

ANCIENT JEWELRY

West
Room

The goldsmith's craft is one of the oldest arts in the Mediterranean world. That is to say, it is one which came to perfection in prehistoric times. In Cyprus wonderful gold treasures date back to the fourteenth century B. C.; and the ancient work in gold done in the eighth and seventh centuries B. C. was never surpassed by later products. Ephesus in Asia Minor was a great center for the goldsmiths' industry, and from Asia Minor came the most famous historical makers of jewelry, the Etruscans. Even in antiquity their renown was great. Their technical skill was unrivaled. The Greeks, too, did excellent goldsmith work. Some specimens of ancient jewelry, Etruscan, Greek, and Roman, will be found in case VI.

Greek work, such as the two ducks (No. 6) or the earrings (No. 16), good though it be, is quite overshadowed by the minute and painstaking work of the Etruscans. An amazing amount of skill and patience must have been necessary to produce such detail laden ornaments as No. 7 or No. 15 or No. 23, or such elaborate necklaces as No. 32 or No. 34. The soldering to a surface of minute sections of gold thread—granulation, as it is called—seen, for instance, on the pendants of No. 31, is now a lost art. One of the most interesting pieces is a gold bulla (No. 3), a case for amulets, worn especially about the necks of children. It has on the front a design of two nude youths and on the back palmettes.

Roman work is much less good. One interesting piece is a ring (No. 14) having instead of a seal a nude figure of a child clinging to the band of the ring, and inside an inscription of unknown significance, *Excidio servata meo*, "saved by the destruction of me."

In this same case are displayed a few specimens of gems and intaglios and a few cameos from the Maxwell Sommerville Collection, some of them set in rings. Most of these gems are of the imperial Roman period, but the mountings are modern.