

ST. MARY'S, ASHENDON, BUCKS.

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Ashendon—formerly Assendon, Assendune, Eshenden or Essendone, — with its hamlets of Great and Little Policott, is bounded on the north by the village of Wooton-Underwood; on the east by Westcott in Waddesdon, and Over or Upper Winchendon; on the south by Nether or Lower "Winchendon, Chearsley and Chilton, and on the west by Dorton. It lies about eight miles and a half west of Aylesbury, six north of Thame in Oxfordshire, and two miles and a half south of the road from Aylesbury to Bicester. The village consists of farmhouses and cottages irregularly built upon a hill, from which elevated position it seems to have derived the latter portion of its name, "don" meaning an "eminence."

The place appears to have been of some importance in Saxon times, as it is frequently mentioned, according to Browne Willis, in ancient chronicles. About the year 872, the Danes suffered a most severe defeat here by an army led by King Ethelred and Alfred his brother,* who

* THE BATTLE OF ESSENDUNE.—" S. Ethelred, the elder brother of Alfred, was attacked in the same invasion of the Danes, wherein S. Edmund suffered. A few days after the battle of Essendune, he received the Crown of Martyrdom in fighting against the Pagans. He was buried in Wimborne Minster, where a small brass is to be seen bearing his effigy. It is of the early part of the 17th century."

" Go, call the priests, and bid the Thanes,
And let the Mass be said;
And then we meet the Paynim Danes,"
Quoth good King Ethelred.
" I see their Raven on the hill;
I know his fury well;
Needeth the more we put our trust
In Him that harrowed Hell."

Then out and spake young Alfred,
" My liege, this scarce may be;
Our troops must out with battle shout,
And that right instantly."
Mde answer good King Ethelred;
" To GOD I look for aid;
He shield a Christian King should fight
Before his host have prayed!"

afterwards threw up entrenchments and earth-forts around it, and so for some years prevented a recurrence of the evil. In the year 1016, however, Eadnoth or Adnoth, Bishop of Dorchester (Oxon), formerly a Prior or Abbot of Ramsay, was slain in a battle with the Danes. This village and all the neighbourhood was then in the diocese of Dorchester, and not for some centuries afterwards in that of Lincoln. It has lately, together with the whole of the County of Bucks, being placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Oxford. It is comprised in the rural Deanery of Waddesdon and the Archdeaconry of Buckingham. The Church, situated on one of most elevated spots in the village, is dedicated in honor of the Nativity of the B. V. M., and the Feast is observed in the early part of September. The Church consists of chancel, twenty-eight feet long and sixteen feet wide;

The Priests are at the altar now
The King and nobles kneel;
The Sacrifice is offered up
For soul and body's weal;
And nearer now, and nearer still
The Danish trumpets bray;
Northumbrian wolves came never on
As they came on that day.

Four bow shots are they from the host,
The Saxon is aware;
Yet not a knee in England's ranks
But bendeth yet in prayer:
The five stout Jarls looked each on
each,
And one to other spake:
"By Woden but these Christian fools
An easy prey will make!"

Young Alfred holds no longer;
" Let priests and women pray ;
But out to battle, lords and thanes,
Or else we lose the day!"
Half with Prince Alfred grasp their
arms
And battle on the plain,
And half with godly Ethelred
At holy Mass remain.

Prince Alfred's men are on the hill;
Their shields are o'er their head;
The Raven flies triumphant midst
The dying and the dead.

Frean and the Sidrocs thunder here,
There Harold's bloody crew;
And for each man the Northmen miss,
The Saxon loseth two!

nave, about fifty feet long, with clerestory, south aisle, and porch; with a square tower at the west end, thirty-four feet in height. The tower and some of the windows are early second pointed; a window of three lights on the south side (of which we give an illustration), being particularly good, reminding us strongly of some of the latest work in Salisbury Cathedral. Some third pointed windows, with poor mouldings, and a flat arched door, have been inserted in the western side of the tower: and work of the same inferior character has been done in the chancel: the clerestory, likewise, is of a similar style, the windows being two-light third-pointed.

On the gable at the east end of the chancel is a small cross, of good design, not much damaged. In the tower the ancient Sanctus Bell remains, and bears great resemblance to that existing at Long Compton, Warwickshire. There are two piscinae: one of second pointed work in the south aisle, for the altar of the B. V. M.; and another of somewhat earlier character, south of the

The Mass is said, the King is up:
 "Now, worthy liegemen, shew
 That they who go from prayer to
 fight
 Can fear no mortal foe!"
 And on with sword and battle-axe
 The Wessex column roll'd:
 Both Thane and Ceorl and Earldorman,*
 And Heretoch and Hold.

Then waxed the combat fierce and sharp,
 Yet ere the sun went down,
 The Raven spread his wings for flight,
 As far as Reading town:
 And on the morrow when they came
 The bearing dead to Court,
 Five mighty Jarls and one great King
 Were writ in that amount.

In English song the King live long,
 That won a field by prayer;
 The bloody day of Essendune
 Long live recorded there!
 Short life was godly Ethelred's ;
 Short life but long renown:
 And for the Royal Diadem
 He hath the Martyr's Crown !

J. M. NEALE.—*Mirror of Faith*, pp. 26-30.

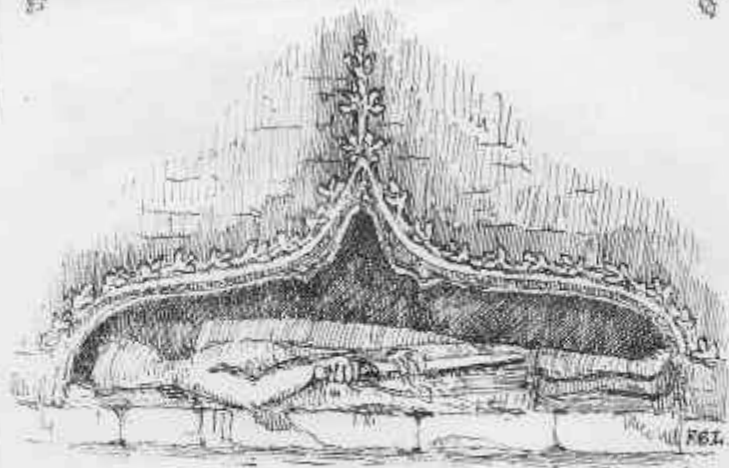
* *Ceorl*, retained in our own language, under the form *Churl*. *Heretoch* and *Hold* were the names of officers in the Anglo-Saxon armies. Their functions are not accurately known.



† Quince St



† St John St



† Recumbent Effigy S. Mary's Ashendon. Bucks. Q. 2

(For Records of Buckinghamshire)

sanctuary, for the High. Altar. We have given illustrations of both, that in the Chancel being the most uncommon. The steps to the ancient Rood-Loft have been closed up very lately: and the Rood-Loft itself existed within the memory of an old inhabitant still living. "It was covered," we were informed, "with color and gold, and a row of Bible characters along the bottom of it." In the north wall of the chancel, near the sanctuary steps, placed under a second pointed canopy, lies the figure in stone of a Crusader. He is habited in chain mail; his right leg — as is usual with such — crossing his left: the shirt or hauberk descending to his knees, and the border of the surcoat to about the middle of the leg. His left hand holds the scabbard of a large sword slung in a broad belt, while his right hand grasps the hilt. On the left arm is a large pointed shield. The whole figure, but especially the head, has been most wretchedly defaced, and appears to have undergone at various times some processes of restoration — by no means improvements — at the hands of the village mason. It has been daubed over with lamp-black, afterwards with chocolate, paint, and then with eight or ten coats of churchwarden's white-wash. We ventured to remove a small portion of these ornamental additions, and the result was, that we discovered in one or two places the presence of polychrome. Green, gold, scarlet, and blue, had been evidently used upon the figure, which appears to be in date late in the thirteenth, or early in the fourteenth century. It is not known for certain, of whom it is a representation: some have assigned it to Sir John Bucktot, or Bugden, of Policott; and some to one of the Cressy family, who were anciently Lords of the Manor there. The font is of first pointed work, and not very remarkable in its character. There are now no brasses in the church, though many existed there fifty years ago*. In various parts of the sacred building there are monuments bearing the following names:— Fawconers, Cheyne (of Drayton Beauchamp), Winchcombe, Hawles, Webb, Rose, Lucas, Crouford, Humphries or Humphreys, Bampton, Rice, and Garrett. The Church appears to have undergone what the good-natured keeper of the key of it, called a "restoration:" i.e. objects of superstition have been carefully destroyed, memorial brasses have been sacri-

legiously sold, or made away with, the commonest and cheapest deal has been used to make sittings, the rood-screen has been removed, and white-wash has been plentifully applied to walls, roof, and wood-work. These "improvements" were made about fifteen years ago. Such things of course would not happen now-a-days, a taste for preserving objects of antiquity and interest having become prevalent, and the manner of making restorations better understood; but we look for the day, when GOD'S houses shall not be kept merely decent, but restored with zeal to somewhat of their ancient glories as they stood in "the days of faith," and what is of still more infinite importance, with a restored daily and weekly sacrifice. GOD grant it in His good time !