

## PAINTINGS ON THE WALLS OF BARDWELL CHURCH.

---

IN the restoration of the church of Bardwell near Ixworth, which was carried on by Mr. Farrow, of Bury, during the spring and summer of 1853, the workmen, in scraping the walls of the nave, disclosed a variety of ancient paintings, covering nearly the whole walls of the church. They attracted considerable attention at the time, and as many, who took an interest in such matters, came to see them, and expressed a great desire for their preservation, tracings were made of some of the most perfect figures by Mr. Bacon, of Bury, and drawings in water-colours of the remainder by Mr. E. Walden, a student of the Royal Academy. These were taken by me to Oxford, and shewn to Mr. Burgon, a Fellow of Oriel-college, who has much taste in painting and ancient records, and he submitted them also to others at Oxford, who are cognisant of such matters, and has furnished me with the result of their observations in the following interesting letter:—

*Oriel, Oct. 22, 1853.*

MY DEAR DUNLAP,—I am going to comply with your request that I would send you a few remarks on the paintings on the walls of Bardwell church, as they are exhibited in the drawings and tracings you were so kind as to show me. I will not waste your time, or my own, by repeating what I have already told you,—namely, that I am induced by friendship towards yourself, *not* by any presumption that I possess real knowledge concerning this class of objects, to commit the following observations to paper:

The paintings in question are not all of one age. The oldest are—

1. *The representation of the legend of St. Catharine.*
2. *The Minstrels.*
3. *The Emblems of the Deadly Sins.*

These three may be referred to the latter part of the 14th century,

or even to the beginning of the 15th. They may be considered, with tolerable certainty, to range from 1380 to 1420.

The next class are—

4. *The representation of the Last Judgment.*

5. *The figure of St. Christopher.*

As far as can be judged from the drawings, these two seem to belong to about the year 1500.

The latest is—

6. *The King of Terrors,*

Which may be referred to the very eve of the Reformation. It looks, in fact, yet more modern : but cannot be so, for obvious reasons.

I will now speak of each of these works, in order, something more in detail.

1. *The legend of St. Catharine*, as I find it set down in books, corresponds sufficiently with the fresco, to make every part of it intelligible ; though it is evident that the artist had in his mind a version of the story differing in some particulars from the legend which I have been myself reading. St. Catharine was an Alexandrian lady of the loftiest rank. Accordingly you will observe that she wears a crown in the picture. She was possessed of exceeding beauty, and of wondrous learning too, as the course of the story shows. At a certain festival, after witnessing the idolatrous sacrifices of the people, she ventured to expostulate on the subject with the Emperor Maximinus : who, in consequence, appointed fifty orators to dispute with the lady, and threatened them with burning if they failed to convince her of her error. You behold three of them, in the picture, enforcing their arguments with most convincing gesticulations. But the lady shows by her attitude that she is by no means without something to reply. In short, my dear Dunlap, she refuted them all ; and persuaded them to be baptised—and burned. Burned they were, according to *my* legend : but I suspect that your artist read of a different kind of death, for you will observe that the corpse on the ground (which I suppose represents one of the three refuted in argument) is being *speared* by two officials. St. Catharine was then exposed to the torture of a machine, consisting of four wheels, armed with teeth, which were to tear her body in pieces ; but this instrument of torture was destroyed by the intervention of angels. You see two of them in the picture, armed with swords, and hacking at the machine ; but the artist has exhibited it with *two* wheels only. The meaning of the little figure on the ground, I know not. The saint was at last decapitated. And this forms the fourth and last division of the story. Observe her hands folded in prayer while she suffers.

This composition is by no means without merit. The three wise men are designed in a spirited manner. Observe their ermine caps—tight costume—and pointed shoes. There is something of grace and majesty in the figure of the saint. Her dress is diapered, like that of Lady Montacute in the cathedral of Christ Church. You will observe the peculiar cloak worn by the Emperor, with the longitudinal opening, which discovers his right hand grasping his left arm above the elbow.

2 *The Minstrels* form an exceedingly clever composition. Observe the little bagpiper going first; and, in the rear, the two taller trumpeters, with cheeks puffed, and bodies well thrown back. Their dress is quite characteristic of the time I have assigned them to. It is impossible to say of what larger composition this forms part.

3. *The Deadly Sins* are a favourite representation on church walls; but they do not appear to follow each other in any established order. I find them set down in Bishop Andrew's Devotions thus,—pride, envy, wrath, gluttony, lust, covetousness, sloth. But it is evident that lust, gluttony, and covetousness form the three last of the series in this picture: while pride and sloth seem to be the two first. Is the third envy, or wrath? or both? I cannot tell.

4. *The Last Judgment* seems to be a nobler class of composition. Our Lord is the central figure, of course: those to the right are the blessed—those on the left, the damned, among whom the form of the evil one is conspicuous. I cannot explain anything here. You notice the archangels, and the pope. But who are the two principal suppliant figures? The Blessed Virgin is neither of them, of course.

5. *St. Christopher* is uncouth and gigantic as usual, with the figure of the Saviour on his shoulder, according to the well-known legend. He is always represented thus on the north side of church walls, facing the south door, with allusion to baptism. He who sees him is lucky for a day or week—I forget which. The saint is always represented wading among fish and grasping a club, or staff. The hermit awaits him on the shore. There seem to be traces of a tree in your picture: but the letters, the church, and the little figure reaching out an arm, I suspect will be found to be portions of an older painting, which has been only partially brought to light.

6. *The King of Terrors* is simply hideous; and though curious, and well worth preserving in this manner, pretends to no artistic merit. The skeleton was frequently exhibited thus in works of the beginning of the sixteenth century; and on a church wall must have been an impressive kind of homily.

And thus I conclude my meagre remarks on your paintings, my dear Dunlap. If anything has been rightly hazarded, it is entirely due to the friends to whom I have shown them; namely, Dr. Wellesley, the Principal of New Inn Hall, and Manuel J. Johnson, Esq., Ratcliffe Observer; two gentlemen who, to a thorough knowledge of the Fine Arts, unite great antiquarian taste and skill; and with whom it is impossible to converse on such subjects without the utmost advantage or delight. I also showed your tracings to Mr. Parker, the intelligent editor of the *Glossary of Architecture*.

But if there be any mistakes in what goes before, you must ascribe them altogether, dear Dunlap, to

Your friend,

JOHN W. BURGON.

*The Rev. A. P. Dunlap, &c., &c.*

To this I will merely append a few remarks.

The figure of St. Christopher was immediately over the north door, as Mr. Burgon states was the universal case; the colours were more clear when it was first uncovered, and it seemed, as he surmises, to have been painted over another picture. The legend of this saint is well known, and the old verses beginning, I believe, with "Si Christophorum videris," and ending with a promise of good fortune to all who had seen him during the day, seem to have been a great encouragement to a regular attendance at daily prayer in church, as his figure was almost universally represented there.

Next to St. Christopher on the north wall, going east, was the legend of St. Catharine, as described in Mr. Burgon's remarks. This painting was in a very perfect state; the two figures whom he thinks to have spears in their hands appeared to me rather to have poles, with which they were stirring the faggots heaped upon the body of a victim below, whose legs only were visible. There is, I understand, a painting like this in Catfield church, Norfolk, where the saint stands in the midst of four wheels, broken asunder; the angel having cut the cords, which are seen on the ground on the left side; the sword is brought by the angel: and the fifth compartment represents the saint kneeling to receive the stroke of the executioner, for according to the Acts she was first tortured on four wheels, and the cords being cut by an angel, she was finally beheaded.

Next to the martyrdom of St. Catharine were three figures of the King of Terrors: two were so injured that only small fragments were visible, but these were of the same character with the other, which was quite perfect. The accurate tracing made of it reveals it with all its dreadful accompaniments.

Beyond these were some remains, but so mutilated, that no drawing could be made of them.

Over the chancel arch was the Last Judgment; a very striking picture, and the figure of the Son of Man especially very beautifully drawn. I cannot help Mr. Burgon in suggesting who are the kneeling figures.

Next on the south side were some remains and letters, but too far gone to be intelligible.

In the centre of the south side were the seven deadly sins. When first disclosed, there seemed at the end of each of the three sins most visible (*Luxuria*, *Gula*, and *Avaritia*) a figure of the evil spirit, holding the offender with his head downwards over the pit of darkness, an awful warning of what the end of such sins must be; but this figure in the two latter became gradually more indistinct and faded. A very good tracing has been made of the trumpeters by Mr. Bacon: the rest were drawn by Mr. Walden. In the Norwich Society's Reports there is an account of the painting of the seven deadly sins, discovered in Catfield church. They are represented as the branches of a tree: each branch is a dragon, gorging a sinner, who comes out naked, and is pulled down in his turn duly by the evil spirits below. A trumpeter is at the top, as in Bardwell church; but *Invidia* comes where *Avaritia* does in the latter. In the paper Mr. D. Turner remarks, "It would hardly be going too far to pronounce this painting unique." "If so," a friend, writing on the subject, observes to me, "we may rival it in the one at Bardwell, for our drawing of the same subject is more artistic."

The description given by the Rev. Mr. Husenbeth, the Roman Catholic Vicar-General of the East of England, of this painting at Catfield, is as follows: "The tree of the seven deadly sins, of which there remain only *Avaritia*, *Ira*, *Invidia*, and *Socordia*. The figure at the top seems to have been a flatterer trumpeting, for Pride."

As the two other sins, wanting in Catfield, (viz. *Luxuria* and *Gula*,) are tolerably perfect in the painting at Bardwell, and as also "Pride" is more fully represented by a larger number of trumpeters, drawn with great spirit, the two pictures together make up a whole set of the deadly sins, with various characteristics in very good preservation, and form an interesting study for those who are curious in the paintings of so early an age. There is also another representation of the tree of the seven deadly sins in Crostwright church, Norfolk, with a closer resemblance to a tree.

I had thought that they had probably been executed by a monk from the Abbey of Bury (to which Bardwell appertained), as I had understood that generally in every

abbey one of the monks studied the art of painting, and went out to decorate their churches; but Mr. Burgon believed that they were the work of Flemings, who at that period came over and executed many of the paintings in the East of England.

The date he has assigned to the earlier paintings is confirmed by the probable date of the church, which, from the character of its windows (decorated and early perpendicular), seems to have been erected about the latter end of the 14th century. On a book open in the hands of one of the four figures (the only survivors of a large number which formerly ornamented the ends of the hammer-beams of the beautiful old painted roof), is the date M CCCC XXI repainted from the old figures previously existing, and put up again within the last thirty years.

There are memorials both in the church and on the porch of the family of Berdewelle, who are stated in the History of Norfolk to have taken their name from the town of Bardwell, in Suffolk (then written Berdewelle), and to have lived there as early as the time of the Conqueror, when Baldwin, Abbot of Bury, infeoffed Ralf de Berdewelle of that manor. They always bore for their arms a goat saliant, and for their rebus or device a bear, with a well on his back, and the two letters "de," which make up the word "Bear-de-welle," or Bardwell.

Of this family one seems to have been a great warrior, viz., Sir Wm. Berdewell, Knt., who was born in 1367, and according to the custom of that period was retained by different lords and gentlemen, to fight either the battles of the king, or their own. There are various accounts preserved of the terms of the contracts he made for the service of his men-at-arms, and archers on horseback; the money to be paid him for them, and the bouche-de-court, or domestic board, to be allowed them. After all his martial exploits, however, he seems to have finished his course in peace. His will is dated at Bury on the 1st of October, 1434, and there he died soon afterwards, for it was proved on the 29th of the same month. In it he desires to be buried in Berdewell chancel, where also his wife Margaret, daughter of Theobald de Pakenham, Esq., was subsequently

laid by his side. In the same will he bequeaths to the repair of Berdewelle church 40s. and 20s. to repair the roads, and 20*l.* to his daughter Isabell, and to Robert his son and heir, his basilard, and all his gilt armour, and his best girdle, with his loose gown furred with beaver. He seems to have been a man of piety as well as bravery, if we may be permitted to judge from his outward acts; for he had already in his life-time done much for the service of God. His benefaction to the church is dated A.D. 1421, and it is stated that he built the porch, part of the steeple, and most of the windows. His effigy is depicted in rich stained glass in one of the windows of the nave\*, and his sword still hangs on the north wall, as inactive now as the strong hand that wielded it. His son, Robert Berdewell, who succeeded to his manor of West Harling, built the hall and settled there, and the connection of this ancient family with Bardwell seems from that period to have ceased.

The manor passed afterwards to the family of the Reades, who intermarried with the Crofts, a knightly family—some handsome monuments of both these families still remain in the chancel—the date of them ranges from the beginning of Queen Elizabeth to the year 1769, when, according to the inscription, they became extinct. There is an old Greek epitaph on a stone in the chancel; it has neither name nor date, but is supposed to be in memory of a Mr. Poley, one of whose family, according to an inscription on a slab in the nave, intermarried with the Crofts and died in 1626. His name is twice introduced indirectly in the Greek, according to the quaint custom of the time (probably about James the First's reign). I have attempted to render it into English verse, but must confess, if the author has taken some liberties with his composition in the original, I have not been sparing of such in the translation.

Τον ἀνδρα πολὺ λαμπρὸν εἰς τινα ζητεῖ,  
 Ἐνθαδὲ τοιῶτις ἀνθρώπων σῶμα καθευδεῖ.  
 Οὗτος λατρευτὴς ἦν τοιοῦτο θεοῖο ἀληθὲς,  
 Τὸς τε γονεὺς τιμᾶ, καὶ τιμᾶ τον βασιλῆα.  
 Φιλτάτος ἦν φίλων, ἕτος βέλτερος ἀδελφῶν,

\* A description is given of this stained glass in a letter by Mr. J. Boldero, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1825.

Ουτος ανηρ ην των ανδρων μεν φιλος απαντων,  
 Μαλλον δε πτωχων, ος ποικιλα δωρα εδωκε.  
 Ζως ων ην τοις, τοις τεθνηξομενος τε.  
 Μεχρι εως ην γαρ πνευμ' αυτε υστατον εκπνων,  
 Ως εφαι' αντιβολων, Εμε, Κυριε μη ελεησον,  
 Ει ζω η θνησκω, το θελημα Θεου γενεσθω.  
 Ει εν ην ετως τετα θανατος τε βιος τε,  
 Ουτος ετοιμος εν θανατω, αγαπης δια εργα,  
 Αξιος ευ τε πολυ δια τε Σωτηρος Ιησυ.

If any seek an upright man to know,  
 Such once was he whose frame now rests below ;  
 To God, his parents, and his sovereign true,  
 He gave to each the love and honour due ;  
 The best of brothers, kindest help in need,  
 He was of all mankind the friend indeed ;  
 But blessings mostly on the poor he shed,  
 He clothed the naked, and the hungry fed.  
 Such was his life, and such, when death drew nigh,  
 The clear calm faith in which he sought to die ;  
 For when his breath was ebbing fast away,  
 He cried, " Have mercy, Lord, on me, I pray,  
 And if I live or die, Thy will be done ! "  
 If such his life, so ended, as begun,  
 In works of love so ready to depart,  
 And seek his treasure where he gave his heart,  
 May we not hope, thro' Christ, in Heaven such worth  
 Will find the mercy which he showed on earth.

The manor-house of this family stood in a field near, a little to the N.W. of the church, but not a vestige of it remains. The moat is still visible. The present lords of the manor and principal proprietors, are the Duke of Grafton, Sir Henry Blake, Bart., the Rev. J. S. Hallifax, and the Earl of Albemarle.

In Sir H. Spelman's History of Sacrilege allusion is, I believe, made to this church as one where the great tithes, which had been alienated, were recovered and restored to their original purpose. They were bought by Mrs. Gulston, who also purchased the advowson of the vicarage from King Charles the First. She was the widow of a Dr. T. Gulston, who was an eminent physician in London, and founded the Gulston lecture, which is still delivered annually at the College there. Her benefaction is dated in 1635, and she vested the patronage of the living in St. John's College, Oxford, principally it would seem out of regard to Archbishop Laud, who had been president of that society ; in the same spirit she directs that every third vacancy shall be supplied by a Fellow elected to that



college from Reading in Berkshire, which was the Archbishop's birthplace.

The situation of the church is good, and the tower rising boldly from the edge of the sloping ground renders it an interesting object from some distance round. The church consists of a nave only, without aisles, the roof of which is of timber painted, and of a pitch and elevation remarkably fine. The judicious alterations which have been made in this and the chancel, and the restoration of its ancient character by the removal of what was unsightly, substituting new oak open sittings throughout, and replacing the pavement of the chancel with encaustic tiles of a beautiful pattern, render it altogether one of the most striking village churches in the neighbourhood; and the churchyard, which is now no longer overrun with numerous paths, but planted with appropriate trees and evergreens, has a simplicity and quiet beauty about it, suited to the sacred character of a spot where the ashes of the dead may repose in peace, till the great day of the Resurrection shall dawn.

The frescoes have all been covered, but the tracings and drawings which have been made of them, and which are now strained on canvas, will, I hope, preserve their character sufficiently. They may help, perhaps, to illustrate others which are either already known, or may be discovered hereafter in the course of those enquiries which induce so many able and learned men to search into and treasure up those ancient memorials which connect the present with the past, more especially in the county or neighbourhood to which they are attached by residence or birth. I shall be very glad if these few remarks of my own and my friend's on what has fallen under our own more immediate observation may prove of service for this end. In a parish like ours, of which few records remain, and whose history is "unknown to fame," there is but little to attract the attention or repay the researches of the antiquary. It is no slight satisfaction to have met with "anything" which may for a while engage the consideration of this Society, whose exertions are so full of interest to all who love to dwell on the memories of bygone ages, or to moralise on the works of "the mighty dead." May they prosper in their good—I

might almost say—their sacred undertaking, and though this is but an humble offering, I shall feel very thankful if, in a county possessing so many higher objects of interest, our remote village has been able to contribute one trifling leaf to their legendary stores.

ARTHUR PHILIP DUNLAP.

---

### MELFORD HALL.

THE manor of Melford was an antient possession of the monastery of St. Edmund's Bury, being enumerated in Domesday Book among the lands of St. Edmund; and many of the lordly abbots of that powerful house made the manorial hall their occasional retreat from the cavils of the brotherhood and the perpetual contentions incidental to the civil and religious polity of the age.

Jocelin de Brackland, the charming chronicler of the doings of the famous Abbot Sampson, relates that in the year 1163

“Geoffrey Ridell, Bishop of Ely, sought from the abbot some timber for the purpose of constructing certain great buildings at Glemesford; which request the abbot granted, but with a bad grace, not daring to offend him. Now the abbot making some stay at Melford, there came a certain clerk of the Bishop, asking, on behalf of his lord, that the promised timber might be taken at Ælmeswell; and he made a mistake in pronouncing the word, saying Ælmeswell when he should have said Ælmsethe [Elmset], which is the name of a certain wood at Melford. And the abbot was astonished at the request, for such timbers were not to be found at Ælmeswell. Whereof, when Richard the forester to the same town had heard, he privately informed the abbot that the bishop had the previous week sent his carpenters in a surreptitious manner into the wood of Ælmssethe, and had chosen the best timber trees in the whole wood, and had placed his marks thereon. On hearing this, the abbot directly discovered that the messenger of the bishop had made an error in his request, and answered that he would willingly do as the bishop pleased. On the morrow, upon the departure of the messenger, immediately after he had heard mass, the abbot went