

**CHARACTER ANALYSIS BY
THE OBSERVATIONAL
METHOD, LESSONS X AND
XI - EXPRESSION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649370627

Character Analysis by the Observational Method, Lessons X and XI - Expression by Katherine M. H. Blackford

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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Character Analysis

BY THE
OBSERVATIONAL METHOD



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Lessons X and XI—EXPRESSION



FIFTH EDITION



New York

INDEPENDENT CORPORATION

1920

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New York.

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LESSON TEN

EXPRESSION—POSTURE AND GESTURE

PART ONE

There is a pretty ancient Japanese story of a husband who made a long journey on foot to a distant city. Seeing there a mirror for the first time, he purchased it and took it home to his wife, who was a very beautiful woman. Upon looking into the mirror, she exclaimed: "What a beautiful picture you have brought me!" She was amazed and awed when it was explained to her that the beautiful picture was but her own reflection.

The good woman stood in awe of the mysterious thing that revealed her to herself. Only upon unusual occasions did she permit herself the privilege of gazing into it. At other times it was carefully secreted from prying eyes.

After a few years she became ill and was told that she must go away on a long journey. Calling to her bedside her young daughter, who greatly resembled her, she gave the girl a package containing the mirror.

"I am leaving with you a wonderful magic glass. Cherish it and care for it tenderly. Look into it every day and there you will see my face. When you have done wrong, my face will be sad and my eyes will look reproachfully into yours. But when you have been thinking good and happy thoughts, when you have been kind to your father and to

others, when you have been industrious and careful and gentle, my face will be happy and I will smile at you. You have always loved to have mother smile at you. So you will live a true and useful life and keep the face that looks at you from this glass always young, always beautiful, always happy."

The child was for a time almost inconsolable because her mother had gone away, but when she looked in the glass the vision of her mother's face—as she thought it—so young and so sad would cause her to smile that her mother might be happy. And she was always rewarded by seeing the clouds chased away and the sunshine breaking through.

As the years passed everyone marveled at the increasing beauty of the girl. No one could account for it. As she grew in loveliness of face she also grew in beauty of character. Then one day her father chanced to discover the secret when he found her gazing, as she thought, upon the face of her mother with an intense desire to grow more like her.

The Value of Beauty.—Mirrors have come into general use in modern times, but there are yet unguessed possibilities in the mirror for the purposes of self-analysis and self-development. The world itself is a mirror, as Madeline Bridges has sung, in which we see reflected our own image. In a special sense every face into which we look reflects our own. Smiles are reflected with smiles; frowns with frowns.

It is not only romantically but scientifically true that by suggestion we grow like that which we admire and love. Hawthorne has told us this in his tale of classic beauty, "The Great Stone Face."

Even yet the civilizing and uplifting force of beauty is little understood. In the highest sense of

the word, beauty constitutes true value in and of itself. That which is beautiful never loses its charm, never loses its power to uplift, to inspire, and to give happiness.

To do away with ugliness in a city would mean, to a large extent, to do away with disease, pauperism, vice, and crime. It is not a mere accident that the parts of our great cities which breed these things are hideous.

In human beings the truly beautiful face is the outward appearance of a beautiful character. Color, form, size, structure, texture, consistency, and proportion, however perfect they may be, cannot give beauty to face and figure. True beauty, while dependent to a certain extent upon these for its materials, has its essence—as it were, its soul—in expression.

Definition of Expression.—*Expression is the visible muscular action and organic reaction of the body in response to invisible thought and feeling.*

The crude, vague movements of the lowest one-celled organism in search of its food are the expression of a desire.

This is the very beginning of the evolution of expression.

As organisms become more complex and their various parts more highly specialized in their functions, their feelings are greater in number and more intense in character. Therefore the expressions of feeling are more numerous, more intense, and more finely shaded.

Broad and Strict Meanings of Word Expression.
—In the widest sense of the word, every muscular action and every organic reaction in response to

either conscious or subconscious nervous energy comes under the head of expression. Thus every movement made by man or any other animal for the purpose of securing, preparing, digesting, and assimilating food, the movements attending respiration, circulation and reproduction all belong in the realm of expression.

In another and an important sense, expression refers only to muscular and organic reactions which either voluntarily or involuntarily accompany emotions and have no other known purpose than that of expression. In this special sense, expression includes smiles, frowns, grimaces, gestures, blushing, paling, posture, etc.

Causes of Expression.—Treating of expression in this sense, Mantegazza says:

“The expression of emotion is one of those centrifugal energies which arise from those great transformers of force which we call nerve centers. A given quantity of movement from without in the form of light, of heat, of sound, is transformed into emotion or thought which, taking a centrifugal direction, gives place to muscular movements. These movements may be cries, articulate words, or gestures. Generally the energy of expression is only a part of the transformed force, often even a very small part.”¹

Paraphrasing this statement, *all that comes into the mind either through the senses or by meditation, and thus stimulates thought and arouses emotion, produces a force in the nerve centers part of which is transformed into the muscular and organic movements of expression.*

¹ “Physiognomy and Expression,” page 79.