The truth about beauty

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.

Citation: READ, S.L., 2015. The truth about beauty. Discover Your Ancestors, 4, pp.141-145.

Additional Information:

- This article was published in the magazine Discover Your Ancestors (https://discoveryourancestors.co.uk/) and appears here with the permission of the publisher.

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/35778

Version: Published

Publisher: © Discovery Media Group Publishing

Rights: This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Please cite the published version.
The truth about beauty

Dr Sara Read looks into women’s beauty routines in the 16th and 17th centuries
whole head was refreshed, and he claimed his hair stayed bright and clean for the rest of the year.

Hair colour
Another time when women might wash their hair was if it was losing its colour, when a good wash in lye soap once again proved to be the first choice. Otherwise, to blacken the hair, a comb dipped in black leading could be used (this was also recommended for men’s beards). Felix Platter’s Golden Practice of Physick (1664, translated into English by prolific Civil War medical author and translator Nicholas Culpeper) warned that you shouldn’t over-darken your hair as this was unattractive, and that if it was naturally very black you could lighten it with by washing it with lye soap and then use the smoke from burning sulphur, known as brimstone. The anonymous author of The Ladies Dictionary (1694) wrote that “As for the colour of the Hair, opinions are various [...] but above all that it be not red”. Despite, or perhaps because of, the legacy of the red-headed Tudor monarchs, red hair was...
not fashionable. Black hair too favours at times as Thomas Raynalde dreads than any other hair colours, even though it must surely be that it was more visible in dark hair. Platter blond with washes made from Langhan's book of herbal medicine from 1597 advised the use of boiled w as smallpox scars - she had the disease when she the aristocracy (and perhaps hiding her own forehead from a very distinctive look, typical of 16th century portraits. Raynalde explained thick. dung with lye soap to make hair grow she also advised washing hair mixing she also advised using the recipe for ‘pincers’ or tweezers, or cut it close to the head, or she could manufacture a depilatory cream made from arsenic and burnt limestone – which should be tested by dipping in a feather before use to see if the plume fell off. Skin treatment Clear skin was considered ideal and Raynalde also included treatments to remove freckles and pimples, including dabbing them with oil of tartar. Hannah Woolley advised using almond oil or beer’s blood, and removing too much red from the complexion, for which a jelly made from various pulses was advised. Raynalde advised that skin could be moisturised with deer suet blended with rosewater and musk, or with sweet almond oil. This is said to have worked well on chapped lips. By contrast, Hannah Woolley advised that you should rub dry lips with “the Sweat behind your Ears, and this will make them smooth, and well coloured”.

Significantly, many beauty guides offered potions to try and repair the damage caused to a woman’s face by the ravages of smallpox, which was prolific throughout this era. Cures for the pock marks this left behind were many and various but Woolley says that the best one she had come across was “to wash the Face one day with the Distilled water of strong Vinegar, and the next day with the water wherein Bran and Mallows have been boiled; and continue this twenty days, or a Month together.”

The proliferation of smallpox scars led to use of facial patches, called black patches or spots. These were small pieces of black fabric or leather cut into shapes such as stars of crescent moons and stuck on the face, often to cover a smallpox scar or similar imperfection. Such was their appeal, though, that women wanted to wear them as fashion accessories even when they had nothing to cover. Elizabeth Pepys, the wife of diarist 1660. While the opinion that honest, virtuous women would make the most of their natural beauty without make-up, the women of the Court of Depot, as it was known, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.

How far your beauty regime extended from manufacturing soaps and moisturising balms to keep your skin clear and comfortable, or to wearing make-up and gazing in a mirror, probably had as much to do with your station in life as with any other consideration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W idow s 111951 to claim 20% off the RRP with free UK publisher, and English at Loughborough University. Her next works as lecturer in early modern aspects of early modern health. She has published written widely on aspects of early modern views and advocated the use of ‘painting’, ie make-up, arguing that clothes are just as unnatural but no one advocated walking around naked. In a later book Sociable Letters (1664) she went further and noted that: Country Housewives take more Pleasure in Milking their Cows, making their Butter and Cheese, and feeding their Poultry, than great Ladies do in Painting, Curling [their hair], and Adorning themselves, also they have more Quiet & Peaceable Minds and Thoughts, for they never, or seldom, look in a Glass to view their Faces, they regard not their Complexions, nor observe their Decays.