

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07540-4 - The Science of Gems, Jewels, Coins and Medals, Ancient and Modern

Archibald Billing

Frontmatter

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The Science of Gems, Jewels, Coins and Medals, Ancient and Modern

In addition to his medical practice, lecturing and teaching at the London Hospital, and his publishing of several medical works, the Irish physician Archibald Billing (1791–1881) was also an amateur artist and antiquarian. This illustrated book on gemmology was first published in 1867. Beginning with the works of ancient Greece, for him the highest pinnacle of civilization, Billing discusses the use of engraved gems, putting cameos and intaglios in the context of contemporary monumental sculpture, and tracing the history of carving in miniature back to the seal-stones of the Egyptians and Assyrians. He also considers the types and qualities of mineral used in making jewellery, from semi-precious pebbles through to diamonds, and he describes the techniques of cutting precious stones. The work concludes with a translation of the autobiography of the Italian engraver Benedetto Pistrucci (1784–1855), who became chief medallist at the Royal Mint.

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ANCIENT AND MODERN.

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