ARCHAEOLOGIA:
OR,
MISCELLANEOUS TRACTS,
&c.

I.—*Masons' Marks at Westminster Hall.* By EDWIN FRESHFIELD, LL.D., V.P.

Read December 13, 1883.

WHEN, in the spring of 1882, the First Commissioner of Works announced his intention of proceeding to destroy the old law courts at Westminster, it seemed to me that it became necessary for every person interested in antiquities—and particularly in the antiquities of London—to watch with interest the result of this destruction, and in consequence I obtained permission from the Chief Commissioner to visit the place myself, and also to take with me two friends—Fellows of the Society. I selected for this purpose my friends Mr. Micklethwaite and Mr. Somers Clarke. I should like to say something personal to myself, however, to explain why I thought I was for many reasons a proper person to watch these buildings. My grandfathers upon both my father's and mother's side, my father and myself, have

been attorneys of the Court of King's and Queen's Bench at Westminster for a period stretching over very nearly one hundred years, and as the law courts at Westminster were built somewhere about the year 1812, we have collectively seen them built and destroyed.

As soon as the buildings were cleared away it became apparent that a considerable portion of the old construction of the hall would be visible, and of this I obtained permission to have photographs taken. The series of photographs exhibited represents the result of this; and they form a continuous series, showing the different bays of the hall from one end to the other, and also views of some of the details.

As the ground was cleared away it also became apparent that a great portion of the Norman building still remained; that the Norman buttresses had been cut into on either side, and an arcade introduced. It was easy to see from the colour of the stone which was Norman and which was the work of Richard the Second; the Norman work being chiefly in a yellow stone—I suppose Caen, and the work of Richard the Second being for the most part in the bluish fire-stone from Reigate.

But beyond this the Norman work was covered with the marks of the masons, and by the assistance of my friend Mr. Somers Clarke I obtained complete rubbings of all that were worth rubbing.

The subject of these masons' marks has been already slightly considered by the Society, and in the thirtieth volume of *Archaeologia*^a there will be found a paper upon it.

I have not yet formed any very complete opinion upon the subject. Some of the marks are of an altogether fanciful nature, and it has been surmised that they have more to do with the individual mason than with any particular gild; but some are common apparently to all countries, and among these is one particular mark—the arrow-head; several instances of this will be found among the marks at Westminster Hall. This mark seems to me to be one of great antiquity and of universal use.

Some five years ago I went from the mouth to the source of the Ebro, and upon the outside of all the buildings of a period corresponding approximately with the Norman part of the hall, viz. the eleventh and twelfth centuries, I found the arrow-head was used with other marks. I found the same mark upon the stones

^a Vol. xxx. p. 113.

BAY 1.

BAY 2.

BAY 3.

BAY 4.

BAY 5.

SCALE OF 0 3 6 9 12 INCHES.

1ST BAY FROM NORTH

SCALE 8 FEET TO AN INCH.

2ND BAY FROM NORTH

WESTMINSTER HALL, WEST SIDE.
POSITIONS OF THE MASONS' MARKS.

WESTMINSTER HALL, WEST SIDE.
POSITIONS OF THE MASONS' MARKS.

5TH BAY FROM NORTH.

SCALE 8 FEET TO AN INCH.

No. 15 2ND BAY FROM NORTH.

WESTMINSTER HALL, WEST SIDE.
POSITIONS OF THE MASONS' MARKS AND DRAWINGS
OF No. 15 2ND BAY.

in the cathedral churches of Winchester and Ely. I found the same mark on the early portions of the St. Sibold's church at Nuremberg, and upon the cathedral church of St. Stephen at Vienna; and, last autumn, happening to be present when they were uncovering a portion of the wall of Servius Tullius at Rome, I found the same mark there. I have also seen it at Constantinople and in Asia Minor. It was explained to me by a gentleman who had some knowledge upon the subject, that the frequency of the use of the arrow-head was due to the ease with which it could be made, but I cannot say that this explanation approves itself to me; on the contrary, upon examining the marks here it will be observed that they must have been works of considerable care.

On the other hand, I have examined many buildings in Normandy of the same date as English Norman with but poor success. The hall of the Exchequer of Normandy in the castle at Caen bears on a small scale a great likeness to what must have been the Westminster Hall of William Rufus; but I cannot say with certainty that I traced any mark upon it, though I think I detected on one stone the arrow-head. In a desecrated church in a farmyard at Taon, near Caen, I found a double-headed arrow had been cut upon the inner face of a stone which would have been invisible had the church been perfect; and it may be that this was the practice of the French Norman masons, as it certainly was a method occasionally adopted by the English masons in the thirteenth century. The church of Taon, although Norman, is not a very early specimen.

Mr. Street, who has illustrated his book upon Spain^a with pictures of the various cathedral and other churches he visited, has taken notice of the marks there, and observes, that he has been unable to trace any connection between the marks and particular builders; but I cannot say that I altogether agree with him.

I think I traced the same marks upon all the buildings of the same date up the valley of the Ebro; and I certainly came to the conclusion that the buildings had been built by gangs of workmen that followed from one place to another, using their marks as they went. These marks may be found in many of our parish churches, and it is much to be regretted that one of the first acts of a modern church restorer is to neatly dress the stone, and so obliterate them.

I propose to place at the disposal of the Society the negatives of the photographs exhibited, for the purpose of preserving a representation of the state of the hall at present. Mr. Somers Clarke has also prepared a plan showing where

^a *Some Account of Gothic Architecture in Spain.* London: John Murray. 1869.

the masons' marks were situated; and he has given me the rubbings of the masons' marks, which also I hope to be allowed to place at the disposal of the Society.

I would draw particular attention to one mark, which looks like a tree or birch rod. If this is, as I believe it is, a genuine mark, there is only one that I know of at all like it, and that is at Sta. Maria Benevente. It is figured in Mr. Street's work before mentioned.