XIII

HAIR DRESSING

HEAD SHAVING—WIGS THAT ARE STILL WORN—
ROMAN CURLS AND FRINGES

THE styles in which hair is dressed are so inti-
mately connected with fashions in costume that
no excuse is needed for dealing with the question
here. Moreover, there are certain vestiges in cos-
tume occasionally to be met with which owe their
origin to the way in which hair was once arranged.
Hair can be treated in all sorts of manners without
injuring the person in any way, and usually without
causing pain, though some fashions in hair arrange-
ment had results that were far from pleasant, and
must have caused considerable discomfort.

In addition to the styles in which hair is allowed to
grow, there are others which lead to its removal from
one or more of the places which it normally covers,
and almost every change that could be rung is met
with. In addition to the hair on the head, women
have only their eyebrows and eyelashes to consider,
though it is the fashion to remove any "superfluous"
hair from their faces and arms. Men have also to
consider moustaches, whiskers, and beard. Nowa-
days it is decreed that women’s hair should be long and that men’s should be short; but even now men with long hair do not necessarily look effeminate, as is shown by the cowboys from the Wild West who have taken part in various exhibitions in this country, and whose hair reaches on to their shoulders. The shaving of the whole head is carried out by many savage nations, and this is perhaps surprising, seeing that the process cannot but be laborious and even painful when carried out with flint knives or pieces of shell. The Chinese leave the hair that grows from one small spot in order to make their pigtail.

In this country it might be thought that the tonsure of priests was the only remnant of shaving the head; but we need go no farther than the East End of London to find Jewesses who upon marriage shave their head and put on wigs. It appears that the custom is still universal in the remote villages of Russia, where every Jewess on her marriage shaves her head. The wig that is worn is of a very plain pattern, and the hair of which it is composed is parted down the middle. The object which seems to underlie the custom is the destruction of the charm of the women when once they have found husbands. In London the younger women do not seem to be keeping up the practice, and it is mostly in the case of those who are over forty years of age that shaved heads and wigs are to be found.
There may be, however, another explanation. In many countries where great value was attached to a profuse head of hair a variety of superstitions arose, and emblematic observances were followed with regard to it. Parents dedicated the hair of their infants to gods, as did young women theirs at their marriage, warriors after a successful campaign, and sailors after deliverance from a storm. The Egyptians of all classes, as well as their slaves, shaved their heads and wore wigs. By this habit they ensured greater cleanliness, and the structure of the wig not only allowed the heat from the head to escape, but protected the latter effectively from the sun.

It does not happen that both sexes always follow the practice of shaving their heads, for, contrary to what prevails amongst civilized nations, Fijian women are usually closely cropped, while the men spend much time and attention on cultivating and elaborately arranging a luxuriant mass of hair.

The tendency nowadays is to cultivate eyebrows and eyelashes, but if we go back in our history to the reign of Richard II we find that it was thought necessary to pull out the eyebrows, and at the present day in some parts of Africa it is one of the requirements of female beauty to eradicate the eyebrows. Special pinchers for this purpose are to be found among the appliances of the native toilet. A man may of course remove all the hair, speaking in the ordinary way, from his face, or he may retain only his moustache or
Methods of hairdressing illustrated by Romano-Egyptian portrait models in the Myers Collection, Eton College Museum.

(Photographs by Wilfred Mark Webb.)

(See pages 129 and 133.)

PLATE VII.
his whiskers or his beard, or a combination of any two of these. At the present day we meet with all sorts of styles, though one may be the fashion for the moment among the younger generation or those who wish to be considered smart. One cannot alter the disposition of one's hair as easily as one can change one's clothes, and this, perhaps, taken in conjunction with the objection to change on the part of a man and his relatives, gives the variety that has been mentioned. For instance, if it were customary when a man was young for his fellows to wear beards or only a moustache, then he continues to wear a beard or only a moustache.

Perhaps no other fashions come round again more regularly than those which govern the amount of hair on a man's face, and it may be interesting to indicate very briefly some of the changes which have taken place during the last two thousand years or so in this country.

The inhabitants of England at the time of the Roman invasion either did not shave at all or wore only a moustache. The Romans often cut their beards (see Plate VII, Figure r.), and the Saxons parted their beards into double locks or neatly trimmed them. When the Normans came into this country they were closely shaved, but afterwards they went to the opposite extreme.

In the fourteenth century old men wore beards and the younger generation shaved. Edward III had
a long beard, Edward II two small tufts on his chin, and in Edward IV's time the beard was closely shaven. Afterwards we find that a tax was put on beards, and once more, in Elizabeth's and the following reigns, we have a number of extraordinary fashions in connection with the hair on the chin. When we get to 1798, among the upper classes beards were again no longer worn, and there have been several changes since that time.

Apart from the prevailing fashion, there is, under the conditions which we have seen to govern the matter, considerable scope for the indulgence of individual taste, and often an effect is produced which is much more striking than otherwise would be the case. A man may choose, for instance, to grow a large pair of bushy whiskers, and he may thereby give character and importance to his face, which without them would be very insignificant. Curly hair is effective and has its advantages, therefore we find that it is carefully imitated both in the case of real hair and of wigs. The effect is now usually produced artificially only in connection with ladies' hair. When dealing with this branch of the subject, once more we might allude to the monstrous toilets which have been built up in defiance of all laws of proportion and, we might add, of comfort and cleanliness also.

To utilize the hair from the heads of others is an ancient practice still to be met with, and all sorts of
means for making the most of one's own hair in the shape of pads and so on are still adopted.

When speaking of footmen, we shall find that those who dress in the costume that was in fashion when hair powder was in vogue still wear it, and the custom has been traced to the days of Rome, when gold dust was put upon the head. It has been suggested that our Saxon forerunners used coloured hair powder or else dyed their hair, but the evidence comes from Saxon drawings in which the hair is often painted blue, and this may be due merely to the caprice of the artist. It is well to be wary also in studying the colour of clothes at early periods, by looking at pictures, to remember that the illuminators may have followed their own fancy, and made garments of such colours as fitted in with their own ideas of ornament.

Though the use of wigs is extremely ancient, the origin, which is customarily ascribed to the peruke, is interesting. Many curious fashions have arisen through royal peculiarities or temporary indispositions, the courtiers having imitated their royal master or mistress, out of compliment. Louis XIV had, when a child, remarkably beautiful hair, which fell in curls on to his shoulders, and to imitate this, his courtiers put on false hair, while later in life the king himself adopted the fashion which they had set.

The obvious use of artificial additions to the hair has now been discontinued for very many years except in
a few cases. Judges and barristers with a few Parliamentary and other officials still wear wigs, as do also certain coachmen and footmen, but these we shall consider elsewhere.

It will prove of no small interest after recalling the various modes of doing the hair which ladies have adopted during the last twenty or thirty years, to compare them with the fashions in Egypt in Roman times about two hundred years before the Christian era.

The reason why we can do this so well is that the Romano-Egyptians put on the top of their coffins a model of the head of the person who was buried in it. Professor Flinders Petrie has shown that the effigies were really portraits, and even a glance at some of them would go far to prove the statement. Professor Petrie made composite photographs of the face on the outside of the coffin and of the skull within, and both in the profile as well as in the full-face pictures it was seen that the plaster model clothed the skull, as it were, with flesh.

To return to the question of hair dressing, if one examines Plate VII we shall see first of all a lady with corkscrew curls, which were more prevalent in the last century than they are now, though they have not yet died out. Then we have a lady with a very elaborate fringe, another who allows her hair to fall in waves on her forehead, and it forms a chignon at the back. Lastly (Plate VII, Figure b) a little girl
with a small bun on the top of her head. Another specimen, not figured here, and also contained in the celebrated Myers Collection, shows the bun exactly as it was worn at the end of the last century.

We have included two heads (Plate VII, Figures a and f), one of a boy and the other of a man, showing the great likeness that exists between the way in which hair was done more than two thousand years ago and at the present day.

Besides the methods of hair arrangement which have survived or been revived, there are certain little features still to be seen here and there in modern dress which owe their origin to the ways in which hair or wigs were dressed.

A remnant of the bag-wig, with its great bow of black ribbon, we may find in the army. For a long time on the backs of the collars of the officers and staff-sergeants of the Welsh Fusiliers there have been fixed some ribbons which hang down their back. These, which are few in number, are called the "flash," and are said to represent the bow which used to ornament the bag-wig. A hundred years ago the officers of the regiment wore their hair turned up behind, and it was then tied with a bow. This is in keeping with another explanation which Mr. R. Simkin has given us, which is that the flash is the survival of a bunch of ribbons that were sewn on the back of the coat-collar to protect it from the pomatum and powder of the "clubbed" or "queued" hair. The
privilege of wearing the "flash" has recently been extended to all ranks of the regiment (see Figure 109).

A survival of the same kind, which takes us back to the time of wigs, is to be seen on the backs of the collars of several court dresses, and it is known technically as the "wig-bag." It is also, as we have had occasion to mention, to be seen on the back of the collar of the liveries of some servants whose dress is in the old style, and here, as in the case of the Lord Mayor's coachman, it looks as if it had originated in a bow (see Figure 113).