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THE AGED LIVIA.

By KATHARINE A. ESDAILE.

(Plates xxii, xxiii)

When in 1887 Dr. Helbig published his identification of a head now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek as Livia¹ (plate xxii), the suggestion met with almost universal acceptance, the likeness to her coins and gems, as well as to the portraits of her son Tiberius, being too strong to admit of doubt. The portraiture of Livia is curiously uncertain. We know that the inscribed bronze bust of her in the Louvre is of provincial workmanship, and must, from the hair, represent the empress in early youth; she appears on many coins as Salus, Pietas, etc. and we possess some really fine gems; but apart from the Copenhagen head the monumental evidence is unsatisfactory. Statues of her are mentioned by Dio as erected in 35 B.C. (xlix, 38), and in 9 B.C. (lv, 2); another was erected by Claudius (Suet. *Claud.* ii), who also raised her to the rank of a god in 41, Tiberius having refused all divine honours from the senate for himself and his mother. In the provinces she was widely honoured in her life: the base of a statue has been found at Athens;² the remains of another dedication at Constantine in Algeria;³ a temple statue was erected at Smyrna in A.D. 23, together with one of Tiberius,⁴ right at the close of her life, since she died in 29 at the age of eighty-five;⁵ and provincial coins bearing her portrait as Juno, Rhea, etc. are numerous.

Of existing monuments, one statue of an elderly Roman lady of the period has long been attributed to her, the seated figure found at Paestum, now in the Museo Arqueologico at Madrid.⁶ It is now ascribed, not without probability, to the aged Antonia. The much damaged head of a member of the imperial house at Rome is, as the text of the *Einzelnverkauf* points out, too poor for a definite attribution to be possible.⁷

It is the object of the present paper to draw attention to a far more famous work of art, the so-called 'Agrippina seduta' of Naples (plate xxiii). The name has long been abandoned, but none has been as yet substituted for it, either by the official guide⁸ or by Dr. Arndt,⁹ though the latter has proved beyond all doubt that the head does not belong to the body. This may be a matter for some sentimental regret, since the statue as restored is among the most impressive figures in all Roman art, but the body is altogether too rounded in its forms to belong to the aged head, and the wrinkled hands

¹ *Röm. Mitt.* ii, pl. i; Arndt-Bruckmann, 6-7; Hekler, p. 209.

² *C.I.G.* iii, 316; cf. 381.

³ *Musée de Constantine*, p. 11.

⁴ *Tac. Ann.* iv, 15.

⁵ *ibid.* v, 1; Pliny, *N.H.* xiv, 8, gives her age as 82.

⁶ *Bern.* ii, i, p. 92; a misleading outline

drawing of the head and shoulders; good photographs and description in *Einzelnverkauf*, 1768-1770.

⁷ *Einzelnverkauf*, 1368, 1369.

⁸ no. 977, p. 235.

⁹ Arndt-Bruckmann, nos. 713-714 and text.

are a restoration. The remains of the 'queue' on the neck prove, however, that the original head was of the same period as that now placed upon it.

It is difficult to understand how the name of Agrippina could ever have been attached to the head, since both princesses of the name died before they were fifty, and this portrait, making all allowances for the difference between Italian and English standards, is obviously that of an aged woman. Few members of the imperial house lived to be old; indeed the only women that reached the age of seventy and upwards in the period to which the head belongs are Livia and Antonia. Antonia the head certainly is not; the coins and the portraits identified from them alike declare this to be impossible. There remains only Livia, and the likeness to the

FIG. 12. LIVIA : SARDONYX
IN FLORENCE.

From Bernoulli, *Römische Ikonographie*, II, I, pl. xxvii, nos. 6 and 8.

FIG. 13. TIBERIUS AND LIVIA : CAMEO
IN FLORENCE.

Livia of the coins and to the head at Copenhagen is decisive. The peculiarly clear-cut brows, the widely opened eyes with drooping underlids, the individual lines of lips and chin (the nose is a restoration, but the lines are certain enough), are all the same, save that age has deepened their lines. It is peculiarly interesting to compare the portraits of Livia at different periods of her life; the young girl on the Hague gem¹; the woman in the prime of her beauty, on the sardonyx in the Uffizi (fig. 12); the middle-aged but still fine and clear-cut features of the heads in Copenhagen; and on the Florence cameo (fig. 13); the aged empress of the Naples portrait, representing her as Augusta still, but widowed, the mother of one surviving and embittered son.

The head-dress is of the general type common to the imperial family at the period, but the curls on the head have spread from

¹ Bernoulli, II, I, pl. xxvii, no. 7.

the fringe worn by Antonia and the elder Agrippina to the head itself, as in one issue of the bronze coins bearing the head of Agrippina the younger. Mrs. Strong¹ has noted the change from the hard pigtail of republican times to the looser plait tied at the nape of the neck, the last stage of the coiffure being that in which " bunches of curls appear at the sides or enframing the face." It will be noticed that Livia does not wear the side lock or locks of the Agrippinas, but gathers all her hair into a 'queue' in the severer fashion adopted by Antonia.²

The Naples head then takes its place as the one existing portrait of the aged Livia, and is probably one of the earliest, as it is one of the most impressive of those dignified studies of elderly women of high rank in which Roman art was to excel in the first two centuries of our era. There is here no ignoble flattery, no representing an elderly empress in the guise of a Venus, such as is common at a later time. Were the statue complete we might say of it, *mutatis mutandis*, as Thackeray said of another portrait of a woman ruler, this time of the Netherlands :

" The woman is in a stiff black dress, with a ruff and a few pearls ; a yellow curtain is behind her—the simplest arrangement that can be conceived ; but this great man (Rubens) knew how to rise to his occasion ; and no better proof can be shown of what a fine gentleman he was than this his homage to the vice-queen. A common bungler would have painted her in her best clothes with crown and sceptre, just as our own queen has been painted by Hayter. Here stands this majestic woman in her everyday working dress of black satin, *looking your hat off*, as it were."

The Naples portrait of the aged empress is worthy to stand beside that noblest of Roman portrait statues, the aged Augustus from the Via Labicana, now one of the glories of the Museum of the Terme.

NOTE ON THE STATUE ON WHICH THE HEAD OF LIVIA IS PLACED.

It is probably rash to make any definite suggestions as to the original of the statue to which the head of Livia is affixed, but, as already noted, there is nothing to connect it with an aged woman. The forms are rounded, mature, but not elderly, the wrinkled hands a restoration to suit the head ; while the fragments of a knob of hair on the nape of the neck proves that the original wore a 'queue' and so belonged to the first half of the first century A.D. There is no trace of side-curls, and the head appears from the fractures to have been knocked off rather than accidentally broken. The number of women of rank available at the period is limited, and as it is expressly recorded by Tacitus³ that the statues of Drusilla, wife of the younger Drusus, were defaced by a *senatus consultum* in consequence of the discovery of her crimes, it is just possible that the statue in question may have represented the mistress of Sejanus.

¹ *Roman Sculpture*, p. 360.

² Her own portraits on coins are either veiled or wear the simple plait and knot fashionable in the

earlier days of Augustus, and retained for the idealised and Graecised portraits on the coins.

³ *Ann.* vi, 2.

[*Vilhelm Trydes Forlæs.*

HEAD OF LIVIA IN THE NY CARLSBERG GLYPTOTEK, COPENHAGEN (p. 139).

HEAD OF THE AGED LIVIA, THE SO-CALLED 'AGRIPPINA SEDUTA,' AT NAPLES (p. 139).
From Arndt-Bruckmann, *Griechische und Römische Porträts*, nos. 713, 714.