

PICTURE AT HARDWICK HOUSE OF A WINDOW
FORMERLY IN THE ABBEY OF
BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

THE "ICONOTYPICON BURIENSE," OF SPELMAN.

Gradually and silently have the glories of the great Abbey of St. Edmund decayed. Tower and gateway still stand to mark its former grandeur, but little, if any, of its ornament remains. Dr. Montague Rhodes James in his work on *The Abbey Church of St. Edmund at Bury*, has done much to make known the past magnificence of the building, the vastness of its ancient library, and the gradual loss and changes in its adornment. Among the numerous sources whence he obtained his interesting information was the *Collectanea Buriensia* of Sir James Burroughs, the property of St. James' Parish at Bury. From this collection he has given his readers the verses of Sir Henry Spelman, as given in Yates's *History of Bury*, page 177 *et seq.* "upon a painted window" which once stood in a large chamber in the Cellarer's lodgings. To quote Dr. Montague R. James' marginal allusions to Spelman's verses, "the person charged with the destruction of the Abbey saw and marvelled at this picture, and sent for a painter who copied it. Many copies now exist in that district; and an eye-witness assured me of the truth of the matter."

Reference is also given to "a letter from Spelman to Archbishop Ussher, dated Westminster, May 18th, 1621, on the subject of a print of this window which was then in preparation." Spelman asserted that a right honest old gentleman saw the picture standing in the Abbey window, and the painter who took it

out often told him the same about forty years since, *i.e.*, about 1580. Dr. James continues, "It is quite possible that one of the copies of the window may still be in existence and unidentified; the re-discovery of it would help, more than anything else, to decide the question of the real existence of the glass."

Fortunately a copy of the window is in existence, and, through the kindness of our President, Gery Milner-Gibson-Cullum, Esq., in whose possession the painting now is, and who has generously supplied a print of it to the Institute, the reader who is curious or has a care for such matters, can judge for himself how far Spelman was correct in his reading of the subject portrayed.

In 1544 John Eyre received farms and rents once belonging to the Abbey; in 1559 he was appointed to the office of receiver of the Revenue in Norfolk and Suffolk; in the following year, 1560, he bought the site of the Monastery from Queen Elizabeth for £412 19s. 4d., and transferred it to one, John Badley. At the foot of the painting are the following words:—

"This monimet was found in y^e Selerer's great Chamber wyndowe in glasse in y^e monastary of Sceynt Edmonds Burye att y^e dissolution of y^e House, after by John Eyers esquier caused to be paynted as you see in all poynts lyke y^e same."

John Eyre most probably ordered the painting to be made before the year 1560, but whether he obtained the services of a Fleming, as did Clopton to paint the windows of Long Melford Church, or of a native painter, as Mills of Lavenham, employed by Reyce to work in Preston Church, or of a native artist as Sexten of Lavenham, who painted the portraits of Henry VIII. and his queens, we are unable to decide.

It is difficult, too, to decide the date of the original painting, which may have been early sixteenth century or late fifteenth century work.

The picture is 6 ft. 2 in. by 3 ft. 4 in. On the upper part of the *left* division, so called by Spelman, is a representation of Antichrist, enthroned, wearing a triple crown and receiving gifts from the heads of the Church militant. Near by stand two clerics, one clothed in violet, from whose lips proceed, a mischievous looking imp; the other in the scarlet robe of a cardinal. The dead are seen to rise, and the faithful are depicted as suffering martyrdom. Spelman's view is that the picture alludes to the Pope as Antichrist, probably from the triple crown which is depicted. It is hard to accept this view, yet it is strange that the chief officers of the church are represented as supporting Antichrist.

The features of Antichrist are similar to those given to the prophet, Helias, in the lower part of this division of the picture. Here, again, whilst the laity are represented as devout hearers of the words of the prophet, the two clerics in the foreground are marked as scoffers of the word, and a lawyer sleeps soundly whilst the prophet is preaching.

The upper part of the right hand side of the picture gives a representation of St. Paul; in the lower part of the same side the Prophet Malachi is to be seen. This side also contains Scriptural allusions to the subject which the painter had in his mind.

“ Veniet discessio primum et revelatus fuerit homo peccati filius perditionis qui adversatur et extollitur supra omne quod dicitur Deus aut quod colitur ita ut in templo Dei sedeat ostendens se tanquam sit Deus.”
—2 *Thess. ii.*, 3, 4.

“Ecce ego mittam vobis Heliam prophetam antequam veniat dies Domini magnus et horribilis et convertet cor Patrum ad filios et cor filiorum ad patres eorum. Ne forte veniam, et percutiam terram anathemate.”—*Malachi iv.*, 5. 6.

In the following letter, forwarded by Mr. Montgomery Carmichael, H. M. Consul, Leghorn, the writer criticises Spelman's views as to the representation of Antichrist :—

“Sir,—In the extremely interesting and well-informed article on Hardwick House by Miss Lilian Redstone, published in the *East Anglian Daily Times* of September 7th, attention is called to the rare copy on a panel of a stained glass window once in the “Great Chamber” of the Cellarer at Bury. Miss Redstone, following Sir Henry Spelman, speaks of it as containing a representation of the “Pope as Antichrist.” Without looking to the panel for confutation, it is surely safe to say that such a thing could not be. Christians of the Middle Ages believed that Antichrist was one single person, who would have his rise and fall. It was not till after the Reformation that the belief took ground in England that every Pope was Antichrist, thus transforming a single personality, well outlined in Holy Writ and tradition, into a series and succession of personalities.

I have not had the privilege of seeing the priceless panel, but Mr. Milner-Gibson-Cullum has been kind enough to send me a photograph of it. The picture contains all round the fullest refutation of Sir Henry Spelman's unhistorical conclusions. There is Antichrist in it certainly, but no Pope. Antichrist in art is represented like Christ (*e.g.*, Signorelli in the Orvieto frescoes); like Christ, otherwise he could not have deceived mankind. The beard and the long hair in

this figure are utterly un-Popelike, and betray a distinct and by no means unsuccessful, endeavour to portray a resemblance of our Lord. True, Antichrist is wearing the Papal tiara. That is just what one would expect. It is a common thing in art to see our Lord, and even Almighty God Himself, represented with the tiara, for the tiara was considered the most sacred of all crowns. If then used as the crown of Christ, it would be the only possible crown for Antichrist. In the upper dexter of the panel is a representation of St. Paul and a citation from 2 Thess. ii., 3, 4, which exactly explains the attitude and demeanour of Antichrist in the picture, "Ita ut in templo Dei sedeat ostendens se tanquam sit Deus." And there, sure enough, is Antichrist seated in majesty, with orb and sceptre in his hand and a halo round his head, the counterfeit presentment of the God-Man, showing himself forth to the children of men as the God Incarnate. Wickliff and the Waldensians may have called a given Pope Antichrist, but we must altogether put from our minds so unhistorical a notion as that the orthodox monks of Bury would slander in enduring stained glass the Chief Bishop of Christendom, whom England, in those days, in common with all the West, regarded as the Viceregent of God upon earth. Ecclesiastical censures of the severest description, together with a removal of the offending window, would certainly speedily have followed so open a mark of disrespect.—I am, etc.—MONTGOMERY CARMICHAEL.

We think that Mr. Carmichael must be right, but for pre-Reformation identifications of Antichrist with the Pope, all interested in this point should read the article on Antichrist in W. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, London, 1863, Vol. iii, appendix, pages 71, 72.—F. E. W.