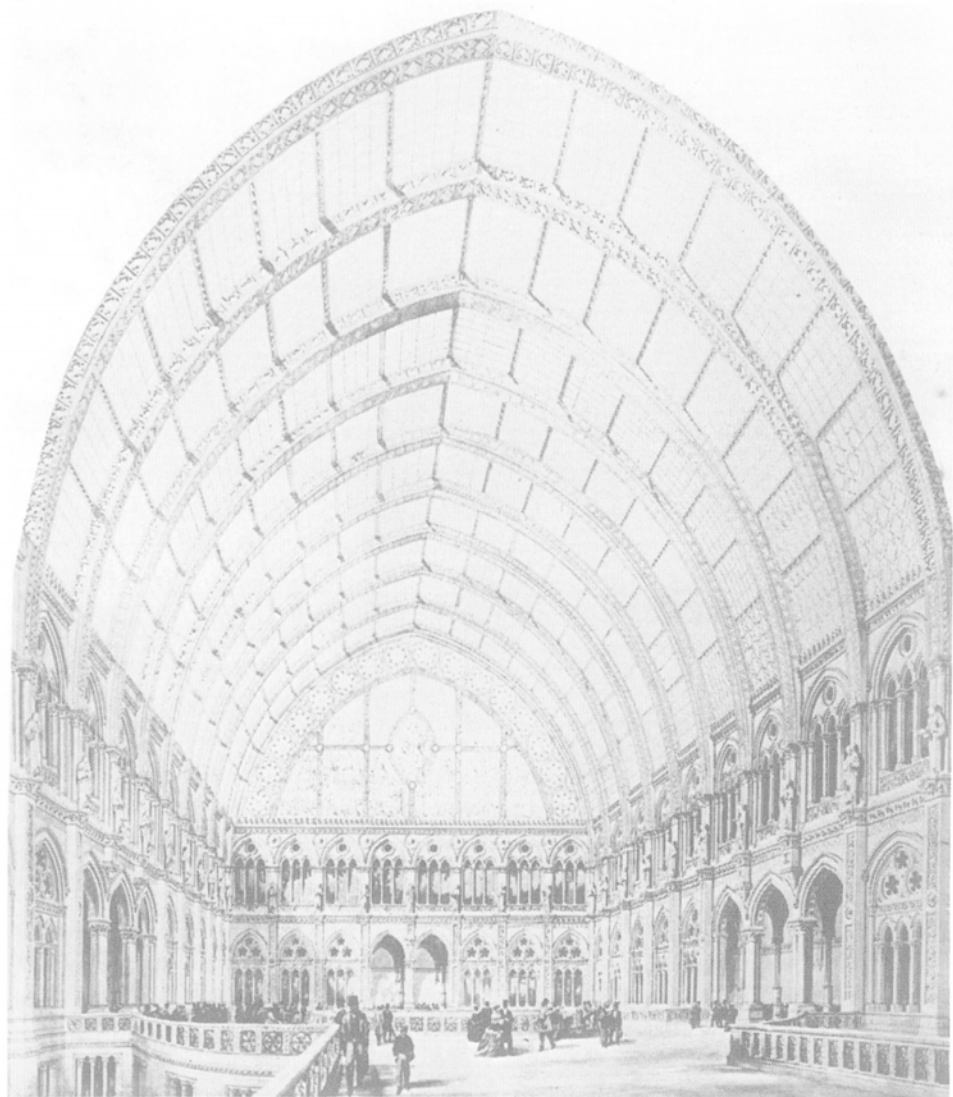


63 Scott. Competition design. 1866–67. Interior of alternate central hall, by Thomas Allom. (Scott. Design.)



prospect before me of at length clothing my work in a sightly garb, and rewarding myself at last by the application of art to that which had hitherto been merely contrivance."<sup>155</sup> Perhaps this denial of the organic wholeness of plan and elevation prevented Scott's law courts from winning any strong proponents. A professional architectural renderer, Thomas Allom (1804–72), was responsible for the vast number of beautiful perspectives that illustrated the entry, and public knowledge of this further damaged Scott's reputation. The *Athenaeum* suggested caustically that Allom might have succeeded as well on his own.<sup>156</sup>

### Street's Design

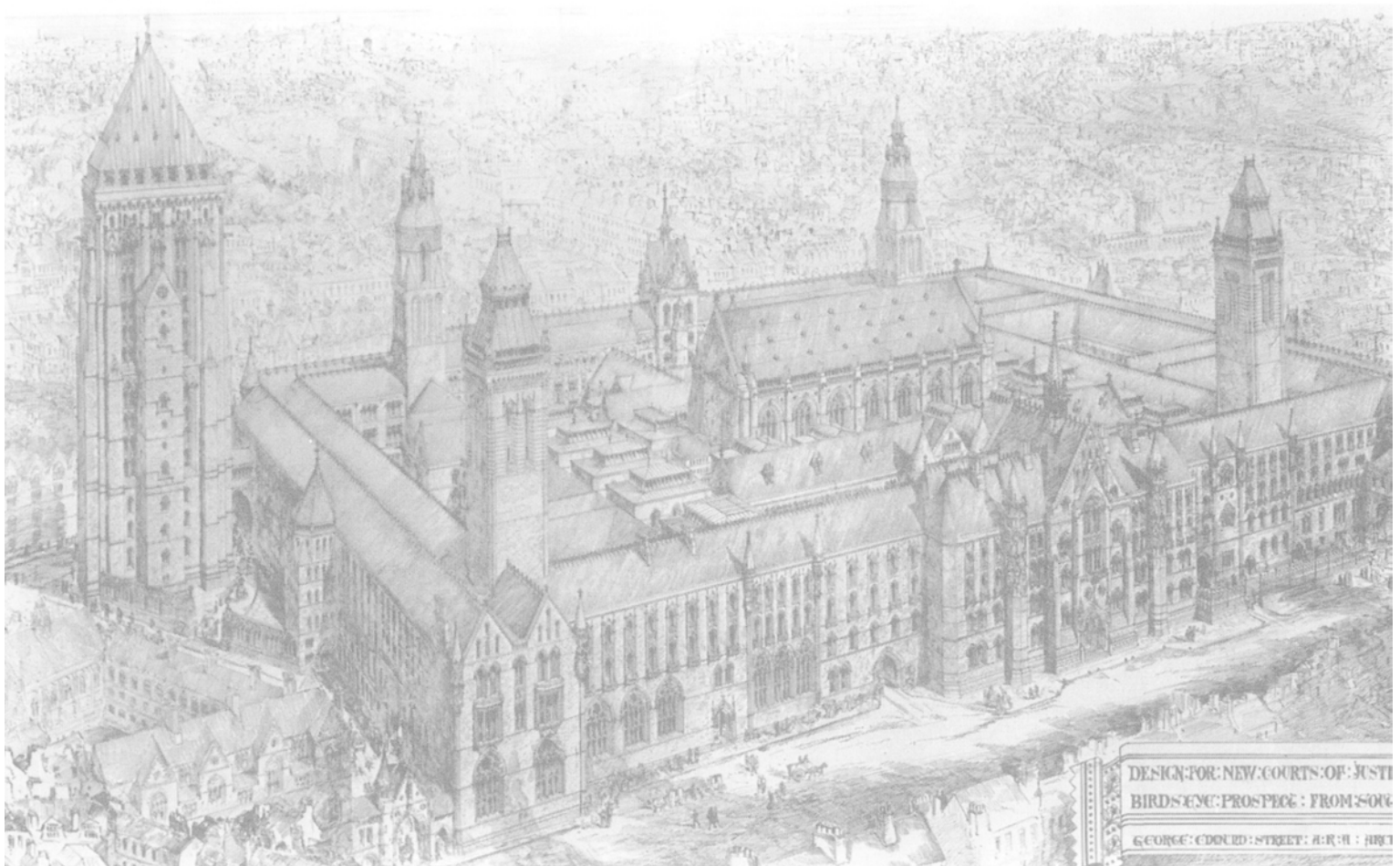
IN MANY respects the design submitted by George Edmund Street was the ideological ally of Scott's, but it possessed far greater unity and power. Like Scott's, his law courts were a final expression of faith in the possibility of High Victorian stylistic mediation (Fig. 64). The long regular façades, with their central and ter-

minal climaxes and unbroken rooflines, bespoke the “horizontal” and “repose” that Street had long championed for urban secular architecture. Against this were contrasted the bold verticals of asymmetrically placed towers. He himself explained his effort as a compromise:

I have taken occasion, so far as was reasonable, to make all my façades tolerably regular in arrangement. So I have made distinct centres to the north and south fronts, and have also made the other main fronts equally uniform in their general character. With all this uniformity there are, however, very often, of necessity, features where uniformity was unnecessary, and irregularity a virtue, and I have gladly availed myself of them in all cases. So that I hope my design has sufficient picturesqueness not to be tamely uniform, and yet enough uniformity to prevent the building looking trivial or frittered away.<sup>157</sup>

64 George Edmund Street.  
Competition design. 1866–67.  
*Bird's-eye view by Street.*  
(Architectural Association.  
NMR photograph.)

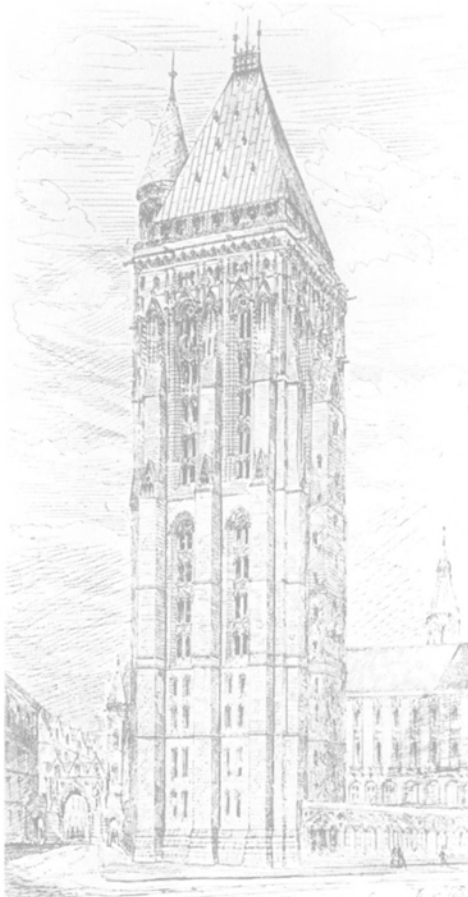
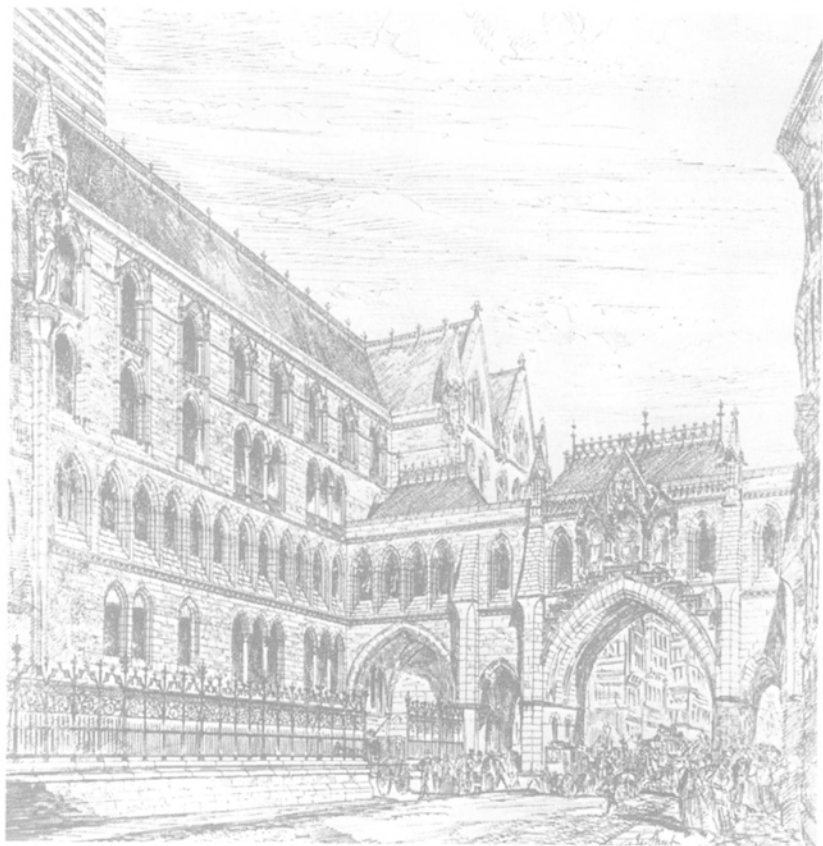
The uniformity which was part of this compromise marked a substantial departure from Street's previous practice. Although his rhetoric had always supported the incorporation of classicizing properties in contemporary architecture, he had heretofore designed little that conformed with this theoretical position. He had excused



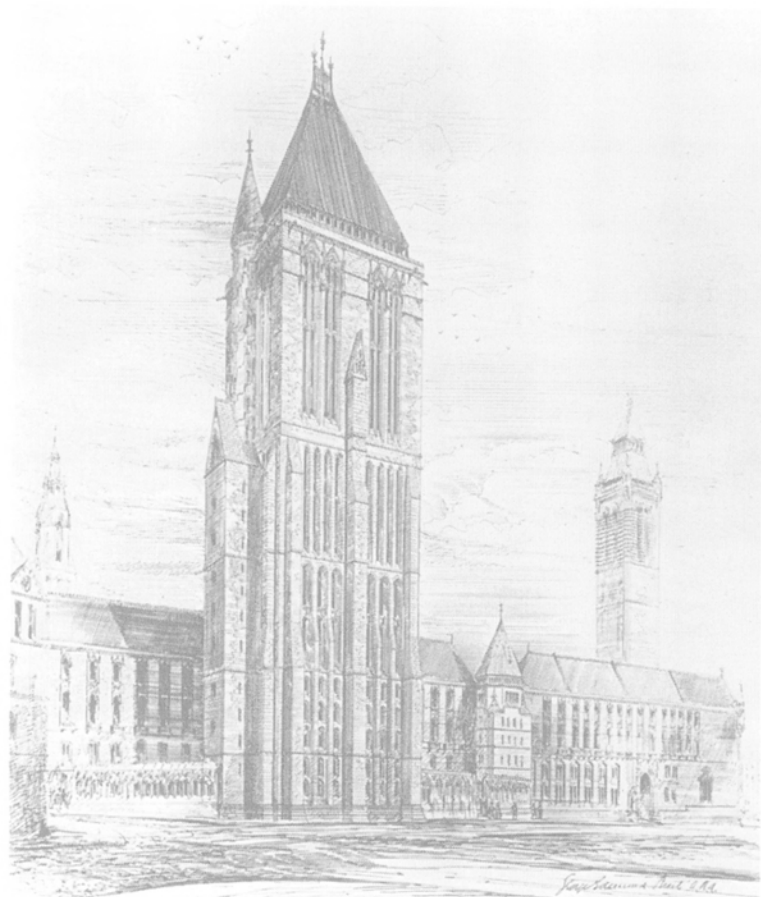
65 Street. Competition design. 1866–67. Perspective of eastern part of Strand façade and Strand bridge, by Street. (Photograph in *GES. Explanation and Illustrations of His Design for the Proposed New Courts of Justice*. London: J. E. Taylor and Company, 1867.)

66 Street. Competition design. 1866–67. Perspective of record tower, by Street. (Photograph in *GES. Explanation and Illustrations*.)

67 Street. Competition design. 1866–67. Perspective of alternate record tower, by Street. (Photograph in *GES. Explanation and Illustrations*.)



View of RECORD TOWER from Clement's Inn



View of Alternative design for RECORD TOWER from Clement's Inn

the irregularity of his entry in the government offices competition on the basis of the irregularity of the site and the proximity of St. James's Park, while the picturesque properties of his other large planning exercise, the convent at East Grinstead, could be justified on the grounds of its rural setting (see Figs. 5, 8).<sup>158</sup> In the late fifties and sixties, Street, nearly as much as Burges, was identified with the powerful picturesque of the Early French, but now, with the law courts, he had at last resolved to put theory to practice.

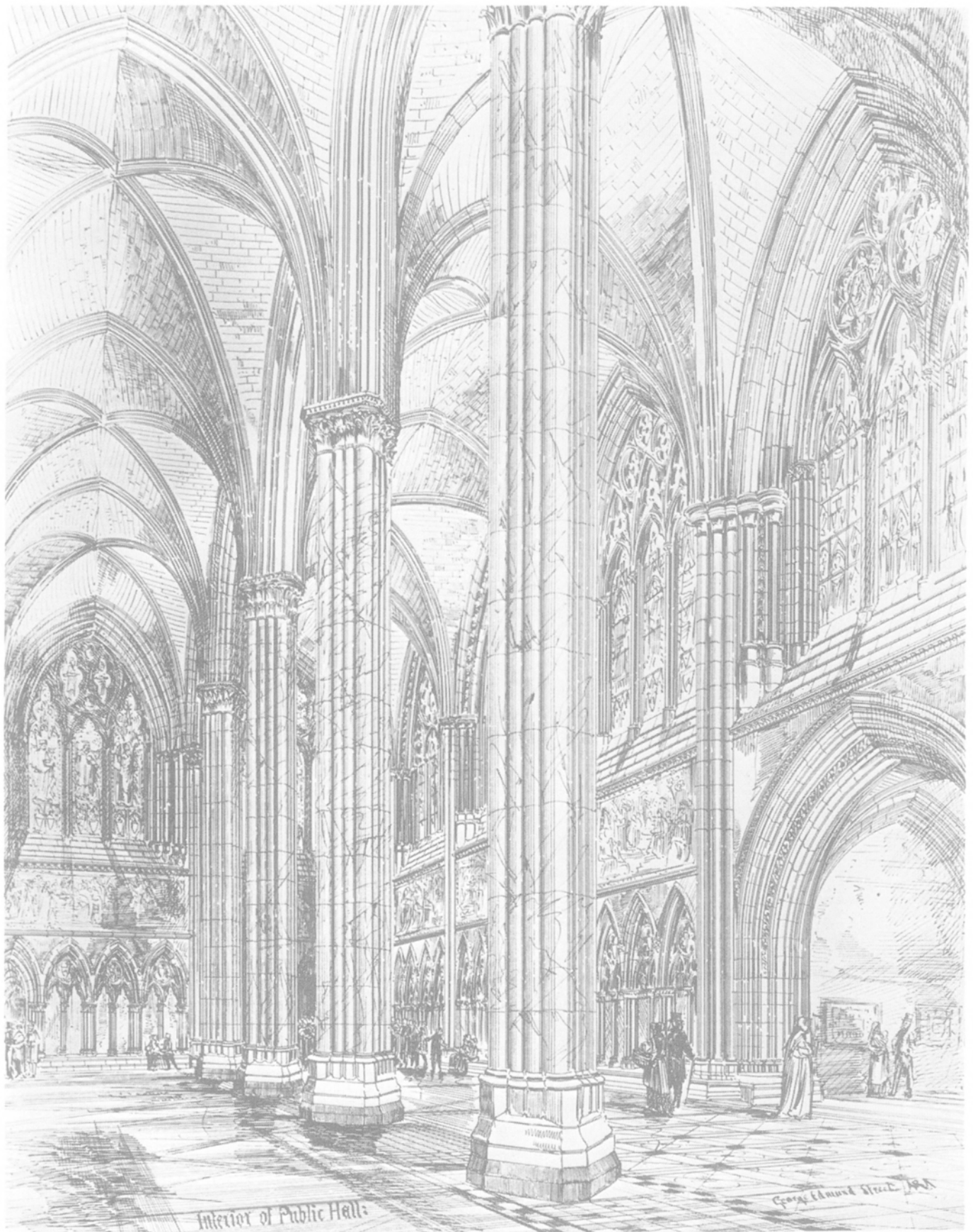
Nevertheless, to counterbalance the apparent symmetry and insistent horizontals of the main body of the building, Street provided a number of picturesque accents. The most dramatic of these was the soul-stirring record tower, which he called his "one grand feature."<sup>159</sup> The four ventilation stacks were also placed without exact symmetry, and the fenestration patterns on each side of the main entrance were significantly different. Varied groupings of small pinnacles punctuated the roofline. Moreover, the proposed bridge across the Strand on the site of Temple Bar blocked from view the pair of eastern gables, obscuring the symmetry of the main façade (Fig. 65).

These picturesque elements were demanded by the nature of the Carey Street site. Although Street submitted a bird's-eye view of the entire building which did not show the church of St. Clement Danes, he also prepared a number of smaller, close-up perspectives which demonstrated that he understood that passersby would see only fragments of his façades. This realistic outlook shaped Street's work.

Street's chosen architectural vocabulary, employing a variety of picturesque forms, complemented this dynamic composition. Much of his vocabulary derived from his earlier experiments with the forceful massing of the Early French, as seen in his churches at Howsham (1859–60) and Denstone (1860–62), and in the executed version of the Crimean War Memorial Church (1863–68) (see Fig. 7). His enthusiasm for these strongly picturesque forms had been responsible for delaying until now the realization of the more even and regular composition that he advocated in theory, and this enthusiasm continued in the law courts' vigorous massing, reticent surfaces, steep-pitched roof, and in the asymmetrical placement of the record tower—especially in its more economical alternate version (Figs. 66, 67). The same feeling prevailed in the numerous round, conically roofed stair towers, in the chamfered corners of the central Strand pavilion, and in the general wide spacing of windows.

The unbalancing effects of the Early French were partially offset by a strong recollection of Italian Gothic in other parts of the design, particularly in the two, campanile-like ventilation towers at the southeast and southwest. With their strong cornices and horizontal striping, they harkened back to the towers Street had designed in the fifties for the government offices (1856) and St. Dionis Backchurch (1857), when his interest in Italy had been at its peak. As recently as 1864, in his design for All Saints, Clifton, he had adopted a partially Italian vocabulary for an urban setting. It may have been this consideration which brought Italian models into use once more at the law courts, for the urban applications of Italian Gothic, with its strong classical survivals, had first attracted him to its study. But although the Italian towers of the law courts contributed an element of repose to the design, they were grouped in a picturesque pattern, and their overall effect remained rather informal.





The final ingredient in Street's picturesque stylistic mix was English Decorated Gothic. Of course, English precedents remained only one part of his encyclopedia of sources, but their presence was important, signaling his desire to temper the unbridled power of the Early French. In his competition design, Street gave up the plate tracery and softened the almost brutal plainness of what had long been his preferred style, introducing more Decorated tracery and richer moldings than in any project since his sketch for the Oxford Museum in 1853 (see Fig. 3). He rejected characteristically squat Early French columns in favor of the tall, multiple shafts with which he supported the vaults of his central hall, a chamber whose refectory-like plan was intended to create a secular appearance without copying the hammer-beam roof of Westminster Hall (Fig. 68).<sup>160</sup>

The return to later and English precedents was part of a general tendency among architects of the time. In 1864, G. G. Scott observed that this shift in taste was taking place "at the present moment," and recent scholarship has proposed that the revision by G. F. Bodley of his design for the church of All Saints, Cambridge, between 1861 and 1863, was the first important evidence of the new nationalism.<sup>161</sup> Street's interest in later English architecture was rekindled at least as rapidly, as demonstrated by his All Saints church of 1862–63 at Brightwalton, Berkshire.<sup>162</sup> But he only faced nationalism as a theoretical issue in two essays written in the spring of 1866, the year in which he worked on his designs for the National Gallery and the law courts. The first, "The Study of Foreign Gothic Architecture," was published in an anthology of essays dated April 1, while the second, "Architecture in the Thirteenth Century," was first given as a series of lectures in Dublin in April and May.<sup>163</sup> In both Street discussed the fundamental differences between French and English medieval architecture, but while the earlier essay was a full-blooded endorsement of foreign studies, of the type to be expected from the author who had added a recent book on the Gothic architecture of Spain to previous writings on Germany, Italy, and France, the second was far more circumspect in its recommendations, and an undercurrent of antiforeign sentiment could be detected.

Both essays offered a novel explanation for the differences between English and French Gothic, based on an extrapolation of the observed differences in the capital types of the two national styles. The French had shown a historic preference for square capitals, while the English preferred round ones, and from this Street argued that there evolved correspondingly simple and severe molding profiles in France and softer, less pronounced forms in England. Throughout entire buildings he could trace the effects of this basic difference: "And just as the French system of moulding led naturally to an equally bold system of design in window tracery and other details generally, so in England the delicacy of eye and feeling which was accidentally fostered by the round abacus and its accompanying mouldings, produced, equally naturally, a more delicate design in every other part of the fabric."<sup>164</sup>

In the earlier essay, Street, still clearly a full proponent of the Early French picturesque, proceeded from this analysis to lament the "lack of vigour and majesty about English work" and to exhort, "it is certainly our duty, to do our best to develope by degrees beyond the point to which our forefathers reached, and to some extent by means of foreign examples."<sup>165</sup> But in the later lectures in Dublin, although Street still recommended a broad understanding of foreign architecture, his assessment of the relative merits of English and French prototypes had begun to change.

68 Street. Competition design. 1866–67. Interior of the "Public Hall," by Street. (Photograph in GES. Explanation and Illustrations.)

English architects, he told his audience, were “the more truly poetical in their work, [and] more essentially possessed of the feelings of artists.”<sup>166</sup> He had begun to esteem poetry as well as vigor, and perhaps he recognized, too, that his enthusiasm for the Early French had kept his work more powerfully picturesque than was desirable.

Street’s taste for English Gothic subsequently deepened and grew. When he replaced the ailing Gilbert Scott in presenting two of the Royal Academy architecture lectures in 1871, his position had become more plain. He advised his listeners,

I feel myself unable too strongly to express my hope that not one of you students of the Academy will ever allow yourselves to be seduced from what is at once the most natural, the most useful, and, fortunately, the most easy course of study which you can take up—that, namely, of the ancient buildings in your own country. . . . No one, I believe, values foreign study or foreign Art more than I do. But there ought to be proportion in all things.<sup>167</sup>

By 1879 Street was even more forthright, telling a meeting of the St. Paul’s Ecclesiological Society, “I confine myself to-night almost entirely to English architecture for several reasons:—1st. It is ample for our time. 2nd. It is, I think, the best architecture of [the thirteenth century].”<sup>168</sup>

This growing artistic nationalism—perhaps a reaction against a perceived military threat from Second Empire France—suppressed the impetus that had sent Ruskin, Street, and other High Victorian theorists to the Continent. A new architectural ideology was emerging. Street now found himself linked with a large group of younger architects, many of whom had first learned to admire the picturesque quality of French Gothic but later discovered a gentler, more flexible architecture at home. Richard Norman Shaw, Street’s own chief assistant five years earlier, was a leader of this movement. Shaw’s early work, like the competition design for the Bradford Exchange (1864), was in the Early French manner, but he made his enduring reputation with virtuoso adaptations of English vernacular architecture, beginning in the middle sixties. The fruitful interaction of Street with the architects of this younger generation continued to be an important part of the story of his design for the law courts.

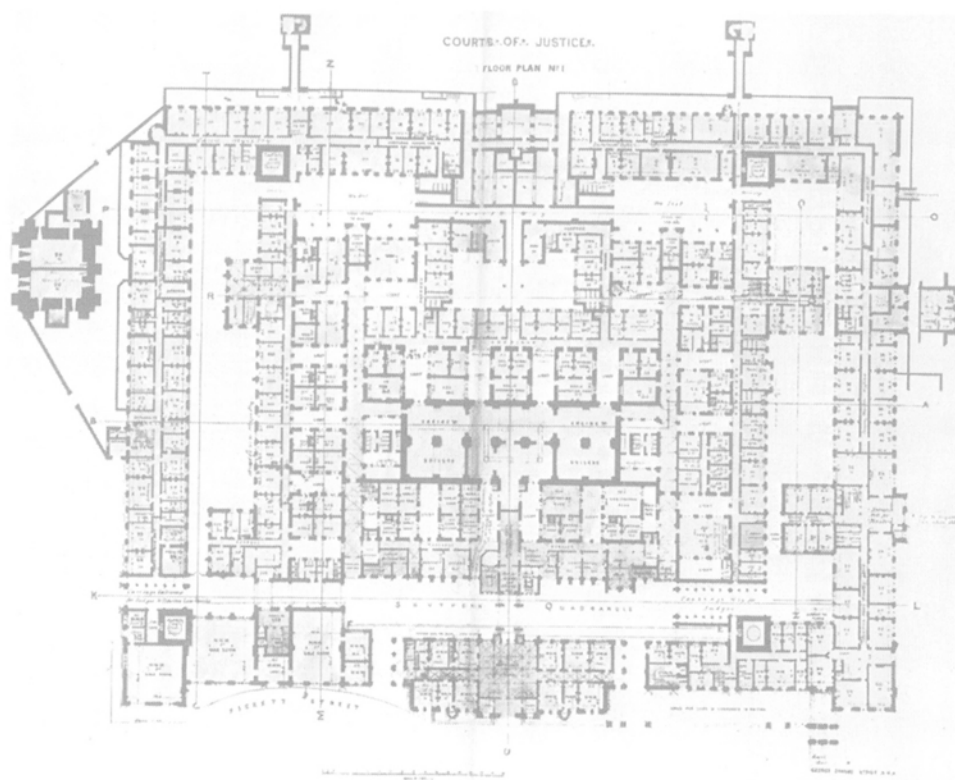
However, at the time of the competition, those who admired Street’s work were largely blind to his partial reaction against the Early French. They approved of his design because it contained an element of the powerful irregularity found in those of Burges and Seddon. The *Athenaeum*, whose critic liked Street’s entry best of all, specifically associated it with the designs of those two architects. Oblivious to the substantial amount of surface detail and tracery with which Street had enriched his building—covering even the upper parts of the preferred version of the record tower—the reviewer noted: “Mr. Street has sought effect, not by placing ornaments over the whole of his fronts, but by skilfully grouping the masses of his building into a composition.”<sup>169</sup> While such a description was not entirely inapplicable to the law courts, it would have been more appropriately attached to a slightly earlier work, like the Crimean Memorial Church. But it was for what remained of such Early French qualities in his elevations that he received a generally favorable reception, ranking third in the esteem of critics after the entries of Burges and Waterhouse. Street’s work even garnered the most positive evaluation offered by the cynical *Quarterly Review*.<sup>170</sup>

Street executed all of his own perspectives, and his extraordinary drawing ability certainly contributed to the popularity of his design. Alone among the entrants, he restricted himself to simple pen and ink, but this was a medium of which he was an undisputed master. From his office, through Shaw, the wonderfully evocative drawing technique of the Queen Anne generation was disseminated, and his perspectives must have thrilled the visitors to the exhibition in New Square. "See what can be done with only three strokes," the *Builder's* critic overheard an admirer say of his drawings.<sup>171</sup>

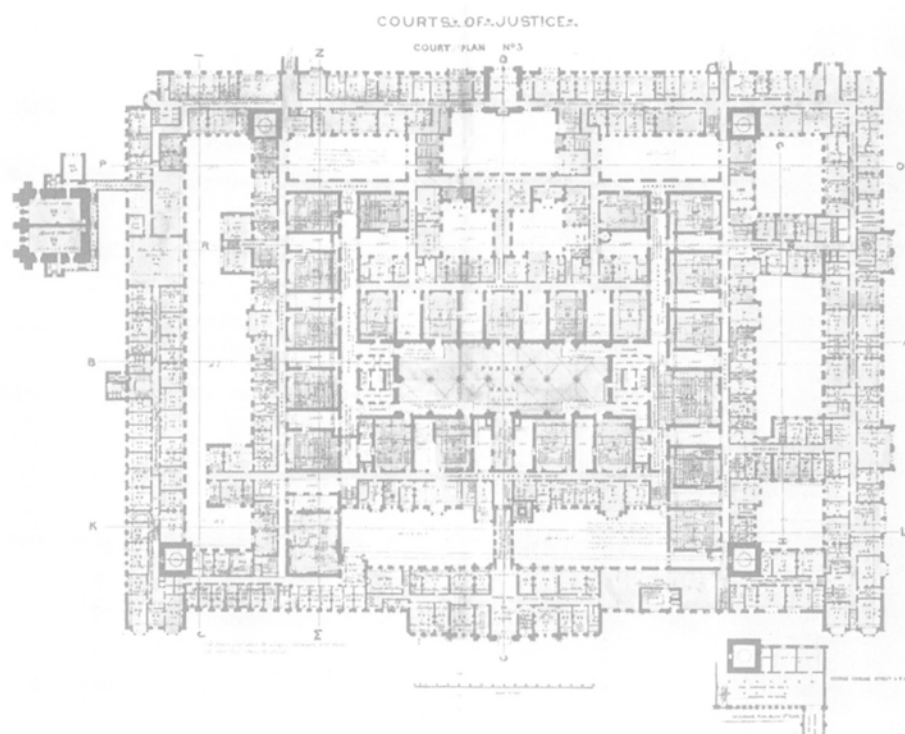
The reviewers who were dissatisfied with Street's design, like his admirers, were somewhat confused about his intentions, failing to note his efforts to moderate the massive picturesque quality of his earlier work. Only the perspicacious writer for the *Building News* recognized his significant return to an English architectural vocabulary, but, because he preferred Burges's Early French, he doubted whether the gentler picturesque of English Gothic was "strong enough" to give the needed "dignity and unity" to a large public building.<sup>172</sup> In the same way, the *Chronicle's* enthusiasm for Burges led it to complain that Street's elevation was "rather flat and monotonous."<sup>173</sup> But most detractors found the work too irregular, like the *Ecclesiologist*, which complained that "the whole design is to our mind wanting in unity and strength."<sup>174</sup> With this the *Saturday Review* and the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* agreed, and the *Belgravia* critic, who had favored Garling's ill-disguised classicism, argued that the façade was more like a "college on a high street" than a monumental public building.<sup>175</sup> The *Builder*, the champion of Barry, did not even discuss or illustrate Street's exterior until the design had won an award, and its later assessment was predictably negative.

This failure to appreciate the classical monumentality of his elevations surely dismayed Street, but even more troubling was the almost universal condemnation of his planning (Figs. 69, 70). In this area, several other competitors had a clear advantage. While Street adopted the usual concentric layout, he produced neither a logical realization of that system, such as Waterhouse and Lockwood had developed, nor an ingenious modification like Burges's. His solution did not even equal the less brilliant variants prepared by Barry and Scott. Street muddled the logic of the concentric arrangement by so reducing his central hall that it was impossible to align all of the courtrooms adjacent to it, as most of the other contestants had managed. Instead, he was compelled to locate more than half of his courts on secondary corridors, and their less concentrated placement made it very difficult to provide the necessary separate routes of access for different types of visitors. To provide a private passage for lawyers between the lobbies at the rear of the courtrooms, he was forced to throw iron catwalks across the intervening light wells (Fig. 71), creating the unfortunate necessity of roofing the light wells with glass in order to protect the lawyers from inclement weather. Street compounded these general deficiencies by an inexplicably careless error with respect to the commission's most important requirement—the careful restriction of public access to the building. Several of the competitors entirely reordered their plans to provide for this one necessity, and Street, coming from a legal family, must have understood the general objective. His published description of the design did include a strenuous statement about spectators: "There can be no necessity for admitting large numbers of curious visitors to any Court. All that is required is that there shall be just so much

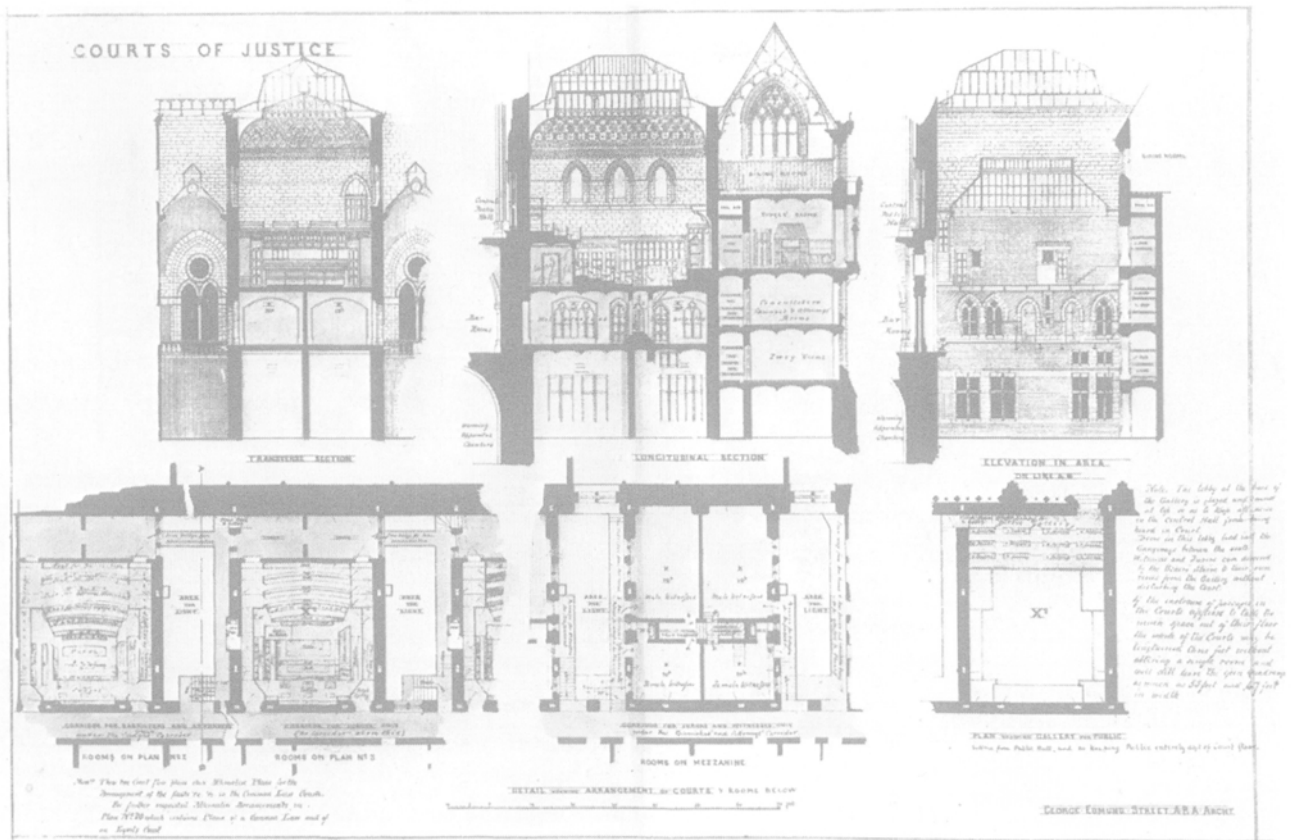




69 Street. Competition design.  
1866–67. Plan at Strand level.  
(GES. Explanation and Illustrations.)



70 Street. Competition design.  
1866–67. Plan at courtroom  
level, two floors above Strand.  
(GES. Explanation and Illustrations.)



71 Street. Competition design. 1866-67. Plans and sections of courtrooms, showing access arrangements. (GES. Explanation and Illustrations.)

accommodation for them as shall make the proceedings of the Courts public.”<sup>176</sup> But despite this, Street somehow began with the intention of admitting the public to the central hall, from which they could pass into the galleries of the courts. This clearly jeopardized any scheme to limit public admission. On his drawings, he labeled this space the “public” hall, and located it on the level of the spectator galleries, where only the general public was likely to venture (see Figs. 68, 70).

Fortunately, he detected this error at the last minute, and made a make-shift correction by adding railings to confine the public to the corners of the hall. But the noisy throng could still disturb the atmosphere of the great concourse, and, as the *Builder* pointed out, the railings cut off all public entry to the lord chancellor's court.<sup>177</sup> The haste with which the design was revised as the deadline approached is reflected in the fact that a few of the labels on the plans were added in a rapid, ordinary script, and a number of the carefully lettered labels were crossed out and altered. There must have been a burst of feverish activity in Street's office when it was discovered that the plan violated the chief stipulation of the instructions.

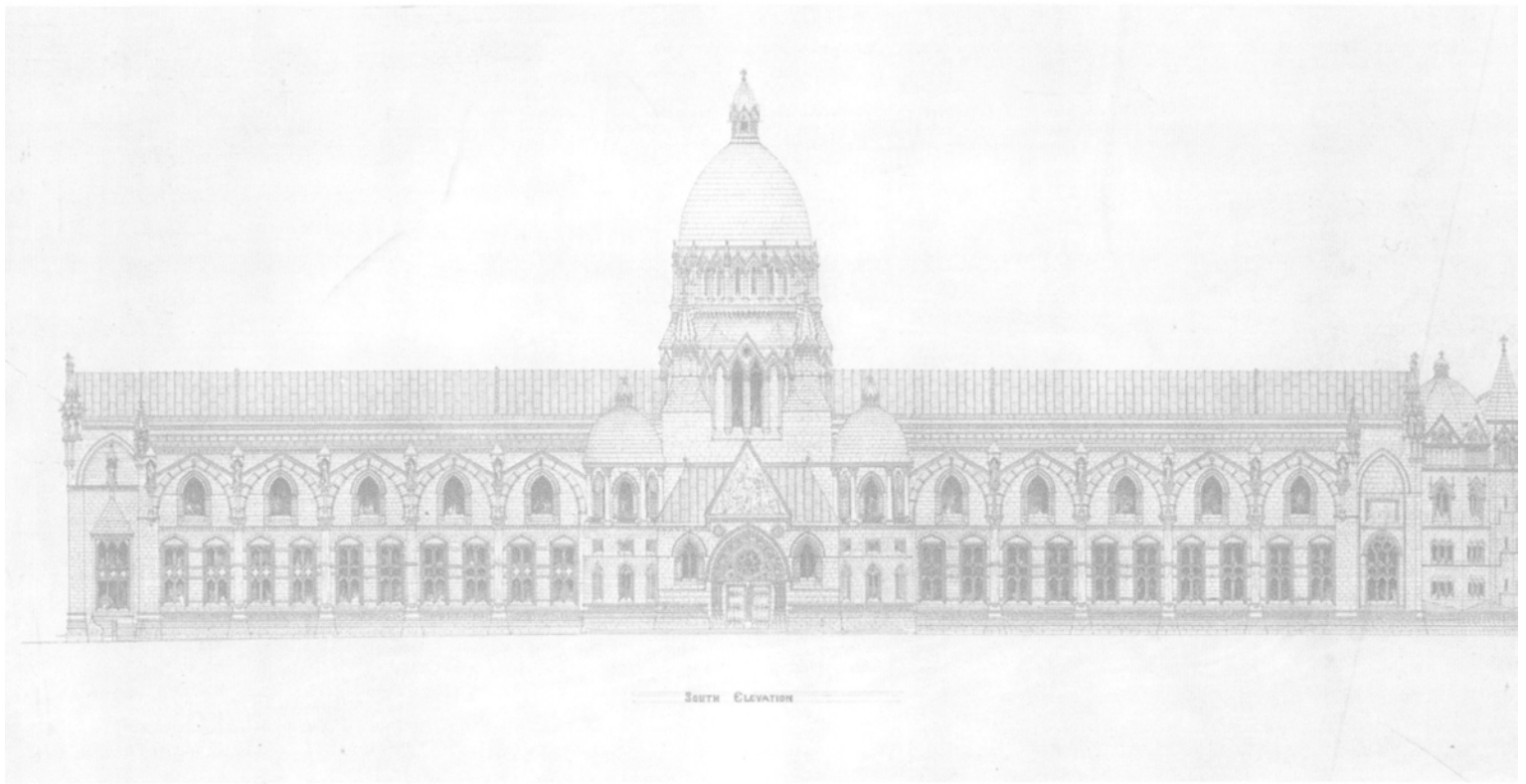
Street's scheme for dealing with public circulation was also faulty in another important respect. In order to prevent loungers from drifting from courtroom to courtroom, the program had specifically called for separate outside public entrances to each court. However, Street funneled the public from ground floor entrances up to the level of the galleries in two large groups, each of which might be admitted easily to ten or eleven courts. He argued in his description that the commission's

requirement was “an impossible arrangement without vast loss of space and great expense, and therefore an impossible arrangement in so restricted a site.”<sup>178</sup> But to this the *Builder* replied sarcastically, “that the arrangement denied is not actually ‘impossible,’ is shown conclusively by more than one of the competitors.”<sup>179</sup> Barry, the *Builder*’s choice, had accomplished at least a part of the task by subdividing the flow of spectators with eight nonconnecting stairs, while Burges had provided precisely the separate external entrances which were recommended. Several other competitors, including Waterhouse, at least provided separate stairs to each court from the basement level.

On the whole, Street’s plan must be ranked in the bottom half of the competition field, and this failure is not altogether surprising. He had had little experience in planning large buildings, and a glance at the great warren of rooms strung along ill-lit corridors which he had devised for the convent at East Grinstead (begun in 1864) suggests that he had achieved little sophistication (see Fig. 8). Nor was Street unaware of his shortcomings. In a letter written to the Royal Commission shortly after the designs were submitted, he urged its members not to devote too much attention to aspects of planning and too little to the “architectural character of the elevation.”<sup>180</sup> Contrary to the avowed priorities of Burges and Scott, and to the expected procedure of most architects, Street devoted the more important part of his efforts to the latter concern. Street believed that it was in the outward aspect of the building that he might at last give concrete form to what had for so long been only a potent theory, and, fortunately, the years ahead afforded many opportunities to refine his plan in accordance with the advice of its critics.

During those years Street also revised his elevations, and in that work the critics again played an important role. Their enthusiasm for Burges’s extraordinary design encouraged Street to abandon his experiment with the classicization of Gothic, just as it was bearing fruit. The future seemed to lie with an almost undiluted picturesque, and Street—long an Early French devotee—needed little convincing to redirect his energies. Indeed, a comparison of the law courts design with his slightly earlier competition design for the rebuilding of the National Gallery suggests that Street had begun to revert to his picturesque habits before hearing a word of this most recent praise of Burges (Fig. 72).

Street had made a sketch for the National Gallery by the time he returned from his tour of Continental museums in March 1866, when the instructions for the law courts had not yet been issued.<sup>181</sup> His gallery design, even more than the law courts, imposed classical regularity upon medieval structural principles, specifically adapted to its formal, unobstructed site on Trafalgar Square. For that location, Street created a virtually symmetrical façade, whose repetition of gables recalled the composition of a Roman basilica or bath, and at the center he raised a medieval dome to symbolize the Gothic and classic congruity he was seeking. Derived from the Byzantine-inspired domes of southern France, it linked the design to the Romano-Byzantine style practiced by some contemporary French architects, and, specifically, to Léon Vaudoyer’s Marseille cathedral (begun in 1852). Like his Continental colleagues, Street evidently turned to Byzantine precedents because they were the most classical form of medieval architecture, and he wrote boldly about these intentions: “I have attempted to give [the design] so much simplicity, dignity, and classicality of



72 Street. National Gallery competition, London. 1866. South elevation. (Victoria and Albert Museum. Crown copyright.)

effect, as will ensure its having a sufficiently grave and monumental character."<sup>182</sup> No more daring word than "classicality" could have been spoken by a convinced medievalist. Street's design for the National Gallery was the most audacious of his career and the fullest expression of the High Victorian creed.

However, the same critics who favored the Early French entries in the law courts competition also reviewed the National Gallery contest, and they were very critical of the classicality that Street had so forthrightly adopted. The *Building News* was representative of such opinion: "The composition is slight and not even picturesque. The front shows a long uninteresting straight building of two stories, divided on each side into five arched compartments, with a single doorway in the centre."<sup>183</sup> In reconsidering this as he commenced the design for the law courts, Street evidently reached the same conclusion. With impressive critical detachment, he decided that his best work had depended upon the telling juxtaposition of powerful masses rather than the imposition of linear order, and that classic and medieval could not be mixed as evenly as his theory had postulated without losing the qualities with which he felt most comfortable as a Gothicism. And so in the law courts Street contrived to shift the balance of regular and irregular features more in the direction of the picturesque. This reflected a new, general sensibility and was not merely a reaction to the nature of the confined Carey Street site.

Moreover, in the descriptive text Street prepared after the drawings were complete, he gave a sure indication that his thinking was continuing to evolve along the same lines. He wrote that he would have preferred to break up the long rooflines, which gave so much regularity to the building shown in the bird's-eye view, by hipping the roof at short intervals. He only apologized lamely for this last-minute alteration: "I regret very much that any of the drawings should not illustrate my

exact intention; but it was impossible, I found, to alter the drawings without, in point of fact, redrawing them, and for this I had not time.”<sup>184</sup> Street could not ignore the instinctive artistic imperative that now seized him, although in yielding he had to begin to retreat from his theoretical ideal: the perfect equilibrium of classical regularity and the picturesque of Gothic.

### *The Decision of the Judges*

**B**ETWEEN FEBRUARY and July 1867, the competition judges evaluated these eleven designs. During the spring and early summer, many members of the jury were also involved in the new Reform Bill debate, but because the Conservatives had exploited the Adullamite revolt to return themselves to power, the judges—except for Stirling-Maxwell, the sole Tory among them—now found themselves on the Opposition side of the question. Only because the Liberals had been appointed as jury members by name (rather than *ex officio*) did they retain their responsibilities with regard to the law courts. Gladstone’s diary tersely records their activity as architecture critics during that turbulent political season: (February 7) “Visited the Law Courts as a Judge 3–4”; (May 29) “Conclave of Judges Law Courts Designs 4 pm”; (July 19) “3–5½ Lincoln’s Inn: Meeting of Judges of Law Courts’ Designs”; (July 24) “Meeting on Law Courts Designs 4–5¼”; and (July 29) “Law Courts’ Meeting 3½–4½. We chose Street for Elevation and Barry for plan.”<sup>185</sup>

To flesh out this skeletal record and to explain the awkward joint award with which it concluded, it is necessary to rely to some extent upon conjecture. But a credible reconstruction of the law courts decision can be based on an analysis of the architectural tastes of the judges, the prevalent rumors attending the judging, the known opinions of informed observers of the competition—most notably the press—and the advice which the jury is known to have received.

The prejudices with which each of the judges approached his work have been discussed. Next to these, the rumors provide the most tantalizing hints about the thinking of the judges, even though none of the preliminary gossip properly predicted the rather surprising shared victory of Barry and Street. Rather, Waterhouse and Burges were the subjects of the most persistent speculation, even before the competition was fully under way.

As early as March 22, 1866, in his comprehensive attack on the conduct of the contest, Cavendish Bentinck reported but discounted a rumor that the Royal Commission had already made up their minds in favor of the architect of the Manchester Assize Courts.<sup>186</sup> This report was given some plausibility by Waterhouse’s brief service as the commission’s architectural clerk, even though he resigned that position on December 1, 1865, lest it jeopardize his opportunity to compete. Waterhouse was also known to be a friend of Edwin Wilkins Field, the secretary and true driving force of the commission. It was Field who had nominated him to serve as the architectural clerk, citing his “special knowledge [of law courts] which certainly no other architect can have,” and the two men maintained a friendly correspondence throughout the competition.<sup>187</sup> Field betrayed his friendship by indiscreetly pressing his opinion on those who visited the designs when they were hung in New Square. A correspondent to the *Builder* charged him with “acting neither wisely nor well” and went on to allege, “I could tell instances by the score, and will, publicly and by affidavit, if this note should have no effect, of his endeavours to bias