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MEDIÆVAL WALL-PAINTING AT UPCHURCH.

BETWEEN Chatham and Sittingbourne, on high ground overlooking the Medway, stands the church of St. Mary, at Upchurch. It consists of three aisles, three conterminous chancels, north and south porches, and a low western tower, with a shingled spire made, like that at Willesboro, in two parts, the lower portion being four-sided, while its upper cap is hexagonal.* In the chancel are three chair-like sedilia of stone, which were engraved in *Archæologia*, vol. xii, p. 100, and beneath the north chancel is a *capella carnaria*, or charnel house. The nave arcades do not commence at the east wall of the tower, but several feet of blank wall (possibly, part of an earlier tower) interpose between the tower and the first pier of each arcade. From the tower staircase (which projects into the nave) a doorway, several feet above the floor, formerly led into a room over the north aisle, for a priest, or an *inclusus*, similar to one at Chislet. The chamfer stops, throughout this church, are greatly varied in detail, yet all are of similar outline.

While this church was under restoration, in 1875, several traces of wall-paintings were discovered. Within a fragment of Early English arcading, at the north-east corner of the nave, close beside, but north-west of, the chancel arch, is seen the head of an arch-

* At Brookland, the spire is made in three distinct portions.



A

B

C

D

EASTERN PORTION OF WALL PAINTING IN UPCHURCH CHURCH.

bishop with his cross. Beneath the east window of the south chancel, appeared some fragments of designs upon a smaller scale. In one, were two knights in combat; in another, two priests; other designs seem to have flanked the same window.

In the south aisle of the nave a more important discovery was made. High up, beneath the wall-plate of the south wall, there is a long series of figures, boldly sketched with broad black outlines, but very sparingly coloured. These figures form six distinct scenes, and extend along the whole wall, between the south door and the arch of the south chancel. The space thus occupied by the painting is about seventeen feet long, by four feet wide. The figures vary from 2ft. 9in. to 3ft. in height. The Rev. B. St. John Tyrwhitt, Vicar of Upchurch, caused the painting to be copied, and its design is now given on the accompanying plates. For the purpose of inserting two Decorated windows, the painting has been mutilated, where the heads of the windows occupy portions of wall formerly covered with parts of the painting. This fact gives a clue to the date of the work, and seems to suggest that the paintings were executed during the Early English period. Arcading of that period still appears at the east end of the high chancel, on its north and south walls; fragments of similar arcading have been discovered on, and west of, the north pier of the chancel arch; and Norman plinths, of the piers of an earlier chancel arch, have been uncovered and are now visible. There can be little or no doubt that this series of painted figures adorned the south aisle of the Early English fabric, in the thirteenth century. The painting was probably obliterated in the fourteenth century, when the exist-

ing arcades of nave and chancel, and most of the windows, were inserted.

The subject of the painting is very obscure. One of the best living authorities upon such matters, Mr. J. G. Waller, has devoted some attention to it, and has kindly favoured us with the following communication:—

“The subject is certainly of unusual interest.

“As these paintings are in the south aisle, we must look to legendary sources for a solution. Biblical subjects are found in the chancel, if at all. The aisles, I think I may say invariably, illustrate the life of some saint. Nor ought we to be obliged to go far to find out which saint is referred to, but at present I have not been able to do so. I am sorry I have not seen the paintings themselves. No figure has the nimbus; this is remarkable. Is there not an omission? This is how the painting reads:—

- (i)—A is a bishop at the altar, officiating at the mass, and B is a deacon at the lectern reading the Gospel.
- (ii)—C is the same bishop, and D is a woman having in her hands a chrisom'd child; perhaps a dead child.
- (iii)—E, the same bishop again, who may have brought back the child alive to the mother F.
- (iv)—G is the same bishop, emptying out of his chasuble what appear to be consecrated wafers; but into what?
- (v)—I may be the husband of the woman; he seems to be enjoined by the bishop (K) to go upon a pilgrimage; perhaps on account of the restoration of the child.
- (vi)—L is perhaps the husband, again; he seems to be on pilgrimage and to be receiving the benediction of an anchorite, whose hand protrudes from the window of his cell, M.

“The Bishop is the important person, in these scenes, and ought, I should say, to be nimbed. I have no doubt of being able to find out the subject, but it will require some research.”