

The Fallacy of Palmistry

By RUPERT HUGHES

YOU will be married late in life," said the palmist, but you will never have any children.

"I was married at 22 and I have one child," said the sitter apologetically.

"Let me look again," the palmist exclaimed, hastily seizing the wrinkled scroll. "Oh, yes, I overlooked this wedding and I find two more children still to come."

Palmistry is one of the oldest of human follies. It is rather disgracefully childish than dangerous. It lacks the ghoulish horror of spiritualism. It lacks the upperclass attention of telepathy. As a form of parlor entertainment it is amusing, and a man with a clever command of language can while away an awful pause by holding somebody's hand and reciting an impromptu dissertation on character. The ingenuity of some of these fellows is amazing.

I used to watch one of them in drawing-rooms, and he found his greatest success, curiously enough, not in flattery but in graceful insult. It was a treat to see him take the hand of a hopelessly respectable old lady of an unblemished humdrum, glance at her palm, start with a shock, look at her with amazement, and refuse to read her hand before people. I said it was a treat to watch her, as she writhed with delighted horror at his aspersions on characteristics which, he told her, discretion or cowardice had kept in check, but which her hand—ah, her hand displayed so that he who read might run!

Palmistry has kept what place it has kept in civilized toleration by the fact that its character studies can hardly go entirely wrong. And palmists have taken good care to provide a refuge from every mistake. The wicked trait which one "mount" proclaims is annulled by the opposite trait proclaimed by a "star," the awful thing which this "line" threatens is canceled by the shape of a "phalange;" "grille" contradicts "triangle;" "island" conquers "cross;" spatulate finger gives the lie to conical thumb, and the nails to the knuckles.

Palmistry, then, involves nothing very tragic, because its very believers do not believe in it very much. The chief objections to it are that it is false in premise and conclusion, that it is a silly superstition allying itself to astrology and phrenology and fortune-telling, and that it is used to an extent by cheap swindlers to wheedle money from people who could find better uses for it.

When palmistry pretends to vivisect character, it is merely diverting nonsense like charades and conundrums.

When palmistry assumes to utter prophecies, it becomes impudent as well as puerile. When the palmist sets himself up as a counselor upon matters of personal conduct, he becomes a public nuisance. It is a pitiful thing for a state to allow liars and charlatans to decoy the poor and the foolish (for no one else visits them), and take hard-earned dollars for worthless advice. It is obtaining money under false pretenses, and in many enlightened communities professional palmists are under the legal ban along with thimble-riggers, clairvoyants, pick-pockets, quack doctors, and confidence operators.

Among the numerous palmists working New York is one who has the unspeakable impertinence to advertise such monstrous falsehoods as this:

"The palmist, tells you about business, lawsuits, changes and the best moves to make, how to turn failure into success and accomplish your ends. Marriages, divorce, personal disagreements, love affairs and all social matters, and how to rectify mistakes are dwelt upon with great accuracy. He has brought light to many in trouble. Ill health, accidents, dangers, enemies and all the evils that beset mankind are plainly indicated, and words of warning given. You make no mistake in consulting him.

"The hand is the mirror reflecting the many events the future holds, and palmistry shows how to change your relation to Fate, and thus choose the best course. Thousands who are successful in every walk of life are being guided by it to-day."

These are typical springes for woodcocks, and many palmists are even less immodest in their claims than this man. All the professionals guarantee not only to sound the caverns of character, but also to read "the vast backward and abysm" of your past and the vast forward and abysm of your future.

The libraries contain black-letter tomes in the French, English, German, Latin of centuries ago giving true and infallible signs which make any palm as legible as this morning's newspaper.

I should like to quote some of the



dogmas of the elder palmistry, contrast the tangled and contradictory doctrine of to-day, and then conclude by quoting what real scientists say of the evolution and meaning of the curious features of the hand—that wonderful tool which Aristotle called "the instrument of instruments."

It may help the laity if I first outline the major states and territories of the hand-map as palmists see it. If you open your palm as widely as possible, you will see certain protuberances and certain lines. The protuberances, according to evolutionists, are remnants of the pads of our ancient quadrupedal ancestors. By palmists they are called "mounts," and they are not only named after the Greek gods of astrology, but are still supposed to indicate the qualities typified by those gods and the influences exhaled by their namesake planets.

There is something really sublime in this process. An ancient race gradually invented a group of gods. These gods were fortunate enough to have a number of marvelous poets, dramatists, and sculptors as press agents. They became very popular and their fame remained long after their power had vanished. Some of these gods got their names arbitrarily affixed to certain large but remote chunks of whirling slag called planets. Then the stupendous idiosyncrasy of astrology was evolved, and by jugglery of dates and penitents and things, it was—and still is—asserted that these chunks of slag affect the soul-structure, the complexity and destiny of the individual born "under" them. If Saturn was in "the ascendancy" when you were born, you will be sour and saturnine; if Jupiter, you will be jovial, etc. One might as well say that a person born in Washington square could not lie, and a person born in Lincoln square would be assassinated.

Now lengthen the ears of these jackastrolgers one yard more and you reach the palmists. Certain lumps of muscle in what used to be a foot but is now a hand are arbitrarily given the arbitrary names of these planets and then assigned the qualities of these imaginary gods by whose titles these planets were dubbed as they were identified. And so we reach the uttermost tip of the top icicle on the peak of idiocy and are told that since somebody called the large thumb-muscle "the mount of Venus," therefore the thickness of your thumb-muscle is the exact gauge of the quantity you possess of those qualities for which Venus was a proverb.

There is nothing in all palmistry so incredible as the credulity of the believers in it.

So we have a "mount of Jupiter," which measures the Jupiterian qualities. So we have lines which indicate intellect, sentiment, wantonness, and even destiny. And we have little subsidiary quirks of pattern called stars, crosses, grilles, and the like, which mean other things.

But to outline the hand: At the base of the thumb is the mount of Venus; at the base of the first finger is the mount of Jupiter; second finger, Saturn; third, Apollo (who had no planet); little finger, Mercury. Underneath Mercury is the mount of Mars; and underneath this at the base of the hand is the mount of the moon. The hollow of the palm is the plain of Mars.

The large wrinkle made by the thumb turned in is the life-line, on whose clarity and length depend longevity and health. This line can be charted off for dates by beginning at the top and dividing it into nearly equal arcs for periods of five or ten years. The fate-line which runs up the middle of the hand can be charted off for dates by beginning at the top and dividing it into nearly equal arcs for periods of five or ten years. The fate-line, which runs up the middle of the hand—if it does—can also be charted in five-year periods, beginning at the base. If the fingers are folded inward they form in most palms two wrinkles. The upper is the heart-line and it shows "the satisfied or unsatisfied state of the affections."

The lower crease is the head-line; it indicates "the inclination of the nature."

Other lines are the lines of Apollo, of marriage, of travel, of the liver or health, and of intuition. Then there is the ring or girdle of Venus, a curved line sometimes found running between the first and fourth fingers. This we are told "has been the subject of great disagreement among various authors." According to one, it gives "energy" to either good or bad occupations.

This is a very bald outline of the nearly infinite material of palmistry.

C. Vanlair, in the Revue de Belgique published a series of articles, "La Main Psychologique," in which he states that in hands still young there are hardly more than two kinds of lines. Age gradually develops others more fine, short, superficial. Then finally appear the lines of senility, which are nothing but the wrinkles of the hand.

He quotes Fere's recent observation of the gradual development in a pianist of those little curved folds embracing the base of the fingers which chiromancers designate as "the rings of Venus." The wrinkles in question were marked little by little as a result of the very assiduous exercises meant to perfect the individual play of the fingers.

He notes that the superior monkeys, the gibbon and the orang, have three folds across the palm; the chimpanzee, more akin to us, has two. Sometimes criminals, idiots, and degenerates have only one transverse fold, while normal human palms carry two.

As for prophecy by palmistry Vanlair exclaims: "Are there not already in the most simple hypotheses relative to the slow evolution of inanimate things, enough unknown terms? Has the science of nature predicted with a complete enough certitude the infinite transformations of the medium which surrounds us that one should dare to broach that imbecile audacity, the problem of the future of a human creature? Can one forget that if there is one mystery more insoluble than all others, it is surely that of the innumerable contingencies presiding over our destinies?"

Prof. Stirling, professor of physiology at Victoria university, England, stated in the course of a lecture at the royal institution:

"Palmistry is an absolute absurdity; the whole thing is beneath contempt. Look at your palms, and you will find certain classical lines. These lines—the so-called lines of life, heart and head, and the girdle of Venus and the bracelets of life around your wrists—what do you suppose they really are? They are nothing more nor less than creases or folds produced by the action of the muscles. The line of heart, for instance, is the flexure of the four fingers. The line of life is the result of the action of the thumb. All these lines that have been given astronomical names by palmists are characteristic flexures. You will find the same lines on the palm of the Barbary ape. Humanity is daily gulled through its extraordinary ignorance of the elementary facts of physiology."

Prof. Stirling placed finger prints in a very different category. "The print of the thumb alone," he said, "is sufficient to identify a person for all time." But this is because of its physical, not its psychical individuality.

There is, in short, no scientist of any standing whatsoever who gives palmistry any rating whatsoever. By the testimony of its own adepts it is in a state of hopeless contradiction and dispute. Its character-analysis is false, its prophecies do not come true.

The hand is a marvelous mechanism, and it has slowly evolved from the foot of the padded type. Its sensitiveness and dexterity have coincided with intellectual progress, but it is no primer of psychology, no tablet of mental and spiritual mysteries. Its lines and bulges have no more scientific significance than the wrinkles in an old coat-sleeve.

LAYING FOUNDATION FOR PROFITABLE SHEEP FLOCK

Greatest of Care Should Be Exercised in the Selection of the Ewe as Well as the Sire—Time and Patience Also Necessary.

(BY W. R. GILBERT, CANADIAN EXPERIMENT STATION.)

In laying the foundation of the flock the ewes should be selected as uniform in character and quality as possible.

The first few years should be devoted to improving the ewe flock. This is more easily achieved and far less costly than ram breeding, inasmuch as sires suitable for getting good ewes never command such high figures as those likely to beget high-class rams.

In the selection of sires I argue in favor of choosing robust rams. In no case let the fashion lead the breeder to forget that the ultimate object in breeding sheep is to produce mutton and wool at a minimum of cost.

Some rely little on pedigree, others much on form and symmetry, but the

care of large flocks can be carried out without trouble.

Extra feeding at about tupping time results in a larger crop of lambs at the subsequent lambing.

As to the date of mating, it varies considerably, Dorsets going to the ram in June, while many of the breeds are not mated until October or November. For show purposes ewes are generally mated three weeks earlier.

In the treatment of in-lamb ewes in early autumn sound old pasture or second year's seeds provide all that is required, and as winter approaches a few roots—preferably white turnips or cabbage—may be given daily, with a little hay.

A full supply of roots is not recommended. Some months prior to lamb-



Excellent Type of Dorset Ram.

power of a carefully bred sheep to stamp a flock must be insisted on.

The selection of sires during the first few years is not a difficult matter, but in after years it is very troublesome.

Should a direct blood cross be sought or a slight line outcross, I am inclined to the latter view.

Breeders should be in no hurry to dispose of rams in service, as sometimes lambs of little promise develop into good sheep.

When mating ewes, flushing—i. e., placing them on fresh pasture or folding on rape, mustard, kale, etc.—is considered a good practice.

It usually results in an early and prolific crop of lambs.

After service breeders recommend that the ewes should be removed to poor pasture. In practice it has been found to prevent turning, and in the

ing a little trough food is sound economy, as the lambs are healthier and the ewes stronger for the treatment.

It is of importance that no crushing shall take place at the trough. The fold should be arranged to open to the south. To be perfect the enclosure should have a sparred, raised floor, in sections, made of creosoted wood, so as to be easily removed and cleaned.

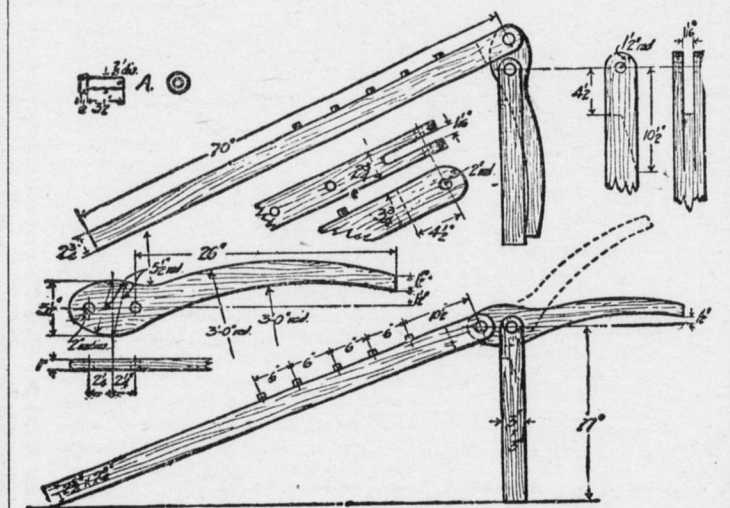
Feeding Sheep.

The best feeds are clover hay, a mixture of oats, wheat bran, linseed meal and roots.

The sheep barn must be dry and well ventilated. Foul odors and too much heat bring on pneumonia.

All straw, stalks, etc., used for litter in the sheep barn should be run through a cutter to increase the power of absorption.

CONSTRUCTING A WAGON JACK



For oiling wagon wheels or taking them off some kind of lifting arrangement is resorted to. For simplicity of construction and effectiveness the jack herewith described is unique, writes I. G. Bayley in Scientific American. The whole, including the pegs or pins A, is made of oak, the best tough white oak being recommended.

The beam is made from 3x4 inch timber, planed down to the dimensions given. An eye or slot is cut out at the wide end, 1 1/16 inches wide by 4 1/2 inches deep. This end is rounded off to a radius of 2 inches. Five pegs, one inch in diameter by two inches in length, are driven into the upper side. The holes are one inch deep and should allow the pegs to have a driving fit.

The upright is 27 inches high to the center of the fulcrum, made from 3x3 inch stuff. The end is rounded off to a radius of 1 1/2 inches and a slotted hole is cut in, as indicated in the detail view.

The lever is cut from one-inch board, six inches wide by about 33 or 34 inches in length. It should be laid out accurately to the dimensions given in the larger scale view. When correctly made and the slot in the upright cut likewise, the two holes

for the pegs A will be in a vertical line, when the lever is pressed down, as shown in the upper general view. The pegs A should have a loose fit and be furnished with small wooden pegs or nails to keep them in place, when the parts are assembled.

To operate the jack the lever is raised, as shown in dotted lines in the lower general sketch, and the beam slipped in place under the axle of the wagon, which should rest between one of the small pegs in the upper face. Bearing on the lever, it is pressed down into its lowest position, as shown in the upper sketch, raising the wagon wheel from the ground and securing it in that position indefinitely, without the least chance of its slipping back.

Seeding Peas.

Peas should be seeded early for the best results, although good crops are often secured from seeding as late as the first week in June. The crop may be harvested economically by cutting the peas with a mower equipped with a pea lifting attachment. The crop must be thoroughly cured in small covered bunches before it is stored.

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Manager—That drinking song went very badly tonight.
Stage Director—I know. The tenor had been drinking.

Queer Attribute of Salmon.

Only about 20 per cent. of salmon spawn before they return up the river from the sea, and those that do return after spawning are coarse, and, when cut up, white in the flesh; in fact, are known as bull trout, for so-called "bull trout" are not a different kind of fish, but are plainly salmon which have spawned.

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