

The Fortune Teller.

IT has been said, that Man, by Nature,
Is but a superstitious Creature.
If I err not, 'twas *Burke's* opinion,
And he may seem to claim dominion,
As a Philosopher and Sage,
In this illuminated age,
Which his superior mind adorn'd,
And through whose years he will be mourn'd;
Nor in what doth to Man belong,
Am I dispos'd to think him wrong,
—If we look through th' historic page,
And travel on from Age to Age,
It will to our research appear,
As the Meridian Phœbus clear
What notions strange, Men have conceiv'd
What contraries they have believ'd :



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All Fates he vow'd to him were known,
 And yet he could not tell his own.

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In ev'ry time, 'neath ev'ry sky,
We see the same Credulity.
The Pagan Augurs s'wore they knew
Why Birds or this or that way flew ;
And Oracles proclaim'd the Law
To keep the vulgar Folk in awe,
While the keen Conj'rors of the State
Assum'd to know the will of Fate.
The monkish Ages then succeed,
Govern'd by superstition's creed,
When mystic men in holy robe,
O'er-run one quarter of the globe:—
Nay, in this most enlighten'd Age,
So philosophic and so sage,
When Knowledge is so much the rage,
E'en now we see the human mind,
On many strange occasions blind :
Not when she chuses to dispense
Her pleasures to each diff'rent sense,
But, as she in her fancy varies,
Her idle whimsies and vagaries.

How many cheeks will now turn pale
At hearing of the Goblin's tale!
How many tremble with affright
At dreams that have perplex'd the night!
A Raven's croak, a Magpie's chatter,
To numbers is a serious matter;
And when abroad they think to roam,
Will check their steps and turn them home.
How many Matrons daily see
The grounds of Fate, in grounds of Tea!
If fair MARIA breaks a glass,
She's sure some ill will come to pass;
But, if the Salt, by chance she spills,
She then foresees a thousand ills:
Though, for her comfort, she grows bolder,
When she has thrown it o'er her shoulder.
—Lay knives across upon a table,
It will some appetite disable:
Check the digestion of the meat,
And spoil the pleasures of a treat.
—If a poor Dog tied up at night,
Perchance should howl, it shakes with fright

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The Nurse who sits by Sick-man's bed,
As a Knell tolling for the dead.
E'en Gipsies still pursue their trade,
And daily get their vagrant bread,
By boasting the pretence to be
Skill'd in the arts of Palmistry :
Ay, still what num'rous fools are known
To learn their Fate of *Norwood's Crone*.
—Thus in our bright, instructive day,
When Science rules with potent sway ;
When Knowledge ev'rywhere expands
And gets into so many hands ;
When Reason claims its widest reign,
The whims of Folly still remain ;
And Hope and Fear, in constant strife,
Continue to embarrass Life.
Soothsayers have been long at rest,
And Oracles are now a jest :
We think not that the Comet brings
The overthrow of Thrones and Kings :
Nor, as of old, view with despair,
The progress of the wond'rous star ;

Yet still, how often we apply
 The workings of Credulity,
 And calculate on Horoscopes,
 To calm our Fears, or wake our Hopes:
 'Tis Weakness, Folly, what you will;
 But the vain search is practis'd still;
 Or wherefore is it so well known,
 That, in each corner of the Town,
 Some artful, knavish Rascal dwells,
 Who, with grave aspect, Fortunes tells;
 While, to each List'ner he pretends
 That He and Fate have long been Friends;
 And, by his Art, he can unlock it,
 As easily as pick a pocket.
 —To satisfy, while Reason's blind,
 The whimsy of the erring mind
 That doth in some weak moment, brood,
 O'er fear of ill, or hope of good,
 'Tis known that scarce a day is past
 But some fair Maiden's Lot is cast;
 Or tender Damsel seeks to prove,
 What is to be her Fate in Love.

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Or eager Spendthrift doth apply
 To know when his old Sire will die:
 Or Miser bribes him to be told
 That he shall long enjoy his gold ;
 While he to know doth humbly crave,
 If Coin is current in the Grave.

As I've been told, the other day,
 Two Ladies did a visit pay,
 With a Bank Note and their Petitions,
 To one of these self-dubb'd Magicians,
 Possess'd of a low, crafty sense,
 Sustain'd by force of Impudence,
 And dealing out the will of Heaven
 According to the price that's given.
 For Ladies of the Higher Sort,
 Either from Folly or for Sport,
 Will visit, cloak'd up in disguise,
 These Emperics in Prophecies,
 To laugh at, or believe their lies.

In large arm'd Chair this MERLIN sate,
 Prepar'd to sell the will of Fate ;

And forming Packets from the sky,
 For any Fools who came to buy.
 The subtle Knave was well array'd
 In all the Costume of his Trade,
 With sable Gown, and Cap well furr'd,
 The potent Wand, and flowing Beard.
 Above an Alligator hung,
 Beneath a range of Orbs was strung ;
 While, on a Globe, to aid the cheat,
 Grimalkin occupied a seat ;
 For the unconscious mewling beast
 Was thought to be a Witch at least.

Hither the curious Ladies went,
 Upon their timorous errand bent ;
 Trembling their Story they relate,
 Then wait in awe to know their Fate :
 When thus the solemn Cunning Man
 His grave, mysterious speech began.
 “ To me all Fate, all Fortune’s known.”
 When it was said, in hollow tone,
 “ Vain boaster—can you tell your own?”

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'Twas DEATH who spoke:—Behind the

Chair

He did his fatal Scheme prepare.

The magic mumm'ry fell around,

And Globes and Spheres bestrew'd the ground.

—Weigh'd down by falsehoods, fraud and lies,

The howling FORTUNE-TELLER dies.

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