THE FORTUNE TELLER

- Karel Capek

Karel Capek (1890-1938), was a famous Czech novelist, playwright and story writer. His short stories are marked by a gentle play of irony.

In this story a smart Detective Inspector called MacLeary employs his charming young wife to trap a fraudulent fortune-teller called Mrs. Myers. The story of Mrs. Myers, a woman who comes to the attention of a police inspector called Mr. MacLeary. Keen to know how she conducts her business, Mr. MacLeary’s wife calls on Mrs. Myers at home and pretends to be a single woman who desires to know her future.

In their meeting, Mrs. Myers predicts that Mrs. MacLeary (disguised as Miss Jones) will be married before the year is up and will go on a long journey. A man, it is claimed, will also try and stand in her way. Believing these predictions to be false, Mrs. MacLeary reports these findings to her husband. He has recently discovered that Mrs. Myers’ identity is also false: her surname is, in fact, Meierhofer and she comes from Lubeck in Germany.

As a result, Mrs. Myers is called to account for her business before the local magistrate, Mr. Kelly, who finds her guilty of fraud and sentences her to pay a fine of fifty pounds. The case of Mrs. Myers, it seems, is finally over.

It is in the closing paragraph of the story, however, that Capek uses irony when it transpires that Mrs. Myers’ original predictions for Mrs. MacLeary come true. Mrs. MacLeary does indeed marry a man before the year is up: he is a millionaire from Melbourne and Mrs. MacLeary moves with him to Australia, a place which requires a considerably long journey from London.

Conclusion:

In this short story the prophesy of the old lady, the fake fortune teller that she predicted a certain future for Miss Jones, or Mrs. MacLeary, comes true. Although the judge orders her to go back to Germany and also advises her not to practice anymore such fraudulent prediction as a professional fortune teller, yet the greatest irony is that the prophesy of the fake fortune teller comes true at the end and it takes the readers to some
unpredictable climax when Mrs. MacLeary is found to have been married to a rich young businessman and have moved to Australia.

Thus a freakish forecast comes true in the life of the smart Inspector.