THE PORTRAITURE OF THE ANCIENTS.

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One of the most tantalising peculiarities belonging to the study of Antique Gems is the existence of that innumerable series, thrown together at the end of every catalogue under the designation of "Unknown Portraits." What can be more trying to one versed in ancient history than to possess some impress of a face full of life and individuality, to be morally conscious that he has therein the "counterfeit presentment" of some great philosopher, statesman, or warrior, and after all, to be obliged to content himself, at best, with the arbitrary ascriptions of Fulvius Ursinus, Leon Agostini, Gori, and Visconti—ascriptions based for the most part upon the fancied agreement of the features with those of some restored, almost equally unreliable, bust or statue? Where the assistance of medals fails us we indeed have no other resource than this; and even this poor resource labours under another disadvantage; sculpture, when reproduced by drawing, losing so much of its character, that the marbles or bronzes are of little real service to our purpose unless we be enabled to examine the originals for ourselves, and compare them with the miniature heads we are endeavouring to identify. Visconti, in his two *Iconographies*, has availed himself only to a very limited extent of engraved gems in order to complete his series of Greek and Roman portraits, being probably deterred by the consideration that a mere *supposed* resemblance, when unsupported by an inscription, was insufficient warranty for their admission amongst likenesses in the authenticity of which his own archaeological credit was involved. It is, however, possible that had the acute Italian more attentively studied these minuter, but far more perfect, memorials of ancient celebrities, he might have conscientiously augmented his muster-roll, and that to a very considerable extent.

It was for posterity an unfortunate impulse of the pride of

art. that made the Roman engravers think it beneath them to continue the practice of their Etruscan predecessors (who carefully subjoined his name to every hero they portrayed), but rather to trust to fidelity of portraiture for the sufficient declaration of their subjects. As far as regards the personages of mythology, they did not often err in this estimate of their own powers, for in that province all the types had been fixed for them by immemorial tradition. Plutarch (*Aratus*) mentions some curious facts, proving incidentally how familiar the aspect of their most ancient celebrities had been rendered to the Greeks by their repeated representations in every form of art. Thus, Nicocles, tyrant of Sicyon, was the exact image of Periander, one of the Seven Wise Men; Orontus the Persian, of Alcmæon; and a certain young Lacedæmonian, of Hector. To the last-named this discovered resemblance proved fatal, he being crushed to death by the multitudes who flocked to see him as soon as it was made known.

But in the case of ordinary mortals, no amount of skill in the artist could preserve to his work the possibility of recognition after all remembrance of the deceased original had passed away together with his contemporaries. And, by an unlucky coincidence, it was precisely at the date when portraits from the life first began to appear upon gems, that the old explanatory legends were discontinued—a circumstance that has robbed of its chief value what otherwise would have been by far the most interesting department of every gem-cabinet. The engraver remained satisfied with having by his skill ensured the recognition of his patron amongst contemporaries,—nevertheless it is inconceivable how he should have neglected so easy and obvious a method for immortalising him amongst the educated for all succeeding time. Such a precaution he has actually taken for the continuance of his own posthumous fame in the case of his principal works by adding his *signature;* but this very care has, in some instances, only served to mislead posterity (as in Solon's case), by making us attribute to some celebrated namesake of the artist's in Grecian history, the actual personage of his Roman employer.

In other cases when a name *does* accompany a likeness, it often proves no more than a client's or freedman's, paying thus his homage to the grandee really represented

there—a species of adulatory deification borrowed from the very ancient custom of joining one's own name to the figure of the patron-god upon the signet. But most frequently of all, alas! when the inscription does professedly designate the subject (if a noted historical character), it is easily detected as a mere clumsy interpolation by a modern hand, made in order to give value to an unknown head, in the same way as busts of private Romans were commonly, during the same period, inscribed by their finders with the titles of the most eminent sons of Greece.

How important, how intensely interesting, the class of gem-portraits would now be to us, had the slightest means of identification been generally supplied by their authors, is a thought that must strike every one who considers the immense number still extant, the conscientious diligence displayed in their execution by the highest ability in that branch of art; and last but not least, the ample means at the artist's command for ensuring fidelity in his reproduction even of long departed worthies, when representing them at the order of their descendants or admirers. Throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, every town had its temples, gymnasium, agora, or forum, peopled with the statues, in all materials, of those amongst her sons who had in any way distinguished themselves in arms, letters, or the public games; and as civilization advanced, popular adulation or private vanity swelled their hosts to an extent perfectly inconceivable to our notions, often by the mere multiplication of the same figure.

Plutarch notices, as a remarkable exception to the general rule, in the case of Agesilaus, the absence of all portraits or statues of so eminent a man; for he would not allow any to be taken in his lifetime, nay more, upon his death-bed actually forbade it to his survivors. The antiquity of the practice appears from the same historian's notice of the statue of Themistocles he had admired, standing in the temple of Athene *Aristobule*, both statue and temple erected by the great statesman, describing it as "of an aspect as heroic as his actions." Alexander on entering Phaselis, in his Persian campaign, was delighted to find the statue of his favorite poet, the lately deceased tragedian, Theodectes, newly set up by his fellow-townsmen, and testified his gratitude by crowning it with garlands. On entering Persepolis as victor,

he sees a colossus of Xerxes thrown down by the rush of fugitives, and debates upon the propriety of re-erecting the same, but finally decides to leave the figure prostrate as a punishment for the impiety of its original when in Greece. Such memorials, still preserved in Plutarch's times, went back to the remotest antiquity; he speaks of a statue of Orpheus in cypress wood then existing at Lebethea, in Thrace. Lysander with his confederate generals, his own offering in gratitude for the termination of the Peloponnesian War, were still standing in marble in the Treasury of the Corinthians at Delphi.

These dedicated groups often represented some noteworthy event in the hero's life. Craterus sends to the same temple a work by Lysippus of Alexander attacking a lion with his hounds, and himself hastening to his aid. Philopœmen, "last of the Greeks," dedicates there his own equestrian figure in the act of spearing the Spartan tyrant, Machanidas. Aratus destroys the portraits of the line of Sicyonian tyrants. Amongst them was that of Aristostratus, standing in a chariot and crowned by Victory, the joint work of all the scholars of Melanthius, including the great Apelles. Nealces, himself an admired painter, is employed to efface the tyrant's figure, which he replaces by a palm tree. The first proceeding of the Macedonian king, Antigonus Doson, when master of Sicyon, is to set up again the statues of these tyrants, whence it must be concluded that Aratus had not actually destroyed, but only removed them from their posts of honour in the public place. Public gratitude gave additional stimulus to artistic energy—down to Plutarch's age those very early masters Silanion and Parrhasius, were honoured with annual sacrifices by the Athenians for their successful statues and pictures of the national hero, Theseus. A laughable example of cheap honour to a public benefactor, is afforded by the lately discovered Sestine Inscription, which after enrolling the vote of a bronze statue to a great civic patriot, one Menas, goes on to declare that the resolution being delayed through want of funds, Menas had added yet this to his other enumerated services, that he had set up the statue at his own expense.

To illustrate the unlimited multiplication of such honours, a few examples, taken at random, will more than suffice. Demetrius Phalereus, governor of Athens for Demetrius

Poliorcetes, was complimented by that time-serving community with a bronze statue for every day in the year. At Rome, and in yet uncorrupt republican times, Marius Gratidianus, on account of his verification of the silver currency, obtained, from the gratitude of his fellow-citizens, a similar honour placed in *every* street of the city. Pausanias beheld the consecrated ground, no less than half a mile in circuit, crowded with those of Hadrian alone, all congregated round his grand work, the Olympeum at Athens. Their number may be estimated from the fact, that every town pretending to be an Athenian colony had sent thither one in its own name; the parent state, as was right and proper, outdoing them all by a *colossus* of her imperial second founder placed in the rear of the shrine. Doubtless that benefactor had, underhand, supplied the funds for so costly a memorial; for the just quoted example of Menas informs us that a man's subscribing money to his own glorification is far from being the invention of our own day. For, the making a colossus, even in those ages of superabundant artistic power, swallowed up the revenue of a Grecian state. The Apollo of the Pontic town bearing his name, thirty cubits in height, had cost no less than five hundred talents (100,000*l.*): the more celebrated one at Rhodes, seventy cubits high, required the outlay of three hundred (60,000*l.*):[1] the Mercury of Auvergne made by Zenodorus, the dimensions of which Pliny does not give, stating only that they exceeded those of Nero's by the same statuary (110 feet),—"omnem amplitudinem ejus generis vicit,"—cost the equivalent of 400,000*l.* | CCCC |, and required ten years for its completion.[2]

The rage for colossus-making flourished down to the last days of art. Gallienus had commenced one to his own honour on a scale preposterously exceeding even the extravagance of Nero's ambition, for the shaft of the spear held in the emperor's hand contained a winding stair by which a man might mount to the top. Another remarkable example are the marble colossi of the imperial brothers, Tacitus and Florian, placed over their *cenotaph* at Terni in the centre of their paternal estate, and which, when Vopiscus

[1] This great disproportion in cost, as compared with the former, is explained by its *material* being furnished from the siege-train of Demetrius Poliorcetes, abandoned by him in his flight from the island.

[2] xxxiv. 18.

wrote, were lying on the ground shattered and cast down by a recent earthquake. And lastly, the insane ambition of the miserly Anastasius thus to indulge his vanity, but at as cheap a rate as possible, led to the destruction of a whole street full of monuments of better times, all cast into the furnace to supply the requisite metal.

But to return to the regular class of these memorials, as showing the long perpetuation of the practice. Ammian notices, such as raised by Constantius II. in the grand square at Amida to commemorate certain officers who had fallen victims to the perfidy of the Persian, Sapor; and again, Julian's conferring the same distinction upon Victor, the historian.[3] From the terms in which Nicetas speaks of the statues of victorious charioteers adorning the Hippodrome at Constantinople down to the year A.D. 1204 (when they were all melted down by the Franks on the capture of the city), it would appear that these popular heroes continued to be thus perpetuated in bronze so long as the circus-races themselves were maintained.

Plutarch has preserved a good saying of old Cato the Censor's, *apropos* of the multiplication of such memorials by everyone that chose to pay for the gratification of his vanity. Many people of small note having statues set up to them in Rome and himself none at all, notwithstanding his notable services to the State; on this being observed to him he replied, that "he very much preferred it should be asked why he had *not* a statue than why he had one." This neglect, however, was subsequently rectified, for Plutarch had seen a bronze statue of him in the character of Censor standing in the temple of Salus. Again, some faint idea of their incredible numerousness is given by the casual notices of the swarms so long remaining in Greece. Many generations after that country had become the favorite foraging-ground of every Roman amateur who possessed authority to plunder—like Nero, who made a *selection* of five hundred bronze statues "of gods and men indiscriminately" out of those at Delphi alone.[4] Nevertheless, the learned Mucianus calculated that at the time of his tour in Greece a few years later, there were still remaining three thousand statues in Rhodes singly, and an equal number at Athens, Olympia, and Delphi respectively. But what the pillage had been

[3] xxi. 10. 5.

[4] Pausan., x. 7. 1.

under the earlier Roman domination may be imagined from a single fact. Scaurus, Sylla's stepson, had that very same number employed in the decoration of his temporary wooden theatre. But, in truth, the fecundity of Greek genius had been absolutely miraculous, Lysippus alone having executed fifteen hundred statues, some of them colossal, and everyone of them perfect in its kind. The Greeks, however, had the less right to complain of this Roman spoliation, having themselves set the example of the licence in this lust given by victory; Cleomenes, on capturing Megalopolis, sending off all the statues and pictures he found therein to decorate his own capital, Sparta. The new conquerors commenced operations in the line of art-plunder at the taking of Syracuse, when Marcellus despatched one half of the statues found there (the other half to the Samothracian Cabiri) for the decoration of Rome, an innoyation strongly censured by his countrymen of the old school. Thirty-seven years later, Mummius similarly despoiled all the cities belonging to the vanquished Achæan League, leaving only, out of respect for his memory, the numerous statues erected to Philopœmen in each member of that confederacy.

Rome again, and probably the other chief *Latin* cities (for the Etruscan we have positive statements), although destitute of the productions of Greek art previous to these conquests, nevertheless possessed an abundant stock of her own in the primitive national style, corresponding with the very Archaic of the Greeks. These monuments, of infinite historic, though perhaps small artistic value, ascended, as Pliny incidentally informs us, to the Regal Period, and even beyond; for a Hercules was, in the historian's day, venerated by religious antiquaries as the work of Evander himself. The author of the curious treatise, "De Rebus Bellicis," although writing under the Lower Empire, had undoubtedly very respectable ancient authority for his assertion,—"Æris copiam in *simulachris propriis* ad virtutis suæ testimonia figurabant;" speaking of the early times of Rome when coin of any kind was unknown. Such a tradition has met full and remarkable confirmation in the conclusion at which the best numismatists are at last arrived, that the *æs grave*, instead of remounting to Numa's reign, can none of it claim higher antiquity than the rebuilding of Rome after the Gallic sack, B.C. 390; for their style does not display aught of

the Archaic, but merely the coarseness of bad copies from fine Grecian models. We discover the reason for Pliny's remarking that "*Signa Tuscanica*, which nobody disputes were made in Etruria, are dispersed all over the world," as well as of the present plentifulness of "Etruscan bronzes" (their modern synonym), from the single recorded fact, that at the capture of Volsinii (B.C. 261), Fulvius Flaccus carried away to Rome no fewer than two thousand statues!—a number absolutely incredible, did not the hosts of their representatives that yet exist inform us of their real nature. They must have been mostly *statuettes*, and diminutive ones too; although the "Aretine Orator," a Metellus, a masterly portrait-figure, is of life-size.

But, what is more to our present purpose, Rome, and doubtless other Italian cities, possessed an inexhaustible treasury of portraiture in another and less costly material, yet one infinitely superior to all the rest in the essential point, exactitude. For as Polybius minutely describes[5] the custom: upon the death of every person of family, his face was modelled in wax with the utmost care, and even *coloured* after the original: which waxen casts were afterwards preserved in little cabinets arranged in genealogical order around the *atrium* of the ancestral residence. To take a cast from a person's face in plaster, and to use this as a matrix for the melted wax, was the invention, says Pliny, of Lysistratus, the brother of Lysippus. The same artist was the first to make *actual likenesses* of his patrons, all Greek sculptors before him having invariably idealized their features,—"quam pulcherrimos facere studebant."[6] If, therefore, the credit of this invention were really due to Lysistratus, the primitive Roman *imagines* must have merely been modelled by hand, not direct casts from the face of the defunct. The profession of modeller consequently must have been a flourishing one at Rome, one proof of this amongst the rest being the frequent occurrence of gems, the signets of such artists, exhibiting them at work upon these heads supported on the left hand, conclusive evidence of the nature of the substance they are manipulating. These waxen masks were those *imagines* whose long array formed the pride of the degenerate nobles who despised Marius and Cicero for their want of them, and who, as the great orator

[5] vi. 53. [6] xxxvi. 44.

sharply says of Piso, "crept into honours through the recommendation of smoke-dried ancestors whom they resembled in nothing save in their *complexion*."

Nothing resists the action of time so effectually as modelling wax, if only protected from pressure, a proof of which is afforded by regal seals (of the same composition) preserved from early Norman, and even Carlovingian reigns. Hence these *imagines* preserved unchanged the personal appearance of the Roman's ancestors for many generations back. For this reason we may accept with all confidence the portraits of Brutus the Elder, Ahala, Metellus, Scipio Africanus, &c., upon the consular denarii, or upon gems, although such may only date from the last two centuries of the Republic. At the obsequies of any person of a patrician family, these *heads* were affixed to figures clad in the official costume appropriated to the former condition in life of each person; and these effigies, so completed, followed in long procession the last departed member of their line as far as the *Rostra* in the Forum, where the next of kin delivered a funeral oration in his honour, recapitulating with the merits and exploits of the individual all the traditionary glories of his *gens*. A good idea of the remote antiquity to which these memorials were carried back may be derived from Tacitus's allusion to the interminable line of *imagines* which graced the funeral of Drusus, only son of the Emperor Tiberius. Beginning with Æneas they went through the series of the Alban kings, then Attus Clausus and the Sabine nobility, finishing with the unbroken succession of the Claudian race.

In addition to these private stores of portraits, from their very nature the most authentic that could be desired, Pliny often refers to another class, to which a passing allusion has been made above. These were the host of statues, or rather *statuettes;* a half-life size, *tripedanea*, being (as he remarks in the case of those erected to the murdered envoys Julius and Coruncanius, B.C. 231) considered in early times as something out of the common for such monuments. Beginning with the Kings of Rome they illustrated each successive period of her history until they culminated in the grander works springing out of the vanity and ambition of the last ages of the Republic, and the commencement of the Empire.

The extreme antiquity of the custom is manifest from Pliny's mention of the statues of the Kings, which he quotes

as authorities on a point of costume, a proof of the care bestowed upon their execution. The very nature of the case proves these statues to have been works of the period they commemorated; it being absurd to suppose that the early or late Republic should have erected statues in honour of a detested government, the very name whereof was synonymous with *tyranny;* although even this hatred had been forced to spare these original monuments, as being sacred things, the property of Jupiter of the Capitol. Of their style of execution a good notion may be formed from the heads of Romulus, Sabinus, Numa, and Ancus on the denarii, struck late in the Republic by families claiming descent from this ancient stock—portraits testifying to an experienced eye, by their peculiar style, that they were true copies of Archaic originals. Stiff in the extreme, they were none the less true to nature, as the sole surviving relic of their school, the Wolf of the Capitol, strikingly declares. Another, and a curious proof of the correct individuality secured to his portraits by the Regal brass-founder, lies in the circumstance Plutarch records respecting the statue of Brutus the Elder, holding a naked sword, and "then standing amongst the Kings in the Capitol." In the features Posidonius, the philosopher, declared he could trace a strong family likeness to his celebrated namesake and imitator. But of the statue of the contemporary Porsenna, then existing in the Senate-house, he remarks that the style was rude and Archaic: a good testimony to its genuineness.

To cite a few illustrations of the fecundity of the national Italian school in ages long preceding the date when

> "Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes
> Intulit agresti Latio:"

Pliny mentions that the statue which Spurius Cassius (who was put to death for treason B.C. 485) had *erected to himself,* long suffered to stand behind the temple of Tellus, was finally melted down by order of the censors, Scipio and Popilius, at the same time that they *removed* (not *destroyed*) out of the Forum all statues of persons that had borne office which had not been authorised by public decree to enjoy that honour. This cruel onslaught upon a harmless gratification of vanity took place in the year B.C. 159. Again, to quote Pliny's own words, "I would have supposed the *three* figures of the

Sibyl, with that of Attus Nævius made by Servius Tullius's order, to be the most ancient works in Rome, were it not for the statues of the Kings which stand in the Capitol." As early as the date B.C. 495 Appius Claudius, when Consul, set up all his ancestry, with their titles underneath, in the temple of Bellona. By a proud generosity Rome preserved the memorials of even her bitterest enemies—a gold *clypeus* embossed with the bust of Hasdrubal (captured by Marius in Spain) was fixed over the portal of the Capitol. Of Hannibal himself no fewer than three statues were objects of interest (visuntur) to the historian's contemporaries; whilst the colossal Baal of Carthage, propitiated of old with human victims, stood by neglected in the open air. And further, these honours were paid to the memory of the illustrious dead even under circumstances that one would fancy would have precluded them; but it appears the victorious side had sufficient magnanimity to concede this innocuous consolation to the vanquished. For example, Plutarch had admired the statue of the younger Cato standing, sword in hand (like his predecessor of old) upon the Utican shore, marking the site of his funeral pile; probably erected by the townsmen, who are mentioned as having celebrated the patriot's obsequies with the greatest respect, regardless of all consequences to themselves from the displeasure of the conqueror.

The source, therefore, being so astonishingly copious, it was only natural the Roman gem-engravers should avail themselves thereof, and that they did so to the full is manifested by the present abundance of antique portrait gems. That so small a proportion of their number has been identified, is partly due to the negligence of gem-collectors in not studying ancient sculpture with that view, or, better than all, the portraits on the consular coinage. The latter means, judiciously applied, often leads to the recognition of the great personages of the Republic, immortalised by history, and now recalled to life for us by the manifestation of their countenances upon the signets of their next descendants.

But the same study opens out a far more extensive field than the range of Roman history. Of the Grecian *philosophers* the gem-portraits, though seldom contemporary (for reasons I have sufficiently discussed in another place) must by no means be regarded on that account as mere creations

of the artist's fancy, drawn in accordance with the popular conception of the character of each. A host of statuaries are catalogued by Pliny, beginning with Colotes, the partner of Phidias, such as Androbulus, Apollodorus, Alevas, Cephisodorus, &c.; all distinguished for making the portraiture of philosophers their special walk in their profession; or else like Chalcosthenes, devoting themselves exclusively to the sculpturing of athletes and charioteers. As all these (besides many more named by Pliny) principally occupied themselves in thus perpetuating the outward forms of the numerous *literati* of their respective generations, the series of authentic likenesses in this class ascended considerably beyond the period of Plato, although probably somewhat idealised before the invention of Lysistratus already noticed. During the disasters of the Samnite War (B.C. 343) the statues of Pythagoras and Alcibiades were set up in Rome by the Senate when ordered by the Delphic Oracle to pay this honour "to the wisest and to the bravest of the Greeks." Pliny is surprised at these particular two being preferred to Socrates and Themistocles, but as far as regards the Samian sage the Romans found good reason in the tradition that made him to have been enrolled a citizen of the infant state, nay, the actual preceptor of Numa: his son Mamercus was claimed by the Æmilii as the founder of their family. Of the first of these two bronzes the appearance is preserved to us by a *contorniato* medal; the philosopher was seated in his chair in the attitude of meditation, his head resting on his hand.

These likenesses were prodigiously multiplied so long as the study of philosophy continued in fashion at Rome, that is, during the first three centuries of the empire. Pliny[7] notices the "modern invention" of placing in libraries the figures of learned men, made of gold, silver, or at poorest of bronze ("aut certe ex ære"), which he attributes either to Asinius Pollio, who first established a public library at Rome, or else to the royal founders of those at Pergamus and Alexandria. Juvenal laughs at the swarms of impudent pretenders to the title of philosopher who usurped that dignified name on the strength of having their rooms crowded with plaster busts of Chrysippus, and who regarded themselves as quite perfected by the purchase of a good

[7] xxxv. 2.

Aristotle or Pittacus, or a contemporary head of Cleanthes, to decorate their bookcase.

That the followers of the different schools displayed in their signets the heads of their respective founders, would readily be supposed from the nature of circumstances; and this supposition is converted into certainty by Cicero's laughing at the Epicureans amongst his friends for carrying about with them their master's portrait in their table plate, and in their rings.[8] And a century later, Pliny mentions the fondness of the same sect for setting up his portrait in their rooms, and carrying it about with them whithersoever they went.[9] Such a practice accounts for the frequency of the heads of Socrates on gems of the Roman period; for none perhaps are to be met with whose style approaches more closely to the epoch of the Athenian sage. *Plato* likewise makes his appearance on the same medium as his master, but to far less extent than collectors flatter themselves in their hope of so interesting a possession, for his grave and regular physiognomy is usually confounded with the established type of the Indian Bacchus. *Aristotle*, too, in his well-known attitude of meditation, with chin resting on his clenched hand, is occasionally to be seen on really *antique* gems, though with infinitely more frequency on those of the cinque-cento school. *Diogenes*, ensconced within his capacious *dolium* (oil-jar), was a much more fashionable device in times whose extravagant luxury had made the affectation of asceticism the favorite cloak for ambition and knavery.

The order of *Poets* is likewise as fully commemorated by our glyptic monuments. Their distinctive badge is the *vitta* surrounding the head, a thin ribbon tied more loosely than the broader diadem of Grecian royalty. This only applies to the great lights of Hellenic literature, for their Roman successors assumed crowns more befitting the character of their muse. Ovid bids his friends at home strip from his brows the Bacchic ivy-wreath so ill suited to the sad estate of an exile :—

> "Siquis habes nostros similes in imagine vultus
> Deme meis hederas, Bacchica serta, comis;
> Ista decent lætos felicia signa poetas,
> Temporibus non est apta corona meis." [1]

[8] De Fin. v. 1. [9] xxxiv. 1. [1] Trist., i. 7.

But of such portraits, with the exception of Homer's well-known features (though but a fancy portrait, as Pliny himself confesses [2]) ; *Æschylus*, recognisable by his tortoise capping his bald pate ; and *Sappho*, by her Lesbian head-cloth,—the attribution of such likenesses is a matter of great uncertainty. This circumstance is much to be regretted, since authentic portraits, so long as the possibility of recognition survived, went back to the very day-spring of art. Plutarch mentions how that Phidias himself got into very great trouble—nay, even endangered his life—by introducing his own figure in the Battle of the Amazons, chased upon the shield of his colossal Minerva, in the guise of a bald-headed old man lifting up a stone : and likewise records how Themistocles rallied the poet Simonides for having his portrait painted, he being of most unsightly aspect.

The absence of all distinguishing symbols is fatal to the recognition of the two great rivals of Æschylus, although it were but reasonable to seek for them amongst the same class of memorials. In fact, Visconti has published a cameo representing an aged man enveloped in the *pallium*, whom a female is presenting to a seated Muse ; and supposes that this protégé of Melpomene's has a head much resembling the portrait bust of Euripides found at Herculaneum. The subject he ingeniously interprets as the Muse receiving the Poet from the hands of Palæstra, daughter of Hercules, in allusion to his original occupation of athlete. It is certain that this was the established type for commemorating a successful dramatist. The fine Marlborough gem, No. 393, exhibits a youth holding, to mark his profession, the *pedum* of Thalia, engaged in conference with the Comic Muse, who is seated in precisely the same attitude as Palæstra in Visconti's cameo. And what confirms this explanation, the pair of Bernay silver vases (in the Bibliothèque Impériale), with chasings of Alexander's epoch, give the same design with unimportant variations ; the *thymele* (theatrical altar), being introduced between each pair of interlocutors, as a symbol, intended plainly to declare that some dramatic celebrity was taken by the ancient *toreutes* for his theme.

To this perplexing uncertainty, however, there is one fortunate and remarkable exception in the *Lucretius*, on black agate (formerly Dr. Nott's), inscribed LVCRE in the lettering

[2] Pariunt desideria non traditos vultus sicut in Homero evenit.

of his own times ; accepted by the infallibility of the Roman Archæological Institute, and K. O. Müller, as the unquestionable *vera* effigies of the poet-philosopher. *Virgil's* likeness, however, although beyond all doubt it *must* exist on gems, and on not a few of them too, has hitherto imitated the notorious bashfulness of its original, and shrunk from our recognition. But the anxious longing of the early Italian scholars has imposed upon the world two supposititious heads of strangely differing type ; one, that of a Muse with flowing bay-crown locks (which, therefore, graces the titlepage of Heyne's beautiful edition of the poet) ; the other Apollo's, with short crisp curls, in the Archaic style, perhaps taken from the Etruscan Colossus, standing, when Pliny wrote, in the Palatine Library ; and the very one put by the Calpurnian family upon their denarii. And yet Virgil's face must have been as familiar to the Romans as Shakspeare's is to us, for with them, too, the author's portrait formed the regular frontispiece to his works, as Martial tells us in this very instance :—

> " Quam brevis immensum cepit membrana Maronem !
> Ipsius vultus prima tabella gerit." [3]

But, in reality, we are not left in doubt as to Virgil's personal appearance. The Codex Romanus, written probably in the fourth century, actually gives a full-length figure of the poet, which has every mark of genuineness about it. He is seated in front-face, closely wrapped in his toga, at his desk, a *capsa* of books by his side ; he is close shaved, and his hair cropped short, his face long and thin ; and, so far as the smallness of the drawing permits to judge, with a general resemblance to the portrait of Augustus. Of one thing we may be certain, that the great poet, the most modest of men, would have avoided nothing so much as any conspicuous deviation from the fashion of his own times.

Martial thanks Sortinius Avitus for placing his bust (*imago*) within his library, and sends him an appropriate inscription to be put under it. In another place he speaks of his own portrait as being then painted as a present for Cæcilius Secundus, then commanding the army on the Danube. [4]

The portrait of Horace, equally to be expected amongst these relics, has hitherto evaded all research,—perhaps as

[3] xiv. 186.

[4] ix. 1, and vii. 84.

completely as that of his great contemporary. But the lucky finder will in this case have the advantage of being able to verify his discovery by comparing it with the poet's head upon the *contorniato* bearing his name. Although this medal belongs to the period of the Decline, the head has clearly been copied from some authentic original, such as the statue erected in the forum of his native town. This test the Blacas gem, unanimously accepted for a Horace in virtue of the bay branch and the initial H in the field, does not endure in an altogether satisfactory manner. By the aid of these medals, which have lately proved their own authenticity and source, by serving to identify in the most convincing manner a newly discovered statue of Terence, the gem-portraits of the same poet, of Sallust, Apollonius Tyaneus, and Apuleius, may possibly be hereafter recovered by some sagacious and fortunate collector.

Our invaluable authority for all the details of Roman life, Martial, when celebrating the philosophic poetess, *Theophila*, betrothed to his friend, Canius, seems to have penned his epigram[5] for the purpose of accompanying a portrait of the lady, as it begins with—

> "Hæc est illa tibi promissa Theophila, Cani,
> Cujus Cecropia pectora voce madent."

I am strongly tempted to recognise this ancient blue-stocking in a female figure, nude, in character of Venus, but with hair dressed in that very peculiar fashion first set by Domitian's empress, inscribed very conspicuously ΘΕΟΦΙΛΑ; which is engraved upon a plasma formerly belonging to the Praur Cabinet.

The practice of rewarding poetic eminence with a statue (Christodorus, flourishing under the Byzantine Anastasius, extols one of Virgil amongst those of early Greece, decorating the Gymnasium of Zeuxippus), was perpetuated down to the last days of the Western Empire. Claudian was thus honoured by Honorius, and with the superadded compliment of the extravagant inscription :—

> Εἰν ἑνὶ Βιργιλίοιο νόον καὶ Μοῦσαν Ὁμήρου
> Κλαυδιανὸν δῆμος καὶ βασιλεῖς ἔθεσαν.

That the popular poets of the day, besides these sculptural

[5] vii. 69.

honours, received also from their admirers the less ostentatious but more imperishable distinction of portraiture in gems, is made matter of certainty by Ovid's pathetic remonstrance, which follows the lines already quoted :—

> " Hæc tibi dissimulas, sentis tamen Optime dici,
> In digito qui me fersque refersque tuo,
> Effigiemqui meam fulvo complexus in auro
> Cara relegati quà potes ora vides !
> Quæ quoties spectas saberit tibi dicere forsan
> Quam procul a nobis Naso sodalis abest ! "

A thing hitherto unnoticed, but bearing very directly upon our subject, is the practice mentioned by Statius in his Ode on the Birthday of the poet Lucan. He informs us that it was then the fashion to honour a departed friend by sculpturing his portrait in the character of a Bacchus :—

> " Hæc te non thyasis procax dolosis
> Falsa numinis induit figura :
> Ipsum sed colit et frequentat ipsum ;"

alluding to the golden bust of the poet placed by his widow, Polla, over her bed as a protecting genius. The disguise of Bacchus was probably chosen for these memorials, because that god was the great establisher of the Mysteries, initiation into which stood the departed soul in such good stead in the world to come. It is not surprising that Bacchic impersonations should have been so popular when, long before, we find Ptolemy Philopator spending all his time, when sober, in celebrating his Mysteries and beating a tambourine about his palace.[6] A memorable record of this fashion has come down to us in that masterpiece of Roman sculpture, the colossal Antinous of the Lateran Gallery, with ivy-crowned though pensive head, the veritable god of wine in all but its expression of deep thoughtfulness. This belief is furthermore exemplified by a large and beautiful gem (a nicolo in the Heywood-Hawkins Cabinet), with an *intaglio* bust of the same imperial favourite, whose deification is declared by the thyrsus inserted in the field, and still further by the composition, in *cameo*, surrounding the portrait like a frame. On each side stands a Bacchante, one clashing the cymbals, the other waving a torch ; at the top reclines a Cupid, at the bottom a Satyr : all these figures being combined into one

[6] Plutarch, *Cleomes*.

design of uncommon elegance and masterly execution.[7] From all this it is allowable to conjecture that the heads of Bacchus and Ariadne, in which the Roman glyptic art so conspicuously and so lavishly has displayed itself, may not in every instance be *ideal*, but, on the contrary, may often perpetuate the features of the deceased friends of the persons who caused them to be engraved.

Atticus was so great a lover of portraits, that he took the trouble to compose a work on the subject; had it survived to our times, nothing in Roman literature would have been so full of interest. Varro, actuated by a similar predilection, *invented* some method of multiplying portraits both expeditiously and cheaply, for he published a collection in one volume of seven hundred heads under the title of "Imagines Virorum Illustrium," each accompanied with an explanatory distich in hendecasyllabic verse, of which a single specimen only is preserved, the one relating to Demetrius Phalereus:—

> "Hic Demetrius æneis tot aptus est
> Quot luces habet annus absolutus."

But, by a negligence infinitely to be regretted, Pliny has not thought it worth his while to explain the nature of this interesting invention. Nevertheless, his expressions "benignissimo invento" and "aliquo modo insertas" are much too strong to be understood merely as relating to the obvious and long-established process of drawing such portraits by *hand*. A false reading of *n* for *u* in another passage of Pliny's has called into existence a lady artist, to whose pencil Varro should have been indebted for his supply of drawings, in the person of Lala of Cysicus, "quæ M. Varronis *in*venta pinxit." But Jan, by restoring the true reading, "*ju*venta," remorselessly reduces her to a mere miniature painter, who was practising her art with much success at Rome during the younger days of the great antiquary.

But to return to Pliny's significant expression, "aliquo modo;" the words strike my mind as implying some *mechanical* contrivance for effecting the purpose expeditiously and without variation. It is hardly possible to conceive the same portrait to be copied over many hundred times, and

[7] This gem was first published by Millin in his *Pierres Gravées inédites*, and thence republished by Inghirami, *Monumenti*, &c.

by different hands, in the *atelier* of the Roman *librarius*, and still to remain the same in every one of its repetitions. But, on the other hand, if we call to mind how skilful were the artists then residing at the capital of the world in making all manner of dies, stamps, and moulds of every material used for impressing all substances whether hard or soft, it is possible to conceive something of the nature of *copper-plate printing* to have been hit upon by Varro for the purpose of carrying out his scheme. Certain it is that there are numerous Roman bronze stamps still preserved that have the inscription *in relief* and reversed, and which, consequently, could only have been used with *ink* for signing papyrus or parchment. To this day the Orientals use their signets (although incised in gems or metal), not for impressing wax, but for carrying a glutinous ink, exactly after the manner of a copperplate, and transferring it to the paper requiring signature.

But there is a second method that Varro might have employed, the idea of which has been suggested to me by a remark of Caylus,[8] applying to a cognate branch of art. He believed he had discovered sure indications that the ornamental borders and similar accessories to the designs upon Etruscan vases had been transferred to the surface by means of a *stencil-plate*, that is, a thin sheet of copper through which the outlines of the pattern are pierced, which being applied to the surface to be decorated, a brush charged with paint being drawn over the outside, leaves the pattern behind at a single stroke. It is very possible to imagine Varro's learning this process of the ancient potters during his antiquarian researches, and his seizing upon the same for the realisation of his long meditated scheme. A set of stencil-plates engraved with the most prominent features of the portraits in bold outline, would reproduce the likenesses in a sketchy, yet effective style, identical with that of the mediæval block-books, and well calculated for expressing the individuality of the heads. The Chinese have from time immemorial produced books illustrated with cuts by precisely the same process as that devised by the monkish precursors of the real printer; and why should not the same notion, suggested by a similar want, have occurred to the ingenious Roman?

[8] Recueil d'Antiquités, i. p. 17.

Again, I cannot help suspecting that the Etruscan *graffiti* incised designs on gold plates forming the heads of rings (a style of ornamentation so popular with that people) might have been intended for transferring ink to smooth surfaces, after the present fashion of the East. It is self-evident, from the thinness of the plate, these graffiti were not made for impressing wax or clay; and in those primitive ages rings were always worn for some practical purpose, not as mere decorations for the hand.

But to return to my first conjecture—an actual notice of the employment of a stencil-plate is to be met with in ancient history. Procopius, to exemplify the barbarism of Theodoric, states that he was never able to master so much of the art of writing as to sign his own name, and therefore had recourse to the expedient of passing his pen through the letters THEO, pierced through a gold plaque, which was laid upon the document requiring his signature.[9] This fact looks like the application of a method already in common use, but for some different purpose.

And to conclude, the best testimony to the *originality* of Varro's invention is, as I remarked at starting, to be found in the forcible expressions of Pliny in noticing it; which, therefore, I shall give in full. "M. Varro benignissimo *invento* insertis voluminum suorum facunditati septingentorum *aliquo modo* imaginibus, non passus intercidere figuras, aut vetustatem ævi contra homines valere: *inventor* muneris etiam Deis invidiosi quando immortalitatem non solum dedit, verum etiam in omnes terras misit ut præsentes esse ubique ceu Di possent."[1]

[9] The Greek was glad to make the most of the stupidity of the Goth. The thing that so puzzled Theodoric was not the four simple letters, but the complicated monogram of his whole name in their outline, such as it appears on his denarii. The Byzantine emperors, like the sultans, always sign with an elaborate monogram.

[1] XXXV. 2.