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FORTUNE TELLING  
BY CARDS

# **Fortune-Telling by Cards**

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## **Fortune-Telling by Cards**

### **Introduction**

"THIS goddess Fortune frustrates, single-handed, the plans of a hundred learned men." In this saying the Latin author has given us the key to all the restless striving to search out the Unknown and the Unknowable which marks our own age, just as it has marked previous periods in history which we are apt to look back upon as being but little removed from the dark ages. Of all the methods by which men and women seek to penetrate into the mysteries of Fate and Futurity, Cartomancy is one that can claim the distinction of having swayed the human mind from prehistoric times right down to this twentieth century of ours. It may be that this book will fall into the hands of those who agree with the words of L'Estrange: "There needs no more than impudence on the one side and a superstitious credulity on the other to

the setting up of a Fortune-teller." This attitude of cynical superiority is sometimes genuine, but in many cases if we could read what lies beneath the surface we should find that it is but a cloak worn to conceal a lurking fear, an almost irritated condition of mind, born of a halfconfessed faith in the power at which it is so easy to scoff. There is a vein of superstition in every human heart, and many men who have played a great part in the world's history have not been ashamed to seek help from occultists, when the tangle of life seemed too involved for them to unravel with the ordinary means at their disposal. The pages of history are full of the penalties meted out by kings and rulers to those who were accused of working evil spells upon them. It needs but to mention the names of Wallenstein, Murat, King of Naples; Bernadotte, afterwards King of Sweden; and the merciless Robespierre, as types of a vast number over whom the fascinations of Astrology and Cartomancy, which are so closely allied, have cast their witching spell. Pope treats the cards as sentient entities:  
"The king, unseen, Lurked in her hand and mourned his captive queen."

While in another passage he says:

"Soon as she spreads her cards th' aerial guard Descend  
and sit on each important card."

In the following pages we have given information that will, we hope, afford interest and amusement to many. We have not dwelt on the gift of prophecy, or on the power of second sight claimed by apostles of the occult. We would in no case obtrude the subject of Cartomancy upon the notice of those whose susceptibilities would be wounded, or whose sense of right and wrong would be outraged by the practice, and we have ventured to speak a word of warning to the morbidly minded. We give this method of Fortune-telling for what it is worth. It may be either a pastime seasoned with a flavour of

mystery, a study in the weird ways of coincidence, or a test of skill quickened by intuition. We would have all our readers amused and interested, but none saddened or enslaved by it.

## **Chapter I How we got our Pack of Cards**

Where do they come from?—The Romany Folk—Were they made in Europe?—Suits and signs—The power of cards—Their charm and interest—Necessity for sympathy—Value of Cartomancy.

Where do They Come From? WHEN we take up an ordinary pack of cards to deal them out for a rubber, or to lay them down in the careful deliberation of Patience, or when we watch them being used as the inexplicable instruments of a something that, with a feeling akin to superstitious dread, we prefer to call coincidence, we do not often stop to think of the varied and eventful history represented by those smooth, highly-glazed playthings. The actual and authentic history of playing cards only goes back about five hundred years, and various theories have been mooted as to the source from which Europe obtained them. It is an established fact that in past ages many eastern peoples, notably those of India, China, and Chaldea, possessed cards which differed materially both in use and design from those known in the West at a later date. It is impossible to trace these prehistoric beginnings of card-lore, but there seems little doubt that the Wise Men of eastern lands regarded their cards with none of the contempt usually bestowed upon them in the West. They held them in high esteem as mediums for the partial revelation of the Unknowable, and included them as a part of their mystic lore. The Romany Folk. It is thought by many that we owe our cards to the gipsies, who are supposed to have been the offspring of a

low caste of Hindus, and who, driven from their own land, found their way, as fugitives, through Western Asia into Egypt, and from Northern Africa into Europe. It is certain that all kinds of fortune-telling, whether by Cartomancy or whatever method, are inseparably connected with that curious, fascinating, highly gifted and elusive people. They excelled in music and ail mechanical pursuits; they could learn a language, or distinguish themselves in metal work, with equal ease; but they had to live more or less on the defensive, as very children of Ishmael, and years of persecution only deepened their craftiness, sharpened their intuition, and rendered them more keen to assert their mysterious power over those who oppressed and yet inwardly feared them. These Romany folk have preserved intact the ancient lore of the East, while incredulous Europe has turned the sacred pages of divination from the book of fate into mere instruments of amusement, and a vehicle for winning or losing money. The gipsy remains a past master in the art of Cartomancy, and though we may scoff, there are very few amongst us who do not feel a sense of disquietude when brought face to face with an instance of her uncanny power. We can afford to laugh when the sun of our lives is shining brightly and all is well in mind and body, but there come dark days in the lives of all, and then some are impelled to seek the aid of these weird sons and daughters of an unknown land. By many, perhaps by the majority, this inexplicable gift has been vulgarised and debased to a mere means of extorting money from the ignorant and the credulous; but by some it is still held as a sacred faith—possibly no more superstitious than some forms of unenlightened or perverted Christianity Were They Made in Europe? Another theory separates the cards of the West entirely from those of the East, and holds that the western were originally made in Europe. This is as it may be. A writer of the latter part of the fifteenth century says that cards were first known at Viterbo in 1379, and that

they had been introduced by the Saracens, who, with the Arabs and Moors, have the credit of planting the seeds of Cartomancy in Spain. It is certain that at first cards were called by the name *naibi*; and the Hebrew and Arabic words, *Nabi*, *naba*, *nabaa*, signify "to foretell." It is also widely believed that the idea of playing games with cards was an after-thought, and that their original purpose was for the practice of divination. The earliest cards were the Tarots, of which we speak in another chapter, and it is supposed that some one had the bright idea of adding the numeral to the symbolical cards, so as to play games with them. This addition was made about the middle of the fourteenth century, and at the beginning of the fifteenth century there was a pack in Venice composed of seventy-eight cards, twenty-two symbols and fifty-six numerals; with four coat (court) cards, king, queen, chevalier, and valet, and ten point or pip cards to each suit. The fifty-six numerals were subsequently reduced to the present number, fifty-two, by the rejection of one of the picture cards. The Spaniards discourteously abolished the queens, but the French, true to their reputation, kept the dame and rejected the chevalier. The early German packs were the same as the French, but the queens again were cast out in favour of a superior knave called the Obermann. England accepted the Spanish or French pack as she found it. Suits and Signs. There have always been four suits, but there have been many changes in the signs used to mark them. The original quartette were:—Cups, supposed to be emblematical of Faith; Money, representing Charity; Swords, figuring Justice; and Clubs, typical of Fortitude. These signs are still retained in the Tarots, and in Italian and Spanish cards. Old German packs have bells, hearts, leaves, and acorns; and during the fifteenth century the French adopted spades (*pique*), hearts, clubs (*trèfle*), and diamonds. There is some difficulty in tracing how we come by the word *spade* in this connection. It has been thought to

be a corruption of the Italian word spade, meaning swords. It is not known why the French should have called this suit pique. Our suit of clubs is known by the French as trèfle, from their drawing the sign like the trefoil; and the Germans call it Eichel from its resemblance to an acorn. Our name is supposed to show Italian influence, though where the connection between the word bastoni and our sign is to be found, I am at a loss to say. The heart sign needs no explanation, and is found in French, German, and English packs. It corresponds to the Spanish and Italian sign of cups. By some curious evolution the signs of money and bells were squared into the French carreaux, our diamonds. Many of the packs used in the fourteenth century were of the most artistic and costly nature, and in some cases the court cards were drawn so as to represent historic characters.

The Power of Cards. Fierce controversies have ranged round these apparently simple pieces of glazed pasteboard. They have exercised such an irresistible fascination upon the minds of men and women of all grades and ages that others have risen in wild revolt against this power, which had no attraction for them, and which they longed to crush out of existence. There are still those amongst us who will not have a card in the house, and who, even if they do not use it, acquiesce in the term "the Devil's books," which has been applied to the pack. With their use for gambling purposes we have nothing to do here. As the instruments of Cartomancy we give them our respectful consideration. We would urge those of a morbid and unhealthy turn of mind to beware of letting this practice take too strong a hold upon them. No reasonable being need be ashamed of confessing a certain fear of the Unseen and the Unknowable; but, on the other hand, no sane person would take a pack of cards as the rule and guide of life, the final court of appeal in any matters of moment. Their Charm and Interest. There is much amusement to be derived from the study of Cartomancy,



and it is not to be denied that there are certain persons who appear to have the power of making the meaning of the cards vivid and convincing, while in the hands of others there seems neither rhyme nor reason in their manipulation of the most carefully shuffled pack. We may call things by what name we will, but strange coincidences meet us at every turn, and now and then there seems but the thinnest veil between us and the Future, which is so sedulously hidden from us. There has been a great revival of interest in all matters relating to occultism in the immediate past, and if we are to believe what we read and hear, educated men and women of to-day are going to have their fortunes told as eagerly as did the great men and famous women of France during the stormy period of the Revolution, and under the sway of the great Napoleon himself. Many curious and convincing instances of accurate foreshadowing of future events are told with regard to the famous Mademoiselle Lenormand, and other cartomancers who held undisputed sway over the minds of society at a time when credulity was supposed to have been cast off with the trammels of a worn-out creed. So when the fortune-tellers of the twentieth century take a pack of cards and proceed to read the mysteries revealed therein, they are following the example of the wise men of Chaldea, Egypt, and China, the Flowery Land of the East, to say nothing of their European predecessors.

Divination by cards, therefore, is of great antiquity and of world-wide popularity. Formerly it was combined with a knowledge of astrology; but now it is considered sufficient to follow the general rules laid down by one or two famous cartomancers, and to rely on intuition and experience for details. Necessity for Sympathy. Any one with the slightest knowledge of occultism is aware that sympathy with the inquirer or subject is essential. It is true that cold reason tells us that the cards are pieces of pasteboard and nothing

more, and that it is the height of absurdity to expect any revelation; yet, in dealing with them, human sympathy may discern something of our perplexities, and all unconsciously set our feet on the right path. Value of Cartomancy. In the following pages there are several methods of divination by cards. Any one observing the rules can learn the signification of the cards, and while a study of the combinations they resolve into in the hands of different people will always provide a fund of amusement, it may also—in all seriousness I say it—inspire hope in the place of despair, assuage sorrow, and send the inquirer away comforted; surely no insignificant result.

## **Chapter II What the Individual Cards Signify**

Two systems—The English method—The foreign—Significations of the cards—Hearts—Diamonds—Clubs—Spades—A short table—Mystic meanings.

Two Systems. THERE are two separate systems of explaining the cards individually: one which makes use of the whole pack of fifty-two cards, and another which only employs thirty-two, throwing out the plain cards under seven of each suit. The English Method. The former plan is sometimes spoken of as the English method, and in it we do not find mention of reversed cards bearing a different meaning from those which come out in the ordinary way. This is probably to be explained by the fact that the larger number in use affords sufficient shades of meaning, and the task of remembering one hundred and four significations would be too heavy for many minds. The Foreign. In the latter system, which is more distinctly traceable to foreign sources, we get the signification of each card modified, or even contradicted, by its position being upright or the reverse. The following definitions apply to the use of the

whole pack, and have been worked up from both ancient and modern sources of information. It must always be borne in mind that the reading of the cards has come down to us through many ages, has been passed on to us through countless hands and in varied tongues. Cartomancy has travelled from the East to the West, from the South to the North, and its secrets have been, for the most part, jealously preserved by oral tradition among its weird and fascinating votaries.

Significations of the Cards. The following definitions are based upon one of the oldest authorities dealing with the subject, and have been amplified by some of the more modern meanings now in vogue,

## HEARTS.

Ace.—An important card, whose meaning is affected by its environment. Among hearts it implies love, friendship, and affection; with diamonds, money and news of distant friends; with clubs, festivities, and social or domestic rejoicing; with, spades, disagreements, misunderstandings, contention, or misfortune; individually, it stands for the house.

King.—A good-hearted man, with strong affections, emotional, and given to rash judgments, possessing more zeal than discretion.

Queen.—A fair woman, loving and lovable, domesticated, prudent, and faithful.

Knave.—Not endowed with any sex. Sometimes taken as Cupid; also as the best friend of the inquirer, or as a fair person's thoughts. The cards on either side of the knave are indicative of the good or bad nature of its intentions.