

COMPOSITE PICTURES.

THE traveller who in his journeys happens to come into contact with a people different in appearance from those with whom he has before been associated or acquainted, is struck with the similarity of all members of the race, and he writes home a vivid description of the general features of the inhabitants. To him all Japanese, all Germans, or all Italians are alike, appearing to be of the same color and facial expression, each one a typical representative of the race. "The reason of this is that, by short contacts with many individuals, he receives upon his retina, and has recorded upon his memory, a composite picture emphasizing only what is common to the race, and omitting the individualities." The same fact will be observed on a more limited scale by the likeness of members of the same family being apparent to a stranger but unnoticed by an intimate friend. The stranger at first observes the characteristics common, and neglects the differences. Most of us know the inability of man to discriminate between members of the *genus infans*, all babies being exactly alike; and the consummate art of discrimination common to all women, all babies being unlike, especially each one's own. Familiarity reveals the differences and distinctions which are unobserved by men.

The discrimination and the perception of similarity in all these cases, and in many others that can easily be recalled, are due to the principle above quoted. When pictures or images of objects are presented for the first time to us in quick succession, those characteristics which are common to all will be most strikingly impressed upon the mind, and the composite picture thus formed will be one combining all the common characteristics of the group, while peculiar characteristics and individual specialties will be but lightly impressed and be hidden by the prominent features.

At first sight the Greek alphabet presents a mass of letters all alike, all crooked; but familiarity reveals the differences, and the crooked signs soon become as distinctive as the English