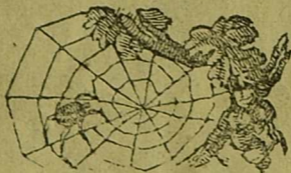


THE
FORTUNE TELLER.

BY
CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.



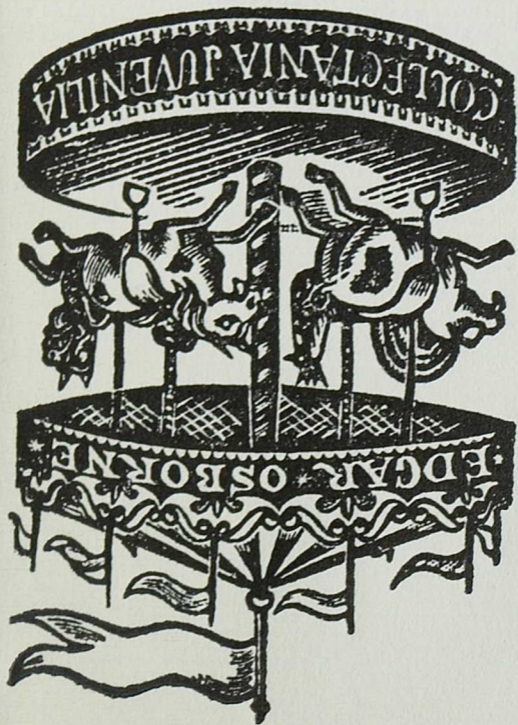
THIRD EDITION.

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AND SOLD BY J. TURNER, 22, UPPER SACKVILLE-ST.
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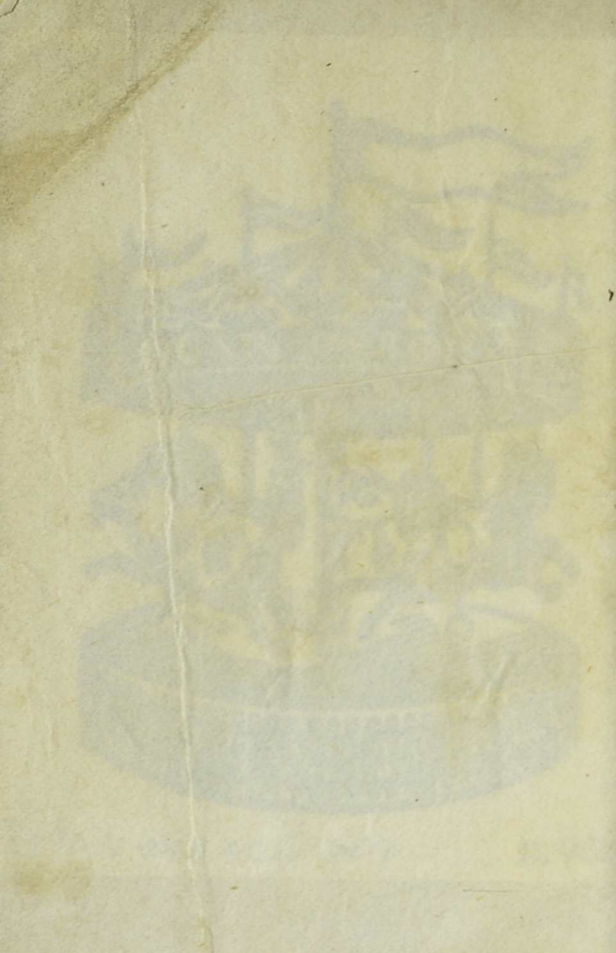
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*For little Fanny Lyne
From B. Brabon*

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GEORGE FOLDS, No. 1, St Andrew-street, Dublin.

THE FORTUNE TELLER.

The Gipsy woman* was dressed in a short jacket of dark blue cloth, the skirts of which hung down a little way over a petticoat of strange patchwork. Stuffs of all colours seemed to have been used to mend and piece out the old dirty dark green that still remained. Her hat was of black beaver, very much the worse for wear, and it was tied under her chin with a red cotton handkerchief. Fastened to her back, in a sort of bag, she carried a little child, whose bright black eyes shone out like jet from beneath its tangled hair. Its face was dirty, even more so than its mother's, and so sun-burnt that it seemed never to have known the comfort of shade.

* The Gipsies are a wandering people : they are found in various parts of England and Scotland : they are, in their countenance, character and habits, a distinct people.

Besides her baby, the Gipsey woman carried a wallet slung over one shoulder, and hanging at her side ; and a tattered apron was gathered up, and knotted into the piece of cord that served her for a belt. Altogether, there was something so remarkable in their appearance, that little Jessy, who was running before her Mamma, in the shady green lane, stopped to look with surprise at the Gipsey woman ; and then, rather frightened by the bold look of her piercing eyes, she turned back, and ran to her Mamma, taking hold of her hand, and keeping close beside her.

The Gipsey passed them, making a low curtsy to the lady, but not speaking a word ; and Jessy looked round to observe the baby, for it had laughed and crowed when it saw her.

“ I thought she was a beggar woman, Mamma,” said Jessy, “ but she did not ask for any thing. How black her eyes are, and the baby’s too !”

“ They are Gipsies, my dear,” said Mrs. Howes, “ and Gipsies do not often beg ;



but I am sorry to say that they often cheat, and steal, and do many other bad things."

"Where do they live, Mamma?"

"They are wanderers over the earth, having no settled home, Jessy. They are found in most countries, and are very nearly the same every where. It is not known exactly from whence they came; but they are generally supposed to be what their name expresses, Egyptians. It was foretold by the prophets that the mighty Egyptians

should become the basest of all people ; and that they should be scattered among all nations. We here see the threat of the Lord against them as exactly fulfilled as that against the Jews."

" O Mamma !" exclaimed Jessy, " tell me more about them. I am so sorry for the Jews, because God loved them very much once, and now He is so very angry with them. It is a terrible thing to have God angry with us, Mamma !"

" A terrible thing indeed, my love ! and you know the Bible says, ' God is angry with the wicked every day,' and all are wicked in God's sight who do not believe in His Blessed Son, Jesus Christ, and pray continually to have their sins washed away in his most precious blood."

" Do the Gipsies believe in the Lord Jesus, Mamma ?" " Oh no, my dear, they have no religion at all, even in name : they are the most ignorant and wretched people among us. Knowing nothing themselves, they cannot instruct their children ; but they bring them up in idleness and vice, to lie

and swear, steal and defraud—to impose on the charitable, and deceive the unwary. It is a great pity that some among us, who love to do good, do not take particular pains to find out and instruct those wretched outcasts of society. God would bless such a work ; for He has commanded His servants to look even among the highways and hedges for sinners, who will be accepted if they come to Him, and admitted to sit down at His table.”

Mrs. Howes and her little girl had by this time nearly reached the house, through a field which led to the back gate, and there, the first thing that they saw, was the Gipsy standing at the kitchen window, and two of the maid servants very busily talking to her. Seeing their mistress, however, they quickly ran away, and left the Gipsy to answer for herself.

She was a little confused at first, but her face soon became as bold as ever, and in a fawning tone of voice she said she was sure the good lady would not be offended at her

having begged a little stale milk for her poor child, which was very thirsty.

Mrs. Howes asked if she had got any. "No," she replied, "the maid would not give it without leave."

Mrs. Howes called a boy who was at work, and ordered him to bring a bowl of fresh milk, of which the poor little baby drank heartily; and it was then filled again for the mother.

"And now," said Mrs. Howes, "whether you spoke truth in telling me that this draught of milk was what you asked of the maids, is known to your conscience. It is also known to God, whose eyes are in every place, who sees all that you do, hears all that you say, and knows all that you think. I hope you have not spoken falsely; for He will assuredly put the lying lip to silence; and I hope you came here with no wicked intention, for He knows the things that come into your mind, every one of them, and will punish the thought of a wicked heart."

The Gipsy said she would not for the

world be a sinner. "You are one," replied the lady, "and so are all; but remember this—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and though you should be the chief of them, He both can and will save you, if you come to Him for pardon."

Mrs. Howes ordered the boy to see that the Gipsy left the place, and then went to speak to the servants, and to caution them against suffering such people to loiter near the house.

When Jessy saw her sister Caroline, and the young lady who was on a visit to them, she told all about the Gipsy, and described the poor little baby, as it was carried on its mother's back.

"'Tis the same woman," said Caroline to her friend. Her Mamma asked her what she meant, and Caroline replied, that when walking in the early part of the morning, she and Miss Wilkins had met this woman, who tried very hard to persuade them to have their fortunes told.

"And did you ask her to tell your fortune?" said Jessy.

“ No, Jessy: I knew Mamma would not approve of it, and, therefore, I refused to listen to, or to stay near her.”

“ And I was disappointed,” said Miss Wilkins, “ for I have often wished to meet a *real* Gipsey, who could tell fortunes, and this seemed to be one.”

“ Do you mean a real Gipsey, or a real fortune-teller?” asked Mrs. Howes.

“ Why, both, Ma'am.”

“ I am surprised, my dear, to hear a young lady, so well instructed as you have been, speak as if she believed a poor ignorant creature like this, capable of foretelling future events: a thing which the wisest of men would not presume to do.”

“ I do not exactly believe it, Ma'am. I wanted to find out if she could, and it might do no harm.”

“ A very great deal of harm, my dear,—a great sin as well as folly—a great injury to yourself and your fellow creatures, and an exceeding great insult against God.”

“ Let us hear all about it, if you please,

Mamma," said Jessy, rubbing her little hands, and setting herself on the sofa; for Jessy dearly loved to listen to her mother's instructions.

Miss Wilkins said, "I know that many sensible people entirely disbelieve in these things; but does not the Bible tell us of them? The witch of Endor for instance."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Howes, "and the Bible most positively forbids the holding of any communication with them. Witchcraft, as it existed in early times, was punishable with death; and the Lord's most severe displeasure was denounced against such as sought unto those who had familiar spirits: so that even if you can believe these wretched impostors in our days to possess any extraordinary power, you see it is a dreadful sin to listen to them."

"But suppose we do not at all believe it, Ma'am; and only amuse ourselves with their folly."

"Their folly, my dear, is very great sin; for it begins in a lie, and fearfully insults the

most High God, assuming either that He is not the sole and supreme Ruler of the world, or else that He cannot hide his designs and counsels from the impious worms of earth ; or that he is pleased to hold converse with, and to communicate the knowledge of His purposes to the most notoriously wicked and profane of persons—such as lie under His wrath, and blaspheme Him daily with their lips and in their lives. And this applies to all the idle methods practised by superstitious people, to find out what shall occur to them. It is terrible to jest with the foreknowledge of the omnipotent God.”

“ But, Ma’am,” said Miss Wilkins, “ I have heard very extraordinary things, proving how much these fortune-tellers know of the concerns of people whom they never saw before.”

“ Very probable,” answered Mrs. Howes, “ for without seeing them, they could learn from servants and neighbours quite enough to enable them to give a good guess at many particulars. This Gipsy might have found

out, with little trouble, from my simple maid-servants, as much as might have enabled her to astonish us all with her wonderful knowledge of past events, and to gain attention to her pretended predictions. By listening to her, and of course paying her for this information, we should at once reward a lying lip, and encourage the unhappy creature to farther deceits. If the slightest supposition that she might be speaking truth, entered our minds, we should be guilty of the sin of witchcraft. If we only amused ourselves with her ignorant pretensions to utter prophecies, we must be numbered among the 'fools' who 'make a mock at sin'; and such fools are held in abomination before God. Besides, if we who are supposed to understand our duty, set the example of listening to her for our own senseless diversion, servants and poor people will think themselves right in following it; and they will do so with superstitious belief, regarding her as one who has 'familiar spirits.' They will also be persuaded to squander their earnings in a way most ruinous to their own happiness, for

these artful people take care to foretel, in general, great riches and worldly honours to their hearers, and many a simple girl is led by them to leave the path of humble industry, and fix her hopes on something which will never come to pass; but in the expectation of which, she may fall into destruction.

“ If you had held out your hand to that Gipse woman, my dear young friend, or listened to her deceitful language, you would have made yourself answerable before God for more sin than you can easily imagine. Every poor creature around us, who should have been robbed, deceived, or puffed up with proud and mischievous conceits by her, might justly accuse you of setting the example, and charge upon you the injury sustained both here and hereafter.”

“ No one would have seen me,” observed Miss Wilkins.

“ Perhaps not; but would the woman have neglected to boast that a young person of education, and of the better class of society, had acknowledged her claims to witchcraft? She knows too well the force

of example, to let such a circumstance pass by untold. And even were it otherwise, how could you answer to God for the gross insult offered to His divine majesty and wisdom, in permitting a wretched creature like this to claim His awful attributes, and to boast of searching into those ‘secret things’ which belong unto the Lord our God, and to Him alone. Reflect, my dear, upon these solemn words, and judge whether without dreadful sin, you could lend your ear to so blasphemous a deceiver.”

“Mamma,” said Caroline, “how does it happen that these people so often discover thefts, and restore lost goods, by directing the losers where to find them?”

“I do not think that it occurs so frequently as you seem to imagine, Caroline; but greater wonders are performed every day by the Police, and by the same means—active inquiry, carried on with secrecy and perseverance. Besides, it is too often found that the supposed witch is an accomplice in the theft; or has, by terrifying the superstitious

mind of the suspected criminal, extorted a confession.

“ ‘ Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,’ my children ; but commit yourselves wholly unto Him who is willing to make all things work together for good to you ; and to bless your going-out and your coming-in from this time forth, even for evermore.”

Take thou no thought, O child of dust,
For what to-morrow's dawn may bring ;
But in the Lord, thy Saviour, trust,
And bide beneath his guardian wing.

Thy times are in his hand alone,
That hand which deals thy daily bread ;
To him the coming hour is known,
That lays thee with the silent dead.

Would'st thou, a worm of earth, explore
His counsels, hid from angel eyes ?
Indulge the impious wish no more,
Nor tempt thy God—“ God only wise.”

Enough, if through life's path to heaven,
He deign to guide thy devious way ;
Enough that grace and strength be given,
Sufficient for the passing day.

THE END.

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