all, and that they would never agree. (There was an unusual flash in his reverence's eyes, possibly the forerunner of the electric light of to-day.) There were also many other troubles (?) such as the manipulators would say to all of us, according to our sex, the appearance of our watch-guards or the number of the rings upon our fingers. His reverence seemed satisfied, and then asked that

he might be permitted to tell her the future, as he was a professional in the art. She shook her head dubiously and remarked that "it was impossible for him to do so."
"Oh, yes it is, madam," said his reverence; "and in proof I have to inform you that you are near trouble."
"Oh no, indeed; I have nothing to trouble me, and it goes to show that you know nothing about my profession."
"I say," thundered his reverence, "you are near trouble!" accompanying the statement with a piece of advice. There was a commotion in that domicile—the magician found trouble,

the professional retired, and the next day the rooms were closed, and the widow (?) left for parts unknown. Since that day to this there has never been such extreme interest manifested for fortune telling, because the forces were disorganized, fear entered the hearts of the operators, and it generally died out, until now the book is closed upon one of the old methods of swindling our hardy sealers out of their hard earned income.
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