



The Ancient Glass in the Church of S. Mary-on-the-Hill

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(Read 20th January, 1903)



ON Thursday Evening, May 30th, 1861, a paper was read before the members of this Society by Mr. J. Ralph, on "The History and Principles of Coloured Glass Decoration, with special reference to the proposed Memorial to the late Rev. Canon Slade." In the course of his remarks, the lecturer not only described the different processes used in manufacturing coloured glass, but also gave much interesting information about the history of stained glass in connection with architecture. Those who are fortunate enough to possess Part VII. (Old Series) of our Journal, will read the account of the lecture, and the subsequent remarks of various speakers, with considerable interest. But as all may not be the happy possessors of that volume, I venture to reproduce a few of the points brought out on that occasion, as a fitting introduction to a paper on "The Ancient Coloured Glass in the Church of S. Mary-on-the-Hill."

Major Egerton Leigh was in the Chair, and he, in common with other speakers, was of opinion that it was

quite possible to reproduce the colours and effects which we so justly admire in ancient glass. At the same time he remarked that coloured glass (like port wine) improved with age, and that the crust, with which time and our atmosphere combined to coat the old glass, often added richness and depth to the original colours. That this latter effect is not always produced by age is shown by the present condition of the beautiful stained glass in the Chapter House at York. A careful examination of this has recently been made by Mr. Grylls (of Messrs. Burlison & Grylls), who found it corroded to an extent that he had never seen before in forty-years' experience. It is more than doubtful whether the course of time will have such a mellowing effect on some of the modern windows, put in thirty or forty years ago, as to make them in anyway comparable with the ancient specimens which have been preserved to us. With regard to the windows in York Minster, we are told that "all the decorated glass in that Cathedral is corroding in the same manner, but that the Chapter House windows, being somewhat earlier than the rest, are in the worst condition." The remedy proposed is to protect the outside surface from the atmosphere by other plain glass, leaded in squares, and for this £500 will be required.

On the occasion to which I have referred, Mr. T. Hughes remarked on the curious affinity in many respects between the principles of heraldry and those of glass-painting, the ancient tinctures of both being alike, and quoted some quaint words from Randle Holme's *Academy of Armoury* :—

"Mettle upon mettle is bad Heraldry ;
Colour upon colour is false Armoury."

He then said, "It ought to be recorded that long after the Reformation many of the Cathedral windows

remained adorned with scriptural subjects. These, however, had gradually disappeared, until, 25 years ago (that would be in 1836), it was a subject of great regret to all strangers that there was not a single pane of coloured glass in Chester Cathedral; except, indeed, the head of the Virgin which then graced the apex of the clerestory window immediately over the Lady Chapel; and even this disappeared when the present handsome window was erected. Originally, the window had contained the genealogy of Christ, beginning at the base with the root of Jesse, and ending at the top with the figure of the Holy Virgin." I have not been able, as yet, to discover any trace of this fragment of old glass;¹ nor yet of another, which used to be in one of the compartments of the tracery of the window in the South Transept, now filled with glass by Mr. Kempe, as a memorial to some members of the Potts family. Two small quarries of coloured glass are the only specimens in the case in the Chapter House, where such treasures are usually preserved.

Perhaps it may be interesting here to note, with reference to the small amount of old coloured glass remaining in Chester, that Bishop Gastrell, in his "*Notitia Cestriensis*," makes no mention of any in connection with any other of our City Churches (unless, indeed, the "Arms" in S. Patrick's Isle, in Trinity, were in the windows there), but only in his notice of S. Mary *supra Montem*. We should, therefore, perhaps,

¹ Since this was written "the head of the Virgin" has been returned to the Dean and Chapter, and is now kept in the Chapter House. Bishop Bridgeman "glazed the east window over the Communion Table, with the story of the Annunciation, Nativity, Circumcision, and Presentation of our Saviour." "The Head of the Virgin" might be a relic from one of those scenes, and, if so, may be dated 1637; but Mr. Kempe, having seen the glass, ascribes it to W. Peckitt of York, who did much work in the latter half of the Eighteenth Century.

be justified in concluding that none else, of any moment, existed at the time when he drew up his account, *circa* 1720. His references are indeed taken from the Randle Holme MS., and mention the window set up by John Davenport, Rector 1534, in memory of a previous Rector; S. Katharine's Chapel window, made by *Ralph* Brereton, 1523; another by Worrall, Mayor of Chester 1521; and the Troutbeck Coat of Arms in the Troutbeck Chapel. As the Randle Holme MS. mentions several others, it is possible that Bishop Gastrell only alludes to those which were in existence in his time.

Before passing away from this point, I think I may safely say that most persons, when comparing old and modern glass, would generally pronounce the verdict, "The old is better."¹ The highest praise which we can give to the new is, that it approaches most nearly to the old in colour and general effect. When we find, as at York Minster, or Ludlow, or elsewhere, whole windows still filled with old decorated glass, we are lost in admiration of what has been thus handed down to us, and filled all the more with regret that carelessness or fanaticism has, in so many instances, deprived us of treasures which might still have adorned our Cathedrals and Parish Churches. And here I cannot help recalling a personal incident. In December 1886 I happened to be in York Minster when the stone-work of the large window in the South Choir-Transept was under repair. Advantage was taken of this opportunity to have the glass of that window thoroughly examined and over-

¹ With reference to the old glass, the following extract from the book on *Gloucester Cathedral*, in the Cathedral series, will be interesting:— "The white glass is of special beauty when compared with modern times. Its luminous pearly look comes from the fact that the body of the glass is full of minute bubbles, each of which catches the light, and then reflects it out from the interior of the glass, so that the glass is not only translucent, but is itself actually luminous, with innumerable centres of radiation."

hauled. I was present when the various panels, giving scenes in the life of S. Cuthbert, were being closely scrutinized by the Rev. Dr. Fowler of Durham. Those which were comparatively modern and inferior (and there were but few of these) were put on one side, to be replaced by others, which would be more worthy, and which would harmonise more exactly with that which was really old. I was particularly struck, not only with the jewel-like appearance of the glass, but also with the elaborate detail of the scenes depicted. Though, when in position, the general effect of the pictures would be simply kaleidoscopic, so to speak, yet the figures and details were as carefully drawn as if the picture were to be close to the eye of the beholder. The old artist had not been content with producing a good general effect, but had secured this whilst portraying, in a most elaborate manner, scenes from the life of the saint whom he was commemorating. The lesson to be derived from such a consideration is obvious.

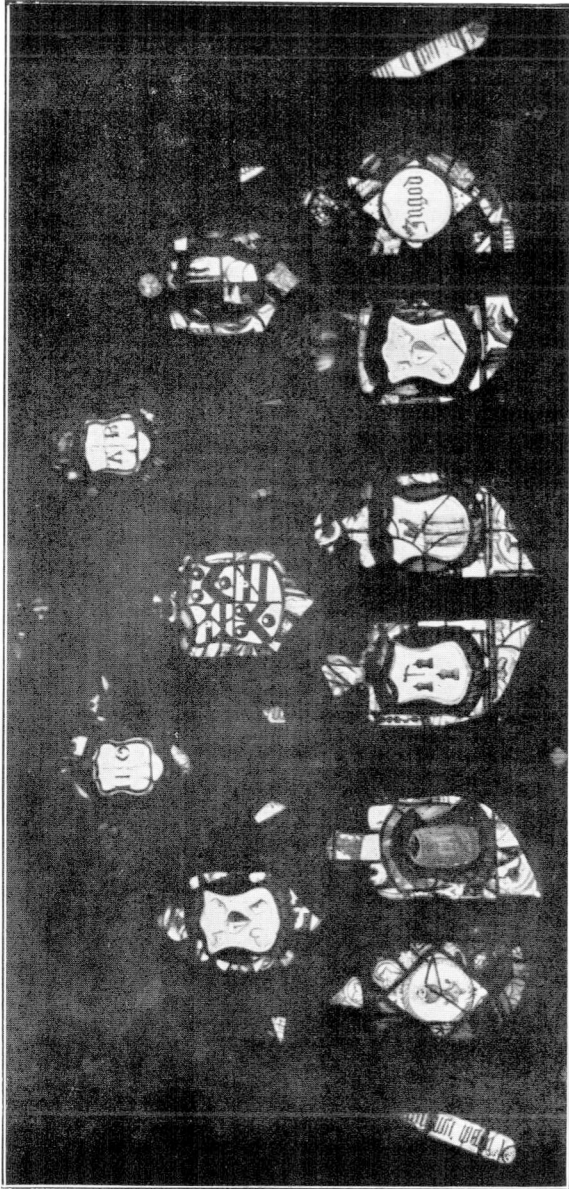
Turning now to our special subject. I can imagine that anyone who had the privilege of living at York, or Tewkesbury, or Ludlow, or indeed in any place where a good deal of old glass has been preserved, would think but little of the very small quantity which is to be found in the Church of S. Mary-on-the-Hill. And yet, small though that quantity is, it is surely of considerable value in this City, as being the only specimen of ancient glass to be found now in any of our Churches. It is this consideration which has led me to bring that old Church again before your notice, for I cannot but look upon this old glass as one of its treasures. It is now in the tracery of the eastern and two of the southern windows of the Troutbeck Chapel. I have not been able to find any record as to when the glass, presumably collected from

other windows in the Church, was placed in its present position. It has probably been moved on several occasions, when the stonework of the windows has been renewed, as it evidently *has* been in recent years. It is impossible, therefore, to say to whom the arrangement of the glass is due. It is harmonious enough, though not always very intelligent, as when some lettering of an old inscription is reversed and placed upside down. An expert would, no doubt, detect some modern glass intermingled with the old. As to its general character, we may say that it is most interesting, and the effect of it is very pleasing; whilst it stands out in marked contrast to the cruder colours of some recent glass in the main portion of two of the windows. Some of it is suggestive of the jewels after which the old workmen named the colours which they used when working designs in glass. The fragments are, of course, of a miscellaneous character; but they give evidence of the richness of treatment originally in the windows, traces being left of canopies, pedestals, borders, and other architectural features, which must have been very elaborate.

In looking at the history of the glass, before commenting on it in detail, we turn, naturally, to the late Mr. Earwaker's valuable book on the Church and Parish of S. Mary-on-the-Hill. There is a brief description of it, as it now is, on page 22; whilst there is also a longer description of the old "heraldic glass," as it existed in 1578, taken from one of the manuscripts belonging to the collection of the Randle Holmes, now preserved in the British Museum. This will serve to give us the date of the glass, or of some portion of it.

The one Coat of Arms which has been preserved is that of Brereton quartering Ipstones. In the manu-

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The Old Glass in the tracery of the East Window

Dr. Stalderfich, Photo.

script referred to we find this Coat mentioned twice; once as being found "in one of the high windows of the chancell," and again in the east window of S. Katharine's Chapel, which was on the north side of the chancel. The inscription on this latter window, which was in Latin, was the following:—"Randal Brereton caused this glass work to be made in the year of our Lord 1523."¹ It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the glass, or at any rate some of it, dates from the early part of the 16th Century.² Probably this and the other decorated windows in the Church, which are described in the above-quoted manuscript, remained uninjured, in their original positions, until 1646, when, as we learn from another, preserved in the same collection, "all the curious windows and figures [therein] were, by the Roundheads, caused to be taken down and defaced, and cut in quarrells confusedly, and [the repairs] cost the parish, in the workmanship, £10." With reference to this destruction of windows, we learn, from Hanshall's *History of Cheshire*, that "Sir Wm. Brereton's forces defaced the Cathedral Choir; much injured the Organ; broke nearly all the painted glass in the Church windows; and demolished the Font." Can the preservation of the glass we are considering be due to the fact that the Parliamentarians, led by

¹ In Bishop Gastrell's *Notitia Cestriensis* we find, as I have already said, this entry: "St. Katharine's Chappell window was made by *Ralph* Brereton An(no) 1523." The confusion between the names Randal and Ralph was not uncommon.

² It is, perhaps, not without interest to note here the connection of the Brereton family with stained glass elsewhere. In Brereton Hall, called by Camden "a magnificent and sumptuous house," the Arms of the family occur in several of the windows, and also the date 1577. There were also some ancient painted figures of the Earls of Chester, which were removed by Sir Lister Holte to Aston Hall, but eventually bought by the Marquess of Westminster, and placed at Eaton. In Hanshall's *History of Cheshire*, the report that these windows formerly belonged to the Chapter House of Chester Cathedral, is deemed too absurd to demand a formal contradiction.

Sir Wm. Brereton, showed some little respect to a window put up by a Brereton ?

In Dr. Ormerod's History, published in 1819, we are told that the windows on the *north* side "contained fragments of stained glass; amongst others, the Arms of Brereton and Ipstones, and a golden tun (probably intended as a rebus)." It would seem from this that the glass may have remained in S. Katharine's Chapel, where it had been placed in the first instance, until after 1819.

Sir Stephen Glynne left some interesting notes of visits to Cheshire Churches, and amongst them will be found the following, in a record of a visit which he paid to S. Mary's in 1852 :—"The stained glass of the east window" (whether of the north or south Chapel or of the Chancel he does not say) "is partly modern, partly of ancient fragments." No mention is here made of the glass in the windows on the south side of the Troutbeck Chapel, which, as we shall presently see, differs in character from that in the east window.

Looking now at the glass in the eastern window in detail, we find, in the top compartment, some pieces of no particular pattern; in the two next below are the initials I.I.G. and A.B., fancifully joined together with a cord, like a true-lover's knot. I have tried in vain to identify the persons whose initials are here given.¹ Then below, in the centre, are the Brereton Arms quartering Ipstones, which are thus heraldically described in Mr. Earwaker's book, "Quarterly 1st and 4th Argent, two bars, sable; 2nd and 3rd Argent, a chevron between three Crescents Gules, Ipstones." On the left of this

¹ A Thomas Gamul married Alice Bavand about 1600, but, unfortunately, the initials do not correspond.

is an emblem of the Passion, a shield bearing the Five Sacred Wounds in Hands and Feet and Heart. On the right is a nondescript imitation of a Coat of Arms, made up of fragments of coloured glass. Below these, and immediately above the principal lights of the window, are the following, beginning from the left :—First, some letters forming part of an inscription, not, however, in Latin, but in English ; it begins with the word “Of,” and closer examination showed that the words following, on another piece, had been inserted the wrong way round, and that they were “your charity” ; doubtless followed, originally, by the words, “Pray for the souls of,” with the names of those in whose memory the window was erected. In Hanshall’s *History of Cheshire* (p. 246), we are told that “in a high window in the middle aisle appears the following, ‘Of your charity pray for the soul of Matthew Ellis and Elizabeth his wife.’” These letters may have formed part of this inscription.

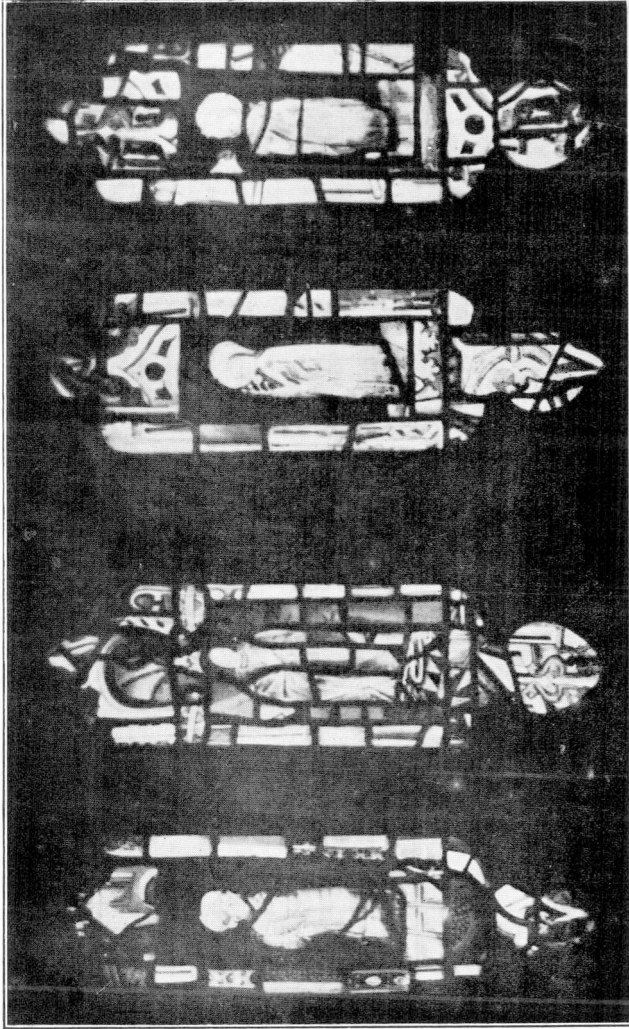
In the next compartment is “the Chalice and Host,” the cup being very interesting and elegant. This emblem, we know, was much used to mark the graves of priests. It is possible, therefore, that this may have been part of a memorial to some ecclesiastic ; and we know that there was a window erected to the memory of Richard Pencell, who was Rector from 1430 to 1458.¹ Next to this we have the *rebus* of the Brereton family, consisting of a *Tun*, round which a *Brier* is

¹ We learn from Bishop Gastrell’s *Notitia Cestriensis*, that a window was set up by Joh: Davenport, Rector in 1534, with the inscription “Orate pro anima Joh: Willesty (Willaston) quondam Rect. hujus eccles: 1400.” He was really presented in 1404, by the Abbot of S. Werburgh. This window seems to have been erected by a subsequent Rector, as it contained, also, another inscription, “Orate pro anima Johannis Davenport hujus ecclesie rectoris qui hanc fenestram fieri fecit MDXXXIV.” It was in this year that John Davenport was succeeded by John Brereton.

growing. On this treatment of names I will make some further remarks presently. The next two spaces contain shields (similar to that bearing the Five Wounds), on which are what I take to be other Passion emblems, though the combination is not, perhaps, a usual one. The Rev. W. N. Howe has kindly furnished me with a list of the most general emblems of the Passion: the Nails; the Hammer; the Pillar of the Scourging (sometimes with a cord round it); the Scourges; the Lantern of the Betrayal; the Spear; the Sponge and the Reed; the Cock; the Dish containing the Sacred Blood; the Seamless Coat; the Loin-cloth; S. Veronica's Handkerchief; the Dice; the Bag and 30 pieces of Silver. Of those we are considering, the first has a hammer, and what, I had supposed, might be (as being in connection with it) three nails of a very conventional sort. The Rev. Dr. Fowler of Durham (no mean authority), suggests that this is "probably a Passion Shield, with hammer and three dice-boxes. The dice are often, and the boxes sometimes, I think, introduced." The other has a bird on a perch, from which is suspended a robe or garment of some kind. This, I imagine (and Dr. Fowler is of the same opinion), is probably the Seamless Coat hung on a rod, and the Cock which often appears in such representations. I ought, perhaps, to say that Dr. Fowler has not had the opportunity of seeing the glass, but only a rough sketch of it. In the next compartment is a shield bearing "the Five Wounds" (the counterpart of the one already mentioned). This, however, seems slightly different in nature and colour, and is, probably, a modern copy of the other, which is old.

In the adjoining space is something which created some difficulty in my mind. In a circle, which is

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The Old Glass in the South-east Window

Dr. Stottersfath, Photo.

surrounded by a slight golden border, are the letters, in Old-English characters, "Ingod." There is no space between *In* and *god*, and the only capital is the *I* at the beginning. The interpretation which I put upon it is, that it is part of a text or inscription, which, in its original position, was in several compartments, so that the portions in each were placed in circles, surrounded by a delicate border.¹ If this were so, Dr. Fowler says, "The small 'g' need not present any difficulty, for the post-mediæval use of capitals, even for Divine names, is comparatively modern. I have seen a bell-inscription, *in god is al quod (quoth) gabriel*, no capitals being used. I think capitals came in with printing, but not with the earliest printing, except at the beginning of new subjects, as in the manuscripts." The fact that in another compartment is found "the Chalice and Host," has suggested to some the idea that this also may have reference to the Blessed Sacrament. Can it represent a Wafer, or the receptacle in which the Wafers were kept? There is an interesting specimen of a metal reliquary band, as it is termed, in the Meols Collection in this Museum. On this is the inscription "In God is al"; but here the words are distinct, and they recall the bell-inscription mentioned by Dr. Fowler. If this phrase were common in mediæval times, we need not be surprised at finding only the opening words of it, which would naturally suggest to the reader the rest.

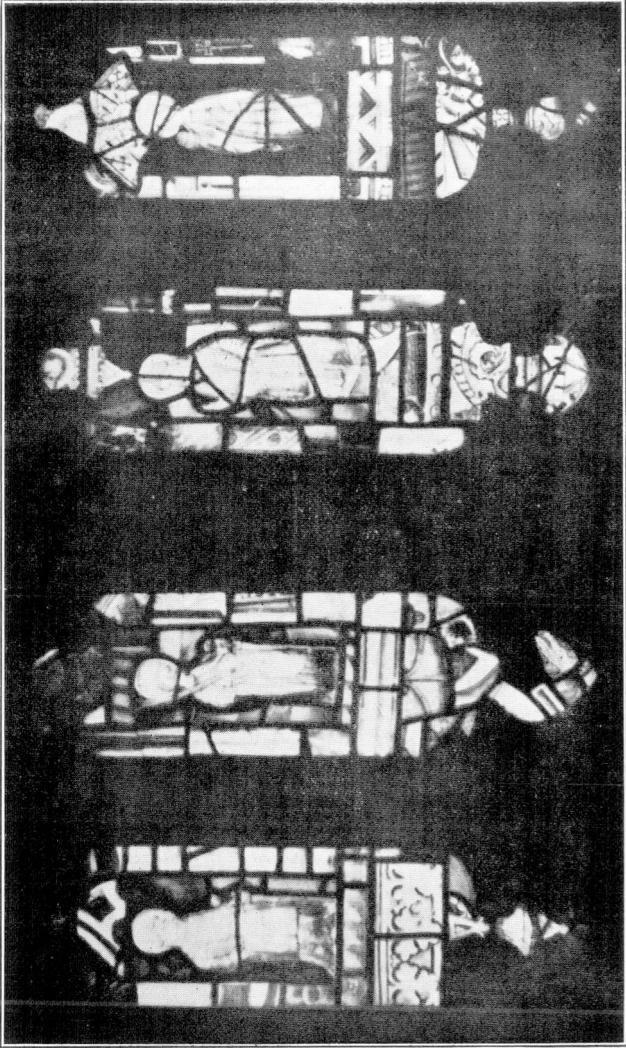
In the last compartment are some more letters. Again we have "Of," as if the beginning of the familiar phrase "Of your charity pray for the soules of———;" but the rest and larger portion I have not been able to decipher, not even with the aid of my son, who mounted

¹ Thus: [In God] [is my health] [and my glory], *Psalm lxi.*; or
[In God] [have I put] [my trust], *Psalm lvi.*

a ladder for the purpose. In this I have been disappointed, for I had quite hoped that a closer inspection of the letters (and there are fragments of inscriptions, also, in various other parts) might have revealed something, and enabled us to identify the glass with some of that described in the Randle Holme MSS.

Turning now to the glass in the windows on the south side, we find, as I have already intimated, that it differs in character from that which we have been considering. It consists of eight figures, four in each window, the glass around them being arranged in imitation of the canopies under which they may originally have been. These fragments are sufficient to show that very graceful and elegant designs must have existed in some of the windows; the colouring is very rich and clear; whilst the fact that we have here eight figures, proves that the glass in the Church was not entirely *heraldic*. Of the eight figures three are male, and, by the ecclesiastical dress which they wear, are apparently deacons, as they all seem to be clad in dalmatics. The nimbus is found on all the eight, except one, from which it has probably disappeared. The drawing, both with regard to the features and postures, is very varied and beautiful. Several are quite perfect; in some, portions of the drapery have been supplied from other sources. Taking them in order, beginning from the east end, the first figure is that of an ecclesiastic, a deacon wearing the dalmatic, carrying a book in the right hand, whilst the left hand and the bottom of the figure have disappeared. Next we have a female, without a nimbus, and with drapery supplied chiefly from other figures. In the next we have a female, holding in her hands a lily; this may, therefore, represent the Blessed Virgin, possibly, as a child. The fourth figure is a female, carrying

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EAST

WEST

The Old Glass in the South-west Window

Dr. Stalterfath, Photo

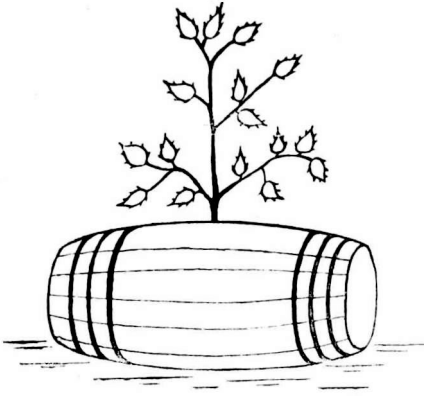
the palm of martyrdom ; the golden yellow of the dress is noticeable. Coming now to the window at the west end of the chapel, we have first what looks like a repetition of the figure of a deacon in the other window, only, in this case, the left hand has not disappeared, but is found holding a sword, whilst the vestments are perfect. Next we have a female figure, with nimbus, with palm in one hand and sword in the other. Then we find an ecclesiastic, wearing a dalmatic, and therefore a deacon, but not a reproduction of the other two, as the figure is turned in the opposite direction ; here, again, the lower portion has gone. The last figure is a female one, carrying what looks like a sheaf.

It is, perhaps, hazardous to conjecture what may have been the original position of the windows in which these figures were first placed. The three ecclesiastics are all deacons by their dress. We know that there was an Altar to S. Stephen in the Church ; can these figures have been in close proximity to it, and represent some of the Order of Deacons, as S. Vincent, though the special emblems by which S. Stephen and S. Laurence are distinguished are absent ? There was also an Altar to S. Katharine in the North Chapel ; can the female saints, evidently virgins, have been near to it, even though the wheel of S. Katharine is not now to be found amongst them ? Wherever the glass may have been, even if it has been brought here from some other Church, we cannot but be thankful that there is still to be seen in one of our Chester Churches, some specimens of this ancient art, though it makes us regret all the more the vandalism or carelessness which has deprived us of very much more.

A few words may be added on the use of the rebus. The word is Latin, and really means "by things," and

is applied to a mode of expressing words and phrases by pictures of objects, whose names resemble those words, or the syllables of which they are composed; an enigmatical representation of words by figures. Names with the termination "ton" naturally lend themselves to this treatment. I remember, more than thirty years ago, accompanying the Yorkshire Archæological Society in one of its Excursions. We visited an old Hall, close to Thornhill Lees Station, which was, or had formerly been, the property of a family named Nettleton. There is a large room there beautifully decorated, and over the fireplace a chimney-piece in oak richly carved, one of the panels bearing the Nettleton rebus. If one syllable was not capable of pictorial illustration, it was written in letters on the object representing the other portion; thus, we have the rebus for Burton and many others. Dr. Fowler tells me that "there is a very good one, carved in stone, at Fountains Abbey, supporting a niche over the great west window. It is the figure of an eagle holding a crozier, and perched on a tun from which issues a label inscribed 'Dern 1494.' The eagle is the symbol of S. John, and is meant to signify the Christian name, so that the whole thing represents: Abbot John Dernton or Darnton." He adds: "Parkinson, the herbalist, has, on his title-page, a circle of palings, representing a park, within a sun (Park-in-sun); and the title of his book is '*Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris*,' rendered thus: Parkinson's Earthly Paradise." Day, the Reformation printer, had a man watching the sun rise, with the words, "Arise, for it is Day." At Jesus College, Cambridge, the rebus of its founder, Bishop Alcock, occurs frequently. For instance, on one side of the gateway is a cock perched on an orb, and on a scroll issuing from its mouth is the legend, in

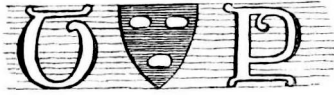
Examples of Rebus



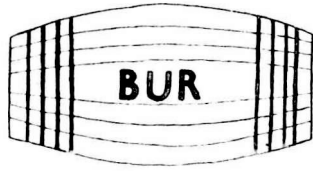
Nettleton



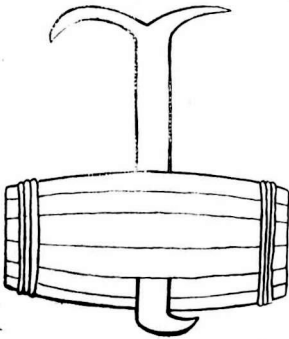
Hicock



Goldstone
(Prior of Canterbury)



Burton



Langton
(Musical sign for a "long" and tun)



Briereton
(Brier tun)

Greek, "I am a Cock"; on the opposite side is a similar representation, only the legend is altered to the reply the bird makes, "So am I."

The presence of this rebus in the window has led some people to imagine that some of the shields, which we have called Passion Shields, may really be canting Coats of Arms. Of this kind are the "three hands" for Tremayne; "three bugle-horns" for Hornby; "three bees" for Beeston; and "three calves" for Calveley. So, too, for the City of Oxford, we have an ox crossing a ford. But though the Passion emblems (if they be such) are not what are usually found, the treatment is quite different to that in the rebus, and the shields are analogous to the one on which are the Five Wounds; whilst all the shields are surrounded with the same rope or cord of green, whatever that may mean. I am, therefore, inclined to think that the explanation already given is the correct one, and that they all are Passion Shields.

Since the above paper was read, the three lower lights in the western window, on the south side, have been filled with stained glass as a memorial to the late Mrs. Llewelyn Roberts. The work has been executed by one of our own members (Mr. Gilbert P. Gamon, 195, Oxford Street, London), and harmony of colour, between the old and new glass, has been carefully studied and preserved. It is interesting to note that he has used for his monogram a rebus, viz.: a lion's paw or jambe (or gamb) with the initials O.N., making Gam(b)on or Gamon.

