

II.

THE PAINTINGS

ON THE

CHOIR CEILING

OF

S. Albans Abbey Church.

*A PAPER READ BEFORE THE S. ALBANS ARCHITECTURAL AND
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY, FEBRUARY 22nd, 1876,*

BY

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S. ALBAN AND S. AMPHIBALUS IN S. ALBANS ABBEY," ETC.



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THE
 PAINTINGS ON THE CHOIR CEILING OF
 S. ALBANS ABBEY CHURCH.

It is my intention this evening to bring before you a brief account of the Paintings upon the Ceiling of the Choir of S. Albans Abbey Church, which, as many of you are aware, were disclosed to view during the past summer, by the removal, under Mr. Chapple's personal superintendence, of the later series of Paintings which had hidden the earlier ones from view. Reckoning from the western arch of the tower, westward, as far as the rood-screen, there are 66 panels, arranged in 11 transverse rows of six panels each. In every row we find three panels, each charged with a shield supported by an angel, alternating with a like number bearing the sacred monogram *ih̄c* (the first two and the last letters of the Greek form of the word Jesus), drawn in four different ways, and surrounded by a scroll. The only exceptions to this rule are to be found in the two central panels of the middle or sixth row, which contain representations of our Lord and S. Mary the Virgin, under canopies.

There are also inscriptions, which occur only upon those panels bearing shields. I will now proceed to read a description of the Paintings and inscriptions as they actually appear, with the addition, in brackets, of the complete form of the quotations, and will then offer some remarks upon the various features that seem to demand notice.

PANEL	Row I.		PANEL	
1.	Tibi laus & glia o b̄a Trinitas (Tibi laus et gloria O beata Trinitas)		4.	azure, a saltire or Scutū sc̄i Albani martiris
	azure, 3 crowns or Scutum sc̄i Edmundi regis		5.	<i>ih̄c</i> sals n̄ra o b̄a Trinitas (salus nostra O beata Trinitas)
2.	<i>ih̄c</i>		6.	gules, 3 crowns or Scutū sc̄i Oswyni regis
3.	Te laudat os creatu o b̄a Trinitas (Te laudat omnis creatura O beata Trinitas)			<i>ih̄c</i>

* It will be noticed that in some instances the marks of contraction are absent from abbreviated words;—in such cases they have been omitted in the original.

PANEL	II.	PANEL	V.
1.	i h c	1.	Pleni sūt celi & trā magestatis (Pleni sunt cœli et terra majestatis gloriæ tuæ)
2.	Summe trinitati simplici (Summæ Trinitati simplici deo una divinitas) arg. a cross gu. Scutū scī Georgii	az. 3 black-a-moors' heads full-faced sa., crowned and bearded, or Scutū regis Suesor	
3.	i h c	2.	i h c
4.	Gloria ti ba Trinitas (Gloria tibi beata Trinitas) az. a cross flory between 5 martlets or Scutū scī Edwardi regis	3.	Te gliōs Apostolor cor (Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus) Barry of 7, arg. and az., a lion gu., crowned and collared, or Scutū regis Ciprie
5.	i h c	4.	i h c
6.	Salua nos o beata t̄rin (Salva nos O beata Trinitas) az. 3 fleurs de lys or Scutu sci lodwisi regis fra	5.	Te prophetar laudabilis numers (Te prophetarum laudabilis numerus) gu., 3 legs armed ppr., conjoined in the fesse point at the upper part of the thighs, flexed in a triangle, garnished and spurred, or Scutū regis de man
	III.	6.	i h c
1.	Te deum laudam te dom̄in (Te deum laudamus te dominum confitemur) arg. a double-headed eagle displayed sable Scutum imperratoris (sic) Romanor		VI.
2.	i h c	1.	i h c
3.	Te eternū patrē oīs uenerat (Te eternum patrem omnis terra veneratur). Our Lord upon the cross; a chalice at foot. Scutum regis iudeor*	2.	Gloria patri et filio & sp. (Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto) gu., a triple tau arg. Scutū fidei
4.	i h c	3.	B. V. M., seated, nimbed, and crowned; round her seven stars: above her a groined canopy.
5.	Tibi ōs Angli t celi et uniūse potest (Tibi omnes Angeli tibi coeli et uniuersæ potestates) or, a cross moline between 4 circles each inscribed with a Greek cross, all arg. Scutū Imperatoris Constant	4.	Our Lord seated, nimbed with cross nimbus, right hand raised to bless, in left hand orb and staff with vexillum; above Him a groined canopy.
6.	i h c	5.	i h c
	IV.	6.	Gloria in excelsis arg. a cross with three nails, and crown of thorns sa., surtout a spear, and rod with sponge, in saltire, between a hammer and a scourge, all gu. Scutū sa tionis
1.	i h c		VII.
2.	Tibi cherubin & seraph (Tibi cherubin et seraphin incessabili voce proclamant) Quarterly, 1st and 4th gu. a castle ppr.; 2nd and 3rd arg. a lion ramp. sa. Scutū regis hispanie	1.	Venerandū tūu filiū (Venerandum tuum, verum et unicum filium) Paly of 8, or and gu. Scutum regis Arragon
3.	i h c	2.	i h c
4.	Ses Ses Ses (Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus) Quarterly, 1st and 4th gu. 3 lions passant guardant or, for England; 2nd and 3rd az. semée of fleurs de lys or, for France Auncient Scutū regis Anglie	3.	Scñ qo paraclitū spñ (Sanctum quoque paraclitum spiritum) arg. a cross potent between four Greek crosses, or Scutū regis Jherusalem
5.	i h c	4.	i h c
6.	Dominus deus sabaoth arg. 3 dice sable, each charged with 6 dots arg.: the whole within a bordure gu. charged with 7 castles. Scutū regis portingalie	5.	Tu rex glorie Xp (Tu rex gloriæ Christe) or three lions passant guardant az. Scutū regis Danie
		6.	i h c

* For the deciphering of this word I am indebted to my friend the Rev. Henry Fowler.

VIII.		X.	
PANEL		PANEL	
1.	i h c	1.	i h c
2.	Tu patris sempitern es filiu (Tu patris sempiternus es filius) arg. six ermine spots Scutu ducis Britannie	2.	Eterna fac cū sancts tui (Eterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria munerari)* Quarterly England, and France Ancient; surtout a label of 3 points arg. each charged with 2 spots of ermine Scutū ducis Lancastrie
3.	i h c	3.	i h c
4.	Tu ad liberandum sussept [sic] (Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem non horruisti virginis uterum) Quarterly 1st and 4th or, an eagle displayed sa., 2nd and 3rd arg. a lion ramp. gu. Scutum regis boemie	4.	Saluum fac poplū tuū (Saluum fac populum tuum Domine, et benedic hæreditati tuæ) Quarterly England, and France Ancient, surtout a label of 3 points arg. Scutum p̄icipis Wallie
5.	i h c	5.	i h c
6.	Tu devicto mor aculeo aperuisti (Tu devicto mortis aculeo aperuisti credentibus regna coelorum) Quarterly England, and France Ancient, surtout a label of 3 points arg. Scutum dn̄i thom filii regis	6.	Et rege eos et extolle illos (Et rege eos et extolle illos usque in æternum) Quarterly England, and France Ancient: surtout a label of 3 points arg., each charged with 3 torteaux Scutum ducis Eboraci
IX.		XI.	
1.	Tu ad dexterā Dei sedes (Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris) az. semée of fleurs de lys or, surtout a label of 3 points gu. Scutū regis Cicilie	1.	Per singulos dies benedicim te (Per singulos dies benedicimus te) Or, a lion rampant gu., holding in his paws a Danish battle-axe ppr., the blade in chief, charged with a pellet Scutū regis Norwagie
2.	i h c	2.	i h c
3.	Iudex crederis esse venturus Barruly of 14, arg. and gules Scutū regis Hungare	3.	Et laudaĩns nome tuū in sæculū (Et laudamus nomen tuum in sæculum; et in sæculum sæculi) gules, an escarbuncle, or Scutū regis Naverre
4.	i h c	4.	i h c
5.	Te eo q̄s famulis tuis sub (Te ergo quæsumus famulis tuis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti) az. semée of fleurs de lys or Scutum regis Francie	5.	Dignare Dom die ist s peccato (Dignare Domine die isto sine peccato nos custodire) Or, a lion rampant gules, within a tressure flory Scutū regis Scotie
6.	i h c	6.	i h c

The remarks I have to offer upon this series of paintings fall naturally under three divisions—the first, treating of the inscriptions above the shields; the second, of the charges upon the shields, and the inscriptions beneath them; the third, of the probable date of the execution of the work.

The inscriptions are only found upon those panels bearing shields, so that there are three in each row except the 6th, or 32 in all.

Those in the first two rows are devoted to praise and prayer to the Holy Trinity. The six inscriptions are taken from the Breviary Antiphons for Trinity Sunday.

* "All Latin MSS. previously to 1492, read 'Eterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria *munerari*;' and the equivalent of *munerari* is found in every known version of the *Te Deum* up to that time. The '*numerari*' reading appears to be an error of the early printers, arising out of the very slight difference presented by *mun* and *num* in black letter."—BLUNT'S *Annotated Common Prayer*, p. 13.

Next come portions of the *Te Deum*, amounting to 23 out of the 29 Clauses of which this Hymn is composed, and occupying all the remaining rows except the sixth or middle one, so that the ceiling was made to re-echo, as it were, the glorious hymn of praise which the monks chanted in their stalls below.

You will have noticed that the first few words only of many of the Clauses are given, for this reason, that the space was too limited to contain the whole sentence; but since, by the ancient use of the English Church, the *Te Deum* was ordered to be sung at Matins on every Sunday and Feast-day throughout the year—except during Advent, and the Lenten season from Septuagesima to Easter—the general familiarity with its structure which its habitual recital would ensure, at least amongst the monks, whose special portion of the Church this ceiling adorned, rendered the omission of the latter part of many of the clauses of but little moment.

The middle row (No. VI.) having its two central compartments occupied, as was mentioned above, by paintings of Our Lord and S. Mary the Virgin, two only of its panels possess inscriptions.

It is worthy of remark that three clauses of the *Te Deum* (the number required for a single row in the ceiling) are missing between Rows V. and VII., as if they had at first been painted upon this middle or sixth row, and were afterwards painted out, to make room for the existing designs.

I now come to the second division of my subject, viz., the heraldic charges exhibited upon the 32 shields, and the inscriptions beneath them; but before entering upon it, I must be permitted to say that to discuss this subject fully, in all its bearings, would demand more patience on your part, and more heraldic knowledge on mine, than either you or I can venture to lay claim to. All I can hope to do is to put before you a translation of the Latin inscriptions beneath the shields, together with a few short comments upon certain of the coats-of-arms which were described previously in heraldic terms.

- I.—1. Shield of S. Edmund (King of East Anglia).
- 3. Shield of S. Alban (Protomartyr of the British).
- 5. Shield of S. Oswyn (King of Northumbria).
- II.—2. Shield of S. George (Patron Saint of England).
- 4. Shield of S. Edward (King of England).
- 6. Shield of S. Louis (King of France).
- III.—1. Shield of the Emperor of the Romans. Richard,* Earl of Cornwall, second son of King John, laid claim to this title.
- 3. Shield of the “King of the Jews.” This design, a crucifix, represents Our Lord at the time when He had over Him this “superscription.”
- 5. Shield of the Emperor Constantine.

It will be observed that in this example, as well as in that of the Crusader King

* His jewel-chest was long preserved in the state treasury of Aix-la-Chapelle, and is now at Vienna. —*South Kensington Museum Art Handbook of Furniture*, p. 47, by J. H. Pollen.

of Jerusalem (Row VII., Panel 3), the positive rule in heraldry that metal shall not be placed upon metal has been purposely broken, probably in order to distinguish these arms from those of every other sovereign.

IV.—2. Shield of the King of Spain (Castile and Leon).

4. Shield of the King of England.

The coat "France Ancient" (*semée of fleurs de lys*), was in use in the quartered arms of the English Sovereign from 1340 up to 1403, when King Henry IV., following an alteration made by the French King as early as 1364, adopted "France Modern" (*3 fleurs de lys*). Here you will not fail to notice the use of the more ancient charge.

It is remarkable that, in this instance, the customary arrangement is reversed in the quartering, so that instead of France occupying the first and fourth quarters, these are assigned to England, and the second and third quarters given to France. The same reversal is found in the other four examples of the quartered coat of England and France which this Ceiling furnishes, whilst on a sculptured shield on the western side of the doorway leading from the Church to the Cloister, the usual arrangement is adopted, as also in some examples in stained glass in a window in the north aisle of the Nave.*

6. Shield of the King of Portugal.

This differs from the arms commonly assigned to Portugal, viz., *arg. five escutcheons in cross az., each charged with as many plates in saltire; the whole within a bordure gules, upon which eight castles or.*

V.—1. Shield of the King of Sweden.

3. Shield of the King of Cyprus.

5. Shield of the King of Man.

The Isle of Man belonged, at the presumed date of this work, to William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, who sold it in 1393 to William Scrop.†

VI.—2. The Shield of Faith.

The triple tau is a common mediæval device, but I am not aware of any other instance in which it has this title assigned to it.

6. The Shield of Salvation.

A very suitable name for this design, which represents the instruments of the Passion.

You will notice that this, which is the middle row in the Ceiling, has a special dignity imparted to it by the elaborate paintings in the two central panels, and by sacred devices, in place of heraldic ones, being painted upon the shields.

* The Rev. C. Boutell states in his *Heraldry*, p. 143, that "RICHARD II. appears to have quartered *England and France*, as well as *France and England*; that is, he sometimes placed *England*, and sometimes *France*, in the first quarter."

† J. M. Trokelowe et anon. *Chronica et Annales*, p. 157 (Rolls Series).

- VII.—1. Shield of the King of Arragon.
 3. Shield of the King of Jerusalem.

(See remarks upon the shield of the Emperor of the Romans).

5. Shield of the King of Denmark.

- VIII.—2. Shield of the Duke of Brittany.
 4. Shield of the King of Bohemia.
 6. Shield of Lord Thomas, son of the King (Thomas of Woodstock, youngest son of King Edward III.)

- IX.—1. Shield of the King of Sicily.
 3. Shield of the King of Hungary.
 5. Shield of the King of France.

This is France Ancient, the field being *semée of fleurs de lys*.

- X.—2. Shield of the Duke of Lancaster. (John of Gaunt, fourth son of King Edward III.)
 4. Shield of the Prince of Wales. (Edward the Black Prince, eldest son of King Edward III.)
 6. Shield of the Duke of York. (Edmond of Langley, fifth son of Edward III.)

- XI.—1. Shield of the King of Norway.
 3. Shield of the King of Navarre.
 5. Shield of the King of Scotland. This has a single tressure in place of the usual double one.

It will be observed that the six shields in the first two rows are devoted to Saints; Row III. has Our Lord as King of the Jews on the middle shield, between two Emperors on the side ones; sacred symbols appear upon the two shields in the middle row, No. VI.; all the shields in Rows IV., V., and VII., the second and fourth panels in Row VIII., and the six shields in Rows IX. and XI., are allotted to the arms of European Sovereigns, those of the Crusader King of Jerusalem being reckoned with them. The third shield of Row VIII., and all those of Row X., are assigned to four out of the seven sons of Edward III.

Before discussing the question of the date of the execution of this series of Paintings it may be convenient to enumerate the sons of King Edward III. and their chief dignities.

1. Edward, Prince of Wales, or Edward the Black Prince, born 1330; married the daughter of the Earl of Kent; died 1376, one year before his father.
2. William of Hatfield (died an infant).
3. Lionel, Duke of Clarence, married Elizabeth de Burgh in 1362; died 1368.

4. John of Gaunt, or Ghent, created Duke of Lancaster, 1362. On his marriage with his second wife, Constance, daughter and co-heir of Peter, King of Castile and Leon, he assumed the title of King of Castile and Leon; died 1399. Obsequies were performed in S. Albans Abbey for his first wife, Blanche of Lancaster, in 1369, and for himself in 1399.*
5. Edmond of Langley, born at King's Langley, near S. Albans. His first wife was Isabel, second daughter and one of the co-heirs of Peter, King of Castile and Leon. Created Duke of York in 1385 by King Richard II.; died 1402. It is not known at what exact period the label charged with *torteaux* was substituted for a label *counter componée*, or *chequée*, which distinguishes this Prince in the Burghersh Monument at Lincoln, c. 1360.
6. Thomas of Woodstock married Alianore de Bohun, was created Earl of Buckingham in 1377, and afterwards Duke of Buckingham and Duke of Gloucester; murdered at Calais, 1397.
King Edward III., Edward Prince of Wales, John of Ghent, and Thomas of Woodstock are all mentioned in the Book of Benefactors as having made gifts to the Convent.†

Nearly all the heraldic evidence is in favour of the date of the work belonging to the later years of King Edward III., who, it will be remembered, reigned from 1327 to 1377.

- (a) The arms on Shield 4, Row IV., assigned to the "King of England," are certainly those in use in his reign.
- (b) The omission of the arms of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, seems to show that the work was executed after his death, which took place in 1368. This date, then, we may take as a starting-point for our investigations, since the Ceiling cannot bear an earlier date than this.
- (c) The arms on Shield 4, Row X., being those of the Prince of Wales, point to a date not later than 1376, the year of his death, and confirmatory of this are the arms and inscription on Panel 6, Row VIII., of "Thomas the King's son," or Thomas of Woodstock, who was known by this title and these arms until 1377, when he was created Earl of Buckingham.

So far all is clear. We seem to have arrived at a date for the series of Paintings, between 1368 and 1376, which is quite as near as we can hope to come.

With this, too, coincides the style of the two central figures in Row VI.

But, on the other hand, the arms and the inscription upon Panel 6, Row X., to Edmond of Langley, who is there styled "Duke of York," both belong to a period subsequent to 1385, in which year he was raised to the dukedom.

Here, then, we find ourselves in a difficulty, for this coat-of-arms and inscription carry us at least eight years later than the time of King Edward III.'s death.

* *Gesta Abbatum*, Vol. III., pp. 275, 438.

† *Liber de Benefactoribus*, p. 433 (Rolls Series).

I may add that the canopies over the two central figures above-mentioned look hardly, if at all, earlier than 1385.

So far as I can see, there is but one solution of the puzzle, and it is this: That the main features of the work pertain to the period between 1368 and 1376, whilst certain additions and alterations, notably of the arms and inscription to Edmond of Langley, Duke of York, were made subsequently to 1385, and before 1402.

In any case, the paintings must have been begun, and nearly, if not quite, finished, during the time of Abbot Thomas de la Mare, who ruled from 1349 to 1396.

From the *Gesta Abbatum** we learn that about the year 1314 King Edward II. gave a quantity of timber for the repair of the Choir stalls, and these, which were constructed by workmen skilled in wood-carving, under the direction of one Master Geoffrey, seem to have cost many years of labour, and to have been brought to completion by the year 1369.†

The Choir was probably bounded at each extremity by a light screen; the eastern one, which stood beneath the eastern arch of the tower, separating it from the Presbytery, and the western one standing one bay east of the existing stone rood-screen. Between these two was a passage, running north and south, as at Durham, which served as a vestibule to the Choir. The canopied stalls, which, starting on each side from the eastern arch of the tower, extended under it westward to within one bay of the rood-screen, had two return stalls (or more) at their western limit. Of these return stalls, facing east, one of the southern ones was appropriated to the Abbot, and one of the northern ones to the Prior, who were thus enabled to keep watch over the behaviour of the monks. In the year 1874, during the progress of the work of restoration, it was deemed necessary to lower the floor to its original level, and in so doing the rubble foundations of the whole series of stalls (including the return stalls) were found, and this discovery confirmed the description in the *Gesta Abbatum* of the arrangement of the stalls in every particular.

My reason for making these few remarks upon the Choir stalls in this place is that the account of the date of their construction renders it very likely, in the absence of any of the evidence which it has been the work of this Paper to bring before you, that the construction and decoration of the Choir Ceiling would be taken in hand soon after the stalls themselves had been completed, and it is therefore of great value as a piece of independent evidence.

Since the above Paper was read the author has been favoured with communications from two esteemed correspondents, Mr. H. T. Riley and Mr. J. G. Waller, both of whom are of opinion that the Paintings upon the Choir Ceiling were begun *temp.* King Edward III., and were not completed till after Edmond of Langley had become Duke of York, in 1385.

* Vol. II., p. 123; J. de Trokelowe *Chronica*, p. 83.

† *Gesta Abbatum*, Vol. III., p. 271.

APPENDIX.

AFTER the foregoing Paper had been sent to Press an opportunity occurred to the Author of examining several mediæval and modern Service-Books, with the result that all the Inscriptions in the first two rows were found almost word for word in the *Sarum Antiphoner*, or in the *Roman Breviary*, in the Offices of Matins and Lauds for Trinity Sunday. A brief allusion to this has been made at page 5; but the matter seemed of sufficient interest, from a Liturgical point of view, and also as showing that a strict rule guided the choice of the inscriptions, to justify the printing of the original passages in full, with references.

(Row I., Panel 1.) "Tibi laus, tibi gloria, tibi gratiarum actio in sæcula sempiterna, O beata Trinitas." Responsory at end of Lection V. at Matins for Trinity Sunday: *Roman Breviary*.

(Panel 3.) "Te iure laudant te adorant te glorificant omnes creature tue O beata Trinitas." Antiphon at Matins for Trinity Sunday: *Sarum Antiphoner*.

(Panel 5.) "Spes nostra, salus nostra, honor noster, O beata Trinitas." 2nd Antiphon in 2nd Nocturn of Matins for Trinity Sunday: *Roman Breviary*.

(Row II., Panel 2.) "Summe trinitati simplici deo una diuinitas equalis gloria coeterna maiestas patri proliq² sanctoq² flamini. Qui totum subdit suis orbem legibus." 9th Responsory at Matins for Trinity Sunday: *Sarum Antiphoner*.

(Panel 4.) "Gloria tibi Trinitas æqualis, una Deitas, et ante omnia sæcula, et nunc et in perpetuum." 1st Antiphon at Lauds on Trinity Sunday: *Roman Breviary*.

(Panel 6.) "Libera nos, salua nos, iustifica nos O beata Trinitas." Antiphon at Matins for Trinity Sunday: *Sarum Antiphoner*.

