

ST. MARY, AYLESBURY.

The great improvements made of late years in the interior of this fine old Church, are now being followed up by an extensive renovation of the exterior. Mr. Scott has again been consulted, and under his advice and direction all the coverings of rough cast, with the ugly plinths of Roman cement, are now in course of removal. A handsome wall-facing of stone is gradually superseding the rough cast; the buttresses are being rebuilt on solid foundations reaching down to the rock, and good stone plinths, following as nearly as possible the old lines, are taking the place of the cement. The designs contemplate a restoration or reproduction of the windows, wherever necessary; and the whole exterior will then become a worthy counterpart to the magnificent interior. Already some £10,000 have been expended on the interior; and it is estimated that the external works now in progress will cost at least £3500 more, of which about £2000 have already been raised.

Not the least interesting part of the present restoration is the Lady Chapel, a beautiful work of the fourteenth century. In excavating for the new buttresses and plinth foundations of this building, the workmen encountered some old arches of a very rude type, which led to further excavations within the Chapel; and thus the remains of an ancient crypt have been revealed, possibly of Saxon date. In later times this crypt seems to have been used as a chancel house, the arches serving as openings for this purpose from without. At the east end of this subterraneous chamber, immediately under the east wall of

the Lady Chapel, and, in fact, forming its foundations, are two of these old arches, one of which is partly filled up with masonry. There are also two more arches of the same character, one on the north side, and the other on the south, this last being immediately underneath the piscina and sedilia of the Lady Chapel, which have likewise been revealed in the course of the operations.

The old stone steps leading down into the crypt have also been found at the west end of the Lady Chapel. These will, of course, be preserved, and all the stone work be carefully restored.

This chamber was evidently the crypt of a much older building; and as the traditions of the place inform us that Aylesbury possessed a church in very early times, it is not impossible that this may have been the very site of the Saxon building where St. Osyth is said to have been buried in the ninth century.

E. B.
