

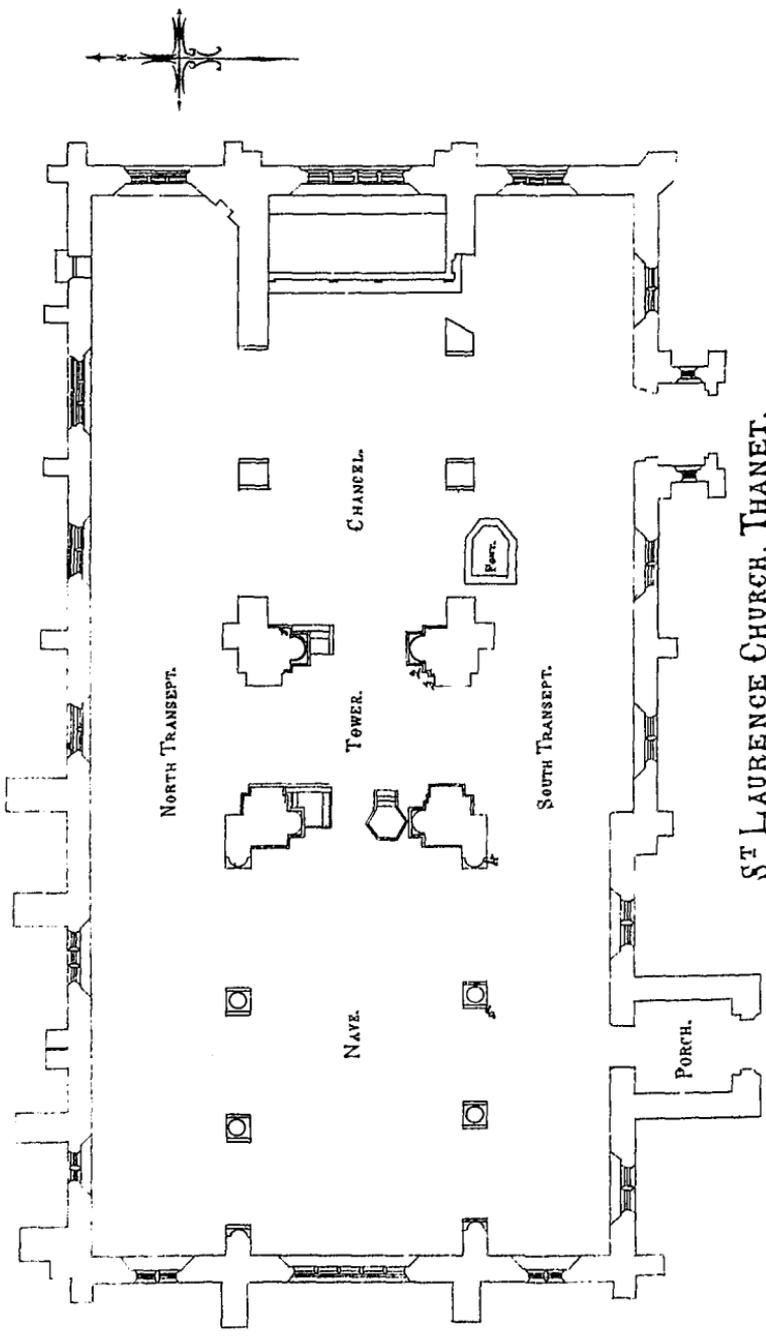
A SCULPTURED LEGEND AT ST. LAURENCE
CHURCH, IN THANET.

BY THE REV. C. A. MOLONY.

THE line of pillars in this church, extending from the chancel arch in the central tower towards the south porch, have capitals ornamented with grotesque heads at one corner only. Viewed separately, these sculptures look strangely out of place, and seem due solely to some inexplicable caprice of the mason or architect. But when studied with regard to their relative positions, and in connection with each other, they may be suggestive of an exorcism of which no history can be traced. The accompanying Plan of the church shews the relative positions of these sculptures by means of numbers, 1 to 5.

Upon the north pillar of the chancel arch, at the south-eastern corner of its capital, *inside* the chancel, crouches a demon (1), overlooking the three chapels which formerly existed at the eastern extremity of this church. His hideous features wear a broad grin of satisfaction; it may be at having attained a position so advantageous for "catching away the word sown," or instilling evil thoughts into the minds of the worshippers.

At the angle marked (2), he is again depicted with a cowed and sullen expression, *outside* the chancel. In front of him, upon the adjoining pillar, is a half-length figure (3) beckoning to him with the right hand, and pointing with his left hand to the door of the south porch, in the act of dismissal. This figure is popularly believed to be Archbishop Laurentius, with his crozier, the successor of Augustine in the See of Canterbury; it is more probable that it represents an angel, as it appears to have wings. The angel evidently has discovered the presence of the evil spirit in the chancel, and



ST LAURENCE CHURCH, THANET.

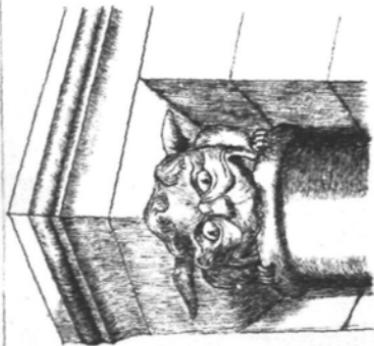
The figures 1 to 5 mark the positions of carved capitals of piers.

has evoked him, previous to inflicting upon him a sentence of banishment from the church. These sculptures are on the inside of the pillars in this angle of the tower.

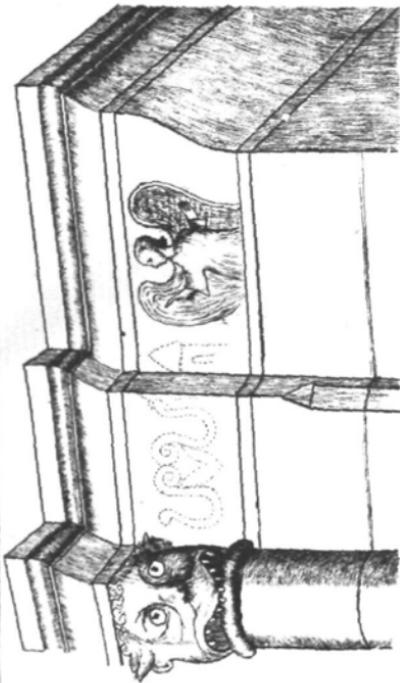
The adjoining pillar completing the south arch of the tower bears no carving upon its capital. But at the south-west corner (4) of the nearest pillar in the nave's south arcade, on the *outer* side, is a bold outline of a head, having the mouth covered with a conspicuous gag. Silence, symbolical of restraint from further mischief, and an immediate expulsion from the sacred edifice, have been enforced upon the evil spirit. He has sped thus far in his outward flight.

At the corresponding angle (5) of the next pillar, nearly opposite the south door, is a most uncouth head. Only a rough outline is visible here, in which the principal feature is a pair of staring eyes, and the left cheek is distorted by the tongue being thrust derisively into it. The demon has displaced the gag, and takes advantage of the screen afforded by the massive angle of the tower intervening between him and his reprovee to leer impudently at the latter before making his exit through the south porch.

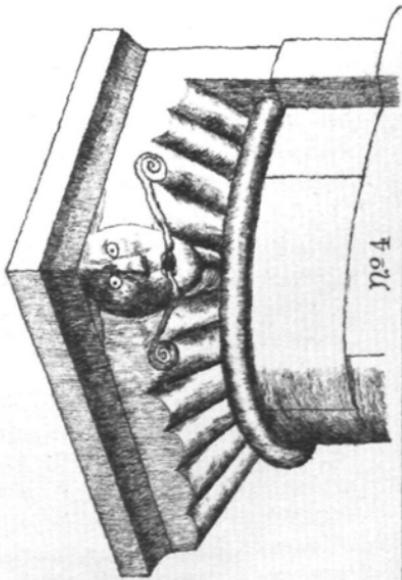
Such was the manner in which the builders of old time delighted to embody spiritual allegories in stone; quaint as their conceits often were, they were at the same time symbolical and instructive, and presented to the eye abundant matter for reflection, being attractive alike to the careless or to the devout mind.



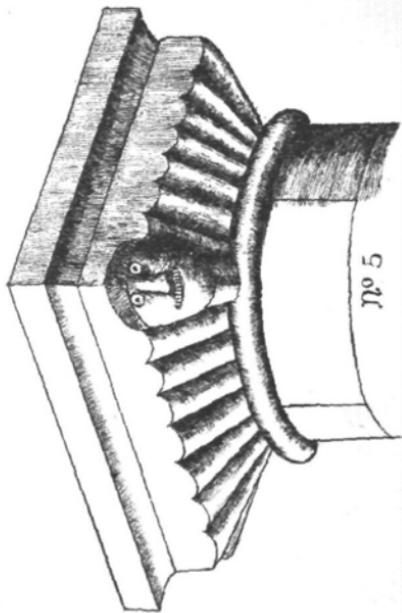
№ 1



№s. 2 and 3.



№ 4



№ 5