On Recently Discovered Mural Paintings in our English Churches.

BY

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ON RECENTLY DISCOVERED MURAL PAINTINGS IN OUR ENGLISH CHURCHES.

By C. E. KEYSER, M.A., F.S.A.

In February and May, 1896, I read a paper before this Society on the subject of the recent discoveries of mural paintings in our churches and other ancient buildings which had been brought to light, or to my notice, since the publication of the South Kensington List in 1883.[1] I now propose to continue the report up to the present time, as although only a short time has elapsed since the publication of my last paper, a certain number of interesting finds have been noted, which may well be collected, so as to form a short but comprehensive treatise of our subject up to date. I only wish I could produce some illustrations, but my attempts to have some of the series photographed have not turned out very successful, and I have not thought it worth while to make any further effort in this direction.

Starting from the eastern counties, I must first mention some paintings recently discovered at Norwich Cathedral, chiefly in the south aisle, which have been duly described by Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, and an account of them published in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, XVII. 308. At Ranworth Church, Norfolk, which is now undergoing restoration, is a decorative border, and traces of paintings are discernible beneath the whitewash on the nave walls, which will, I hope, be explored, when the new roof has been placed in position. At Carleton Rode, in the same county, visited in 1897, are numerous consecration crosses, which have been repainted. The chancel screen, simply referred to as "painted" in the List, has figures of St. Paul and the eleven Apostles, omitting St. Matthew, all well and boldly depicted on the panels.

At Tacolneston close by is, on the north wall of the

[1] See *Archæological Journal*, LIII. (2nd Series III.) 108, 160-191, 192.

chancel, a very beautiful consecration cross, with a white rim, a sort of olive green ground, and chocolate-coloured lines forming the arms. The lower portion of the screen, now standing against the chancel wall, has been preserved. Only two of the panels have been painted, but the colouring is so fresh and brilliant that it suggests the idea that the work must have been stopped by the advent of the Reformation. The mouldings of the panels have been painted ivory white, with flowers and foliage in red and green, quite equal in their execution to the magnificent examples at Ranworth and Attleborough. The panels have been decorated with gilding and gesso work, and there has been a subject on each which has been intentionally injured. On the one panel is an outdoor scene with trees, half a cell, a kneeling figure of a monk in black with hand on a book, while a richly vested female holding a box stands over him. On the next panel adjoining the former doors is a scarlet bed, two windows, etc. a kneeling figure in black, another figure richly robed standing over, and perhaps an animal, possibly a lion, at his or her feet. The painting is very good, but the faces have been wilfully scratched over. It is rare to find subjects like these painted on the panels of the Norfolk screens, and it is uncertain to what these refer, though it has been suggested that they are intended to represent the temptation and death of St. Anthony.

In this same year (1897) I was asked by the Council of the Society of Antiquaries to go down to Dovercourt, in Essex, and see whether any discoveries of importance had been made there. Accordingly I paid a visit to the church in October, and found the work of restoration still going on. The walls were in a very bad condition, but traces of texts, etc. were everywhere apparent. At the east end of the nave on the north side is the Lord's Prayer twice in red and black letter with rich crimson border, perhaps of the periods of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth. There are traces of vermilion colouring belonging to an earlier series. Between the window and north doorway are the Commandments of Elizabethan date, and part of an earlier subject, apparently our Lord with cruciform nimbus, holding some object with

yellow waved lines in his left hand. On the south wall are traces of texts, and a nice decorative border in crimson is carried along above the wallplate and round the head of the window. Above the doorway is an ermine cap and feathers; on the plaster above it were the letters "Henri y IV." I believe that similar caps were afterwards found on other parts of the walls.

At St. Alban's Cathedral, on the east wall of the chapel enclosing the shrine of St. Alban, a small portraiture of an archbishop, corresponding with that of St. William of York on the same wall, has recently been brought to light. In July of last year my attention was drawn to some discoveries at Abbots Langley, in Hertfordshire, and accordingly, accompanied by my friend Mr. P. H. Newman, who is an expert in these matters, I paid an early visit to the church. The paintings are on the walls of the beautiful decorated chapel on the south side of the chancel. On the east wall, on the north side of the east window, was a large figure of a bishop, and a corresponding one on the south side was afterwards uncovered by Mr. Newman. On the south and west walls were a series of small subjects within square divisions separated by a bright vermilion border, which are thought to represent scenes in the earthly life of Christ. The date seems to be of the early part of the fourteenth century.

In 1897 I received information as to the finding of some paintings at Rampton and Kingston, in Cambridgeshire, and accordingly in September I was able to run down and inspect them. At Rampton on the north wall of the nave near the east end was a very large portraiture of St. Christopher. The whitewash had been very carelessly removed, and only the head and upper part of the saint, with the Infant Christ seated on his shoulder, could be clearly deciphered. Above is a pretty foliaged pattern with bunches of berries. In the lower part of the painting, the St. Christopher, which probably dates from the fifteenth century, has been scraped away, and the operator has uncovered an earlier pattern of double lines enclosing trefoils in red, with a very bold scroll border of the thirteenth century. Traces of decoration occur on other parts of the walls,

round the chancel arch, etc. Round the head and down the jambs of the north doorway is a pattern of dentils in red. An account of the paintings is to be found in the *East Anglian*, VII. (new series), 253–5.

At Kingston, visited on the same day, the church had been recently restored and several very interesting paintings brought to light, but all in a somewhat mutilated condition. Over the chancel arch on a red ground were traces of a large subject, probably the Doom. On the north wall of the north aisle between the two east windows is the familiar portraiture of St. Christopher, most of the upper part having been destroyed. In the next space westward, and partly over the west doorway, is a large representation of St. George and the Dragon. St. George is riding on a white horse, and his spear has pierced the neck of the prostrate dragon, which has the head and jaws of a crocodile. On the same north wall are traces of two other subjects not yet divested of the whitewash. On the west wall, partly concealed by the present lean-to roof, is a large and interesting example of the wheel of the seven deadly sins. In the upper part is a large wheel with yellow rim and spokes having an edging of red. There is a medallion in the centre, and traces of the representations of the sins between the spokes. On the upper side left are parts of a figure, probably a demon. Below, the subject is somewhat confused, but is, I think, intended for the jaws of Hell. A large demon on the left with horns, bat's wings, and tail is blowing a horn, and there seem to be at least four figures in the mouth of Hell, some apparently having been hauled in. The idea seems to be that the wheel is revolving, and that the sins, as they arrive at the bottom, are seized and hurled down into the depths of Hell.[1] These paintings are apparently of the fifteenth century.

In 1898 the restoration of Barby Church, Northamptonshire, near Rugby, was commenced, and I was asked by the rector to pay him a visit and give him some advice on the discoveries he had made. Accordingly, in June, when the restoration was still in progress, I went

[1] For list of the various examples of this subject, see *Archæological Journal*, XLIX. 343.

down in the hope that, as in the case of many of the other Northamptonshire churches, interesting specimens of mural paintings might be brought to light. In this I was somewhat disappointed. The church had been previously thoroughly churchwardenised, and the walls were in a rotten condition. The chancel arch has been coloured in red, and the voussoirs of the soffit have been painted alternately red and white with blotches of a deep red. There are texts of various dates on east wall of nave and in north aisle. On east wall of north aisle is a pattern of lilies, and the same design appears on two niches in the north wall. There are traces all along the north wall, and by the north door a gigantic foot, part of a bare leg, and several fish in the water, demonstrating the former existence of a large picture of St. Christopher. To the west of the doorway, and on south wall of south aisle, were further traces of colour, but nothing of interest has, it is believed, been since discovered.

In 1898 I was asked by the Society of Antiquaries to report upon some paintings which had been found at Stowell, in Gloucestershire, and accordingly in October of that year and in the following spring I visited the church, and collected the materials for a short paper, which was read before the Society and appears in Vol. XVII. p. 382, of their Proceedings. The little church was mainly built during the last quarter of the twelfth century, and the paintings chiefly belong to this date. The principal remains are on the north wall of the nave, opposite to the main entrance, but there is some evidence that the subject was continued along the west and south walls of the nave and the walls of the south transept, though here we have portions of later subjects mixed up with the earlier series. The main picture provides us with a very early representation of the Doom. In the centre, under a semi-circular headed arch, is a figure of our Lord seated and with both hands upraised. On either side have been three similar arches, within each of which are seated two of the Apostles. St. Peter occupies the position on the right, and St. Paul on the left of our Lord. There are traces of angels above, at the side, and below, and several nude figures, some collected in a sheet, no doubt portray the risen souls receiving the

blessing or curse from the lips of their Divine Judge. On the transept walls seem to be represented the punishments of the condemned, though not very distinct, and there are the remains of later paintings, the subjects of which are also uncertain. On the interior of the tympanum of the Norman south doorway is a scroll and foliage pattern in grey with some lettering of the fifteenth century.

The beautiful church of Bishops Cleeve, near Cheltenham, in this same county, has recently been undergoing restoration, and on the occasion of a visit to it last October, to renew my acquaintance with the magnificent late Norman work with which it abounds, several paintings were noted as having been recently brought to light. In the south transept is a blocked Norman south window, with considerable remains of decoration, a bold scroll in red, starting from a head in the centre of a pale grey colour, and alternate squares of red and grey round the head, and a masonry pattern of double red lines enclosing cinquefoils on the splays. On some steps in the sill of the window is a lozenge pattern in grey. All the colouring seems to be of thirteenth century date. In the east wall of the north transept is a semi-circular headed monumental recess, and at the back a rather indistinct painting of the Crucifixion. In the centre is our crucified Saviour, with the Blessed Virgin and St. John the Evangelist on either side. On the south is a figure of St. John the Baptist holding a medallion on which is represented the Agnus Dei, while on the north side is a royal personage crowned but not nimbed. Behind the figure of the Virgin, which is on the north side, is a small kneeling portraiture of the donor. The only colours now visible are deep red and vermilion, and the date seems to be of the latter part of the reign of Edward III. or the second half of the fourteenth century. On the north wall of the north aisle is part of an early text with red and yellow border, and the lower portion of a richly coloured representation of St. Christopher of fifteenth century date. There is some earlier colouring mixed up with this painting, and traces of texts, etc. on other parts of the north wall, which have not yet been explored.

In a beautiful chapel on the south side of the south aisle is the effigy of a lady with considerable remains of the original decoration. On the walls of the parvise over the south porch are several large subjects said to have been executed by a schoolmaster who formerly officiated there. There is a battle scene with elephants, etc. a lion, tiger, skeleton, and portrait of the schoolmaster, all exhibiting considerable merit. They are stated to have been painted in 1817.

At the interesting abbey of Hailes, visited on the same day as Bishops Cleeve, I found most of the objects which had been discovered during the recent excavations had been locked up, but a series of six very large and most beautiful bosses from the Chapter House roof were still on view. These were of the thirteenth century. All have bold foliage sculptured on them, and bear strong traces of gilding and red, green, and blue colouring. On one is a representation of Samson slaying the lion. A figure with long garment and hair is standing over the lion and wrenching open its jaws with his hands. Both figures are painted red, and the sculpture is admirably rendered.

At Fairford, in the same county, on the piers of the tower arches of the well-known church are some paintings which do not seem to have been satisfactorily explained. On the north-east pier is a large figure of an ecclesiastic, with a hermit's cell above him, holding a crozier, and another can be discerned on the north-west pier. On the south-east pier is a representation of the Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John, and in a hollow moulding on either side are the implements of the Passion, viz. a ladder, lance and reed, cup, the dice, etc. These date from the early part of the sixteenth century.

At Kelmscott Church, Oxfordshire, there are considerable remains of mural paintings, though more might, I think, still be uncovered. The arches of the north nave arcade of transitional Norman character have been decorated with red colouring. There is a bold scroll on the faces and soffits of the arches and a trellis pattern on the eastern respond. In the north transept have been a series of subjects under rounded trefoiled

arches with heads painted between the arches, which are coloured in red and yellow. The subjects on the west and north walls are not clear, but on the east is the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, two of the scenes depicting the daughter of Herodias dancing, turning a somersault, before Herod, and the executioner with the head of the saint on a charger. The date seems to be late in the thirteenth century.

I have received information from the Rev. E. H. Goddard of the finding of some paintings at South Newington, in Oxfordshire, which I have not yet had an opportunity of inspecting. The following subjects are stated to be still visible. On the jamb of the east window of the north aisle is a portraiture of St. Margaret. On jambs of window in the north wall are the Virgin and Child and two kneeling donors, and probably the Annunciation with kneeling figure of donor and armorial shield below. Farther west is a large and somewhat confused subject, alleged to represent the martyrdom of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

At Maids Moreton Church in Buckinghamshire, during the recent restoration, two paintings were brought to light in the chancel. One on the south side on the back of the sedilia represents the Last Supper. It is somewhat fragmentary, but the table can be made out, and part of the figure of our Lord and His hand pushing the sop across to Judas, who has a bag in his hand. Traces of the other Apostles are also discernible. The colours used are grey, red, and brown. On the corresponding space on the north side of chancel is the Crucifixion, but the whitewash has been only partially removed, so that the lower part alone of the subject is visible. The paintings seem to be of the same date as the church, or about the year 1480. At Great Missenden Church, in the same county, visited in February of the present year, while still undergoing restoration, are considerable remains of decoration. Several niches have been very richly coloured, one large one in the north transept or chapel having a very beautiful pattern of pomegranates on the back, with the outline of the statue which once stood there clearly defined. It is doubtless very late and probably about the year 1500.

At Drayton Church, Berkshire, some portions of a very highly decorated reredos, formerly stowed away in the church chest, have again been brought to light, and are now placed in the sill of a window on the east side of the south transept. There are six subjects arranged from north to south in the following order: (i) The Assumption of the Virgin; (ii) the Annunciation; (iii) the Adoration of the Magi; (iv) the Betrayal; (v) the Scourging; and (vi) the Entombment, with the Marys at the Sepulchre. The date is probably early fifteenth century. At Kingston Lisle, in the same county, visited in 1896, are several paintings which have been described in the *Reliquary*, VI. new series, 143. The subjects are in the chancel, and all are on a deep red ground. In the splays of the east window are full-sized figures of St. Peter and St. Paul of fifteenth century date. On either side of the east window is a painted niche with a figure depicted on the wall above it. On the north wall are two scenes in the history of St. John the Baptist, viz. Herodias's daughter dancing in the usual conventional fashion before Herod, and presenting her mother with the head of St. John on a charger. These seem to be of the fourteenth century. On the upper splay of the north window is the head of our Lord with cruciform nimbus. On the east wall are painted the folds of a curtain, and there are zigzag borderings and other traces on various portions of the chancel walls, red being the predominant colour. At the desecrated Norman church at Hatford, in the same county, are remains of decoration, which have been brought to light by the falling away of the whitewash. On the south wall of the nave are two figures under a canopy, perhaps the Annunciation, and masonry and other ornamental patterns are everywhere visible. In the splays of the Norman windows in the chancel are red roses, and there are other remains in this part of the church. In the *Reliquary*, VI. new series, 147, is an illustration of the subject of the Crucifixion, stated to be still visible in 1892 on the walls of this church.

The very ancient church of Ford, near Arundel, in Sussex, has recently been undergoing restoration, and a

visit was paid to it last November.[1] On the north wall of the nave is part of what is said to be a Saxon consecration cross, and varied decoration, partly, perhaps, of the Norman period. On the south wall is a figure of our Lord with a group of other personages, and on the east splay of the east window probably the Agony in the Garden. Over the chancel arch is a large representation of the Doom, of the fifteenth century. On the north side are one or two groups of small heads with yellow hair. On the south near the middle are two groups of heads, and above the lower a large shield with the thumb of the angel holding it, probably as a protection against a demon, to the south of it. The group below no doubt represents the saved passing to the north. In the south corner are several demons, more heads, and probably the jaws of Hell. The figures are about two feet high, and the treatment of the subject is similar to that at Ashmansworth. In the south transept at Boxgrove, visited on the following day, is some decorative colouring not previously noted. Within a blocked Norman window in the east wall is a painted niche, and on the same wall a masonry pattern of double lines and foliage, and perhaps a portion of a large subject. In the south-west corner is a small figure and an indistinct object below it.

At Breamore Church, Hampshire, visited in May, 1898, is the interesting sculpture of the Rood, now within the south porch over the south doorway, and described in Vol. LV. p. 86, of our Society's journal. The figures of our Lord on the Cross with the Virgin and St. John have been sculptured in stone, while the intervening wall spaces have been painted with a church, etc. and the sacred monogram and other decorations appear on the east and west walls. The treatment is less elaborate, but carried out on the same principle as the well known representation of the Doom at Wenhaston Church, Suffolk.

At the little church of Ashmansworth, also in Hampshire, some early painting had been previously discovered on the north side of the chancel, which was referred to

[1] A full description of the church and its paintings has been communicated to the *Sussex Archæological Collections*, xliii. 105, by Mr. P. M. Johnston, the architect for the restoration of the church.

in my paper read before this Society in 1896, but it was not until last year, when a more systematic scheme of restoration was commenced, that the walls were properly examined. At the request of those interested in the work, I paid a visit to the church in September of last year. I found that considerable remains of paintings had been uncovered on the nave walls, the most notable being on the east wall, above and on either side of the chancel arch. On and above the arch is a trellis pattern formed by pale red intersecting lines, and there have been two tiers of subjects divided by a deep red border enclosing scroll foliage. Above has been a similar border mixed up with later paintings. On the lower tier have been four large subjects within circular medallions. The ground between them has been painted a deep red, but the figures are now only shown in outline. The subject on the north has been obliterated, but the next one is a representation of the Descent into Hell. There is a tall figure of Christ with bare feet, trampling on a prostrate demon, with various figures kneeling before Him. More figures are portrayed emerging from the jaws of Hell, which are depicted by a semi-circular band of yellow on the south side. A border of roses of later date has been painted over the lower portion of the picture. In the next medallion to the south of the chancel arch is a large tomb, much resembling the back of a chair or bed, with at least four nimbed figures at the side of it. This is probably intended to portray the Marys at the Sepulchre and the Resurrection. Between this and the next medallion is a church with curious cupola or low spire at the west end, and red lines indicating the slope of the roof. In the next compartment under a semi-circular arch are several nimbed figures and a large white dove with extended wings above them, no doubt a representation of the day of Pentecost. The various figures in this series are about three feet in height. In the tier above are several large figures, those over the chancel arch with the nimbus, and they seem to have formed part of an early representation of the Doom. The date of this series seems to be late in the twelfth century. The royal arms and supporters have been painted on the wall over the central portion of the

subject. Above and probably over the earlier painting is a late fifteenth century picture of the Doom. The legs of several nude figures are visible on the north side, evidently hurrying towards the north, where the gate of Heaven is usually depicted. A figure in a shroud, and two more rising from the tombs, and fragments of others also remain. In the upper south corner is a very large demon with long tail above several figures with clasped hands and perhaps flames of fire, indicating the jaws of Hell. The groundwork is green, and the treatment similar to the same subject at Ford (see *ante*). On the north wall are traces of the earlier painting, and a seventeenth century version of the Lord's Prayer, and farther west part of a fifteenth century portraiture of St. Christopher with some indistinct black letter inscriptions. On the south wall are traces of other subjects and seventeenth century texts. On the north wall is the outline of a consecration cross, and there are two more on the south.

At the neighbouring church of Burghclere numerous paintings were discovered some years ago, but have been whitewashed over. One of the subjects is said to have been the martyrdom of St. Sebastian. At the fine Norman church of Kingsclere some interesting decoration was found within the splays of the Norman windows in the nave, but it has been entirely destroyed.

At Salisbury Cathedral the great west door has been elaborately ornamented with painted figures under canopies now very indistinct. Several other recent finds in Wiltshire have been brought to my notice by the Rev. E. H. Goddard. At the noble church of Bishops Cannings[1] figure subjects were found in an arched recess on east wall of transept, and thirteenth century masonry patterns on the walls of the transept and the vaulting of the chancel. At Purton[2] Church considerable remains of colour, and the raising of Jairus's daughter, a rare subject in mural painting, were brought to light during the restoration, and at Wanborough[3] Church, on the north wall, our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. At Imber Church is some decorative colouring on the

[1] *Wilts Archæological Magazine*, XXIII. 9, 10.
[2] *Ibid.*, XXIII. 237.
[3] *Ibid.*, XXIII. 243.

nave arcade, and on the north wall of the north aisle, a series of paintings, one probably the purging of the seven deadly sins. At Keevil Church, the fifteenth century decoration of the nave roof has been discovered and restored. At Brinkworth Church the wall over the chancel arch has been richly coloured, and there are two courses of decoration on either side. On the north wall is an angel (?), and remains of larger figures. On a pillar near the south door is the painting of a saint, and remains of colour are visible on the east column of the south nave arcade. This is mainly of fifteenth century date. At Lacock Abbey two paintings were found at the back of the lavatory. In the larger recess is the abbess carrying her crozier and kneeling to a saint, probably St. Augustine, who is in the attitude of benediction, while in the smaller recess is apparently a female saint, the most distinct portion being the head of a crozier.

At Charminster, Dorsetshire, where the church was visited by our Society in 1897, and by me in September of that year, a good deal of painting had been recently brought to light, though unfortunately in a rather fragmentary condition. Over the chancel arch have been a series of subjects, but only one, probably representing the descent of our Lord into Hell, seems capable of identification. There is some very beautiful decoration on the north and south walls of the nave near the east end, of date about 1500, and the Creed and some early texts. On either side of the upper part of the tower-arch is painted a tree, that on the north with pale red leaves and branches; that on the south is black and yellow, and growing out of a vase. On the north-east buttress is painted the word "MORO."

At the parish church at Barnstaple, in Devonshire, on the south wall at west end of north aisle, is a large figure of a bishop in the act of benediction, standing probably over a prostrate figure not now discernible, while an abbess holding a crozier stands on the opposite side.

At Poundstock Church, Cornwall, two very interesting paintings have been recently uncovered, and were inspected by me in October of last year. There have been three subjects on the north wall of the north aisle, over

and at the sides of the north doorway. Of the central subject nothing can now be made out. That on the west side, surrounded by a scroll border, is a representation of the Tree of the Seven Deadly Sins, showing the head of pride with an attendant demon at the top, and the other sins at the extremities of the branches. There have been scrolls with the title of each sin, but only one on the east side remains. The painting is not very distinct. The subject on the east is the Christian representative surrounded by various implements.[1] The figure is outlined in yellow, above life size, and rather indistinct. It may be partly in armour. There is a saw right across the body, and other metal instruments, such as a sickle, shears, balances, sword, knife, gridiron, etc. are depicted around it. There is a similar border to the other picture with a red rose at each corner, which seems to indicate that it was executed in the reign of Henry VI., or about the year 1450. The chancel screen with figures of saints on the panels had been removed to the vicarage on the occasion of my visit.

At Poughill, in the same county, visited on the following day, are two large representations of St. Christopher, which have unfortunately been brilliantly repainted at the instance of the late vicar. On the north wall of the north aisle, within an elaborate border, is the larger of the two pictures. In this example the saint is crowned, the vicar having adopted the theory that this was St. Olave, though no trace of a crown is visible in an original drawing of the unrestored painting which has been shown to me. It has all the usual adjuncts of the subject of St. Christopher, our Saviour on his shoulder, the hermit with his lantern and cell, the fish in the water, a mermaid, boats, etc. Some white roses on the border show the date to be about 1470. Nearly opposite, on the south wall of the south aisle, is the second example, very similar in its treatment, and undoubtedly of the same date. The figure of the saint is at least eight feet in height, and in this instance he is not crowned. Part of an inscription in English, "Bear I never so heavy a burth," and the word "wonder" can be deciphered. The border is similar to that in the north

[1] For list of similar examples see *Archæological Journal*, LIII. 177.

aisle. It is very curious that this subject, popular though it undoubtedly was, should thus have been twice painted at the same time in a small remote country church.

On the north wall of the chancel of the church of Morwenstow, visited on the same day, is a painting supposed to represent St. Morwenna. Under a rounded trefoiled arch coloured yellow is a female figure with veil, yellow dress, and cloak outlined in red. She holds a book in the left hand and is giving the benediction with the right over the head of a kneeling figure of a priest with his hands clasped. There is some decoration in yellow above. The figures are rather over half life size. Does this represent the priest who built the chancel in the thirteenth century, invoking the blessing of the patron saint on his work? The date of the painting is about 1250. On the north side of the chancel is preserved a curious piece of wood carving, with a castle and various animals and heads, all richly gilded and coloured. It may date from the fifteenth century.

In addition to these paintings in our churches, a few examples have been noted in our domestic buildings. On the wall of the attic at Costessey Hall, Norfolk, is depicted a view of a park with trees, palings, and various figures. It seems to be coeval with this part of the house, which was erected in 1564. At Pevensey, Sussex, is an old house, said to have been occupied by Edward VI. and his tutor. In an upper room is part of a border in grey, with winged cherubs outlined in grey, part of a crown, etc. There is a date on the house, 1542, and the painting may be of that period. At an old house facing the church at Newbury, Berkshire, some thin fascia boards had been affixed to the main beams of the ceiling of two large rooms on the first floor. On these some sentences in black letter had been painted, an account of which appeared in the *Morning Post* of September 7th, 1897. From the character of the borders and lettering they most probably date from the time of Henry VIII. At Brightwell, near Wallingford, also in Berkshire, some paintings have been found on the walls of an old cottage, apparently illustrating texts from the Song of Solomon, and of early seventeenth century date.

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To Mr Solomon Pennach
with the Author's compliments

[*From the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, Feb.* 18, 1904.]

P. H. NEWMAN, Esq., read the following notes on the preservation of some ancient wall-paintings:

"It is now about twelve years ago that the late Mr. Loftus Brock, a Fellow of this Society, consulted me as to the best means of preserving some ancient mural paintings at Canterbury, which were at that time in a ruinous condition, and fast fading from the walls they were intended to adorn. After some consideration of a subject of which I then knew theoretically but little, and practically nothing, I suggested a mode of treatment which Mr. Brock agreed with me in thinking that, if it did not absolutely effect the object desired, it could at least do no harm. It should be said, moreover, that any compunction we might have had as to risk to the paintings would have been lessened by the observations of their then guardian on what was as obvious to ourselves, that if something was not done very soon there would be no paintings to preserve. The works referred to were severally at Eastbridge Hospital, and in the church of St. Alphege at Canterbury, and St. Nicholas, the church of the Lepers' Hospital at Harbledown. The paintings at the two places last mentioned had then but recently been uncovered, and much speculation had arisen as to their subjects. It was my discovery of the subjects of these paintings which first called attention to the operations I was engaged in, and raised question and criticism of an impatient character as to my qualifications for dealing with these ancient monuments with the view of their preservation. My reply to these questions was that, as my operations were in the nature of an experiment, it would be both premature and unfair to disclose them, both in relation to myself and the works under treatment, and might be indeed actually mischievous in case other persons with more zeal than discretion should be tempted to essay elsewhere a process which was tentative, and at the best had not, and could not at the time have been, proved successful. If this evasion of disclosure gave offence in some quarters, as

I have been led to believe it did, while I regret the fact, I can only say that it was in the nature of things, and that no other course appeared open to me.

Before coming to the explanation of my own method of treating these wall-paintings, and, as I conceive, its *rationale*, it may be well to summarise those processes for preservation which have been ordinarily used, so that points of similarity may be the more readily observed.

The best known authorities on the subject are Mr. J. G. Waller and Professor A. H. Church. Mr. Waller, after giving careful and elaborate directions for the removal of superimposed whitewash, says: 'In discussing the mode of preserving these paintings by a varnish, it must be well considered. On stone, or upon a sound wall, no doubt some such manipulation may be very effective, if properly done. But the decay of wall-painting when exposed to the air, damp, etc., arises from the loss of the material by which the colours were originally tempered. The medium is not so durable as the colour, and damp succeeded by dryness, and the variations of our climate, tend to its disintegration; it comes off in dust or powder. This even takes place in "fresco buono," as may be seen in many churches in Italy, giving rise to the report of the colours fading. The colours do not fade, they simply disintegrate and fall off in dust.

To restore to the decaying tempera painting the medium it has partially lost could be done by means of a spray, casting upon the surface a dilution of size in alcohol and water to make it sufficiently thin for the process. This could be done to any wall, however soft, with success; but a hard varnish upon a soft wall would certainly hasten the decay.'

Professor Church, after equally careful instruction for removing whitewash from the surface of the ancient paintings, gives the following recipe for a fixing solution:

'Melt 2 ounces by weight of pure white beeswax, and pour the melted wax into 6 ounces by measure of oil of spike lavender or oil of orange peel. Warm the mixture until it is clear, and then add 10 ounces by measure of picture copal varnish and 26 ounces of freshly distilled spirits of turpentine.

The above mixture is to be applied warm by means of a broad flat soft brush to the wall picture.'

'Sometimes,' says the Professor, 'it is necessary, if the colour be at all easily detached to apply the fixing liquid to the wall by means of a *spray producer*. A scent distributor worked by an india-rubber ball, by bellows, or by Fletcher's foot-blower will answer.'

These extracts are taken from Mr. Keyser's comprehensive *List of Buildings in Great Britain and Ireland having Mural and other Painted Decorations*, published by direction of the Department of Science and Art.

Now while agreeing with Mr. Waller that a hard varnish will hasten the decay, it is possible to use Professor Church's recipe with success provided it is used in a proper way, *i.e.* with certain modifications, not as to material, but application. But first let us gauge the effect of the hard varnish Mr. Waller judiciously deprecates. There is, of course, varnish and varnish, and many kinds darken speedily, especially if they contain, as in the commoner sorts, a proportion of litharge as a drier. The use of such a varnish as this by whatever method would be fatal, as in a short time on stone or plaster the painting would be so degraded in its lighter portions as to be indistinguishable, and it is for this reason that Professor Church suggests a recipe for a fluid which gives the least chance of darkening. But this risk, after all, is incomparable with the greater one of using a viscous fluid even thinly on a more or less porous wall surface, unless it has been subjected to previous and careful treatment. The pores are choked, the surface ceases to allow perspiration or evaporation of confined moisture, or the free exit of rarefied air, and these imprisoned forces quickly burst their bonds, carrying with them the pigments used in the paintings.

This has occurred so frequently as scarcely to need further reference, and has been acknowledged as the result of a pernicious practice certain to result in a short time in the destruction of that which it was intended to preserve.

Now it will be observed that Professor Church does not recommend the use of the medium, of which he has given a recipe, in a state of viscosity; he is careful to advise its application as a preservative to ancient mural paintings in a very dilute and fluid condition, and I have little doubt that its use in many instances under favourable conditions would be attended with success. But in dealing with the paintings I have referred to I had neither Professer Church's knowledge of chemistry nor his experience of the behaviour of wall surfaces, and yet it was essential to run no risks.

I therefore determined to make experiments.* I soon found that although a weak size medium presented more affinities to the fixatif originally used in the paintings than

* These experiments were made in my own studio upon plaster surfaces on which I had painted with colours containing insufficient tempera medium to fix them, thus representing as nearly as might be the condition of old and desiccated works.

one composed of oils and spirits, its application either by means of brush or spray was attended by considerable danger of smearing or obliteration, and I came to the conclusion that any medium containing water should be avoided altogether, and that if the paintings were to be preserved intact, after the removal of the whitewash, some spirit or varnish medium must be used. But the questions still remained, What? and How?

I had about the time of which I am speaking been painting a good deal in spirit fresco, with a medium from a recipe given me some years before its publication by the late Gambier Parry. I had a quantity of this medium by me, I had made it myself, and could rely on the quality of its components; they were with one exception the same as those used in the preparation of the preservative recommended by Professor Church, and I deemed that, if this could be used thinly, my Gambier Parry medium was exactly the material I required for my purpose. But then, how should it be applied? Of course thinly, as I knew the risk of choking I have referred to, but how thinly was the point, and I not unnaturally decided that I could scarcely use it too thinly to begin with. Theoretically, I may be told that I was entirely wrong, but the result has most fully justified my theory, which ran something like this:

If I drench the wall with approximately pure spirit I shall not injure the tempera painting upon it; while in a comparatively short time I shall render the wall more than normally dry by evaporation, and lessen the risk of choking and subsequent disaster.

I therefore treated the wall as one treats a photographic gelatino-bromide film one is anxious to dry rapidly. The after measures were simple enough, but involved some patience and time. The climatic and local conditions being favourable to rapid drying, I proceeded the day after the preliminary drenching to use the medium in its weakest form, and the following day a little stronger. I used three strengths of solution of the medium, but nothing at all approaching viscosity, even at the last, when the wall had become practically non-absorbent, and I used the liquid warm.

It will, I think, be allowed, if the method indicated be considered, that the result of applying a fixing liquid in increasing strengths after the normal moisture of the wall has been evaporated is to run the least risk of choking until the porous surface has been entered or permeated to some depth, and so to speak built up.

And if this be so the process affords a reasonable hope that

the bond of wall and painting is sufficient to give it considerable permanence. It must, I think, also be admitted that although practically a varnish is used, the method is not that of varnishing, but a saturation of surface to a considerable depth, increasing in tenacity from the depth to the surface, and affording at the least quite as good a keying to the wall as any application of liquid size, and without the accompanying inconvenience.

If it should be objected that any varnish, oil, or spirit fixer is antipathetic to tempera or fresco medium in which these ancient works were painted, and that for their preservation nothing could be better for the purpose than a liquid containing such ingredients, I must at the risk of repeating myself urge the weightier objections to the use of size or any aqueous medium at all.

The first is of course that by the use of water you are adding moisture to a surface you wish to dry, and the next is that the colours of these paintings, desiccated by time, with much of their original fixing perished, are exceedingly soluble in water and apt to run either under brush or spray. At any rate my experience goes to show that the work is done much more safely with spirit than with water, a fact that may be emphasized by another, viz. that I have found very rare instances where it was necessary to use a spray. In nearly all cases I have been able to effect even the earliest saturations with a large flat brush fully charged with medium and drawn once only lightly over the painting. I have not in this paper referred in any way to the preliminary removal of coatings of white or colour wash, this will vary in process with the circumstances, but I should remark that before the drenching process or application of any medium the work should be lightly but thoroughly brushed with a painter's badger softener.

These methods or processes of preservation, as I have said, I used at Canterbury twelve years ago. More recently I have been honoured by the request of Mr. Keyser to collaborate with him in an investigation of the walls of the church of St. Mary at Aldermaston. The discovery of paintings there is sufficiently well known to call for any further reference than in connection with the subject of this paper, and to say that the same treatment which I am advocating now, and which was successful at Canterbury, I used with equal success in the preservation of the Aldermaston paintings.

Mr. Keyser's wide knowledge of mural paintings, as shown in his valuable catalogue, constitutes him so reliable an authority on the condition of these works when uncovered

and at subsequent periods, that I have been much gratified to hear from him from time to time that the paintings show no sign of deterioration or degradation of colour from their original state after the removal of the superimposed white-wash, and when they emerged in their strength on the first application of the medium. In regard to the state of the Canterbury paintings, I visited Mr. Crosse, the Master of Eastbridge Hospital, in the summer of 1896, *i.e.* about three years and a half after my experiment, with the view of ascertaining the result after what I deemed a reasonable interval. In Mr. Crosse's presence I sponged portions of the Eastbridge painting with water, and afterwards, when dry, brushed it over with turpentine spirit; none of the pigment coming off under either process. I applied the same severe test to the paintings on the wall of St. Alphege's and the splay of the window of St. Nicholas, Harbledown, where I had found and treated with preservative solution the subject of the Annunciation. The painting at St. Alphege's, the Adoration of the Magi, stood the test well; the Annunciation at Harbledown not quite so well, there being a tendency for the pigment to yield in some places. I think, however, it is a fair surmise to account for a little failure of fixation in the Harbledown splay from the fact that the time at my disposal there did not allow of my carrying out the process with the same care or thoroughness as I had the opportunity of doing at Canterbury. In any case, however, it is desirable to bear in mind that under no circumstances would it have been possible for the paintings to have stood these tests had the fixation been attempted with liquid size.

Before concluding this paper it may be well to refer to the application of the process to the particular instance of the painting on the west side of the window in the transept or chapel at Aldermaston. On the removal of the whitewash here we found a fifteenth-century canopy surmounting some fragments of a subject of a kneeling figure, probably St. Nicholas, as suggested by Mr. Keyser in his description of Aldermaston Church in *The Archæological Journal* for December, 1898. This picture in a fragmentary condition had been painted over, and was adhering to the earlier diapering of rectangular pattern, possibly executed a hundred years previously. The entire work was thus in the nature of a palimpsest, and I experienced no little difficulty in retaining any of the later painting upon the wall. I refer to this picture and its condition because I am bound to say that I could have done nothing in the matter of its preservation,

had I been restricted to the use of fluid size or size and alcohol. I could not have dared an application of any aqueous medium at all. As it was, though the difficulties were great, they were not insuperable, and with much care I was able to restore the adhesion of surfaces in addition to their permanent preservation by injecting between the diapering and the superimposed picture white lead thinned with a solution of shellac.

It is much to be regretted that there was not more of this particularly interesting subject left to preserve, but the lower portion had been ruthlessly cut away for improvements when the churchwardens a few generations ago battened the building throughout, and lined it with lath and plaster.

The question may well arise whether these ancient paintings are in all cases worth the trouble expended on their preservation, and whether after careful note and copy by hand and photograph they might not in many instances yield place to something less crude or even to a fair surface of plain wall. With that question I have nothing to do at the present time; if it arises at all in my mind it is only to emphasize the fact that there are some of these mural works, notably some of those to which I have herein refered, where, as priceless heirlooms of a dead past, monuments of local or national intellectual efforts at certain periods, they deserve for their own sake, as well as for ours, our tenderest care, our most circumspect and earnest efforts to preserve them."