

# GODDESSES AND EMPRESSES; COIFFURE AND CHARACTER.

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WERE the dear dead women whose names have come down to us so different from our living selves? Often as I walk through a picture or sculpture gallery I try to realise them to myself; to imagine them breathing, vital, face to face. Their lips are sealed with eternal silence. How I long to hear it broken! What think they of their descendants? Are we really as "new" as our enemies say? Would Helen, Cleopatra, Lucretia, Mary Stuart, Vittoria Colonna, Christina of Sweden recognise us as spiritually akin to them, and tell us that we are more like than unlike our foremothers?

We are probably better educated than some of them, and live in a generation more favourable to individual development than others, but are we different *au fond*? I think not. The difference lies chiefly in the fashions! Alas that those women who made and marred history cannot voice what they did and felt and thought, bidding us judge in how far the verdict of their contemporaries was true. Their spells lie with them in the dust, or they might tell by what witchery they ensnared the hearts of men. They were not all beautiful, but they were all beloved, and is not true love the best thing life has to offer?

Wishes however are vain. One can but look and speculate, forming conclusions wise or unwise, erroneous or correct according to our degree of insight, and our power of reading faces.

I passed one day through the galleries of the British Museum and studied the faces of the Roman empresses, trying to see how much of nineteenth or twentieth century humanity I could discern in them. Once more I murmured at my powerlessness to read those faces aright.

Suddenly I bethought me of clever Miss Annie Oppenheim the physiognomist. Why should we not make the round together, examining not only empresses but goddesses, nymphs and muses? I might frivolously confine myself to externals—their attitudes, their robes, their style of hair-dressing. She

should diagnose their character or lack of it.

No sooner said than done. One dull morning we made our way to the Museum, left reverence at the door, and walked to the end of the Greek gallery, pausing before an archaic statue of Diana. Poor Diana! stuck on a pedestal within the foggy boundaries of Bloomsbury, to be gazed upon blankly by excursionists, and criticised by transatlantic tourists. How long it was since men had worshipped at her shrine. The thunders that at Ephesus would have stricken the profane; the power that for a glance had changed Actæon to a stag—where were they?

We braved them, and Diana never heeded. A cold, proud, sweet goddess she looked, despite the quaint, stiff folds wherein the sculptor's lack of skill enveloped her. The face was beautiful. Imperious, serene and noble in expression, with

hair waved full above the ears and banded by a chaplet, she still looked worthy of divine honour.

"What do you think that face betokens?" I asked. "Purity," said Miss Oppenheim. "Notice the upper lip. It lies close, fits in to the teeth as it were, and this is always indicative of chastity. Sensuality is expressed by an upper lip curling out from the teeth. See that head of Mercury close by. It is fine, but note the upper lip. That shows an animal nature."

Obediently I looked at Mercury's lip. It gave to the face a yearning, breathless



DIANA ARTEMIS.

expression, a something that the Germans call *sehnsuchtsvoll*. Then we came back to Diana.

"What else?" I asked.

"The lower lip, full at its angles, shows kindness and sympathy. The brow is peculiar, with a large organ of form at the inner corner of the eye. She would catch and aim well. Constructiveness is also shown. The long throat betokens love of exercise and fresh air. All long-necked animals love air and freedom. The ears show energy by setting out slightly from the head."



DIANA.  
(First Cent. B.C.)

"You consider then that the sculptor has really made a head to correspond with the character mythology assigns to Diana?"

"Yes, remarkable knowledge of anatomical physiognomy is shown."

On a bracket near by was an archaic bust of the same goddess, but in this she looked older, and had a gleam of humour about the lips. Her hair was amazing. It had no visible parting, but was crimped into queer laboured little waves, and looped above the ears in five small plaits. Evidently the divinities took time over their toilet. Diana wore a coronet that bore five ornaments, like Tudor roses, and on each side of her face fell in front a piece of hair like a strap divided into three, and producing an effect like the Sphinx's head-dress.

"Vanity," I commented, "apparently existed before the nineteenth century," and stopped by a third Diana, whom Miss Oppenheim passed over as the bust did not correspond with her idea. I was interested however to note a novelty—or should one not rather say an "antiquity"?—in hair dressing. The front locks were taken up and tied in a large Alsatian bow on top of the head. What women call the "back hair" was short and caught into a bunch behind, so that it stood out like a shaving brush.

A water-nymph on a bracket had dressed her *cheveux* somewhat as Mrs. Patrick Campbell wore hers in 'Mrs. Tanqueray.' Ancient and modern touched. It framed the face and fell low on the neck, but in front was drawn more forward.

Next we were attracted by a helmeted

Minerva. The Goddess of Wisdom showed her characteristic by the simplicity of her style. Her hair was beautiful and wavy, but quite plainly dressed. She was uncommonly good-looking, if a little stern.

"What does that face show?" I asked.

"Intellect," said Miss Oppenheim. "Note the length from ear to eye. Then there is great will power shown in that jaw. When the jaw comes outside the neck—see what I mean?—when the neck has the effect of being relatively slender and lying well under the jaw, courage, resolution and force of character are indicated. When, on the contrary, the neck is as wide as the jaw and starts at right angles from it, weakness, pliability and want of determination may be looked for."

I hurried over Minerva, for a bust of Venus came next, and I was naturally anxious to hear if her physiognomical traits bore out the light reputation that mythology has given her. The first glance showed me that Venus at any rate was anxious to save appearances. She had actually copied Diana's mode of hair-dressing, tied her front hair in a demure and stately bow knot on top of her head and gathered her abundant locks into a low twist behind. Venus evidently had not the courage of her opinions, or could it be that it was she who really set the fashion, and that Diana, with the perverse desire to sail near the wind—in appearance at least—shown by so many women of blameless reputation, followed the lead of the pleasure-loving goddess?

Many of our most admired modes at the present day are set by ladies fair but frail, and perhaps even in Olympia matters were not very different. Still I had thought better of Diana.



DIANA.

As neither of the immortals deigned to enlighten me I did as the world does, expressed hope for the best, but believed the worst.

"Now for Venus," said I to Miss Oppenheim,

"She has a sensual mouth," remarked the physiognomist severely. That was to be expected.

"Very bad?" I asked. Venus was evidently going to be shown up.

"No," said Miss Oppenheim disappointingly. "Simply denoting tendencies. There are many people who have vicious inclinations and don't give way to them, and there are others that have no inclinations in particular. As a matter of fact good people are bad people who never wilfully do evil. I wouldn't give a farthing for those who have no capacity for being bad if they like. That is not a bad face."

"Come here," said I suddenly, drawing her into a little square vestibule where, opposite a copy of the Discobulus, stood in a niche an exquisite full-length statue of Aphrodite. "Look at this Venus. It is my ideal of beautiful womanhood, the embodiment of maternity and sweetness."

"The face is emblematical of all that is womanly," was Miss Oppenheim's verdict. "The mouth is more refined than in the bust we have just looked at. Great love of children is indicated. There is softness in the small chin. The jaw does not come outside the throat, thus showing a lack of will."

There was a divine simplicity in face, figure and attitude. The hair was brought softly back and turned up at the nape in a small twist. What struck me with all these grand antique masterpieces was that none of the women's heads showed enormous masses of hair. Hair, thick if you will, wavy, and growing beautifully above broad low brows,

but not remarkably long or abundant. If the young lady from the suburbs who still imagines that a big chignon is fashionable, possessed in reality the amount of hair that pads and frizzing enable her to affect, she would have a far more abundant supply



VENUS.

than those who have passed in all ages as models of feminine beauty. A great mass of hair, as a matter of fact, is a disadvantage to a woman and can seldom or never be arranged to look really well.

Beyond Venus was a bust, the head of a

Muse. "What have you to say about her?" I queried.

"No reasoning faculties; much imagination and ideality; wonderful intuition," was the reply. One does not imagine a Muse to be that sort of person. To my eyes this particular Muse seemed a bright, alert, modern-looking young woman, with a small mouth, round chin and rather narrow forehead. Her hair was divided a little way down the centre, then taken back into a veritable "bun." How stale the "bun" is!



A ROMAN EMPRESS.

Juno, in the next gallery, showed, as might be expected, "great firmness." That sounded disagreeable somehow. People often do talk of a woman's being "firm" and "strong-minded," as if it were nice to be irresolute and weak-minded. It is only when one has had some little experience of what weak-minded, irresolute women can be that one doubts the charm of these gentle qualities. Juno perhaps was a trifle too determined, but there were excuses for her.

"Her jaw comes beyond her throat," remarked Miss Oppenheim. I had heard before from a schoolboy that Juno's jaw was her great point and made her unpopular in Olympia, but did not mention this.

"What else?" I asked.

"A sense of humour"—saving grace in woman or goddess. "Sarcasm in these downward curves." Poor Juno! Of course Jupiter didn't like *that*. "Love of the beautiful shown in her broad chin."

On the whole I rather liked Juno. She had character, and was perhaps a bit of a spitfire, but never namby-pamby. She wore a diadem and her hair falling loosely behind on her neck, then turned up and twisted.

Beside her was another Venus, less dignified and beautiful than the other, this time preparing for the bath. Her hair was in the popular Olympian style, bow knot on top. It was evident the fashion was hers. Yet again I was bewildered: Diana close by wore the very same coiffure!

After all the statues of the goddesses

were but indications of the sculptor's fancy. The Roman empresses proved more entertaining, for their busts were probably portraits.

We stopped short before the first, distinguished by no name. She was a smooth-



DOMITIA.

cheeked, round faced, matronly personage with a shrewd and rather humorous mouth. Quite the most striking thing about her was her coiffure, that threw all the simple goddesses quite in the shade. It consisted of

seventeen small vertical barrel curls, set in a semicircle from ear to ear. Behind these came two lateral rows of short fat curls, twelve in each. The rest of her hair, golden or otherwise,

Was 'angin' down 'er back,

as the roystering wayfarers sing on Saturday nights. This nice empress, hair and all, was dug up in the grounds of the Villa Casali at Rome.

"What was her character?" I asked Miss Oppenheim, as if her imperial majesty was a maid-servant. How she would have resented the question had she been capable of uttering a protest. Fortunately the reply was not exactly unfavourable. "Pure mouth; much determination; a fine brain; pleasure-loving eyes. The thinness of the bridge of the nose shows love of spending money. Her small, round chin betrays desire for affection. She was a sybarite and had not much will power where her passions were concerned."

The next empress in the row was Domitia Longina, wife of Domitian, a prim person with an air of great precision, and wearing what seemed at first sight a bath-sponge on her head by way of fringe. Even to my eyes, less skilled in noting shades of character than Miss Oppenheim's, there was a distinct suggestion of temper about the corners of her mouth. I felt that now I quite understood why Domitian went out and persecuted Christians. The bath-sponge fringe was very marvellous, and not unlike some of the modern horrors in hair dressing that misguided women wear under the delusion that they are making themselves look fashionable and fascinating.

Quite modern were the sleek coils at the back, so smooth that one saw vast trouble must have been taken to make the bath-sponge so uncompromisingly cellular. There was something a little mocking in the face.

"She possessed marvellous independence," was Miss Oppenheim's verdict, "self-will and determination. That long upper lip signifies the power of endurance. The tip of the nose shows assertion, the wide bridge acquisitiveness, the prominent eyes lack of perception." (Dear, dear! poor Domitian! He was evidently himself a martyr.) "When the eyes are set level with the forehead," went on Miss Oppenheim, "their possessor does not see far into things. He or she notices only whatever it is impossible to escape. Deep set eyes show penetration."

"Unpleasant person as a wife," was my comment. "But here is Sabina, Julia Sabina, the wife of Hadrian. Tell me what you think of her." I had read "Der Kaiser," by George Ebers, and did not expect to hear much good. Sabina had the most wonderful thing in hair we had come to yet. Its arrangement must have been a task of almost superhuman difficulty. I felt that if mine were once done up after that fashion I should never take it down. In front was a three-tiered head-dress, whether a tiara or an elaborate structure of false hair I could not determine. A little curl over each ear seemed to suggest hair, but then, how did she ever work it into that shape?

The extreme front looked like a Grecian plait laid flat, but the next row bore a pattern of squares and triangles that puzzled me, unacquainted with the toilet of Roman empresses. Behind was a third row with a rolled edge. The back hair was carefully crimped with an iron. Nature never made those level sharp lines, or perhaps indeed the sculptor was at fault. I doubt it however, for Sabina looked like a lady that would have naturally straight hair that waved "with deeficulty." At the back was a muffin-shaped coil of plaits. Sabina looked



JULIA SABINA.

a shrew. "Here," thought I, "is a person of rigid, of uncompromising principles, and very very easily shocked. I know the kind. They are not uncommon in our own day and country. Dear souls, what terrible mischief they make!"

Miss Oppenheim's verdict was as follows:—"Inquisitive, determined—her throat is small



ANNIA FAUSTINA (THE YOUNGER).

and the jaw comes outside it—precise, contesting, energetic. She liked to take the lead. Firmness and fidelity are shown by her chin. She was resentful but straightforward and constructive."

The next empress, Faustina the elder, wife of Antoninus Pius, I gazed on in astonishment. She seemed to be the very type of the British matron, narrow forehead, neat hair, pursed lips, a high nose, and a sense of her own dignity, eminently respectable appearance, hair divided down the centre, brought up to the top of the head and done in a figure eight coil behind, just as it was worn a few years ago. Good gracious! Surely I had met her in the flesh!

Miss Oppenheim said she had small mental capacity, the cheeks and jaw being wider than the brain; great economy; acquisitiveness shown by the nose, calculation and accuracy by the eyebrows. She was a woman who would look after the candle ends. All this chimed in with my own idea of her, but Miss Oppenheim went on to give the lady credit for qualities which I did not imagine she possessed. "She was tactful," she declared, "judging by her deep-set eyes, and had a peaceful face. Her small nostrils show a great dislike for strife." Well, a physiognomist ought to know.

Farther on was a pretty, plump little woman, with a somewhat bird-like and perky air. She was absolutely of to-day in looks and style of hair dressing. Her neat rippling Madonna bands were brought over her ears and knotted low behind. She poised her head high and looked as if she could hold her own against anyone. The bust was of Annia Faustina the younger, the notorious wife of Marcus Aurelius. However I didn't let Miss Oppenheim know, for I wanted an unbiased opinion first.

"H'm! No tact; wonderful self-assertion; fond of talking, as shown by the fulness under her eyes; selfish, always wanting to be amused. The width of her nose at the tip shows lack of reserve. Pure mouth." (I gasped.) "That she was very pleasure-loving is shown by the depth of the eyebrows over the eye."

"Then on the whole you don't think she could have been very bad?"

"No, not very. Frivolous perhaps."

"But," said I in low, awe-stricken accents, "she was a—a—a scorch!"

"Well," said Miss Oppenheim, "she may have been anything you like, but I can only go by the indications given by the bust. The sculptor may be in fault. Perhaps it is a bad likeness. But if she had the sort of face here represented she was the kind of woman I say."

Beside Faustina was the bust of Claudia Olympias, a noble Roman lady who lived in the time of Nero. Claudia looked as if she were good—very good, but painfully stupid. She was undeniably plain. Her head was slightly turned away, and she had a far-off look in her eyes as if she objected to find herself in such close proximity to Faustina, and was consequently a little embarrassed, while Faustina, bold as brass,



CLAUDIA OLYMPIAS.

did not care a jot. No use pretending not to see her. One might imagine it rejoiced her that Claudia should feel uncomfortable, and she seemed as if she could make

scathing remarks on the provincial elaboration of her neighbours' coiffure.

The virtuous widow, whose excellence has been celebrated by her freedman Epithymetus, had twenty-four circular objects, with a little hole in each—presumably flat curls—round her forehead, though I decline definitely to class them. They might have been metal, or a removable head-dress. Two other rows, latera! these, towered behind, each having in the middle flat graduated curls like the keystone of an arch. The back however was most marvellous of all, being crowned apparently by a circular air-cushion, over which the hair was drawn, and covered by an elaborately patterned network. It might however have been composed



CRISPINA.

of endless small plaits supported by a frame. The centre anyhow was hollow, in true air-cushion style.

"She has a sensual mouth," said Miss Oppenheim unkindly. "She loved physical rather than mental pleasures." Oh Claudia! I should not have thought it. "Excessive sympathy, amounting almost to weakness, is shown by the slightly hanging under lip. She had musical capacity, and though not intellectual was not lacking in brain. She was neither quick nor bright, but had a marvellous memory, and little or no penetration." Perhaps that was why she allowed Epithymetus to carve her bust, and turn her out looking a dowdy person with no figure to speak of. If she really was like her effigy the sculptor showed her justice without mercy.

Lucilla, wife of Verus, a small-featured baby-faced personage looking ridiculously young for a Roman Empress, wore her hair waved, divided, drawn loosely back and rolled round behind.

Miss Oppenheim did not bestow much attention on her, saying she appeared like a girl of twelve, with a keen sense of the ridiculous and a love of good living. We accordingly passed on to a beautiful and majestic woman, Crispina, wife of Commodus. She reminded me

somehow of portraits of the Empress Eugénie at the height of her splendour and beauty.

"That is a very powerful head," said Miss Oppenheim. "The nose shows great refinement. She had remarkable reasoning powers, but a rather weak chin. The lips are well defined. She has a sad expression, and indeed the face lacks mirth. That is the head of a woman who thought and criticised, but she had little power of expression. She would always feel more than she could say. That often gives a beautiful expression, telling of depth of character.

Crispina's hair was wonderful. She, with Claudia Sabina and the unnamed empress, bore off the honours of the gallery. Her locks were divided in front and waved. A curious rippled band of hair made a frame for her face and was brought low behind the ears, narrowing till it disappeared under an enormous chignon with three divisions. It did not spoil her however; another instance that a beauty may wear anything and look well in it.

Julia Mammæa set a new style, followed with slight variations by all the succeeding empresses. This consisted in wearing the hair rather plain, waved, with or without a coronet, brought low on the neck so as to make two distinct loops under the ears, loops that might be seen from the front, framing the neck on each side; the ends



OTACILLA SEVERA.



AN IONIC FEMALE.

were turned into a small flat circle of coils or plaits.

Julia was a woman of Oriental, one might say Jewish, type, voluptuous in expression. Miss Oppenheim saw in her face indications of a love of the beautiful and of truth. Sabina Tranquillina, wife of Gordianus Pius, had a mouth that showed great firmness, independence and activity. "All these women," went on Miss Oppenheim, "were above the average in intellect."

Otacilla Severa, wife of Philip, struck me as looking stupid, conceited and determined, a little body who thought a great deal of herself. She too wore the loop, but the ends of her hair were plaited into a broad plait turned up and secured on the top of her head. "That advanced lower lip shows a criminal tendency," was Miss Oppenheim's comment.

Finally we came to Herennia Etruscilla, the most intelligent, alert-looking woman we had yet seen. Her expression was brilliant. She looked witty, sarcastic, and companion-

able, but Miss Oppenheim said she showed a certain lack of scruple. "That is a business-like head," she remarked, "but the nose is somewhat coarse. The low wide brow shows width of intellect and of ideas, the eyebrows indicate a pretty talent for diplomacy. She was intriguing and fond of travel, a shrewd woman and daring. Hers is the head of a pioneer."

Like so many others she wore her hair divided down the centre and caught into a knot behind under a pointed diadem. The face was singularly vivid and attractive, in marked contrast with that of a pretty but stupid and broken-nosed Ionic female figure close by, with two locks of hair curled and hanging down like a spaniel's ears on each side of her face. "She," said Miss Oppenheim, "was imaginative and romantic." Poor dear! Romance does not accord with a broken nose!

And now will those who are tired of our tame nineteenth century coiffures please study the illustrations and adopt whichever suits them.

