

In secret, everybody goes upon the principle that a man \_is\_ what he \_looks\_; but the difficulty lies in its application. The ability to apply it is partly innate and partly acquired by experience; but no one understands it thoroughly, for even the most experienced may make a mistake. Still, it is not the face that deceives, whatever Figaro may say, but it is we who are deceived in reading what is not there. The deciphering of the face is certainly a great and difficult art. Its principles can never be learnt \_in abstracto\_. Its first condition is that the man must be looked at from a \_purely objective\_ point of view; which is not so easy to do. As soon as, for instance, there is the slightest sign of dislike, or affection, or fear, or hope, or even the thought of the impression which we ourselves are making on him--in short, as soon as anything of a subjective nature is present, the hieroglyphics become confused and falsified. The sound of a language is only heard by one who does not understand it, because in thinking of the significance one is not conscious of the sign itself; and similarly the physiognomy of a man is only seen by one to whom it is still strange--that is to say, by one who has not become accustomed to his face through seeing him often or talking to him. Accordingly it is, strictly speaking, the first glance that gives one a purely objective impression of a face, and makes it possible for one to decipher it. A smell only affects us when we first perceive it, and it is the first glass of wine which gives us its real taste; in the same way, it is only when we see a face for the first time that it makes a full impression upon us. Therefore one should carefully attend to the first impression; one should make a note of it, nay, write it down if the man is of

personal importance--that is, if one can trust one's own sense of physiognomy. Subsequent acquaintance and intercourse will erase that impression, but it will be verified one day in the future.