

# THE STUDIO

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STAINED GLASS BY REGINALD BELL



"ST. GEORGE." STAINED GLASS  
PANEL IN STAIRCASE WINDOW  
AT 21 OLD BURLINGTON STREET  
LONDON. BY REGINALD BELL

STAINED GLASS BY REGINALD  
BELL.      ♦      ♦      ♦      ♦      ♦

THE saying that all things move in cycles is strangely exemplified at the present time by the state of affairs in the handicraft of painting and staining upon glass, for a remarkably complete parallel may be drawn between this post-war period and its conditions and the middle of the 14th century. Then, as now, this country was recovering from war—and that a war fought over the very ground on which British troops were fighting not five years ago. Again and again in Froissart's Chronicle

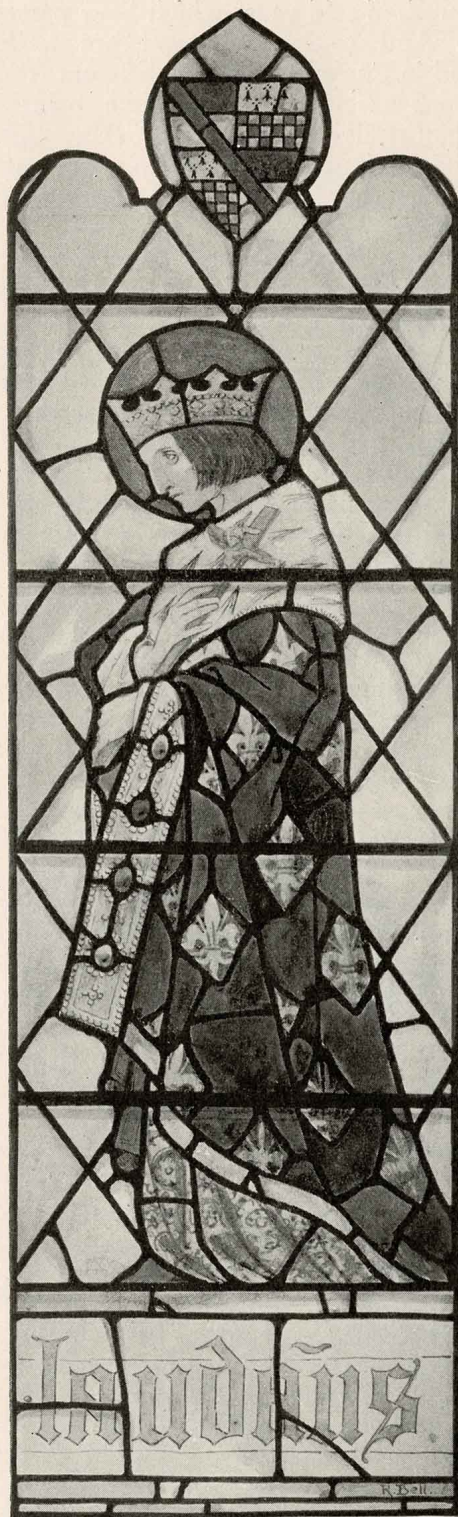
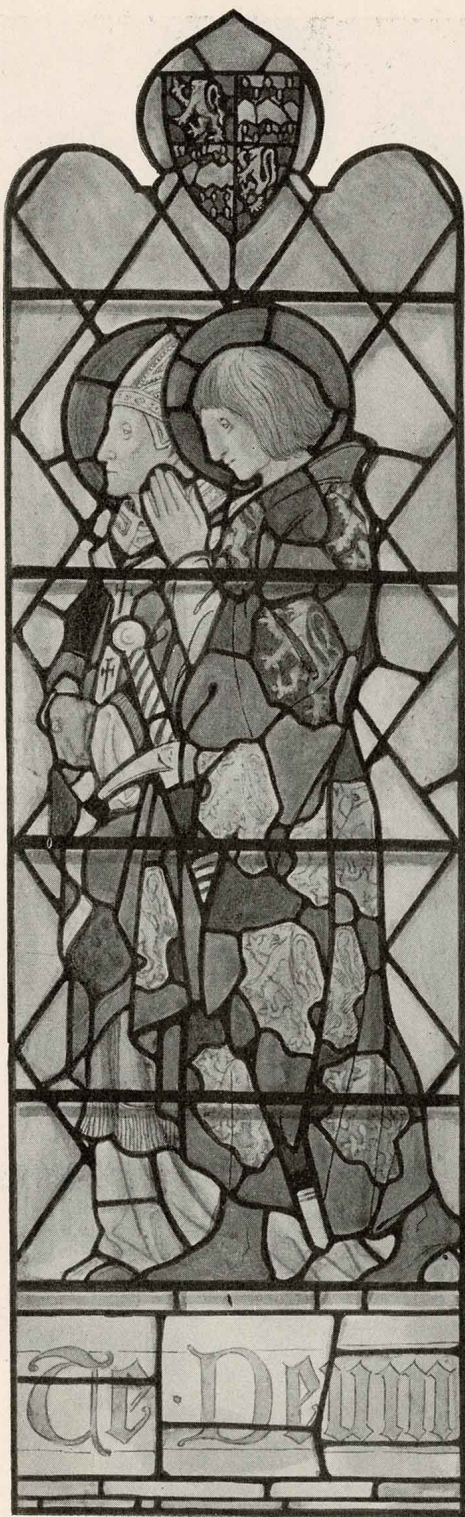
the same place names leap to the eye as were so familiar in the daily press of 1918—Corbie, Amiens, St. Quentin and the rest. Again the country is recovering from post-war pestilence—for the influenza of 1918 probably claimed nearly as many victims as the Black Death of 1348—and now, as then, English glass-painters find themselves in the middle of a re-birth of their handicraft. Never in all its history did stained glass make such strides as in the years between 1340 and 1380. In that short period more changes took place in the technique and design of windows than in the four centuries which preceded it or the





"ST. GEORGE" DESIGN FOR STAINED  
GLASS WINDOW IN THE LIBRARY,  
PARK HOUSE, ST. JOHN'S WOOD.  
BY REGINALD BELL.





DESIGNS FOR PART OF A  
SERIES OF CLERESTORY WIN-  
DOWS. BY REGINALD BELL

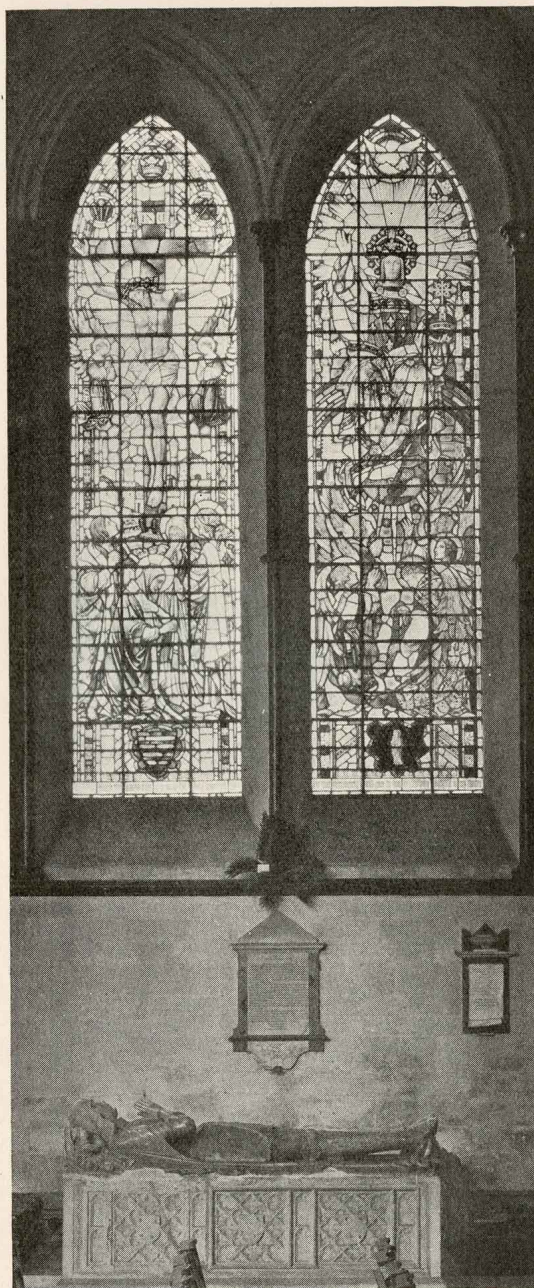


## STAINED GLASS BY REGINALD BELL

five hundred odd years which have passed since. And to-day windows are being painted in England so vastly different from the work executed by the same painters less than twelve years ago, that they might well be attributed not only to other men but to another country and another era altogether.   ♦   ♦   ♦   ♦   ♦

A change of occupation is good for all of us. As years pass, spent in the same employ, one inevitably grows stale, gets into a groove, yields to routine. The younger glass painters of England, divorced from their handicraft during four years of soldiering, had time to think, to reconsider old methods and scheme new. The Victorian glass-painters overpainted their material and their windows were dense and heavy; but now the younger men are painting more and more lightly and delicately every year. Colour is as deep as in the fourteenth century, and because there is more white glass to contrast with it, it seems richer than before; but the brown shadows beloved by the Victorians are gone, let us hope for ever. The painting now is as delicate and windows nearly as translucent as they were at the end of the fifteenth century.   ♦   ♦   ♦   ♦   ♦

Of the work of two or three younger men well in the van of the new movement perhaps none repays examination so well as that of Reginald Bell, and few men do work so difficult at first sight to appraise or criticise. From the variety of his designs and his range of subjects and treatment one is at first tempted to class him as an experimentalist. Sometimes he is grave, sometimes gay. He will design little nursery window medallions and do them to perfection: a series of toys, miniatures of wooden knights on spotted hobby horses, gay little spots of colour happily conceived, perfectly drawn, and for all their lightness of subject firm and strong in treatment and design. One so soon jumps to the conclusion that here is a painter vowed for life to paint jolly things for children that it comes almost as a shock to find that all this dainty stuff is mere playtime relaxation and that Reginald Bell is happier when opportunity offers of treating large window spaces in the grand manner. Not till one has seen his most important works does one realise that even underneath the tiny play medal-



PART OF A SERIES OF  
"VICTORY" WINDOWS  
IN SALISBURY CATHE-  
DRAL. BY REGINALD BELL



## STAINED GLASS BY REGINALD BELL

lions is an unusual quality of strength—a strength which stands the designer in good stead when working on the heroic scale.

Strength, in brief, is his characteristic: depth of colour, firmness and balance in composition, and a startling boldness of line. Every window he touches shows easy certainty—a confidence in his own mastery of a most obdurate material. Any painter of average talent, inheritor of the traditions of a celebrated family of glass-painters and educated in a studio which has been a school for two generations of craftsmen, should be able to produce good work, but Reginald Bell is not a painter of average talent. He is an artist, a designer of remarkable ability, and a handicraftsman to his finger tips. He has knowledge, power, and that happy inborn quality of ease in handling his material which makes light of limitations and turns them to advantages. Where a lesser man would be shackled by the lead lines in which all glass-painters

must work, Reginald Bell's windows wear them as easily as light chain armour. They outline his work, strengthen his design and shackle him nowhere. His *Victory* window in Salisbury Cathedral—one of the finest windows painted in England during the past four hundred years—would still be a dignified thing, would still tell its story, if every painted line and shadow upon it could be removed. The leadlines would still preserve its composition—in the Crucifixion panel, rigid and still, with one drooping figure where Our Lady slowly sinks at the foot of the Cross, and in the Triumph light with soaring lines like flames outlining the wings of the adoring Cherubim beneath the rainbow on which the Christ is throned.     ♦     ♦     ♦

His little *St. George* on foot, shown in the colour reproduction, though a miniature after this last, displays the same qualities. The design is firm and strong, the radiating lines of the figure with its slender legs and



DESIGN FOR PART OF A WAR  
MEMORIAL WINDOW. BY REGINALD BELL



## STAINED GLASS BY REGINALD BELL

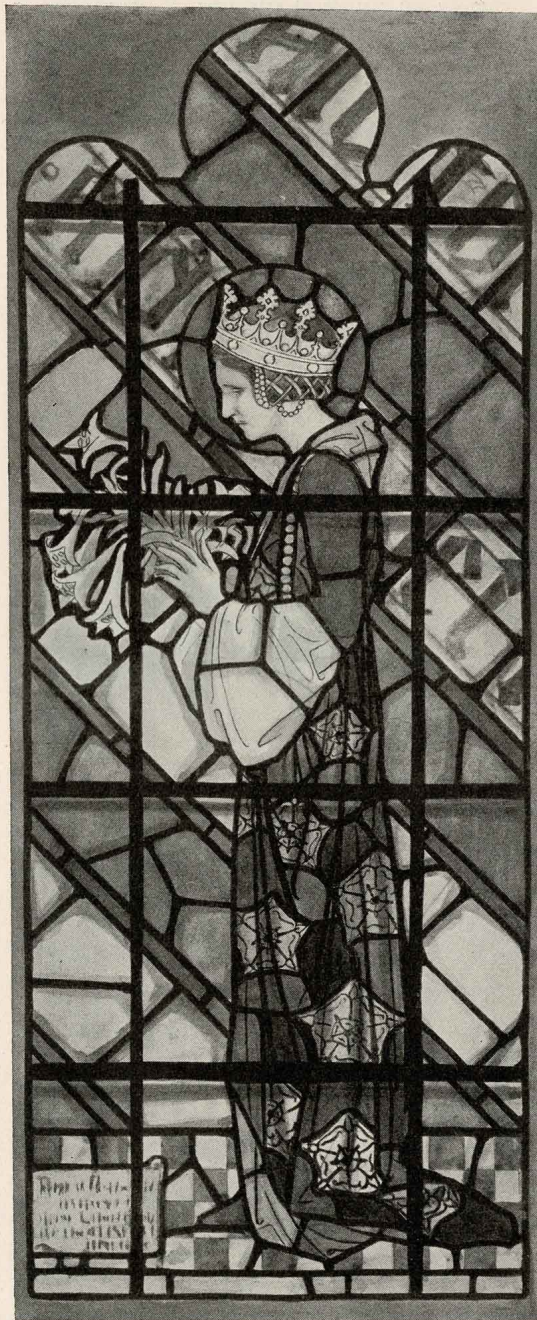
uplifted arm held together happily by the up-flung curve of the dragon's wings meeting the arched line artfully contrived by scroll, sword, and lambrequin. Nothing could be more modern in its scheme, and yet at first glance the panel might be from an early fifteenth-century window. His mounted figure of the same Saint at 21, Old Burlington Street, is frankly modern and its movement extraordinarily alive. It is difficult to realise that every curve in the design must follow a bent grooved lead. It is so free that it positively needs to be gripped and held steady by the strong square border. His little *St. Margaret* on the other hand is drooping, all restful. The panel needs a close examination before it reveals the heavy line and powerful craft-work involved in the draperies of the slender figure. The same heavily leaded draperies—quite in the manner of the best 15th-century work—give character by their depth and richness to the processional figures in the clerestory designs, and again for all their strength the figures are finely drawn without a trace of clumsiness. ▀

Above all, his work is translucent. Too many painters forget that the first purpose of a window is to admit light. Too many, remembering this, endeavour to admit their light by pale colour, often missing their aim by rendering it muddy by a film of paint. Reginald Bell never forgets this purpose, and so never uses a painted line or shadow which is unnecessary. He has realised the vital fact that he is most the master of his craft who paints his glass the least.

MAURICE DRAKE.

LEIPZIG BOOK EXHIBITION, 1914.—Since the Armistice the great bulk of the exhibits in the Official British Section at this exhibition have been returned to this country and distributed to their owners by the Department of Overseas Trade. Information is now desired by the Department as to the ownership of the exhibits lent for display in the British Women's Section (quite distinct from the Official British Section), which await distribution because the owners' names and addresses are not available. The office of the Department is 35 Old Queen Street, S.W.1.

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"ST. MARGARET"  
BY REGINALD BELL





BY APPOINTMENT  
THE KING AND QUEEN



TO THEIR MAJESTIES  
and H.M. QUEEN ALEXANDRA

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