

THE CLOCK FROM THE LONDON EXHIBITION
OF 1851 AND OTHER PARIS CLOCKS
OF AUGUST POTOCKI AT WILANÓW

While carrying through his building projects August Potocki took equal care of the appropriate furnishing of the palace and purchased a number of fine objects abroad. One of the most interesting acquisitions purchased by August Potocki in Paris is a large mantel clock which forms one set with two candleholders (Fig. 22). All these objects were made of cast iron elements screwed together, supplemented with chasing and china plaques. The decoration reverts to the events of the Hundred Years' War. The group of knights on the socle of the clock represents the battle of Charles VII of France against the English. The files dealing with August Potocki's foreign purchases contain a bill dated 1851 drawn up by the firm of Leroy et Fils the mark of which features on the face of the clock. The note concerning the clock in the Catalogue of the Exhibition of Antiquities (1856) says that the clock was produced before the year 1851 and mentions the place where the clock was displayed for the first time. The fact that it was shown during the famous Crystal Palace Exhibition in London is proof of its high quality. It is known that August Potocki purchased or ordered works of art from many well-known contemporary artists and craftsmen, including Leroy et Fils.

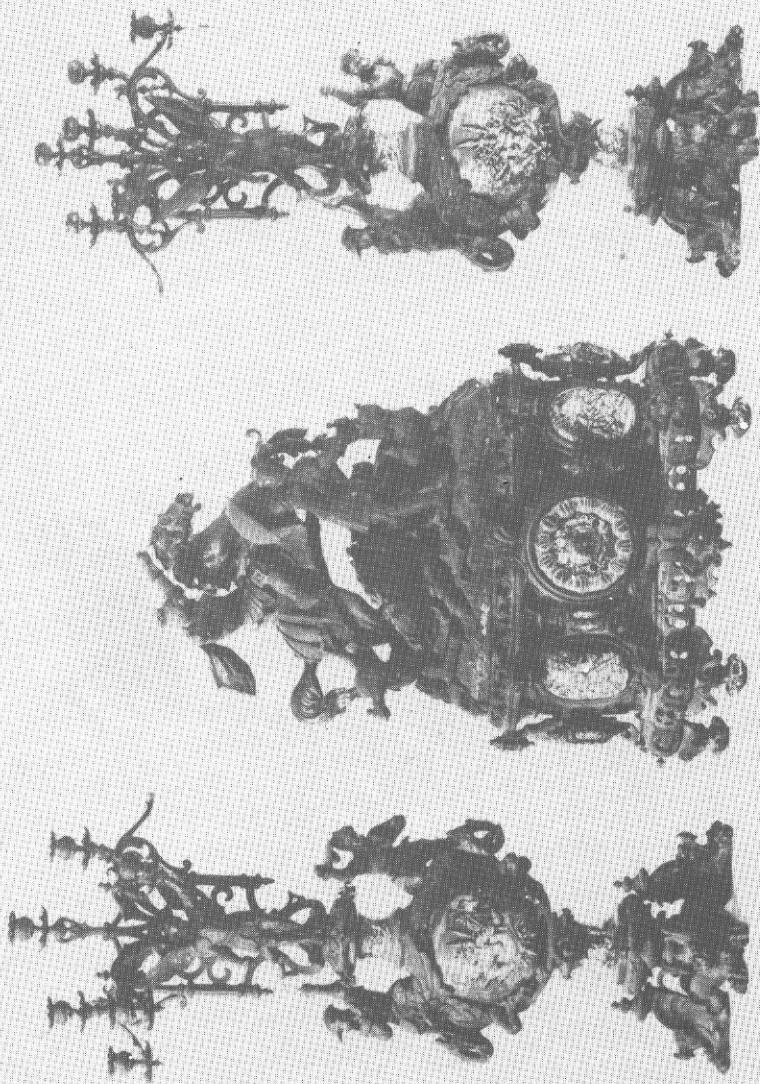
In the 1860's a representation similar to the group of knights adorning the Wilanów clock appeared in England. In 1871 H. Perovetz Ltd., the antiquarians, of London put on sale an early Victorian group of knight showing King Harold fighting with four Norman infantrymen during the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the whole group standing on a marble plynth. This work, produced by the London Goldsmith George Angel in 1866, may have been inspired by the Wilanów clock that the London artist could have seen during the Crystal Palace Exhibition.

August Potocki brought from Paris another clock, too, in the form of a fluted oval column of black marble, the work of the renowned makers RAINGO Fr. à Paris whose signature is emblazoned on the face. There has also survived a bill concerning this clock, dated 1850.

The third clock which was probably specially ordered by August Potocki - as indicated by the Pilawa coat-of-arms in the crowning of the main body - is a pseudo-rococo mantel clock of black marble with gilded bronze ornaments. It is crowned with a sculpted representation of Bacchus on a goat playing with two putti. The clock was produced in the 1860's in the firm of Wilhelm Denière of Paris, in cooperation with the marble carver Mudesse, and Cailleaux who was probably responsible for the works of the clock.

Finally the last item which can be associated with August Potocki is a mantel clock with a calendar. The casing of varnished wood has in its front wall a white enamelled face and three openings where, owing to the clock's ingenious mechanism, weekdays, dates and months are displayed. The pendulum mechanism bears initials composed of entwining letters AR and the inscriptions "A Paris" and "Breveté". The clock was produced by A Rédier of Paris after 1851.

The number of items preserved in the Wilanów museum is evidence of the long and lively collecting activity of August Potocki.



22. Mantel clock with candlesticks. Manufacture Leroy et Fils, c. 1850