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# HISTORIANS PREFER BLONDES

## Lloyd George's New Wife Starts A Train Of Thought

A FEW genes get together and we have a smouldering brunette, a few others and there is a glowing blonde or a fiery red-head. Then something happens in history. For example, something happened recently to Lloyd George. At the age of 80 he married his secretary—a woman whom the cables described as the "blonde bewilderment" of Versailles in 1919.

Well, history's cavalcade of bewildering women is long. There was Deborah, whose chant of triumph was sung in the congregation of the people; Semiramis, who led her armies to battle when King Ninus faded from the scene; Lucretia, by whose virtues the Tarquins were ousted and Horatius kept the bridge; Tarpeia, who betrayed the Capitol; Margaret of Lancaster, who

fought in her husband's stead for the crown of England; Catherine of Russia, powerful enough in intellect and will to dominate her masculine contemporaries; Marie Antoinette, the tinder which ignited the French Revolution—and so on. Had the colour of their hair anything to do with their power?

### We Start With Helen

Let us start with Helen of Troy—"daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair" as Tennyson has sung. Helen was apparently a blonde, a most bewitching blonde, and thanks to her blonde charms and troublesome personality, she plunged her country into war. Whether Paris would have been so smitten with Helen if she had been brunette, no one can say. All we can say is that the rage of those days was glowing blondes with dazzling fair skins.

A Greek woman of a different type was Sappho, greatest of lyric poets of antiquity, and founder of the first women's club. There is, however, doubt as to whether she was tall and fair, conforming to the Greek ideal of beauty, or whether she was small and dark. Alma-Tadema, the artist, has fixed the current tradition in his representation of Sappho's school at Lesbos. There she is small, dark, beautiful, intense: and the artist, as one romantic commentator has said, has "subtly caught the prophetic light of her soul, her eager intellect, her unconscious grace and the slumbering passion in her eloquent eyes." Our artist, on the other hand, is one of those gentlemen who prefer blondes. Perhaps it is as well that we are not sure of her colour. Blondes can still say "And then there's Sappho..." while brunettes can claim her in precisely the same words.

### Spartan Ox-Throttlers

One of history's biggest groups of dominant women were the Spartan mothers, and they are said to have been blondes—but they had none of the qualities of the traditional glowing blondes. They were rude health and nothing else. Listen to this extract from a play by Aristophanes. Lysistrata is greeting Lampito, the delegate from Sparta for a woman's conference: "O dearest Laconian, O Lampito, welcome. How beautiful you look, sweetest one! What a fresh colour! How vigorous your body is! Why, you could throttle an ox!"

### Enter, a Brunette!

Blondes haven't had it all their own way, however: one of the most bewitching women in history is reliably reported to have been a brunette—none other, of course, than Cleopatra. Although a book has been written to prove that her hair was red, the accepted tradition is that she was tall, brown-skinned, her eyes and hair like jet, and as glossy as the raven's plume. At the age of 18

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