

THE LATE M. AUGUSTE CHOISY

[Hon. Corr. M.].

It is with very sincere regret that we have to record the sudden death, at the age of sixty-eight, of M. Auguste Choisy, the distinguished architectural historian to whom the Royal Gold Medal was accorded by the Institute in 1904. M. Choisy was the son of an architect at Vitry-le-François (Marne), where he was born on 17th February 1841, and his early interest in our craft was probably derived from his father. The statement, however, which he made on the occasion of the presentation of the Gold Medal, to the effect that when quite a youth and looking through his father's library he came across a copy of the TRANSACTIONS of the Institute of 1842 in which he read Professor Willis's Paper on the Vaults of the Middle Ages, constitutes a memorable incident in the annals of our Institute. As M. Choisy said, the Paper was a revelation to him, in that it showed how forms ought to be analysed, and how drawings ought to show clearly the structure. When he commenced his studies of the Roman methods of building Professor Willis's disquisition was ever present to him as the best model to be followed, distinguishing at once the commencement and the conclusion of architectural criticism.

M. Choisy's studies were commenced in the École Polytechnique, where he had the advantage of following the lectures given by the eminent professor, M. Léonce Reynaud, whose *Traité d'Architecture*, in two folio volumes, illustrated with fine engravings, still forms the standard work of reference in all the French schools. His career in the École Polytechnique enabled M. Choisy to enter, in 1863, the "École des Ponts et Chaussées," an institution of which we have no parallel in England. In the following seven years he would seem to have been able to travel in various parts of Europe, and it was during this period that he conceived the idea of making a minute analysis of Roman construction. I met him as a stranger in Athens in August of 1866 when measuring the plan of the theatre of Bacchus, and was astonished at the exceptional knowledge he seemed to possess of the buildings of the Acropolis. Subsequently I was introduced to him at the French School in Athens, and in my diary placed a record to that effect, and also that he had written many essays on archaeological subjects which had received the approval of the Institute of France. His first important work, *L'Art de bâtir chez les Romains*, was not published before 1873, but already, in 1868 or 1869, he must have made some progress with it, because in M. Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire Raisonné*, under the article "Voûte," p. 477, vol. ix., is a note by the author stating that a young French engineer, M. Choisy, would publish shortly a very complete work on the structure of the Roman vaults, which had been lent him to read, and in which a

detailed description would be given of the various methods employed by their great builders, demonstrating by the clearest arguments that economy in expense was one of their principal considerations. The publication of this work was apparently deferred on account of the Franco-German war, which paralysed everything in France. Its great importance, however, resulted in a recommendation, which was made by his former professor, M. Léonce Reynaud, and by M. Viollet-le-Duc, that he should be sent on a mission to the East to study the buildings of the Byzantine Empire, and in 1882 M. Choisy published his second great work, *L'Art de bâtir chez les Byzantins*. It was about this time that, on the recommendation of his friend and comrade M. Ferdinand de Darstein, Professor of Architectural History in the École Polytechnique, and author of the magnificent work of S. Ambrogio, Milan, he was brought into the educational section of that institution and was appointed "Professor adjoint." The courses of lectures which he delivered to the students would seem to have led to his third great work, viz. *L'Histoire de l'Architecture*, published in 1899. Within the compass of two octavo volumes M. Choisy has condensed that which might easily be expanded into twenty; but in the descriptions which he gives and the drawings with which the work is illustrated his object would seem to have been to use the fewest words and the least number of lines. All the drawings were made by him, a great number of them being in isometrical projection, the most difficult type of representation, and one which requires a profound mathematical knowledge. In 1883, shortly after his appointment as professor, M. Choisy published another work, which is less known, viz. *Études épigraphiques sur l'Architecture grecque*: these studies include a translation of the specification of the work still required to complete the Erechtheum, and also a translation of the specification of the Arsenal of the Piræus which was found in 1882 engraved on a slab of Hymettian marble. The description given was so clear that, although the building was destroyed in 86 B.C., M. Choisy was able to work out plans, sections, and elevations of the arsenal, and these are published in his work. In 1904 he published his last work, *L'Art de bâtir chez les Égyptiens*, which was reviewed in this JOURNAL in January of that year. It was in this year that M. Choisy retired from his work in the École des Ponts et Chaussées and the École Polytechnique, intending to devote the remainder of his life to a work on Vitruvius. When I saw him last, in August 1904, he said it would take at least a year and a half to make the drawings and annotate the descriptions given by Vitruvius. That is now five years ago, so that he had apparently found the task to be one of greater difficulty than he had anticipated. It is to be hoped, however, that sufficient progress has already been made with it to

warrant its publication, to which we should all look forward with the greatest possible interest. I have only two other tributes to record to his memory: the first is that his greatest work, *The History of Architecture*, has now become an authority constantly referred to in all works on similar subjects, not only in France, but in England, America, and Germany; and the second, that he was always ready at any time to answer communications made to him on various subjects; and his replies were always of the kindest description, for if he differed widely from the views of his correspondent he always managed in his answers to elude the differences and to encourage him in his researches.

R. PHENÉ SPIERS, F.S.A. [F.].

DU CERCEAU AND DE L'ORME.

To the Editor JOURNAL R.I.B.A.,—

SIR,—Several interesting problems are suggested by Mr. John W. Simpson in his most generous and sympathetic review of "French Châteaux and Gardens of the Sixteenth Century" in your issue of Aug. 28. In most cases no data, I fear, exist for a solution of them. But some slight ground may perhaps be found for an affirmative reply to his query, "Did Catharine de Médicis hand over the designs of De l'Orme to Du Cerceau after the former died in 1570?" in the fact that among Du Cerceau's published or unpublished works there are drawings referring to at least two other buildings on which De l'Orme was employed as architect by Catharine, and illustrating unexecuted or only partly executed designs of his, i.e. the châteaux of Chenonceaux and St. Maur-les-Fossés. Catharine, having acquired the former in exchange for Chaumont from her rival Diane de Poitiers after Henry II.'s death, intended, as Du Cerceau informs us, to extend it considerably. The plans for this extension are in the British Museum collection and are engraved in a reduced and slightly modified form in "Les Plus Excellents Bastiments de France." They include an elliptical hall at the further end of the bridge gallery; a stately court of honour before the château with a hemicycle on either side, each leading to what appears to be a sort of nymphæum; and a great fore-court, whose sides converge towards the castle. A fragment of one of these sides is the only part of this scheme in existence. As regards St. Maur its history is given in "French Châteaux," and I need not repeat it here.

It is curious, however, that Catharine should have handed over De l'Orme's drawings to Du Cerceau rather than to Jean Bullant, who succeeded the former as her architect, unless indeed she did so with the express object of their being utilised in the book he was preparing under her patronage. Why, then, did he not reproduce some of the most interesting of the designs after having gone to the trouble of making elaborate drawings from them?

I can offer no answer to the question except it be to suggest that in the case of the Tuileries Catharine may not have relished seeing great prominence given to a noble scheme whose abandonment two years after De l'Orme's death was caused by her pusillanimous credulity.

Since there is no evidence that De l'Orme and Du Cerceau were on terms of friendship, though they can scarcely have failed to be acquainted, it is not likely that the former gave his drawings to the latter. But De l'Orme having no professional heirs his papers may have been sold to Du Cerceau; in that case, however, he might be expected to betray a knowledge of De l'Orme's works for his non-royal clients, such as the château of Meudon for the Cardinal of Lorraine. On the whole the theory that he got them from the Queen-Mother seems to fit the facts best.

Yours faithfully,

7th September 1909.

W. H. WARD, M.A. [A.].

THE R.I.B.A. SCALE OF CHARGES.

To the Editor JOURNAL R.I.B.A.,—

SIR,—In the issue of the JOURNAL dated the 24th July 1909 Mr. Henry W. Burrows solicited information as to whether an architect could, under the Institute Scale of Charges, charge more than 5 per cent. where the works involved structural alterations, and exceeded the sum of £1,000 in amount. I think Mr. Burrows might, as a good many other members of the Institute do, ask a good many questions concerning the Institute Scale of Charges, which require clearing up and rendering definite in a variety of particulars. Take, for instance, paragraph 3: "In all works of less cost than £1,000, &c., &c., 5 per cent. is not remunerative, and the architect's charge is regulated by special circumstances and conditions." Let it be assumed, therefore, that under such circumstances a charge of, say, 10 per cent. would be remunerative, how does such a charge work out in practice? A contract is entered into involving an outlay of, say, £950, and the architect would in due course charge the sum of £95 for his professional services rendered. But the client in course of the work orders an additional outlay of £100, making a total outlay of £1,050, whereupon, referring to the Institute Scale, the architect—who is always considered to be a person void of emotion—finds that 5 per cent. under such circumstances is remunerative, although he knows that it is not, and his charge in consequence will be reduced to the magnificent sum of £52 10s. So the absurd position arises that if he carries out work to the extent of £950, the amount originally intended, he will be paid the sum of £95, and if he supervises a further outlay of £100 he will receive the sum of £52 10s.—in other words, incur a loss of £42 10s. for his additional service. Then, again, under clause 3: "In all works of less cost than £1,000, and in cases of alterations and addi-