

MONSIEUR DE CAUMONT.

By C. ROACH SMITH, F.S.A.*

THE death of M. Arcisse de Caumont calls for an expression of recognition and grateful remembrance from all who can estimate the importance of the science of archæology, in a wide point of view, national and European. With an ardent love of his native country and animated by intense and chivalric devotion to her monumental antiquities, he did not rest contented in studying them in France alone. He visited neighbouring countries, and made himself acquainted with the works of their most eminent writers; and by incessant activity and perseverance he roused the intelligence of France to a sense of the importance of the national monuments and to the necessity of staying the progress of Vandalism, which had for many years revelled in destruction. He established an association on a broad and liberal scale, the influence of which soon extended to England and led to the movement which resulted in the kindred societies formed after the model of M. de Caumont's well-digested scheme.

M. de Caumont was born at Bayeux, in 1801. When a mere boy he evinced great aptitude for the natural sciences; and, in 1820, we find him publishing essays on the geology of the district of Bayeux, of Cotentin, of Western Normandy, etc. The most important, entitled "*Essai sur la Topographie Géognostique du Calvados*," has been republished so late as 1867. To these studies may be attributed much of the power for comparison, analysis, and precision of thought so conspicuous in his archæological works, especially in those prepared for educational purposes, in which careful and correct classification was imperative.

In 1824 was formed the Society of Antiquaries of Normandy. Its "*Mémoires*" bear internal evidence that M. de Caumont, who appears as Joint Secretary, was the founder. The report on its proceedings, at the close of the first year, was written by him; and it shadows forth, in a clear, forcible, style, the sound and comprehensive principles

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upon which the long and successful career, he had just entered upon, was based. "Hitherto," he writes, "historians have transmitted only principal events; they have neglected a mass of interesting details; they have neglected altogether the history of literature, of the arts, and of industry, to occupy themselves solely with political occurrences. Timid narrators, they never sought to study the character of the people whose great actions they have traced; they relate the effects and neglect the causes, easy as they were to discover. In one word, they have written history without reasoning; and their works are altogether without a moral."

With M. de Caumont were associated in this Society MM. le Prévost, Rever, Lambert, Pluquet, de Gerville, the Abbé de la Rue, and others of the leading Antiquaries of Normandy, all older than M. de Caumont. De Gerville had long been a refugee in England, where he became acquainted with the works of our best historians; and with some of our most eminent architectural writers, with which De Caumont, through him, became equally familiar; for his mind was of a mould too expansive to be confined to his own country. He was familiar with the works of Ducarel, Cotman, Dawson Turner, King, Miller, Britton, Rickman; and with those of our more recent architectural writers, including Mr. J. H. Parker, with whom he became personally acquainted; the results of whose visits to Normandy are recorded in some of our best publications, as well as in the "Bulletin Monumental." Above all, to M. de Gerville he expresses his obligations, remarking that he it was who first of all, in Normandy, devoted himself to the study of the architecture of the middle ages. In the first volume of the "Mémoires" of the Society of Antiquaries of Normandy appears M. de Caumont's first essay on the religious architecture of the middle ages in Normandy. In this essay he adopts the term *Roman*, first proposed by M. de Gerville to designate architecture from the departure of the Romans to the end of the eleventh century: since then the term has been generally used in France.

This essay was the pioneer of the author's matured and important work, the "Cours d'Antiquités Monumentales," in six volumes, the first of which appeared in 1830, the last in 1841.¹ The volumes comprise,—1. The Celtic Era. 2

¹ "Caen, Chalopin et Hardel, 6 vol. in 8° et 6 Atlas contenant 120 planches," 1830-1841.

and 3. The Gallo-Roman Era. 4. Religious Architecture. 5. Military and Civil Architecture. 6. Baptismal Fonts, Altars, Tombs, Paintings on Glass, Frescoes, Enamels, and Wainscotting. The "A'bécédaire," in four volumes, were published from 1851 to 1861. They are rudimentary works, well adapted not only for educational but also for general purposes. In the last of these, on Heraldry, he was assisted by M. Bouet, of Caen, whose name is associated as artist and contributor with the later volumes of the "Bulletin Monumental."

The "Mémoires" of the Society of Antiquaries of Normandy supply an interesting chain of evidence of the zeal and persevering spirit of M. de Caumont. His active mind did not rest contented with success. M. Le Prévost had already visited the East and South-East of France to urge the formation of kindred societies. M. de Caumont did the same for the West. He encouraged correspondents to continue their researches, to unite, and to form independent bodies. Convinced that centralisation was as prejudicial in literature as in politics, he never ceased to fight against it by forming in the various provinces, many and distinct centres. Science, he felt, would gain by this multiplied self-government; and he saw, and correctly, that it was impossible that the national monuments could ever be properly explored and studied but by devoted persons residing near them; and to whom they were constantly accessible.

In the "Société Française d'Archéologie," for the preservation and description of the national monuments, which he definitely established in 1834, his aspirations were realised. Of this great Association he was the creator and the life. Some notion may be formed of its success from the "Bulletin Monumental," its bi-monthly journal, which, up to the death of its founder and director, had completed 38 thick 8vo volumes, well illustrated. This archæological mine does not include many volumes emanating also from the Société Française, or rather from its indefatigable founder. The load of labour which his successful institution threw upon him was enormous and incessant. Although the amount of correspondence and literary compositions would alone seem more than enough to confine him to his study, yet, viewed through his "Bulletin," he seems to have been ubiquitous, not only in spirit but in person. He organised congresses, drew up lists of questions for the various sections, assigned

to each its work, appointed the right men in the right place ; and thus made the congresses useful and consistent. Nothing was left unfinished. If time ran short, sub-committees were appointed to complete all duties. Ignorance and Vandalism were opposed as soon as discovered ; Town-councils destroying or defacing churches or Roman walls, or pulling down ancient houses of interest, were encountered and checked on all sides ; researches and excavations were stimulated by praise, and by funds where needed ; and, although it is not easy to know always how far fortune has favoured a man, for often where there is a will there's a way, yet it is certain that M. de Caumont must have had good private property. It is, moreover, as certain that, whatever it may have been, had he possessed a hundred times as much, his patriotism and generosity would have exhausted it.

It is impossible, in a limited space, to convey more than a faint notion of a man so remarkable as M. de Caumont. He can only be fully estimated by his works. Of these a complete list is appended to a sensible, well digested, and feeling biography by M. E. de Robillard de Beaurepaire,² which should be read by all who appreciate unselfish devotion to science and a combination of energy and genius such as make a man esteemed and beloved in his own country and honoured everywhere. But, above all, the "Bulletin Monumental,"³ before referred to, should be consulted. This invaluable work is now conducted by M. de Cougny, the worthy successor of M. de Caumont in the directorship of the Société Française.

A statue of M. de Caumont is to be erected at Bayeux. For this the Society has voted 5,000*f.* ; other Societies at Caen and individuals have raised the subscription to about 12,000*f.* It is probable that English archæologists will join in this appropriate expression of sympathy, and record their names as subscribers. The Secretary, the Abbe le Petit of Tilly-sur-Suelles, invites co-operation ; and for the same object, M. de Cougny, au Château de la Grille, près Chinon, Indre-et-Loire, kindly consents to receive communications.⁴

² Caen ; F. Le Blanc-Hardel, 1874.

³ Paris ; Derache, Didron, Dumoulin. The second volume of a new series is just completed.

⁴ Any subscriptions in aid of the above will be gladly received by the Secretary, at the Office of the Institute, 16, New Burlington Street, London.