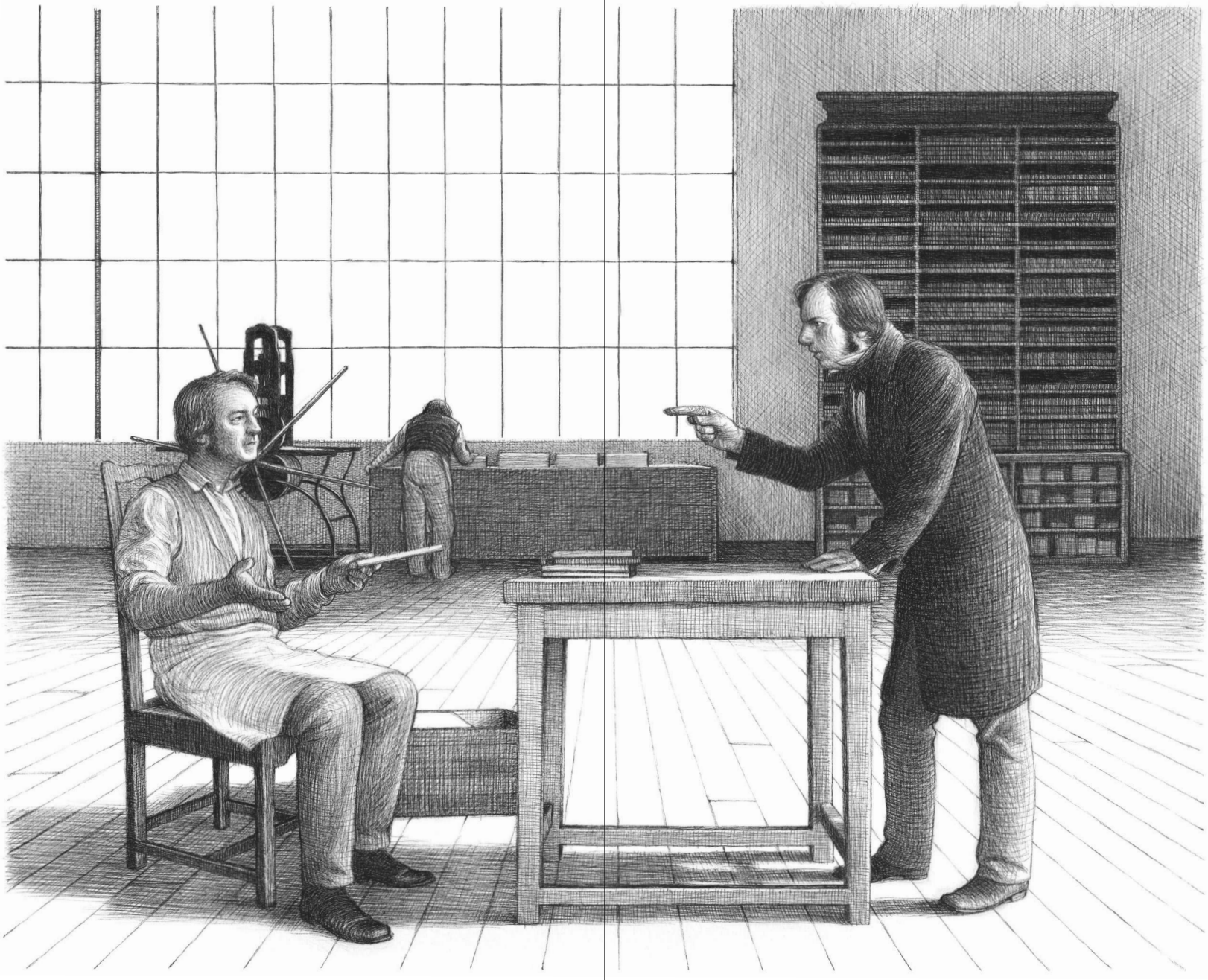
Coates printing workshop, Salisbury, England, June 1836. The architect Augustus Pugin arrives, carrying a slim folio containing a single copper plate etching of the final illustration in his book, presently in production. "Contrasts: or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages, and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste, Accompanied by Appropriate Text" will be Pugin's first substantial publication. He has undertaken few architectural commissions and hopes this book will stimulate interest in his spirited vision of architecture.

He removes the etching from the folio. The image shows an ornate weighing scale displayed on a circular motif. Around the outer circumference are the words "They are weighed in the balance and found wanting". On the scale are two churches. The building on the left is labelled "nineteenth century" and on the right "fourteenth century". The scale tips decisively to the right. Pugin shows his beloved medieval architecture outweighing the contemporary in every measure. Coates receives the plate, complimenting the design without much conviction.

Having delivered this last missing element, Pugin turns his attention to the work already in progress. He is presented with printed, folded and gathered pages for the complete text sections and the majority of the plates sections of the book. He flicks through the text pages, giving some obligingly favourable commentary on the typesetting, impatient to inspect the plates.

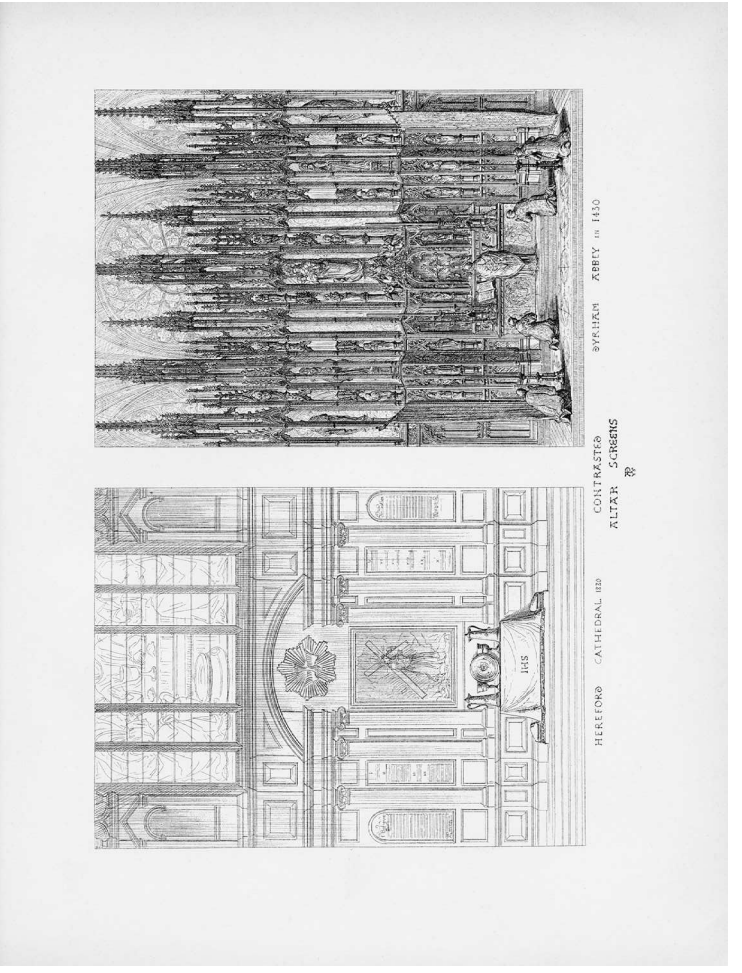
Arriving at the first sheet of plates Pugin is confused. This pair of etchings give comparative representations of altar screens — a medieval example from Durham Abbey (1430) and a contemporary example from Hereford Cathedral (1830). The former is intricate and rich in detail, showing an orderly formation of worshippers. In contrast, the latter is an unassuming table, vulgar in its simplicity, set in an empty room. The two images, both in the same portrait format are — to Pugin's surprise — shown side-by-side, rotated 90° on a single recto page. The facing verso is unprinted.

"Why are they fallen over?" Pugin exclaims. "These were not my specifications." This outburst is not unexpected to Coates, who responds in a concerned tone. "Mr Pugin, sir, I hear your remarks but you must please understand that we are confronted with a limit of our tools. Your instructions were to give strong, clear blacks to emphasise the great detail in your etchings of medieval buildings. To achieve this our press produces such an impression on the paper that it is impossible to print the reverse of the sheet without the paper disintegrating." Pugin has turned through several sets of plates, and seeing that they all follow the same format, responds forcefully. "Coates, it is my proposition to contrast the most glorious examples of medieval architecture with the impoverished buildings of our time. Each opening of this book should express that proposition. Why not present each contrasted pair on facing pages with the binding as their divider?"



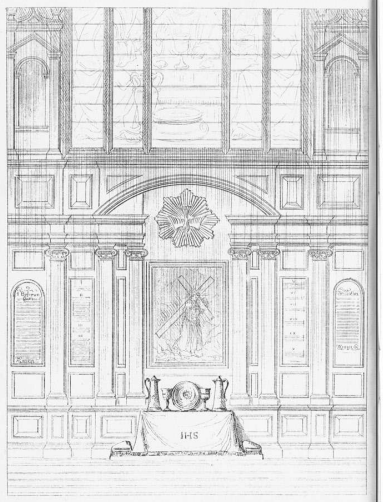
Coates is not prepared for Pugin's uncompromising tone and he pauses to formulate a response. Breaking away from the conversation, Pugin marches across the workshop to a large table where Coates's assistant is stacking the printed sheets. From these stacks Pugin takes a copy of each sheet and begins to fold them in half by hand, the fold precisely dividing each pair of illustrations.

"Fold them like this," Pugin says, gesturing with his half-sized gathering. "They'll need to be stitched into the bindings very carefully." "Mr Pugin," Coates interjects, "the book block will not lie flat." Pugin, who has already begun to demonstrate his instruction to the assistant, turns to respond: "I have no doubt that this book will become a monster."

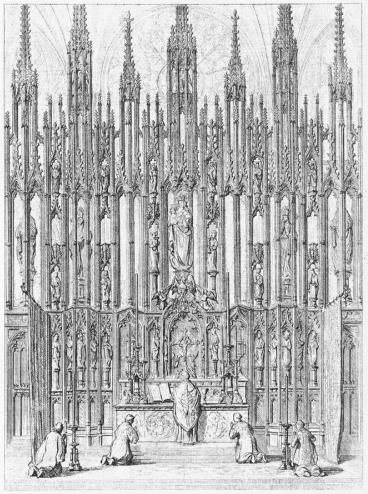


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HEREFORD CATHEDRAL 1275 CONTRASTED



BYRHAM ABBEY in 1450

ALTAR SCREENS



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THE TRADE