

middle of the seventeenth century it was in the possession of Sir Robert Jocelyn, by whom it was conveyed to the Company for the Propagation of the Gospel at Boston, in New England.

Here was the seat of the Hobarts, ancestors of the Earls of Buckinghamshire, before they obtained Blickling, in Norfolk.

In former times the parish was generally considered unhealthy, but drainage and other improvements have quite altered its character in that, as in

long time mere open and waste land. The whole of this Common belonged, till 1878, to the Provost and Fellows of Queen's College, Oxford, who exercised the manorial rights, in virtue of the bequest of Mr. Michel. In that year, however, after a long litigation, the details of which would be difficult to describe, and which are merely of local interest, nearly the whole, except some 300 acres at the extreme east, was bought by the Metropolitan Board of Works, railed in carefull,



PLUMSTEAD CHURCH AND MARSHES IN 1854.

other respects, and its mortality returns of late years show that it can favourably compare with any other place in England. Situated on the gentle slope rising up from the marshes to the summit of Shooter's Hill, it has many natural advantages; and the beauties of its scenery, especially from the high grounds of Shrewsbury Lane and the rugged heights of Bostal Heath, cannot be surpassed anywhere within the same distance of London.

Plumstead Common is a plateau, or rather, a succession of plateaux, divided crosswise by "combes," down which little streams in winter trickle or dash with mimic force, adding not a little to the rugged beauty of the scene. The Common itself extends for more than a mile along the high ground, and overlooks the marshes and the river. It was for a

and placed under such regulations as will ensure its maintenance for ever as a recreation-ground for the people, in conformity with the Commons Preservation Act, which was passed about that time. The Common is to be kept in its present wild state, and not turned into a "park" or "garden." In many parts it bears a close resemblance to Hampstead Heath; and though not so diversified, nor so rich in wild flowers, it is covered in places with wild thyme, heather, and gorse, and affords a pleasant retreat and recreation-ground to the "Londoners south of the Thames."

The central part of the Common is used for exercising the horses belonging to the Artillery at Woolwich. Hereabouts, a little to the north of the road across the Common, before it descends to the