

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the *Archæological Journal*.

Dear Sir,—In the “Journal” of the Archæological Association (vol. xxxiii, part 3) Mr. Irvine has made a friendly attack upon me on the subject of “Wide-jointed and Fine-jointed Masonry.” I have long been accustomed to consider this to be a distinguishing feature between the eleventh and twelfth century, according to the words of William of Malmesbury, who wrote in the early part of the twelfth century, and in describing the buildings of Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, the greatest builder of his time, says, the walls were so admirably built that *they appeared to be all of one stone*, clearly showing that the writer was not accustomed to see fine-jointed masonry. Prof. Willis also showed the members of the Institute the same thing in his lectures at Canterbury and at Winchester, especially the latter, where the outer walls of the transepts, which are of the eleventh century, are all wide-jointed, and the parts rebuilt with the central tower, after it fell upon the body of William Rufus, and therefore early twelfth century, are fine-jointed. I have found the same thing in scores of other instances both in England and in Normandy, where I was generally accompanied by M. G. Bouet, who made me drawings of them, and we had an Itinerary given to us by the late M. Arcisse de Caumont, my much valued friend for many years, and the best Norman antiquary of his day. I was the first to give this clue to them, and they verified it on many occasions with the French Archæological Society, especially in the two celebrated abbey churches at Caen, which they examined with much care, and ascertained by means of the jointing of the masonry that the vaults and clerestoreys are additions of the latter half of the twelfth century; they originally had flat wooden ceilings as at Peterborough. It is therefore evident that this is a useful distinction between *early Norman and late Norman* buildings, and these are usually the one of the eleventh century, the other of the twelfth.

Nevertheless, Mr. Irvine has proved his point as far as it goes; but none of the buildings that he cites are *Norman*; they are all of the style or type usually called Anglo-Saxon, and the buildings of this kind are more often of the eleventh century than any other period. The Norman Conquest made no *immediate* change of style of building in England. For a generation after that to the end of the eleventh century there was an *overlapping of the styles*; the Norman had been introduced into England *before* the Conquest by Edward the Confessor at Westminster (as we can still see by the remains of his buildings), but this was the *new fashion*; many *old fashioned* people continued to build in the style of their fathers; perhaps the Saxon prejudice against the Normans added to this old fashion. It is certain that many of the buildings called Anglo-Saxon are of the time of the Conquest, or even later. The churches in the lower town at Lincoln are well known examples;

they are strictly of the Anglo-Saxon type, though built after the Conquest. A large proportion of this class of buildings is in the eastern counties, which were the Danes' land in the eleventh century, and there is every probability that when the Danes first became Christians they were very zealous church builders, and followed the example set by the King Canute (or Cnut), who ordered a stone church to be built where a wooden one had been burnt in his wars, at Ashington in Essex. But the truth must be acknowledged that to call the styles of architecture by the names of the centuries, though very convenient, and in the main correct, is sometimes misleading, and is so in this instance. The width of the joints is a useful distinction between early and late Norman buildings; but a large proportion of the buildings of the eleventh century in England are not Norman, and the distinction does not apply to the Anglo-Saxon buildings.

Formerly, it is true, I did not acknowledge that there was any *Anglo-Saxon style*. but I am not ashamed to acknowledge that further observation during the last forty years has made me see that this was an error, though the best informed people of that time agreed with me, and considered all these pre-Norman buildings as debased Roman only. Rickman and his friends considered these buildings to be *before the year 1000*, and overlooked the eleventh century altogether, which was a very important building era.¹ The best authorities in foreign countries consider that the debased Roman continued to the year 1000, and after that time the national characters began to be introduced, and this seems to be equally the case in England. In the early part of the eleventh century the buildings were usually small, rude and clumsy; but a rapid improvement was going on *before* the Norman Conquest, and was stopped by the introduction of the Norman style in England, but not so in Germany for a much longer period.

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN HENRY PARKER, C.B.

Oxford, Nov. 22, 1877.

¹ See Viollet le Duc, "Dictionnaire de l'Architecture," for France, and Rosengarten, "Handbook of Architec-

tural Styles," translated by W Collett-Sandars, for Germany.