

Ms Digby Roll IV c.1400-1450

A Smalle Tretyse of Palmestrie

An anonymous treatise on chiromancy on a seven-foot long scroll seven inches wide, the oldest extant manuscript on chiromancy in the English language.

Transcribed by Derek Price (1953)

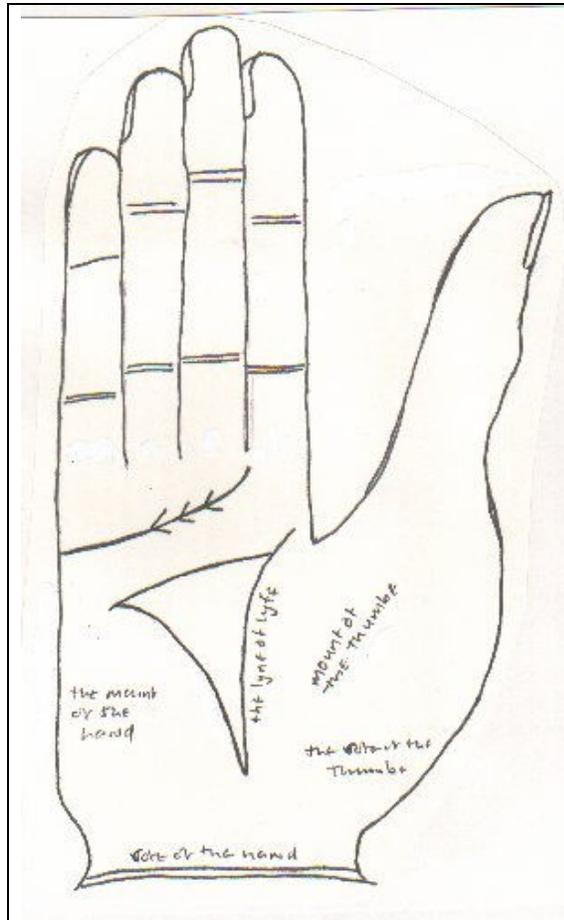
Prologue

Right noble and Reverend Lady, as poets' ditties record, the prayer of the sovereign is a violent manner of commandment, which it befits not the subject to disobey in any way. This made me to awake as from my long sleep of staidness when your deep prayer sounded in my ears. Wherein I conceived that your reverence would like me to convert my study a little space to make you a small treatise of palmistry and declare it in open speech of our mother language. And since I have long slept from such youthful occupations my understanding is the fainter, my mind is more barren, my pleasure is more unready.

But since it is not befitting for such a kind sovereign to be disobeyed by her servant, I have respectfully transformed into a small treatise a few principles of palmistry which, without occasion of evil, may be known and learned by every creature. I trust you will not nourish your ripe grown reason in tender food of child's milk by putting too much faith in this immature science. For although it demonstrates the natural tendencies of our conditions, destinies, and natural chances, occasioned by the influence of causes from above, yet these must not be trusted as irremediable necessities. Especially since man's reason in itself has liberty to follow or to refuse all ordinance of nature. And the Lord, the mighty Maker of nature, dispenses with all natural laws at His pleasure and governs every creature according to His voluntary grace.

Thus you will give a true verdict in judgement according to this science when you perceive the tokens of destinies by your rules - thus things are disposed by nature - or this will befall you by natural tendency if it be not avoided by providence of reason, or by the special privilege of the dispensation of God.

After this estimation of the aforesaid science I shall proceed, as I have learnt, to the declaration of the rules.



The Parts of the Hand

The lyne of Lyfe
 The lyne of the Table
 The lyne of the Head
 The lyne of Liver and Stomack

The Triangle - formed by the lynes of Lyfe, Head and Liver & Stomack

ye mounthe of ye lital finger
 ye mounthe of ye leeche finger
 ye mounthe of ye myd finger
 ye mounthe of ye shewer

the rote of the thumbe - the mounthe of the thumbe - the rote of the hand
 the mounthe of the hand - the vale of the hand - the syde of the hand
 the rote (root) of the fingers

If the Triangle of the hand is of equal lines, so that the lines go near to one quantity in length it tokens steadfastness in true faith, and ripe reason in man and woman. It tokens also amiability, and good fame, and by nature a perfect constitution.

The angle of the triangle which joins together the line of life and the line of the head, it ends and joins in three manners:-

First, when the line of the life and the line of the head join together in the valley of the hand, as it were against the space between the index and the mid-finger, it tokens a tendency to misfortune and wretchedness of life, sorrow of heart, and much business in gathering of possessions, and full hard to come to any thrift or to any increase of possessions.

The second, when these foresaid lines join together higher above the valley of the hand, as it were in the space against the middle of the index, it tokens subtlety of brain, ability for all manner of learning, and sharp mind and fresh of things learned and studied.

The third, when these lines are parted and dissevered above, it signifies a man that loves but himself, unwise, cruel, and envious; a back-biter, idle of words, untrue of speech, and unfaithful.

The angle that is made between the line of life and the line of the stomach and liver, if it is large, right, and well appearing, it tokens inclination to goodness in virtue, in plenty by disposition of nature.

And if this angle is sharp, and small, and little seeming, it tokens avarice, straitness of heart, and covetousness.

And if there is no angle, that is to say if the lines do not join together, it tokens untruth, multiplication of words without faith, and much promising and little fulfilling.

The angle included between the line of the head and the line of the stomach and liver, when they are right joined together, it tokens a noble constitution, health of body, and seldom sickness unless it should be from causes outside.

If there should be found crosses within the triangle, they token prosperity, and noble state, and this refers to virtue as well as to fortunate happenings in worldly furtherings.

If the line of the table is quite whole and not broken, it tokens a strong disposition of nature, and in the generation of children much virtue and natural liking.

And if it is broken or discontinued, it tokens feebleness and little power in generation of fruit.

And if this same line is so long that it reaches and passes beyond the middle of the index, it tokens cruelty and turning away from pity and mercy.

And if this line turns at all towards the mid-finger, he will have in his works much favour of fortune, and good luck will come to him without foreknowledge.

And if this same line ascends fully to the root of the index, that man or woman will seldom be without anguish and disease.

And if the top of this line turns towards the top of the line of the head, or touches it at all, that man or woman is full of cajolery, adulation, and lying. They please in open face, but they sting behind by vice of false detraction.

If there is found a line in the hill of the index, lying beside the line of life, it tokens a person to die in a strange region, far from his own nation.

If any line arises from the root of the thumb and crosses over the line of life, it tokens long journeys, great pilgrimages, and many changes of passage.

If there arises from the line of life one line or more, that passes out towards the hill of the thumb, that person is likely to suffer either death or great peril from fire.

If the hill of the index contains any cross that openly can be seen, it signifies graciousness, furthering to dignities or to honours, and principally of the staff.

If upon the hill of the mid-finger are found certain lines, crossing or besides others, it signifies poverty by imprisonment, by wrong vexations, arrestings, and other unrightful oppressions. And if they arise from the valley of the hand and reach or stretch to the first joint of the same finger, it tokens death in prison.

If the hill of the ring-finger has any line arising from the valley of the hand, it tokens open promotions, subtlety of brain and learning, and knowledge of diverse arts and sciences. And if any line crosses over it, it tokens impediment and hindrance to all these by something unforeseen happening.

If there are any lines that begin at the root of the little finger and pass the mount of the same finger towards the mount of the hand, it tokens shameless liars, thieves, liers in wait to rob or to slay.

If there are any lines that begin in the mount of the hand and touch or turn towards the line of the table, it tokens friendship of strangers. And if they are found coming from the mount of the hand towards the root of the hand, it tokens friendship of your own nation or of your own blood.

If in the side of the hand is found such a token _ it signifies deadly enemies, or that man will die or suffer mischief from a fall.

If in the hill of the hand, near the line of life and towards the root of the hand is found such a figure _ it signifies a slayer of his father or his mother, or a despoiler of holy church. And if it is in a woman it signifies a common strumpet, and ready to all uncleanness.

If in the side of the hand, between the hill of the little finger and the line of the table are found short, bright appearing lines, the number of lines signifies the number of husbands.

If the line that is between the arm and the root of the hand be straight, and extended, and whole, without disseverance or breaking, it tokens a man more mindful and more busy to his own profit and avail than to that of other men. And if it is twisted or discontinued or broken, then it signifies a man or woman more busy with other folks' errands or commodities than with their own.

If in the root of the mid-finger or of the index, or in the next joint of either of them, or in the space between the root and the joint is found any knot, or any

sort of superfluity or arising of the flesh, it signifies immeasurable toil and continual adversity in one's occupations and in one's works.

If within the hand there are many lines traversing or crossing these principal lines of the hand which have been mentioned, it tokens a person involved in many occupations, great mixing in the world in diverse manners.

And if there are found right few lines within the hand it betokens a man blunt of wit, and beastly and rude in all his manners; and the same deem in a woman.

If in the little finger, that is to say between the root thereof and the first joint, sits any crooked line, it tokens drowning in water, or peril of drowning, in youth. If the same is in the ring finger, it signifies the same between 14 and 20; if in the mid-finger, in middle age (middle age begins at 20!); if in the index, in age; if in the thumb, in the last age.

And if the line of the table is wide or long, fair stretched out, it signifies that man or woman shall bring to a good end the goals they are set; and if it is short or broken it signifies the contrary.

And if the same line is branched upwards, it signifies exaltation and advancing to honours, to riches, and to goodness in many degrees.

And if the same line bears its branches downwards, it signifies decreasing, falling from honour, and unlikeliness to all states of worthiness.

If this line of the table enters between the index and the midfinger, it tokens in a man peril of death from iron or from steel, or from some other flowing of blood. If it enters in the same manner in the woman's hand, it tokens peril from child-bearing, or death of the same: yet these destinies may sometimes be obstructed by certain breaks or crossings over of certain lines in the upper section.

If a little beside the same line, towards the side of the hand is found such a figure  that man or that woman will lose one of their eyes; and if there is found two such  that man or woman will lose both their eyes.

If the line of the head is whole and straight, not broken nor dissevered, it betokens seriousness of brain, and sober disposition.

And when it is long and stretched to the side of the hand's mount, it is token of long life, bold heart, and good bodily disposition.

If the same line of the head is so short that it does not pass the base or the valley of the hand, it tokens timidity, faint heart, covetous manners, and men of little trust.

And when it is forked in the nether part at the end, that man or woman will be of two manners of conversation; and they will live two lives, secular and regular.

And if in the lower end of this line there is a small triangle, that person desires honest fame, he is provident and thinking about his profit and honour, and often he dreads perils more than is needed for the avoidance of dishonour.

If the line of the liver and stomach is long and whole, not broken, and also if it is well coloured, it tokens continual health of the liver and stomach.

When it is discontinued or broken, or dark of colour, it tokens feebleness of stomach and ready disposition to wasting of the liver.

And when it is more red towards the line of life, it tokens headache through fault of the stomach or of the liver.

And if any line comes from beneath, crosses the line of the stomach, and passes through towards the valley of the hand, it tokens sickness near to coming.

If the table, between the line of the table and the line of the head, is large and broad in appearance, it tokens openhandedness and free heart in all a man's life.

If it is narrow in appearance, it betokens niggardliness all a man's life.

If it is in some place narrow and in some place broad, sometimes he will, in his age, be openhanded, and sometimes closefisted.

The same table, if it is broad and large, it tokens kindness and friendly manner.

If it is strait and narrow, it betokens avarice, discord, and enmity.

If the line of the life is of fresh colour, ruddy, bright and broad with competent measure, provided that it is not too broad, it signifies balanced constitution, and lustiness of person.

And if there is at the back thereof another line, lying beside, ruddy and fresh, it tokens amorousness, and that person is likely to love par amours. And the higher that the line sits to the mount of the line of the head, the more worthy person it tokens to be loved.

If the hill of the thumb is full of lines which traverse or cross over, especially upwards towards the root of the thumb, it tokens plenty of riches in youth.

If they sit a little above the root of the thumb, it signifies riches in middle age.

If the lines sit near the joint of the thumb, it signifies riches in the last age.

If there comes falling from the line of the stomach and liver, a line much crossed in the end, as a spur or as a star, it tokens advancing to a great benefice or a high estate of temporal honour.

Lines, when they are in great multitude about the triangle, and especially within it, they token sovereignty of much people or of many beasts. Few token poverty and neediness.

If a line comes from the line of the head and passes down across the side of the hill of the hand to the side of the hand, it betokens a fall from a horse in a solitary place. And if it is crossed over by another line, the destiny is destroyed.

If there is in the back of the thumb a round line, closing with both ends of the joint of the thumb, it betokens suspension and hanging.

If the fingers are long and slender, it tokens clear wits, and especially in contriving subtle things that might be wrought with one's craftsmanship.

If they are short and blunt, it tokens rudeness and folly.

And if they cannot come together by a great distance, it tokens poor lineage and wretched birth.

If they are subtle and slender and nimble and can lie just together, and especially at the back, it tokens noble birth, true begotten, and gentle blood.

If the nails are long and ruddy and narrow, it signifies noble disposition of health and of natural heat.

If they are short and pale it signifies likeliness to sickness or envy, or lack of quickness and natural heat.

If there are found upon the nails white spots, it signifies good benefits and blessings of your friends; and if there are found black spots, it signifies enmities, and cursings and maledictions.

If in the joint of the four fingers, nearest the roots of the hand, is but one line, it signifies sudden death; if there are many lines, it tokens long continuation of sickness, and great difficulty in dying.

If there appears upon the hill of the little finger such a sign  it signifies plenty of wounds and sharp hurts.

If there arises a line, obviously and openly showing, from between the hill of the little finger and the hill of the ring finger, and it enters between the same two fingers, it is the token of a great rewarding and of sudden exaltation to great degree and great state.

If there is found a broad line between the ring and the midfinger, it tokens presumption and shameless folly, and ill advised in every work.

If there is found upon the hill of the mid-finger, as it were a capital C or half circle, as it is here, it is a sign that the man or women will grow to be greatest of their lineage, either by skill, by manhood, or by grace of fortune.

If there are found upon the space between the root of the index and the first joint of the same finger two lines standing up parallel, and brightly appearing, they signify great hurts and strong wounds, with stone or with iron, in the head; and peril of death through the same. And if any other line crosses these foresaid lines, this destiny of wounds and these foresaid perils shall have no effect.

And here ends this little treatise drawn out of the science of chiromancy. Nunc finem feci, give me a bow. *Quia Merui.*

