

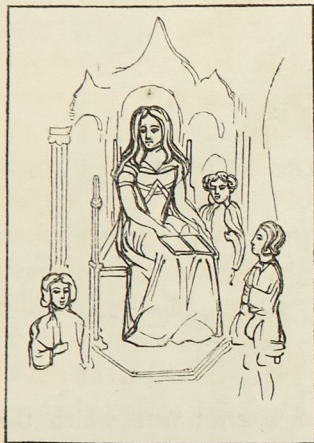
NOTICE,
 BY THE REV. JAMES BULWER,
 OF A
 MURAL PAINTING,
 DISCOVERED
 In the South Transept of Cawston Church.

AMONGST the many objects of interest with which the church of Cawston, in the hundred of South Erpingham, abounds, my attention was directed, on a late visit, to a painting which was faintly discernible under the whitewash on the east wall of the south transept. Many of the parishioners, as I was informed, distinctly recollected it, and stated that it had been covered over fifteen or sixteen years. The Rector, on my expressing curiosity about it, very obligingly caused a scaffolding to be raised, and a mason was employed to clean it. He also informed me, that he had often seen the painting himself, and that it represented a lady sitting in a chair, with a book on her lap, and children standing round her. Vulgar tradition had called it a portrait of Mrs. Gurney and her family; and this was countenanced by a brass on a stone near the spot being inscribed to the memories of "William Gurney, gent., who died March 10th, 1578; and of Ann, his wife, who died Jan. 19th, 1596. They had one son and three daughters." The arms were, Gurnay impaling Waytes—azure, a fess between three fishes naiant, argent.

Upon partially removing the coatings of whitewash, the painting, as sketched from memory, was very like the annexed wood-cut. The lady was dressed in a green mantle,



MURAL PAINTING OF ST AGNES
IN CAWSTON CHURCH.
NORFOLK.



with a tight bodice of a buff or brown hue; her hair was dishevelled, and very auburn. The children were in loose dark coats; and the ruddiest of hues on their cheeks gave a fair sample of the artist's beau ideal of youthful health and beauty.

I was not present at the operation of cleaning; but upon application of the brush and water, not only was the white-wash removed, but the greater

part of the colour of the painting just described; and there was discovered underneath it a specimen of mediæval art of much better execution, and of much more antiquarian interest, than the supposed portraiture of the Gurney family.

The etching is from a drawing made on the spot; and it will be seen at a glance, that the artist who painted the lady and her children took advantage, with some prudence if not originality, of such parts of the existing design as suited his purpose. He retained the chair, the book, and a portion of the pillars; transformed the monks into children; changed the crown of St. Agnes into hair; and blotted out the glory, the dove with the ring, and the lamb.

The prevailing tints of the original mural painting were red, yellow, and green. The interiors of the canopies were green, as also the bodice of Saint Agnes, and the lining of the chair. The crown and glory were studded with gems. The mantle had a rich border of small flowers; and traces of a diapered pattern were discernible on most of the draperies. The cushion, on which the Saint was seated, was covered with cloth of gold elaborately worked; at her feet reclined a lamb, and on the right and left of her head were

traces of two other figures, apparently of bishops, over the monks.

Those who have been engaged in examinations of this kind, are well aware how difficult it is to make out a subject accurately when the lines are partially obscured or obliterated. In the present instance this difficulty was much increased, by patches of the later painting being left adhering to the original design. A portion of green, the colour of the lady's robe, still covered the bottom of the drapery at St. Agnes' feet, and rendered the figure of a lamb, which was to be discerned, very obscure, and it was impossible to make it clearly out. The etching is a faithful transcript of all that remained, and better illustrates the subject than any verbal description. The original was twelve feet high, and about seven wide. The letters at the base of the left-hand pillar, forming "*Jon bridale,*" may belong to the legends, or may be the name of the artist or author. These legends were two; one on either side in a scroll, and in English; but their purport has hitherto baffled all my attempts at interpretation, and is still a mystery. I carefully transcribed the characters; and the following facsimiles may, I hope, enable some one learned in such things to point out the sense, or to refer me to the source from whence the artist may have taken them. On the right hand are the words,

*Wenie your be ban er be with you pre to God we make
good ende yt be wthe wt his blod so brith.*

On the left hand:

*You preyre many hebene queyn yt bar ye low yt blisful fode
yt this blisse we mou hi sein yt schr us alle + + +
on rode.*

At the bottom, on the centre panel of the canopy:

SANCTA. AGNES.

I may mention that Cawston Church is dedicated to St. Agnes.