

## The Archaeological Journal.

SEPTEMBER, 1852.

### ON THE BRONZE DOORS OF THE CATHEDRAL OF GNESEN.

THERE are perhaps few examples of the earlier period of mediæval sculpture<sup>1</sup> more deserving of attention from the student of the history of art than the metal doors which ornament many continental churches. As the bronze of which they are usually composed, admits of delicate workmanship, and possesses great durability, better opportunities of forming correct estimates of the powers of the artists of those times are seldom to be found than are afforded by works of this description. In the following pages it is proposed to give some account of one of these monuments of the metal-founder's art which has hitherto been little known in this country, the bronze doors of the cathedral of Gnesen in Prussian Poland. They merit notice not only as good and well-preserved examples of the art of an early period, but in regard to the remarkable person from whose history the subjects of the bas-reliefs which cover them are taken, St. Adalbert, the second Bishop of Prague, who as one of the earliest apostles of Christianity in the north-east of Europe, and as a martyr in the cause, has ever been held in the highest veneration in Bohemia, Northern Germany, and especially in Poland, of which last country he is one of the patron saints.

It may I fear be thought that the subject is here treated at too great length, but its nature makes it unavoidable either to enter somewhat fully into details, or to treat it in a cursory and incomplete manner. It must, moreover, be

<sup>1</sup> The application of the word sculpture to castings in metal may, perhaps, appear unusual to an English reader. It is,

however, sanctioned by Cicognara, D'Agincourt, and many other writers on art.

remembered that the study of the works of art executed among the continental nations ought not to be neglected by the British artist or archæologist who desires to acquire a thorough and correct knowledge of those of his own country. The examination of foreign examples and the comparison of them with our own, will often aid us most materially in forming correct conclusions as to the purpose, the history, or the origin of the latter; and many of the errors into which some of our older antiquarian writers have fallen might have been avoided if they had been better acquainted with the antiquities existing on the Continent.

The doors in question are fixed at the principal entrance of the cathedral of Gnesen, on the south side of the nave near the west end, and consist of two valves, each about ten feet high by three wide. They are solid castings in bronze or bell-metal, the execution very clean and good. After the casting the work has been carefully tooled up, and fine lines, such as those marking the embroideries on garments, and the small folds of the draperies added with the graver.

A border about five inches wide, of foliage mixed with figures of men, quadrupeds, birds, and monsters runs entirely round each valve, and encloses nine panels containing subjects in relief, taken as above mentioned from the history of St. Adalbert; one of the valves has a narrow border ornamented by a scroll so placed as to cover the junction with the other valve. The general character of the arrangement and of the border may be seen in the cuts at pages 222 and 224, which are copied from the engraving of these doors in Count E. Raczynski's "Wspomnienia Wielkopolski," (Memorials of Great Poland), No. 51 of the plates. For the purpose of giving a correct idea of the style and character of the work, and of the power of the artist, a portion of each of the same two panels has been engraved from casts from moulds made by myself on the doors in 1851. These cuts will be given in a subsequent number of the Journal. The figures on the left valve (*i.e.* the one opposite to the left hand on entering the church) are in considerably higher relief than those on the right.

Before describing the reliefs which fill the several panels, it will be necessary, in order to make their meaning intelligible, to give a sketch of the life of St. Adalbert. Excellent materials for this purpose are afforded by the two biographies

written shortly after his death, which are printed in the *Acta Sanctorum*,<sup>2</sup> and in Pertz's *Rer. Germ. Scriptores*.<sup>3</sup> The first of these is stated by the writer to have been composed in the reign of Otho the Third (983-1002), and the author is supposed to have been one Johannes Canaparius, a monk in the convent at Rome, in which St. Adalbert had formerly lived. The other is ascribed by the editors of the *Acta Sanct.*, to an unknown monk; by Pertz, to St. Bruno, who was consecrated "Archiepiscopus Gentium" in 1001, and martyred in Russia about 1009. The two lives agree in most respects; the first is simpler in style and more minute in its details, the second more rhetorical and didactic. In the following narrative I have preferred, where any difference existed, to follow the first rather than the second. St. Adalbert was born in Bohemia about the year 956, of noble parents, his father being Count of Lubic, by name, it is said, Slawnik,<sup>4</sup> his mother's name was Strzieszislawa. At this time Bohemia was very imperfectly Christianised,<sup>5</sup> but his birthplace was one of those parts of the country where the Christian religion was the most in honour. In baptism he received the name of Woitiech, or Woyciech, (explained to mean the "consolation of the army") by which he has always been, and is to the present day, known to the Bohemians and Poles. While an infant he was suddenly seized with a dangerous sickness, and was in imminent peril of death,<sup>6</sup> but his parents having carried him to the neighbouring church and placed him on the altar of the Virgin Mary, he as suddenly recovered. While a boy he showed some disposition to study, and being placed in the care of the priests, he is said to have committed the whole psalter to memory before the age of sixteen. Having thus, as his biographer (*Vita Secunda*, p. 188), expresses it, been fed upon the nectar of David and the honey of Gregory, he was sent to Magdeburg, in order that he might "eat his part of the seven loaves of wisdom."<sup>7</sup> Here he was received

<sup>2</sup> 3rd vol. Of April, 23rd day.

<sup>3</sup> 6th vol.

<sup>4</sup> As, however, this word means no more than "a Slavonian," some mistake seems probable.

<sup>5</sup> "Pars maxima, lignum vel lapidem pro Deo colunt; plerique vero, nomine tenus Christiani, ritu gentilium vivunt;

nonnulli tamen, et bene credunt et bona opera agunt."—*Vita Prior*, p. 178.

<sup>6</sup> "Curvis unguibus lacerat ora pallida nutrix," says the author of the *Vita Prior*, when describing the consternation produced in the family by his sudden attack.

<sup>7</sup> *i. e.* The Trivium: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric; and the Quadrivium: Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy.

by the Archbishop Adalbert, who bestowed upon him his own name in the rite of confirmation. By the Archbishop he was committed to the care of Ottricus,<sup>8</sup> at that time master of the schools, under whose auspices he entered the "januas timoris" (p. 188), which indeed seem to have deserved the name, for the discipline was of the most rigid kind, as the penalty of an ill-learned lesson is described to have been that—"scopæ tergum verrunt et ferventia flagella carnem frangunt."

Ottricus being called from the superintendence of the schools to the chapel of the Emperor Otho the Second, the young Adalbert, after nine years study at Magdeburg, returned to Bohemia. Here he was present at the death-bed of the first Bishop of Prague, Tetharatus<sup>9</sup> (otherwise Dithmar), whose dying penitence produced such an effect upon his mind that he, having been hitherto a luxurious worldling ("deliciosus miles"), became from thenceforth a devoted servant of Heaven.

The duke<sup>1</sup> and the people<sup>2</sup> having met in order to elect a bishop in place of Tetharatus, unanimously chose Adalbert, and his election was marked by the marvel of a man possessed by a devil appearing in the cathedral and announcing what had occurred, before it could be known to the priests attached to the church. The bishop elect went to Verona in order to receive from the Emperor Otho the Second, the confirmation of his see by delivery of the pastoral staff, and was there consecrated by Willigisus, Archbishop of Mentz. This appears to have taken place in the year 983. After his consecration he returned to Prague,<sup>3</sup> and there diligently and zealously performed the duties of his high office, particularly devoting himself to the assistance of the poor, the sick, and the prisoners, which last were at that time extremely numerous in Prague. He was, however, much troubled by the evil deeds of his flock, and especially by three things; the practice of polygamy by the great men, the marriages of the clergy, and the selling of Christian

<sup>8</sup> The successor of Adalbert in the Archbishopric of Magdeburg.

<sup>9</sup> The date of Dithmar's death is by most Bohemian authors placed in 969.

<sup>1</sup> Boleslaus the Pious.

<sup>2</sup> "Factus est conventus desolatæ plebis una cum principe illius terræ."—*Vita*

*Prior*. "Conveniunt Dux terræ et major populus."—*Vita Secunda*.

<sup>3</sup> The biographer relates that the horse on which he rode back was not adorned with a bridle glittering with gold and silver, but merely furnished with a hempen halter.

slaves and captives to the Jews.<sup>4</sup> A vision is said to have appeared to him, of our Saviour complaining that he was again sold to the Jews in the persons of these the members of his body. (*Vita Prior*, p. 181.) Worn out at length by his contests against these iniquities, he determined on abandoning his diocese, and in the year 989 he undertook a pilgrimage on foot to Jerusalem. In the prosecution of this journey he came to Rome, where he found Theophania,<sup>5</sup> daughter of the Greek emperor, Romanus, and widow of Otho the Second, who entreating his prayers for her deceased husband, bestowed upon him a mighty mass of silver,<sup>6</sup> which he forthwith distributed to the poor. From Rome he proceeded on his journey, taking the great Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino in his way. Here, however, the abbot and the principal monks dissuaded him from his pilgrimage, representing to him that it was more profitable to lead a holy life in some settled abode than to waste his years in useless wandering, and that God was in every place propitious to him who lived well. Struck with the truth of this advice, he proposed to become a member of the community which the Greek St. Nilus<sup>7</sup> had established at Grotta Ferrata, about four leagues south of Rome. St. Nilus, however, being unwilling to receive him, recommended him to Leo, abbot of the convent of SS. Boniface and Alenius in Rome. His brother Gaudentius, who had accompanied him into Italy, also took the cowl. Here he remained for five years in the sedulous practice of all monastic virtues. It is related of him that as a work of obedience he was accustomed to carry daily to the kitchen, or the refectory, the water or the wine which was required for the use of the brethren, and that the enemy took occasion to tempt him to sin by causing him often to slip and break the earthen pitchers and spill their contents. On one day, however, as he was bringing wine to the table of the refectory, he stumbled and fell with so mighty a crash upon the vessel he carried, as to excite the attention of the abbot and all the

<sup>4</sup> This is a curious testimony to the early settlement of the Jews at Prague, where a numerous colony exists to the present day. Their old synagogue is a building of the 13th or 14th century.

<sup>5</sup> "Pulchrum lutum, Græca Imperatrix Augusta."—*Vita Secunda*.

<sup>6</sup> "Ingentem massam, quantum juvenis

Gaudentius vix levare posset."

<sup>7</sup> He was abbot of the convent of Rossano in Sicily, but was driven from thence by the incursions of the Saracens. A remarkable doorway (probably of the 11th century), with a Greek inscription, remains in the church at Grotta Ferrata. —Gailhabaud.

brethren. Strange to say, however, the pitcher was whole and the wine unpilt.

In the year 994 St. Adalbert was commanded by the Pope to return to his diocese ; here he was at first well received, but the wickedness of the Bohemians, and especially the murder of a woman who, having committed adultery, had taken sanctuary in the nunnery of St. George, and was forcibly dragged out from thence and decapitated, compelled him again to leave Prague. Thence he went into Hungary, where he laboured with much success, and baptised the king's son, St. Stephen. From Hungary he returned to his Roman monastery, where he remained until, in the year 995, Willigisus, Archbishop of Mentz, came there in company with the Emperor Otho the Third. The primate of Germany complaining that so important a see should remain deprived of its bishop, Adalbert was a second time compelled to leave the convent, and crossing the Alps, after about two months travelling, he reached Mentz, where he remained for some time at the court of the emperor, who took much pleasure in his company.<sup>8</sup> While here he had a vision, from which he augured his approaching martyrdom. From Mentz he passed into France, visited Tours and Fleury, and then set out for Bohemia. On his road, however, he heard of the massacre of four of his brothers and their children, male as well as female, which had been perpetrated by some of his enemies, and abandoning his intention of returning to Prague, he betook himself to Boleslaus,<sup>9</sup> Duke of Poland, with whom his elder brother happening to be, had for the time escaped the fate of his kindred. From the court of the Polish duke he communicated with the Bohemians, but finding that they utterly spurned and rejected him, he resolved to abandon them to their evil ways, and to attempt the conversion of the heathens of the north and east of Europe. He visited Gnesen,<sup>1</sup> where he baptised many of the natives, and travelling thence to the Vistula, he embarked with his two companions, Benedictus a priest, and his

<sup>8</sup> A quaint story is told of his conduct at this period. "Noctibus cum carpserant (*i. e.* the members of the imperial household) somnum, calcamenta eorum componere cura fuit. Ab janitore usque ad Principem Regiæ domus omnium caligas aqua abluit, et purgatis sordibus, eas suo loco restituit."—*Vita Prior*, cap. 5.

<sup>9</sup> According to the usually received chronology, Boleslaus did not succeed Miecislaus I. until 999.

<sup>1</sup> Dlugosz, and other Polish chroniclers following him, reckon St. Adalbert as Archbishop of Gnesen, but this receives no sanction from the early writers.

younger brother Gaudentius, and sailed down the stream to Dantzig, and thence by the Frische Haff to the neighbourhood of Fischhausen, not far from Königsberg, in Prussia. Here the three intrepid missionaries were landed on an islet on the coast, and the vessel in which they came returned. The inhabitants of the island attacked them with threats and blows, and carried them over to the mainland, where they remained five days. On the sixth day, (the 23rd of April, 997), after celebrating mass they set forward on foot, but while reposing on their road, they were seized and bound by the natives, and Sigo<sup>2</sup> their priest, having first pierced St. Adalbert with a lance, his followers quickly completed the murder, and he expired, employing his last breath in prayer for his murderers.<sup>3</sup>

After his death his head was cut off and fixed upon a stake, while his companions were carried away in bonds. So far the early Lives; of the occurrences after his death there are many and various accounts more or less legendary, references to many of which will be found in the observations of Bohuslaus Balbinus, which follow the early Lives in the *Acta Sanctorum*. The narrative which seems to have been generally received, is to be found in Dlugosz's<sup>4</sup> *Hist. Polon.*, and is shortly as follows: His head having been set on a stake, his body was cast on the sand as a prey to the birds and beasts of prey, but an eagle<sup>5</sup> perching near, drove off all that approached, and protected the corpse from mutilation. The Prussians, struck by this marvel, after some days buried the body, and when Boleslaus, on hearing of the

<sup>2</sup> Another account calls the chief priest Kyrwardus, and his satellites Waydelotti; the former word or Kyrwaitus, however, according to Schützius, (*Rer. Pruss. Historia*), was the appellation of a Prussian priest, and signified "Os Dei." Hartknock (*Selectæ Dissert. Hist. de variis rebus Prussicis*) says that the title of the high priest was Kriwe Kriweito.—*Judex Judicum*. Waydelottus is derived from *waidiu*, knowledge (p. 148—150).

<sup>3</sup> The probable cause of this savage deed was a dread of the anger of their Gods, as is expressed in the words put into the mouth of the Prussians by the author of the Second Life, "Propter tales homines terra nostra non dabit fructum, arbores non parturient, nova non nascentur animalia, vetera morientur." From the part taken in it by the priest, the act

seems to have been partly of the nature of a sacrifice; and in later times the Prussians were accustomed to burn alive, with their horses and arms, some of the chief prisoners whom they took in war (Schützi, *Rer. Pruss. Hist.*); nevertheless, they are described by Helmoldeus (*Chron. Slav.*, cap. i., p. 49.) as humane and hospitable to those whom accident or storms may have thrown upon their coasts.

<sup>4</sup> Often called Longinus, a translation of his name. He wrote in 1470.

<sup>5</sup> Eagles often occur in Polish legends. An eagle, in like manner, watched over the remains of St. Stanislaus at Cracow. Gnesen, in Polish "Gniezna," was founded where an eagle's nest (gniazdo) was found on the ground by Lekh I., and the arms of the kingdom are an eagle.

murder, had invaded their country, dug it up, and agreed to sell it to him for its weight in silver. When put into the scales it was, however, balanced by the duke's ring, or a widow's mite; or, according to Dlugosz, so small a weight of silver, that nearly all that the Poles had brought with them was replaced in their chests, "non sine magno Pruthenorum cruciatu." When Boleslaus had obtained the holy remains, he carried them with great pomp to Gnesen, and there interred them in the cathedral. In the year 1001 the shrine of the saint was visited by the Emperor Otho the Third, who on that occasion<sup>6</sup> bestowed the title of king on Boleslaus, and placed the regal crown upon his head. In 1038 Brzetislaus, Duke of Bohemia, pillaged the cathedral of Gnesen, and according to the Bohemian historians, carried off the body of St. Adalbert. This the Poles obstinately deny, and assert that the body carried off was that of St. Gaudentius, (See Dlugosz and the "Dissertatio de relatione Corporis Pragm" of B. Balbinus, in the Acta Sanctorum.)

A splendid shrine of solid silver, supported by angels of the same metal, the gift of King Sigismund the Third, stands in the centre of the nave of the cathedral of Gnesen, and is believed to contain his remains. On the day of his martyrdom crowds still flock to attend the solemn service performed in his honour, and to hear sung the celebrated hymn<sup>7</sup> to the Virgin Mary, beginning, "Boga rodzica dziewica" (*i.e.* Virgin mother of God), both the words and the music of which are said to be the composition of the saint. (Wspomnienia Wielkopolski, vol. ii. p. 325.)

At Prague, on the other hand, a magnificent shrine adorned with gold gems and pearls, and costing more than 7000 florins, was made in 1129 in order to contain the bones brought from Gnesen, and was placed on the altar dedicated to the service of the martyr. (Acta Sanct., vol. iii., April, p. 992). "Non nostrum tantas componere lites."

The subjects on the doors are arranged in regular order

<sup>6</sup> Boleslaus, in return, presented him with many gifts, and among them an arm of St. Adalbert, which the emperor placed in the church of St. Bartholomew at Rome.

<sup>7</sup> It was sung by the Polish armies before going into battle, and was prefixed by the Kings of Poland to their codes of laws, and to treaties of peace. It is

remarkable as being (even in its present form, which is supposed not to be older than the 14th century) the oldest known monument of the Polish language. (Talvi, Languages and Lit. of the Slavic Nations) It is given, with the music to which it is sung (but without a translation), in Bowring's Specimens of the Polish poets. It has no poetical merit.



of time, they commence at the bottom of the left valve, and are continued upon it in ascending order; on the right valve they are arranged in descending order. The first panel is divided by circular arches into two compartments; in the one is a woman sitting up in bed, an attendant approaches her carrying a cup; the former has the head covered by a sort of hood tied under the chin and falling on the shoulders; the latter, long hair uncovered. In the other division a naked child stands in a large chalice-shaped font; on each side stands a figure, apparently of a woman, with one hand touching the child's arm, and with the other raised near its head. Here, no doubt, we have the birth and the baptism of the little Woyciech.

In the second panel, on the right hand, is a building, before which is an altar, behind the altar a figure half seen with the right hand raised in the attitude of benediction; before the altar stands a man dressed in a long gown and short cloak hanging from the shoulders, and holding over it a child in long clothes; behind him, are two women, the first wears a hood and holds what look like two balls,<sup>s</sup> the second has the right hand raised, and long uncovered hair. This obviously represents the healing of the infant by his being placed upon the altar of the Virgin, the figures representing an attendant priest, the father, mother, and nurse.

The third panel is divided by a shaft into two compartments under circular arches; under the left one are a lady who has a long pendant from her headdress, and a man with uncovered head, and a short cloak hanging from the shoulder. These present a child to a man wearing a long robe open in front, who stands under the second arch. Behind him is a church, or some other building, by the side of which stands an attendant. This, no doubt, is the delivery of St. Adalbert by his parents to the care of Ottricus at Magdeburg.

The fourth panel contains only the figure of an ecclesiastic, kneeling and bowing himself down as in prayer, before a shrine. This is probably intended to represent the devotion of himself to the service of God, which was produced in St. Adalbert by the death of the Bishop of Prague. The rest of the panel is occupied by a monstrous

<sup>s</sup> A common conventional manner of representing offerings.

lion's head holding a ring, such as is constantly found on early doors in Germany, and occasionally in this country.

The fifth panel is represented in the accompanying wood-cut. The seated figure, no doubt, represents the Emperor Otho the Second delivering the crozier to Adalbert at Verona. The garment in which the latter is habited seems



to be meant for an alb. The embroidered collar of one of the group of ladies will be noticed. It seems remarkable that none of the male part of Otho's court should be represented, except his sword-bearer or captain of the guard.

The centre of the sixth panel is occupied by a figure of a man without clothing, except a cloth tied round his waist; his hands are tied behind his back by a cord, held by two men dressed in tunics ending above the knees. Behind is a woman turning away. From the mouth of the naked figure a small demon issues, whose exit from the possessed man is enforced by the bishop, who stands opposite with uplifted hand. Behind the bishop are two ecclesiastics. This does not seem to apply well to the story of the demoniac who announced his election, but probably refers to the expulsion of demons performed by him when bishop.

In the seventh panel an ecclesiastic appears, reclining on a bed, above which a curtain is suspended. The head and shoulders are much raised; beyond the feet is a church. Above, appears a figure of our Saviour (with a crossed nimbus round his head) hovering from a cloud; a cross is in his left hand, while the right is extended towards the recumbent figure. This, no doubt, represents the vision concerning the Jewish slave-merchants.

In the eighth panel is a seated figure wearing a ducal cap, and holding in the left hand a fleur-de-lis,<sup>9</sup> while the right is extended towards a bishop who stands before him, and who holds a crozier in the left hand, while the right is elevated, and the fore-finger extended as in expostulation. Behind the duke stands a guard holding a sword, and behind him a part of a building is shown. Behind the bishop are four men, the last three of whom seem to be fastened together by ropes held by the first. The two first wear caps of a beehive form, with a rim at the lower part, and a round knob at the top. This probably represents St. Adalbert pleading with the Duke of Bohemia (Boleslaus Pius) on behalf of the captives. In the ninth panel four monks stand at a table on which are several vessels. Another approaches it carrying a pot; behind him is an object on the ground, probably representing a pitcher or other vessel overturned, and another lying on it; towards this a monk bends down. Behind him, again, is another monk. The subject of this seems clearly to be the accident to the wine-pitcher, which occurred during St. Adalbert's first residence in the Roman convent.

In the tenth panel a bishop is shown with four attendants in a boat, approaching the land. The boat has a high stem and stern-post, each carved at the top into an animal's head. On the shore is a group of six men, armed with swords, spears, and shields. The heads are either uncovered or covered only by close-fitting caps. The right hands are raised, but it is not easy to decide whether the gesture is meant for welcome or for warning. This panel probably represents the landing at Dantzic; the costume of the men on shore is the same as that of the Prussians in panels Nos. 13, 14, and 16, but here the shields are ornamented and there plain, and these figures have swords, while the Prussians have none.

In the eleventh panel a bishop appears in episcopal costume, holding a crozier in the left hand, while he gives a benediction with the right; behind him are three attendant ecclesiastics, two of whom hold books. Before the

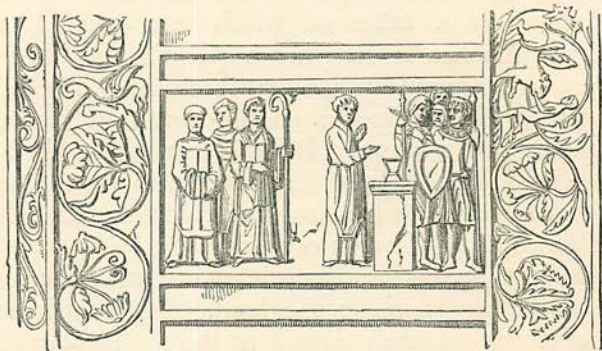
<sup>9</sup> Several of the earlier Kings of Rome, as Henry I., Louis the Fat, and Philip Augustus, are represented on their seals, (Montfaucon, *Monts. de la Monarchie Française*, vols. i. and ii.) holding fleur-

de-lis, or sceptre-head, in their right hands; so is the Emperor Frederick II., in an illumination.—(Agincourt, *Painting*, plate 73.)

bishop is a figure in a tub, and behind, a group of unarmed men in tunics. This would seem to represent the baptism of the natives in Poland or at Dantzic.

In the twelfth, a bishop is seen exhorting a group of men in tunics, but unarmed; behind him are three ecclesiastics, one of whom holds a book, and another a scroll. This is obviously the preaching of the bishop to the natives, and, as they seem to hear it without repugnance, it is probable that it is not the Prussians who are here meant.

The thirteenth panel is the one represented in the accompanying woodcut. Although in the early Lives nothing is said of the presence of the Prussians at the mass celebrated



on the morning of the Martyrdom, it probably is intended to represent that occurrence. The anger and aversion of the heathens is very plainly expressed, and here they are represented armed. The priest celebrating mass wears a chasuble, and none of the figures are in episcopal attire.

The fourteenth panel contains the martyrdom of the saint. He is clad in an alb, and on his knees. One of his murderers pierces him with a lance, while another, bestriding his body, raises an axe. The action of these figures is vigorous and natural; his three companions at a short distance raise their hands in grief and horror.

The fifteenth panel is partly occupied by the lion's head for the ring; the rest of the space is filled by the watch of the eagle over the body. The corpse is represented as swathed in wrappings, and placed upon a board supported between a tree and the stake on which the head is fixed; behind it is another tree, on which the eagle perches. Both

the trees are represented in a rather unnatural and conventional manner.

In the sixteenth panel the purchase of the body from the Prussians is shown. In the centre is the Duke of Poland (Boleslaus Chrobry), wearing an open crown ; both tunic and mantle are short. Behind him are three of his courtiers, in tunics girt round the middle, and wearing short cloaks joined by a fibula : the heads seem to be covered by close skull-caps. One other figure holds a sword, but has no cloak. Near the duke is a large vessel filled with round masses, some of which an attendant puts into one of a pair of scales, which is held by a Prussian. The body of the saint is, however, not in the other scale. Behind the holder of the scales is a group of seven Prussians, with shields, but no weapons are visible.

The seventeenth panel shows the conveyance of the holy remains to Gnesen ; two priests carry a feretory, from which a cloth depends ; underneath it, and kneeling on the ground, are two small figures (probably the sick or cripples). At one end of the feretory stands a bishop, holding a book in his left hand, and an aspersorium in his right ; behind him is an attendant. At the other end are two crowned figures ; one (probably the duchess) raises a hand to her eyes. The other wears a long mantle and a robe terminated by an indented edge which reaches about half way below the knee.

The eighteenth panel represents the deposition of the saint in his tomb at Gnesen. A figure at the head, and another at the foot, are placing the body (the face of which is exposed, and the head covered by a mitre) in a low tomb (such as were in use in the 12th and 13th centuries) : behind the tomb stands a woman raising a hand to her eyes ; near her stands a man, clad in a long robe girt round the waist, and a cloak joined in front, and holding a vessel, like a small pail, or a basket. At the foot of the tomb is an arch, between two small towers ; under this stands a bearded figure, with a thurible. At the head is a bishop with a crozier, and behind him a crowned figure holding a sceptre ; one end of the mantle is thrown over the right arm, and two robes of different lengths are seen, the longer ending with an indented border just above the feet.

It will be observed that many small differences exist between these brazen chronicles (as Count Raczyński terms

them) and the narratives from which the abstract of St. Adalbert's life, given above, is taken—as, for instance, that in the panels containing subjects relating to his journey into Prussia, three, and not two, companions are always represented. This may have been caused either by a certain carelessness, not uncommon in such cases, or by the artist's having followed some later writer, who had narrated these events in a rather different manner.

The wide borders which surround each valve contain within the scrolls of foliage, figures of lions, stags, nondescript monsters; birds and dragons, peacocks, cranes, centaurs, dogs; men hunting with bows and arrows and horns, a man killing a lion, &c., designed with much spirit and life, and very fairly modelled, except as regards the human figures.

The whole effect is extremely rich and good, and much invention is shown in the varied forms of the foliage: this is in part imitative of the vine, but more generally of an entirely conventional character.

In a subsequent number of the Journal the subject will be completed by a review of the opinions put forth by native writers as to the origin of these doors, and by an attempt to arrive at a correct conclusion on that point.

ALEX. NESBITT.

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ACCOUNT OF EXCAVATIONS NEAR THE FLEAM DYKE,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE, APRIL, 1852.

MATLOW, or Muttlow Hill, as it is more frequently called in the neighbourhood, although it is marked on the County Maps by the former appellation, is a large and well known tumulus in Cambridgeshire, which in its close vicinity to the remarkable earthwork, Fleam Dyke, has attracted considerable notice in that locality, especially from the tradition belonging to it, that it contained a *gold coach*, which is, or I should rather *now* say *has*, been implicitly believed, among the labouring classes thereabouts for many years; for the examination, of which I now detail the results, made under my own superintendence, has for ever extinguished the interesting legend.

It is hardly to be supposed that with such unusual

## ON THE BRONZE DOORS OF THE CATHEDRAL OF GNESEN.

*(Continued from page 226.)*

No inscriptions are to be found upon these doors, and the time and place when and where they were cast must therefore be determined either by historical evidence or by comparison of their style and character with those of other works of art whose origin is better ascertained. From the former of these sources it would appear that but little that is trustworthy can be gathered. The only old writer who is cited as mentioning these gates is Michael Litwin (*i. e.*, the Lithuanian,) who says ("De Moribus Tartarorum," p. 3), that Boleslaus Chrobry took from Kiev, in 1008, a "valva" which the Russians had brought from Kherson, and presented it to Gnesen. None of the older annalists mention this circumstance, although they give many details<sup>1</sup> respecting the campaigns of Boleslaus in Russia and the taking of Kiev; it will, however, be proper to notice the conjectures which later native writers have formed as to the origin of these doors. With the patriotic spirit so characteristic of the Poles, they have been willing to see in them memorials of the glorious deeds of Boleslaus; and Naruszewicz ("Historia Narodu Polskiego," Vol. I.), and Raczynski ("Wspomnienia Wielkopolski," Vol. II., p. 323), attest the existence at Gnesen of the tradition that they are trophies of the taking of Kiev. The same story will also be found in some of the older topographical accounts of Poland.<sup>2</sup> The circumstance that the subjects are taken from the life of St. Adalbert has been always felt to be a most serious objection to the correctness of this tradition; and Siemienski (*Monumenta Eccl. Metro. Gnesnensis*), argues that the fact is otherwise; but the close correspondence of the reliefs with the history of the saint can leave no doubt but that he is in error. The

<sup>1</sup> As in "Sarmatiæ Europæ Descriptio," by Guagnini. (Spires, 1581.)

<sup>2</sup> Some of a very poetical character; as that Boleslaus fixed, in the bed of the Dnieper, brazen tubes so artificially contrived that they continually sounded his name. He is said to have set up iron columns to

mark the limits of his conquests. ("Stan. Sarnicii Annales.") Dlugosz says that Boleslaus cleft the golden gate at Kiev with a miraculous sword given to him by an angel. Kadubek tells the same story somewhat differently.

antiquary, Thaddeus Czacki, (in a note on the passage in Naruszewicz, above referred to,) says that the tradition was that these doors were taken from the imperial castle at Kiev,<sup>3</sup> and presented to the Church of Gnesen by Boleslaus, but, adverting to the supposition that the subjects of the reliefs were taken from the life of St. Adalbert, he concludes that, if the fact be so, the tradition must be erroneous. In Count Raczynski's work, above referred to, two theories as to the origin of these gates are advanced—one, that of the author, the other that of an architect named Berndt, who was commissioned by the Prussian Government to make drawings of this remarkable monument of early art. Count Raczynski, relying somewhat upon the tradition which connects these doors with Kiev and Boleslaus, but feeling the improbability of such memorials having been erected at Kiev before 1008, in honour of a saint of another church, who suffered only eleven years earlier, supposes that Boleslaus may have caused them to be cast at Kiev. There is, however, nothing to be found in them characteristic either of so early a period as the commencement of the eleventh century, or of the Greek style which must unquestionably have prevailed at Kiev, but, on the contrary, much which belongs to the German style of the twelfth.

Mr. Berndt observes that the colour of the metal of the two valves is not alike, that of the left valve being more coppery, while that of the right is more brassy; he also notices the different degrees of relief which distinguish them; and from these circumstances infers that the two valves date from different periods: the right valve he believes to be the remaining one of a pair given by the Emperor Otho the Third, and the work of some Byzantine sculptor; its fellow he thinks was carried away by the Bohemians, when they pillaged Gnesen in 1039, and the existing left valve he supposes to have been wrought by some Italian artist of the fifteenth century.

The first of these points is not of much importance, as it is well known that bronze, unless treated with proper care and skill, becomes much altered if kept long in fusion; in consequence of the speedy oxidation of the tin,<sup>4</sup> the pro-

<sup>3</sup> "Z Carogroda do Kijowa." Kiev at that time belonged to the Dukes Uchelaus, or Wsevolod; I know not why a division of the city or a castle in it should be called imperial.

<sup>4</sup> Bronze usually consists of about 90 parts of copper and 10 of tin; bell-metal of from 33 to 60 of tin to 100 of copper.—Ure's Dictionary of Arts.



portions of the metals entering into its composition, and consequently the appearance of the compound are greatly changed.<sup>5</sup> It is, therefore, quite possible that both valves may have been cast from the same furnace and within some hours of each other, although the colour and texture of the metal now show considerable difference.

The different degree of relief seems a more important distinction—on the left valve some parts of the figures, particularly the heads,<sup>6</sup> are in three-quarters relief, and many in half, while on the right one all is in flat relief, usually not more, if as much as quarter relief, though the heads occasionally, and sometimes a whole figure, show greater prominence. If this circumstance leads to the supposition of different dates for each valve, it must, on the other hand, be remembered that the style and character both of the groups of figures and of the ornamental border are precisely similar. Mr. Berndt quotes Dlugosz to show that the Bohemians carried off “*tabulam auream*,” which he supposes may have been the left valve, then of bright gold-coloured metal; but, had he read the passage with any care, he would have seen that the historian speaks of “*tabulas tres quibus altare magnum adornatum fuerat auro puro et variis preciosis lapidibus et gemmis superbas*,” obviously works of the same nature as the golden altar-piece of the Cathedral of Basle, or perhaps as the paliotto of the high altar of the Church of St. Ambrose at Milan. His opinion that the left valve is the work of an Italian artist of the fifteenth century seems to be entirely unsupported either by the general character of the work, or by any of the details of costume or architecture, and cannot be received with favour by any one familiar with the character of Italian sculpture of that period.

It would, therefore, seem that little light, as to the origin of these doors, can be obtained from external evidence, and that their date must be deduced from the internal evidence afforded by the works themselves, and from a comparison with other works of art of the like nature. This may perhaps

<sup>5</sup> In consequence of want of care during the fusion, the capital, shaft, and base of the column of the Place Vendôme, although cast from the (originally) same metal, are now very different in composition. See Ure’s “*Dict. Arts*,” Art. Bronze.

<sup>6</sup> In the reliefs which cover the bronze doors of the Cathedral of Hildesheim (dated 1015), the heads and necks of the figures stand out in full relief, quite free and detached from the background.

best be done under the following heads :—1st. The composition and treatment of the subjects. 2ndly. The modelling of the individual figures and their costume. 3rdly. The details of architecture, &c. And, 4thly. The ornamental border.

The grouping is very simple, and composed of a small number of individuals ; with very few exceptions the figures all occupy the same plane. No ground is under their feet, but they are represented with the usual naïveté of early mediæval art, as if suspended in the air. Neither are there any backgrounds.<sup>7</sup>

The action of the figures is often animated and natural, and even the countenances are sometimes not without characteristic expression ; this is well seen in the most prominent figure of the group of Prussians (page 353), whose tangled locks and heavy brow mark the wildness of the barbarian, and his scorn and hatred of the preacher of a new religion. Where the features are passionless and still, they are usually fairly modelled and approach tolerably near to nature.<sup>8</sup> They are superior in these respects to most of the English or French works of sculpture of the twelfth century with which I am acquainted. The hands and feet are often badly and apparently carelessly modelled. The proportion of the heads to the bodies is not far from the natural one, and there is no trace of the exaggerated length and attenuation so characteristic of the mediæval Greek or Byzantine school of art, or of its marked tendency to stiffness and extreme formality of attitude.

The drapery is much broken up into minute folds, and where masses occur they are rather clumsy than large or bold. Such treatment of drapery characterises mediæval sculpture until near the thirteenth century, when a more tasteful and more natural style was adopted.

The costume will be seen to differ little, if at all, from the usual forms which prevailed in England, France, Germany, and Italy between the eighth and thirteenth centuries ; and the various nations, individuals of which appear in these sculptures, show but trifling differences in their attire. The

<sup>7</sup> In the Italian reliefs of the fifteenth century, as in Ghiberti's doors of the Baptistery in Florence, backgrounds are used throughout, and intricate grouping abounds.

<sup>8</sup> The head of Otho the Second is represented as that of a young man, as he was at the time when the event represented in the relief occurred.

annexed woodcut, which represents the Emperor Otho the Second delivering the crozier to St. Adalbert (in the fifth pannel), shows the costume of the personages of the most elevated rank, the Dukes of Poland and Bohemia being habited in the same manner. Their long and ample mantles are fastened in front, their tunics are also long, and when the wearer stands erect reach nearly to the ankle. The costume of the nobles and courtiers only differs from that of their superiors in that both tunic and mantle are shorter, neither reaching below the knee. The mantle is generally fastened on the right shoulder. The swordbearers, or guards, as well



as the persons of inferior rank, wear no mantles, but only tunics and hose. The heads are usually uncovered, but in some cases closely fitting caps may be intended to be represented;<sup>9</sup> they are, however, but obscurely indicated, and it may be doubtful whether it is not the corrosion of the metal and the consequent absence of the marks indicating hair which

<sup>9</sup> On an early seal of Lübeck is a figure wearing such a cap, *Kaplaken*; strong cloths for caps were, in 1327, among the

chief articles sent to the Hanseatic factory at Novogorod.

has produced a resemblance to a cap. The hair of the civilised men is worn short and smoothly combed, some of the Prussians, on the contrary, have their hair hanging in rough tangled masses ; they are true "homines criniti," as Helmoldus describes them. All except the ecclesiastics wear moustaches ; those of the Prussians are thicker and longer than those of the Poles, Bohemians, or Germans. None are bearded except one figure in the eighteenth pannel.

In the engraving at page 343, of the Emperor and his attendant Sword-bearer, it will be seen that while the tunic of the latter is represented as full of folds in its lower parts, the portion above the waist is quite smooth, and projects considerably beyond the lower ; this projecting part has horizontal lines engraved upon it, as if to represent an ornamental border. The same may be observed in the most prominent figure of the group of Prussians in the thirteenth pannel. This projection may possibly be merely a clumsy representation of the falling of the upper part of the tunic over a narrow belt girding it about the waist ; but it looks as if intended to represent a leathern or wadded lorica,<sup>1</sup> or cuirass, worn over the tunic. In these instances, ornamental stitching, or embroidery round the neck and at the wrists, is represented, which seems to make against the supposition that anything besides the tunic is meant to be shown.

Of these sculptures, none perhaps are more curious and interesting than the figures of the Prussians (shown in the annexed woodcut : the group is a part of the thirteenth pannel) ; at least, if we may believe that they are correct representations of the appearance of this people while yet enjoying their primitive independence.

It may be thought that the very close resemblance of their costume to that of the other nations, goes far to prove that the artist gave himself no thought or care as to the correctness of the representation, and clothed these heathens in

<sup>1</sup> Such a garment, or piece of defensive armour was used by the Romans, but it seems to belong rather to the classical period, or to the Greeks of the Lower Empire, than to the middle ages or to Germany. Distinct representations of such a defence are but seldom to be found in mediæval art, but it may be seen in some sculptures engraved by Ciampini (*Vet. Mon.*, vol. ii., plates 4 & 5), and in Agincourt's "History of Art," plates 47

& 51. The first are Italian, of uncertain date, but probably later than 600. The second instance is in an illumination of a Bulgarian MS. of the thirteenth or fourteenth (?) century ; the third, in a Greek MS. of the ninth or tenth. Was not the "thorax," which Eginhart says that Charlemagne wore over his linen tunic, a defence of this kind, and not a mere pectoral?

the ordinary dress of his own fellow-citizens; but it is not unlikely that in the twelfth century their dress did not materially differ from that of the neighbouring nations. Helmoldus (writing circa 1160), in his "Chronicon Slavorum,"<sup>1</sup> cap. 1, gives, at some length, an account of their manners, but says nothing as to their dress, except that they were in the habit of bartering marten-skins with the Germans for woollen cloths, called Faldones (or Paldones). Hartknoch ("Selectæ Diss. Hist. de variis rebus Prussicis," p. 270) says that they wore short tunics of linen or undyed woollen cloth, tight linen breeches reaching to the heels, and shoes of raw hide, or bark. This agrees well with the dress represented in these reliefs. Their arms, he says (pp. 387—388), were clubs, shields, swords, arrows, and spears. This last seems to have been their chief weapon, and with it they are accordingly represented in these sculptures. Their shields, judging by the standard afforded by the size of the figures, were only about two feet in length; the form is one not uncommon in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but so small a size is unusual. Shields in several instances in Lombardy<sup>2</sup> are represented in sculptures of the same form,



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<sup>1</sup> Helmoldus classes the Prussians among the Slavonians; but it is clear, from the remains of their language, that this is an error, and that they were a branch of the Lithuanian stem.

<sup>2</sup> St. Zeno, Verona, sculpture about the west door; Cathedral, Verona, do.; St. Michele, Pavia; remains of the ancient

Porta Romana, Milan, (Agincourt, Sculpture, plate 26), &c. All the examples cited are probably of the twelfth century, some are well ascertained to be so. Some remarkable armed figures of the twelfth century, in the choir of the Cathedral of Magdeburg, have also, I believe, shields of this form.

and sometimes they are not much larger than these appear. The shields carried by the Prussians have no ornament except a border ; but those seen in the tenth pannel are decorated in a manner curiously similar to some heraldic bearings ; one may be described as party per pale, bendy, counterchanged ; a second, party per pale, barry, counterchanged ; and a third as barry bendy. This last shield is slightly different in form from the others, the point being curved to the sinister side.

The ecclesiastical costume presents but little requiring notice. The mitre is of the low early form ; the crosier a plain crook.

The female costume, also, has nothing very characteristic : the garments are long, falling on the ground, and covering the feet ; the sleeves wide. Round the neck, in some instances, is an embroidered border. The heads of the women of rank are covered by hoods, or kerchiefs, fastened under the chin, and falling on the shoulders. The women of lower station have the heads uncovered, with the hair long.

The architectural details appear all to point to the Romanesque period, and to the Lombard or the German style ; the arches are all circular, small arcades, and slender towers, capped by dome-shaped roofs, frequently occur, all well-known features of the architecture of Lombardy and of Germany in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The boat in the tenth pannel is exactly like the one represented on a seal of the citizens of Lübeck, which is attached to a document dated 1267 ("Die Hansa, &c.," by Kurd von Schlözer, title-page), excepting that the boat on the seal has a mast. This seal may, of course, be much older than the document to which the impression is attached.

The broad borders, enclosing figures of men, beasts, birds, and monsters, will at once recal to the architectural student the friezes, abaci, or strings, which occur in the buildings of the countries and periods to which the architectural details are above referred. Instances are to be found in the abaci of some of the columns of the south transept of St. Michele<sup>3</sup> at Pavia, in a string or band on the exterior of the apse of the Cathedral of Basle ;<sup>4</sup> and in our own country, work of similar character will be seen in the remains of the Church of Shobdon in Herefordshire.

<sup>3</sup> This church is ascribed by some to the seventh or eighth century, but the more probable opinion gives it to the

eleventh or twelfth. See Gally Knight's "Eccles. Architecture of Italy."

<sup>4</sup> It is remarkable that the famous

Of these examples, the one at Basle comes the nearest to the doors of Gnesen; the foliage is, however, more conventional, and indicates a rather earlier period. Its date is not precisely known, but there is good reason to refer it to the middle of the twelfth century.<sup>5</sup>

A superb instance of metal-work of a rather later period, but of considerable similarity of character (as regards the design), is afforded by the noble candelabrum which stands in the north transept of the Cathedral of Milan, and is known as the *Albero della Madonna*. This magnificent object is about 15 feet high, and of bronze gilt; it contains a multitude of statuettes from the Old Testament, signs of the Zodiac, lions, serpents, dogs, sheep, birds, fish, heads of men, &c. &c., interlaced with foliage of a character approaching to our own early English. It is attributed to the end of the twelfth, or the beginning of the thirteenth century (vide *Bulletin Monumental*, vol. 17, p. 181, where a portion of the base is engraved).

In the foregoing pages, some proofs have been adduced that these doors show traces of relation both to German and to Italian works of sculpture of the twelfth century; and when the political history of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Germany and Italy, and the frequent presence of the Saxon, Franconian, and Hohenstaufen emperors in the latter country are called to mind, it cannot be a matter of surprise that the monuments of art in the two countries should exhibit many marks of connexion. That Italian art<sup>6</sup> had in these times an influence upon Germany, we know in some cases historically: as in the instance of Bishop Bernward, of Hildesheim, who, when the tutor of Otho the Third, and accompanying him in his travels and residences in Italy, not only studied

golden tabula formerly belonging to this cathedral, the date of which is confidently given as 1019, has a frieze of very similar character.

<sup>5</sup> Many more instances of the same description of ornament may be found in the twelfth century buildings in this country, in France, and particularly in Germany.

<sup>6</sup> It has been the custom of many German writers on the history of art to ascribe all progress to the influence of Greek artists, and to call every work of art anterior to the thirteenth century Byzantine. This may be in a great degree

correct as regards the ninth and tenth centuries, but I apprehend that there exist evidences of an independent style (particularly of ornamental art) in the eleventh, and still more in the twelfth centuries. Compare the sculptural decorations of the Cathedral of Athens, of St. Mark's at Venice, and of the Duomo of Torcello, with those of the Lombard and German churches of corresponding dates, and the Byzantine reliquary in the treasury of the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, which contains the head of St. Anastasius, with those of western fabrication in the same repository.

the remains of ancient art himself, but carried young men in his suite, for the express purpose of enabling them to acquire a knowledge of the arts of that country; thus laying the foundation of a German Italian school of art. When, later in life, established at Hildesheim, he (in the year 1015) adorned his cathedral with the doors covered with bas-reliefs, and the bronze column, which still remain there. On the latter, scenes from the life of our Saviour are represented, arranged in a spiral running round the shaft from bottom to top—an arrangement obviously suggested by the remains of classical art which he had seen in Italy.

That the casting of large works in metal was frequently and successfully practised in Germany during the eleventh and twelfth centuries is proved both by the testimony of many writers, and by numerous existing monuments; and, as examples of such, in addition to the very remarkable works at Hildesheim above referred to, may be mentioned the doors in the cathedral of Mentz (975-1011); those in the cathedral of Augsburg (1088); the effigy of the Emperor Rudolph, the Swabian (killed in 1080) in the Cathedral of Merseburg; the lion at Brunswick (1166); the doors of the Cathedral of Novogorod (on which are the effigies and names<sup>7</sup> of the artists); the candelabra in the cathedrals of Brunswick and Erfurt; and, as a curious instance of the application of bronze to architectural purposes, the tracery<sup>8</sup> of the circular west window of the Church of Gadebusch, in Mecklenburg.

When the style of art shown in these and other works of sculpture of the same period is compared with that of the Gnesen doors, it is obvious that the latter is of a later and more advanced character; instead of the stiffness of attitude, and want of expression, or even of correct modelling in the heads, we find, as has been before remarked, considerable animation and life in the gestures, and both expression and natural form in the countenances of the figures. Still the draperies show much of the minute and feeble treatment of the earlier style. It is therefore clear that in these sculptures we have an instance of transition from the earlier style to that which in Germany appeared towards the end of the

<sup>7</sup> Riquin (i.e. Richwin, or Richwein), Waismuth and Abraham. The two first are certainly German, (see F. Adlung, *Die Korssunschen Thiiren*).

<sup>8</sup> Traditionally said to have been made from the crown of the god Radegast, whose temple stood on the spot.



twelfth century, and which a well-informed writer on German art (Dr. F. H. Müller, "Beiträge zur teutschen Kunst und Geschichtskunde durch Kunstdenkmale," 1st abt. p. 78) describes as characterised by graceful and natural attitudes, expressive heads, well-formed faces, and drapery in broad masses, arranged according to simple and true motives—in short, as a style founded on the imitation of nature instead of on classical or Byzantine traditions.

It will, therefore, I think, not be considered an unfounded conjecture which would assign the end of the twelfth century as the date, and some city of the north-east of Germany (very probably Magdeburg) as the place of the casting of these doors. Such, I may add, was the opinion expressed by some of the canons of the Cathedral of Gnesen, who were kind enough to communicate to me the conclusions which they had arrived at as to the origin of these remarkable decorations of their cathedral.

ALEXANDER NESBITT.

Having had occasion while preparing this paper to consult a book but seldom met with in this country, "Die Korssunschen Thüren in die Kathedalkirche zu S. Sophia in Novgorod," by F. Adelung (Berlin, Reimer, 1824), I found in the appendix a list of all the examples of metal doors in European Churches, of the existence of which the author was aware.\* Very many of these, although highly curious, are almost, or altogether, unknown in this country, while an accurate knowledge of them would be a most valuable contribution to the history of European art, particularly in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries. I have, therefore, drawn up the following table, in the hope that some of the travelling members of this Society may be induced to procure accurate descriptions, drawings, or—still better—casts of such of these works as they may happen to visit in the course of their tours.

The materials of this table are, for the most part, derived from Adelung, though differently arranged and abbreviated. I have had to make many alterations and additions, which it would be needless to particularise; and in consequence of the rarity in this country of several of the works he quotes, I have been unable to verify all his references. The table, probably, contains many errors, as it frequently happens that the authorities are conflicting, and it is difficult or impossible to ascertain which account is to be preferred.

\* It is singular that he was ignorant of the existence of the doors at Gnesen, as he evidently took much pains in getting up his subject.