

The SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE SECTION

A Magazine for your Reading Table
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS' PAGE

THERE used to be a law in England—and, for aught I know, it has never been repealed—by which all persons claiming to have skill in the science of physiognomy were deemed rogues and vagabonds, and were to be punished by whippings and imprisonment. In effect this law denounced as preposterous the ancient and instinctive belief of mankind in the possibility of reading a man's character from his form and features, and of divining his future to a certain extent from the expression of his face. Such a belief, the learned Know-it-alls of the period affirmed, was both absurd and superstitious. And to this dogmatic affirmation many Know-it-alls of today still echo a pious Amen.

Yet the fact is that with the progress of modern scientific research, especially in the related fields of physiology and psychology, it is steadily becoming more and more certain that form and feature are distinctly helpful as an index to character, and that in some degree coming events do "cast their shadows before" in the lines of facial expression. To be sure, the re-establishment of the old science of physiognomy on a thoroughly sound basis is still largely a matter of the future; modern physiologists and psychologists have as yet made merely a beginning in this respect. But the beginning they have made is so suggestive and important that it is even now being turned to practical account in many ways.

It may be emphatically asserted that every organ of the human face, properly studied and interpreted, is capable of yielding valuable indications with regard to the temperament, character, strength and defects of the individual. Most of all is this true of the eye. Long extolled by poets and philosophers as the mirror of the soul, the eye is today conceded by all who have studied it from a strictly scientific standpoint, to afford, in its shape, position, muscular reactions, and general condition, an almost incredible wealth of information. Even such a seemingly trivial matter as its color has been found of considerable importance as an aid in character reading.

The Eyes of Geniuses

FOR example, some years ago a writer raised the question, "Why do novelists usually give their favorite characters gray or blue eyes?" The answer to this question involves the discovery that most writers of note have themselves been gray or blue-eyed people. Emerson, Hawthorne, Lowell, Carlyle, Milton, Swift, Dickens, Scott, George Eliot, Landor, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Rossetti—all of these, to mention only a few from the long list, have had blue or gray eyes. And in numerous instances their eyes have also possessed an uncommonly clear and penetrating quality.



POWER AND WEAKNESS WRITTEN IN THE EYES

By H. Addington Bruce

Of Hawthorne's eyes, Bayard Taylor used to say that they were "the only eyes I ever knew to flash fire;" and Hawthorne's wife once wrote to a friend, "I never dared gaze at him, even I, unless his lids were down." Describing Carlyle on the lecture platform, Leigh Hunt said, "There he stood, rugged of feature; brow abrupt like a low cliff craggy over eyes deep-set, large, piercing, between blue and gray, full of rolling fire." Of Rossetti we are told that his eyes were "gray-blue, clear, and piercing," and characterized by "that penetrating gaze so noticeable in Emerson."

But more than this, and a fact to be borne well in mind, is the interesting circumstance that not only famous writers but men of great intellectual power in all walks of life have had, in an overwhelming majority of cases, gray or blue eyes. Napoleon's eyes are described as having been gray and "full of determination and resolve." Napoleon's conqueror, Wellington, the Iron Duke, likewise had "penetrating gray eyes." So had Oliver Cromwell, whose eyes "looked out inscrutably." Gray was also the color of George Washington's eyes and of Thomas Jefferson's. Alexander Hamilton's were a deep blue. Ulysses S. Grant's dark gray eyes have been pronounced "the most expressive part of his features." Abraham Lincoln's eyes were blue.

Of course there are exceptions to this as to every rule. Grant's illustrious rival, Robert E. Lee, had "hazel brown" eyes; the eyes of Gladstone, the Great Commoner, were "agate colored," approaching black; and Daniel Webster's eyes, which "flamed under his superb brow even in old age," were unmistakably black. But the fact remains that for every man of high intellectual power having brown or black eyes it is easy to name nine with eyes of blue or gray.

A Word to Parents

ON the other hand, if blue, gray, or grayish-blue eyes seem to go with extraordinary mental ability, it has been observed that as a rule brown-eyed and black-eyed people are possessed of pronounced emotional traits, being ardent, impulsive, affectionate, passionate.

We have here, it seems to me, a hint of first-class importance to educators and parents. For the facts just stated suggest that, in the upbringing of a blue or gray-eyed child, care should be taken to appeal with special force to the emotional side of the child's being so that he shall not grow up to be an intellectually superior but perhaps cold, heartless and selfish man. And, in the case of the brown or black-eyed child, the effort should primarily be to develop the reasoning power and power of the will, so that in later life impulse and passion will be less likely to govern the conduct.

H. Addington Bruce



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