## ON RECENT DISCOVERIES OF WALL-PAINTINGS AT CHALDON, SURREY; WISBOROUGH GREEN, SUSSEX; AND SOUTH LEIGH, OXFORDSHIRE.

By J. G. WALLER.

THE last few years have produced numerous discoveries of ancient tempera paintings during the restoration of our churches. A considerable addition to our knowledge of mediæval ecclesiastical art has been thereby attained, and very much more might result if means were taken to secure a good survey of those not destined to be preserved, or an accurately recorded account of those which have a better fortune. By means of photography and tracings, where practicable, a permanent record might be made in all cases, which could not fail to prove valuable to the history of art. The works on which I am about to offer some remarks have all of them special claims, but none equal to that of Chaldon, Surrey, which is an unique example. Next to that is the Crucifixion, &c., at Wisborough Green, Sussex, which has details which are peculiar, and part of a subject hitherto unknown to us. Lastly, those of South Leigh, Oxfordshire, which, though containing no new subject, yet are worthy of remark on account of the important character of their execution.

The subject of the Chaldon picture is the "Ladder of the Salvation of the Soul and the Road to Heaven," a title found in the Greek Guide[1] now in use by the monk artists of Mont Athos. Examples of it are sometimes seen in manuscript illuminations, the most remarkable being that in the Hortus Deliciarum lately in the public library at Strasburg, but which unhappily perished during the siege of 1870. For an account of this and some general information on the subject, see vol. v., "Collections of Surrey Archæological Society," pp. 279-80, &c.

The picture is on the west wall of Chaldon Church, and

[1] Discovered by M. Didron, and a translation into French published by him in 1847.

is divided into two parts by a horizontal band, *nebuly*, to use an heraldic term, a usual convention for clouds in mediæval art, which separates the place of torment from that of salvation. In the centre is a ladder, stretching from the base to the summit, at which is the figure of our Lord, the right hand in benediction, the left holding a cross; it has the cruciform nimbus, and is within a wavy aureole; the sun on the right, the moon on the left. Up this ladder the souls are ascending, or endeavouring to do so. As far as the boundary between the upper and lower divisions, it is a struggle: some are falling, others clutch at the rungs; but when past this, they ascend without fear.

But the key to the subject is the tree on the left side, amongst the upper branches of which a serpent is entwined. This is the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,"[2] and on the wall of the respond of the north arcade were some other figures, unhappily destroyed during the absence of the Rector, which possibly carried out the obvious idea of representing the Fall of Man; and it will be seen that the intent of the whole was to show, both punishment ensuing, and also mercy and redemption. Between the ladder and the tree, about midway, is the figure of the Usurer: he sits amid flames, he is without eyes: around his neck hangs a money-bag, and three are round his waist: his right hand holds up a coin; pieces of coin are dropping from his mouth, out of which lolls his tongue, and he is catching them in his left hand. Two demons on each side are tormenting him with pitchforks, vaulting aloft and making a fulcrum of his head. All these details are explained by stories from Cæsarius and Herolt: the first a Cistercian monk of Heisterbach, who wrote in the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century; the latter a Dominican, and a compiler of the fifteenth century.

Cæsarius[3] gives a story of a knight of Cologne, named Theodoric, a usurer, who, being very ill, was moving teeth and mouth, when his servant said to him, "What are you eating, my lord?" He answered, "I am eating money." It seemed to him as if demons poured money into his mouth.

Another story by the same author is of one Godescalc, a

[2] In the account of this picture in the Collections of the Surrey Archaeological Society, I have confounded this with the "Tree of Life."

[3] Dialogus Miraculorum. Wherever Cæsarius is quoted it is from this work.

miller, and has extremely curious incidents, showing how he was taken to hell by a demon, and the *fiery seat* prepared for him was pointed out. As regards the conspicuous want of eyes, it may be explained by another story from the same writer. The novice asks of the monk how he, who had *no* eyes, could have contrition, as without eyes he could not weep. The monk answers, very prettily, "Contrition is not in tears, but in the moving of the heart." [4]

Herolt,[5] in "Exemplum XLVI.," gives a tale of a usurer of Brabant, who had greatly spoiled the poor, and who saw at his death two huge dogs of darkness about his bed: he then thrust out his tongue to about a *foot* in length, and thus miserably died. The "dogs of darkness" are, doubtless, the figures who are tormenting him with forks. "Exemplum XLVII." is a story of two sisters who, at their mother's death, divided their patrimony. One put out her portion to usury, and cared not for her poor sister, but, making a chest, collected her money in it. At length she fell ill, and, feeling herself at the point of death, went to her chest, and taking two bags of money from it, bound them about her naked body, concealed beneath her clothes. She then bade her sister, that no one should examine her body after her death. But suspicion having arisen from its weight, a horrible disclosure took place, and it was found that there was a huge serpent, who frequently spat fire and sulphur into the woman's mouth.

In the curious vision of the Monk of Evesham, said to have occurred in 1196, a goldsmith is introduced as tormented for his avarice, and saying: "Trewly often tyme y haue ben caste downe hed longe into a grete hepe of brennyning money amonge the whiche y brent ful intolerably. And tho fyrye pensys y was compelled to deuoure with an opyn mowthe that y felte alle my bowellys to brenne in me. And hethir to often times y am compellyd to telle hem and of the towchyng of hem myne handys and fyngers ben sore peynde." [6]

The bearing of all these stories upon the composition of this figure is obvious enough. (Fig. 1.) The artist has

[4] Perhaps this idea of the novice may have arisen from the very frequent use of "effusio lachrymarum" by monastic writers on contrition.

[5] Herolt, Exemplum Exemplorum.

[6] See Mr. Arber's curious and accurate reprint of the old English version.

made use of them to symbolize the Usurer and his punishment in after-life. If we trust to the numerous stories of a similar kind which abound in all collections of the monkish moralities, no person was more hated. Shakespeare's

Fig. 1

play of the Merchant of Venice was partly founded upon one of these tales, and among the numerous characters satirized by Dante and placed in the infernal regions, the usurers (*mesta genta*) are conspicuous, and the poet indicates individuals by arms on the bag hanging about the neck.

> " Cosi ancor su per la strema testa
> Di qual settimo cerchio tutto solo
> Andai ove sedea *la gente mesta*
> * * * * * * *
> Non ne connobbe alcun ; ma io accorsi
> *Che dal collo a ciascun pendea una tasca*
> Che avea certo colore e certo segno."
>
> *Inferno*, c. 17.

It was probably a common custom for the money-bag to be carried about the neck ; the word " crumena," used by Herolt, is rendered, " a leathern bag worn about the neck."

On each side this figure are groups of a male and female embracing, each male figure having behind him a demon, as if urging or inciting him on. One would indicate a youth, the other a man of mature age ; the demon to this atter is coloured *red*. There can be no doubt that the sin

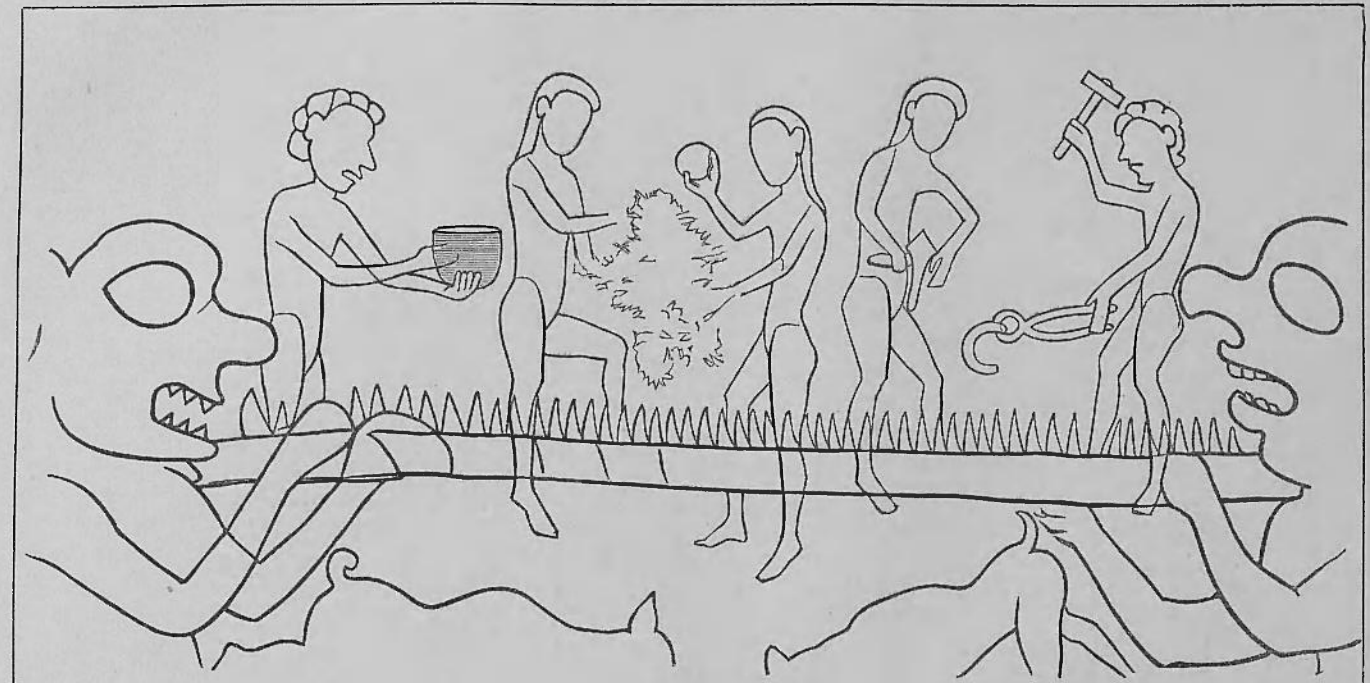

Fig. 2.

here symbolized would be illicit affection. The red colour has doubtless a meaning. The rust (*rubigo*) of sin is a frequent expression, and the colour may be to denote intensity. The demons here shown as suggesting evil belong to the ancient doctrine of an evil and a good spirit attendant upon man, which found its way into Christianity in the earliest times, though long previously entertained. The second book of the Shepherd Hermas, written in the Apostolic Age, as some suppose, called "His Commands," says, "There are two angels with men,—one of righteousness, the other of iniquity." In each case here we have, then, "the angel of iniquity" prompting to sin.

But the most curious part of all in this singular work is, without doubt, the bridge of spikes, which is immediately above the figures just described, and is a serrated beam sustained by two large demons, one by the "Ladder," another by the "Tree." Over this souls are attempting to cross, their feet represented as slipping over: let it also be remarked that they are moving in opposite directions. (Fig. 2.) At one end is a figure about to ascend the bridge, holding a bowl, apparently of milk, anxiously with both hands, as if fearful of spilling it. Then we have two female figures going in opposite directions to each other, in the centre of the bridge. Unfortunately, what they hold is effaced, except that one has a ball in her left hand, which I cannot doubt was intended to represent a ball of spun wool, the clew, as it was formerly called, and still so in Scotland, and in the northern parts of England. The female figures possibly then bore with them the appropriate distinctions of woman's occupation. In "Vives' Instruction for a Christian Woman" is the following illustrative passage: "What a foule thing is it to see a woman instead of hir wool-basket to handle the table-board, and for hir spindle, the dice; for hir *clewe*, or prayer-book, to turn the cards." There are two other figures at the opposite end which also face each other: one is unmistakably a smith, holding a horse-shoe by pincers in one hand; in the other uplifting a hammer, as if in act of forging. He seems quite regardless of him who comes in the other direction, holding, as it seems, a mason's pick, and who appears as if shrinking from impending contact on the narrow bridge. The smith, and that at the opposite end both show profiles which are really

expressive: the only other instance is one of the embracing figures just described; features are omitted throughout, except in special cases, as here or in the figure of the Usurer.

This punishment of the Bridge is of the most remote antiquity in Oriental systems of religion. There is the bridge of the Mahometans, called in the Arabic Al Sirât, said to be laid over the midst of Hell, and to be finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a scimitar, an idea probably borrowed from the religion of Zoroaster, where the bridge is called Pûl Chînevad, *i. e.*, the strait bridge, over which mankind will be obliged to pass at the last day. In the "Times," December 14, 1872, a correspondent speaks of a representation of Hell in a temple at Wuchang, China, where is a bridge "over which wretched souls are being urged by green demons." The Jews also have a bridge of Hell no broader than a thread. The idea has widely spread, and appears in many ways in mediæval mythology; but in that of the Vision of Tundale we get the illustration apt and close for our purpose, and its date, 1149, is not much antecedent to the Chaldon painting.

This Vision of Tundale is but one of a series in which the plan of Dante's poem is anticipated—an angel performing the part of guide, as Virgil in the Divina Commedia. Tundale was an Irishman of noble rank, who fell dead in a fit of rage, and is conducted through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise by his guardian angel. In his progress he comes to a bridge, which, in the English metrical version, is thus described:

"Over that lake then say thei lygge
A wonder long narow brygge
Too myle of leynthe that was semand,
And scarsly of the bred of a hand.
Off scharpe pykys of yron and stell
Hit was grevous for to fele.
Ther myght passe by that brygge thare
But yett her feet wer hyrt sare."

He then perceives one on the bridge carrying a "burden of corne" on his back, who "pleynud his synne full pytuysly," and whose feet by the pikes were "pykud full sore." Inquiring of the angel the meaning of this, he is answered:

"For hym is ordyened this payn,
That robbyght men of hor ryches
Or any gudys that herys is
* * * * * * *
And he that thou syst on the brygge stand
With the schevis so sore gretand
Fro holy chyrch he him stale."

Tundale is then told he must now go over the bridge, and lead with him a wild cow, a punishment enjoined for having stolen the "gossypis cow." He essays the difficult task, tumbles about, and in his dire strait meets the other unfortunate with the sheaf coming in the opposite direction, and neither could go back, and they suffered sorely, but at length Tundale is rescued by his angel.

This is very illustrative of the painting, especially in the incident of the souls meeting on the bridge, and being unable either to pass or go back. The punishment is also for robbery, and it especially points out the crime of robbing "holy chyrch," *i. e.*, not paying tithes. This is evidently what is meant, and is quite in accord with mediæval writers, who denounce these people as guilty of theft. Now, applying this view to the painting, it would suggest to us a number of individuals marked out by their symbols of occupation as guilty in this respect—as the smith, mason,[7] cowherd, or even the *spinster* with her spun wool, &c., a class to be surely found in the smallest of country communities.

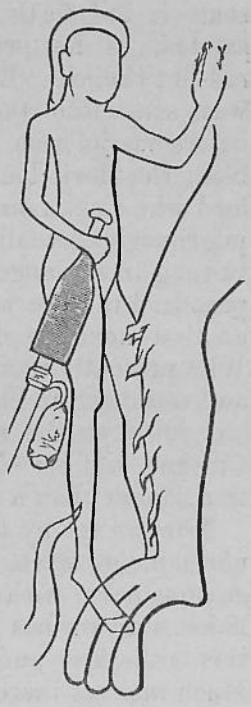

Fig. 3.

On the other side of the ladder is a large caldron standing upon a brandreth, and a fire burning beneath it. It is filled with souls, which a demon on either side is stirring up with forks. According to Tundale's Vision, it is the punishment of parricides and fratricides. Close by this is a remarkable figure (Fig. 3): it holds a bottle of wine, and the bottle is

[7] Perhaps a quarryman.

shaped exactly like the champagne bottle of the present time. In this point of view it is interesting, for I do not ever remember to have seen another representation of the glass wine-bottle of so early a date. Immediately beneath is a pilgrim's staff. The original story, for the explanation of this figure, occurs in Cæsarius, and is so remarkable that it is worth giving complete. It is entitled "The Punishment of the Abbot of Corbey":—

"At the time of the schism between Otto and Philip, Kings of the Romans, a certain pilgrim coming from parts beyond sea, selling his cloak for wine, which in those parts is very strong, drank so much that, being drunk, he went out of his mind, and was thought to be dead. At the same hour his spirit was led to the place of punishment, where, upon a well covered with a fiery lid, he saw the Prince of Darkness himself sitting. In the meantime, among other souls is led forth the Abbot of Corbey, whom he much saluted, as he presented to him a sulphurous cup in a red-hot chalice. Who, when he had drunk, the lid removed, was sent into the well. But the pilgrim, as he stood before the infernal threshold, and, seeing such things, trembled, the devil loudly called out, 'Bring over to me that lord who stands outside, who, of late, selling his garment of pilgrimage, got drunk.' Which being heard, the pilgrim turning to the angel of the Lord, who had led him thither, promised that he would never more get drunk, whilst now at that hour he delivered him from the imminent peril. Who presently returning to himself, noted the day and hour, and returning to his country, knew that the aforesaid Abbot had died at the same time. I saw the same Abbot at Cologne, and he was a very secular man, more conformable to a soldier than a monk." [8]

Now we see by this that Cæsarius speaks of it as a fact, not mincing even the mention of names, a very common circumstance with him. And a drunken man having a hideous dream has nothing improbable about it. Doubtless this is the first and original story of the drunken pilgrim. Much interest therefore belongs to it in connection with the history of this picture, as here we have materials for giving it a date, in so far that it cannot be earlier. The schism or

[8] Cæsarii Heisterb.: Dialogus Miraculorum, Dist. 12, cap. xl.

dispute between Otto and Philip lay between the years 1197-8, so that it inevitably carries the execution of it, at the very least, to the end of the century.

But to proceed. Near the Ladder stands a female soul, at whose hands a dog is jumping up with open mouth. A passage in one of Herolt's sermons, "De pœnis inferni, cxxv.," concerning the punishment of a lady for her sins in life, explains this completely. Dogs devoured her hands, because she says, "I stretched out my hands in giving to dogs those things which I ought to have given to the poor; that is to say, meat, cakes, and other things; and even I adorned them luxuriously with rings and gems." Close by the Ladder stands a large demon with cloven feet, having carried off an unhappy soul with a fork, and intimidating by cries and gestures those endeavouring to ascend. Behind him, above the lady just spoken of, is a group of two figures, conspicuously male and female, who are falling down backwards. The male figure carries a large horn, which the female also places her left hand upon, whilst in her right she holds out a coin to him. This is extremely difficult to solve satisfactorily, and I have not yet discovered the special story, which doubtless exists, for its interpretation. The horn is like the warder's in shape, or very similar to that sometimes seen in use by the gleemen or jongleur of the Middle Ages. The female is clearly offering money, not receiving it. Might it imply one in trust betraying that by female seduction? The way in which the woman lays one hand upon the horn, and offers money with the other, seems to show it is to get possession of it. Horns represented tenures, as that of Ulphus at York; may it not symbolize some betrayal of trust, or surrender of property of the church? It is a vague surmise, but it is the best I can offer.[9]

But one portion of this division now remains for description. At the extreme end a demon wolf, lying on its back, is tormenting the feet of a group of souls by biting at them. The figures represent dancers, for dancing seems to have been a most grave offence with the monkish satirists, and very numerous are the stories and the punishments inflicted on them for that sin. A figure falling down from

[9] The suggestion given in the account in the collections of the Surrey Archaeological Society is, I fear, still less satisfactory.

above, and some faint indications of which nothing can be made out, complete this lower division.

The upper portion of the painting does not involve much difficulty. The subjects are known, but at the same time the correlation with each other are by no means of common occurrence. Over the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" is the "Descent into Hell," and rude as the work is, it has far greater claims for its design than the majority of later productions. Christ, holding the cross with banner, symbol of victory, in his left hand, is moving forwards, trampling upon Satan, who is prostrate and manacled, and thrusting the point of the cross on his head, agreeably to the text: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." A number of figures all facing him appear as in acclamation: he takes Adam by the hand, and the female figure close by must be Eve. Hell is represented according to the usual convention as the jaw of a monster; *beneath* it are some flames of fire, representing Purgatory, out of which also a few figures are rising. An angel above, flying towards the Saviour, carries a scroll, significant of the fulfilment of the Prophecies or of the voice from Heaven: "Open ye gates, &c." There is another by the Ladder, also with a scroll, apparently introducing two figures, who ascend the ladder by the side, not in the usual way, representing the two patriarchs, Enoch and Elijah, who did not descend to Limbo, being translated to Heaven. On the other side of the ladder, above is an angel, bearing a small figure in his arms, the Penitent Thief, to Paradise or Heaven.

The authority for this explanation is chiefly found in the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, but we must glance a little at mediæval theology on the subject as given in Herolt's "Sermones Discipuli de Tempore," cxlvi. As soon as the soul of Christ was separated from the body, it descended to the Limbo of the Patriarchs, and remained there from the hour of his death until the hour of his Resurrection, when he led forth the Patriarchs from Limbo, and on the day of his Ascension produced their souls in heaven. At the day of Christ's passion there were four receptacles of souls: the Hell of the damned; the Limbo of children who had died in original sin; Purgatory, from which he liberated those souls who were sufficiently purged of sin; the Limbo of the

Patriarchs, the fourth and highest, into which he descended, broke and destroyed it, leading forth those who were therein imprisoned.

The Gospel of Nicodemus in the following passages describes this event, as from the sons of Simeon, Leucius, and Karinus :—"There suddenly appeared the golden glow of the sun and a purple ray of light shining upon us. And immediately the father of the human race with all the patriarchs exulted, saying, this light is the author of eternal light, &c. . . . There was suddenly a sound as of thunder, and a crying of spirits. Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in, &c. . . . The Lord of Majesty came in the form of a man, and illuminated the eternal darkness, &c. . . . Then the King of Glory, in his majesty spurning death and seizing Satan, the prince, delivered him to the power of Hades, and drew Adam into his glory, &c. . . ." An altercation then takes place between Hades and Satan, in which the former, reproaching him, says, "O prince Satan, possessor of the keys of the Under-world, those thy riches which thou hast gained by the tree of prevarication,[1] and the loss of paradise, thou hast now lost by the tree of the cross." . . . Then he went to Paradise, holding the forefather Adam by the hand, and delivered him with all the righteous to the Archangel Michael. . . . On the way they meet with Enoch and Elijah, and also the Penitent Thief bearing his cross. In conversation with the latter, he informs them that the cross was the sign of his admission to Paradise, which, when shown, he was taken in by the Angel, and placed on the right hand. In the picture, as before said, the Angel is bearing him in his arms to the *right* of Heaven, as represented by the demi-figure of Christ within the wavy aureole. It is the same interpretation that mediæval art gives in the subject of the crucifixion, where the soul of the Penitent Thief is received by an Angel.

The subject of St. Michael weighing souls occupies the centre and greater part of the right side. It is in itself one of the most common representations found in our mediæval

[1] I here use the translation made by B. H. Cowper, which is, perhaps, in this case literal: but it clearly refers to the tree of the forbidden fruit, or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The classic term "Hades" is used for "Inferus," and "Underworld" for "Inferi." For our purpose the familiar expression "Hell" in reference to this event is certainly better, though perhaps not so accurate. See "Apocryphal Gospel," by B. Harris Cowper. 1870.

churches, and must have been popular everywhere, for Herolt, in his Sermon on the Angels, says, "that Michael the Archangel, has the office of weighing the merits and demerits of souls, according to the pictures which are the laity's books, that he may know which are full and which are empty: as Daniel says, 'Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.'" Here St. Michael, in long tunic and mantle, holds the balance, opposite to him is a huge demon advancing, having bound at his back a large bundle of souls, and he is attempting to depress the scale, in which the demerits are placed, whilst the soul standing at the feet of the saint implores aid. A similar incident is also seen on the vaulting of St. Mary's, Guildford. But in later times another development took place, and was exceedingly popular, which I shall describe with the paintings recently discovered at South Leigh. Three female figures, being conducted by an Angel to the Ladder, seem as if they had passed the ordeal of the balance. The angel carries a tablet, the record of good deeds, whilst the purse, hanging at his girdle, is intended to indicate that he bears the alms-giving of the faithful. These must be the three Marys, associated as they are in the narrative of the Resurrection, and who play so important a part in the mediæval mysteries. Having already at some length treated of the great antiquity of "soul-weighing" in all the ancient oriental religious systems, I must refer to my account of this painting in the collections of the Surrey Archæological Society, vol. v., for further particulars. But I may here at least state that on the Egyptian Sarcophagus, in Sir John Soane's Museum, we absolutely have a representation of both "Soul-weighing" and the "Ladder to Heaven," which takes us back, in rough numbers, to 3,270 years from our time, 500 before Homer penned the Iliad, and 900 before Herodotus composed his history. A reverend antiquity indeed! Can we want a further proof of the value of preserving such records as these, when they thus illustrate so dark a passage in the history of human culture?

Before we leave this interesting painting, some few words are necessary upon its execution and date. It is to be remarked that, except in the few instances noted, there are no features given to the faces, nor are the divisions of fingers or toes indicated. This is not the result of any inability in the artist, for his flowing lines, the contrast of attitude shown

on the ladder, and the general dexterity throughout would entirely disprove such a view. In fact, it is nothing more than a piece of art-writing: nothing is done but what is absolutely necessary to tell the story. The "Ladder" is an ancient ecclesiastical convention, but looking to the power exhibited of combining together a numerous collection of stories into his scheme of setting forth the struggle between vice and virtue, and future punishment and reward, none of the examples, which have come under my notice, can compare with the amount of thought that has been infused into this. In fact, the discovery of this painting has been a large addition to our knowledge of mediæval art.

As regards its date there are details that we are accustomed to attribute to the twelfth century. But this nevertheless is extremely vague, and must of necessity be so. Let it be understood, however, that before we leave that era, we cannot fix with certainty upon any distinctive style. It was an age of transition; between the earlier portion and the later some changes may be traced, but they are few; it is in the succeeding century that the onward progress of art is made manifest, and in that we lose the earlier conventional treatment. From the data already given, it is obvious that this work could not have been done previous to 1198, so we are brought at once to the end of the century. The early English style of the architecture of the church is also that of the same period. But we cannot, at any rate, place its execution many years later, and the few first of the thirteenth century would be the extreme to which we could be warranted. There can be little doubt that the artist was a monk, as none other could have received instruction in art, still less in the knowledge of the numerous monkish narratives which illustrate this picture. Moreover, it may not be a very wild suggestion to suppose, that he may have belonged to the same order as Cæsarius, whom he so often uses: otherwise one can hardly see how he would have become acquainted with his writings early enough to have made this use of them. The Cistercian Order was at this time in its highest repute all over Europe, and we may be sure that art was cultivated in its cloisters. Indeed Cæsarius gives us an account of a monk painter of the order, which is so interesting as illustrative of the practice of art in those times that I give an abstract from it:—"A certain monk of the Black Order, from the diocese

of Mayence, died a few years ago. He was a good painter, and so devoted to our Order, that he painted, for nothing, crucifixions of wonderful beauty at several altars in many of our houses, only receiving his expenses. For our crucifixions he almost always made, not requiring any payment from us."[2] It would have been pleasant to have recorded the name of this early labourer in art, for without doubt his practice illustrates the mode in which our humblest churches were decorated during the middle ages. The Chaldon painting retains the evidences of the Greek ecclesiastical school, that was soon to give way to one of progress, which ended not until the whole system culminated in the sixteenth century, from which period there was a rapid decline.

We will now turn to the paintings in the church of Wisborough Green. These consisted of symbolic representations of the seven deadly sins, in which a figure is surrounded by figures of a dragon, which tortures each offending member of the body, wherein each sin is supposed to reside; and one of the Crucifixion, with remains of another subject above. There is something remarkable in the treatment of these latter subjects. The figure of Christ has a peculiarly shaped crown upon his head, which is intended to represent the crown of thorns, but is altogether dissimilar to those familiar to us in later art, being woven to form a triple-leaved tiara: it has the crossed nimbus, and the hair is long and flowing. The body is attenuated, the ribs being strongly marked, and the loins are covered with drapery hanging to the knees. The right side of the composition is gone, but there yet remains a portion of the head and arm of the Virgin Mary, upraised towards the head as in grief, and the spear and one leg of the soldier about to pierce the Saviour's side. On the left is a figure holding a jar or bottle in one hand, whilst with the other he holds up a sponge, but not upon a reed, according to the sacred text. St. John in a chasuble, crossing his hands upon his breast and holding a book beneath his arm, stands on the left of this figure; and lastly, comes that of the dying thief, but as this is on the left side of the Saviour, it must be the Impenitent Thief, Gestas, as he is called in legendary story.

This latter figure is very remarkable: instead of the arms extended upon the cross, which, I may observe, is but a con-

[2] Dialogus Miraculorum Distinctio, 8vo, cap. xxiv.

tinuation of that of our Lord, a singular deviation from our ordinary conventions, they are placed over it, brought round in front, and tied with a rope or thong, the body being thus suspended. In ecclesiastical art the thieves are not shown as crucified in the same way as the Saviour,[3] and I cannot but think that we have here the popular influence of the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, for its narrative has many points of agreement, and we must all remember, that the names of the thieves, Dismas and Gestas, as well as Longinus, the centurion who pierced our Lord's side, first occur in this gospel, and how completely mediæval art has accepted its narrative it is scarcely necessary to show. Now the Greek version, the earliest certainly to which we can refer, though not probably earlier than the fifth century, thus relates the event :—" And Jesus went out of the Prætorium, and the two malefactors with him ; and when they came to the place, they stripped him of his garments, and put about him a linen cloth, and they put a crown of thorns on him about his head. And they crucified him, and at the same time they *hanged* the two malefactors with him. . . . And the soldiers mocked him, coming and offering him vinegar and gall, &c." It is certain that this term " hanged " has been interpreted as a different mode of punishment, and has had a very common acceptation. The omission of the " reed," but offering the sponge with the hand may be referred to the same ; nevertheless, the reed and sponge have been associated among the instruments of the Passion long previous to the thirteenth century, to the first half of which this picture may be referred. The background is diapered, and the gable ends above the cross indicate the distant Jerusalem.

It is much to be regretted that a large portion of the subject which surmounts this is gone, yet we are, so far, fortunate that what remains is probably the most interesting. There is a small fragment of the figure of our Lord, showing the head with the crossed nimbus, and the left hand holding a cross, like that of an archbishop. Opposite to this is the figure of St. James, habited in a long tunic, over which is a mantle or cloak, having at the fastening a large escallop shell. He holds in his left hand a similar cross to that of Christ, and at his girdle hangs a large pouch or scrip, upon it, heraldically disposed, a cross patée between three escallops,

[3] There are, however, some exceptions.

one and two. He is turning towards a group of figures, all habited as pilgrims, like himself, each with his bourdon or staff, an escallop upon his scrip, and wearing a slouched cap for the head, commonly used by peasants and wayfarers in early ages, and often seen in miniatures of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. In fact, this cap, the "chapournet" of heraldry, forms the arms, variously differenced, of the great Lombard families of Capello or Capelletto, the Capulet of Verona, and of Shakspeare's "Romeo and Juliet."[4] The attitude of the saint's right hand shows that he is introducing these pilgrims to our Lord, now in the heavenly kingdom, and the indication of buildings above their heads is in accordance with the text, "in my Father's house there are many mansions." The wavy base, which separates the upper from the lower compartment, is to indicate the heavens.

It is obvious that we have here a subject quite away from our ordinary experience. That it has a special object and a special meaning cannot be doubted, for we must always bear in mind that ecclesiastical art never acknowledged the whim or fancy of the artist. We must seek directly for the interpretation in the legendary histories of St. James of Compostella, and of the celebrated shrine in the Spanish province of Galicia. Of all the shrines in Christendom, none exceeded this, not even that of Loretto. It is even possible that the very term pilgrim, in its religious sense, was first applied to one who had travelled to the shrine of St. James. For Dante, in his "Vita Nuova," makes a specific distinction, and only allows the name of pilgrim to him who went beyond seas as "to the House in Galicia." And the escallop-shell has become the badge of a pilgrim in a general sense, although truly it only belongs to the shrine of Compostella. For instance the effigy of the pilgrim at Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire, has the sign of St. James, *i. e.*, the escallop-shell, upon his cap and scrip. Also the arms of the Veronese family of Pellegrini, as given upon a tomb in the church of St. Anastasia, in Verona, is a pilgrim in full habit with the escallop upon his cap. In the Peninsula the importance of the shrine was immense. It was a received opinion

[4] Capello, capelletto, chapeau, *chapournet*, and our English cap, are synonymous terms, differing only in form by diminution and augmentation.

that you must at one time make a pilgrimage thither, if not in body during life, then in spirit after death, and to those performing this good work, the Milky Way was said to be a guide by night, pointing as it were, in its starry course, the road to heaven.

> " Namque ferunt vivi qui non hæc templa patentes
> Invisunt, post fata illuc, et funeris umbras
> Venturos, manusque istud præstare beatis
> Lacte viam stellisque albam, quæ nocte serena
> Fulgurat, et longo designat tramite cœlum."
>
> *V. Bartholome Pereira, Paciecidos*, lib. vii. p. 117.

I have no doubt whatever, that the subject of this part of the painting has reference to an incident in the legendary account of the transportation of the body of St. James into Spain. It is much too long to give entire, but a short abstract from it will be sufficient for our purpose. " Whilst the ship was passing by a village in Portugal, a marriage festival was taking place, and the bridegroom was about to take part in the sport of throwing the cane. But his horse became ungovernable, and plunging into the sea, sank, yet soon arose again close to the ship, the knight's garments and the trappings of his horse being now covered with scallop-shells. Much astonished, seeing the disciples of the Apostle, he asked of them how he came there. ' Certes,' they replied, ' that Christ, through the merit of a certain servant of his, whose body they were transporting in that ship, had chosen to manifest his power upon him.' The knight then seeks to know who Christ is, and is forthwith instructed. He then addressed them thus : ' Friends and Sirs, you who have served Christ and his holy Apostle, ask him to show for what purpose he has put these scallop-shells upon me, because so strange a marvel cannot have been wrought without some great mystery.' With that the disciples prayed, and afterwards heard a voice from heaven, which said unto the knight, ' Our Lord Christ has thought good to show by this act all persons present and to come, who may choose to love and serve this his servant, and who shall go to visit him when he shall be interred, that they take with them from thence other such scallop-shells as these with which thou art covered as a seal of privilege, confirming that they are his, and will be so from that time

forward. And he promises that afterwards in the day of the Last Judgment they shall be recognised of God for his, and that because of the honours which they have done to this his servant and friend, in going to visit him and to venerate him, he will receive them into his glory and his Paradise.'" [5]

The application of this legend to our painting is not difficult. Its teaching is to show that all who go to the shrine of the apostle, and there worship the friend and servant of our Lord, will be received by him into the heavenly kingdom. So we see the saint himself introducing his faithful followers to Christ in Paradise, all bearing the distinguishing sign of the escallop-shell. Those parts, now gone, might have given us still further interesting details, but I feel that we have preserved, that which is the most important. It is worth while now to ask, how so curious a subject should be found in England? I think the answer is, that this work must have been suggested by one who had returned from a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James. The cross and escallops on the scrip of the figure of St. James are disposed in an heraldic fashion, and might be the arms of some family. In Spain there are many who claim descent from the knight of the legend, and whose arms contain escallops. That of Ribadineira adds also a cross, as in the figure of St. James. It may be that some research into the family history of the county might help us in this inquiry.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the paintings discovered at South Leigh, Oxfordshire, during a recent restoration of the church. Having seen a long notice of this discovery in one of the papers, with an intimation, however, that they had been restored, and finding that photographs could be had by application to the Rev. G. Moultrie, the incumbent, I at once wrote for them. With them came a description, which, unfortunately not being written by one acquainted with the principles of ecclesiastical art, had of necessity some errors. The misinterpretation which will invariably follow when this is the case, has led, in one instance, to a false restoration, wherein the original painting was obscure. With this exception, after giving the photographs a close inspection, I believe, as Mr. Moultrie

[5] Quoted by Southey in his notes to the "Pilgrim to Compostella."

has told me, that the restoration was effected line for line; always remembering, however, even to do this thoroughly requires the operator to be acquainted with the conventions, if he would avoid error; and it is easy to suppose you follow a line when, nevertheless, you may be deviating in some details of importance. It would have been far more interesting, in an archæological point of view, could we have had photographs previous to any retouching.

It is not often we get so much out of one church, and I am informed that the paintings now preserved had been covered by others of a subsequent date. They consist of the "Resurrection," or rather of the "Last Judgment," "St. Michael weighing Souls," without doubt the most important example yet discovered; the figures of St. Clement of Rome, and a symbolic representation of the Virgin Mary. These last are the latest in date, belonging to quite the latter part of the fifteenth century. The arrangement of the subjects places the "Last Judgment" over the chancel arch, its usual position, carrying also a portion of it on to the south wall of the nave, and on to the corresponding wall of the arcade of the north aisle. Beneath this is a highly decorated diaper, composed of foliage with birds interspersed —probably parrots, as has been well suggested in allusion to the name of Perrot, a family who lived at North Leigh, and who may have been at the cost of the work. The large painting of St. Michael, &c., measuring 11 ft. by 10 ft., occupies the space between a window on the south wall and the south entrance.

With this latter I will commence the description. The figure of St. Michael, with wings above displayed, is habited in a closely fitting embroidered jupon, the arms and legs in plumose scales, a convention in very common use in the representation of the Heavenly Host in the fifteenth century; his mantle is fastened by a morse on the breast; in his right hand he holds the balance, in his *left* he brandishes aloft a sword. In the scale on his right is a half-draped figure of a soul kneeling on one knee with hands conjoined in prayer; in that of his left side is a demon blowing a horn, a frequent convention; another sits upon the end of the beam to weigh it down; another with wings is flying downwards with an instrument of torment, as if to render assistance. This end of the scale hangs over the open jaws of Hell, in which other

demons are aiding with a hook or rope attached to the scale in order to depress it. On the other side stands the figure of the Virgin Mary, with long golden hair and crowned, having over her gown a super-tunic, and a mantle richly embroidered with stars of heraldic fashion ; she stands upon a crescent moon, twelve stars are said to be above her head, and in her left hand she holds a rosary. The whole is richly framed within a border of foliated ornament, and the background of the subject is diapered with round spots.

I have described this subject as it is now restored by Messrs. Burlison and Grylls ; but there are details here so utterly inadmissible that I wrote to Mr. Moultrie, and correcting the appropriation of the subject, told him I was sure that the moon was a mistake, that there were no stars above the head, for had they been so intended they must have been in the form of a corona, and not following the lines of the diaper. That the figure of the soul kneeling on one knee and partially draped, were both against accepted conventions ; that the rosary in the hand of the Virgin should rest upon the end of the balance ; and that details of ornament had been introduced not in accord with the period. I received a very courteous reply, admitting that the portion I had spoken of was originally obscure and indistinct, and a diagram was enclosed to indicate the part, which was one corner, comprising the lower half of the figure of the Virgin. But my informant said that they certainly were stars, twelve in number overhead, and that the rosary did not rest on the balance.

I do not for one moment question the good faith of this statement, nevertheless my experience tells me how easy it is to glide into error in matters of this kind, with the full conviction of your truthfulness. In point of fact, a close examination shows me that these are not stars at all, but a form of diaper, and that it was not continued throughout must be referred to one of those accidents of which there are many analogies. Then, as to the rosary, it is a matter of two or three short lines, which, if obscured, would have naturally been omitted by a restorer with no special knowledge for his guidance. Indeed, the rosary resting upon the end of the beam is essential to the story. It weighs down the balance ; it is the opposing force in opposition to that of the demons on the opposite side. The

examples we have had of the subject are too numerous to admit of any doubt on this matter. Two have been discovered during the last few years in the adjoining county of Buckinghamshire.

In all cases of the latter class the incident is evidently the same, and the intent is obviously to show the efficacy of invocation to the Virgin Mary. The story, to which it must be referred, belongs to a large class, of which compilations exist, not only in the Latin, but in most of the vernacular dialects of Europe. Possibly our English examples were destroyed at the Reformation. Many of the stories are of very great antiquity, but I know of no compilation earlier than the twelfth century. In that beautiful MS. volume called Queen Mary's Psalter, in the British Museum, there are many marginal illustrations of these miracles of the Virgin. Among them that of the Pious Painter and the Pious Thief, of which Southey made an amusing paraphrase. But in the Lady Chapel at Winchester Cathedral is a very large series of subjects, now almost obliterated, including the last mentioned and a number of others of singular curiosity, a full account of which I gave in 1845.[6] Many of them have a similar tendency, showing that, however great the sinner, the power to save is in the hands of the Virgin Mary. It is to one of this kind that this painting belongs, and it refers to an Italian usurer, a hated class, whose evil deeds were on the point of weighing down the scale. Whereupon the Virgin Mary appears and certifies that he ever invoked her, saying his "Ave Maria," and casting her rosary upon the beam she restored the balance in favour of the guilty soul. A story of much greater antiquity, but of a similar tendency, occurs in the Golden Legend under the head of the Assumption. It is too long to give entire, but it is of a knight who had made a compact with Satan, for large sums of money, to deliver up his wife. She being devoted to the Virgin Mary, the latter takes her place, and the demon is discomfited. He then claims the man's soul, and a long altercation takes place, when the matter is referred to the supreme Judge. The story takes somewhat of a dramatic form, after the fashion of the ancient moralities. Two characters are introduced, Truth and Justice. After much dispute, our Lord commands that the scales

[6] See Winchester volume of the British Archaeological Association.

should be brought, and all the good and evil deeds weighed. But Truth and Justice said to the sinner, "Recur with thy whole mind to the Mother of Mercy, who sits beside the Lord, and endeavour to invoke her to thine aid." Which when he had done, the Blessed Mary came to his assistance, and placed her hand upon the balance, and that part wherein were but few good works. Also the devil on his side endeavoured to draw it down. But the Mother of Mercy prevailed and liberated the sinner. The above story is conceived entirely in the same spirit, but it has not the later development of the rosary. In the painting discovered at Lenham, in Kent, the rosary is distinctly lying upon the end of the beam, and I cannot doubt but that it was so here. In point of fact were it not, there would be no obvious meaning in the introduction of the figure of the Virgin, nor in the rosary in her hand; nor should we have the reason of the beam being depressed on that side in favour of the soul. An operator not knowing these facts would be sure to err, as he would naturally argue that perspective demanded that the beam should be in front of the rosary. Whatever view may be entertained on the subject of restorations, it is certain that none should ever be undertaken without a record of the previous state.

On examination of the painting over the chancel-arch one is at once impressed with the fact of all the upper portion being gone, for it is the "Last Judgment," not the "Resurrection," which does not occur as a separate subject. The depressed roof at once explains this, for when this was substituted for one of a higher pitch it must have cut off all the upper part, which contained the figures of our Lord, the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, &c. What now remains is but the base of the picture, representing two angels descending on either side sounding trumpets; that on the right is clothed in white, that on the left is in the dark raiment of sadness or of mourning, and figures of the dead arising from their graves. Of those on the right, some cast their eyes upwards towards, what would have been, had the painting been complete, the figure of our Lord in judgment. Some look towards the right, where is shown the heavenly Jerusalem, with St. Peter guarding its gates. On the left side a large group bound around with a coil are being urged onwards by demons to the mouth of Hell. Above, the forms

rising from the graves, are in attitudes of despair; one, a female with long hair, covers her face with her hands. As is usual, the mediæval artist never fails to represent all orders of society. Kings and queens, mitred prelates, monks with the shaven crown, as well as laymen; he is most impartial, equally distributing them on the right, as on the left. Eighteen naked figures rising from their graves represent the saved. Among them a king and queen, a Pope in his tiara, a bishop in his mitre, a monk with the tonsure, a merchant with the cap of maintenance. Above them a scroll inscribed "Venite, benedicti Patris mei" ("Come, ye blessed of my Father"). On the south side of the chancel-arch the lost are represented. In the upper part of the painting three figures rise from their graves weeping and lamenting. The group of the condemned contains twelve figures:—among them a king, a queen, a noble, a monk, and a bishop. Above the painting is a scroll containing the words "Discedite, maledicti" ("Depart, ye cursed"). By the latter group, on the ground, is Satan in the form of a serpent in many a coil. The photograph does not show the Heavenly Jerusalem, as it is not on the same plane, but on the return wall of the arcade. But, from the printed description sent to me, it seems to show a very usual convention. St. Peter holding the keys is habited in a black cope with morse, behind is an open archway with groined roof in a castellated building; over the battlements of which are seen angels with outspread wings, and the spires of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the background.

Without doubt we have here a very remarkable relic of mediæval art. There is a great deal of power shown in the expression of the various figures, which reminds us, though at a distance, of some of the work in the Campo Santo at Pisa. The subject of "Soul Weighing," just described, is properly a part of the Doom, and is very frequently represented in the sculptures at the west front of cathedrals on the continent, as at Notre Dame, Paris, Amiens, &c., but here it is separate and constitutes a supplement. In fact with its special treatment it is always distinct in our churches after the thirteenth century.

The other subjects have no importance. They are late examples of the fifteenth century, and by no means of the best work of that time. The figure of St. Clement of Rome

is beneath a canopy, attired as a Pope in chasuble, dalmatic, alb, stole, amice, and the triple tiara. His right hand is in the act of benediction, and pendant from his wrist is an anchor, the symbol of his martyrdom. In his left hand he holds the triple-formed cross. It is an ungainly and ill-designed figure. The waved lines beneath represent sea.

Under a similar canopy is a representation of the Virgin Mary, holding a lily, and the dove, symbol of the Holy Ghost, is descending upon her. It would not be correct to call this "The Annunciation," as none other of the accompaniments exist, and there is no relation shown to any other figure, as, for instance, the Angel Gabriel. It is in fact a symbolic representation, like that of St. Clement. It is of the same character and age, and not much better than the other figure in its execution.

The date of the "Last Judgment" and that of "Soul Weighing" cannot be before the fifteenth century, and the details of the angel in the latter are precisely similar to the treatment observed in the sculptured figures of the Heavenly Host in the Beauchamp Chapel, in St. Mary's, Warwick. When we commend the care which has preserved these works, one would like to impress upon all to whom such office pertains, that the value of them depends entirely upon their illustration of the past. As works of art they tell us nothing, and when restored their value is lessened, because we lose the testimony they would otherwise present.