

him protection or security. In this belief, catalogues of intaglios and cameos, with lists of their several qualities, or virtues, were published, and are sometimes found in mediæval manuscripts.

A very handsome cameo, described by one of the modern writers on this subject, was looked upon with regard as a preservative against rats! Among a great number of such objects formerly preserved in the treasury of the Cathedral of St. Paul's in London, one, which bore a figure of Andromeda, had the power of raising love between man and woman; one with the figure of a hare was a protective against the devil; a dog and a lion on the same stone preserved against dropsy; the figure of Orion gave to one of these stones the quality of securing victory in war; in another the figure of a syren, sculptured in a jacinth, rendered the bearer invisible.

It was in a great measure out of these mediæval collections of gems, ecclesiastical or lay, the result of mere accidental finds, that our modern collections have been formed, with the addition of others found in antiquarian excavations of a later date, and they are thus, more or less, of a very miscellaneous character. The dactyliothea of the Roman age, if collected by a man of taste, would contain nothing but stones of the highest degree of art, and even if he erred in judgment himself, he could find an adviser who would assist him; he did not collect his specimens by chance, glad to get all that came to hand, but sought them from the best sources, so that he had probably nothing but what was good. It is different with the modern collector. The cameos and intaglios which are brought to light by ordinary antiquarian excavations are, for the most part, of a very low degree of merit, such as no doubt were possessed by people of the commoner classes. The modern collector has little but these to collect from, and not in such abundance but that he is glad to get all he can, or at best to pick out here and there any one which seems better than the others, and wait for a rare chance of obtaining something of a very superior character. Such is the general character of the contents of most modern cabinets, and especially of such as have been made by private collectors; and such, no doubt, is the cabinet of intaglios and cameos of the Duc de Blacas. It contains a certain number of very fine works of art, among a large quantity of specimens of very ordinary merit. This is especially the case among the intaglios, which may perhaps be said to be the case generally. The stones necessary for the cameos were rarer than the others, and were probably seldom given to the artists of inferior merit who employed themselves on intaglios, and the two processes differed considerably in the manner of carrying them into execution. In modern excavations on ancient sites, an intaglio is often found, but a cameo very rarely. Even now we do not know where the Romans obtained the large sardonxes on which they engraved the fine cameos which are preserved.

The sardonx on which the fine head of Augustus in the Blacas collection is engraved forms an oval, five inches and a quarter in length, by three inches and three quarters in breadth, and is of very good quality. The ground, or layer, of the stone out of which the head rises is of a fine russet colour, which throws the engraving into very delicate, though rather low relief. A head of Medusa appears to form the centre of the shield which covers the breast. Augustus has a band, or fillet, round his head, the sign of his imperial dignity, on which are set four precious stones, an emerald on the left, and, following it in their order towards the right, a sapphire, a topaz, and a ruby, and round the figure in the middle are arranged four very small diamonds. In the collection of the Imperial Library at Paris, there are several cameos as large, and perhaps a little larger, than the Augustus of the Blacas collection, but there is hardly one of them that equals it, and certainly not one that excels it as a work of art. The expression of the countenance is brought out with great delicacy and refinement, and the artist has displayed the greatest skill in taking advantage of the colours and shades offered him by the stone. Little appears to be

known of the history of this remarkable work of art, except that it was formerly in the Strozzi collection.

The age of Augustus is said to have been that at which the art of engraving precious stones was carried to the highest degree of excellence among the Romans, and we need not therefore be surprised if we find so many of them representing the features of that emperor. Pliny (xxxvii. 4) celebrates the merits of a portrait of Augustus by an engraver named Dioscorides, which was used as the signet of the emperors who succeeded him. One of the finest cameos known is a tricoloured sardonx, about a foot high, representing, in twenty-two figures, the apotheosis of the Emperor Augustus, and which was therefore probably engraved soon after his death. It was brought from Constantinople in the reign of St. Louis, and being, in the ignorance of that time, supposed to represent the triumph of Joseph over Pharaoh, it was considered to regard the church more than the laity, and was placed by that monarch among the treasures of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris. It is now preserved in the Bibliothèque Impériale. In the same case with the large cameo of Augustus in the Blacas collection there is a small one, of the same emperor, also on sardonx, which came likewise from the Strozzi cabinet.

The choicest examples of the Blacas collection are arranged in two cases, at the two ends of a box or frame, one with the large cameo of Augustus in the centre, looking towards the entrance-door, the other in the opposite direction. The first contains forty intaglios and cameos, and among the latter, besides the two already described, a cameo on sardonx, representing a portrait of Tiberius, also from the Strozzi collection, which strikes us by its wonderful relief, but it has suffered much from rubbing. Among the intaglios in this case are a portrait of Julius Cæsar engraved in jacinth, the features of which are wonderfully sharp and delicate; a Silenus, on cornelian, with full face, remarkably fine; another Silenus, side face, on amethyst, which is also finely executed, and has the name of the engraver inscribed in Greek letters, Hyllus; and a Mænad, whose wild and drunken fury, and the voluptuous fleshiness of her bosom, are represented with extraordinary effect. The other select case contains forty-two examples. It also has its large cameo, well executed, on a sardonx about five inches high, representing the Empress Messalina. The portrait of Juba II. is represented in a delicate little cameo on sardonx. A head of Livia, on cornelian, is also worthy of our notice, because the head is in intaglio, surrounded by a border in cameo. This also came from the Strozzi collection. Among the intaglios in this case, we may call attention to a female head in cornelian, with a sweet little face; a very characteristic portrait of Vespasian, in cornelian; and a small head of Horace, in topaz, of considerable merit. There is also in this case what is called an amulet, in cornelian, formed in the shape of the petal of a flower (perhaps intended for a rose), with two small Cupids, very prettily executed in intaglio.

The rest of the intaglios of the Blacas collection, with two or three cameos, are placed in three large cases, upon tables, on the other side of the room, and are mostly of inferior work. Many of them have suffered from rubbing and ill-usage. They amount in all to 384. We may, in passing over them, point out to notice No. 20, a neat little cameo of a horse, of tolerably good work, and No. 245, a sardonx remarkable for its neat border of astragals.

In the course of collecting, the Duc de Blacas embraced a taste for acquiring a class of monuments which were then comparatively little thought of, those of the earlier ages of Mahometanism, which are intimately connected with the present article by the circumstance that among them the intaglios, or engraved stones, hold a very prominent place. The duc was one of the earlier friends of the late accomplished and lamented professor of Arabic in Paris, M. Reimaud, who, at one time, might almost be looked on as the keeper of his Mussulman antiquities, and who, in 1828, published, in two octavo volumes,