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J. Henry Middleton
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The Engraved Gems of Classical Times

This monograph on classical engraved gems, which also contains a catalogue of the collection then held by the Fitzwilliam Museum, was published in 1891. J. Henry Middleton (1846–96) was at the time the Director of the Museum and Slade Professor of Fine Art in Cambridge. His intention was to provide an introductory volume for students of archaeology which both traced the history of the use of engraved gemstones as seals and signets from Babylonian to classical times, described the techniques used to create these miniature works of art, and gave catalogue definitions, enhanced by photographic plates, of the Fitzwilliam collection, which had for the most part been donated by Colonel Leake (1777–1860), whose antiquarian interests had been aroused when he was sent to the eastern Mediterranean to assist the Turkish army against the French in the early nineteenth century.

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*With a Catalogue of the
Gems in the Fitzwilliam Museum*

J. HENRY MIDDLETON



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CLASSICAL TIMES

WITH A

CATALOGUE

OF THE

GEMS IN THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM.

BY

J. HENRY MIDDLETON,

SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ART, DIRECTOR OF THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM,
AND FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE;
AUTHOR OF "ANCIENT ROME IN 1888."

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1891

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MEMORIAE
VIRI CARISSIMI
CAROLI WILHELMI KING.

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PREFACE.

IN the following pages I have attempted to give a brief account of the engraved gems and other forms of signet which were used by the chief classical races of ancient times. The book is intended for the general use of students of archaeology, and has been written with the hope that it may in some cases lead the reader to a more detailed and practical study of this most fascinating subject.

The various tools and technical processes used by the ancient gem-engravers have been discussed at some length, since a close attention to these points is specially desirable as a much-needed help in the frequently difficult task of distinguishing between gems of different origin and date.

With regard to the Appendix containing the catalogue of the gems in the Fitzwilliam Museum, I have attempted to indicate the period to which each gem seems to belong, in spite of the great difficulty there is, very frequently, in attaining to anything like certainty on this point.

Even though in many cases my judgment may be erroneous, yet, on the whole, the attempt to distinguish periods of workmanship has its use, in giving the reader a notion of the general style and character of the gem in question.

The gems which are described in this catalogue were, with very few exceptions, collected by Colonel Leake, the

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distinguished author of valuable works on the *Topography of Athens* and other kindred subjects. They came into the possession of the Fitzwilliam Museum in the following manner. By his will, dated Jan. 17, 1859, Colonel Leake bequeathed to his wife for her life his whole collection of books, coins, gems, bronzes, vases and other antiques, with the provision that at her death, the whole collection should be offered to the University of Cambridge for the sum of £5000.

Colonel Leake died in 1860, and his widow died in 1863. It was then decided, by a vote of the Senate on Feb. 4, 1864, that Colonel Leake's testamentary offer should be accepted and that £5000 out of the funds of the Fitzwilliam Museum should be devoted to this important acquisition.

The actual value of the whole Leake collection was probably double of the sum paid for it, and its value has largely increased since 1864. The coins alone are now worth considerably more than the £5000 which was paid for the whole collection.

In 1870 a catalogue of Colonel Leake's gems was published by the late Charles William King, M.A., Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, the well-known author of many works on antique gems, which are full of interesting matter illustrated by the widest reading and the most copious learning. At this time, however, Mr King's eyesight had begun to fail, and in consequence of that a certain number of inaccuracies crept into his descriptions which make it desirable that another catalogue should be prepared, illustrated by a photographic process which gives the actual character of each gem better than the woodcuts in Mr King's work.

Mr King's chief works on gems were the following—*Antique gems*, 1866; *Precious Stones and Metals*, 1865; reprinted in Bohn's Series in 1883; *Handbook of engraved gems*, 1866; *Antique gems and rings*, 2 vols. 1872; *The Gnostics and their remains*, enlarged edition, 1887. And also a large number of articles on gems published in the

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Archaeological Journal, Vols. XVIII., XIX., and others. All these works are full of valuable matter, and are written in the most interesting style.

Mr King's own collection of gems, consisting of 330 examples of various dates, was formed by him between the years 1845 and 1877.

In 1881 it was sold to an American gentleman, Mr J. T. Johnston, who presented the whole collection to the Metropolitan Museum in New York City. A descriptive catalogue, written by Mr King in 1878, was published by the New York Museum in 1882.

Mr King died suddenly in London on the 26th of March, 1888. Of his loss as a friend it is impossible to speak—

“aeternumque
Nulla dies nobis maerorem e pectore demet.”

J. HEN. MIDDLETON.

KING'S COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

WORKS ON ANTIQUE GEMS¹.

A large number of the most valuable monographs on gems are scattered through the volumes of the chief archaeological periodicals of England, France, Germany and Italy; with the names of which classical students will be familiar.

Books on gems of the 17th and 18th centuries are now of but little value except for the records they supply, showing, in certain cases, that a special gem is not, at least, one of quite modern production.

The chief works of this class are these :

Agostini, *Gemme antiche figurate*, 2 vols., Roma, 1686.

De la Chausse, *Gemme antiche di Michelangelo Causeo de la Chausse*, Roma, 1700.

Maffei, *Gemme antiche di Dom. de' Rossi colle sposizioni di P. A. Maffei*, Roma, 1707.

Stosch, *Gemmae antiquae caelatae*, Amsterdam, 1724, and the same collection described by

Winckelmann, *Pierres gravées du feu Baron de Stosch*, Florence, 1760.

Zanetti, *Dactyliotheca*, Rome, 1747.

Mariette, *Traité des pierres gravées*, Paris, 1750; and *Museum Odescalchum, sive thesaurus gemmarum*, Rome, 1751.

Gori, *Museum Florentinum*, Florence, 1731—1762.

Natter, *Traité des pierres gravées*, London, 1761.

¹ The most important works in English on engraved gems are those written by C. W. King, a list of which is given in the Preface on page x.

- Gori, *Dactyliothecca Smithiana*, Venice, 1767.
 Worlidge, *Antique gems*, London, 1768.
 Cipriani, *Drawings of 100 gems in the Marlborough Collection*,
 engraved by Bartolozzi, 2 vols. folio, 1780—1791.
 Raspe, *Catalogue of gems cast in paste by James Tassie*,
 London, 1791.

Many other large and costly works with illustrations of antique gems were published in the 18th century, but the engravings of that time give little or no notion of the real character of the gems they represent, the main object of the artist being to give a pretty picture rather than a faithful copy.

Among more recent works the following are the most valuable—

- Toelken, *Erklärendes Verzeichniss der antiken vertieft geschnittenen Steine*, Berlin, 1835.
 Köhler, *Gesammelte Schriften, herausgegeben von L. Stephani*,
 St Petersburg, 1850—1853.
 Panofka, *Gemmen mit Inschriften*, printed in *Abhandlungen der König. Akad. der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1851,
 pp. 385—519.
 Brunn, *Geschichte der Griechischen Künstler*, Brunswick, 1859,
 Vol. II., pp. 444—637; and new edition, 1889, Vol. II.,
 pp. 303—433.
 Chabouillet, *Catalogue des camées et pierres gravées de la Bibliothèque Impériale*, Paris, 1858.
 Stephani and others, *Compte-rendu de la Commission Impériale Archéologique*, St Petersburg, 1860 to the present time;
 and, dealing with the same subject, *Antiquités du Bosphore Cimmérien*, St Petersburg, 1854.
 Gerhard, *Gesammelte akademische Abhandlungen und kleine Schriften*, Berlin, 1866.
 Müller-Wieseler, *Denkmäler der alten Kunst*, Theil II., Göttingen, 1869.

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- H. N. Story-Maskelyne, *Catalogue of the Marlborough gems*, privately printed, London, 1870.
Milchhoefer, *Die Anfänge der Kunst in Griechenland*, Leipzig, 1883, pp. 78 to 90.
Furtwängler and others, *Mykenische Vasen*, Berlin, 1886.
A. H. Smith, *Catalogue of gems in the British Museum*, with an Introduction by A. S. Murray, London, 1888.

Other works are referred to in the following text.

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