

A Pseudo-Aristotelian Chiromany

British Museum: Ms Add 15236 c.1400

Extract from the original Latin manuscript as translated
by Thorndike and reproduced in *Speculum v40* (1965)

A large hand sometimes comes from labour as in the case of a carpenter, sometimes from nature. When it is because of large bones and muscles, its owner is strong and robust but not of a lively intellect. If it is large from fleshiness, its owner is luxurious and naturally an excessive drinker. If one has big hands and fingers sharp at their ends, he is lustful and false. If the fingers are broad, he is faithful and writes well. If a woman, she has a deep womb and much seeks a man. If man or woman has a broad table in the hand and thin fingers, such a one is good at handiwork and well disposed for playing harp or organ. Such a woman also has a wide womb in the anterior part and very narrow near the matrix. If man or woman has a small table in the hand and large fingers, he or she will die of an apostume, and she will have a wide womb near the matrix but narrow at the mouth of the womb. And such women are disposed to prostitution because of the width near the matrix. Those whose hands are neither too large nor too small are more normal.

A man with small hands is womanly and deceptive, vindictive and unstable. He may love profusely but it soon turns to hate and such a one is never to be trusted. In the case of man or woman, the hatred is as vehement as a serpent. But women naturally have small hands, unless from work. If their hands are excessively small, their wombs are narrow at both ends and they do not seek a man unless one much beloved, and women of this sort are very difficult to have intercourse with. One with small hands is weak and timid in either sex. A true experiment is that a woman with greenish hands can quickly conceive but never delivers the foetus alive. One with coarse hands is naturally luke-warm and dull. If such is a woman, *parum appetit coitum sed multum potest coire*. Such persons never agree well from lack of choler and blood.

Those without a mass of flesh between thumb and forefinger, below the thumb and in the palm, are naturally leprous; but members of religious orders do not have such bunches of flesh because of their vigils and slight use of their hands. One with thin hands is very agile and ingenious and easily angered and lustful as a sparrow. Those whose fingers do not match or come together do not agree in their words and deeds. When a line near the joint of the thumb is like a net composed of many lines and openings, its owner will never enjoy his riches.