

The Credulous Public.

Imposed upon by the Fortune-teller.

A GREAT deal of interest has recently been aroused in the ways of modern fortune-tellers and their relations with the credulous public. The other day police proceedings in Christchurch revealed a state of things that amazed a good many hard-headed people, who did not realise how absurdly gullible and superstitious thousands still are where events pertaining to future fortunes are concerned. Recently the Rev. William Ready, of Auckland, also took occasion to comment very strongly on the attitude of mind of those people whose credulity made the bogus profession of fortune-telling a more or less profitable one. With a view to getting information at first hand a reporter paid visits to several professed clairvoyants and psychometrists in Auckland.

One person visited by the seeker after knowledge apparently had his visions come to him in somewhat dingy surroundings not at all captivating either to the ocular or to the olfactory sense. The room into which the subject was ushered bore a strong nicotine trail, which a boy scout even in the embryo stage of his development could have traced to a nearby door, through which one not particularly clairvoyant could readily imagine that other members of the household had shortly disappeared. Judging by the obvious appeal to the senses of the atmospheric environment, one would have assumed that the household was not remarkably aesthetic. The four and the five of spades upturned on the tablecloth, and showing serene pipes, seemed to indicate an interrupted game of euchre cut short in its smoky surroundings when the room was required for the purposes of the seer. The seer himself apparently rose superior to material things, so far as any rate as they concerned his control over his visions. He was no longer young, he bore no signs of a compelling or even of a moderately strong personality, and personal cleanliness in the matter of neck linen or care of the hands did not concern him. There was something pathetic in the harmless affability with which he received the visitor. To make known the object of the visit was an easy matter: it seems to be the common experience that one is met more than half-way in these things. Perhaps, too, it should not be a matter for surprise that a clairvoyant person should sense with a fair degree of accuracy something of the nature of the mission of their visitors. A mumbled explanation is readily met with "Yes, yes, you want a reading?" Will you sit down there, please?" In these days, you will understand, one does not get his fortune told. He gets what is called a "reading." This reading presumably is of information not legible to other than clairvoyant eyes. This magnetic healer and psychometrist then—the word magnetic has a fascination for them all—seated himself near his patient, and said, "Let me take one of your hands." The patient had only two hands, so he chose one and offered it to the psychometrist. Closing his eyes, the seer thought a while, then waving his hand in the direction of the waterfront, said, "You come from over there." A slight hesitation brought a more comprehensive wave and an assured ring in the statement, "You work there," which seeing that the embrace took in the greater part of the southern hemisphere was a shrewdly intelligent remark to make. Satisfied that with rare clearness of vision he had located the place where the visitor battled for his daily crust, and where he kept the pillow on which he laid his weary head at nights, the seer said: "I see you walking about a great deal. Does that convey anything to you? Does your work cause you to walk about a great deal?" The visitor didn't know that it did so very much, and the wise man sheered off on to a new tack to gather in his invisible assistants. "Will you give me something that belongs to you—something that you use frequently?" A pocket-knife was handed over, and was probed thoroughly

to the venerable brow—thickness of skull does not seem to affect the wireless messages that only clairvoyant eyes may read. And then came the question with unambiguous directness, "Are you a member of the police force?" So that was what he was getting at, was it? With the superior air of the fortunate person who is in a position to speak the simple truth, the visitor replied that he was not a policeman. "You will excuse me," said the psychic person, "but we have to be so careful." Possibly it was the same care that caused his attendant "controls" to cause him to say: "I want to say this, that I see many policemen about you. Does that convey anything to you?" It did not convey anything to the listener, except the presence of a lurking suspicion still in the psychic's mind, so he gave an assurance that he was not associated in any way with the force, but he had the honour to number several policemen among his personal friends. The visions of blue and silver thus satisfactorily allayed, the reading proceeded, each new statement being opened with: "I want to say this," and concluded with: "Does that convey anything to you?" The seer was assured that he was naturally cautious, that he was a very much safer fellow than he knew or than anybody else knew, but that there was a water journey in store for him, and after the water journey he would bring something back that would make for his uplifting and happiness. Also, that he took pleasure in ministering to others, that he had done a lot of good without getting credit for it, but that it would be all right, all right, and the time of uplifting and happiness would come very soon. He had said that before. In the course of a confidential chat, this particular seer mentioned that departed spirits came around him and helped him, that he had been developing his powers for many years, and that he had had many very successful "readings." It grieved him that people who came to him for readings sometimes gave wrong answers when he asked them questions, and it was one of his trials that a rival medium came to him and impishly matched her unseen forces against his. As a side-line to his business he carried on a very successful magnetic healing department, varying the treatment by passing electricity through the patient's body to his or through his body to the patient's. He could not read or write, and all his knowledge came to him by inspiration; and his fee was half-a-crown, thank you very much.

Then there was a lady, large, complacent, and glib-tongued. Her sanctum was not uncomfortable and bore a look of prosperity. The only suggestion of the occult about the room was an unconvincing study on the wall of an unconvincing Oriental lady. There was a crystal—a thing like a glass egg—on the small table, at either side of which sat the two actors in the "reading." "Would that be of any assistance in gaining impressions concerning you? Why, I have not used that for months; there is no occasion to use it just now." Thus was the mild suggestion that it was the crystal that held his story turned aside by the clairvoyant lady. She took the seer's hand, and began to tell him what a fine self-sacrificing fellow he was, how a fair, blue-eyed man called John was perfectly reliable, and would be found to be a good friend, and how a benevolent-looking party with grey whiskers was, alas! about to die, but was full of benevolence towards him. "Your wife has not been well," declared this lady so very confidently that the alarmed bachelor sitting before her could only blush and stammer that he had not known of it. Possibly it was the thought of this very sudden cloud of fate that loomed over him, possibly it was bewilderment at the idea of a sick wife, but the seer apparently gave the psychic person courage to go on. And she did, painting a glowing picture of the wife that never was, who was irritable sometimes, and suffered from pains in the back. Of course, he would like

her cured of those pains that made her irritable. He supposed it would be only a fair thing. Well then, why not bring the wife along to the seer's husband, who was simply wonderful at curing such things. Thus did the good lady's assisting angels prompt her to put in a good word for her husband. And so the tale went on, the two, or was it three, beautiful children; and the dark lady who had always thought so much of the seer. Ah, that meant something, did it? She was still single, and would come into the seer's life again, because though the present wife would be very well for some time, she was going to be very ill. And so on and on, every phase of wonder or amusement on the part of the seer leading the seer of visions to draw other conclusions until the story wearied, and, "Yes; gentlemen usually give me five shillings, sir."

DEATH OF LADY CAMPBELL.

THE LAST OF THE NAME.

We regret to have to announce the death of Lady Campbell, widow of the late Sir John Logan Campbell, which took place on Sunday at "Kilbride," Parnell. Deceased has been in weak health for some time, but the immediate cause of her demise was a fall she sustained about a fortnight before Sir John's death. She tripped, and the injuries she sustained were such that she had been in bed ever since, Dr. Aubin being in constant attendance. Deceased was the daughter of Sir John Cracroft Wilson, K.C.S.I., judge at Moradabad, India, and was born at Lucknow. The family subsequently came to New Zealand, and settled in Christchurch, where the name is well known, and where Lady Campbell leaves a number of relations. Her marriage to Sir John took place in 1858. They lived in Florence and Paris for a considerable time, and Lady Campbell remained in Europe after Sir John returned to New Zealand again, in order to complete the education of the family. There were four children—three daughters and a son. Two of the daughters and the son died, and the only surviving child is Mrs. H. O. Murray, who lives in England, so that there are no more representatives of the name which has been connected with Auckland ever since the birth of the city. Lady Campbell returned to Auckland in about 1883, and lived here ever since. She was highly educated, and took a keen interest in the social life of the community in an unostentatious manner.

Lady Campbell was an annuitant under the will of the late Sir John Logan Campbell, and her death releases a considerable sum which the trustees in the estate had to retain in order to pay the annuity. This fact will enable the trustees to carry into effect some of

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