

**THE PSYCHONOMY OF
THE HAND; OR, THE
HAND AN INDEX OF
MENTAL DEVELOPMENT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649683482

The Psychonomy of the Hand; Or, the Hand an Index of Mental Development by Richard Beamish

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Cover @ 2017

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RICHARD BEAMISH

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THE
PSYCHONOMY OF THE HAND;

OR,

THE HAND AN INDEX OF MENTAL DEVELOPMENT,

ACCORDING TO

MM. D'ARPENTIGNY AND DESBARROLLES,

With Illustrative Drawings from Living Hands.

BY

RICHARD BEAMISH, F.R.S., &c.,

Author of "The Life of Sir Marc Isambard Brunel"

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
FREDERICK PITMAN, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1865.

265. l. 4.

PRINTED BY F. PITMAN,
20, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.



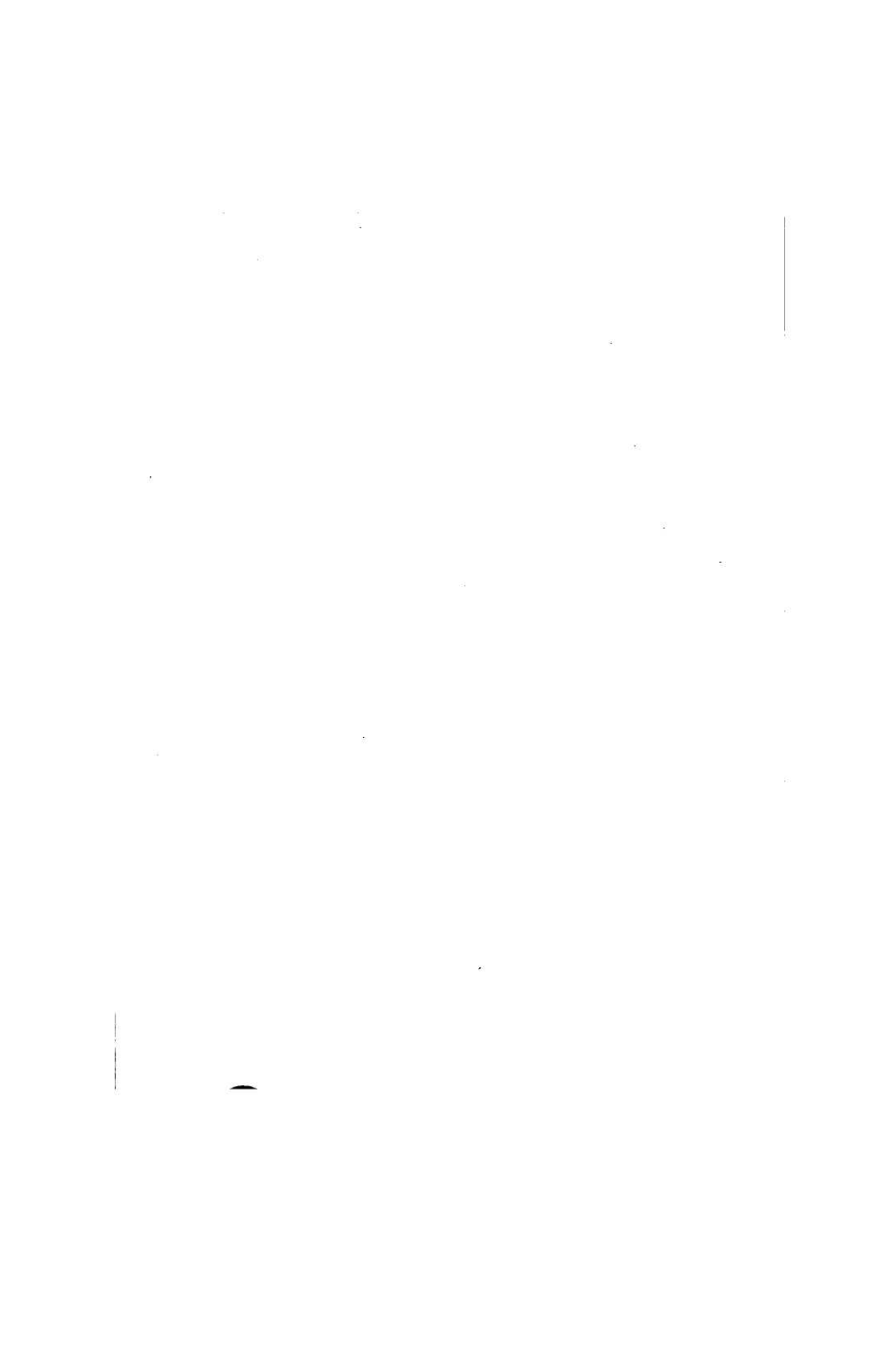
TO LEWIS DUNBAR BRODIE GORDON, ESQ.

ENCOURAGED BY THE INTEREST
WHICH YOU HAVE TAKEN IN MY CHIBOGNOMIC PURSUITS,
AND INFLUENCED BY A FRIENDSHIP WHICH HAS SUBSISTED WITHOUT INTERRUPTION
FOR UPWARDS OF THIRTY YEARS,
I VENTURE TO DEDICATE THE RESULT OF MY LABOURS IN THIS DEPARTMENT
TO YOU.

WHILE IT MAY HELP TO RECALL SOME PLEASANT HOURS
SNATCHED FROM PROFESSIONAL LABOUR,
AND DEVOTED, PERHAPS NOT UNPROFITABLY, TO PSYCHONOMIC SPECULATIONS,
IT WILL BRING TO YOU THE ASSURANCE OF THE UNABATED
AFFECTION, RESPECT, AND ESTEEM OF

The Author.

2, Suffolk Square, Cheltenham, 1864.



PREFACE.

THE position which is occupied in creation by Man, must always be a question of the highest interest to the physiologist, the ethnologist, and the anthropologist. To establish the superiority of that position, one section of palæontologists vehemently assert that certain cerebral distinctions are essential. That assertion, however, another section as vehemently deny. The result of the contention seems little calculated to advance the interests of science, or the cause of truth.⁽¹⁾

With the hope of opening up a new phase of ethnological inquiry in this country, which shall be free from anatomical perplexities, I venture to call attention to the evidence which the human Hand affords of those physical, intellectual, and moral endowments, by virtue of which Man claims superiority.

The most superficial observer must be aware of the diversity of form which the hand presents, and of a certain indefinite psychological significance which every variety suggests. Similar vague conceptions obtained with regard to the countenance, until it was given to Lavater to interpret the language of nature, and to show with what uniformity the passions imprint their particular signs upon the lineaments of the face.

What Lavater has done for physiognomy, MM. D'Arpentigny and Desbarrolles have sought to accomplish for Chiromnomy and Chiromancy.

M. D'Arpentigny has endeavoured to show that every mental organization is uniformly accompanied by a certain definite form of hand;⁽²⁾ and M. Desbarrolles, that the vital action of every organization tends to develop certain lines and marks upon the susceptible surface of the palm proportionate to the intensity of such action;⁽³⁾ thus illustrating the remarkable expression in the Book of Job, that "in the hand of all the sons of men God places marks, that all the sons of men may know their own works."⁽⁴⁾

Notwithstanding the modesty with which M. D'Arpentigny puts forth his views, as a revival only of those which had been taught by Anaxagoras (428 B.C.), and applied by

(1) See the discussion on Professor Owen's paper, read at the meeting of the British Association at Cambridge, 1862, "On the Zoological Significance of the Cerebral and Pedal Characters of Man."

(2) "La Science de la Main, ou l'art de reconnaître les tenances de l'intelligence d'après les formes de la Main." Par Le Caines D'Arpentigny. 2nd Edition.

(3) "Les Mystères de la Main révélés et expliqués." Par A. D. Desbarrolles. 5th Edition.

(4) Chaldaean Version, xxvii. chap., 7 verse.

the best artists of Greece, we have the assurance of M. Desbarrolles that they are really original; the result of many years of patient observation and careful analytical investigation.

The circumstances which led M. D'Arpentigny to direct his attention to the hand, are well calculated not only to awaken curiosity, but to invest the subject with a considerable amount of general as well as personal interest.

"While a very young man," says M. Desbarrolles, "M. D'Arpentigny resided principally in the country. In his immediate neighbourhood lived a rich and intellectual *Seigneur*, who had a strong predilection for the exact sciences, and more particularly for mechanics. Geometricians and mechanics were therefore amongst his most constant visitors and guests.

"His wife, on the contrary, was a passionate lover of the fine arts, and only received artists as her guests. As a consequence, the husband had his reception-days, and the wife hers. M. D'Arpentigny, who was neither mechanician nor artist, and who therefore ranged himself under neither banner, attended indiscriminately the *réunions* of husband and wife.

"Of his own hand, M. D'Arpentigny was somewhat vain. This vanity naturally led him to institute comparisons with other hands, often to his own advantage. He soon observed that the fingers of the arithmeticians and mechanics presented a knotty appearance at the joints, while those of the artists did not possess that form. In a word, the members of these societies seemed to him to differ quite as much from one another in the form of their hands, as they did in the constitution of their minds and in the nature of their social habits.

"The repeated confirmation of his observations very soon led him to divide men into two categories—those of the smooth, and those of the knotty fingers. Connected with the smooth finger, he observed an impressionability, caprice, spontaneity, and intuition, with a sort of momentary inspiration, which took the place of calculation, and a faculty which gave the power of judging at first sight. In this class he placed the artists.

"The knotty fingers, on the contrary, he observed to be connected with reflection and order, aptitude for numbers, and an appreciation of the exact sciences. In this category he placed mathematicians, agriculturists, architects, engineers, and navigators; all, in short, who were led to the application of acquired knowledge. I never heard," said he, "of a poet or of a mathematician formed by art; but always of a poet and mathematician endowed by nature;" confirming the truth of the aphorism—

¹ *Poeta nascitur non fit.*

And thus, having convinced himself that the hand of a poet did not resemble that of a mathematician, nor the hand of a man of action that of a man of contemplation, he proceeded with his investigation through every grade of life. All forms of hands had for him now a signification; though to determine the relation which subsisted between some of them, and the special mental organization of which they were the index, required years of study and observation."

The important conclusion at which he arrived at length was, "that it is to entertain but a feeble idea of the prevision of God—of His justice—of His power, not to believe that the instruments with which He has furnished us are adapted by the variety of their forms to the variety of our intelligence;" thus confirming the observation of Paracelsus,⁽¹⁾ that "as each plant is developed in accordance with a certain definite form, so Man is also distinguished by a special form perfectly adapted to his individual requirements: and as by the form of the plant you recognize its species, so, by the configuration of Man, do you determine his character."

"The study of the Divine impress teaches us that Nature has established special lineaments, which become the signs of the several members of the body. By the aid of these signs she reveals the deep secrets of all organization, and especially that of Man."

It was under this belief in the uniformity of Nature's laws that M. D'Arpentigny proceeded to build up his "system," to establish which cost him thirty years of careful investigation, and the exercise of strong analytical powers.

M. Desbarrolles, while he accords to M. D'Arpentigny the honour of having been the first to systematize the principles of *Chiromnomy*, lays no claim to a similar honour for himself as regards *Chiromancy*. "That science," he says, "emanated from India, and is as old as the world. Though long lost, it was recovered by an erudite savant, Eliphas Levi (Alphonse Louis Constant), the author of an admirable work on the *Kabbala* (tradition)."

"Thanks," he says, "to his indications, we have studied one by one all the works written on Chiromancy, and by the aid of comparison sought to extract the truth from the midst of numerous errors." Unfortunately, M. Desbarrolles has not confined himself to Chiromancy, or Chiromnomy, but has extended his inquiries to supposed planetary influences, to more than questionable analogies and numerical coincidences, which, however acceptable to a fanciful and speculative people, would possess little interest for an English public.

For myself, I can only claim to have followed in the steps of M. D'Arpentigny, and to

(1) *Philosophiæ Sagax.*