

MOST IMPORTANT TALENT

James Fitzjames Stephen

The one talent which is worth all other talents put together in all human affairs is the talent of judging right upon imperfect materials, the talent, if you please, of guessing right. It is talent *which no rules will ever teach us and which even experience does not always give*. It often coexists with a good deal of slowness and dullness and with a very slight power of expression. All that can be said about it is, that to see things as they are, without exaggeration or passion, is essential to it; but how can we see things as they are? Simply by opening our eyes and looking with whatever power we might have. All really important matters are decided, not by a process of argument worked out from adequate premises to a necessary conclusion, but by a wise choice between several possible views.

EMPHASIS NOT IN ORIGINAL