

BRONZE HEAD IN THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

## A BRONZE HEAD OF THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

[PLATE I.]

### I.

A GENEROUS gift to the Ashmolean Museum, from Mr. E. P. Warren, has not only allowed the art-lovers of Oxford to enjoy an exquisite work of art, but has also enabled students of Greek sculpture to attain to a fuller knowledge of the style and technique of the great schools of the fifth century B.C. Our head appears to have been broken off a statue; unfortunately it is not complete. And as it had to be put together and bent into shape, any measurements will be of little value. I may however record some of them,

	MM.	INCHES.
Height from hair to mouth ... ..	118	$4\frac{5}{8}$
Circumference at band ... ..	550	$21\frac{3}{4}$
Length of nose ... ..	57	$2\frac{1}{4}$
"    mouth ... ..	47	$1\frac{7}{8}$
"    eye ... ..	33	$1\frac{1}{2}$
"    left ear ... ..	52	$2\frac{1}{8}$
Height of forehead ... ..	55	$2\frac{1}{4}$
Thickness of bronze, about ... ..	10	$\frac{3}{8}$

Antique is, most of the hair, both ears, the left eye, the nose, the upper lip. I have indicated in Fig. 1 what parts are antique. Generally speaking, the right side of the face, and the lower lip, the chin and the neck are modern. The head came from the second portion of the Forman Collection, which at the sale, unlike the first portion, was very indifferently catalogued. It consisted of nine bronze fragments, fastened to a background of plaster. The thickness of the bronze was about  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch. The fragments were reset on a stone core by Mr. F. Bowcher, and the missing parts replaced in beeswax by him, under the direction of Mr. E. P. Warren and Mr. J. Marshall. Mr. Bowcher had specially before him a cast of the Diadumenus head of Dresden (below, Fig. 3). Whence the fragments originally came cannot be ascertained: it is probable that they may have come from some important excavation in Greece, as they could easily have been concealed by workmen.

The restoration is very successful; and as it is carried out in wax only, new parts can never be mistaken for old.

The head represents, in life size, a boy who was no doubt a victor in one of the great athletic festivals of Greece. As the ears are undamaged, he was probably not a boxer or pancratiast; perhaps a runner or pentathlos. He is represented as binding his hair with the fillet of victory. This



FIG. 1.—RESTORATIONS OF BRONZE HEAD.

restoration is certain in view of the character of the head-band and the likeness to other Diadumenus heads. Mr. Bowcher, in his restoration, has taken this view, and has carried the fillet further; but of course this restoration furnishes no evidence. The eyes, as is usual in bronze statues, were filled in in paste.

The secret of the charm which clings to the head, and which every one who examines it seems to feel, is the extremely pleasing and delicate character of the curls, the eye and the ear. The process by which it was produced is beyond doubt that known as the *cire perdue* process. The wax model was enclosed both within and without by moulds of terra cotta or plaster; the wax was then melted out and bronze poured in in its place: after which the moulds were removed.<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Bowcher has been able exactly to imitate in wax the lines of the hair, the eye and so forth, in his restoration, we need not suppose that much engraving of the surface after the casting was necessary, but the whole was gone over with the tool. The casting of the almost detached curls on the forehead must have been difficult.

But no doubt the most striking feature of the head is the head-band, which is adorned with a line of palmettes, like the head-band of Hera, on the coins of Elis, Cnossus and Argos. The device was inlaid in silver, but the silver has disappeared, except at a few points. The pattern was traced by an engraving tool; and it can be clearly traced, because the silver saved from oxidation the bronze under it, while the rest of the bronze surface suffered from decay. The nearest parallel to this decoration is offered by that of the Delphic Charioteer: but the parallel is not close. The Charioteer's fillet is adorned with a maeander-pattern, deeply cut. The bronze head at Munich, to be later mentioned, also has had inlays of silver in the fillet.

The curls by the ears and on the temples are like those of the Delphic Charioteer in the same places, curling boldly, almost detached, and reminding us of a time when such curls were made separately of bronze and soldered on.

Few bronze statues and life-size heads of the fifth century have come down to us. The works with which our head may best be compared are the well known Idolino of Florence, and the beautiful boy's head of the Louvre from Beneventum.<sup>2</sup> Both of these are Greek originals, and both have justly won great admiration. Yet if we compare the new head with them, point by point, we shall find that it greatly surpasses them. Let us consider some of the details.

The upper eyelid overlaps the lower at the outer corner of the eye. This custom of representation was coming in in the middle of the fifth century; after which it is usual. But as our bronze was broken across the eye, the putting together of the two lids is somewhat arbitrary.

The nose is short, and the end of it rounded. One might suppose that it had been somewhat forced out of shape, but that it is like other noses of the mid-fifth century: the small and narrow nostrils, forming a strong angle one with another, closely resemble those of the Delphic Charioteer. The upper lip is notably short.

The ears are carefully formed: the cartilage just before the opening

<sup>1</sup> Compare E. A. Gardner, *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*, ed. 2, p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Collignon, *Hist. de la Sculpt. gr.*, vol. ii. Frontispiece.

is decidedly prominent: this is not the case in the Louvre head, and the cartilage of the Idolino is notably flat: in the Nelson head, which is in character nearer to bronze than other heads of the class, we have the same prominence of cartilage. Modern scientific art-criticism attaches, as is well-known, especial importance to the form of the ear in painting and sculpture, as a characteristic trait of the artist.

The upper lip has a marked ridge: no doubt the red of the lip was plated with silver or gold.



FIG. 2.—TOP OF HEAD.

A noted feature of the hair is its arrangement in curled locks, arranged in a circle about a point on the top of the back of the head (Fig. 3). The nearest circle of curls is something like a star-fish in form. Although in case of our head this nearest circle is partly restored, yet enough survives to show the arrangement in the restoration to be correct. The part restored is darker in colour.

I have tried to compare various fifth century heads with our bronze in this respect. The comparison was not easy, because it has not been the custom to represent in illustrations the tops of heads. I had therefore to trust to casts, the number of which was limited.

The star-fish arrangement of hair, if I may so call it for brevity, appears in rudimentary form on the head of the bronze charioteer of Delphi; although there the relief is very low, and the curls are rather engraved than standing out.

It is also discernible in the head of the so-called 'Heroic King' at Munich, whom I believe to be Themistocles.<sup>3</sup> It is fully developed and dominant, not only in the case of the two above-mentioned

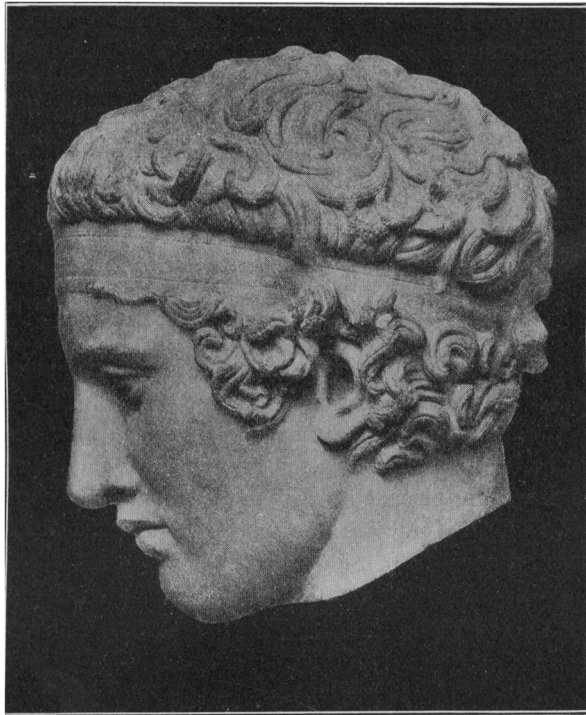


FIG. 3.—MARBLE HEAD AT DRESDEN.

bronzes, but in the Cassel head of the Diadumenus, and the Vaison statue of that type, in the Nelson athlete head,<sup>4</sup> the boy athlete of Dresden,<sup>5</sup> and other heads of Polycleitan type; but in marble statues of the class, the hair is seldom carefully copied: thus in the heads of the Farnese Diadumenus and that from Delos, one cannot trace the arrangement of the hair quite satisfactorily. In fact the tracking of a technical detail of this kind from

<sup>3</sup> *Corolla Numismatica*, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> *J.H.S.* 1898, Pl. XI.

<sup>5</sup> Furtwängler, *Masterpieces*, p. 266.

figure to figure soon shows one how careless and untrustworthy are the copies of fine Greek originals made for the Roman market.

Certainly the whole way of representing the hair, which is fairly homogeneous in the whole class of fifth century works of which I have spoken, is entirely changed in the statues of the great artists of the fourth century, both Attic and Argive. In such statues as the Hermes of Praxiteles the Eubuleus, the Agias, the bronze statues of men from Anticythera and Ephesus, the hair appears as separate locks standing out from the head, not as strands lying in relief on the surface of the head.

There exists a considerable series of works in marble which in the arrangement of the hair and in the head-band so closely resemble our head that we must clearly assign it to the same group. The best of these are a Diadumenus head in Dresden<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 3) which is of very detailed and accurate work, and one in the British Museum, less well preserved. Another head, of the same class, but less carefully finished, is that in Cassel. Furtwängler mentions other inferior heads of the same class.<sup>7</sup> They all repeat in essentials the head of the statue from Vaison, which has long been regarded as a Roman copy, though a poor one, of the Diadumenus of Polycleitus. This gives us a fixed point from which to start; and establishes a probability that our head is in type Polycleitan.

That this arrangement of the hair is peculiar to the Polycleitan group, I am not in a position to say. But so far as I have been able to observe, it does not occur in statues distinctly Attic, such as the boy's heads in the Acropolis Museum Nos. 689 and 698 of Dickins' Catalogue. Both of these however are decidedly earlier than the new head. Nor does it exactly occur in the Massimi head of Myron's Discobolus, nor in the very beautiful boy's head in bronze at Munich<sup>8</sup> which is accepted as a fifth century original, though of uncertain school; and which dates from the latter part of that century.

## II.

It is an interesting study in archaeological method to trace from decade to decade the gradual discovery of the works of the Polycleitan school. The discovery began with the identification by Friederichs in a figure of heroic size from Pompeii, now at Naples, representing a sturdy youth, a Roman copy of the Doryphorus or spear-bearer of Polycleitus, mentioned by Pliny. Soon afterwards the Diadumenos of Polycleitus, again mentioned by Pliny, a youth binding his head with the fillet of victory, was also identified in the figure from Vaison, the attitude and bodily forms of which are almost

<sup>6</sup> Furtwängler, *Masterpieces*, Pls. X. XI., 1895, Pls. XI. XII. p. 240.

<sup>8</sup> *Cat. of Glyptothek*, No. 457; compare Hauser in *Röm. Mittheil.* x. 103.

<sup>7</sup> *Cat. Br. Mus.* No. 2729; *Revue Archéol.*

identical with those of the Naples Doryphorus. A replica of this figure, of Hellenistic work, has come to light at Delos.

A careful study of some of the bases of statues still extant at Olympia, and bearing on the top the marks of the feet of the figures upon them, has enabled Professor Furtwängler to go a step further. These marks determine the attitude of the statue: Furtwängler found in our Museums several figures whose attitudes corresponded; and as their heads were of the type of the Doryphorus head, he identified them as Roman copies of the Olympia figures, or at all events as kindred to them. These copies represent in some cases victorious boy athletes, and about some of them there is an undoubted charm, especially about such statues as the Dresden, the Barracco and the Westmacott figures.<sup>9</sup> Plato tells us of the young Theaetetus that he was not beautiful in feature, but he was brave, intelligent and modest, and earnest in the performance of duty. In the *Clouds* of Aristophanes we read of a class of young men who are models of *αἰδώς*, and in all things opposite to the forward and flashy youths of fashion. Such are the youths represented by Polycleitus, only that their outward form corresponds better than in the case of Theaetetus to the beauty of the soul within.

An anatomist will hold that the development of the bodies of these youths is far too mature for their age; but we must remember that under the sun of Greece and in the constant exercises of the palaestra the male body would develop at a far earlier time of life than in our colder climate and under our more sedentary habits. The body of a Greek boy was not white, but red, through exposure to the air, and far nearer to the simplicity of primitive man.

The identification of these youths, scattered through the museums of Europe, has tended greatly to raise our appreciation of the master. So long as we had only the Roman copies of the Doryphorus and Diadumenus to go by, it was not easy to make a modern eye, at all events, satisfied as to his artistic supremacy. We felt these figures to be heavy and somewhat dull; and it was very probably in view of them that Pliny repeats the criticism, no doubt borrowed from some Greek authority, that the athletes of Polycleitus were too square-made and too monotonous in type. In the Roman copies they lose the charm of exquisite finish of detail which the originals doubtless possessed; and the Idolino in particular suggests that the solidity of the two canonic figures was by no means an invariable character of Polycleitan athletes.

But Furtwängler did not stop at that point; he went on, without adequate data, to fix the dates of the Polycleitan statues of athletes; and in so doing failed. He assigned the statue of the athlete Cyniscus, the basis of which was found at Olympia, to B.C. 440, and the statue of Pythocles, of which also the basis was found, to B.C. 430. But we now have unimpeachable authority, in the papyrus published by Grenfell and Hunt, and commented by Robert,<sup>10</sup> as to the dates of the victories of these two

<sup>9</sup> Furtwängler, *Masterpieces*, pp. 250-266.

<sup>10</sup> Robert in *Hermes*, 1900, p. 141.



athletes, on which occasions, no doubt, their statues were set up. The dates in the papyrus are, for Cyniscus B.C. 460, for Pythocles 452. Furtwängler's dating is thus upset; and the *floruit* of Polycleitus must be thrown back.

We must not, however, overlook certain difficulties which beset the attribution of our head to the Polycleitan school. It has long ago been observed that the head of the Diadumenus generally given to Polycleitus is of quite a different type from the head of the Doryphorus of the same artist. The Doryphorus head is deep from back to front, flat on the top, square in profile. This has been regarded as the normal head of the school; and the statues of boy athletes and the *Idolino* have mainly on the ground of having heads of this type been given to the school of Argos. But the head of the Diadumenus is notably of another character, much more rounded and softer. While the bodies and attitudes of the Doryphorus and Diadumenus are scarcely to be distinguished, the heads are far apart; and it has been recognised that the Diadumenus head is much nearer to the Attic type. Archaeologists such as Furtwängler have accounted for this by supposing that in later life Polycleitus came more under the influence of the great contemporary Attic schools of Myron and Pheidias. The explanation is scarcely quite satisfactory; but it is hard to suggest a better.

In fact there is another type of Diadumenus which is often regarded as Attic. This is the Farnese Diadumenus of the British Museum, which differs from the Vaison figure in pose. The Vaison figure is moving forward, in the act of transferring his weight from one foot to the other: the Farnese figure is standing in a stable position, with feet flat on the ground. The heads of the two figures do not greatly differ; and it has been noted by archaeologists that these heads are both of the Attic type, soft and rounded, and not of the severer and squarer Dorian type, to be found in statues of the Doryphorus.

In one point our head agrees more closely with the Farnese than with the Vaison type. The fillet on it is already knotted at the back: this is clear in our original, though part of the fillet is restored. After tying the knot, the boy is still holding in his hands the two ends of the fillet. The Vaison athlete is only preparing to tie the knot. But when we look at features, there is no likeness between the Farnese head and ours. Eye and ear are markedly different. And the hair of the Farnese head being very superficially rendered, and the nose restored, it presents in these points no likeness to our head. We find indeed a contrast rather than a parallel.

Brunn regarded the Vaison and the Farnese Diadumenus as both Polycleitan. Most archaeologists recognise a distinction, regarding the Vaison type as Polycleitan, the Farnese type as Attic: and a parallel to the standing attitude of the Farnese figure has been found among the youths on the Parthenon frieze. It has also been noticed, with justice, that a firmly standing attitude is far more appropriate to the action of binding one's hair with a fillet than is the walking attitude of the Vaison figure: whence some archaeologists have been disposed to think that the type originated in the

Attic school of Pheidias,<sup>11</sup> and was copied in Argos, being transferred to a less satisfactory pose which we know from the copies of the Doryphorus to have been Polycleitan.

I do not think that this criticism is at all conclusive. The Farnese statue is a very poor work, and not to be trusted for the reproduction of details. The attitude occurs not only in the Parthenon frieze, but in works of decidedly Polycleitan character, such as the Idolino; and the head, though of soft and rounded type, is not more soft and rounded than the head of the Vaison and Delos statues. It would be absurd to suppose that so great and so prolific a sculptor as Polycleitus would confine himself to one attitude and one type of head. I am therefore disposed to revert to the view of Brunn, and to regard the two types as two variants of Polycleitan originals. If, as Furtwängler maintains, Polycleitus could copy an Attic type for his heads, he might just as well copy it for a figure in the Farnese attitude as for a figure in the Vaison attitude.

Some of my friends have urged me to avoid unnecessary modesty by boldly claiming our head as belonging to the original Diadumenus mentioned by Pliny. To this claim, however, there are objections, which I think fatal. If the Vaison and Delos statues are evidence, the Polycleitan Diadumenus was a fully developed young man, not a boy; and he was on the heroic scale, larger than life. Pliny speaks of the Polycleitan figure as *molliter juvenis*; and the term *juvenis* does not suit our head. We must be content, therefore, to call our head a work of the *school* of Polycleitus, though it may quite possibly be part of one of the many Polycleitan statues of boy athletes.

Thus taken by itself, our head would be regarded as of Attic type, with rounded outline and brachycephalic. Yet it probably belonged to a statue of the Polycleitan class.

In any case its delicacy and beauty enable us to appreciate more fully than before the technical perfection reached by the great bronze-casters of Greece in the middle of the fifth century. Hitherto we have found it somewhat difficult to understand the immense reputation which the athlete statues of Polycleitus enjoyed in Greece. But we must remember that a copy in marble necessarily loses most of the character of a bronze original. The fine and delicate treatment of the hair, the ear, the eyelids, cannot be reproduced in the softer and coarser material.

We can now well understand how a full length figure produced by the very fine and delicate process called the 'lost wax' process, by such an artist as modelled in wax our new head, would be a work of the most remarkable and fascinating beauty. The Greeks appreciated the points of a body in a way which we do not readily understand. Plato observes that when a painter has to represent a landscape, mountain, wood or river, he is content merely to make suggestions. 'Since,' he observes,<sup>12</sup> 'we have no

<sup>11</sup> It has even been suggested that the Farnese figure is a copy of an *Anadumenus* by Pheidias, set up at Olympia.

<sup>12</sup> *Critias*, beginning. Quoted in my *Principles of Greek Art*, p. 20.

accurate knowledge of such things, we do not closely examine or criticise the paintings; we are content in such a case with a vague and delusive rendering. But when the artist tries to represent our bodies, we keenly perceive the defects, and, in virtue of our constant close observation, become severe critics of one who does not render in all respects an accurate likeness.' Plato is of course not merely speaking of the face of a man, but of his whole body; and if we remember this we shall realise how contrary the Greek point of view is to that usual in modern days. We look very carefully at all the features of nature; but of our own bodies we know but little; we are generally disposed to be ashamed of them. Of the points of beauty and ugliness in dogs and horses we have a far more definite notion than in the case of human beings. Of course we shall never go back altogether to the Greek point of view; yet it would be no bad thing if we could learn in the school of Polycleitus to appreciate more fully the beauty of the well trained male body.

P. GARDNER.