MURAL AND OTHER PAINTINGS, IN ENGLISH CHURCHES.[1]

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The subject of which it is proposed to treat in the following remarks is so extensive in its scope, and so much has been written respecting it, that is with some degree of diffidence that I enter upon it, feeling that what I may say will perhaps be found but trite in character, and as an oft-told tale to most of my hearers. But although there have been many excellent papers written and illustrated in the volumes of the various Antiquarian Societies, treating of church paintings, they generally deal only with individual examples ; it therefore seemed to me that a short analysis, as it were, of the whole subject might not be altogether superfluous, especially as at the present moment it must be a source of much regret to all of us, that many of these remains of ancient art are fast perishing. When a painting has been uncovered from the whitewash, under which it has been hidden, probably from the days of the Reformation, its fate generally appears to be this :—It is either re-whitewashed over as unsightly, or left to fade away, which it does at a rapid rate on its fresh exposure to the atmosphere ;[2] so that on visiting a church where we have been led to expect the existence of extensive remains of paintings we perceive but the faintest traces of colour, or bare walls ; a fact which can be vouched for in numerous instances, as for example at Hadleigh, Essex, some twenty years ago there was a very perfect picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary

[1] Read at the Monthly Meeting of the Institute, April 12th, 1888.

[2] Speaking of the tombs in Etruria a writer in the Edinburgh Review says of their mural paintings "They are rapidly perishing from damp and decay in the excavated sepulchres, and modern art seems as inadequate to preserve as it would be to restore them. Antiquaries who were present at the first discovery of some of the finest tombs, are shocked at the difference which a few years have made in the vividness of colour and even of the outlines."—Edin. Rev., April, 1841, p. 136.

and Child, of which at the present time scarcely a trace remains; the same loss is occurring at Hardham, Sussex, the entire walls of whose church were covered with scriptural and other subjects, which are now almost obliterated from the effects of the damp site on which the edifice is built, and at West Chiltington in the same county the extremely elegant pictorial decorations have considerably faded since their discovery only a short time back. This is the more to be regretted, as of many similar remains no public record seems to exist, representations of but a few of their number finding their way into the pages of the "Collections" of the various local Archæological Societies.

It is not intended in the following remarks to enter into the history of wall painting in England, but to describe as fully as the brief nature of a paper will allow, the general disposition, or arrangement, of pictorial subjects throughout the fabric of a mediæval church, with a glance at the usual artistic treatment of the more favourite representations in vogue during the middle ages.

There are two passages in Venerable Bede's Life of St. Benedict Biscop, which show so clearly the intentions of our ancestors in covering the walls of their churches with pictures, that their quotation here needs no apology. Speaking of the saints' return after his fourth visit to Rome, he says:

"He brought with him pictures of sacred images to adorn the church of blessed Peter the Apostle, which he had constructed, namely, that of the Blessed Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary, together with those of the twelve Apostles, with which he intended to adorn the same church in the nave, on boards placed from wall to wall, the images from the evangelical history on the south, and figures from the Apocalypse of the blessed John on the north wall so that everyone who entered the church, even if they were ignorant of letters, wherever they turned their gaze might have before them either the amiable countenance of Christ, though but in an image, or with watchful mind might remember the grace of Our Lord's incarnation or having before their eyes the perils of the last judgment, might be reminded to examine themselves the more strictly."

He afterwards describes the fifth journey of S. Benedict to Rome, stating that he returned with a large number of sacred books, and a no less number of the images of saints.

"He also brought with him pictures of the Divine history, which he hung round the whole of the church of the Blessed Mother of God, which he made in the greater monastery; also images for the adornment of the church and monastery of Blessed Paul the Apostle, showing the agreement between the Old and New Testament ably describing their connection; for example, Isaac bearing the wood with which he was to be sacrificed, and Christ carrying His cross upon which he was about to suffer, were placed next to each other. Again the serpent raised up by Moses in the desert, was compared with the Son of Man elevated on His cross."

Such were the ideas prevailing in Saxon times on the subject of church paintings, and similar opinions have probably been held by the majority of Englishmen ever since. I now proceed to consider how they were carried out in the Middle Ages.

In small churches consisting of a nave and chancel without aisles, the walls were commonly divided into three parts, in the two upper of which subjects were introduced, whilst the lowest, or dado, was sometimes painted to represent textile hangings, or with some variety of the masonry patterns, with which also spaces not occupied by figure compositions were decorated, or with powdering or diapers, which were often of much richness in later times, as an example formerly at Therfield, Herts, showed. The splays or sides of the windows were covered with three or four subjects in each, the figures of which were necessarily small, but well seen from their favourable position as regards light: if not covered with figure compositions, in early work scrolls of foliage were very usual, either of plain red on white as at Capel-le-Ferne, Kent, or of many colours as at Arreton, in the Isle of Wight. In later work full length figures of saints often occupy a similar position on the window splays.

When a church possessed aisles, the columns of the arches were painted with masonry or chevron patterns. and occasionally with a running scroll of a conventional

flower pattern and when the pillars were of large size, with figure subjects as at St. Alban's Abbey. In later work if the pier was octagonal, it was very usual to decorate each face with single saintly images placed one over the other as in Russian churches of the present day. Many of the churches of Norman and Early English date having arches, with flat soffites advantage was taken of this to decorate them with rich running scroll work, as at St. Mary's, Guildford, or diamond-shaped diapers as at West Chiltington. A clerestoried edifice had frequently full length figures introduced between the windows, or subjects if the spaces would admit of them. The roofs over the east bays of nave and chancel were frequently highly ornamented with angelic or other figures and emblems, whilst the rood screens and parcloses bore the effigies of the apostles and saints, in their lower panels, examples of which last occur in nearly every county in England, but are especially numerous in those of Norfolk and Suffolk.

In the earlier works of our church painters the colours were usually subdued in tone, and few in number, the grounds generally of pale yellow or white, but also of red where well covered by the design, the figures often entirely white with the exception of their hair and a few accessories. In effect these works must have harmonised well with the grey tones pervading the stained glass of the windows.

The popular idea respecting the paintings which were displayed upon our old church walls is, that they were grotesque and ill-drawn scenes from scripture history, and the lives and miracles of the Saints. Of the first part of this opinion I will say nothing, but as regards the latter would observe that many would be astonished to find how largely allegorical representations enter into the list of our ancient mural paintings, which is also the case in sculpture and stained glass, to a much greater extent than is generally imagined, and probably many representations which are unintelligible to us may possess some allegorical meaning which has now been lost.

As regards the paintings which have been found to represent scenes from the Old Testament history, they appear to have been less numerous than compositions in

the sister art of sculpture, or in stained glass. The remarkable illustrations of the works of Creation and Biblical events and miracles, which we find recorded in the sculptured works at Salisbury Chapter-house, and on the roofs of Norwich Cathedral, together with those in stained glass at S. Neot's and Malvern, have now at least no counterparts on our church walls.

Of the creation of man there is an example at Earl's Stonham, Suffolk, of fifteenth century date; the fall of our first parents has a few representations of it remaining, one of which at Hardham is perhaps worth notice, from the deep red tint by which Adam is distinguished from Eve. I have only met with a solitary instance of the Expulsion from Paradise. The history of Joseph and his brethren is set forth on a screen at Raunds, Northants; at S. Mary-le-Crypt, Gloucester, there was a figure of the Brazen Serpent, and a large picture of the swallowing of Jonah existed at Ringmore, Devon, now destroyed. Sampson was portrayed at Stapleton, Cumberland, together with David; David and Nathan at Catfield, Norfolk. At Pirford, Surrey, are paintings supposed to be of Jezebel looking out of window, and of the same lady at her toilet. A series of the Prophets was exhibited on the walls of Stapleton Church, and another at Barking, Suffolk; they occur also on several screens. At Southwold, Suffolk, both the greater and the lesser were represented. There are several at Aylesham and Salthouse, Norfolk, and in many other places in the east of England. These, I regret to say, are all the illustrations that I have been able to gather, of paintings whose designs have been taken from Old Testament history and personages.

Proceeding to the consideration of pictorial conceptions derived from the records of the new dispensation, we find that the events connected with the life of our Lord naturally hold the foremost place. Of his nativity there are examples at Headington, Oxon, and at the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre in Winchester Cathedral. The history of the Magi appears more frequently than the above scene; it was at East Wickham, Kent, with other events associated with our Saviour's childhood, and there are at least eight or nine other representations appertaining to the wise men existing in different places.

The Massacre of the Innocents is on a window splay at Headington, and a very rude grotesque painting at Plumpton, Sussex, has the flight into Egypt for its subject. Perhaps our Lord's Baptism is intended by a fragment at the adjacent church at Hardham. Of the miracles of Jesus, the walking on the sea occurs at Prior Silkstede's Chapel, Winchester, and the miraculous draught of fishes at Criswell, Suffolk. The raising of Lazarus is given at Winchester Cathedral; the interview with the woman of Samaria appeared at Catfield; an incident in the life of Jesus which I cannot refrain from remarking formed a favorite device for the ornamentation of Sussex cast-iron fire-backs in later times. There are two instances of the entry into Jerusalem and one example of the Magdalen anointing our Lord's feet. The Last Supper is represented on a large but much restored picture at Horsham, Sussex, and it was at Slaugham, in the same county, in the latter conception, Christ is seen seated at the head of the table, and not in the centre of one side of it, the more usual treatment of this scene; two round flat loaves each marked with a cross lie upon the board. The washing of the disciples' feet was at Stanton Harcourt, Oxon.

The concluding events in the Passion are as might be expected, far more numerously represented than the above incidents. The scourging at the pillar, was at Staugham and West Meston, Sussex, both of early date, in the latter example the Redeemer is bound facing the pillar, streams of blood running down his legs, whilst he is scourged with triple corded whips wielded by two hideous ruffians whose faces exhibit the lowest type of savage intellect.

The crowning event in the history of our Lord's sufferings—the Crucifixion, is represented in so many instances, that it is only necessary to call attention to a few of the most remarkable. At St. Alban's Abbey, on the great circular columns of the nave, there is a series of representations of it of large size, and dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth century; at Ringmore, Devon, the figure of the Crucified was distinguished by a canopy over it, and adoring angels at the sides instead of the usual attendants S.S. Mary and John, and at S. John's, Winchester, S. Francis and a Saint clothed in red were

the accompanying figures. The church at Wisborough Green, Sussex, possesses a remarkable painted fragment, in which the transverse beam of the cross has been continued to include the two thieves hanging upon it, our Lord in the midst; one robber only is now left, that of the impenitent thief to the left of the Saviour, the horizontal bar of the cross passing under the criminals' arms which are brought forward and tied in front in a quite impossible position. Our Redeemer is nude to the waist, with his ribs plainly marked to illustrate the text of scripture, "they have numbered all my bones," his head is is crowned and nimbed; on his right side a man pierces him with a spear held in one hand, whilst he holds the other over his face, as though unable to look at the Saviour. On the left side of the Crucified stands an individual with a very large hooked nose, presenting a cup to our Lord, and holding a cover of 14th century pattern; by the side of the last stands S. John, a well designed figure, with an agonized countenance, and hands convulsively clasped together in excess of grief. With the exception of the evangelist, the drawing throughout is rude and inartistic. At Gadshill Isle of Wight on the east wall of the south transept, set high up, is a much mutilated fragment portraying our Lord about three-quarter life size crucified on a triple-branched lily, or as some say, a palm tree; if the former this example is not alone in English Art as there is a similar one at S. Michael's, Oxford, in stained glass. A Spanish picture of S. Catherine of Sienna shows her bearing a like crucifix. When the crucifixion was painted on the east wall, or facing west, it probably served instead of a cross over an altar.[1]

At West Meston, Sussex, there is a representation of the Descent from the Cross, with S. Joseph, of Arimathea, tenderly embracing our Lord's body, whilst the Blessed Virgin kisses the right hand of her son, who appears clad in a pale yellow tunic. The cross is an ornamental one of very early form, with a diapered pattern in red, very similar to one at Plumpton, indicating that the paintings in both places were by the same hand. At Blunham,

[1] There was an extremely interesting series of the events in the Passion, formerly on the north wall of Horsham Church, Sussex.

Beds, there is a somewhat similar scene, but to add to its horrors, the eyes of the Redeemer have started from their sockets.

The entombment was at Starston, Norfolk, in a work of thirteenth century date, at Long Melford, Suffolk, and Headington, Oxon, at which latter was also figured the Descent into Limbo. The lamentation at the tomb was said to form an appropriate subject in the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, Winchester.

Representations of the Resurrection were very numerous. At West Somerton, our Lord is portrayed in green vestments stepping out of the sepulchre, and giving his benediction with his right hand, whilst he upholds the banner of the cross with his left; at Bedfont, Middlesex, he is seen enthroned with the angels of the Resurrection attending,[1] whilst at Beaverstone, Gloucestershire, he rises from a ciborium, which reminds me of a remarkable panel on the font at Shorne, Kent, where our Lord in the centre of the host emerges from a chalice. The apparition to the Magdalen is a subject at Preston, Sussex, and elsewhere. A very fine and elaborate painting of the incredulity of S. Thomas exists in a perfect state at S. Alban's Abbey: it is of fifteenth century date, and exhibits both our Lord and S. Thomas with rayed glories instead of the usual circular nimbus, an early example of this method of denoting sacred personages. The Ascension occurs at Pinvin, Worcestershire, and Chalgrove, Oxon; but I am unaware of any pictorial representation of the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

The next portion of our subject will be devoted to a few observations on pictorial representations of the events in the lives of the principal saints and of their effigies. As might be expected those of the Blessed Virgin Mary bearing her Divine Child in her arms are very numerous but there do not appear to be any remaining in which she is portrayed apart from her infant, as a single figure, such as sometimes is the case in medieval examples on the Continent. A rather pretty, though sentimental idea is exhibited at South Elmham, where

[1] A very perfect little painting combining our Lord in glory, and the judgment, it is of thirteenth century date, and placed within a recess formed to contain it.

the Virgin is seen with extremely long flowing tresses, which are upheld by angels. With her mother, St. Anne, she is portrayed at Compton Martin, Somerset; and on a screen at Somerleyton, Suffolk, she appears in a richly ermined dress to show her royal dignity, her mother being in simple widow's apparel, the virgin child holds a book in one hand, and has a small stick as a pointer in the other. As "Our Lady of Pity," holding the body of her son, she is seen in a late 14th century picture at Boughton, S. Laurence. There is a large composition of the Annunciation at Horsham, Sussex, and a curious one, of evidently Flemish origin, on the rood screen at North Walsham, Norfolk. The subject was an extremely favourite one, from being the opening scene in the great drama of our redemption. The visitation is on two sides of an octagonal column at Faversham, Kent. The legend of the Annunciation of the death of the Blessed Virgin is painted at Chalgrove, where she is seen standing before S. Gabriel, who presents her with the palm branch of victory. At Chilton Cantelo, Dorset, her funeral is represented, and likewise at Chalgrove, the bier borne by the Apostles, and in the latter example, in accordance with legendary history, the Jewish high priest is seen fixed to the bier, whilst endeavouring to overthrow it, and from whence he was only released at the intercession of S. Peter. The same incident is portrayed at Wimborne Minster. Chilton Cantelo had her Resurrection from a high arcaded tomb and her Assumption, which also existed at S. Olave's, Chichester. The Coronation occurs at S. Alban's, on one of the piers of the north arcade, accompanied by censing angels.

The miracles of Our Lady form a series of paintings, about 1480 as to date, at Winchester Cathedral, and placed there by Prior Silkstede. In one of them she is rescuing an immoral monk from drowning, over whom hang two devils, one of whom in allusion to his offence, being of the female order of succubi.

A series of Our Lord and His Apostles, was at Chekendon, Oxfordshire round the apse, and another ornamented the spaces between the nave windows at Thirsk, Yorkshire. According to Mr. Knight, the miracles and martyrdoms of

the members of the Sacred College, decorated the walls of St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster. Their effigies were also great favourites on the panels of rood screens in the eastern counties.

Next to the Blessed Virgin the most honoured saint in England, was S. Thomas of Canterbury, but the rigour with which the orders of Henry VIII. were carried out, for the destruction of all images and representations of him makes the number now remaining comparatively small. Effigies exist on the walls of churches at Hadleigh, Essex, Hauxton, Cambridgeshire, and Pickering, Yorkshire. Below a figure at Cirencester, there is an indulgence prayer inscribed in his honour, offering five special graces to all those who should say a Paternoster and an Ave before it on every Sunday throughout the year.

The martyrdom of S. Thomas was a never failing subject for the brushes or chisels of our ancestors, and the leading characteristics of these compositions being much alike, a description of one will serve for the rest. At Burlingham S. Edmund, Norfolk, is an unusually fine wall picture of this murder, in which to the left of the spectator is seen a gabled and turreted shrine, supposed to denote the Cathedral at Canterbury, under which appears the archbishop's cross-bearer, and at an altar in front, the martyr kneeling, clad in a purple chasuble with a Y shaped cross, and with the saint's mitre at his feet; behind him come the four knights, the first of whom thrusts a sword into the victim's head with one hand and a dagger with the other; the second also lays his sword on the martyr's head, and has a shield with the bearings—a bend between two crescents; a little to the rear of the last is Fitzurse wielding a battle-axe, and whose scutcheon is a bear within an invected bordure. The fourth malefactor is in the act of drawing his sword from the scabbard, and a circular target seems to hang from his side. The details of this curious work of art show it to have been executed in the Edwardian period, and its preservation is due to the fact of the peculiar manner of its execution, the figures being entirely composed of white plaster inlaid in the rough stucco of the wall, and the details afterwards painted in black lines.

As S. George is always seen associated with his emblem

the dragon and his combat with it is considered as purely emblematical, I will not mention him here but when considering allegorical subjects. The two deacons S.S. Stephen and Lawrence are frequently grouped together on the Norfolk screens.

Of female saints with the before mentioned exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the most popular were S. Catherine, and S. Margaret. Single figures of the former are especially numerous, one was at Kindford, Sussex, and others occur on the screens at North Walsham and Westhall, Norfolk, whilst her life is illustrated at Sporle and Limpenhoe in the same county, Bardwell, Suffolk and Pickering Yorkshire.

It would far exceed the limits of a paper to enter into a consideration of the pictures remaining of the less prominent saints, but it is necessary to say a few words on those of the angelic host to conclude this part of my subject.

S. Michael and the Angels are conspicuous in all Christian Art, and there are two representations especially in which the Archangel figures conspicuously, one showing his triumph over the Dragon or Satan, the other his presumed part in the last judgment as the weigher of human souls. Examples of his combat with evil occur at Croswight, Norfolk, and Melcombe Horsey, Dorset, of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. At Lindfield in Sussex, he was on a painting now destroyed, associated with S. Margaret, both saints being in the act of treading on a two-headed dragon, perhaps intended as emblematical of the resistance to sin incumbent on both sexes. Equally numerous appear to be the representations of the weighing of souls; in which office at Barkley, Oxon he is presented in company with S. Mary and Lucifer, the former as advocate for, and the latter as the accuser of the souls in the balance. In the first volume of the *Archæological Journal* is a description of a curious example at Lenham Kent, where the Blessed Virgin is mentioned as "throwing her rosary into one scale, and her hand upheld in intercession. The other scale which is upraised has two devils or evil spirits, and another imp is seated upon the upper part of the beam with a soul in his hand and blowing a horn." Horn blowing devils are frequently figured in the illuminations of MSS.

The nine choirs of angels occur on screens at Southwold, Suffolk, and Barton Turf, Norfolk. At Blundeston, in the latter county, there were angels bearing the instruments of the Passion, each so placed as to face towards the central rood. A scroll still remains in the hand of one of them, with the words of S. Thomas Aquinas, "Passio Christi Salva (me)." Similar effigies bearing scutcheons charged with the same devices were over the chancel arch at Stowe Bardolf, Norfolk. It is mentioned by Dr. Duncombe that on each side of the door of the undercroft at Canterbury was painted a cherubim full of eyes, and standing on a wheel. Lady Marian Alford, in her valuable book "Needlework as Art," states that cherubim supported on wheels are peculiar to English designs, but gives no authority in support of this statement.

The love of allegory and symbolism seems inherent in human nature, in most countries and ages, and was fully indulged in, as regards English pictorial art, in the Middle Ages. Our Lord, who likened himself to the Good Shepherd and the Door, appears in several symbolical forms on our church walls; thus, at S. Cuthbert's, Wells he is represented in a very perfect manner as the Saviour of the world; he is barefooted, his right hand upheld in benediction, the globe in his left. No crown appears on his head, but a simple cruciform nimbus; the words "SALVATOR MUNDI" leave no doubt as to the intention of the design. Over all is an angel with a shield, charged with his master's badge of the five wounds. Jesus Christ, as the Man of Sorrows, seems the central subject of a panel in a reredos at Hexham, flanked by the emblems of the Passion in the side compartments. At Lanivet, Cornwall, he appears with the bloody sweat, which is indicated by small red trefoils scattered over his body. Our Lord as "the door" is appropriately placed on the panels of the rood-screen doors at Houghton-le-dale, and Castle Acre, Norfolk; he presides in the same position amongst his Apostles at Southwold, Suffolk. Aldenham Church, Herts, possesses a fragmentary painting of our Lord in glory forming an altar-piece at the end of the north aisle; it is of fifteenth century date, and has been richly coloured and gilded. Here the second person of the Godhead is seen enthroned, clad in a red tunic, over

which is a blue mantle, the globe beneath his feet, under them also a pavement, the pattern of which is worked in two shades of blue in reference to the text in Exodus (Chap. xviv., v. 10), "And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." At the corners of the composition have been the Evangelistic symbols, and the central figure has been enriched with imitation jewels, the holes for which remain, as in a carving of the Nativity at the end of an aisle at Newark, Notts. Other figures of our Lord in Majesty and as the Lamb will be noticed in connection with the Doom.

Among the highly interesting pictures found on the chancel arch at West Meston, Sussex, was an allegorical representation exhibiting Christ commissioning his Apostles S.S. Peter and Paul. It has been engraved in the xvith volume of the Sussex Archælogical Society's Collections. These saints so closely associated with each other in both the art and ritual of early Christianity are here presented to us as inclining towards a seated figure of our Saviour. S. Paul, as in some early Italian works, is on the dexter side and receives from his master's hands a large closed book, whilst S. Peter is given a single key of like proportions and is distinguished also by the largeness of his tonsure. A writing over the whole has the legend "LIBRUM DAT PAULO XPS CLAVES Q (U) OQ (UE) PETRO." It appears to me that the above must have been executed by one well acquainted with the early Christian Art of Italy, with the characteristics of which it has much in common.[1]

Although emblematical representations of the Holy Trinity are extremely numerous on the sepulchral tombs and brasses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries I have met with none in painted work, but Dr. Duncombe in his description of Canterbury Cathedral (p 57) states that on the roof of the undercroft there is pictured "God the Father sitting with his feet on a wheel, in the appearance of a man (as described in Ezekiel) and holding a book inscribed "EGO SUM QUI SUM."

[1] The same subject appears to have been at Horsham, in the same county.

The doom or last judgment, is probably the most frequent of the many allegorical representations in our old churches, and though generally placed over the chancel arch, was by no means invariably so.[1] In the earlier periods of painted art that space had often simply our Lord in glory, or the Holy Lamb. At Plumpton, Sussex, were two angels upholding a cross of early Norman outline, the figure to the left holding a spear pointed downwards; other angels were on either side, round one of whom was inscribed MICHAEL, and below an horizontal band stood an angel displaying the seamless coat to the dead rising from their graves; under all in the soffit of the chancel arch was the Agnus Dei. In this conception is doubtless the germ which developed into the more elaborate Doom. Not far from the above at West Meston, in the same county, in a similar position is seen the lamb with cruciform nimbus and staff, the latter without the usual banner of the cross; the emblem of our Lord is enclosed in a quatrefoil bordered with chevrons, perhaps to indicate rays of glory, or mayhap the lightnings issuing from the throne of God; it is upheld by angels who turn away their faces, as though unable to bear the effulgence of the Almighty. Another early example is at Headington Oxon, where Jesus Christ is seen between adoring figures. Gradually the complete symbolical conception of the final judgment was accepted as the proper subject for the adornment of the space above the chancel arch, coming as it would very appropriately over the great crucifix beneath. As the general characteristics of its representation are well known, it would be superfluous to do more than call attention to some variations of the usual treatment. Perhaps the finest example remaining is at Patcham, Sussex, a work of Early English date; here our Lord is throned with the world beneath his feet and displaying his five wounds, whilst his mother, a conspicuous figure, kneels at his right hand in intercession; below is a narrow band, under which on the right are the saved souls marching to heaven in a very quaint manner—all in line and keeping step one with

[1] The Doom was painted on the south wall over the Arcade at Portslade, Sussex, and on the north walls at Stedham, in the same county and St. John's, Winchester.

another—a true "Salvation Army." The part showing the lost has unfortunately been obliterated, but the dead rising from their graves are still to be discerned at the foot of the picture. At Chelsworth, Suffolk, S. Peter appears opposite the Blessed Virgin and Hell, in which demons of grotesque forms torture the wicked by chains worked by a windlace. A singular variation occurs at West Somerton, in which two seraphim present kneeling females to Jesus Christ, one of them being the Blessed Virgin, who holds her right breast in her hand, as if to plead her maternity, and two angels with trumpets summon the dead to judgment. At All Saints, Hastings, our Lord was seated on a rainbow, and crowned with thorns, in his right hand a sword, in the left a lily, his open mantle showing two wounds one on either side ; the angelic trumpeters were here placed in the towers of the new Jerusalem. On the north wall of the nave at South Leigh, Oxon, was St. Peter at the celestial gates, as the "Mundi magister, atque cœli Janitor" of the Breviary hymn. Opposite the heavenly doorkeeper on the south appeared St. Michael weighing souls, thus forming companion subjects to the central Doom. At Augmering, Sussex, the whole of the women were going to bliss, and the unfortunate men to misery, which was a more gallant idea than that expressed on the bench ends at Wiggenhall, St. Germans, where the vices were put on the women's seats, and the virtues on those of the men.

In some paintings of this scene the Just only are clothed, the Lost left nude, and this is quite in accordance with Medieval ideas, Chaucer alludes to it in his "Persones Tale," who, speaking of the torments of hell, says, "And further over all (t)her misease shal be defaute of clothing save the fire in which they brenne, and other filthes, and naked shal they be in all maner virtues which is the clothing of the soule" (Cant.-Tales, p. 518, ed. Routledge). The damned were thus shown on the fine retablo from Ciudad Rodrigo, exhibited in 1881, at South Kensington.[1]

Next to the Doom the most favourite allegorical subject

[1] On a medal struck to commemorate the escape of Lorenzo de Medici from assassination (1478) "the conspirators are all naked, as some have conjectured as being characteristic of the flagitious act, in which they are engaged." Life of of Lor de Midici, p. 151.

in our churches was undoubtedly S. Chistopher, wading through a river, and bearing the child Jesus on his shoulder. That such representations are purely symbolical is the opinion of both Catholic and Protestant writers, "The enormous statues of S. Christopher," says Alban Butler, "still to be seen in many Gothic Cathedrals, expressed his allegorical wading through the sea of tribulations, by which the faithful meant to signify the many sufferings through which he arrived at Eternal life" (Lives of the Saints July 25th). Luther considered the legend of S. Christopher "A fine Christian poem" (Michelet's Life of Luther, p. 417, Hazlett's Trans). His image is still carried in the Corpus Christi procession at Braga, in Spain. The usual position for this subject is on the north wall of the nave and I have a list of about sixty such representations, his figure is also numerous in sculpture, stained glass and even monumental brasses, though they bear but a small proportion to the large number of pictorial ones. At Fritton, Suffolk, his colossal portrait shows him holding a double pronged fork or staff, whilst at Ditteridge, Wilts, a mermaid is introduced as one of the accessories to the scene; and in other examples a hermit with lanthorn, and rosary makes his appearance. Fishes and eels are generally seen swimming in the stream. Our Lord has always a globe in which the banner of the cross is planted, and at Sedgeford, Norfolk, he is portrayed, according to Husenbeth, with three heads. The martyrdom of the saint accompanies the usual figure at Shorwell, Isle of Wight.[1]

S. George and his combat with the dragon enter largely into English painting. Alban Butler considers the representations of him thus fighting "as no more than an emblematical figure purporting, that, by his faith and Christian fortitude, he conquered the devil called the dragon in the Apocalypse" (Lives, April 23rd). Innumer-

[1] At Wickhampton, Norfolk, the water beneath the saint is red, which may be symbolical of the Red Sea, used as a type of the waters of tribulation, following the idea conveyed by the Easter hymn of the Breviary—

"Post transitum Maris rubri
Christo canamus Principi."

In the same picture the humourous fancy of a crab vigorously grasping the great toe of the saint between its claws, is introduced. At Hayes, Middlesex, a hooded figure is seen fishing on the bank, with a fish-basket by his side, and in the act of drawing up a large fish.

able effigies exist of him, always in armour and with his well known cross upon his surcoat and shield; occasionally he is on horseback as at Dartford, Kent, and the King and Queen of the legend were often introduced in the composition, as was the case at Croydon, and Hadleigh.

The seven deadly sins formed the subject of emblematical representations, and in various forms, of which perhaps the most common was that of a tree, to which idea Chaucer alludes when he makes the old knight in the merchant's tale say

> "—though he kepe him from the sins seven
> And eke every branch of thilke tree."

In this form it was exhibited at Bardwell, Suffolk, and Crostwight, Norfolk, the former very poor in conception, where pride for instance is symbolised by four men blowing trumpets, and drunkenness by figures drinking from a huge barrel; the latter is much more artistic, having each branch of the evil tree ending in the head of a demon, whose jaws enclose sinners committing the several deadly sins. At Brooke, Norfolk, each sin is a full length figure placed within one of a series of circular headed panels, and issuing from the jaws of seven monstrous heads; here anger is symbolised by a man stabbing himself. A third mode of treating this subject was exemplified at Ingatestone, Essex, which had Hell in the centre of a large wheel, the outer part of it being divided into seven compartments, the uppermost containing a crowned female typifying pride, another had anger expressed by two men fighting; luxury by two figures reminding one strongly of Mr. Millais' painting of the Huguenot. Perjury, or malice had two witnesses standing at the bar of justice, and each sinner had an attendant devil to encourage him. At Catfield, the sins were placed near the corresponding virtues.

Respecting the illustrations of the Virtues and Vices, Mr. Burges once said, that, "Almost every church had them, either in stained glass, sculpture, or painting." Our Lord surrounded by virtues formed a subject at Westminster Abbey, on the walls of the Chapter House (?) and they would appear to have been painted on a column at Melbourne, Derbyshire, and also at Netherbury, Dorsetshire.

The Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy occur in at least six examples; at Arundel the Saviour stood with representations of them surrounding his effigy.[1] The Seven Sacraments which are so frequently exhibited on the fonts in the eastern counties, were occasionally the subjects of wall paintings as at Kirton-in Lindsay in Lincolnshire and Mid-Lavant, Sussex.

Our Lord as the leader and chief of Christian pilgrims, is I think the idea intended to be expressed in a painting (over another of the Crucifixion before alluded to) at Wisborough Green. Here Jesus Christ is seen holding a long cross-headed staff and near him is S. James of Compostella, in a long blue cloak, the clasp of which is a scallop shell, a pilgrim's pouch hangs by his side, and he grasps a staff like the one held by our Lord; facing the saint are two other pilgrims, also in long cloaks, and one with the usual *bourdon* or staff. I venture to think the Christian pilgrimage was here intended especially as the book entitled "The Pilgrimage of the Soul" existed in many languages, long before Bunyan gave to the world his "Pilgrim's Progress." The Seven Ages of Man, are mentioned in the South Kensington "List of paintings," to be at Hardham, Sussex. There is certainly a picture in that church of the Christian triumphing over his enemies, and another of the Death of the Righteous, under the similitude of Lazarus carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. At Ulcomb, Kent, are representations of scenes from this parable, fully described in the *Archæological Journal* (vol. xxv., p, 194), the one showing his death has a small figure of the soul issuing from the mouth. If any paintings of the death of the wicked are left they have escaped my notice. Purgatory is said to have been the subject of a design chiselled off the wall at Hanslope, Bucks, and of another at Iver in the same county. A twelfth century representation of Hell on the east wall of the north transept at Yaxley, Hunts, has been white-washed over.

The tree, or genealogy of Jesse, so frequently seen in sculpture and stained glass, does not appear to have been

[1] A good example remains at Wickhampton, each act is enclosed within a shafted canopy, and is being performed by a female, the date seems about 1480. Other specimens were at Kimpton, Herts, and Potter Heigham, Norfolk.

often illustrated on walls, but there is said to have existed a thirteenth century example at the east end of the south aisle at Elton, Hants, and another on the roof of the chancel of St. Lawrence, Colchester.

There is a legend which was a great favourite in the Middle Ages, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, both in England and abroad, that of "The Three Dead, and the Three Living." It is still to be seen on the walls of several of our churches, and in Italy it formed part of the great fresco of Andrea Orcagna, in the Campo Santo, at Pisa. At Belton, Suffolk, there is a very fine painting of it, a short description of which will suffice to illustrate the leading features of many more. It is placed above the north doorway, and has faded considerably since it was first uncovered, its date is about the time of Henry IV., and its measurement is sixteen feet eight inches, by seven feet six inches. On the spectator's right hand are shown three full-length skeletons, or rather spectres, who appear advancing towards three Kings on horseback, each of whom holds an inscribed label in his hand; one monarch, who is evidently retreating from the awful apparitions, exclaims, "(Away) wyl I fle," the second, "O marvellous styte ys that I se," and the third cries "O benedicite what want ye?" The robes of these potentates are richly ermined, and their horse trappings are highly curious and elaborate. A tall cross is in the centre of the composition, and birds fly in the air over towers and windmills, which fill up the background. The whole is enclosed in an ornamental border of four-leaved flowers. At Ditchingham, Norfolk the same subject is associated with that of the judgment, as it is in an example at Battle Sussex. In the former the three skeletons are crowned as well as the Kings and like them bear labels. An illustration of it and remarks on this legend will be found in the *Archæological Journal*, vol v., p. 17.[1]

The Dance of Death, is pictured over the chancel arch at Battle, and on the rood-screens at Sparham, Norfolk, and Yoxford, Suffolk.[2]

[1] Other examples were at Ampney Crucis, Glos.; Bovey Tracy, Devon; Charlwood, Surrey; Lutterworth, Leices.; Waddon, Bucks; and one fairly perfect exists at Wickampton.

[2] Mr. Lecky states that the Dance of Death was introduced in the fourteenth century (Hist. of Rationalism, vol. i., p. 60 n.), but the idea is of great antiquity. In a review of Mrs. Hamilton Grey's

Fortune and her wheel are mentioned, among other instances in Chaucer, in the following lines :—

> "Now we be caitives as is wel sene
> Thanked be fortune and her false whele."

The "false whele," is seen in a fragment of painting at Rochester Cathedral with various figures King, Priest, Husbandman, and others climbing it" (Murray's Guide, p. 502). St. Alban's Abbey also had its wheel of fortune and it was painted at Catfield, Norfolk. Elias of Dereham, or Durham, was commissioned by Henry III. to paint it on the gable of the hall of that monarch's Castle, at Winchester.

Probably the most remarkable example of mediæval compositions in wall painting in this country exists within an hour's journey of the metropolis, at the retired village of Chaldon, near Redhill; there the entire face of the west wall of the church, is devoted to a picture of "The Ladder of Salvation," the torments of Hell, the "Bridge" over it, and the Descent into Limbo. The design is divided by a horizontal band of ornamental work symbolical of clouds, the ladder of salvation reaching through both divisions, having a small bust of our Lord at the summit. Souls are seen climbing the rungs, many of those in the lower part falling back, whilst all above the line of separation are looking stedfastly upwards, and stretching out their hands towards Jesus Christ, being encouraged in their endeavours to reach him, by two angels. To the right of the ladder is St. Michael with his scales, to the left a reclining figure of Satan bound, over whom stands the Saviour, thrusting a cross-headed staff into his jaws, a number of souls surrounding their deliverer. In the lower division of the composition at the spectator's right hand is the tree of good and evil, with the serpent twining about its branches; between this and the ladder is a bridge upheld by two demons, it is set with sharp spikes, and there are five figures upon it; below this are two devils with hooked forks, thrusting a

"Tour to the Sepulchres of Etruria" given in the Edinburgh Review, we read, "There is one very remarkable tomb at Tarquinü, called by the excavators the *Carnera de Morte,* which is said to have contained a complete Etruscan Dance of Death, a vast procession of dead mortals of all ages and conditions." Ed., Review, April, 1841, p. 140.

man into the flames, who holds a coin in his right hand, and wears a pouch of money round his neck.

To the left are two fiends keeping souls down in a large cauldron, such we see in old MSS. as used for cooking food. Such are the leading incidents shown in this remarkable composition, which displays much grace and dignity in many of the figures. The ground is red nearly all the rest being left white.

The leading idea of the ladder was no doubt originally suggested by that of Jacob, it is still employed as a Christian similitude, and a modern hymn has the lines—

> "All glory to Jesus, who died on the tree,
> And hath raised up a ladder of mercy for me."

As regards the bridge, one is tempted to say a few words, as it occurs perhaps in no other English composition, though the image is of great antiquity, and common to many varying faiths. The Avesta of Zoroaster has this passage as part of a prayer, "May the fearful terror of hell not overcome me, may I step over the bridge Chinevet, may I obtain paradise" (Ten Great Religions, Pt. I. p. 190) and in a confession of sins, the penitent says, "With the punishment at the bridge—I am contented and satisfied." Sale, in his introduction to the Koran, states that, both the good and the bad before going to their respective destinations "must first pass the bridge called in Arabic 'al Sirat,' which they say is laid over the midst of hell, and described to be finer than a hair, and therefore than the edge of a sword." The good will pass "with wonderful ease and swiftness, whilst the wicked will soon miss their footing and fall down headlong into hell" (The Koran, p. 70, intro.) In the new world we find the early missionaries were told by the Iroquois Indians that the soul after death must pass a deep narrow river on a bridge made of a slender ill-poised tree. (Ten Great Religions II, p. 320.) Brand in his Antiquities prints a Cumberland dirge to much the same effect as the passages quoted, nor has the subject been neglected by Christian poets, for Milton describes the bridge from hell to this world by which the "Spirits perverse,"

> "With easy intercourse, pass to and fro,
> To tempt, or punish, mortals"
> *Paradise Lost, II.*, 1030-1031.

Calderon, in his Purgatory of St. Patrick, has a very noble and beautiful passage too long to quote here but conceived in a similar spirit.

The signs of the Zodiac, are seen in some early wall paintings, as each emblem was considered to have a religious meaning. Virgo is occasionally nimbed to indicate the Blessed Virgin, as at Copford, and there was a series at West Meston, in both cases on the chancel arches.[1]

A clever design between the clerestory windows at West Walton, Norfolk, clearly shows the net of the church, with fishes enclosed in the meshes. and respecting this I must mention, to shew how naturally symbolism enters into the human mind, that in the Life of Billy Bray, the Cornish miner, he is recorded to have styled the erection of a new chapel " building a fishing net,"

Besides the decoration of church walls with figure paintings and symbols, they often had texts and sacred writings ornamentally inscribed upon them, and on other parts of the building ; the " Te Deum," was written on the roof of the nave of St. Alban's in the fourteenth century, and at a later period Long Melford Church, Suffolk, had its interior almost covered with texts and prayers. During the reign of Edward VI. scripture texts were ordered to be placed on church walls instead of pictures, and in the succeeding reign these were by command of Bishop Bonner " abolished and extinguished," in 1554.

Probably most persons consider the writing up of the Ten Commandments in churches as an entirely Protestant practice ; such is not the case for we find in 1488 they were at St. Christopher-le-Stock's, London, inscribed on a tablet in company with eleven others with prayers to various saints. Nor was the custom unknown abroad, for in the office room of the cashier of the confraternity of the Misericordia, Florence, they were inscribed in mediæval times (see Walks in Florence I., p. 103). Moreover " in 1515, the Archbishop of Seville, D. Didaco Deja held a provincial council, or synod, in which it was ordained

[1] It is somewhat remarkable that the signs of the Zodiac, should have become favourite objects in ecclesiastical ornaments, as we read in the Douay version of the Old Testament, of the destruction of those " who burnt incense to Baal, and to the sun, and to the moon, and to the twelve signs." 4 Kings, Chap. xxiii., v. 5.

that the parish priests should instruct the parishioners in the mysteries of the Catholic faith, and should place in each of their churches, tables, containing the articles of the Christian belief, and the Ten Commandments" —Townley's Bib., Lit., Vol. II., p. 225.)

Consecration crosses painted inside the walls of churches, appear to have been always some variations of the cross *patée* enclosed in circles, often quite plain in form and colour, but occasionally much enriched in both, as may be seen at Worsted, Norfolk, and Darenth, Kent.

In conclusion I cannot but remark on the wonderful similarity existing between many features of ancient and more recent art. The Assyrians, for instance painted the walls of their apartments with a double range of subjects divided by a text, as our ancestors did their smaller churches ; the same people made their figures of Kings of larger statue than other men, to denote their superior dignity, as in mediæval works we find those of our Lord and his mother. Egyptian columns were encircled with ranges of full length effigies, as on our church pillars, and subjects in red outlines seem to be indicated in Ezekiel, "She saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion" (chap. xxiii., v. 14). There are numerous other resemblances, but I have already trespassed too much to enter more fully into this interesting feature in our subject.