

Palmistry.

As in an age of faith every crude imagination of things unknown, and every corrupting ceremony, steal the name of religion, so in an age of rational investigation every puerile superstition based upon imaginary correspondences and subtle relations masquerades in the character of science.

The "gipsies' palmistry" has now, forsooth, become a science, and is defined by one, in a volume found in many drawing-rooms, as "the science which enables us to divine character, past events, and destiny, from the shape, the mounds, and the lines of the hands."

Anciently palmistry was known as chiromancy. Now some of its votaries write of it by that name, others as chiromancy. Its tide has ebbed and flowed in the course of ages, but within a few years it has become a fashionable craze, two Frenchmen of some ability and social standing having written upon it—M. le Capitaine D'Arpentigny, who wrote on chiromancy, and Desbarrolles, who grafted upon it palmistry.

Chiromancy claims to find the disposition, tendencies, characters, and trades or professions of men by studying the shape and appearance of the hands, and the sensations they excite when looked upon or touched. In this system hands are divided into large-palmed, spatulate, conical, square, knotty, pointed, and mixed. Whatever may be said of hands or fingers, however, the conclusions to be drawn are modified by the size, shape, and direction of the thumb.

The palmists attach great importance to the palm, the mounds, and especially to the lines. But these may be modified by "stars," "circles," "points," "triangles," "crosses," "branches," "chain-like formations," "breaks," "parallels," "grating marks," "cross rays," "upward proceeding lines" (which have different significations according as there are one, two, or three of them), and the "tortuous lines."

After many experiments with those considered most successful, and a study of the subject in the light of anatomy, physiology, and natural coincidences, I regard palmistry as without basis in science or sense.

That no two hands have ever been absolutely similar is indisputable. When critically examined, no two leaves or flowers, though of the same species, appear exactly alike; much less would such complex organizations as human hands be found without difference.

General conclusions can therefore be drawn from the shape and size of the hands as to strength, suppleness, circulation of blood, temperament, and the size of the form to which they belong. But even here a large margin must be allowed for departures from general rules. Huge hands are sometimes the mortification of small and otherwise beautiful women, while giants are found with small feet and hands. Sometimes large feet and diminutive hands are possessed by the same persons. Walker and Darwin observed that the hands of the children of laboring men are larger from birth than those of persons whose ancestors have lived idle lives, or have been engaged in vocations not requiring the use of the hands. Though such children might become renowned for intellectuality or proficiency in art, the large hand might be transmitted to several generations.

What is justly allowed to chiromancy is true of every other part of the body, in its proportionate relation to the sum of human activity. With these rational conclu-

sions the votary of palmistry will not be content. It is mystery he seeks, and a power to read the past, present, and future, which nature has denied to man.

To the lines, mounds, stars, etc., the signification attached is wholly imaginary, and the hedging to which the professors resort is more absurd and ludicrous than that which has brought astrology into contempt.

The student of anatomy,—who finds in the hand more than fifty muscles and ligaments of great strength; especially one who dissects it, and, as he does so, tests each muscle, and traces the function of each ligament; or even one who owns an imitation hand, with wires, springs, and false skin, stuffed with cotton at the proper places, the best substitute for an anatomical examination,—will have no difficulty in explaining the existence of every line and mound.

Ages ago the Talmud affirmed that "man is born with his hands clenched." Science, with the microscope, traces the manifestation of the hand from its genesis; and in every stage it is found bent into a position necessitating the lines and developing the mounds. The muscular life of the infant, until it begins to creep, consists chiefly of contractions of the hand. Generally speaking, the flexors of the human body are much stronger than the extensors. No species of work is done by human beings with the back of the hand; all that it carries or clings to is held by contractions, and the fist is formed and maintained in the same manner, and, when in repose, the hand never hangs straight with the fingers extended. Thus the various marks of the skin are accounted for, and are perpetuated from age to age.

A further proof of these statements can be found in the fact that the marks on the hand are continually increasing or becoming less distinct, forming new combinations. A similar pseudo-science could be constructed in relation to the feet, especially if applied to that large proportion of mankind who are shoeless. Indeed, one form of ancient divination was known as pedomania.

There are generally marked differences between the left and the right hand, so that the books on chiromancy instruct the student to examine the left hand first, and to modify or correct it by what is found in the right.

The "Language of the Hand" affirms "that the qualities indicated by the lines will always be more or less present in the individual, even though they will not be evident to the ordinary observer, nor even observable at all. In that case they may be kept in subjection by self-denial." A sign of death is indicated when the three lines of life, head, and heart unite beneath the index finger; but "they may only indicate danger unless they are duplicated on the other hand." "If the line of the head divides beneath the middle finger upon a generally unlucky hand, that may predict the execution of the individual, which, unless Providence order otherwise [!], will surely take place." If the hand is otherwise generally fortunate, "we can fearlessly modify the sad prediction, and predict a broken head or a scalp wound."

The sole and sufficient cause of different lines in different persons is the difference in the shape and size of the hands, elasticity of skin, strength and use of the muscles, and external pressure. Therefore hands of different persons are not alike, nor both hands of the

same person. Mr. Francis Galton's remarks, in his work "Finger Prints," are to the point:

"The palms of the hands and the soles of the feet are covered with two totally distinct classes of marks. The most conspicuous are the creases or folds of the skin, which interest the followers of palmistry, but which are no more significant to others than the creases in old clothes; they show the lines of most frequent flexure, and nothing more.

Another statement in the same work is pertinent:

The fact of the creases of the hand being strongly marked in the newly-born child has been considered by some to testify to the archaic and therefore important character of their origin. The crumpled condition of the hand of the infant, during some months before its birth, seems to me, however, quite sufficient to account for the creases.

For lines to be an indication of anything mental, moral, or emotional, it would be necessary for them to be evolved under the influence of nerves connected with the brain centers, in which the said intellectual and moral qualities inhere; but superinduced from the periphery, they can mean nothing except more or less of different motions and use.

The palmist should never be allowed to hear of or see the persons who are testing his pretensions, for the eye, the changing lights and shades of the countenance, the voice, the general bearing, abound with indications which, though often delusive, are direct; and the conclusions of the palmist are read into instead of from the marks on the hand. In testing palmists of repute, I found differences among them, amounting to flat contradictions, concerning the indications of the same hands, and marked divergencies from the facts where anything more than general characteristics were under consideration.

Of the puerility of the evidence adduced one instance may suffice:

A young lady, a few weeks ago, hearing our name mentioned at the country house where we were staying, came up merrily, and, holding out her hand, said: "Can you tell me anything?" She was a perfect stranger to us until we sat down to luncheon. We looked at her hand, and said, "I see you were engaged to be married, but your pride interfered; you dissolved the engagement a year or two ago, and your health suffered in consequence." She at once withdrew her hand, saying, with a vivid blush, "Quite right; and I *have* suffered; no one but my sister ever knew the real cause. You have told the truth. It was pride."

This might be safely said to many intelligent, unmarried ladies; and no remark more likely to be acquiesced in than that "pride interfered" could be made.

Running over the whole field of human nature in his descriptions, the palmist can make many apparent hits; and if he appeals to vanity, the subject will be likely to think "there is more in palmistry than the skeptics believe," of which a conspicuous instance has recently been publicly displayed by the subject.

As an amusement for those who find pleasure in holding each other's hands, and talking airy nothings, or for the uses of writers of fiction, palmistry has great possibilities; but for anything beyond, respect for it indicates a mind either uninformed or unbalanced.

J. M. Buckley.

Variations in the Reports of the Gettysburg Address.¹

THE variations between the several contemporary reports of the dedicatory address delivered by President Lincoln at Gettysburg on the 19th of November, 1863, and the innumerable versions since published, are remarkable, especially because of the brevity of the address, its importance alike in subject and matter, the circumstances under which it was spoken, and the character and office of the orator. Attention has more than once been attracted to these variations, and because of the differences between the earlier reports and the version published in autographic facsimile in 1864, it has been assumed that the discrepancies are due either to the blunders of the reporters or to their attempts to improve its rhetorical composition. Somewhat careful examination of a number of versions justifies the conclusion that while reporters, telegraphers, and printers are doubtless responsible for some minor variations, they are not accountable for the rhetorical differences, because these are due to Mr. Lincoln's own revision.

All authorities agree that the address was read from manuscript; if, therefore, that could be produced, any discussion as to its original form would be needless.

In Arnold's "Lincoln and Slavery" (1866) the version of the address there given is said, in a foot-note on page 424, to have been "copied from the original," but as it differs in several particulars from the words upon which contemporary and independent reports agree, it is questionable whether it was so copied. Probably it is a transcript from the autograph copy made by Mr. Lincoln in 1864, with which it verbally agrees, except in the insertion of "and" in the clause "by the people and for the people."

Curiously enough, in his later book, "Life of Abraham Lincoln" (1885), Arnold gives another version agreeing verbally, except in a single word, with the New York "Tribune" report, November 20, 1863, but without reference to its source, or explanation why he selected that in preference to the one he had previously quoted.

In 1875 it was stated by "The Congregationalist" that the original manuscript was then in possession of Mrs. Carlos Pierce of Boston, being bound in the same volume with the manuscript of Mr. Everett's oration, which, with the address, had been presented to the New York Sanitary Fair to be disposed of. A copy of this so-called original manuscript of the address was printed by "The Congregationalist," but comparison with contemporary reports warrants the belief that the manuscript, if an autograph and not a facsimile of the 1864 revision, was an autograph of later date than the original address. [See page 605.]

In view of the doubts which have been expressed concerning the existence of the original manuscript, it would be remarkable that, if it is extant, no facsimile reproduction has been made, or that the fact of its existence has not otherwise been fully established.

In the absence of the original manuscript, we are relegated to the contemporary reports for the form of

¹ Major W. H. Lambert prepared the manuscript of which this article is a condensation as "A Plea for a Standard Version of President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address." Mr. Nicolay, on page 606, supplies the "standard version," but part of Major Lambert's paper is interesting as explaining the confusion of statements that has obtained in regard to the address.—EDITOR.