

Aristotle's Masterpiece

pp294-298 c.1684

Of Palmistry, showing the various Judgments drawn from the Hand

Being engaged in this part of the work to show what judgment may be drawn according to physiognomy, from the several parts of the body, and coming in order to speak of the hand, it has put me under the necessity of saying something about palmistry, which is judgment made of the conditions, inclinations, and fortunes of men and women, from the various lines and characters nature has imprinted in their hands, which are almost as various as the hands that have them.

The reader should remember, that one of the lines of the hand, and which indeed is reckoned the principal, is called the line of life; this line encloses the thumb, separating it from the hollow of the hand. The next to it, which is called the natural line, takes its beginning from the rising of the fore-finger, near the line of life, and reaches to the table line, and generally makes a triangle. The table line, commonly called the line of fortune, begins under the little finger, and ends under the middle finger. The girdle of Venus, which is another line so called, begins near the first-joint in the little finger, and ends between the fore-finger and the middle finger. The line of death is that which plainly appears in a counter line to that of life, and is called the sister line, ending usually as the other ends; for when the line of life is ended, death comes, and it can go no further. There are lines in the fleshy parts, as in the ball of the thumb, which is called the mount of Venus; under each of the fingers are also mounts, which are each governed by several planets; and the hollow of the hand is called the plain of Mars.

I proceed to give judgment from these several lines. In palmistry, the left hand is chiefly to be regarded, because therein the lines are most visible, and have the strictest communication with the heart and brain. In the next place, observe the line of life, and if it be fair, extended to its full length, and not broken with an intermixture of cross lines, it shows long life and health, and it is the same if a double line appears, as there sometimes does. When the stars appear in this line, it is a signification of great losses and calamities; if on it there be the figures of two **O**'s or a **Y**, it threatens the person with blindness; if it wraps itself about the table line, then does it promise wealth and honour to be attended by prudence and industry. If the line be cut and jagged at the upper end, it denotes much sickness; if this line be cut by any line coming from the mount of Venus, it declares the person to be unfortunate in love and business also, and threatens him with sudden death. A cross between the line of life and the table-line, shows the person to be very liberal and charitable, one of a noble spirit. Let us see the signification of the table-line.

The table line, when broad and of a lively colour, shows a healthful constitution, and a quiet contented mind, and of a courageous spirit: but if it has crosses towards the little finger, it threatens the party with much affliction by sickness. If the line be double, or divided into three parts at any of the extremities, it shows the person to be of a generous temper, and of a good fortune to support it; but if this line be forked at

the end, it threatens the person shall suffer by jealousies, and doubts, and loss of riches gotten by deceit. If three points such as these _ are found in it, they denote the person prudent and liberal, a lover of learning, and of a good temper; if it spreads towards the fore and middle finger and ends blunt, it denotes preferment.

Let us now see what is signified by the middle-line. This line has in it oftentimes (for there is scarce a hand in which it varies not) divers very significant characters. Many small lines between this and the table-line threaten the party with sickness, and also give him hopes of recovery. A half cross branching into this line declares the person shall have honour, riches, and good success in all his undertakings. A half moon denotes cold and watery distempers; but a sun or star upon this line, denotes prosperity and riches: this line, double in a woman, shows she will have several husbands, but no children.

The line of Venus, if it happens to be cut or divided near the fore-finger, threatens ruin to the party, and that it shall befall him by means of lascivious women and bad company. Two crosses upon this line, one being on the fore-finger and the other bending towards the little finger, shows the party to be weak, and inclined to modesty and virtue; indeed, it generally denotes modesty in women, and therefore those who desire such, usually choose them by this standard.

The liver line, if it be straight and crossed by other lines, shows the person to be of a sound judgment, and a piercing understanding: but if it be winding, crooked and bending outward, it shows deceit and flattery, and the party is not to be trusted. If it makes a triangle, or quadrangle, it shows the person to be of a noble descent, and ambitious of honour and promotion. If it happens that this line and the middle line begin near each other, it denotes a person to be weak in his judgment, if a man; but if a woman, in danger by hard labour.

The plain of Mars being in the hollow of the hand, most of the lines pass through it, which renders it very significant. This plain being hollow, and the lines being crooked and distorted, threatens the party to fall by his enemies. When the lines beginning at the wrist are long within the plain, reach to the brawn of the hand, that shows the person to be much given to quarrelling, often in broils, and of a hot and fiery spirit, by which he shall suffer much damage. If deep and large crosses be in the middle of the plain, it shows the party shall obtain honour by martial exploits; but if it be a woman, she shall have several husbands, and easy labour with her children.

The line of death is fatal, when crosses or broken lines appear in it; for they threaten the person with sickness and a short life. A clouded moon appearing therein, threatens a child-bed woman with death. A bloody spot in the line, denotes a violent death. A star like a comet, threatens ruin by war, and death by pestilence. But if a bright sun appears therein, it promises long life and prosperity.

As for the lines of the wrist, being fair they denote good fortune; but if crossed and broken, the contrary.