MEDIEVAL POTTERY.

The four vessels, of which we present our readers with an engraving in the present number of our Journal, were found in the year 1838, at a very great depth in the ground, in making an excavation for a cellar near the extreme boundary of the walls of Trinity College, Oxford, formerly Durham Hall or College, adjoining to the premises of Balliol College, inclosed for the use of scholars about the year 1290, when there was a grant of the land for that purpose from the abbess of Godstow. There is therefore every reason to believe, from this and other circumstances, particularly from a coin being found in one of the larger vessels, that they were placed there deliberately about the time of the original foundation of the walls, according to the common custom still observed on the commencement of any great undertaking of this kind. Such at that time must

have been considered the inclosure within lofty walls of several acres of arable land, for such it is described to be in the charter, with a view to the extension of academical education then contemplated, after the noble example recently set by Walter de Merton. A chapel and library, eastward from this spot, soon followed from the munificence of two successive bishops of Durham, Richard de Bury, and Thomas de Hatfield; and, before the expiration of the fourteenth century, the erection of four additional establishments for general study, within the walls of the city of Oxford, effected an entire revolution in the character of the University, elevating it from aularian poverty into collegiate magnificence. These circumstances are here briefly noticed, that we may bear in mind the rapid progress that may be supposed to have been made in every thing, since the time when these rude vessels may be presumed to have been manufactured, and even from the time when they seem to have been deposited in the earth as relics of a former period. They are of different heights and dimensions. The largest differs only in a slight degree from the sesquipedal measure of the ancient ampulla, for the knowledge of which we are indebted to a playful line of Horace; being in height about 17 inches and a quarter. It differs from the original ampulla or diota, in having only one handle instead of two.

Specimens of medieval pottery are supposed to be of very rare occurence. The smallest fragments of Samian ware, and the minutest relics of ancient art, connected with our classical predilections, are carefully preserved; but the rudeness of the execution, or the coarseness of the material, has generally consigned to oblivion even the sacred vessels of our barbarous ancestors. Yet our Saxon forefathers had their imperfect imitations of Roman ware—such as their ampulla, lecythus, lagena, or flagon, legitha, and crocca, or crohha;—which Dr. Bosworth does not hesitate to interpret as "chrismatories." He considers them, however, as many learned antiquaries do, to have been *small* vessels; though it is reasonable to suppose that they might have been of different dimensions, large or small, according to their intended use and application. There can be no mistake in this matter; as the smaller vessel, in the incorporation of our language with the Norman French, was properly distinguished by the diminutive word cruette, or cruet[a].

[a] So amulet, from ampulette; amula, and amulula, Latino Barb., &c.

Much may be said on the subject of chrism and chrismatories, large and small; but we forbear to enter into the subject at any great length at present. In the mean time, whether such rude vessels as these Trinity jars and cruets were ever used for any sacred purpose, or not, as receptacles for chrism, &c., must be left as matter of opinion. No argument can be derived from their large size; when we consider that the chrism was solemnly hallowed, or consecrated, only once a year in early times, namely, just before Easter, and by the archbishops of the provinces; that many thousands were sometimes confirmed in a day, when the use of chrism was always a principal part of the ceremony, as also in baptism, extreme unction, &c.; from all which we may conclude, that many vessels, and in all probability of many different sizes and dimensions, must have been required for the ordinary services and ministrations of the Church; and some of them may have been of homely materials and rude workmanship.

William of Malmesbury[b], in his Life of St. Wulfstan, the Saxon bishop of Worcester in the eleventh century, having occasion to mention that, even in the latest period of his life the bishop frequently confirmed two or three thousand persons or more in a day, records it as a subject of astonishment to all, that whilst so many as eight officiating clerks sunk under their task by turns in carrying round the chrismatory during the ceremony, the prelate himself persevered to the end without the least fatigue. His journey to York before Easter is described by the same historian as a solemn embassy by command of King William I., and the archbishop Thomas, for the purpose of consecrating the chrism. The vessels, therefore, in which this whole year's consumption of chrism was preserved, and from which it was poured into smaller vessels for immediate use, must have been very different from those diminutive phials, in which a very small portion of the consecrated oil was inclosed, to be used as an amulet, or charm, like the *sainte ampoule*, to cure or guard against diseases. J. I.

[b] Wharton's Anglia Sacra, vol. ii. p. 258.