

XXIV.—*Notes made during a Tour in the West of France.* By JOHN HENRY PARKER, *Esq., F.S.A.* Communicated in two Letters to Captain W. H. SMYTH, *R.N., F.R.S., Director.*

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Read March 20, 1851, and February 19, 1852.

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LETTER I.—THE COUNTY OF ANJOU.

MY DEAR SIR,

ACCORDING to your kind suggestion, I venture to address to you some notes made during a tour in the west of France last summer. You will probably remember that some years ago the late Mr. Rickman commenced a series of papers on the “Architecture of a part of France compared with that of England,” which were printed in the *Archæologia*. He concluded them by expressing a hope that others who may have time and opportunity would follow up what he had so well begun. His observations are confined to the northern part of France—Normandy and Picardy. The object which I had in view in undertaking my tour, was to pursue these observations in the other provinces of France which belonged to England in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. As I believe that their architectural character is very little known, you may perhaps think these notices worthy of being submitted to the Society of Antiquaries, more especially as I was accompanied by an artist who has made me some very careful drawings to illustrate my observations.

The architecture south of the Loire is so different from that of the northern part of France, that some account of it may probably be interesting, especially when drawn from actual observation. The northern architects aimed at height, the southern at breadth, their object seeming to have been to cover the greatest possible space with a stone vault, without pillars or arches.

According to some well-informed French antiquaries, the original type of these peculiar churches was the Cathedral of Saint Frond, at Perigueux, and this is said to have been built by a Venetian colony very soon after St. Mark's at Venice, or between 976 and 1047. The very massive character and extreme plainness of that building agrees very well with the early date assigned to it, and the use of the pointed arches to carry the cupola may be accounted for by its Eastern origin. However this may be decided, the general character of these buildings is clearly

Byzantine; each bay is square, and covered by a domical vault, or cupola, in some cases lofty, in others nearly flat, and concealed externally by the roof.

Instead of attempting to draw out a chronological series of these interesting buildings, it will be more convenient to follow the route which I actually traversed, and which is most likely to be taken by English travellers, commencing with Angers, and proceeding southward through Poitiers and Angoulême, to Bordeaux, returning by Périgueux and Limoges. According to the French antiquaries, the churches of this style do not extend south of the Garonne, and they are confined to just this central district of France. There is, however, one example north of the Loire, at Le Mans, and there may be other straggling instances.

My own impression was, that these churches were generally of the twelfth century, and I found in the same district another description, also of very fine character, which appeared to me to be of the eleventh.

The latter are of the usual plan, with narrow aisles, barrel vaults, and massive round arches; the capitals and bases, and the general character of the work, agreeing with that of the eleventh century, as for instance with the churches at Caen, of the time of William the Conqueror. But some in Poitou are much larger and finer than are to be found elsewhere of that period. May we venture to conclude that this part of France was in a very flourishing state in the eleventh century, and its architecture consequently in advance of other parts?

This state of prosperity appears to have continued through the twelfth century, and then to have suddenly ceased. Scarcely any churches appear to have been built between the twelfth and the end of the fifteenth century. This interval exactly agrees with the period of the English dominion, which seems to have been a continual struggle; and the constant state of civil war was not favourable to the building of churches.

#### ANGERS.

The Cathedral of St. Maurice is a very striking and important building; the earliest part is the nave, which is of about the middle of the twelfth century.<sup>a</sup> It is fifty-four feet wide, and eighty high; divided into bays, or compartments, which are nearly square, and each is covered by a domical vault, not a plain dome, but the central point is the highest, and the ribs, which are square and enriched with the zigzag, meet in this central point; they are on the groins, the space being divided into eight cells. The bays or compartments of the church are separated by

<sup>a</sup> Built by Bishop Normand de Douay. See Bodin, *Recherches sur l'Anjou*; and De Caumont, *Bulletin Monumental*, vol. i. p. 354.

massive square-edged arches, which are slightly pointed, and are carried on enormous buttresses, about ten feet square at the sides, and fourteen feet at the angles; whilst the cornice or corbel-tables and strings are carried round them, so that they form rather a thicker part of the wall than buttresses in the ordinary sense. Between each pair, or in the side-wall of each compartment, is a low pointed arch, recessed in the wall, springing from the bases of the piers, and carrying the triforium gallery at about half the height of the walls. The windows are entirely above this gallery; they are round-headed, in couplets, and filled with very fine original glass of the twelfth century, very similar to that at Canterbury. The inner face of the square buttresses is ornamented with shafts, having capitals and bases of Norman character: these carry the transverse arches and the ribs, and complete the design; the triforium gallery is supported by a Norman corbel-table. The west front of this church is very fine and rich, though somewhat spoiled by alterations at the period of the Renaissance. The central doorway is perfect, its jambs and tympanum filled with fine sculpture, the figures of the stiff Byzantine character. The rose-window has been destroyed and the arcades mutilated, and in the upper part a range of figures under canopies, and a sort of cupola of the Renaissance style, have been introduced in the place of the original gable. The two side-towers remain, and have rather good flamboyant spires added to them.

The next part of the church is the choir with its apse, which are of more decided transition character, and belong to quite the end of the twelfth century; while the transepts, though still partaking of the transition character, are said to have been built as late as 1240. There is a fine rose window at the end of each transept; the southern one is the earliest, and of plate tracery.

Flamboyant chapels have been added on both sides of the nave near the west end, and there is a cloister of late date on the south side joined on to one of these chapels. Both the cloisters and chapels appear to have been rebuilt on older foundations. The vaults of the choir and transepts have round ribs, instead of square. There is some fine original ironwork on the west door.

#### ANGERS.—*Church of Ronceray,*

said to have been founded by Foulques, Earl of Anjou, in 1025, and dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin in 1028<sup>a</sup>, and re-dedicated in 1119 by Pope Calixtus II. It is

<sup>a</sup> Foulques Nerra, the founder, was a great builder, and paid three visits to the Holy Land. These dates are given by Mr. Godard, on the authority of the charters which were in his possession at the time of the meeting of the French Society of Antiquaries under Monsieur de Caumont in 1841.—*Bulletin Monumental*, vol. vii. p. 531. See also Hiret, *Des Antiquités d'Anjou*: Gallia Christ. vol. iv. p. 792.

evidently one of the oldest churches in Angers, and a very fine example of the early type; it is not of Byzantine character, but its plan at present is a simple parallelogram with a plain barrel-vault. To compare great things with small, it bears considerable resemblance to the chapel in the White Tower in London; the details also agree in character with the churches of William I. at Caen. All the capitals have the small volutes, in imitation of Corinthian; and the central piece for the caulicoli is in many left uncarved, a very common feature of the eleventh century. Some, however, are more elaborately carved, as in those of the Holy Trinity at Caen; but, in both instances, the sculpture is probably somewhat later than the rest of the work.

To return to the Church of Ronceray, the vault is carried upon plain square-edged transverse arches of semi-circular form, and has no other ribs. The windows are plain, round-headed (mostly blocked up); the vaulting shafts are half rounds, and have the capitals before mentioned; the windows are all in the upper part of the wall above a string, below which the wall is plain; the shafts are all cut off at about one-half their length, and have modern corbels. It had originally apses, aisles, and transepts, which were destroyed in the last century.<sup>a</sup>

#### ANGERS.—*St. Laurent.*

The ruins of this church, near to that of Ronceray, are of similar character, though not, perhaps, quite so early.<sup>b</sup> The plan is cruciform, with an apse to the choir, and an apsidal chapel on the east side of each transept. The vaults are destroyed, but the greater part of the walls remains. It is chiefly of slate, the principal building-material of the district, but there are tiles mixed with it. The windows have shafts, the capitals of which are of rather a Greek character; the work shallow, but with volutes in the angles. The masonry, and the character of the work, is very rude. The vaults of the transept apses remain, and are of the half-dome form, constructed of small square stones in regular courses. The vaulting shafts and springing of the transverse arches show that the other vaults were baarel-shaped, like that of Ronceray.

<sup>a</sup> Bulletin Monumental, vol. vii. p. 531.

<sup>b</sup> After the dedication of the church of Ronceray by Pope Calixtus II. in 1119, the Pope mounted on a tomb in the adjoining cemetery of St. Laurent, and addressed the people assembled on the occasion, exhorting them to repentance and confession, remitting the seventh part of their penances, and endowing the church with this privilege in perpetuity, that whosoever should come to it in pilgrimage on the anniversary of the dedication should have the same benefit. Gall. Christ. vol. iv. p. 794.

ANGERS.—*St. Martin.*

Another ruined church of great interest, from the character of antiquity and the peculiar features it possesses. The plan is cruciform, with a central tower, and without aisles; the walls of the original portions are built of squared stones in layers, alternately with layers of tiles, three rows together, having an equal thickness of mortar between each row, exactly as in Roman work. The nave is in ruins, and has lost its vault; the central tower is tolerably perfect, and is vaulted with a dome. The piers of this tower are constructed in the manner just described, but they have imposts exactly like the usual Norman impost. There are large shafts in the angles, with capitals of the character of the eleventh century, and on these rest small shafts, carrying the angles of the vault—an arrangement common in Norman work. The arches are plain, semi-circular, with flat soffits; the dome has a plain surface without ribs. The transepts are of the same style as the central tower. The choir is considerably later, and is of transition character. The vaults domical, with square ribs. The apse is still later, and almost of early-French style, but the vault here has round ribs. All these ribs are enriched with ornament. Monsieur De Caumont states that the nave and transept of this church are parts of the structure erected by the Empress Hermengarde in the beginning of the ninth century; and considers it as a precious fragment of the works of the Carlovingian period (now extremely rare).<sup>a</sup>

ANGERS.—*Trinity Church.*

This is another very remarkable church, chiefly of transition character. The nave is wide, and has a series of semi-circular recesses for altars down the sides, vaulted with half domes; the arches pointed, and very much enriched with a great variety of late Norman ornaments. The nave itself is vaulted by a series of cupolas, or low domical vaults, each divided into eight cells, as at the Cathedral. The eastern part, or choir, is divided into three portions; the choir itself, with two aisles, each having an apse. This triple apse has a fine effect on the exterior. Over the central division is a small tower or square lantern, with a cupola. The windows are all plain, and round-headed; the arches all pointed, and enriched with ornament. The windows of the nave are pointed, and more of early-French character.

At the north-west angle of the nave is an older tower, partly in ruins, and clearly of the character of the eleventh century, with a barrel-vault and capitals to the

<sup>a</sup> Bulletin Monumental, vol. i. p. 353.

shafts, similar to those of the Church of Ronceray, which almost joins on to it : a small part of the wall of the nave is of the same age and work as the tower. The old church to which this belonged was evidently much smaller and lower than the present one. Part of the surface of the wall of the old work is formed of small diamond-shaped masonry. This church is said to have been commenced in 1062, and completed in 1092 :<sup>a</sup> these dates agree very well with the character of the tower and the small portion of the original church that remains. The present church is about a century later.

ANGERS.—*The Prefecture.*

In the cloisters of a modern building, now the Prefecture, but formerly an Abbey,<sup>b</sup> are some remains of the original cloister (Plate XXII.), which were found a few years since, having long been entirely concealed under a thick coat of plaster.<sup>c</sup> The work is in very fine preservation. It consists of an arcade of Norman work. It is almost unrivalled, even at that period of rich and elaborate work, the middle of the twelfth century, to which it belongs. In several parts the original painting remains more or less perfect. The tympanum of one arch especially is quite perfect, and very curious, from the combination of sculpture and painting. In the crown of the arch is a figure of Christ sculptured and coloured, and the figures form part of the same composition with the painted figures on the flat surface of the wall ; these are small groups of Scripture subjects : the Epiphany, the Offerings of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, and the Judgment of Solomon. The drawing of these figures bears a remarkable resemblance to the Bayeux tapestry.

The wall of the original cloister is five feet six inches thick, pierced by a series of small round-headed arches, enriched as described.

ANGERS.—*Hospital of St. John.*

This noble foundation was commenced by Henry the Second, King of England and Count of Anjou, the year after his accession to the English throne, or in 1156,<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Bulletin Monumental, vol. vii. p. 530.

<sup>b</sup> The abbey of St. Aubin founded before 1003. A charter of that date is extant.—Bull. Mon. vol. vii. p. 467. According to the Gallia Christiana it was founded about A.D. 960 : vol. iv. p. 23.

<sup>c</sup> This concealment is said to have been made by the Benedictines when they rebuilt the abbey in the seventeenth century. Since the Revolution the abbey has been turned into the prefecture, and the plaster was removed by order of the prefect. See a memoir by M. Godard, Bulletin Monum. vol. iii. p. 208.

<sup>d</sup> The charter of foundation is printed by Hiret, Antiquitez d'Anjou, p. 314.



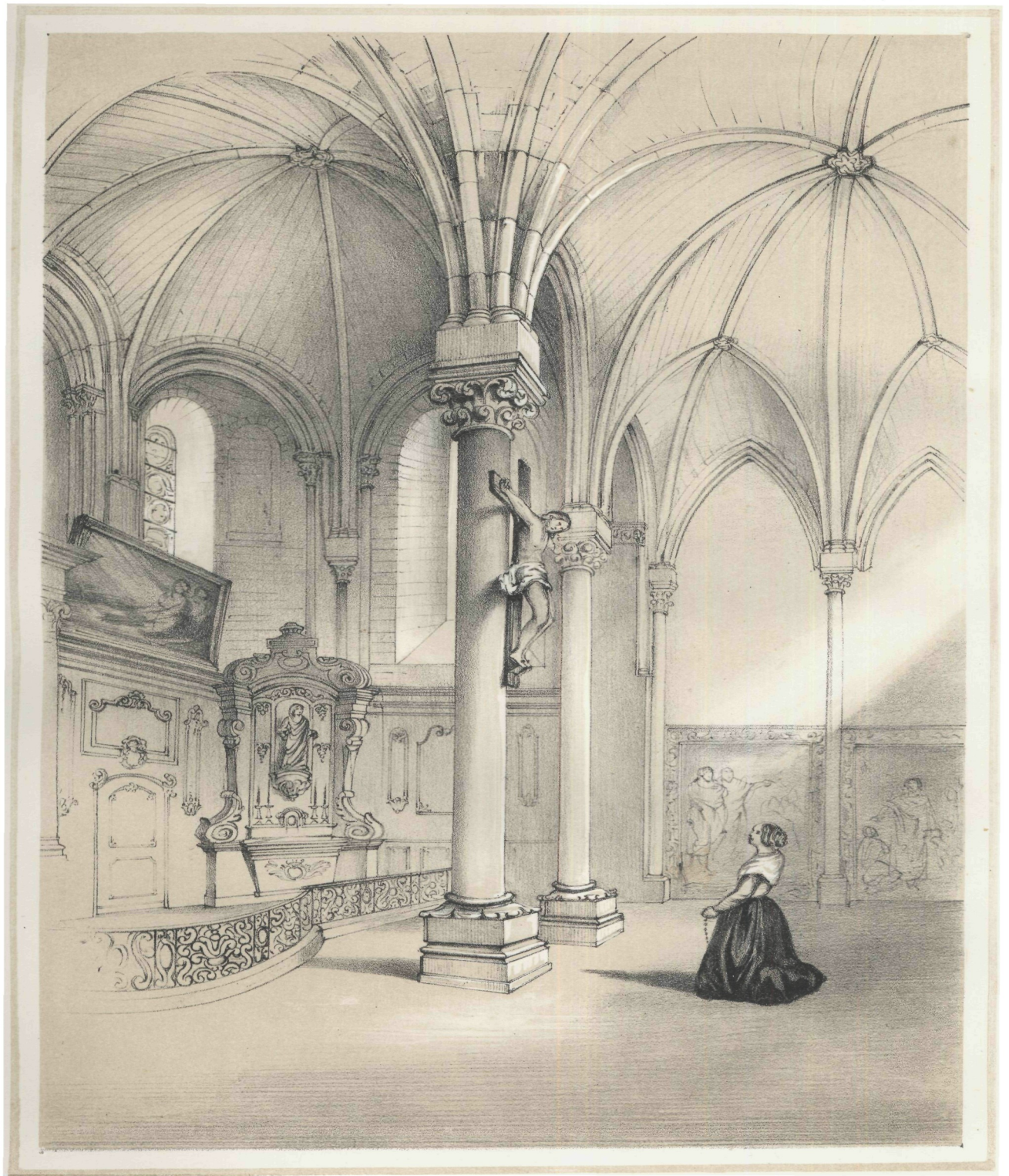
G. Bonet. del.

J. Bastre sc.

*Cloister of the ancient Abbey of St. Aubin at Angers.*

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*Chapel of the Hospital of St. John at Angers*

*Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London. 25<sup>th</sup> April. 1852.*

*J. Basire, Lith.*



and the buildings are said to have been completed in his time. The hall is a fine building, divided into three aisles by very light pillars, carrying transition pointed arches, and vaults slightly domical. It is eight bays in length, each bay having a separate vault; there are, therefore, twenty-four of these small domes, but they are so low as not to interfere with the external roof. They have bold round ribs on the groins of the eight cells into which each dome is divided, as at the cathedral; but these round ribs occur only in the eastern part of the cathedral, which was built after 1200. The chapel (Plate XXIII.) is of precisely the same character, and equally good, with very light pillars and vaults, as in the hall. The windows are all round-headed. The doorways are also round-headed, but richly moulded with very late Norman work. The effect of the chapel has been much injured by altering the position of the altar, blocking up the original entrance, and making a new one in a bad situation. The east end is square, but the vaults are so arranged as to give the effect of an apse. The cloister is good late Norman, or rather transition; two sides of it are perfect.

The barn is very fine and of the same period; it is divided into three aisles by two ranges of round-headed arches, on double shafts. The windows are in couples, with a diamond-shaped opening in the head; the doorway is round-headed, and opens on an external stone staircase. The mouldings are of late Norman character. The cellar under it is large, but very plain, with a good plain vault.

The other buildings of the Monastery are modern.

#### ANGERS.—*St. Serge.*<sup>a</sup>

This is another very remarkable church of late transition character, almost early-French, with a strong resemblance to the Hospital of St. John. The plan is cruciform, with short transepts, scarcely projecting, and with aisles to the nave and choir. The most striking feature is that the choir has two rows of tall, slender pillars to carry the vault, independent of the piers and the arches which separate the choir from the aisles. These pillars are said to be thirty feet high by one foot in diameter; they have octagonal bases, and capitals with foliage of the stiff-leaf character. The vaults are slightly domed and eight-celled, with round ribs meeting in a central boss, which is the highest point of the vault. At the east end is the Lady Chapel, which is square, with a flat east end; but the vaults arranged to give

<sup>a</sup> The abbey was founded in 711.—Gall. Christ. vol. iv. p. 820. The church was re-built between 1036 and 1056, by Vulgrain, the abbot of the monastery, afterwards Bishop of Le Mans.—Bull. Mon. vol. vii. p. 468. But this date will not apply to any part of the present structure.

the effect of an apse, as in the chapel of the Hospital. The piers between the choir and aisles are massive and square, with shafts attached, the arches pointed, the mouldings and vaults of the aisles the same as the choir; the windows are round-headed. The transepts are of similar character, but rather earlier, and have round windows of plate-tracery at each end. The nave appears to have been originally of the same character, but has been entirely refaced in flamboyant work. At the west end is a large porch, with rather a curious double vault. There is a tower at the south-west angle, unfinished. The exterior is plain and poor.

#### ANGERS.—*The Castle*

is large, of striking appearance, and well placed. It is distinguished by an amazing number of massive round towers at short intervals. The material is slate of a dark colour, with layers of white stone at regular intervals, after the fashion of the layers of tiles in Roman buildings. It was commenced in the thirteenth century, under Philip Augustus, but not completed before the fifteenth, under Louis IX;<sup>a</sup> but, from the extreme plainness of the work generally, it may be of any age. Part of the work must be of the sixteenth century, as the embrasures are evidently made for cannon. There is a small portion of the Roman wall remaining in the open space near the castle. It is faced with small squared stones, with layers of tiles at intervals, as usual.

The Tower of *St. Aubin* is a fine structure of the thirteenth century, and a good specimen of the early-French detached towers. The buttresses rise from the ground on all four sides, and it has never had any other building attached to it; the windows are lancets, and the details are all of the same style.

#### ANGERS.—*All Saints (now belonging to the Museum).*

The ruins of an early French church of the thirteenth century, the vaults destroyed, but the walls nearly perfect. The plan is cruciform, without aisles; the windows are lancet-shaped, with shafts having capitals with the stiff-leaf foliage, and round abacus. The east window is a wheel of plate-tracery, but of flamboyant work. The vaulting shafts are terminated on the canopies of figures of the same periods. This is also the case with the vaulting shafts of the choir of *St. Martin's*, which is nearly of the same character. There is a curious double font, oblong, with two basins, carried on an arcade of early-French character. It stands in the north

<sup>a</sup> De Caumont, Bull. Monumental, ii. 330.

transept, and is said not to have been moved. Several good tombs and other fragments of Roman and mediæval work are preserved here; the ruins having been attached to the Museum, which is at a short distance from them. This Museum is a fine flamboyant house, with a good staircase, having a curious and very elegant vault at the top. There are a great number of good old wooden houses in Angers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and several of stone also. One called the House of the Merchants, near the river, is attributed to the thirteenth century, but is really plain flamboyant work of the fifteenth or sixteenth.

SAUMUR.—*St. Peter.*

A fine church of the period of transition, cruciform, with a central tower, an apse to the choir, and apsidal chapels to the transepts, eastward. The choir is very narrow, and the apse has only a single window, large and round-headed; the vault is a plain semi-dome, but the vault of the choir has flat ribs, and the transverse arches are pointed; the vaults are of the eight-celled flat domical form, as at the cathedral and the hospital of St. John at Angers. The transepts are also narrow; the apsidal chapels have semi-dome vaults without ribs. The nave is wider, and has no aisles, but side-chapels, which are not original. The vaults are of the same character as those before mentioned. The windows are all round-headed externally, but very large, and some of the inner arches are pointed. The transverse arches are *all* pointed, and square in section. The capitals are very rich, with foliage of late Norman character. The church is so constructed that each bay from the west is smaller than the preceding, the eastern bay being very much narrower and smaller than the western; this seems done for the perspective effect only, to make the church appear larger. The exterior of the church is of the usual Angevine character, and shows very clearly the transitional date. The apses are very distinct, and have round buttresses. The tower, by itself, might be called early-French, but it is all of the same period. There is a rich late Norman doorway on the west side of the south transept. The west front is of the seventeenth century. The tooth-ornament is used in the dripstones, and in some other situations. There are arcades of paneling along the surface of the walls, both internally and externally.

SAUMUR.—*St. Nicolas.*

A small church of the usual transitional character. It consists of three parallel aisles of nearly equal width and height, five bays in length, each bay having a vault

of the eight-celled domical character ; the arches are pointed. The chief peculiarity of this church is that the altar has been removed from the east end to the west, and a modern choir built for it, while the original apses at the east end have doorways pierced in them. This change has obviously been made for convenience, because the church is situated at the western extremity of the town.

The Hotel de Ville is a small but very good flamboyant building, with fine machicolations on the exterior ; these have trefoils between them, and add much to the picturesque character. The interior court is richer, and also good in its way.

CANDES,—*near Fontevrault.*

A fine village church on the south bank of the Loire, of the same late Norman and transitional character which prevails in the neighbourhood. The plan is the usual one, but good and well marked ; the choir has a considerable decoration towards the north. The west front is a fine example of transition work, approaching more to the early-French character. There are two square corner turrets, which have machicoulis at the top, evidently intended for defence. The west doorway is small, of early-French style, deeply recessed, having five shafts on each side, and the arch well moulded. Over this doorway is an arcade resting on a corbel-table. The buttresses on each side of the doorway are almost turrets, square at the bottom, octagonal above, and terminated by small spires against the wall of the west gable, with a circular window between them. On the north side of the nave is a very remarkable porch, with a room over it, as high as the nave itself, and defended by machicoulis. The vault of the porch is supported by a central pillar like a chapter-house ; the work is unfinished in several parts. There are niches in the front, some of which have figures in them ; others the plain stones, not carved, showing the practice of carving the figures after the stones were placed, which may be observed in many other instances, but seldom so distinctly as here, some having the figures carved, and the pedestals left unfinished. The windows on this side the nave are of enormous length, and very narrow ; the height is fourteen times the width ; the heads are round. The nave has two aisles, of the same height with the central division, and these long windows give ample light to all these divisions. The pillars are very tall, octagonal in plan, with clustered shafts, having small capitals, each with square abacus and foliage. The bases are of early-French character, with the deep hollow to hold water, and corner foot-ornaments. The vaults are of the usual

Angevine character, domical, with eight ribs and a central boss. The choir and transepts are very short and plain, and have been repaired in the seventeenth century.

THE ABBEY OF FONTEVRAULT.—1100–1119.

The church is a very large and fine building,<sup>a</sup> though sadly mutilated. The plan is cruciform with aisles, a central tower, and five apses to the choir, and four transept chapels. The character of the whole is transitional. The windows are mostly round-headed, but those of the transepts are pointed. There are shafts attached to the buttresses in the lower part; in the upper part shafts serve as buttresses. The capitals have foliage of nearly early-French character; there are three series of corbel-tables at the east end. The central tower is square, lofty, with late Norman windows, round-headed, and shafts in the angles. The interior of the choir is very remarkable; the pillars unusually tall, with plain capitals and small round arches, a small triforium arcade and clerestory, both of which have round-headed openings. The vault of the apse is a semi-dome, that of the choir barrel-shaped, with arch ribs, only square in section, and quite plain. The transepts are of the same character as the choir. The nave has been vaulted by a series of small domes, the arches and pendentives of which remain. The upper parts of the domes have been cut off by a modern floor; the arches are slightly pointed, but quite plain, square in section, recessed, but not chamfered. The large arches do not spring from the outer walls; there is a passage behind them. The capitals are very richly sculptured with groups of figures, the abacus square, chamfered with the billet ornament on the sloping surface.

The tombs of Richard I. and Henry II., with their queens, have been very carefully restored, including the colouring. The four tombs are all alike, the

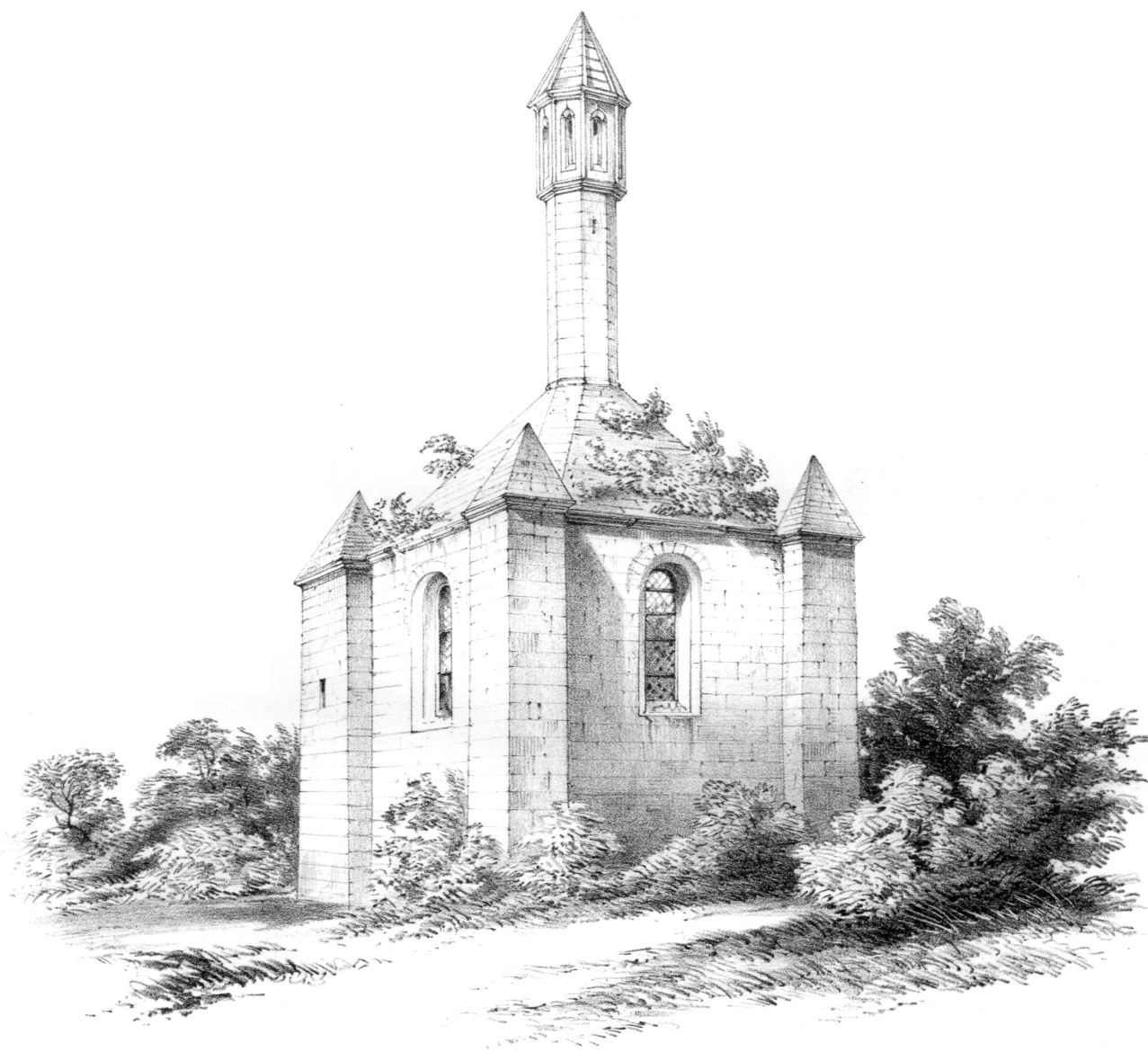
<sup>a</sup> Mr. Gally Knight considers the church as the one commenced by Foulques, fifth Earl of Anjou, but does not give his authority for this date. The abbey is said to have been founded by "Robertus or Robertus de Arbrusculo" in 1100, and consecrated in 1119. The Acts of Donation and Consecration are given at length in the *Gallia Christiana*, vol. iv. pp. 409—416. The authorities there quoted are the *Chronicum Turonense*; *Chronicum Malleacense*; and *Guillelmus Neubrigensis*, lib. 1 *Rerum Anglicarum*, cap. 15. The second abbess was Matilda, daughter of Foulques or Fulk fifth Earl of Anjou and King of Jerusalem, the virgin widow of Henry I. of England (who was drowned before the marriage was consummated). She presided over the Abbey from 1148 to 1164; and it appears, from the complimentary letter of *Petrus Celsensis* (lib. ii. ep. 10), that a considerable part of the buildings was erected or completed in her time. "*Si enim sanctius adoraris in animabus sanctis, quam in templis lapideis, et manufactis, etc.*"



figures lying on beds, but the figures themselves have all the appearance of portraits; three are of stone, one of wood. They are now carefully preserved in the apsidal chapel of the south transept. The figures are all of the natural size; Richard I. is short, his wife tall, with a book in her hand. Henry II. tall, his wife short. The costumes are similar, but not alike, especially the ladies. They do not appear to be so ancient as the period of their deaths, but all four to have been made at the same time, probably in the fourteenth century. The date of the foundation and of the consecration of the church are both distinctly recorded.

At a short distance from the church, and separated from it by some other buildings, is what I believe to be the kitchen, commonly called the octagon chapel or tower of Evrault. It is a very good and rare example of a kitchen of the twelfth century. The general form resembles that at Glastonbury, but this one is much more ancient. The ground plan is octagonal. The first story is square, carried on four lofty arches, each across two sides of the octagon; above this the plan is again octagonal, but much reduced in size. The octagon is formed by squinches across the angles of the square, and on these is carried the spire, terminating in an open smoke louvre. There are shafts in the angles of the octagon on the ground, alternately high and low. The low ones carry the springing of the arches, as usual; the high ones are connected with the points of the arches, to which they serve as buttresses. The four large arches cross the alternate angles, and the tall shafts being in these angles, are connected with the points of the arches by short open ribs. Under each of the large arches are two small ones, which serve as the openings of the fire-places; each had its separate chimney-flue, the lower part of which remains.

The capitals are of late Norman character, with plain foliage; the arches are quite plain, and square in section. The smoke louvre at the top has trefoiled openings, but it is not so old as the rest, and may be of the fourteenth century. The exterior has a series of small apses, with a shaft in each recess. There are openings into the spire; between the top of the apsidal vaults and the springing of the spire there is an interval of modern masonry, and it is here that the shafts of the chimneys have been cut off. It would appear that they were originally carried up in straight shafts resembling pinnacles round the base of the spire, but there is no positive evidence of this. I could not trace the flues more than a few feet from the lower opening; but the two artists who have sent me sections of the building, have both drawn the flues straight up as far as the base of the spire, where they appear to be cut off. The masonry of the spire is of small stones of an early appearance.



*Vertuary Chapel dedicated to St. Catherine  
in the Cemetery of the Abbey of Fontevrault.*

*G. Beard, del.*

*Engraved by the Society of Antiquaries of London 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1852.*

*J. Basire, lith.*

M. de Caumont considers this structure as a sepulchral chapel. Any opinion of his is always entitled to the highest respect, and it is not without considerable hesitation that I venture to differ from so high an authority; but for several reasons I cannot agree with him in this instance. It appears to me to be close to the abbey, and, although the louvre at the top has some general resemblance to that of the cemetery chapel, yet the plan is very different, and the existence of the lower parts of the chimney-flues appears to me conclusive.<sup>a</sup>

At a short distance from the abbey, in the ancient cemetery, is another curious building, a mortuary chapel dedicated to St. Catherine, founded in 1225, by Ala, Duchess of Bourbon, a nun of the abbey.<sup>b</sup> (Plate XXIV.) It is a structure of the thirteenth century, square in plan, with a lofty vault, which has six ribs meeting in an open louvre at the top, having very much the appearance of a chimney. The mouldings are all of the character of the thirteenth century; the arrangement of the double squinches across the angles is very good. The arches spring from plain corbels, but they are all mutilated; at the points of the arches are small figures of angels, one carrying a chalice. At one corner is a turret staircase, very narrow, almost concealed in the walls; this staircase leads to the outside of the roof and up an angle to an opening in the base of the louvre, probably for the purpose of inserting a lighted candle in the louvre, which has a trefoil-headed window at the top of each face, just below the small pyramid which covers it. This louvre is called a bell-turret, but is much too small and narrow for that purpose. It may probably have been used for the lantern for the dead, a custom well known to French antiquaries. There are several lanterns for the dead in different parts of France. At Mauriac, in Auvergne, there is one of these lanterns in the cemetery, and a deed is extant of the donation in 1268 by one of the clergy, for a candle to be lighted every Saturday in the lantern which he had built.<sup>c</sup>

The parish church is a small church or chapel of transition work. The choir has a square east end, but the vault is arranged so as to look like an apse. The shafts are detached, with capitals of rich foliage.

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<sup>a</sup> See De Caumont, *Cours*, vol. vi. p. 338. Since the above was written I have had an opportunity, in a subsequent visit to France, of discussing this point with M. De Caumont himself, and he is now convinced that it is a kitchen.

<sup>b</sup> The Charter of Foundation is printed in De Caumont's *Bulletin Monumental*, vol. vii. p. 543.

<sup>c</sup> De Caumont, *Bulletin*, vol. iii. 432. Also at Parthenay; see Letter II., p. 293.

## LETTER II.—THE COUNTY OF POITOU.

MY DEAR SIR,

Oxford, Feb. 15, 1852.

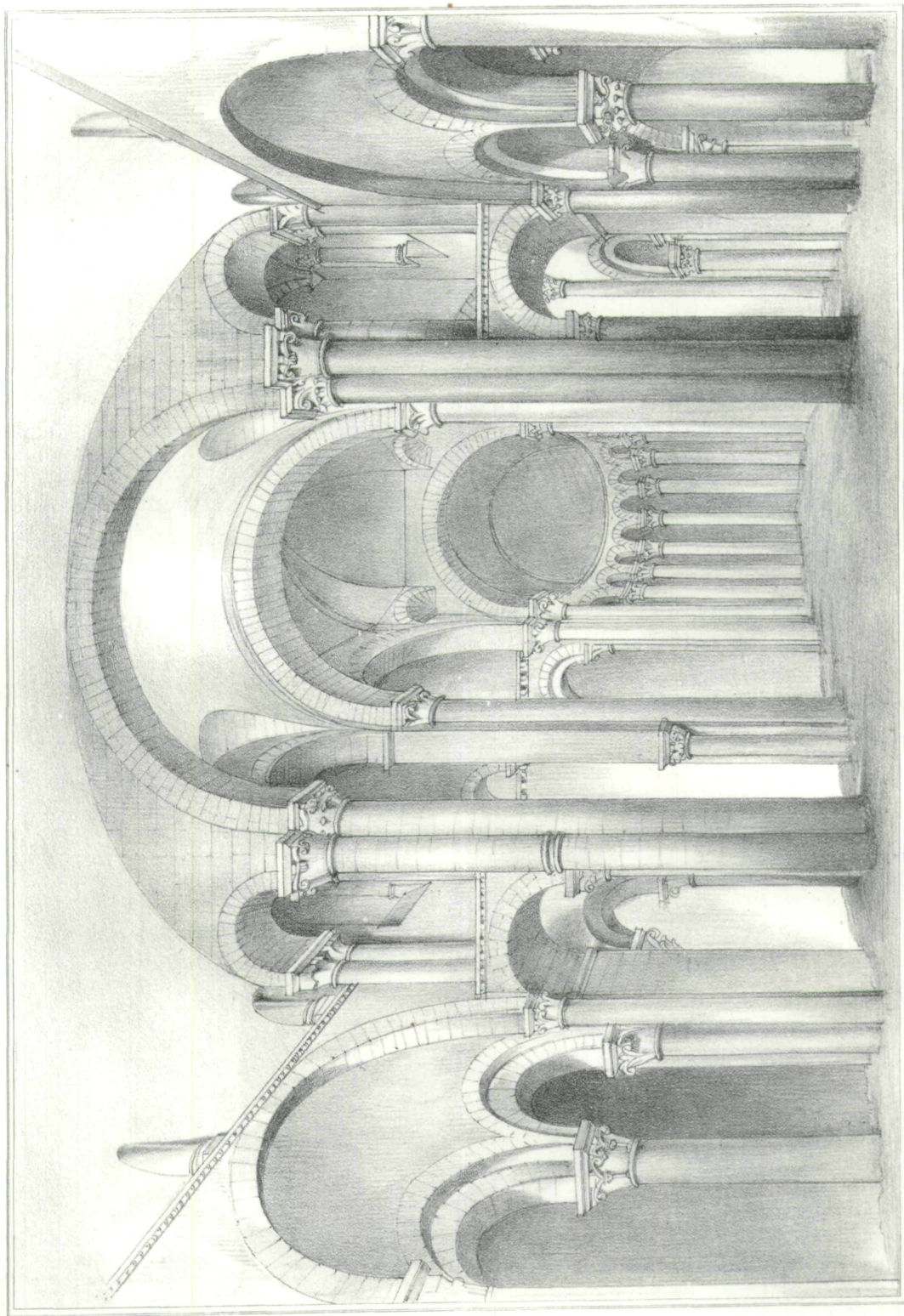
On a former occasion I endeavoured to give some idea of the principal buildings of the middle ages in the county of Anjou, more especially in the city of Angers. On the present occasion I propose to continue my remarks, beginning with the city of Poitiers.

This is well known to have been an important Roman station, and any account of its ancient buildings would be incomplete without mentioning that there are still some remains of a very extensive Roman Amphitheatre, sufficient to indicate its former extent and importance, but of no architectural value. The site is now occupied by vineyards, but portions of the walls, with the arches of the passages, peep out here and there through the rich foliage. The great Vomitoria still exist in a mutilated state; and fragments of ornament and portions of the cornice may still be seen at intervals.

The next building in point of antiquity is that called *The Temple of St. John*, the original part of which belongs to the debased Roman period, or probably to the eighth century. This part is oblong in plan, the greatest length being from north to south; the walls are of brick, with layers of tiles at regular intervals; at each end near the top are small round windows, and sunk arcades of two round arches, with a triangular straight-sided arch between them: under these are round arches recessed in the wall. A similar arcade is carried along the upper part of the wall on the east side, but in the lower part an apse has been thrown out of a semi-circular form, with an arcade of small round-headed arches, the shafts of which have capitals of foliage of a debased Corinthian character, and Roman mouldings. This apse appears to have been added in the eleventh century, and built chiefly of fragments of Roman work. It has a vault of the semi-domical form, with paintings on it of early character.

On the west side a sort of short nave has been added, and three arches opening into it, pierced through the Roman wall. This additional structure is also of a half hexagon form, but considerably larger than the eastern apse, extending the whole width and height of the original building. This addition was made probably at the same time as the other, for the purpose of forming the whole into a church.

What was the purpose of the original structure is still a doubtful point. One party contends that it was a baptistery, because there is a well in the centre; another,



G. Bouché del.

*Church of St. Hilary at Poitiers*

*Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London. 23<sup>rd</sup> April. 1852*

J. Baure sculp.



that it was the tomb of a Roman lady, called Claudia Varenilla, because her tombstone, with the inscription, was found in the wall, and is still preserved in the building which is now used as the Museum of Antiquities of the excellent and active Society of Antiquaries of the West of France. For whatever purpose this building was erected, it bears so much resemblance in the character of the work to the gateway at Lorsch, in the Bergstrasse, usually attributed to Charlemagne, that there can be no doubt they are both of the same age.

Four churches are recorded to have been built in Poitiers in the eleventh century, and, after a careful examination, and a comparison with other buildings assigned to the same period, especially the work of William the Conqueror at Caen, I am satisfied that considerable portions of the present churches belong to the original structures. St. Hilary and St. Nicolas were founded and built by Agnes of Burgundy, Countess of Poitou, who died in 1068.

2. *St. Hilary* was dedicated, in 1049, with great pomp, in the presence of thirteen bishops and archbishops.<sup>a</sup> This church has, however, been so badly treated, first by its partial destruction in the great revolution, and afterwards by an injudicious and clumsy attempt at restoration, before the proper mode of restoring such buildings was at all understood, that it is now very difficult to distinguish the original parts. The nave has been almost entirely destroyed; a large modern barrel-vault has been thrown over the remains of it, and a west front built up of old materials. Fortunately, however, by these clumsy means, one bay of the nave has been preserved, with the whole of the apse, with its aisle and chapels, so that enough remains to distinguish the original plan, and to show that it was a very remarkable one. (See Plate XXV.)

The choir and apse have eight tall round pillars with capitals, in the style of the eleventh century, and small round plain arches. The vault is plain and barrel-shaped, with a semi-dome at the end, and without ribs. There is an aisle or procession-path round the apse, with a plain groined vault; and from this project four apsidal chapels, two on each side, with none at the east end. These have semi-dome vaults, and small round-headed windows, with shafts having capitals and bases of peculiar and early character.

The central tower rests on four tall square piers, with shafts attached, similar to those of the apse-windows; under the tower is a domical vault, with squinches

<sup>a</sup> Gallia Christiana, vol. iv. p. 514: ex Chron. Malliacens.

across the angles of the square tower. The transepts have plain barrel-vaults, with transverse arches only, without ribs; the ends are square, but one is painted to look like an apse. At each end is a large plain round window; there is an aisle on the west side of the transepts, and there are corbel-tables inside to carry the barrel-shaped vaults. The exterior of the apse has round shafts, with capitals and bases attached to the wall in the place of buttresses, and is richer than the interior.

By the kindness of M. Thiollet, I have been furnished with a plan of the church entire, as it existed before the revolution in 1790. (Plate XXVI.) From this it is evident that the nave was originally vaulted by a series of cupolas, which is further confirmed by the portion which remains, having the small transverse arches one over the other across the aisles, to serve as buttresses to these cupolas. The work is of rather later character than the choir, but very good and unusual; and the whole is evidently a carrying out of the design of the eleventh century, if it is not all actually built at that period.<sup>a</sup> There are two aisles on each side, the inner one lofty, and the outer one considerably lower, the height of the arches only. These aisles have plain barrel-vaults: there are also arch-buttresses to the tower across the angles of the first bay of the aisles, on each side. The capitals of this part of the building are more richly sculptured than those of the eastern part.

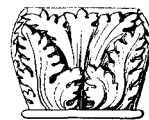
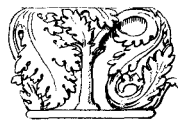
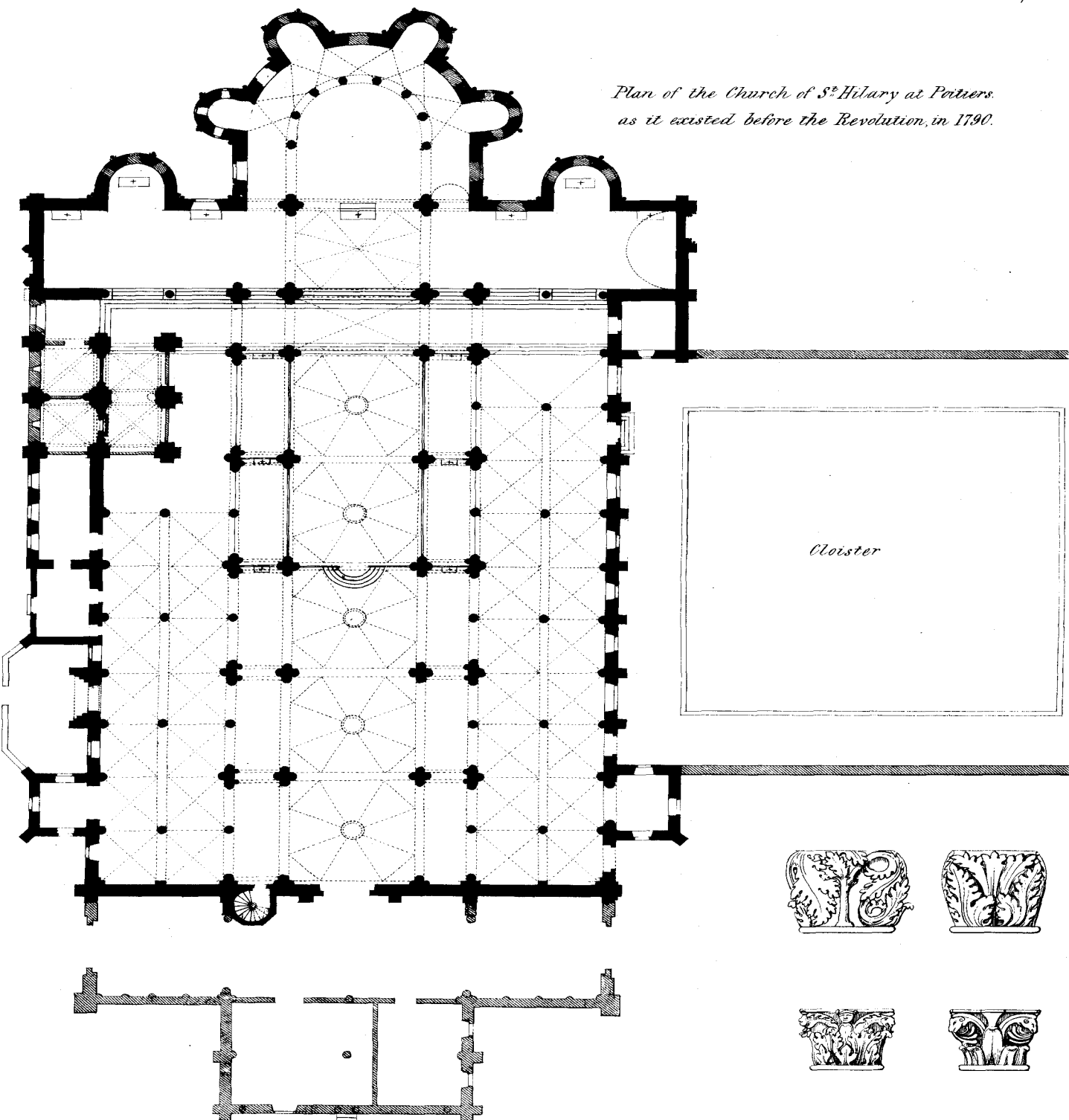
3. *St. Nicolas' Church* is now in ruins; the crypt and the apse are the only parts that remain. The general character is plain and early.

The crypt is of the usual plan, divided into three aisles, and had originally two entrances, one on each side; the capitals have plain volutes. The apse has tall pillars with small round arches; the capitals are the same as those of the crypt; the bases are unusual, and appear to be early; they resemble some of those attributed to William I. at Caen. The vault is groined without ribs, and has remains of ancient painting upon it.

The exterior is richer than the interior, and has a good corbel-table, and the shafts have sculptured capitals. The rest of the church is destroyed, but the chancel-arch remains, and is pointed, yet this appears to be part of the original work. There is a close resemblance between the work here and at St. Hilaire. St. Nicolas is said to have been commenced in 1066, completed in 1087, and conse-

<sup>a</sup> According to M. Thiollet's observations, a small portion on the north side, which was evidently the lower part of a tower, is of earlier character than any other part of the building, and belongs to a previous structure: and, as it is not probable that this earliest part is older than the eleventh century, it follows that the greater part is of the twelfth.

*Plan of the Church of S<sup>t</sup> Hilary at Poitiers,  
as it existed before the Revolution, in 1790.*



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 15 20 25 metres

J. Bascire Lith.

crated, by Pope Urban II., on his return from the council of Clermont, where he had preached the first crusade, in 1096.

4. The history of *St. Porchaire* is not so well known; it is mentioned in 1068,<sup>a</sup> and the present tower is supposed by the French antiquaries to belong to the original church of about that period. It is a fine tower, of early character, with a good doorway and porch under it, with a plain barrel-vault; the doorway is recessed, and the arch moulded; the shafts are thick and heavy, with large capitals, having sculptures of early character, shallow and rude: on one are lions, with the word "LEONES" cut in the stone; on another, two birds drinking out of the same cup; on a third, a figure of Christ in a vesica, with an early inscription; on the fourth are nondescript animals, whose heads form the volutes.

Over the doorway is a pannel of mutilated sculpture. On the first story are two recessed arches with loops under them; on the second story is an arcade of four small arches; over this the belfry, with double windows, with shafts having early capitals. The buttresses are square below, turned into half-round pilasters above, between the belfry windows. There are three corbel-tables, the corbels carved chiefly into heads; and there are strings of the billet-ornament; part of the plain surface is formed of diamond-shaped masonry. The rest of the church is poor flamboyant work, divided into two equal portions by a row of arches, without any distinction into nave and aisle or chancel.

5. The church of *Montierneuf* was founded in 1075, by William Grey Geoffrey, Count of Poitou, and Duke of Aquitaine, who died in 1086, and was buried in this church. The architect was a monk of the abbey, of the name of Pons, and the church was dedicated, in 1096, by Pope Urban II., on the same occasion as *St. Nicolas*.<sup>b</sup>

These dates are recorded on an inscription which has been preserved by the care of the Society of Antiquaries of the West of France.

The exterior of the church is very similar to the others before mentioned; the interior has had its character destroyed by the bad restorations executed in 1817, under the auspices of the Count of Artois, afterwards Charles the Tenth. But many of the original capitals have been preserved, and are lying about in the churchyard, and other places in the neighbourhood; they are of unusual and early character, rather different from those of the other churches. The nave is very long,

<sup>a</sup> Gall. Christ. vol. i. p. 206.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. vol. iv. p. 653.

and has a plain barrel-vault; the small side vaults are carried into this transversely, in a singular manner, and form pointed arches at the intersection. This arrangement is original.

6. *St. Radégonde*, queen of France, founded a monastery at Poitiers, in the sixth century, in which she became a nun, and died there. Her tomb is still shown in the crypt of the present church, and is much honoured by the peasantry.

The church has been several times destroyed and rebuilt. The last time it was burnt was in 1083, and the new church consecrated in 1099,<sup>a</sup> to which period the present choir and apse belong. The tomb and the crypt, which are quite plain, may possibly be part of the original building; the crypt has a barrel-vault, and a half-domical vault at the end; the entrance to it is by a central flight of steps from the nave. The choir is small, with a hexagonal apse, and plain barrel-vault; an aisle or procession-path round the apse, and apsidal chapels. All this is of early Norman character, and the walls are covered with paintings of the style of the thirteenth century, carefully restored. The aisle has a groined vault without ribs; the chapels have barrel-vaults; the nave is larger in proportion to the rest, and is the same width as the choir with its aisles. It is in the style of the Angevine churches of the early French period, with the same kind of domical vaults. On the lower part of the walls are arcades of round arches, over these a bold string, with a corbel-table, and over this the windows, which are of different styles. At the west end is an early porch, with a plain barrel-vault, with arches recessed in the wall on both sides under one of which is a figure of Christ seated on a throne of curious design. The sculpture is rude and shallow. Over this porch is a tower of good Norman character, the lower part square, in three stages, with an octagonal belfry at the top. There are three corbel-tables, one to each story, of good style, and windows with sculptured capitals to the shafts, and a very good round stair-turret of the same style. Attached to the west front is a good flamboyant doorway, with a curious wooden penthouse over it, which appears to be of the same period. The exterior of the rest of the church is very plain, with small narrow pilaster buttresses at the angles of the apse.

7. The church of *Nôtre Dame la Grande* at Poitiers is celebrated for its west front, which is one of the richest pieces of Norman work in existence, being entirely covered with sculpture.<sup>b</sup> The exact date is not recorded, but it must be about the

<sup>a</sup> Ex Chronico Malliacens. ap. Besly, *Histoire des Comtes de Poitou*.—Bull. Mon. vol. ix. p. 399.

<sup>b</sup> For a full account of this church and its sculpture, see *Bullet. Mon.* vol. iv. pp. 435—444.



middle of the twelfth century. The central tower, with its conical top, is also very good and characteristic; and the two turrets which flank the west front are diminutives of it. The plan of the church is the usual one of this district and period—a every long nave of eight bays, with narrow aisles, a short choir with an apse, an aisle round it, and chapels. The nave has a barrel-vault, with square arch ribs; the aisles have groined vaults; the piers are square, tall, with shafts attached, the capitals sculptured—some with a sort of inter-laced Runic patterns, others plain, but all with volutes at the corners. The central tower stands on four lofty round arches, and the lantern is open to the church. In the west front are three doorways, the central one round-headed, the other two pointed; the spandrels filled with groups of sculpture. Over them is a boldly-projecting string, carried on a corbel-table. Over this two rows of small figures in shallow niches, all richly carved: a large round-headed window in the centre, over which, in the gable, is a figure of Christ, in the vesica or aureole. The surface of the wall of the gable is constructed partly of small round stones, with pieces to fit in between, partly of diamond-shaped masonry. The exterior of the south side has a series of arches carried from buttress to buttress, over the windows. These have hood-moulds, enriched with the star ornament; the surface masonry is of small stones—part square, part diamond-shaped. There is a stair-turret on the south side of the nave, two bays from the west end, and another to the central tower. The painting of the walls and pillars has lately been restored, in very good taste, and good painted glass inserted in the west window.

8. *The Cathedral Church of St. Peter* at Poitiers was founded by Henry II. in 1161,<sup>a</sup> but a small portion only was completed in his time, consisting of the two eastern bays of the choir, with their vaults complete, but the structure over the vaults is of a later period. The work of the original part is of transitional character; the east end is flat, according to the English custom, which is very unusual in France. In the interior the vaults are so arranged as to give the appearance of an apse, and the same arrangement is followed on the east side of the transepts, which are a little later, but not much. There is another break in the work on the west side of the transept; the nave is considerably later, and part of it as late as the fourteenth century. The structure over the vault of the choir is very poor and shallow work of the thirteenth century, corresponding so closely with the Hall of the Palace (now the Palais de Justice),

<sup>a</sup> *Annales d'Aquitaine* par Bouchet, p. 57.

that there can be no doubt that they are the work of the same architect; but, unfortunately, the date of the Palace is not known, any better than that of this part of the cathedral. The greater part of the church is in the early-French style, with the domical vaults, like the Angevine churches. The nave has good arches and pillars, with capitals and bases of the thirteenth century. The west front is a very fine example of that style, with three doorways deeply recessed, and filled with sculpture in the tympanum and arches: the large figures in the jambs have been destroyed. The turrets at the angles are of two periods, the lower part of the thirteenth, the upper of the fourteenth century, and a fine rose window of the latter period is introduced in the centre of the west front. The sides of the church are plain. The gargoyles are singular, consisting of plain stone spouts, carried each on a shaft with a richly-sculptured capital and a good corbel. There is a pierced parapet of quatrefoils of the fourteenth century on the sides of the nave. Most of the original windows are filled with good painted glass of the same period.<sup>a</sup>

#### PARTHENAY.

The church of *Old Parthenay* is said to have been built about 1050 by the Lord of Parthenay, Guienne, and Poitou, in expiation for the death of a child which was accidentally killed by his horse at a time when he was out hawking; in commemoration of which event there is in the west front a sculptured figure of a man on horseback, with a child under the feet of the horse, but, as the same figure occurs in several other churches, it is more probable that the legend has been made to suit the sculpture—a practice which may often be observed in the legends of the saints. The date assigned to this event may, however, agree pretty well with the earliest part of the church, which is the east end, though the greater part of it is clearly of the twelfth century. The plan is the usual one of the district, cruciform, with a short choir, short transepts, a tower over the intersection, a long nave, and aisles. The choir is quite plain, with a barrel-vault; the transepts similar; the lower piers have their capitals sculptured with figures of animals; these arches are slightly pointed; the nave arches are also pointed, and of quite late Norman character, as indicated by the mouldings of the bases, &c.; the side windows are also pointed; the west front is very fine, and richly ornamented, with recessed doorways, finely moulded, and also with sculpture. Amongst the ornaments is one nearly approaching to the tooth ornament, and another resembling early-English crockets. In the south wall of the choir are two curious piscinas of the fourteenth century, close

<sup>a</sup> For an account of this glass see *Bulletin Mon.* vol. ix. p. 599.

together. In the churchyard there was formerly a sort of beacon or pillar, with a place for a light at the top, in honour of the dead, called a "*Lanterne des Morts*," of which M. de Caumont has published an engraving, but it has since been destroyed.<sup>a</sup>

The church of *St. Laurent* at Parthenay is of the usual plain character of the transitional work of the district, quite late in the twelfth century; but the east end is square, instead of the usual apsidal form; and at the west end there is a plain massive porch of much earlier character, probably of the eleventh century. In the choir are some stone stalls of transition Norman work, which have lately been restored, but enough of the original work remains to show that the restorations are tolerably faithful.

The church of *St. Croix* at Parthenay is so much of the same character as not to require a separate description.

Part of the west front of another church (*Nôtre Dame de la Coudre*) is late, and very rich Norman work, with some very beautiful ornaments and fine mouldings, and a mutilated figure of a man on horseback.<sup>b</sup>

In the town of Parthenay are several remains of medieval houses, amongst them a good doorway of flamboyant work, with a battlement over it for ornament only—a very rare feature in France.

#### AIROU.

At Airou, about half way between Parthenay and Poitiers, is a good specimen of the usual country houses or chateaux of this part of France, extremely picturesque from the number of small turrets, with their spiral roofs, but of no particular architectural character; so that often it is difficult to determine their age. Nearly the same fashion seems to have continued through the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.

#### CHAUVIGNY.

Chauvigny, situated about twelve miles eastward of Poitiers, has the remains of three castles and three churches. The former are mere ruins, and more remarkable for their situation and picturesque effect than for any particular architectural character. The churches are in a more perfect state, and are worthy of attentive

<sup>a</sup> There was an endowment to defray the expense of the light. See Bull. Mon. vol. vi. p. 12. See also Letter I., p. 285.

<sup>b</sup> A detailed account of the sculptures of this rich west front, which is of Byzantine character, is given by M. de Caumont in the Bull. Mon. vol. vi. p. 336.

study. *St. Just* is a small church of early romanesque style, very similar to those of Poitiers of the eleventh century. The plan is cruciform, with aisles to the nave, and three apses. The vaults are all of the barrel form, carried on plain arch ribs with the usual semi-dome vaults to the apses, and the aisles have their vaults groined without ribs. The central tower has a domical vault, carried on four round arches, the capitals of which are enriched with sculptures of curious and early character, a description of which would hardly be intelligible without drawings. The arches of the nave are round, on octagonal piers, with plain imposts. The windows are all small, and round-headed. The exterior of the nave and transepts is very plain; the choir is more enriched, the apse having good corbel tables and half pillars for buttresses; the hoodmoulds have the billet and other ornaments, and there is a string with a remarkable ornament of Roman character.

*Chauvigny St. Pierre* is another curious church of the same plan and character.<sup>a</sup> The choir has the procession path continued round the apse; the pillars are massive, round, with clumsy capitals of curious sculpture, and figures of birds, animals, &c. The four shafts of the tower-arches are cut off upon corbels with the same curious early sculpture. The procession-path, or aisle, has a plain barrel-vault, and there are three apsidal chapels projecting from it. The choir has a good triforium arcade with richly-sculptured capitals, and the arches ornamented. Over the arcade are three small clerestory windows, pierced through the domical vault. The transepts are of similar style. The nave is rather later, apparently twelfth century. The central tower is square with arcades of shallow paneling of the same period as the nave. The west doorway is transition work, with a pointed arch. The exterior of the choir and apse are enriched in a similar manner to the other churches of this early character, but the sculpture not quite so early.

*St. Père des Eglises* is a small early romanesque church of curious style, very plain; the masonry of part of the walls is of small ashlar work, resembling Roman; and there are remains of early painting in the interior.

#### ST. SAVIN.

The most remarkable church in this part of France is that of St. Savin; but the splendid and elaborate work upon it, published by the French Government, renders it unnecessary to attempt any minute description of it.<sup>b</sup> The general character is the same as that which has been before described as the style of the

<sup>a</sup> See *Bullet. Mon.* vol. ix. p. 417.

<sup>b</sup> See also *Bullet. Mon.* vol. ix. p. 419.

eleventh century. The church is a large and fine one, cruciform in plan, with a very long nave, short choir and apse, with narrow aisles to the nave, and round the apse ; and chapels radiating from the latter : a tall tower and spire at the west end, and a crypt under the choir. The larger vaults are all of the plain barrel form ; the aisles have groined vaults ; the tower is of very early character ; the spire a flamboyant addition. Nearly all parts of the interior of the church, including the vaults of the nave, of the crypt, of the apsidal chapels, and the interior of the tower, are covered with very curious paintings of remarkably early character, clearly anterior to the twelfth century, and probably the work of Greek artists. Some antiquaries have assigned a very remote period to these paintings, and consequently to the building which they ornament. Various coincidences, however, seem to lead to the conclusion that the whole is the work of the eleventh century. In the chapels round the apse are plain massive altars, and on the edges of the altar-slabs are inscriptions which agree, in the form of the letters and the custom of putting small letters within the large ones, with that period. None of these inscriptions record any actual date, but one of them mentions Pope Clement as the reigning Pope : this must be either Clement II. in 1047, or the Anti-pope Clement III. in 1080. An abbey was founded on this site by Charlemagne,<sup>a</sup> but was destroyed by the Normans, and it is not probable that the original church was spared ; nor does the style of the structure agree with other known works of Charlemagne.<sup>a</sup> Its large size and perfect plan would rather lead us to attribute it to the twelfth century ; but the style of the work, and especially the paintings, will not admit of so late a date.

Being fearful of intruding too long on your time and patience, I now conclude for the present, but am ready at any time to continue the subject if wished to do so.

Your very obedient Servant,

J. H. PARKER.

<sup>a</sup> Teste Chronico Malleacensi : Gall. Christ. vol. iv. p. 817.

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