

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS FORTY-FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 30, 1881,

WITH AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY,
1880—1881.

* ALSO

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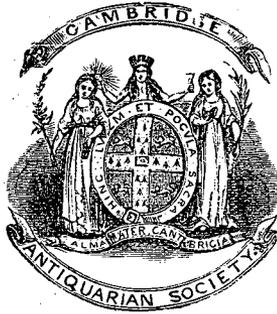
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College.

[March 14, 1881.]

PLINY remarks, in his pithy way, '*Pariunt desideria non traditos vultus, sicut in Homero evenit*¹': 'Our longings give birth to fancy-portraits where no real ones are preserved, as is the case with regard to Homer's.' Not to trouble ourselves about the problem whether there ever was a living Homer at all, we may safely assert that he lived long before portrait-painting was known. According to Pliny² it was Pemonios³, brother of Pheidias, who inaugurated the style by introducing into his picture of the Battle of Marathon the actual likenesses of Miltiades, Kallimachos and Kynaigeiros on the side of the Greeks, and of Datis and Artaphernes on that of the Persians: another brother, Kolotes, did the same for statuary, and heads the long catalogue of artists who devoted themselves to this particular branch of the art. And yet it must be owned that the type of Homer's features was very early established by some high authority, and received with unanimous consent; for we see it reproduced without the least variation from the best times of Roman sculpture—perhaps even earlier—down to its latest degradation in the Contorniate medals of the Lower Em-

¹ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxv. cap. 2.

² *Ibid.* xxxv. cap. 34.

³ Some editors conjecture *Panainos*.

pire, for which the head of Homer forms a popular obverse. The extant busts in marble, which the industrious Visconti has published in his '*Iconographie Grecque*,' are no doubt Roman copies from some original of established reputation; they are the offspring of the fashion of decorating libraries with authors' likenesses, an easy method of gaining the reputation of a connoisseur:

nam perfectissimus horum est,
Si quis Aristotelem similem vel Pittacon emit,
Et jubet archetypos pluteum servare Cleanthis.

JUVENAL, *Sat.* II. 5—7.

The prototype, being a Grecian work, was necessarily in bronze, the exclusive material of the *statuarius*; marble being appropriated to architectural decorations.

It is not impossible that this original was to be found in the celebrated bronze figure so copiously lauded by the Byzantine, Christodorus, in his Description of the *antique* statues decorating the Gymnasium of Zeuxippus at Constantinople, which he addressed to the emperor Anastasius; where it stands fifty-fifth in the list. They were eighty-six in all, the spoils of ancient temples and gymnasia. They were equally divided between ideal and portrait figures. All perished in the great fire raised during the "Nika" sedition in the 5th year of Justinian (532 A.D.).

"The bronze that bears the mighty *Homer's* form,
With soul replete, with living spirit warm,
(Voice only wanting) human skill surpassed,
For sure some god that life-like statue cast:
No earthly artist with conception bold
From earthly furnace filled that wondrous mould.
But Pallas' self, with her own hand divine
Modelled that image of her human shrine,
For she with Phoebus, throned in *Homer's* brain,
Co-partners there, rolled forth the sounding strain.
And there, a mortal equal to a god,
Homer divine, our sacred father stood.
Aged his look, but age had added grace,
And lent a sweetness to his reverend face:

A friendly air with modesty combines ;
 And majesty from every feature shines.
 His neck with age was bowed, but o'er it hung
 His clustering locks in massy tresses flung ;
 Wound drooping past his ears, in rounded rows,
 The spreading beard in soft luxuriance flows,
 Not pointed ; to his face, as it descends
 Down his bare breast, an added charm it lends :
 On his bald forehead Virtue sits enthroned ;
 His jutting brows the sculptor's forethought owned :
 Though to his eyes denied Sol's cheering beam,
 Far other than the blind's his features seem.
 And beauteous still the orbs, though sightless, roll,
 Type of the inner day that lights the soul.
 The slightly sunken cheeks, a furrowed page,
 Bespeak the progress of advancing age :
 But Majesty, deep stamped on every line,
 Dwells with the Graces in one common shrine,
 The Bee Pierian, hovering round his lips,
 Their honey-dropping treasure ever sips.
 With both hands crossed, as in his life, he's seen
 Bent forward on his trusty staff to lean.
 With right ear turned Apollo's voice to hear,
 Or else the whispers of his Muses dear ;
 Buried in thought, with pinions unconfined
 Through boundless space high soars the poet-mind,
 From her deep sanctuary borne along,
 Weaving as she flies the Muses' syren song."¹

The Greeks (but unfortunately at too late a period in their history) invented a most effectual method of perpetuating the likenesses of the ancient heroes of literature or science, by placing their heads, or occasionally their full figures, upon the current coin of the cities which had either given them birth, or were inseparably connected with their history. But of this they only bethought themselves, when, having been reduced to servitude by the Romans, they no longer had a political existence, but lived solely on the memories of the Past : being deprived of the right of coining the precious metals (the exclusive privilege of the Caesars) they were only allowed to strike small

¹ From C. W. King's *Handbook of Engraved Gems*, pp. 352-3.

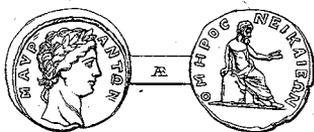
change for local circulation; exactly as our own trading cities did at the beginning of this century; and in a style of art not many degrees superior to theirs. The material, too, was of the worst possible kind for durability, *lead* being substituted for the too expensive *tin* in the composition of the bronze, rendering the alloy extremely susceptible of oxidation; the whole strongly attesting both the poverty and the dishonesty of the times. What an invaluable portrait-gallery we should now possess, had the practice been introduced when higher skill and a nobler material were at the command of the Hellenic mint-master, may be estimated from the following list of portraits to be found rudely attempted upon the small brass of Greece under the Empire. Besides Homer upon the currency of several of the towns that claim the honour of his birth, we possess Sappho and Alkaïos upon that of Mytilene, Herodotus on that of Halicarnassus; with Anakreon, Stesichoros and Aratos in their respective countries. The philosophers thus cheaply immortalised are Bias, Chrysispos, Anaxagoras, Apollonios of Tyana, Pittakos, Pythagoras, Euclid, Herakleitos, Theophanes, Hipparchos, Hippokrates, and his disciple, Xenophon of Cos.

Sparta exhibits the traditional features of Lykourgos; Byzantium, the actual likeness of its restorer, Themistokles; and of more recent celebrities we meet with Sextus Empiricus, and with Nausicaa and Julia Procla, two poetesses, doubtless held by their own Lesbian fellow-citizens of the Antonine age to be rivals of Sappho, but of whom no record survives but these little coins.

And lastly, to show that fame of any kind was held a sufficient passport to this sort of immortality, Corinth gives the head of her notorious Lais, done in a stylè not totally unworthy of her beauty, and with a most interesting reverse of her monument, a Doric column supporting the very appropriate device of a lioness slaughtering a calf.

These coin-portraits, be it remembered, were derived from the most authentic sources. Not to speak of the famous men who were honoured with statues by the vote of great republics, the smallest town, in the remotest region of the civilised world, was zealous to pay the same compliment to the ephemeral celebrity of which it boasted.

A single instance will suffice. Alexander upon entering Phaselis in Pamphylia, on his Persian campaign, was delighted to find the newly-erected statue of his favourite tragic poet Theodectes¹, then lately deceased. The coinage of free Hellas, despite the matchless beauty of its *ideal* heads of deities and mythic heroes, certainly falls short of the living interest of this, the puny offspring of the period of her decrepitude.



The coin, which suggested these remarks (figured above to the actual size), I bought from M. Lambros at Athens, in January, 1881; it is believed to be unique, or at least hitherto unpublished, and may be described as follows:

obv. Youthful bust of Marcus Aurelius, laureated: M · AYP · ANTON.

rev. Homer, bearded and laureated, seated on a rock, and looking at a scroll which he holds in his left hand: OMHPOC · NEIKAIEQN.

The portrait may in this case be considered with great probability to be a reduced copy from the statue, which (as we learn from Aelian²) was set up by Ptolemy Philopator in the temple that he had erected in honour of Homer. It is remarkable that of the seven cities mentioned in the familiar

¹ Plutarch, *Alexander*, cap. 17.

² *Var. Hist.* xiv. 22.

distich as disputing the honour of being Homer's birth-place, and inscribed by Varro beneath Homer's bust—

Ἐπτά πόλεις διερίζουσιν περὶ ῥίζαν Ὀμήρου
Σμύρνα, Ῥόδος, Κολοφῶν, Σαλαμῖν, Ἴος, Ἄργος, Ἀθήναι—

only three—Smyrna, Kolophon, and Ios—have left us extant coins that preserve the memory of their hero; while he is frequently found commemorated also on the bronze coinage of Amastris, Chios, Kyme, Laodicea ad Maeandrum, Larissa, Troadis, Melos, Myrina, Prusias ad Hypium: and now an earlier one than was hitherto known of Nicaea¹ (the city of the great Council) is added to the list.

The position of all these cities, either in Asia Minor or on the eastern side of the Aegæan Sea, seems to suggest an Ionian, or at least an Asiatic, origin for the Homeric poems. But it was at Smyrna ('The Queen of Anatolia') that the cult of Homer had taken the deepest root. Here, even in the silvery days of Asiatic independence, money, called Ὀμήρειον, was struck in his especial honour; and the same name was given to a temple in a quadrangular cloister², which the Smyrniotes had built on the right bank of the Meles. From Plutarch and Lucian we learn that the enthusiasm of a later age saluted him as Μελησιγενής, and Philostratos even calls him the son of Meles.

For very substantial aid in compiling this notice, I hereby express my hearty gratitude to the Rev. C. W. King, of Trinity College.

¹ Leake (*Numismata Hellenica*, As. Greece, p. 90) had already quoted a large brass coin of this Nicaea, bearing on the *obverse* the busts 'regardant' of Valerian and Gallienus, but on the *reverse* a design and legend similar to the one under consideration.

² στὰ τετράγωνος ἔχουσα νεῶν Ὀμήρου καὶ ξόανον κ.τ.λ.

STRABO, *Geograph.* XIV. page 646 B.