

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

22 OCTOBER, 1894, TO 29 MAY, 1895,

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XXXVII.

BEING No. 1 OF THE NINTH VOLUME.

(THIRD VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)

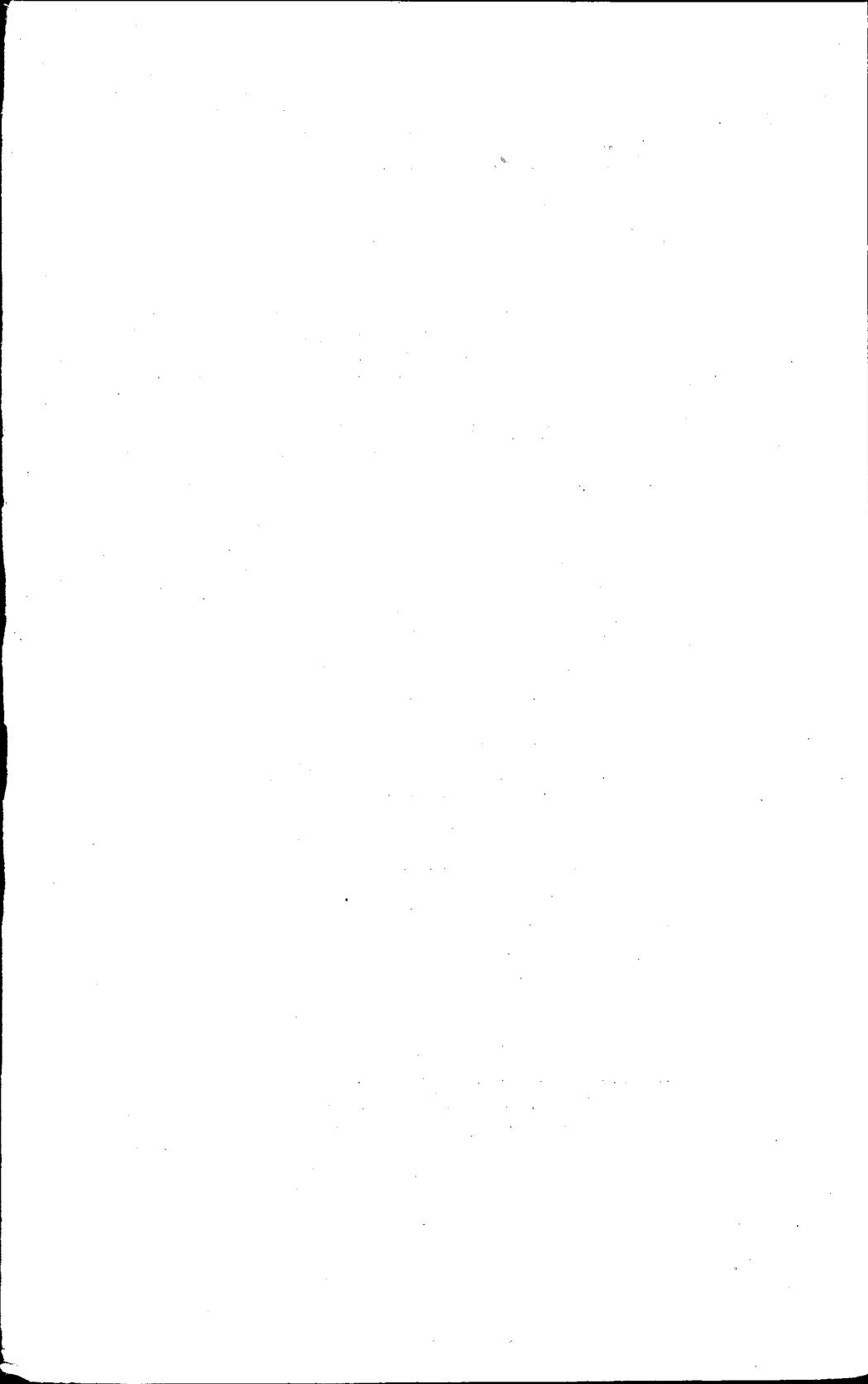
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The following communication by Dr M. R. JAMES, who was unable to be present through ill-health, was taken as read.

ON THE WALL PAINTINGS IN WILLINGHAM CHURCH.

The series of wall-paintings discovered during the recent restoration of Willingham Church does not, interesting as it is, call for a particularly long description. The paintings are for the most part easily decipherable—at least for those who have any experience at all in such matters: and they conform—save in one respect—to types already well known. This fact does not rob them of their value; it may rather help us towards determining their origin, in the future.

Before we study the pictures, however, we should, I think, express our lively appreciation of the very great amount of skill and pains which have been spent by the Rector, Mr Watkins, in laying them bare and in preserving and photographing them. He has set an example which other clergymen, to whom it may fall to make similar discoveries, cannot do better than follow¹.

The paintings which are to be described are all on the nave walls of the Church. We will look at these walls one by one, and take stock of what we find upon them.

I. *East Wall.* The Last Judgment, as usual, is found here. The figure of the Judge, of the Virgin and St John Baptist interceding and of the attendant angels with the instruments of the Passion have disappeared. The complete figure of an angel with a trumpet, and the arm of the other, remain. There remain, on either side of the crown of the chancel arch, figures rising from their graves: then on the spectator's *left*, the nude souls of the Blessed being ushered into Paradise by St Peter, while on the *right*, the Lost are hurried into the monstrous jaws of Hell. The pictures of

¹ Mr Watkins has been so kind as to read my proofs and correct from his intimate knowledge of the paintings the impressions I had received of them in two or three visits. He has also added the substance of a note on the paintings on the South aisle.

Heaven and Hell are carried a little round the corner on to the North and South walls respectively.

This painting is of the fifteenth century.

II. *South Wall, from East.*

1. *The Visitation.* The Virgin, on the *left*, is greeted by St Elizabeth. Both figures are nimbed: the Virgin's head is bare and her hair flows over her shoulders. St Elizabeth's head is covered. On the left of the Virgin's head is a scroll inscribed *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*; by St Elizabeth is another, inscribed *Benedicta tu es in mulieribus*.

This is again a fifteenth-century painting, and seems rather early in that century. The subject is not an especially common one in mural paintings.

2. The wall all round and below this picture is covered with a rich diaper work of roses and dark conventional flowers on a red ground, interspersed with shields. The same treatment is applied to the Eastern portion of the North wall.

One shield is below the feet of St Elizabeth, on the right. It bears the Five Wounds of Christ and the Crown of Thorns.

The next shield is that of the Five Wounds of Christ represented by the wounded Hands, Feet, and Heart.

The third bears the Tau-shaped Cross and two scourges.

This diaper work seems to be of the fourteenth century: at least it is earlier than the other paintings.

3. Between the two last shields is a fragment of another fifteenth-century painting, oblong in shape, of which only the lower end remains. On it we see the drapery of a large figure surrounded by rays, a cloud on the right, and a crowned demigirl below the feet: enough, in short, to show that the subject was the Assumption of the Virgin.

4. In the spandrels of the arches have been painted, in the seventeenth century, the Ten Commandments, in black letter. Part of the Fourth Commandment is legible to me, but none of the others. For the position in which we find them, we may compare that of the late paintings of the Shields of the

Patriarchs in West Walton Church. They are painted, as Mr Watkins tells me, *over* the Apostles, and are therefore the latest work we have to deal with.

5. Above the shield of the Five Wounds, and rather to the left, are the remains of a colossal figure coarsely drawn. From other more complete figures which we shall encounter, we can tell that this is one of a series of the Twelve Apostles painted early in the seventeenth century after the present roof, which is dated 1613.

Two more figures of the Apostles come next. One of these is St James the Less.

6. Westernmost on this wall are three female figures, somewhat smaller in scale and somewhat less coarsely drawn than the Apostles, but not materially removed from them in date.

These figures are in some respects the most unusual and interesting part of the paintings in the Church.

They represent

- (1) Faith holding a chalice in the right hand and a cross in the left.
- (2) Hope with an anchor by her.
- (3) Charity with two naked children nestling in her robe.

III. *North wall, from west.*

1. The three remaining Virtues are the first figures on this wall. They are Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice: the Moral Virtues, as opposed to the Theological: Justice is the only one plainly visible, and, as usual, she holds the scales. Prudence has a mirror.

2. Parts of five out of the six figures of Apostles who originally occupied this wall are also visible. The easternmost seems to be St James the Great: another of St Simon with his saw: but none of the others are, to me at least, certainly identifiable.

3. The first painting, of fourteenth or fifteenth century work, is one of St George and the Dragon. The figure of St George is almost wholly gone: but in the upper *l.* corner

the city with the King and Queen of Egypt looking out from it are visible. Below is the broken lance: the dragon and the horse's legs are seen on the r., and the Princess and lamb are decipherable also.

4. Next comes a tall narrow picture of St Christopher: staff in hand, Child Christ on shoulder, and water and fishes about his feet. This is, as regards style, the oldest painting in the nave, and might be of the fourteenth century. The timbers of the roof have interfered with it; also the diaper-work is discernible under it, and must therefore be older. The position is the right one for a picture of St Christopher, in so far as it is on the north wall. But normally the saint is placed directly opposite the south door, so as to be the first object on which the eye of the worshipper should fall when he entered the Church.

5. The Annunciation comes next to this. It belongs to the same series as the Visitation on the S. wall. The Angel is on the left, and has the usual scroll, with *Ave gracia plena dominus (tecum)*: on the Virgin's scroll is *Ecce ancilla domini, fiat (michi secundum verbum tuum)*.

At this point the diaper-work of roses interspersed with shields recommences.

The shields which remain are:

(1) party per pale: on the dexter side apparently a bear (?), and on the sinister a lion rampant *gules*.

(2) *Gules*, three crowns *or*, for Ely. The crown in base has a sceptre in it.

6. Above this are the remains of a draped figure of fifteenth century work, of which I can make nothing. It is likely enough to have belonged to another scene in the life of the Virgin.

We will now arrange the paintings in order of time.

1. *Fourteenth century.*

Diaper-work with shields.	N. and S. walls.
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St Christopher.	N. wall.
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St George and the Dragon.	S. wall.
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2. *Fifteenth century.*

The Annunciation.	{	N. and S. walls.
The Visitation.		
The Assumption.		
(Fragmentary subject.)		
The Last Judgment.		W., N. and S. walls.

3. *Seventeenth century (after 1613).*

The Twelve Apostles.	{	N. and S. walls.
The Virtues.		

The Ten Commandments.

These paintings may all of them be called *devotional* in character, save the diaper-work and shields, which are *decorative*. This devotional class of paintings form by far the largest proportion of our extant material. The other great category is the *historical* or *didactic*, which consists in the presentment of a considerable series of scenes from the Bible or from the life of a saint. The frescoes in St John's and St Anselm's Chapels at Canterbury Cathedral; and the Eton and Winchester paintings lately described by me, are leading specimens of this class. But the St Georges, St Christophers, Joys of the Virgin and Last Judgments are all intended to excite the devotion of worshippers or to point some allusion in a preacher's discourse; or, again, they stand there in fulfilment of a vow made, or as the expression of the affection felt, by some parishioner or curate, to the person represented.

When we find them in churches which either belonged to some large religious house or were near neighbours of such an establishment, we may fairly conjecture that they were executed by some member of the monastery in question. It is likely enough that a monk who had some facility in painting was specially deputed to go round the churches of his district from time to time and either execute fresh orders or touch up old and faded frescoes. I have never yet lighted upon any evidence which proved this: it is merely a guess, though it is a sufficiently common and probable one.

In the present case one would naturally imagine that the

Pre-Reformation paintings at Willingham were executed by a monk from the neighbouring Priory of Ely.

[Since the above paintings were discovered, the restoration of the S. aisle has been taken in hand. Here the following remains have been discovered :

(1) In the west wall, in a lancet window blocked up when the aisle was extended in cent. xiv., are remains of scroll-work, and two figures, one on either side of the window, of female saints : one has a book, the other a palm branch. Mr C. E. Keyser dates them at 1250.

(2) Many remains of painting on the S. walls, chiefly consisting of frames with black letter inscriptions.]

The Secretary exhibited : (1) a collection of pottery and fragments of stained glass, found in digging for the foundations of the additions to the Physical Laboratory in Free School Lane ; (2) Pottery and glass found at Jesus College ; (3) a large Dutch glass bottle, and an earthenware beer vessel from Wales, presented to the Society by Lady Paget.

FIFTY-FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING, May 29, 1895. W. M. FAWCETT, M.A., F.S.A., President, in the Chair.

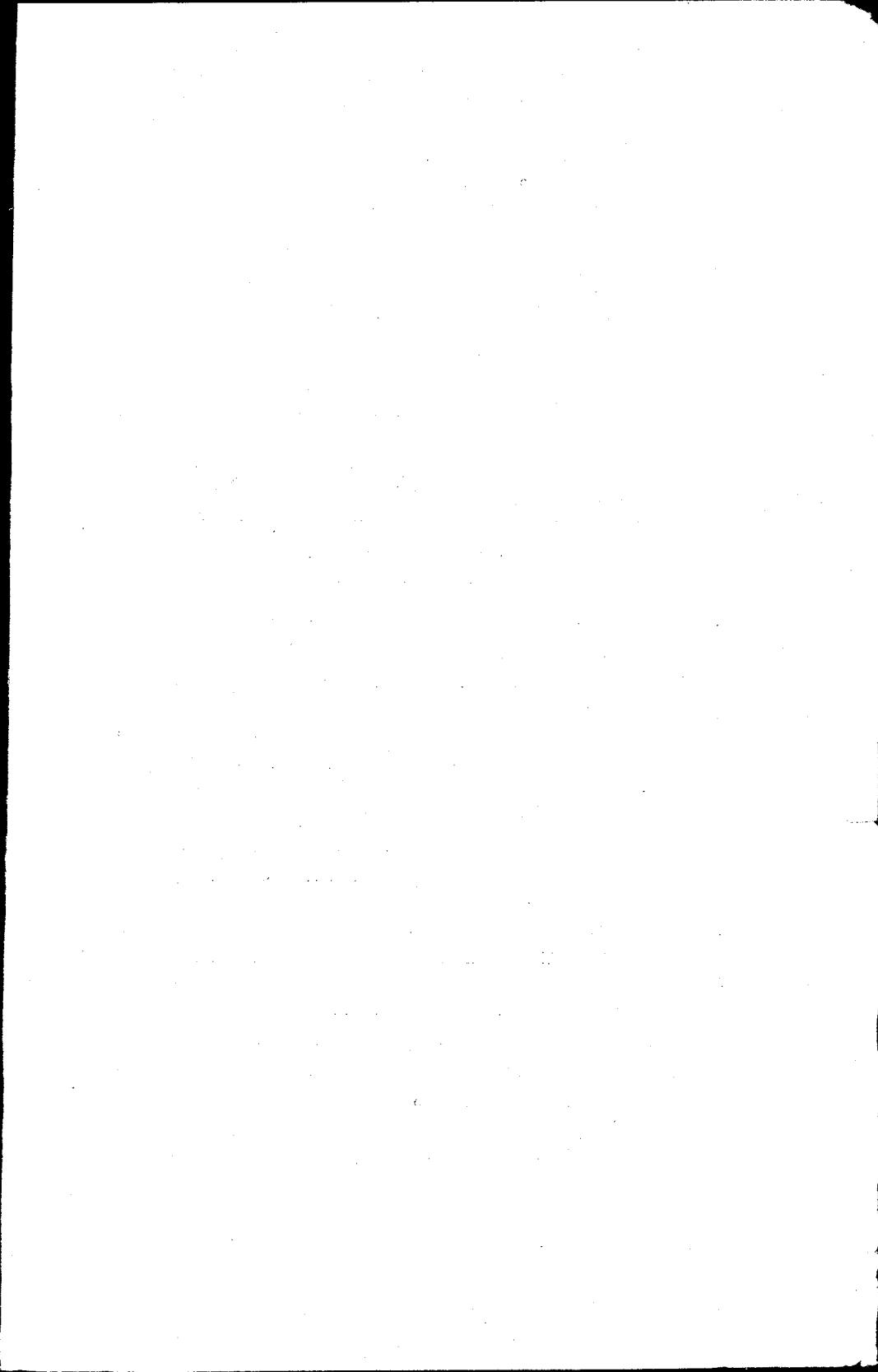
The Secretary read the Annual Report, which was adopted, as follows :

During the past session eight meetings have been held, four in the afternoon and four in the evening. One of the afternoon meetings was held in the Hall of Jesus College, by the kind permission of the Master and Fellows. The average attendance in the afternoon has been 29, and in the evening 31.

Sixteen communications have been made, namely : By the Rev. C. L. Acland : *On Norse remains in North Britain*. By Mr E. M. Beloe : *On the Padders Way*. By Mr J. W. Clark : *On some ancient libraries in England and France*. By Mr Arthur

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