

Robert took the opportunity to make for Sienna to enjoy "the daily divertissements of musicke, horsriding, ballone, and others, courting our palates with ye curious fruits and delicate Muscatella wine". Then all went on to Florence to see "all that is chiefly notable in and about the city—rarities rather to be named yn described—such in number and quality as the whole world can scarce equal, much less exceed".

Bargrave's travels can be reconstructed from comments in his *Rara*. If any place was a starting point it was Leyden, where he was "living retired" in 1650 when he was asked by the Countess of Chesterfield, then in The Hague, to be travelling tutor to her son Lord Stanhope.

Bargrave was buying prints in Paris, collecting odd mussel shells in La Rochelle, adding Roman periwinkles to his collection from the Loire at Doué, near Saumur, and from Toulouse revelling in desiccated corpses, in particular describing how he played with the corpse of a French soldier who had been stabbed in the chest: "I pulled the hand away several times, and the nerves and tendons were so strong that the hand returned with a lusty clap upon the wound." He declined the offer of a dried baby, but took instead a finger. Optical instruments were his quest in Nuremberg, Augsburg and Vienna, and in Venice he bought "of a High Dutch Turner" a "very artificial anatomy of a human eye, with all its films or turnicles, by way of turnery in ivory or horn; together with the optick nerve which runneth into the brain".

In September 1656 he was in Prague to see the coronation of the Emperor Leopold, King of Bohemia, and in November in Innsbruck to witness the reception of Christina of Sweden into the Roman Church: "but her carriage in the church was very scandalous—laughing and gigling, and curling and trimming her locks and

motion of her hands and body was so odd that I heard some Italians that were near me say *E matta per Dio*, 'By God she is mad'". He spent "several summers" in Lyon in a pension on the "Pal Mal", attracted, one suspects, by a "very handsome" and wanton lady abbess, who in 1658 was ready to "leap through the grates for joy" at seeing him.

Bargrave's most memorable voyage, and his only entry into international politics, was made in 1662 at the command of Charles II, or the archdioceses of Canterbury and York, to carry to Algiers £10,000 ransom money raised by the Church to bargain for the release of 300 British slaves captured on the sea by North African pirates. He was forced to bid for them slave by slave "as one buyeth horses in Smithfield", and succeeded in saving 162 at great danger to himself and his companion Dr Selleck.

In Canterbury this perilous voyage is remembered in the cathedral accounts when Bargrave was treasurer, for under 1669-70 is: "To a poore man that had his toung cut out at Argiers. . . 1.0." In the display cases is "The picture in little of Shaban Agaa. . . the King of Argeers. . . [by a] poor painter, and Italian slave", and the dried chameleon "perfumed and stuffed" that was "given me Alive in Africa [but] for want of flies it died" on the way home. There is more than this, for not only has the North African footwear survived, but also the rare Indian ceremonial headwear of a member of the Cree tribe from Hudson Bay, given to Bargrave by Timothy Couley, one of the merchants he rescued, as a mark of gratitude.

The museum that Bargrave must have assembled in his house in the 1660s cannot be isolated from what he saw in the rest of Europe during his travels—and this must also be said of Tradescant's collections. In Italy alone there were more than 250 *musei naturali* by the end of



8—BRONZE HERCULES. One of Renaissance "Antiquities" Bargrave acquired

the 17th century; but even so, Bargrave's collection is surely an epitome of the *Museum Tradescantianum*. In our modern age of specialisation and classification, with museums given over to special subjects, it is easy to forget that, before 1700, paintings, drawings, sculpture, bronzes, medals, coins, gems, natural history and anatomical specimens, optical and astronomical instruments, were kept one

the other. Had the Bargrave collection not been bequeathed to Canterbury in 1680, and then moved over in 1685, and so consigned to oblivion, it would most likely have been dispersed. It is a sadness that the optical instruments have been lost, and serious thought must be given as to whether the cathedral is ultimately the right proper custodian of this precious museum unless the present vitrines are a permanent display. The Roman tables languish unused. The collection cannot be extolled as great, if judged by individual items, only the Roman gems stand out as remarkable. Otherwise the collection is intensely personal and curious in its full effect in Bargrave's cabinet in his Cathedral House in the Cathedral Close must be reconstructed in the mind.

Today we can smile at the oddities picked up: the drunk and urinating Herminius, a bronze "dug out of his temple the Tyber"; and his "Two Priapism, in the form of being votes or offerings to that absurd heathen deity"—absurd, perhaps, but Bargrave's collection is intensely personal and curious in its full effect in Bargrave's cabinet in his Cathedral House in the Cathedral Close must be reconstructed in the mind.

There is the "Confetti di Tiber" containing Tiber gravel, "so like sugar paper that they will deceive any man"; and a large toadstool or mushroom of stone, heavy, which is not a mushroom petrified but grew always a stone. . . I bought it from an Armenian at Venice".

A visit to see most of these at Canterbury is worth while, and if the eye does not catch upon the Frenchman's dried finger, the artificial eye, or the dried chameleon, let it rest upon trays of medals or gold coins, and fine leaden medals made in Lyon. Then ponder the "pretty kind of nun's work purse, made of greenish silk, and carved work mother-of-shell, presented me likewise by a nun".

Illustrations: Mark Fiennes.



9—CABINET MADE IN THE 1660s FOR BARGRAVE'S COLLECTION