

## A RECORD OF THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN

By DR. VAUGHAN CORNISH

THE Committee for the Employment of Artists in War-time, supported by a grant from the Pilgrim Trust, has co-ordinated the work of landscape painters in recording (mostly in water-colour) the architectural gems of rural England with the background of their natural setting. The pictures now on view in the National Gallery, a selection of the first year's work, are arranged according to counties. Such pictures should be multiplied year by year until a complete collection has been made which can be housed for permanent exhibition.

The value of the collection now begun is both historical and educational. The former has, of course, to do with the possible loss of these objects of beauty. This loss may occur in one or other of two ways—destruction by the Huns in war-time, or replanning by Vandals in the succeeding years of peace.

The educational value of this new collection of pictures is especially important in relation to the period of replanning and reconditioning. Whether England's beauty will then be restored or obliterated will depend not only on the accident of individual talent in architecture and administration, but also on the wider diffusion of artistic culture which will ensure that public opinion will not mistake the aberrations of bad taste for the originality of genius.

As we look through the present collection in the National Gallery we find that the subjects recorded as of local or period interest include indoor as well as outdoor scenes of rural architecture—timbered roofs and the paraphernalia of the mills which grind the corn we grow.

The exterior of a windmill is shown in the picture of *Dolce Mill*, Rochester, by Thomas Hennell. Looking upon this, it is easy to realize the imaginative impression of a four-armed giant which led Don Quixote to emulate the achievement of legendary knights.

The villages and small country towns of Buckinghamshire are charmingly illustrated by Stanley Anderson, R.A.; in Beaconsfield the architectural features surrounding a *place* (for which we have no English name altogether equivalent); in Amersham an interesting Market Hall; and in Long Crendon an old house with the outside chimney shaft which was a picturesque addition to rural architecture at an early date.

The view of Chesham, Bucks, by W. P. Robins, is a landscape proper in which the church spire and neighbouring cottages are minor, decorative

features nestling in a well-timbered valley below tree-capped hills.

The street of Hadleigh, by A. Newton, shows the timbered houses with overhanging upper story, which are characteristic of a Suffolk village.

An excellent example of architecture with natural background is seen in Charles Knight's picture of a Sussex farmstead at the foot of the bold slopes of the open chalk downs. *Birdham Mill*, by W. Russell Flint, R.A., shows a picturesque building set amidst the winding waters of Chichester Channel, a remote corner of Sussex.

Among the line drawings, of which there are a few among the many water-colours, that by S. R. Badmin of a bridge over the Ouse at Chellington, in Bedfordshire, records one of the numerous survivals of medieval arches, the beauty of which is often enhanced by reflexion in the placid streams of the English lowland.

Of buildings in the north of England, the picture of *Livesay Hall*, in Lancashire, by W. Fairclough, shows an unusually complete preservation of stone-mullioned windows, which are too often replaced by modern woodwork out of harmony with stone fabric.

The market-place of Thame, in Oxfordshire, by Stanley Anderson, R.A., is depicted, as is proper, on market day; for without the gathering of countrymen the picture of a market-place is one of form without function.

From Gloucestershire we have the double dove-cote of *Coln St. Aldwyn*, by George Bissell, an example of the Cotswold style which is a blessed survival of one of the best types of English rural architecture.

A number of interesting examples of the architecture of south-western England are shown in the distinctive water-colours of S. S. Longley: in Dorsetshire the village of *Corfe*, and the Saxon church of *Wareham*, which stands in a remarkable position above the sunken road which enters that ancient town. In Devon we have *Brixham*, with its houses on a steep slope above the little harbour where lies the fishing fleet amidst the reflexions of lapping waves which come gently in from the broad waters of *Tor Bay*.

Lastly, we come to Longley's simple but charming water-colour of the old farmhouse of *Thorn* in *Salcombe Regis*, near *Sidmouth*, which takes its name from the historic *Thorn Tree*, close at hand, renewed again and again since Saxon times, and it may even be from yet earlier days.