MURAL PAINTING AT MIDDLETON.

MIDDLETON, SUFFOLK. A MURAL PAINTING.

By Charles Ganz.

During the cleaning and white-washing of the interesting parish church of Middleton, a large mural painting, measuring 6 ft. by 4 ft., was uncovered on the north wall of the nave. The subject represents St. Christopher, with his staff in his left hand, bearing the Saviour as a child, who is seated on his right shoulder. The bearded saint, who is depicted with a noble expression, is clothed in a red garment with green coloured sleeves. The Saviour is shown in a green garment, which is covered with brown stars (? formerly gilded), in his left hand holding aloft an ornamental cross, while behind the wavy hair of his head, there are the remaining indications of a nimbus. The neck border of his gown seems to bear traces of gold leaf and has dots on it. The figures exceed life size, and the colours are rich in tone.

Another painting was also discovered on the same wall, nearer the chancel, but being faint it was covered over again. Locally, it is said that a former rector had the paintings covered over, but it is difficult to get at the truth of this assertion, the late rector seeming to be " unaware " of their existence. The painting is presumably late 15th century.

St. Christopher suffered martyrdom under Decius in Lycia. He always carried his ardent love of his Redeemer in his breast as his great and only good treasure. His allegorical wading through tribulation, signified the many sufferings through which he arrived at eternal life.

Mural paintings with a similar subject are recorded as still existing on the north wall of other churches in Suffolk; namely, Gorleston, Preston, Ipswich, Freston, Ilketshall, Bardwell, Martlesham, etc. The illustration of the saint in Fritton Church has a quaint design,

Record is made of similar paintings, white-washed over, in Rushmere Church* and St. Margaret's, Ipswich.

* "List of Buildings having Mural Decorations." C. E. Keyser, M.A.
Eyre and Spottiswoode. 1883. pp. 350-1.