

***JOHN HENRY
PARKER***

***A B C OF GOTHIC
ARCHITECTURE***

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INTRODUCTION.

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ARCHITECTURAL History can only be understood by the eye, either by seeing the buildings themselves, with time to examine the construction and the details of each period, or by accurate representations of them arranged in chronological order. This is what has been attempted in the present work; and when so arranged, any one, however ignorant of the subject, can see and understand the gradual progress and change from one generation to another. What is thus understood is also easily remembered; we can always remember what we have seen, much better than what we have only heard or read about; an accurate representation of each object is better than many pages of description, or of essays about it. The arrangement made in this little work will enable any one to understand the general principles of what are called the styles or periods of Gothic Architecture. Some persons object to this name, which was undoubtedly given originally in contempt by the admirers of the Palladian style, but it has been so generally adopted all over Europe for the last century or more, that it would be in vain to attempt to change it; it is a convenient name, which everybody understands as a general term for the different styles of MEDIAEVAL ARCHITECTURE. Dr. E. A. Freeman has ingeniously suggested that it is the architecture of the Gothic nations who conquered the Roman Empire, and one of which to be proud rather than ashamed.

Strictly speaking, the Norman is one of the Romanesque styles, which succeeded to the old Roman; but the Gothic

was so completely developed from the Norman, that it is impossible to draw a line of distinction between them; it is also convenient to begin with the Norman, because the earliest complete buildings that we have in this country are of the Norman period, and the designs of the Norman architects, at the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth, were on so grand a scale, that many of our finest cathedrals are built on the foundations of the church of that period, and a great part of the walls are frequently found to be really Norman in construction, although their appearance is so entirely altered that it is difficult at first to realize this; for instance, in the grand cathedral of Winchester, William of Wykeham did not rebuild it, but so entirely altered the appearance, that it is now properly considered as one of the earliest examples of the English Perpendicular style of which he was the inventor; this style is entirely confined to England, it is readily distinguished from any of the Continental styles by the *perpendicular lines* in the tracery of the windows, and in the panelling on the walls; in all the foreign styles these lines are flowing or flame-like, and for that reason they are called Flamboyant; a few windows with tracery of that style are met with in England, but they are quite exceptions.

Some persons who object to the name of Gothic, would use the name of Pointed instead; this name was proposed by the Cambridge Camden Society about half-a-century ago, but had never got into general use, and is now seldom met with. I always objected to it, on the ground that it misleads beginners in the study, who invariably consider every round-headed doorway as Norman, and every square-headed

window as Perpendicular, which is very far from being the case. The form of the arch is always dictated by convenience, and is in itself no guide to the age or style of a building; the only safe guides are the moldings and details, and these require some study, but are not at all difficult to understand or remember, when a good series of examples are put before us, as I hope will be found by those who use this little book.

I should mention that this is not at all intended to supersede my "Introduction to the Study of Gothic Architecture," but rather to serve as a stepping-stone to it, just as that leads people to want my edition of Rickman's work, with the historical additions that I have made to it.

Rickman was the first to reduce chaos into order, and to shew that the age of a building can be ascertained by the construction and the details, on the principle of comparison with well-known dated examples, and he should always have the credit of being the first to establish this. His work was at first thought rather hard reading, and this was natural, because he trusted too much to words only; my "Glossary of Architecture" was called "Rickman made easy," and this is true, because, by means of the excellent and accurate woodcuts of Orlando Jewitt, I was able to explain all the technical words which Rickman was obliged to use. In the present work I have avoided the use of these as much as possible, and have trusted to the eye in the numerous examples given, rather than to any words to explain them. The same persons who objected to the name of Gothic, objected also to the name of Early English for the earliest

Gothic style in England; but this was undoubtedly developed from the Norman, in England, earlier than anywhere else.

The earliest pure and complete Gothic building in the world is St. Hugh's choir at Lincoln, which was built between 1192 and 1200, St. Hugh himself having died just before the consecration in the latter year. Of this we have distinct evidence in the life of the good bishop (who was called a saint) by his domestic chaplain, the original MS. of which is preserved in the Bodleian Library, and it has only been published in my time, at my suggestion—through Sir Duffus Hardy, the assistant Keeper of the Rolls—by the Master of the Rolls in the Government series of Chronicles. The best-informed French antiquaries acknowledge that they have nothing like it in France for thirty years afterwards; they thought it was copied from Notre Dame at Dijon, to which there is considerable resemblance, but that church was not consecrated till 1230, so that the Dijon architect might have copied from the Lincoln one, but the Lincoln could not have copied from Dijon.

In England this style is only a natural development from the Norman, in which the transition had been going on for half-a-century before. At the time of the rebuilding of the choir at Canterbury, the change was making rapid progress, the work of William the Englishman there is considerably in advance of that of his teacher, William of Sens, who began the rebuilding. The eastern transepts and the Corona of Canterbury, finished in 1184, approach very near to Gothic.

The small church of Clee at the mouth of the Humber, of which the chancel and transepts and central tower were rebuilding almost at that time, are still more Gothic, and this

work was consecrated by S. Hugh in 1192, as recorded by an inscription; this was the very year in which he began rebuilding the choir at Lincoln, which was finished, as we have said, in 1200. Many of the churches of the rich Norman Abbeys in the south of Yorkshire, and north of Lincolnshire, are nearly as much advanced at the same period; and the west end of the great abbey church at St. Alban's, begun by De Cella about A.D. 1200, is also pure Gothic: of this, unfortunately, we have only a few remains.

In this work I have purposely omitted the remains of Roman villas, and of the churches between the Roman and the Norman period, of which the remains are more numerous than is generally supposed, especially the substructures, or crypts as they are called, and there are several churches of the eleventh century that do not belong to the Norman style. The Saxons appear to have been more advanced in the fine arts such as Sculpture than the Normans, but their churches were on comparatively a small scale, and were generally swept away by the Normans as not worth preserving: every one of our cathedrals was rebuilt by the Normans, and not always exactly on the same site, the old church being sometimes kept for use whilst the new one was building. Although these remains are of great interest to the antiquary, they have nothing to do with the history of Gothic architecture, which is certainly developed from the Norman, and the change did not begin till after the middle of the twelfth century, or about a century after the introduction of this style by Edward the Confessor: the remains of his abbey at Westminster are clearly Norman, and quite distinct from the Saxon character, but this style is

called by the French antiquaries ANGLO-NORMAN, and this is quite correct. Normandy was then a province of the dominions of the King of England, and there are scarcely any buildings in Normandy earlier than the time of the Conquest.

The best-informed Norman antiquaries at the time of the revival of the study of Architectural History, between 1830 and 1840, made a series of excursions to the sites of all the castles of the barons who came over to England with William the Conqueror, in search of some *masonry* of the first half of the eleventh century. To their surprise, they found *no masonry at all* in any one of them; there were magnificent earthworks to all of them, clearly shewing that castles of that period were of earthworks and wood only. This is recorded in the *Bulletin Monumental* of the period, and the substance of the observations is given in the *ABCédaire* of De Caumont[\[A\]](#), who was their leader.

It is a mistake to suppose that the Normans brought this style with them “ready cut and dried,” it began in Normandy and in England simultaneously; the two great abbey churches at Caen were both built after the Conquest, and with English money, and they are not at all in advance of similar buildings in England; both had originally wooden roofs and ceilings only, the stone vaults were not put on until a century after they were built; we have no stone vaults over a space of 20 ft. wide before the middle of the twelfth century, either in England or Normandy. It seemed necessary to say a few words about Normandy, but for any further information about architecture in France or in other parts of Europe, I must refer the reader to my

“Introduction,” in which I have given a good deal of information on the subject from personal observation.

In the present work I have purposely made long extracts from my “Introduction,” on the general character of each style, which are very often the words of Rickman himself, because I could only have said the same thing in other words, and this would rather confuse students than assist them. I have selected other examples, so that one should not be a repetition of the other in the material point, the teaching by the eye; and in those examples where I saw that a few words of description would be useful, they are added, so that this work is complete in itself for beginners, but those who wish to go on further with the subject can do so step by step. The only real way of thoroughly understanding Architectural History, is to go about and see the buildings themselves.

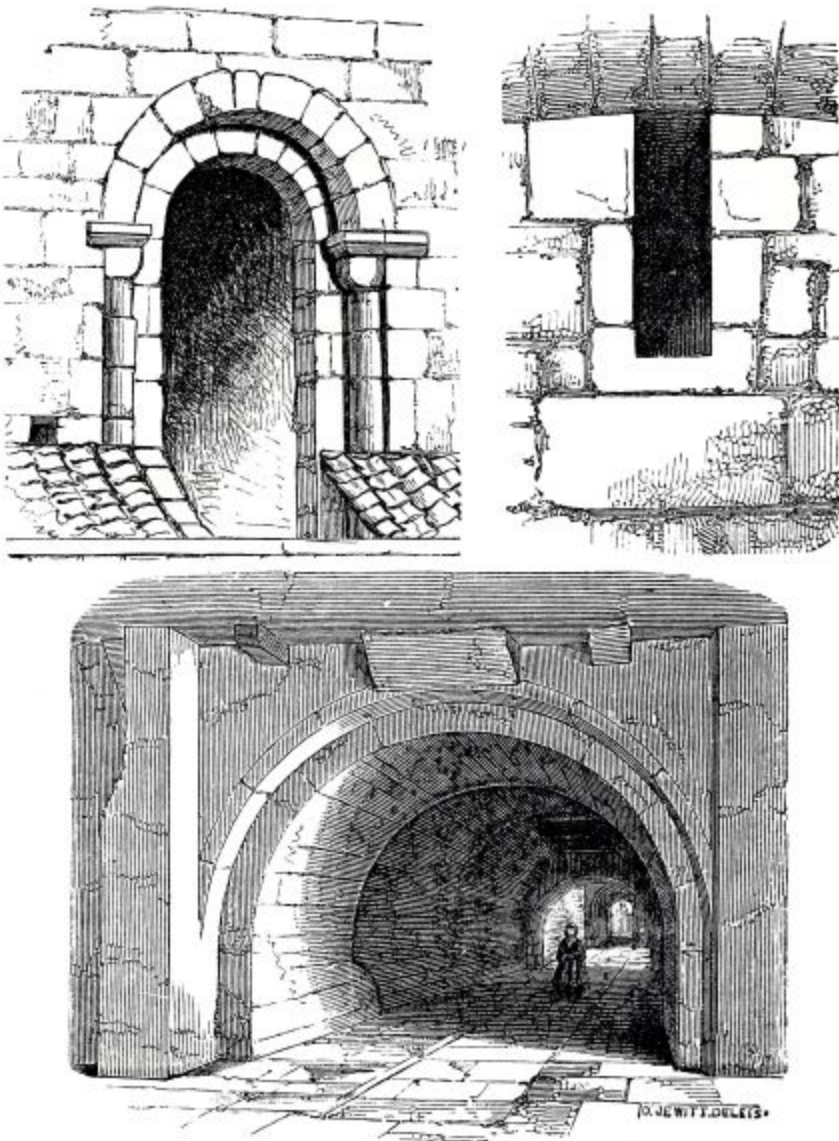
THE EARLY NORMAN PERIOD.

A.D. 1060-1090.

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THE Norman style was introduced into England in the time of Edward the Confessor; the king himself founded the great Abbey of Westminster, and many of the buildings were begun in his time. Of this church he had completed the choir and transepts, which were sufficient for the performance of divine service, and it was then consecrated, Dec. 28, 1065, a few days only before his death. As soon as the choir of a church was ready for Divine Service, it was usual to

consecrate it: the nave was called the vestibule, and was not consecrated. The nave of Westminster at that time was not built: it is probable that a nave was built in the twelfth century, but of this church we have no remains. The dormitory was in all probability building at the same time, as the monks or canons who had to perform the service in the church must have required a place to sleep in. Of this dormitory the walls and the vaulted substructure remain. The refectory also was begun at the same period, and we have the lower part of the walls, with the arcade

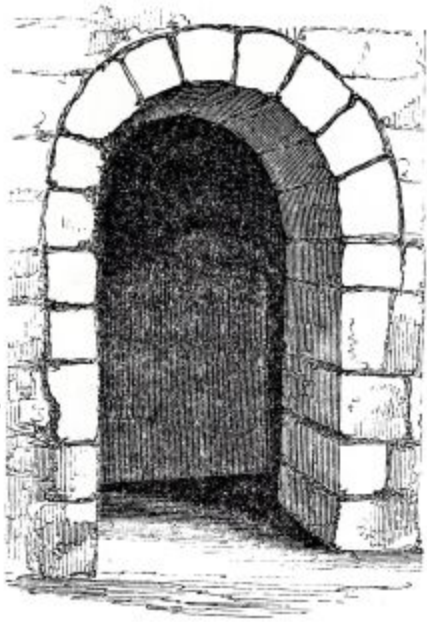


Westminster Abbey, A.D. 1066.

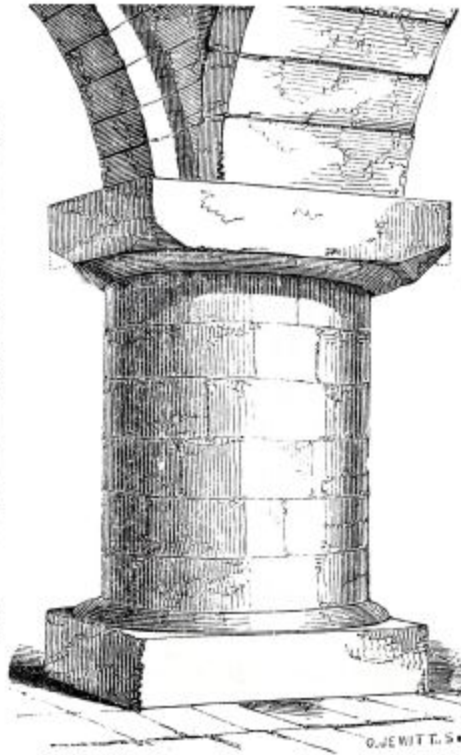
The Dark Cloister under the Dormitory, now the Schoolroom, and Windows of the Dormitory.

at the foot; the work is rude and clumsy Norman, with wide-jointed masonry, and the capitals left plain, to be painted or carved afterwards.

Soon after the Norman Conquest a great change took place in the art of building in England. On consulting the history of our cathedral churches, we find that in almost every instance the church was rebuilt from its foundations by the first Norman bishop, either on the same site or on a new one; sometimes, as at Norwich and Peterborough, the cathedral was removed to a new town altogether, and built on a spot where there was no church before; in other cases, as at Winchester, the new church was built near the old one, which was not pulled down until after the relics had been translated with great pomp from the old church to the new. In other instances, as at York and Canterbury, the new church was erected on the site of the old one, which was pulled down piecemeal as the new work progressed. These new churches were in all cases on a much larger and more magnificent scale than the old; they were also constructed in a much better manner, the Normans being far better masons than the Saxons[B].



Doorway, Dartford,
Gundulph, A.D. 1080.



Westminster
Abbey, A.D. 1066.

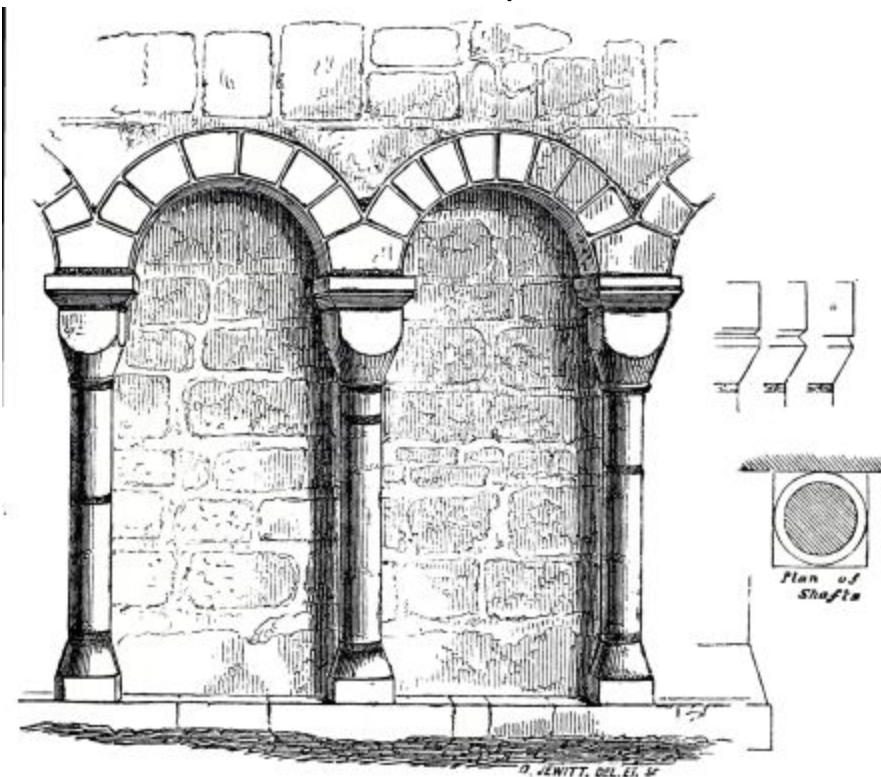


Rubble Masonry, from Gundulph's Tower, called St. Leonard's, at Malling, Kent, A.D. 1070.

The earliest Norman Keep in existence.

Notwithstanding this superiority of workmanship to that which had preceded it, the *early* Norman masonry is extremely rude and bad; the joints between the stones are often from one inch to two or three inches wide, and filled

with mortar not always of very good quality. In consequence of this imperfect construction, many of the towers fell down within a few years after their erection. It is probable, however, that the workmen employed on these structures were for the most part Saxons, as the Normans must have been too much employed otherwise during the reign of the Conqueror to execute much masons' work with their own hands. Nor were the Norman monks established in sufficient numbers to be able to superintend all the



Westminster Abbey, A.D. 1066.

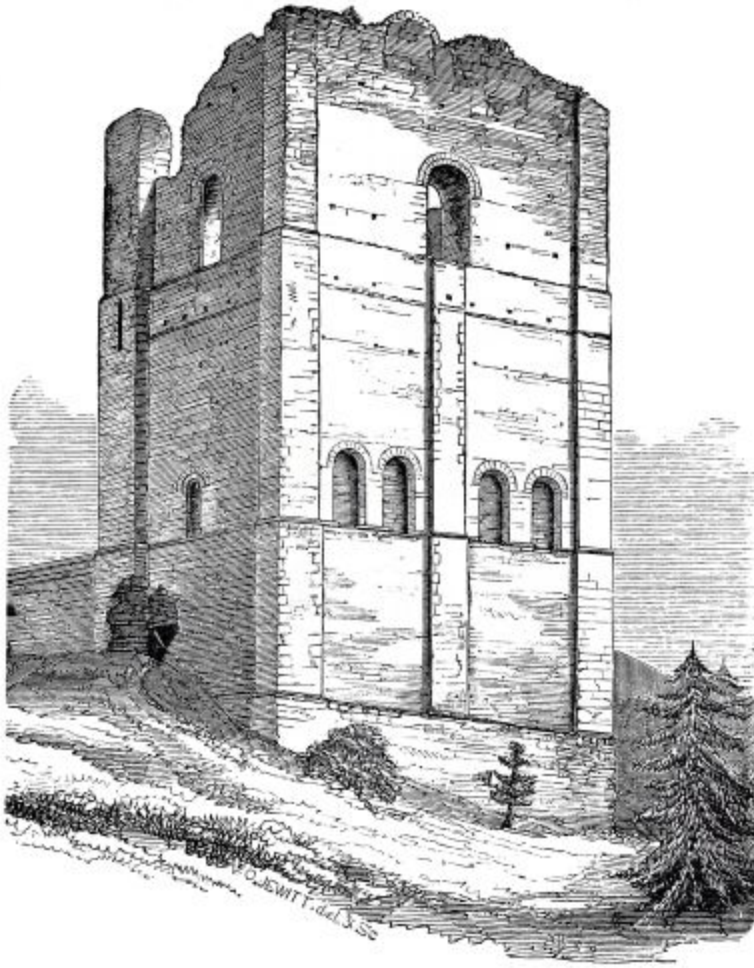
Arcade of the Refectory, now in a Canon's garden.

works which were going on at this period; the cathedrals and large monasteries must have occupied nearly all their attention. The ordinary parish churches which required rebuilding must have been left to the Saxons themselves, and were probably built in the same manner as before, with

such slight improvements as they might have gleaned from the Norman works.

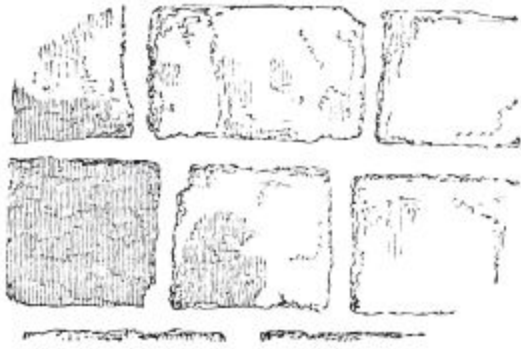
The Normans themselves were, however, but little in advance of the English in the building art: the style which we call Norman correctly for this country, is called by the French archæologists ANGLO-NORMAN, and with reason; that style was developed as much in England as in Normandy.

GUNDULPH, Bishop of Rochester, was the great architect of the time of William the Conqueror. The first building of his that we have remaining is the keep of his castle at Malling, in Kent, called St. Leonard's Tower, which was built about 1070. This is of earlier character than any keep in Normandy. M. de Caumont examined the sites of the castles of all the barons who came over to England with William, and he found no masonry of that period in any one of them. Their castles had consisted of very fine earthworks and wood only[C]. Soon after this time,



Early Norman Keep at Malling, Kent, built by Gundulph A.D, 1070.

Gundulph built the keep of the castle in London called the White Tower, and the cathedral of Rochester, of which we have a part of the crypt, and some remains of the wall of the nave and north transept. The whole of this work is extremely rude; the construction is usually rubble. When of ashlar, the joints are very wide, and the capitals of the shafts clumsy.



Wide-jointed Masonry, Chapel in the White Tower, London, A.D. 1081.

St. Alban's Abbey Church, built in the time of William the Conqueror and William Rufus, as distinctly recorded by contemporary historians, partakes of the Saxon character in many parts: we find baluster shafts in abundance, quantities of Roman tiles, and other features usually considered Saxon, but there is not the slightest doubt that the church was built from the foundations after 1077, when the work was commenced by Abbot Paul of Caen. The materials of an older church are used in it; they were probably brought from old Verulam, with the Roman flat bricks, which are largely used in the construction.

We have a strong confirmation of this in the city of Lincoln: the Conqueror having taken possession of about a quarter of the old city to build a castle upon, and Bishop Remigius having purchased nearly another quarter to build a cathedral and monastery, the Saxon inhabitants were driven down the hill on which the old city stands, and took possession of some swampy land at the foot of the hill, which they drained, and redeemed from the fens or marshes of which nearly all the low country then consisted. On this new land they built several churches. One of these, St. Peter's at Gowts (or at the Sluices), remains nearly entire,

and St. Mary le Wig-ford has retained the tower built at this period. This is an important and interesting fact in the history of architecture, as it confirms what was before only a natural supposition, and it enables us to fill up a gap: we appeared to have scarcely any parish churches of the early Norman period, but it is now evident that many of the long list of churches of the Anglo-Saxon type belong to a period subsequent to the Conquest. The tower of St. Michael's Church, Oxford, is one of those included by Rickman as of the character supposed to be Saxon, but the imposts of the window-arches are quite of Norman character, and it was built after the Conquest. The tower of Oxford Castle was built by Robert D'Oyly in the time of William Rufus, but it has much of the appearance of the Saxon buildings, and the tower of St. Michael's Church is part of the work of his time. Round towers built of rubble-stone are of several periods, generally early, but in a mere rubble wall there is nothing to go by as to the date; they may be of any period.

It is customary to date the introduction of the Norman style into England from the Norman Conquest, in 1066, although that important event had no *immediate* effect on the style of Architecture, and perhaps the remainder of the eleventh century may be considered as a period of transition, just as the last quarter of each of the three following centuries was a period of transition from one style to another; and it may be well to observe, that in all such periods, not only were buildings of a mixed character erected, but some buildings were almost entirely in the old style, others altogether in the new one: this has been called by Professor Willis "an overlapping of the styles," and

generally lasts from twenty to thirty years. In treating of the Norman period we must bear in mind that Normandy was then a province of the same kingdom, and that the intercourse between Kent and Normandy was at least as frequent and as easy as between Yorkshire and Devonshire; so that although there are certain marked provincialisms, there is no real difference or priority of style in one province over the other, after the Norman power was fully established in England. It is customary to point to the two great abbey churches at Caen, founded and endowed by William and Matilda, as models to be referred to, and as proving the great advance of Normandy over England; but this is, in a great degree, a mistake, arising from the common error of confusing the date of the foundation of a monastery with that of the erection of the existing church: a small part only of the church of St. Stephen at Caen is of the time of the Conqueror, and a still smaller part of that of the Holy Trinity, the present building of which is considerably later than the other. In both of these fine churches, the vaults, and the upper parts of the structure, were built late in the twelfth century; they had originally wooden roofs only.

The most important buildings of the time of the Conqueror and of William Rufus were the Norman castles or keep-towers, but most of these were rebuilt in the following century. The earliest Norman keep existing is the one built immediately after the Conquest, by Gundulph, at Malling in Kent, misnamed St. Leonard's tower, as already mentioned [see page 17]. There are still some Norman keeps of this period remaining, as London; but Dover and Rochester in Kent, Newcastle in Northumberland, Appleby and Carlisle in

Cumberland, Brougham in Westmoreland, Richmond and Conisborough in Yorkshire, Porchester in Hampshire, Guildford in Surrey, Goodrich in Herefordshire, Norwich and Castle Rising in Norfolk, Hedingham and Colchester in Essex, are later, and belong chiefly to the twelfth century; but most of them, if not all, were *founded* at this early period. Rochester has been entirely rebuilt on another site. From the uniformity of plan—a massive square tower, with a square turret at each angle of small projection, and a flat buttress up the centre of each face—and the general plainness of the work, it requires a careful examination of each of these buildings to ascertain to which period it belongs. The only parts where any ornament is to be found are usually the entrance-doorway and staircase, and the chapel, and these are commonly rather late Norman. There is frequently a solid wall in the middle, dividing the keep into two portions, with no communication in the lower parts. The passages for communication between one part of the building and another are made in the thickness of the wall, the central part having been divided by floors only, and not vaulted, in the earlier examples. Groined stone vaults, of rough stone, were introduced towards the end of the eleventh century in castles as well as churches; but rib-vaulting of cut stone not before the twelfth.

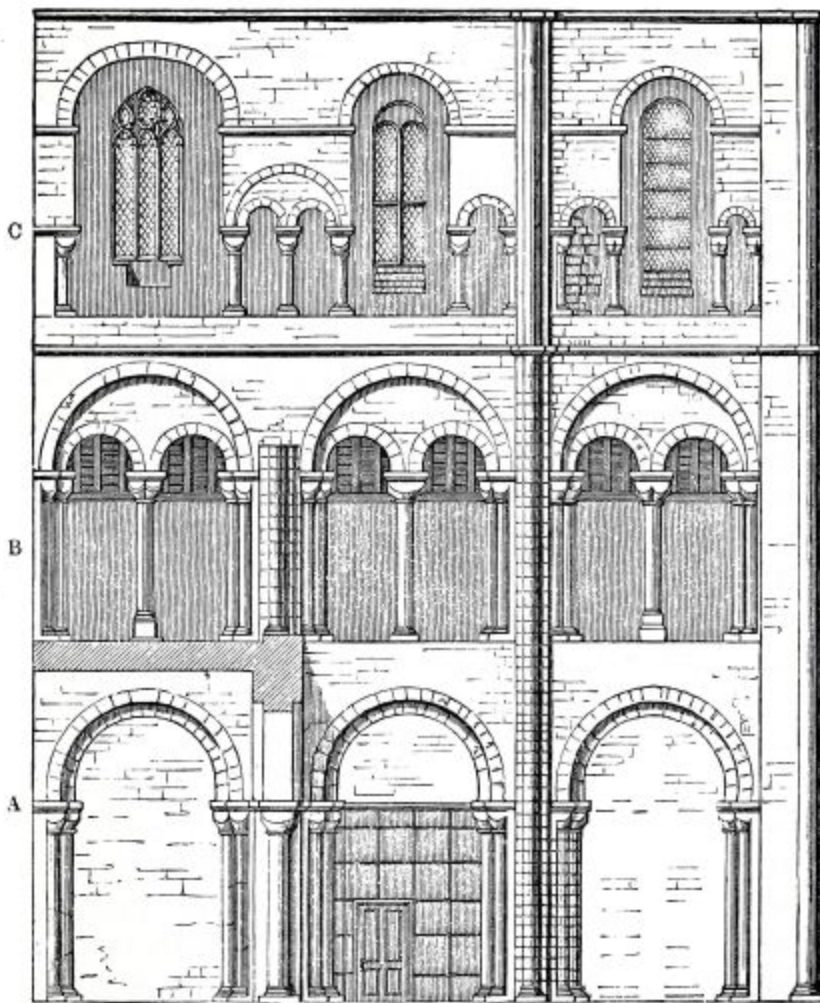
The number of churches which were commenced in the reign of the Conqueror and his successor was so great, that it is impossible to notice them all: but few of them were completed until after 1100; it was not, indeed, until after 1080 that the country was sufficiently settled for much building to be begun.

The chapel in the White Tower, London, is one of the best and most perfect examples of this period; its character is massive and plain, though the work is well executed. Its plan is oblong, consisting of a nave with narrow aisles which stand on the thickness of the walls: the walls have passages in them also in the other parts; the nave has plain barrel-vaults; the pillars are short and thick, and most of the capitals are plain, but some have a little ornament carved upon the abacus and capital, apparently some time after the construction was completed, being within easy reach.

The nave and transepts of Ely were erected by Abbot Simeon, brother of Bishop Walkelyn. Part of the west front of Lincoln was built by Bishop Remi, or Remigius, 1085-1092: the small portion which remains of this work is a very valuable specimen of early Norman, the more so that the insertion of later and richer Norman doorways by Bishop Alexander, about fifty years afterwards, enables us to compare early and late Norman work, while the jointing of the masonry leaves no doubt of the fact that these doorways are insertions, and therefore confirms the early date of the three lofty arches under which they are inserted. A comparison of the capitals and details of these two periods, thus placed in juxtaposition, is extremely interesting. The wide-jointing of the masonry and the shallowness of the carving distinguish the old work from the new. Several capitals of the later period are inserted in the older work, as is shewn on careful examination by the jointing of the masonry, and by the form of the capitals themselves: the earlier capitals are short, and have volutes at the angles, forming a sort of rude Ionic; the later capitals

are more elongated, and have a sort of rude Corinthian, or Composite foliage.

The crypt and transepts of Winchester Cathedral are of this period, built by Bishop Walkelyn on a new site. Early in the twelfth century occurred the fall of the tower of this Cathedral, celebrated from the peculiar circumstances with which it was accompanied, which are thus described by William of Malmesbury, who was living at the time:—"A few countrymen conveyed the body [of the king, William Rufus], placed



Transept, Winchester Cathedral, A.D. 1079-1093.

A. Pier- N.B. It may be noted that the pier-

arches.	arches, triforium, and clerestory,
B.	are all nearly of equal height,
Triforium,	which is frequent in Roman
or Blind-	basilicas and in the Norman style,
story.	but not afterwards.
C. Clear-	
story, or	
Clere-	
story.	

on a cart, to the cathedral of Winchester, the blood dripping from it all the way. Here it was committed to the ground *within the tower*, attended by many of the nobility, but lamented by few. The next year [1097] the tower fell; though I forbear to mention the different opinions on this subject, lest I should seem to assent too readily to unsupported trifles; more especially that the building might have fallen *through imperfect construction*, even though he had never been buried there." That this was really the case, the building itself affords us abundant evidence, and proves that even the Normans at this period were still bad masons, and very imperfectly acquainted with the principles of construction. The tower which was rebuilt soon after the fall is still standing, and the enormous masses of masonry which were piled together to support it, and prevent it from falling again, shew such an amazing waste of labour and material as clearly to prove that it was the work of very unskilful builders.

This example is valuable to us also in another respect: the two transepts were only partially injured by the fall of the tower; the greater part of both of them belongs to the original work; the junction of the old work and the new can