Chapter 2
Starting Out: Kempe and G.F. Bodley

After coming down from Oxford, Kempe went travelling. A long letter to his mother, begun in Rouen on 29 April 1860 and finished in Caen a week later, gives an indication of how he filled his time:

> I need hardly give you a list of what I have seen, for I may say I have seen everything worth visiting excepting one little chapel about 4 miles off – which I was only hindered from visiting today by the heat & the total inability of the natives to direct me to it, & their ignorance of its existence. The cathedral & St. Ouen have given me several hours' delight – and the western front of the former grows on me hourly. At the end of each day I wander back to it again & again, to peep at it & 'find a spell unseen before'. [1]

He told his mother that he was staying in a comfortable hotel – 'no doubt the one where you once lodged. It is on the quay and I have a jolly little room high up overlooking the Seine, with a nice little French bed' – but having reassured her on that point, he teased her about how he was spending his evenings:

> Altogether my visit to Rouen has been most successful: its gay streets (I do not know what you wd say if you saw me in its back streets in the evening where every alley might contain a murderer for aught I knew to the contrary), among whom I pass quietly on my way, in happy unconsciousness of them, & its grand old buildings render it delightful.

Kempe was by now fairly fluent in French (he boasts of this too in the letter), and it would be interesting to know whether he had read Flaubert's account of that part of Rouen in *Madame Bovary*. In a letter to a friend, written two years before his novel was published, Flaubert had already evoked the

Charles Kempe, aged 23.

character of those streets, listing, 'The brothels with their railings, the tubs of evergreen, the smell of absinth, of cigars and of oysters etc.' 'The word is out,' he had added, 'Babylon is here.'[2]

Kempe's letter may simply betray the bravado of a young man trying to startle his mother, but it does reveal for the first time some of his developing attitudes. He was, for instance, unimpressed by the other Englishmen he encountered in Rouen: 'none with whom I could associate or would care to do so'. He was particularly pestered by one elderly man he met 'at the *table d'hôte* who wanted me to accompany him to the cathedral but was luckily too infirm to walk that far'. 'Moreover,' Kempe added, 'he had a wife at his elbow, an insuperable incumbrance.' Neither wives in general, nor the idea of a wife for himself, seem to have held any interest for him at this stage in his life. It is clear he was happiest in his own company:

> I have quite enough to do with my drawing & diary to prevent any feeling of the want of society, & during my rambles I am sure I am best alone – for no companion wd. have spent the hours that I have done at Boscherville, Jumièges &c.[3]

It is frustrating that any detailed descriptions of the buildings and the stained glass Kempe saw during this Normandy expedition were confined to his diary, of which no trace remains. Yet, that he was looking closely at the glass is proved by an early window of his in Prestbury Church (Gloucestershire, 1877) where the mitre and face of St Augustine are based closely on those of St Nicholas, observed by Kempe in a window in the north aisle of Rouen Cathedral and dating from c.1470. It was the fifteenth-century glass of northern France, rather than the twelfth-century glass of Chartres, or the thirteenth-century windows of Sainte-Chapelle, that had already appealed to him most strongly.

The real significance of this visit is that it marks Kempe's transition from treating ecclesiology and church decoration as a hobby, a distraction from the less appealing task of reading for his degree at Oxford, towards a

(above) St Mary's Church, Prestbury: St Augustine, (1877).

Rouen Cathedral: St Nicholas (c.1470).

systematic programme of study. This study was designed not only to deepen his understanding of French architecture and religious art, but to provide him with ideas and templates for future designs of his own. At the same time, Kempe was trying hard to improve his skills as a draughtsman: 'I have done a good deal in the sketching way,' he reported to his mother at the end of his letter, 'though it all looks very ugly at present for I cannot find time to finish my drawings.' From the evidence of the sketch book he kept at Rugby and during his university years, he was a competent sketcher, well able to capture a scene or a building observed at a distance, but detailed large-scale draughtsmanship was never to be his strength. Once embarked upon his chosen career, and to compensate for this drawing weakness, he found young artists of promise, encouraged them to have formal training at art schools (paying for them to do so if necessary), and then employed them to develop his ideas and designs into full-scale drawings.

But that was for the future. Returning from Dieppe to Newhaven, Kempe went to stay with his mother in Brighton, before heading back to Oxford and renewing old friendships. The earliest surviving photograph of Kempe, taken in this year, shows him trying rather self-consciously to look like a confident young man about town. His hair is black and wavy, but wispy is the only word to describe his beard. The early 1860s, however, and probably that summer in Brighton, marked a decisive turning point, for it was then that he came under the influence of the man who would shape his career, both at its start and for the rest of his life: his mentor and friend, the architect George Frederick Bodley.

Bodley was ten years older than Kempe. He was born in Yorkshire, where his father practised as a physician, but his parents had moved from Hull to Brighton, and tradition has it that his father became the Kemp family doctor.[4] This is unlikely, however, since Dr Bodley had actually retired because of ill-health before moving to Brighton.[5] Nevertheless, Kempe's mother knew the Bodleys, and would have known that their daughter Georgina had married a man called Samuel Scott, whose brother was the successful young architect, George Gilbert Scott. She would have known too that Georgina's own brother had also been a pupil of Scott's (his first) and had himself embarked on a promising career as an ecclesiastical architect. Bodley had indeed designed a striking new church (St Michael and All Angels) already being built in the middle of Brighton just when Kempe visited his mother there, on his return from France.

Bodley and Kempe had some important things in common, not least that both suffered from a stammer. Their shared tastes in architectural style and decoration tended towards the late medieval and the

aesthetic – Bodley having already established close links with William Morris and Philip Webb. It also helped that each had a marked leaning to Anglo-Catholicism, despite coming from evangelical backgrounds, and that both their families had wide personal and social connections among the clergy. Bodley had been privately educated and had not gone to university, choosing instead to begin his architectural training at once. His lack of academic qualifications, however, had been no handicap to his career: his brothers, Thomas and William, had both been at Queens', Cambridge, and, through William's recommendation, Bodley had already begun to gain a reputation at the university for his restoration and decoration of the old chapel of Queens'. Thomas had left Cambridge to become Vice-Principal of St Paul's teacher training college in Cheltenham; and, as early as 1852, when he completed his pupillage under Scott, Bodley had been commissioned to build a 'practising school' and Master's House in the grounds at Cheltenham – one of his very first secular commissions. At the same time, he was beginning to build churches and schools elsewhere in Gloucestershire, where his patron was Thomas Keble, Vicar of Bisley and younger brother of the founding figure of the Oxford Movement, John Keble.

By the time, therefore, that Kempe started to come under his influence, Bodley was already an architect favoured by the Ecclesiological Society: at the age of 33, he had completed two churches of his own and was embarking on at least two more. Influential connections and early patrons always helped – a lesson Kempe, too, would quickly absorb. Among these, none was to be more important to Bodley than Charles Lindley Wood, 2nd Viscount Halifax (1839–1934). The patronage and influence of Halifax, who became the leading layman of the Anglo-Catholic movement, and of his circle, would soon become equally important to Kempe. In later years, Halifax, who was President of the English Church Union, would be a frequent guest at Old Place.

Kempe did not become Bodley's pupil in the strict sense. Rather, he absorbed Bodley's tastes and ideals through watching him at work and, gradually, through working alongside him. The first record of Kempe producing an item of church furnishing in his own name comes in 1862, when he designed a lectern for St Nicholas Church, Brighton,[6] and his first known window, commissioned by his own Aunt Charlotte (see below, Ch. 4) and designed for Clayton & Bell, was installed in Gloucester Cathedral in 1865. It was Sir George Gilbert Scott who had encouraged John Richard Clayton to go into partnership with Alfred Bell; Bell and Bodley had been fellow pupils of Scott's. It was presumably Bodley who arranged for Kempe to join Clayton & Bell to learn the principles of stained glass

design and manufacture. At the start of his own career Bodley had reacted against Scott's muscular Geometrical Gothic, evolving the style (almost the attitude) that Michael Hall has defined as Anglo-Aestheticism.[7] Bodley himself described it as the art of refinement, but others were ready to call it 'feminine' or 'effeminate'. Kempe never troubled himself with labels, but found Bodley's colours, his use of natural forms and his designs for fabrics and furnishings (whether incorporated into stained glass or executed in silks and damasks) entirely in accordance with his own. In 1865 he assisted Bodley in the reordering and redecoration of Holy Trinity, Cuckfield: the painting of the panelled roof above the high altar there is Kempe's earliest known decorative work.[8]

In 1867 Kempe began work on the redecoration of St Wulfran, Ovingdean, a scheme that almost turned this church into a Kempe family shrine. This is the church where Kempe's family was buried, and it is where,

St Wulfran's Church, Ovingdean: memorial hatchment above the nave door, by C.E. Kempe to his father, Nathaniel Kemp (1867).

as an artist at the very start of his career, he first paid tribute to his father by placing over the door a large plaster tablet in the form of a hatchment. This bore his father's name and date of death (16 May 1843) and showed the family arms, complete with the crest – the pelican feeding from a wheatsheaf – and the '*Qui seminant*' motto in fine Gothic lettering. The stained glass in the church includes nine windows apparently dating from 1867, made to Kempe's designs by Thomas Baillie & Co., of Wardour Street, London. Baillie's *catalogue raisonné* of 1878 contains the following entry:

> 1867 Ovingdean Church – By order of C.E. Kempe, Esq., Architect. – Numerous Painted and Stained Glass Windows for the Church, consisting chiefly of single figures of Saints; erected 1867.[9]

Whether Kempe himself (or Bodley, who had introduced him to Baillie's firm) used the label 'architect', or whether Thomas Baillie prudently decided to use it, is not known. The term was sometimes applied to him later in his career, but at this early stage he was usually described as a 'decorator' – in essence, an interior designer. What Baillie's brief account leaves unsaid, however, is that Kempe paid for these windows himself; more than that, he incorporated into them not only his own arms and those of the Ingram family (into which his favourite sister, Augusta, had married), but also, in the quarries, images of wheatsheaves and of the Pelican in her Piety. Kempe's fingerprints are everywhere in this church.

Even more striking than the glass is Kempe's decoration of the chancel roof. Here is the first ceiling (the roof is boarded to create a barrel vault) painted by Kempe without any input from Bodley, and in style it shows

St Wulfran's Church, Ovingdean: Kempe's painted chancel ceiling (detail, 1867).

strongly the influence of William Morris's designs: a vigorous flat pattern of leaves, birds and flowers in dominant colours of green and Venetian red against a white background. Under each bird is a scroll with the exclamation 'Alleluia'. The crown posts of the roof are also painted in Venetian red, highlighted with simple flower and leaf patterns in black and white, while the trusses have IHS monograms surrounded by crowns of thorns. There is something less solemn about this small-scale ceiling decoration – the fluttering pigeons perhaps and the more sinuous stems of the flowers and leaves – that contrasts with Cuckfield before and Tuebrook to follow: Kempe, answerable here to no one but himself, was free to experiment.

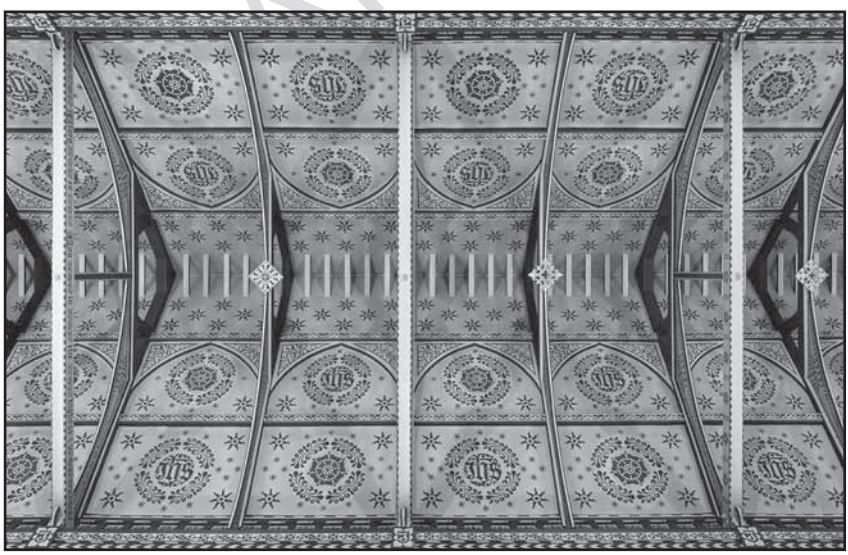
The freedom of expression he allowed himself with the ceiling did not extend to the windows of Ovingdean. The saints and biblical figures in the glass produced for him by Baillie are, in comparison with the ceiling, treated conventionally and rather stiffly. Nevertheless, the work he undertook at Ovingdean was an act of family piety, undertaken in between work for Bodley. In a discreet corner of the chancel ceiling, Kempe placed the following inscription:

> *E dono familiam Kempe et Eamer. Ad Gloria[m] Dei, hoc opus Karolus Eamer Kempe cum sociis fecit i[n] festum festi Corporis Xti mdccclxvii. Orate pro n[obi]s et om[nib]us benefa[c]tor[i]bus huius eccl[es]ie.*
>
> (Given by the family of Kempe and Eamer. To the Glory of God, Charles Eamer Kempe and his colleagues completed this work on the Feast Day of Corpus Christi 1867. Pray for us and for all benefactors of this church.)[10]

There is no indication who were the 'colleagues' working with Kempe at Ovingdean; however, the previous year (again under Bodley's direction) Kempe and a new colleague, William Maynard Shaw, had worked together at Christ Church, Pendlebury in Manchester, where they decorated the chancel in 1866 to a scheme designed by Bodley. The patron of this work was an Anglo-Catholic banker, Edward Stanley Heywood, who took to Bodley's young assistants straight away: 'These two gentlemen are much interested in the work they have undertaken – church decoration. They are very pleasant guests & excellent company,' Heywood recorded in his diary.[11] It was to be with Shaw and Frederick Leach (whom he had first encountered the previous year at Bodley's new church of All Saints, Cambridge) that in 1867 Kempe began work on what Michael Hall calls 'one of the greatest schemes of painted decoration in any nineteenth-century British church, St John the Baptist, Tuebrook'.[12]

The decoration of Tuebrook needs to be understood as one of the decisive statements of the Aesthetic Movement. By contrast with the relatively austere exterior of the church, the interior is richly decorated in a manner that reveals Bodley and Kempe working in close harmony, while also suggesting Kempe's decisive influence. The pink Runcorn stone of the arcades, arches and windows speaks for itself, its natural variations of pink and mauve occasionally offset by paler or darker streaks. As originally furnished and decorated by Bodley and Kempe, however, almost every other surface of the interior was painted or gilded, the colours becoming lighter the higher one looked: the pews stained black; pulpit and chancel screen black and gold, but with green and red details; for the spandrels between the arches, angels enveloped by floral designs in red, green, gold and brown. Then at clerestory level a cream background offsets a green diaper pattern interspersed with rust-red flowers. In the panels of the nave roof ivory is dominant, though the alternating patterns of sacred monograms and mystic roses, enclosed within wreathes of leaves, are again shown in red and green. Every inch of the ceiling panels and the roof rafters is painted, and texts from psalms and canticles are inscribed on the tie-beams in Gothic script with illuminated capitals.

This decoration marks a continuation, and a refinement, of Kempe's earlier roof painting at Cuckfield and Ovingdean: there is an element of reserve in the way the monogram and rose emblems sit within, but do



St John the Baptist, Tuebrook:
Kempe's painted nave ceiling (1868-9).

not dominate, the ivory-coloured panels. But what appears to be Kempe's decisive intervention is the treatment of the east and west walls of the nave, above the chancel and tower arches respectively. At the west end Kempe designed a monumental Jesse Tree, representing the descent of Christ from Jesse – a theme that would produce some of Kempe's most successful designs for stained glass windows, particularly for windows in the west end of a church. Regrettably, this Jesse Tree has been lost and the wall redecorated to complement the Bodley-designed diaper work elsewhere in the church. The Tree of Life, however, above the chancel arch, has survived, and is a powerful image: Christ hangs from a Cross that has become a tree standing in the centre of a garden of stylised roses. At the foot of the Cross, St Mary and St John stand surrounded by six angels, while at the head Kempe has placed a commanding representation of the Pelican in her Piety. The Tree itself bears fruit that represents the twelve Virtues.

The Tree of Jesse and the *Arbor Vitae,* the Tree of Life, are fundamental motifs in Kempe's work, just as the Virtues are a recurrent theme in his iconography. The prominence given to the Pelican is a reminder, too, of its religious and symbolic significance for Kempe himself. The disappearance, therefore, of the Jesse Tree is doubly regrettable. First, it means the loss of the typological element of the design where the Old Testament 'type', the Tree of Jesse, is balanced by the New Testament 'anti-type', the Tree of Life. Second, it diminishes the importance of this decorative scheme at St John the Baptist, Tuebrook, as the first large-scale, integrated, statement of Kempe's religious, personal and artistic preoccupations.

These two wall paintings nevertheless established Kempe's reputation. In 1872, only a year after the church was consecrated, Charles Eastlake published his influential *History of the Gothic Revival*, a book that helped to change the way Gothic Revival architecture was understood and valued in Britain. The last chapter culminated in a detailed account of St John the Baptist, Tuebrook. Having described and approved the overall decorative scheme of the interior, Eastlake turned to the Jesse Tree:

> It is on the space usually occupied by the west window and on the wall above the chancel arch that the artist, Mr. C.E. Kempe, has reserved his greatest care. On the former appears a large and grandly treated painting of the Tree of Jesse in which the figures introduced are nearly life-size. In composition, in delineative power, in judicious choice and association of colour, as well as in attention to the proprieties of costume and other details, this

> work is worthy of all praise, but it is rivalled, if not surpassed, in excellence by that which is executed on the chancel wall. Among the sacred allegories which have found expression in Christian art, there is none more significant or beautiful than that of the Tree of Life as symbolized by the Crucifixion. Mr. Kempe has approached this subject in a manner befitting its dignity and pathos, neither aiming at unnecessary archaism nor adopting a mere pictorial and naturalistic treatment. The design is, in the highest aesthetic sense of the word, *conventional*, but it belongs to that order of conventionalism in which the element of beauty predominates.

Eastlake went on to give a full analysis of Kempe's Tree of Life before concluding, 'In this truly admirable work the genuine grace of Mediæval art seems at length to have been reached.'[13]

Tuebrook is remarkable for the team of artists who came together there: Bodley, as the architect whose overarching vision determined the eventual appearance of the church; Kempe, working closely with Frederick Leach on the painting of the walls; and William Morris, responsible for most of the windows – though not the clerestory angels, for these were very early examples of Kempe glass, designed in collaboration with Bodley and made by Baillie. Nowhere else did all these artists work so closely and effectively together again. Together – and in the face of considerable opposition from those in Liverpool who distrusted what they saw as the dangerously Roman influences in the church's ritual, furnishing and iconography – they had created an ecclesiastical setting which exemplified the beauty of holiness while asserting the holiness of beauty. The shock of the first impression – colour, gilding and imagery, the painted decoration of foliage and flowers, the rich glow of the stained glass – all this was (and still can be) almost overwhelming in its aesthetic and religious appeal. It was neither self-consciously medieval, nor self-consciously modern. Many years later, Ninian Comper, who had himself spent time in Kempe's Studio, explained this appeal:

> The purpose of a church is not to express the age in which it was built or the individuality of its designer. Its purpose is to move to worship. [. . .] The note of a church should be, not that of novelty, but of eternity.[14]

At St John the Baptist, Tuebrook, Bodley and Kempe had attempted to strike exactly that note.

Setting up the Studio

It is not possible to say exactly when the Kempe Studio opened its doors. This is partly because there never was a business or an organisation formally called the Kempe Studio. Technically, and until the day he died, Kempe was in business on his own account: a man who conducted his professional career from his London address. He had no registered office, his was neither a public nor a private limited company. In effect, however, he did run a Studio. He surrounded himself with artists and draughtsmen whom he trained to create works of art in a variety of media according to a set of criteria and influences that evolved over time into 'the Kempe style'. For his stained glass work he also needed to create a workforce of craftsmen and skilled artisans who could create windows of the highest quality to an increasingly demanding schedule; and so, while the drawing offices were in rooms adjacent to his lodgings in 47 Beaumont Street (just south of Marylebone Road and close to Bodley's Harley Street home), it soon became necessary to find accommodation for a glassworks too. As far as one can tell, however, between 1865 and 1868 Kempe worked essentially as a freelance, usually assisting Bodley, or working on his own account, as at Ovingdean. When producing stained glass, he had to rely on Thomas Baillie; when decorating the interiors of churches, as at Tuebrook, he worked alongside Fredrick Leach and, if need be, called in the help of other assistants such as William Maynard Shaw.

Kempe soon developed a great respect for Leach's versatility as an art workman, skilled in a wide range of crafts. 'Art workman' was Leach's own description of his trade, which he carried on from workshops in the artisan 'Kite' area of Cambridge. As the business expanded, he opened an office and showroom in the city centre, opposite Great St Mary's Church, where 'F.R. Leach & Sons' offered a wide range of domestic and ecclesiastical services, ranging from decorative design and execution to plumbing and tiling. In terms of church decoration, Leach subscribed fully to Bodley's aesthetic and Anglo-Catholic principles, and continued to work for him, and for William Morris too, throughout his career. At its height, Leach's business employed over fifty men, almost as many as Kempe's would do. Leach had made an earlier start than Kempe; his father had been an inn-sign painter and had ensured his sons were apprenticed as painters, too. In the 1861 Census, both Frederick and his elder brother Barnet are described as 'House Painter (Master)'.[15] As a 'Master', Fred was in a position to take on apprentices of his own; by 1867 he was receiving applications such as this:

Houghton, Tuesday 22/10/67

Dear Sir,

As my parents would like me to come as an apprentice under you, & as I know I should like it myself, would you kindly drop a few lines to say when father might come. As he would like to come & have a little talk with you.

If it would not trouble you too much would you just write & say what day would be most convenient for you. I got home quite safe & found all my friends well.

I remain with kind regards

A.E. Tombleson[16]

Alfred Tombleson, aged sixteen when he wrote this letter, duly became apprenticed to Leach, though within a year he was effectively working under Leach for Kempe. By mid-1868, Kempe had engaged Leach to assist him with the decoration at Tuebrook. In August he wrote to him, offering condolences for a family bereavement that had taken him back to Cambridge. He also updated him on progress in Liverpool:

> The painting has progressed a good deal and there is but one day's work to complete all that is at present in hand, though without the green and gold – it is therefore very important that these materials should arrive as soon as possible, for on their arrival there would be work for several more days.[17]

Kempe was clearly reliant on Leach for the supply of paints; more than this, he had become Bodley's Clerk of Works at Tuebrook and was anxious not to let the painting work fall behind schedule. Kempe and Leach were both born in 1837, but already Kempe has assumed the tone of the senior colleague:

> I shall be glad if you will return at your earliest convenience and at any rate let us have the materials for continuing the present work. I do not, however, wish in any way to hurry you from your home at this trying occasion.[18]

Once work at Tuebrook had finished for the summer, Kempe was free to pursue his own objectives, but he still needed Leach's help on another task, one that required more than one skilled artist. He had set himself – and Leach too – to begin a systematic study of some of the most important late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century glass in England. Kempe's ambitions had by now crystallised into a firm plan of establishing himself as a fully independent stained glass specialist. The hallmark of his glass would be

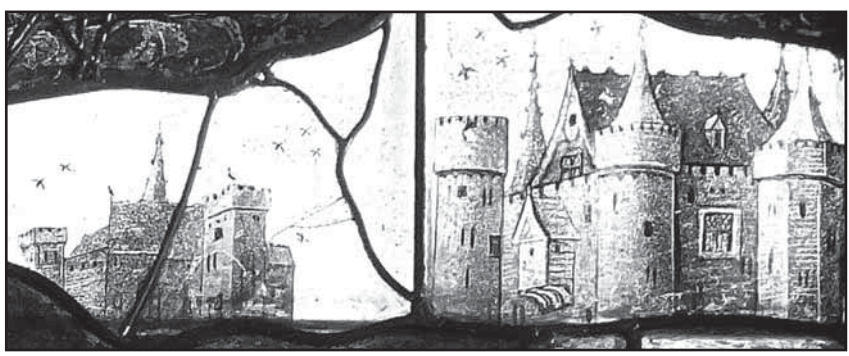
high-quality art designs in the late medieval style. Accordingly, he based himself for the autumn in the West Midlands, inspecting windows in churches such as Malvern Priory, Cirencester and, pre-eminently, Fairford. Writing from Cirencester, he instructed Leach to produce detailed coloured drawings of the windows he had chosen:

> I have examined the glass here and find that it has been a good deal cleaned, and colour shading removed, but the drawing of the figures in the West window is very good. I have told the masons that you will require two ladders – if you do not find the men have brought them in you must apply to Mr. Bridges builder.[19]

The second ladder was for Tombleson. Kempe listed ten saints and bishops he wanted Leach to draw. Then he identified one particular picture he needed:

> There is a head in centre of window [*sic*] the most perfect head of all which would be worth having especially as it is said to be a portrait. It is crowned and looks northward. There are plenty of small figures and details of all sorts worth studying, but I do not think the canopies need to be drawn. [. . .] The yellow stain should be shown in these and in the Fairford figures yet to do – as it cannot be supplied afterwards.[20]

The full-size drawings were to be accurate copies of the originals, annotated to show those who might later use them exactly how effects of colour and shading were achieved. The passing reference to 'Fairford figures yet to do' suggests that Leach and Tombleson might have already paid at least one visit to Fairford, which was not more than a morning's journey by coach from Cirencester.



St Mary's Church, Fairford: painted background details. Kempe borrowed features such as castles, turrets and roofscapes for his own glass.

It would be hard to over-emphasise the importance of this preparatory work both for the Studio (as on-site training for Tombleson) and for the evolution of the Kempe style itself. Though the impact of glass in the cathedrals and churches of northern France has already been mentioned, the influence of Flemish art and glass quickly became equally significant, and it was at Fairford above all that Kempe found those essential elements that would come to characterise 'stained glass by Kempe'.

All the windows at Fairford present biblical scenes and people or biblical and apocryphal stories. They date from between 1500–15, and come therefore at the very end of the era of medieval stained glass in Europe that had begun four hundred years earlier. Yet to think of this glass as the last gasp of an outdated tradition is to misunderstand it entirely. As early as 1913, the stained glass artist and historian, Hugh Arnold, saw it very differently:

> Fairford, in fact, marks a revolution in English stained glass. It is an early, if not the first, work of a new school which, throwing away the old native tradition, based its style on that which had grown up on the Continent and, still more, upon Flemish painting. The Fairford windows represent a phase of their art which did not last very long, for their style soon began to assimilate itself to that of the Renaissance.[21]

Influenced by Fairford, Kempe's own thinking – and hence his style – soon began to assimilate itself to that of the Renaissance.

Art historians from Arnold onwards have debated the relationship of the Fairford glass to the windows at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, to the windows in the Chapel of Henry VII, Westminster Abbey, and to the glass in the Lady Chapel of Winchester Cathedral. One obvious link between them is that the buildings in which the glass is housed were all being built during the reign of Henry VII (1485–1509), the beginning of the Tudor, post-medieval era; another, possible, link is that the glazier Barnard Flower, who certainly was closely involved both at Westminster and (initially) at Cambridge too, may have also been active at Fairford. Arnold, comparing Flower's work in King's College Chapel with glass at Fairford, concludes, 'I think we should not be far wrong in assigning to Flower the whole of the north aisle at Fairford'.[22]

Carola Hicks, however, in her account of the Cambridge windows, *The King's Glass*, warns that

> Attempting to define Flower's hand by comparisons with the work he is presumed to have done at Winchester, Westminster and Fairford is unreliable because there is no one panel in any

> of these places that can be securely attributed to him, except by virtue of hypothetical recognition of what he may or may not have done at King's – a dangerously circular argument.[23]

Nevertheless, the presumed connection of Flower to Fairford would have appealed to Kempe. Flower was born in the Netherlands, and his career up to the point when he was brought over to London by Henry VII had been in the Low Countries. Flower it was, therefore, who introduced the latest stained glass styles from Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges to England. This was important enough; even more significant for Kempe, however, was that Flower had enjoyed the patronage of Bishop Richard Fox (c.1448–1528). More politician than prelate, Fox exercised huge influence at Court and in the country. Kempe identified himself closely with Fox, above all because they shared the same personal emblem – the Pelican in her Piety. Kempe also recognised in Fox a man who, combining faith with a large fortune, had used his wealth to promote stained glass in England, and his biblical scholarship to create schemes of glass to illustrate the Bible and celebrate the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament saints. Fairford was one of the churches where Fox was credited with devising the scheme of glass designed to fill every window in the church; in recognition of this, St Mark in the Evangelists' window had been drawn as a portrait of Fox himself.

Fox's portrait had a compelling interest for Kempe, which will be discussed below, but every window in Fairford helped to clarify the direction he wanted his own glass to take. From Fairford he derived some of his earliest designs for canopies, as can be seen at Cheveley (Cambridgeshire) and in Wakefield Cathedral, where the New Testament saints in the north aisle are also closely modelled on the patriarchs at Fairford. At Fairford, too, Kempe noted the styles of fifteenth-century headwear and beards, as well as stylised armour and the voluminous cloaks worn by prophets and saints – which would soon become instantly recognisable features of his own windows.

By close study of the Fairford glass, Kempe also learned much about the techniques of silver staining and the potential use of enamels – on white glass to create monochrome designs or on blue to suggest grass *etc*. – and he examined the way the Fairford artists had started to experiment with deepening perspective in their painted designs. The artists of 1500 often used architectural features such as arcades, apses and chequered floors to lend depth to interior scenes; for outdoor settings, they included distant cityscapes or hills, while flocks of tiny birds seen in the sky added a Brueghelesque idea of distance. On a more intimate scale, they filled the scenes they depicted with details easily overlooked but enriching the

narrative: the gift of a bejewelled golden chalice presented to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba; the carpenter's set square carried by Joseph on the flight into Egypt; the pair of doves in a gilded cage, brought by Mary as a thank-offering to the Temple; or the pincers tucked into the executioner's belt as he climbed the ladder to remove the nails from the hands of the dead Christ. Details such as these soon found their way also into Kempe's designs; quickly, too, Kempe began to stretch single scenes such as the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple across two, three or even four lights, ignoring the intervening mullions. This was a feature of the glass at Fairford, but one only rarely found elsewhere before 1500. Some images so struck Kempe that he adapted them into his own designs and recycled them several times. The most notable example of this is the story of Gideon and the Fleece, as told in the Book of Judges, where the Fairford image is clearly the original for Kempe's own version.

St Mary's Church, Fairford: portrait of Bishop Fox as St Mark (c.1500).

Of all the windows in Fairford, there was one, however, that affected Kempe profoundly, influencing his own depiction of faces throughout his career. This is St Mark, in the Evangelists' window – the most westerly window in the north aisle. It is an extraordinarily expressive face. First, there is the tilted head. Mark, as an older man, looks downwards; however, his contemplative eyes, half-closed but set wide apart and with flattened eyelids, seem somehow to look inwards, not out. Then, the well-defined

cheeks, nose and chin and the wide, sensitive, mouth: all these features distinguish some of Kempe's finest faces, and Kempe himself saw them first at Fairford, in the portrait of Bishop Richard Fox as St Mark.

Images and techniques such as these, garnered from Fairford and other churches in Gloucestershire during the late autumn of 1868, inspired Kempe – and no doubt Tombleson and Leach also – but they frustrated him too. The glass that had been made for Kempe so far lacked the clarity and subtlety of painting he sought. After his study of such fine late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century glass, Kempe felt acutely that this fundamental problem could only be overcome if he himself had control of the process; and it was his dissatisfaction with the glass produced for him by Thomas Baillie – a dissatisfaction that he shared with Bodley, who was also looking elsewhere for his glass to be made – that led ultimately to the creation of the Kempe Studio. In October 1868, he proposed to Leach that he should join forces with him to help set up his own glassworks, for which Leach would take responsibility. Leach already had his own kiln in Cambridge for executing the occasional stained glass commissions that came his way. Bodley used Leach, so did Morris; but Kempe believed that if he could persuade Leach to work primarily for him, this would give his Studio the start he wanted:

> Since my return to town I have been thinking that I am only losing time in looking to strangers for the execution of my glasswork, and am eager to start some project whereby it may be carried on under my own eye. I have resolved to make a beginning at once, and look to you to help me. I feel pretty sure that with an effort we may arrive at producing work, more in harmony with my own wishes without seeking help of those whose methods I believe to be wrong. [. . .]
>
> It will be very important to me if you can see your way to starting work at once: and I shall be anxious to see you and come to some decision on the earliest day you can name. A hired room and the construction of a kiln in a cellar must be our first step and that as near to me in this neighbourhood as may be.
>
> The work which I have in prospect is such as to induce me to go into the matter as quickly and resolutely as possible: nor can I afford to lose more time in it. I suppose I shall see Tombleson on Monday – I have work for him to go on with here.[24]

This letter, sent from 47 Beaumont Street in October 1868, shows Kempe in a hurry, and with good reason: he had received a major commission to produce a sequence of windows for the apse of the newly-built Bombay Cathedral.[25] The origin of this commission is unclear. As some of the

individual windows were to be memorials to British army officers serving in India, it may have come via a recommendation from Kempe's brother William, serving in India at that time. More likely is the possibility that Bodley was initially offered the job on the strength of the William Morris glass he had been commissioning from the early 1860s onwards; Bodley may have declined the commission, recommending Kempe in his place. Bodley was seriously ill at this time, and was relying on Philip Webb and Thomas Garner to carry on his architectural work. So this might have been a reason for passing the Bombay commission to Kempe. At first glance, these windows do not look much like Kempe glass, but there is strong visual evidence that Tombleson (among others) was involved in producing, designing and painting them.

As commissions began to multiply, the need for Kempe and Leach to employ more staff grew too. He started to engage his own apprentices, conscious perhaps that he should not rely on poaching Leach's – as he had effectively poached Tombleson. As always throughout his career, he had the skill of identifying the potential in young men before they had been trained, and harnessing the enthusiasm of those who were just embarking on their careers. He took on William Tate as the Studio architect,[26] and employed John Thomas Carter as one of his earliest artists.[27] Like Tombleson, both of these man repaid Kempe's early confidence in them with lifelong loyalty, and Carter's son in due course followed his father as one of the Studio's most important draughtsmen. This reciprocal confidence and loyalty was one of the most important factors in the enduring success of whole Kempe enterprise.

Work was now going on simultaneously at several widely-spread locations. In addition to the decoration of Tuebrook, which continued until after the church's consecration in 1871, Leach was working for Morris at Jesus College, Cambridge, on the decoration of the nave roof. Across the road, Kempe was at All Saints, supervising the ongoing decoration on Bodley's behalf. In Sussex, Kempe was commissioned to decorate the chancel walls and provide stained glass for a small village church, St Mark, Staplefield, close to Cuckfield. Once again, he had to use Baillie for the glass and, although he devoted great care to preparing the drawings and adding handwritten notes about how the glass was to be coloured,[28] he was dissatisfied with the result. One window is of particular importance, however. The distinctive figure of St Michael shown in full late-fifteenth-century armour, shouldering a sword and wearing a distinctive, pointed capacete helmet, derives from a window in Malvern Priory that Leach had drawn for Kempe. The same figure, wearing the same armour, appears in one of the clerestory windows at Tuebrook, though not framed within a

(left) St Mark's Church, Staplefield (1868);
(right) St John the Baptist Church, Tuebrook (1869): St Michael.

Both images derive from a window in Malvern Priory, drawn by Leach and Tombleson in 1868.

canopy as at Staplefield. Yet the two windows look entirely different, though both came from T. Baillie's glassworks. The 1868 glass at Staplefield shows Baillie using flesh-coloured tints for faces and hands, while at Tuebrook

the following year he used silver staining. The effect of the latter was closer to the character of fifteenth-century glass, but Kempe knew by now that Leach could be trusted to produce the kind of glass he wanted.

Whether different artists had been at work on the glass in these two churches, however, Alfred Tombleson was certainly employed at both, and the wall paintings at Staplefield appear to have been his work alone. North

St Mark's Church, Staplefield:
wall painting executed for Kempe by A.E. Tombleson (1869).

and south chancel walls are decorated with a row of fruit trees set in a garden with grass, sunflowers, ferns and daisies. Between the trees stand angels holding, at waist height, a long scroll with texts from the Psalms; the south wall quotes from Ps. 117: 'The truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise the Lord.' This scheme – trees, angels, scrolls, texts – draws heavily on an identical scheme that had been recently devised by William Morris and painted by Frederick Leach around the coved ceiling of the nave in Jesus College Chapel. Only the Jesus College text is different – the words are from the Latin hymn *Vexilla Regis* – but otherwise the Staplefield scheme is identical. Indeed, the design of the leaves and fruit of the trees owes much to Morris's decorative style of this period – as seen, for instance, in the 'Pomegranate' wallpaper of 1866. The only difference is that the Staplefield painting is touchingly naive in its attempts to recreate the full-fledged decorative effect achieved by Morris and Leach. Such naivety is readily understood, because Tombleson appears to have been left almost

on his own to undertake this work, and actually signed it (carefully out of sight) 'A.E. Tombleson', where not even Kempe himself would be able to see it from ground level.[29] He was, it is important to remember, not yet twenty when he completed this commission, but Kempe rewarded him within a very few years by appointing him master glazier and foreman of his new glassworks.

To call the paintings of the angels naive is not to deny their impact or their faithfulness to the visual and iconographic principles Kempe had already begun to establish. The angels are crowned and robed in priestly vestments: alb and apparel, dalmatic, cope with jewelled orphreys. The faces of Tombleson's angels are distinctive: rather long and angular, eyes set wide apart. This is an exact description of the same face of St Mark, based on the portrait of Bishop Fox, in Fairford Church that meant so much to Kempe; Tombleson himself, as an apprentice, might well have copied Fox's face in 1868 under Leach's supervision. His Staplefield angel faces have a further significance because they resemble, very closely, the faces of the angels in the Kempe windows of Bombay Cathedral. Tombleson was clearly responsible for both.

Kempe had set up his business with the reduced inheritance he received from his late father's estate,[30] but the commissions that were now coming his way were beginning to give him financial independence. He did not yet own property – his Beaumont Street premises, where the Studio was located, were rented – but in 1871 he became a 'Name' at Lloyd's, the centre of the London insurance market.[31] It is revealing to see that from an early stage in his career he followed his grandfather, Sir John Eamer, in developing a significant financial investment in the City. The 1870s and 1880s were a period of rapid growth in London's financial strength, and this was reflected in the growing fortunes of those who staked their personal wealth there, as Lloyd's 'Names' certainly did. But the expansion of the Studio and the high profiles of the commissions that Kempe was receiving continued to demand investment, in people and resources. At the same time, there appears to have been something almost casual about the way he recruited new staff. In early June 1869, John Carter mentioned to Kempe a friend and fellow artist called Wyndham Hope Hughes, and Kempe said he might be able to find some work for him. Hughes duly came to Beaumont Street, and Kempe offered him a month's trial. On his first day he was set to work to draw an image of St Augustine. At the end of June, Hughes recorded in his diary that he had agreed to a weekly wage of thirty shillings, and that Kempe wanted him to start work in Liverpool without delay. When he arrived at Tuebrook on Monday, 5 July, Fred Leach arranged lodgings for him nearby, and the next day Hughes was put to

work painting on the north wall of the church. Kempe was in Liverpool too, and took pains to make him feel part of the team, taking him to dinner and inviting him to the consecration of a new Anglo-Catholic Church (St Margaret of Antioch, designed by George Edmund Street). Hughes was impressed, noting afterwards in his diary that there was a white marble Crucifixion above the altar.

The first month's work went well, and Hughes returned to London for August where Kempe proposed that, when work at Tuebrook resumed after the summer break, he should take on the painting of the chancel screen that Bodley had designed. This is one of the most prominent features of the church and it is a mark of Kempe's confidence in his new artist that he should have given Hughes such an important job so soon. He clearly expected his artists to be able both to draw in the Studio and to undertake practical on-site decorative work wherever it was needed. During the rest of the year, Hughes and Carter were sent by Kempe to work in new London churches (notably St Paul's, Lorrimore Square in Southwark, one of the most controversial of the growing number of Anglo-Catholic centres in the London diocese). While in London, Kempe had supervised his drawing of a Pelican in her Piety that Hughes then took up to Tuebrook and transferred to the east wall. It can still be seen there today, at the head of the great *Arbor Vitae*, a remarkable achievement for an artist not yet twenty-one, and only in his first year as a member of the Studio.

Hughes was a man who was to have a significant influence on the direction and style of the Studio, even though he worked for Kempe for less than a decade. He was a keen musician, always travelling with his violin, and his diary for these years provides a vivid picture of life as one of Kempe's artists.[32] The diary only came to light in the 1990s; previously it had been assumed, quite wrongly, that the 'Mr Hughes' who worked for Kempe during the 1870s was Arthur Hughes, the Pre-Raphaelite painter.[33] Wyndham Hope Hughes himself was by no means a Pre-Raphaelite, but he was influenced by early Renaissance Italian art and by the increasingly stylised work of Burne-Jones. Significantly, too, he was as strongly attracted to the emerging style of the Aesthetic Movement as was Kempe himself. The figures he drew and painted during the 1870s, particularly of saints and angels, and especially of angel musicians, are highly distinctive and appealed strongly to Kempe; the early glass with which Kempe began to fill the windows of his new property, Old Place, is clearly identifiable today as the work of Hughes, rather than of Carter. Kempe invested heavily in Hughes from the start, allowing him to devote much of 1870 to further study at the National Art Training School in South Kensington, where Tombleson was a fellow student. It is clear, as Margaret Stavridi

explains, that this investment in Tombleson and Hughes was behind Kempe's reference to 'the young hands we hope to bring forward to learn the business' in his letter to Leach.[34]

Back at Beaumont Street in January 1871, Hughes found himself fully occupied painting and drawing. Bodley, recovered from his illness, and Kempe were again collaborating closely at this stage. Kempe had Hughes working on designs for the later stages of the Tuebrook decoration and for a banner that is still on display in the church. At the same time Hughes was assisting Kempe with another commission that had come via Bodley. Edward Heywood, the Manchester banker, had entrusted Bodley with the scheme for decorating and furnishing his home, Light Oaks, in Pendleton. All that survives of this project is a settle, designed by Bodley who then asked Kempe to decorate it. Kempe chose the Four Seasons as the theme for the four panels, the same theme that he would soon adopt for the windows of Old Place.[35] It was Wyndham Hughes, however, who first drew and then painted the settle, beginning the work on 11 April 1871 in spare moments between working on other commissions, particularly the west window of St John the Baptist, Waterbeach (Cambridgeshire), one of the earliest Kempe windows to which a named artist can be assigned. Hughes' diary entries for this period are instructive: having finished the settle drawings at Beaumont Street, he carried them on 12 June to the glassworks at 2 Millbrook, where the settle itself was waiting to be painted. 'Pounced in the WINTER and began to paint it,' he recorded. 'Pouncing', a technique Kempe and Leach had already used for transferring diaper patterns onto walls, means that he fixed the drawing over the wooden panel and then pricked the outline of the drawing through the paper onto the wood. Ten days later he had completed the painting of the figures, and was able to begin the backgrounds: 'Put in the green part of the backgrounds of the FIGURES of the SETTLE.'[36]

By the following year, however, Hughes had embarked on what was to be one of the key commissions both for Kempe and for Hughes himself: the decoration of the Chapel at Castle Howard, in Yorkshire. This commission was remarkable in a number of ways. First, it represented the last occasion on which William Morris and Kempe were to work alongside each other, for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. were in charge of the stained glass, while Kempe was responsible for the internal decoration of the walls. Next, it was the first occasion on which Kempe would be asked to work on and within a classical structure, not a Gothic one; the idiom he adopts is, throughout, Renaissance. Third, this was the first major commission in the United Kingdom that Kempe received without any direct assistance from Bodley; indeed, it marked the point from which their paths were to

diverge for at least the next ten years. Fourth, it is likely that Kempe owed this commission at least indirectly to the influence of Lord Halifax, and Halifax was to become one of his closest friends and strongest advocates. His position as the head of the Anglo-Catholic Church Union, on the one hand, and his active patronage, on the other, were together immensely important in establishing Kempe as the favoured artist of the High Church movement.

To give just two examples, while the decorative programme at Castle Howard (1871–5) was still under way, Kempe received two commissions which can both be attributed to the influence of Halifax: the great east window of the new church of St Agnes, Kennington (designed to be the centre for Anglo-Catholic worship in south London) and the glazing of the windows in the south aisle of the nave of the future Wakefield Cathedral.[37] The earliest Wakefield window dates from 1873; over the following two years the Kempe Studio would create five more – a total of 500 sq. ft of glass. Meanwhile, the St Agnes east window alone contained 480 sq. ft, and would still be one of the largest windows Kempe ever produced, if it had not been destroyed in the Blitz. The size of these commissions is not merely testimony to the reputation the Studio had already established; it indicates how rapidly the workforce must have grown and how efficiently its members worked to create windows on such a scale. Equally remarkable is the fact that the man who acted first as foreman and then as manager of the glassworks from 1874 onwards was Leach's former apprentice Alfred Tombleson; he was only 25 years old but evidently a man in whose abilities as artist, glazier and project manager Kempe had quickly come to have absolute confidence.

By the same token, Lord Halifax was no casual friend who happened to put in a good word for his friend from time to time. His unwavering advocacy of Kempe, and his staunch friendship, gave Kempe a personal and professional confidence that opened doors and directed the course of his career. Kempe had a talent for making his clients and patrons into genuine friends, earning and retaining their complete loyalty. He did the same with many of his closest colleagues. So it is worth noting, in summing up these opening years of Kempe's career, that the two people who were to play perhaps the most significant parts in his professional life, Tombleson and Halifax, came from such utterly different backgrounds: the one born in a farm worker's cottage in a remote fen-edge Huntingdonshire village, the other an aristocrat born in a Yorkshire stately home whose family connections controlled much of north-east England.[38] Halifax had himself been introduced to Kempe by the Rev. Frederick Sutton, a leading ecclesiologist, a friend and patron of Bodley. Writing after Kempe's death in 1907, Halifax recalled that first meeting with Kempe, his 'dear friend', in these terms:

It was when he was painting the roof of St John's, Tuebrook, at Liverpool, that I made my first acquaintance with Charles Kempe. The late Rev. Frederick Sutton and I were at Liverpool together, and I recall as if it were yesterday our visit to St John's, and Mr Sutton's interest and pleasure in Mr Kempe's work. Mr Sutton himself was a born artist, a beautiful draughtsman, and possessed an almost unrivalled knowledge of ecclesiastical art. He was a friend of Mr Bodley's, who, I think, often consulted him; his taste was unerring, and to win Frederick Sutton's interest and approval was no easy matter. Charles Kempe secured both, and I owe my intimacy with him, which has lasted now nearly forty years, to that visit to St John's.[39]