

PALACE OF CHARLES THE BALD^a.

PÎTRES is merely a small village of ancient Normandy, and yet its name is well known in the circles of science. This European celebrity is to be attributed to the three diets or councils held there by one of the successors of Charlemagne, in which various laws were promulgated, and more particularly the famous financial edict still known under the name of the Edict of Pîtres.

The first time Pîtres appears in history, under the name of *Pistis*, is in 861, in the reign of Charles the Bald, and it disappears in that of Charles the Simple, who only signed some deeds there.

Charles the Bald seems to have inhabited the palace of Pîtres for several years. It is known that he held three successive assemblies or diets there for the purpose of taking measures against the Normans, who were then invading France, and for arranging the more important affairs of the Church and State.

The first diet or council of Pîtres was opened on June 25, 861, and lasted to 862. Among those who figured there we note the Archbishops of Sens, of Rheims, and Rouen; the Bishops of Paris, Tournay, Serdis, Beauvais, Autun, Chalons, Meaux, Séz, Troyes, Coutances, &c., and a crowd of counts and abbots. This council is erroneously termed royal or general, or rather national.

The second was opened on the 25th of June, 864. This is the most celebrated of all, and is known under the name of the Edict of Pîtres, by reason of the financial measure there carried out.

At this diet were assembled above fifty prelates from all parts of the empire of Charlemagne. The celebrated Hincmar of Rheims, Archbishop of Rheims, seems to have been the soul of these assemblies, where Wenilon, Archbishop of Rouen, figures as the lieutenant of this great pontiff. In this diet the trial of Pepin II., King of Aquitaine, took place, when he was declared deposed.

The third diet or assembly of Pîtres was opened in August, 869, when thirteen capitularies were agreed on.

After this Pîtres relapsed into complete obscurity; "Evasit in exigui nominis viculum."

Pîtres, therefore, having been the habitation of emperors, and afforded hospitality to fifty prelates and a crowd of nobles, must have possessed a palace as large as that of Charlemagne at Ingelheim, near Mayence. But a Carolingian palace implies also a royal farm, as that of Arélaune and Vaudreuil. Even under the Romans a villa like those of Marboué and St. Marguerite-sur-Mer in France, or those of Bignor or Woodchester in England, was a vast affair. Is it possible to recognise the remains of such a palace or villa at Pîtres? This is exactly what it is supposed has been met with during the last few years.

The journals have fully announced it, and antiquaries believed it. Therefore on the 22nd of September last I went to Pîtres to see for myself the remains discovered some years ago by an inhabitant of this celebrated village.

^a Notes on the Remains of a Palace of Charles the Bald (861—869), discovered at Pîtres, Canton of Pont-de-l'Arche, Arrondissement de Louviers, (Eure).

In passing by the old church I remarked on the Romanesque part of the north side of the tower some ancient tiles, evidently used as materials, indiscriminately collected.

In reply to my questions, the curé informed me that in the gardens and buildings on the north side of the church numerous *débris* were to be found, and that the ground was still called *Les Salles*, a very significant name in Normandy, and almost certainly indicating ancient buildings. In fact, on this same territory of *Les Salles* two streets occur, which carry in their names the ideas of departed grandeur. One is the *Rue de l'Abbie*, the other the *Rue de la Geôle*. Hard by is a space termed the *Cour de la Geôle*. There is, too, a tradition of a well supplied by an ancient aqueduct. In this quarter, in a wretched cottage, lives the Sieur Leber, a market-gardener, the author of the discoveries we are about to relate.

In 1854 this man took it into his head to dig up his court-yard, and discovered the remains of buildings, consisting of worked stone, flints, and tiles of a remarkable size. Walls ran in every direction, forming passages, squares, &c. What most astonished him was the pillars of an hypocaust. He speaks also of columns, but we do not feel quite convinced on this point. Certain it is, that this first success induced him to continue his operations. He sold the stones and tiles for building materials, and turned his court-yard into a quarry. These operations went on during the years 1854, 1855, and 1856, and the mine was not exhausted. It might, probably, be worked even now. Besides what he has sold, this man has filled his court, his garden, and sheds with ancient materials. In fact, every portion of his premises was entirely crammed up.

There were tiles of every variety among the piles so heaped up: there were tiles of concave form, probably used for roofing; curious edged tiles, of the thickness, size, and type of the antique; and flat bricks, such as those that are used in the construction of a hypocaust. We were particularly struck with a variety of great wide bricks, which we will term *Carlovingian*, because we are not acquainted with any such of the ancient period. These bricks, which we have not observed elsewhere, are about two feet in length, and vary in thickness from one-and-a-half to two inches. Specimens have been deposited at the museum of Rouen.

A considerable number of tiles were also found that formed stoves or hot-air-pipes. These square pipes, striped on the surface, are well known to all antiquaries. They were used to conduct heat, breast high, along the internal walls of buildings. These pipes were attached to the wall by mortar, and also by cramp-irons or hooks, a dozen of which still exist at M. Leber's.

The space between each channel was filled by a thick bed of red cement, as hard as stone. There were massive blocks of still stronger cement, which no doubt had formed a portion of the ancient pavement; indeed, concrete masses resembling actual rocks of ancient mortar were found. In my Roman researches at Etretat and Chateau-Gaillard, in 1842, I met with a great number of these blocks of red cement, dense and hard as stone. At Chateau-Gaillard the walls were still covered with it, and double-headed iron cramps were still adhering to the stones.

The dressed stone was less abundant than the flints and tiles, but only because the greater part had been sold, and removed for building purposes. During the past three or four years M. Leber has dealt in these *débris*, and, as we have said, has managed to create a quarry in his little court.

Inscriptions had been cut on some of these stones, several of which are

deposited in the Library of Evreux, where I saw them in September. The inscriptions, which I have not succeeded in deciphering, are Latin, and traced in cursive characters by means of some pointed instrument. M. F. Lenormant has attempted to interpret these *graffiti* in the *Revue des Sociétés Savantes* for 1858.

Among the other *débris* I must mention the presence of stones of small dimensions, cut like *briques à savon*, and striped on their external face. Numbers of such stones occurred during our researches at Lillebonne and Etretat, and we believe such will be found in nearly every ancient building of any importance.

After the fashion of ancient walls, the interior partitions of the palace of Pîtres were lined with coloured cement. We met with a mass of plaster covered by painting, in which blue and white predominated. Similar coloured plaster has been found in all the Roman buildings of the Seine-Inférieure, as, for example, at the villas of Etretat, Bordeaux, Chateau-Galliard, St. John de Folléville Cany, St. Marguerite-sur-Mer (Juliobona), Caudebec-lès-Elbœuf (Uggate), of Eu (Augusta), and Rouen (Rothomagus).

To the pavement of the rooms, also, may be ascribed a quantity of square, thick tiles of terra-cotta. We did not notice any of those flags of lias with which the baths of Etretat, and the hypocausts of Chateau-Galliard were paved; but the former magnificence of this building is best conceived by the fragments of marble which must have formerly decorated it.

It would be an interesting question to determine whether the palace of Pîtres possessed glass windows like our modern mansions. It is so far certain that among the *débris* we remarked many fragments of a flat thick glass, resembling our window-glass. Some of these fragments were white, but some appeared to have been tinted. We know not if these fragments may be rightly attributed to such a domestic purpose, but it is certainly not the first time they have been met with in ancient buildings, either by ourselves or others.

We must now consider the remains of the objects found in the building, which are not without interest.

Ceramic art is represented, in the first place, by the remains of a *dolium* of the same character with those we have discovered in the tombs of Fécamp, Lillebonne, Cauville, Grainville-l' Alouette, St. Denis-le-Thibout, St. Maurice-d'Ételan, and more particularly in those of Barentin.

The fragments of ordinary pottery were very abundant. It was easy to recognise the remains of jars, bowls, and plates, or saucers. These last were of the red pottery termed Samian. One small vessel was almost entire. I was exceedingly struck by the presence of several fragments of vessels, ornamented in relief, of a fine glossy ware, and a beauty truly remarkable.

Following these so evidently Roman types, in the midst of this collection of almost classic forms, I was truly pleased by the appearance of two Frankish vases of a form resembling that which so abounds in the graves of the Eaubon valley. One of these vessels is of a grey pottery, the other black coloured with plumbago. This last has a zigzag ornamentation running round it. These two vessels, so Frankish in substance, type, and decoration, are, as it were, the seal of the occupation of this palace by the representatives of Germanic civilization. It was extremely agreeable to me to find, in the midst of *débris* so generally attributed

exclusively to Roman civilization, those arts and manufactures which evidently survived in our land.

Besides the pottery, we also remarked fragments of glass, among which a curious cup of fine iridised glass is prominent. This cup, which unfortunately is fractured, is of a rare type. We only remember one like it at Sigy, from the Frank cemetery of the parsonage. It rests on a flat hollowed foot, like that of an ancient lachrymatory. We consider it a drinking-glass. It contains a red tartar, like the Frank cups, and is strongly iridised. We attribute this cup to the Frank period.

Of metallic objects there were several descriptions in iron and bronze. Iron was represented by a key of antique form, by cramp-irons, hooks, and a quantity of nails of every kind. Singularly enough, some of these nails appear to have heads of lead, or coated with lead.

Bronze was represented by various objects. Among the rest are some half-dozen reliques which resemble buckles; but it principally appears in the form of coins, a great variety of which have been found. But a relique which appears to me of more interest even than the coins, is a small earthen vessel, still filled with molten bronze. This little vessel, generally supposed to be a crucible, is now in the Evreux library.

It will directly be seen how much interest must attach to the discovery of a mint crucible in this same *palais de Pitres*, whence issued the edict that for centuries after regulated the coinage in the whole of the empire of Charlemagne, that is, in nearly all Western Europe.

There are but two or three more little objects to enumerate. One is a small whetstone, pierced for suspension. We must remember that similar whetstones have been found in Frankish graves, placed at the girdles of the dead, from which they must have been suspended in a pouch, or by a strap. There was also a mortar in pudding-stone. These are common enough in our country, both in towns and in the country. It must not be forgotten that hand-mills were in use among us down to the twelfth century, and that they still exist in Palestine, Egypt, and Algiers.

I also fancy I observed, among a heap of smaller *débris* at M. Lebar's, several glass beads, of a blue colour and ribbed. These beads are very common in Roman ruins and sepulchres, as also in those of the Franks.

I was much surprised to notice among these ancient remains a pipe-stem of white earth, like our modern ones. This stem is thick with a very fine orifice, like those of the seventeenth century. I was assured that many such were found in these excavations at Pitres. I do not attach an undue importance to minute objects of such ill-ascertained a date, but as pipes have been found in ancient buildings in France, Switzerland, and England, I consider myself bound to cite them. In this respect I partake the opinion of Dr. Bruce, who says with great reason in his "Roman Wall,"—"The fact of finding pipes in the midst of Roman ruins must not pass unnoticed."

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