

**ADDRESSED TO HIS GRACE THE
DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.
THOUGHTS ON THE CAMEOS
AND INTAGLIOS OF ANTIQUITY**

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Addressed to his grace the duke of Marlborough. Thoughts on the cameos and intaglios of antiquity by Anonymous

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ADDRESSED TO
HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.
THOUGHTS

ON THE
CAMEOS AND INTAGLIOS OF ANTIQUITY,

SUGGESTED BY
A SIGHT AND SURVEY

OF
THE BLENHEIM COLLECTION.

BY
A LOVER OF THE FINE ARTS.



54
Si qua sunt in universo Antiquitatum omnium generum Thesuro Monumenta.
In quibus prisca artifices, facile luxuriantes, ingenii libertate uti sunt, Gemmaria
Ars proculdubio primas tenet. Vide *Gemmas Astriferas, a Gorio in Praef.*

OXFORD,
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1847.



THOUGHTS

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CAMEOS AND INTAGLIOS OF ANTIQUITY,

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PART I.

ON ANTIQUE GEMS IN GENERAL.



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TASTE, that undefined and indefinable something within us, be it the creature of feeling or the result of study, a natural endowment or an acquired habit, finds or forms materials for the exercise of its powers, it discovers substances whereon to develop its resources, and exhibit its ingenuity in every kingdom of the animate and inanimate world. The remark is not meant to apply to the subjects of a painter's or a sculptor's compositions, to the things presented to an artist's fancy or feeling by the earth, the sea, the sky, by all the phænomena and realities of things created. Most true and certain it is, that nature does in this way abundantly minister her sublime and beautiful stores to an artist's taste; but such things do not fall within the compass of the preceding observation, neither do they properly belong to the subject of the present paper; the materials here referred to are

Taste displays its power over the flint and pebble.

those which the industry of taste has discovered on the surface or within the recesses of the earth, which are to be handled by the hand, and to be fabricated by suitable implements into works of art; they are the pebbles of the mountain or the sea-shore, the flints of the cliff or the quarry, which, (though custom and commerce have forbidden us to call them precious stones,) have been named by the French *pierres fines*, but which should be rather called *pierres belles et bonnes pour la gravure*. But whatever be their denomination, they ought to rank high in our estimation as having been the favourites of the gifted Gem-engravers of the Greek and Roman Schools. It was on a Sardonyx that Tryphon carved the celebrated Cameo of the Marriage of Cupid and Psyche, in the Marlborough Collection. It is known that the subject of "*Diomedé in possession of the stolen Palladium*" has tried the skill of three of the greatest lapidary artists of antiquity, two of whom bear names famous for a very different sort of excellence, Solon and Dioscorides. Solon chose the Sard or Cornelian for his Intaglio of Diomedé; Dioscorides the same stone for the same subject; neither did Polycletus, the carver of the third Intaglio of Diomedé, make a different choice as to the material on which he worked; this similarity of choice, both as to the subject engraved and the mode of engraving, not being surprising, because Polycletus of Sicyon was the predecessor, if not the teacher, of the other two, and was closely imitated by them. Again, in that wonderful work of the Glyptic art, one of the finest

Pierres fines.

Instances of the Stones used by the great Engravers of antiquity.

Gems in the Marlborough Collection, and which (like that of the Cupid and Psyche) was brought from Italy, about 1631, by that Earl of Arundel who was the father and founder of *virtu* in this country, Diomede is again the subject, not indeed as before, as if the hero were in the act of defending his prize against some unseen assailant, but here Ulysses himself is introduced in angry remonstrance with Diomede, and (agreeably to the story told in Suidas, *sub voc. Διομηδείως ἀναγκή*) prepared to strike and rob him of his booty; the stone chosen for this Intaglio is a Sardonyx. “*Love taming the Lion*,” by Plotarchus, in the Florentine Collection, is a Cameo worked out of a Sardonyx; the same subject, (by the artist Alexander,) once in the Morpeth Collection, and much more elaborately treated than in the former Gem, was likewise engraved on a Sardonyx. “*Hercules binding a Lion*,” by Dioscorides, in the King of Prussia’s Museum, is a Cameo on an Onyx. “*The sitting Faun*,” by Nicomachus, once in the Chevalier Odam’s Cabinet at Rome, but now in the Marlborough Collection, is an Intaglio cut out of a black Agate; “*The Achilles Citharædus*,” by Pamphilus, one of the wonders of the Duke of Devonshire’s Collection before it was dispersed, is carved *en creux* upon a Cornelian. The famous Intaglio called Michael Angelo’s Seal in the Royal Cabinet at Paris, which, within an oval of about an inch long, contains fifteen figures, most wonderful in attitude and *ordonnance*, is also cut out of Cornelian.

Instances might be cited without end to shew the sort of stones chosen by the ancient Gem-engravers