

of graves, all uniform, and bearing the names of young people of either sex who were drowned in the Thames off Triphook Point, between Woolwich and Plumstead, through the unfortunate collision between an outgoing steam-ship, the *Bywell Castle*, and a saloon steamer, the *Princess Alice*. A large stone cross close by records, by its inscription, this fact, stating that out of some 750 passengers, about 500 were drowned, and adding a well-timed Scriptural quotation that "in the midst of life we are in death." The cross was erected by a six-penny subscription, to which over 2,300 persons contributed.

Plumstead Church and the old manor-house which adjoins it stand apart from the rest of the village, on the debatable ground between the highland and the lowland, verging upon the marshes, just where the line of cliffs must have run when the unembanked river Thames was an arm of the sea. That such was once the case is shown by some fragments of rock, evidently once a portion of a bluff headland, still to be seen high up on Plumstead Common, near the Woolwich end. These fragments, having been much chipped away by mischievous children and pleasuring parties, have been carefully railed in and saved from further injury. They are now becoming objects of respect, and are regarded with almost superstitious veneration, on the old principle, "*Major ex longinquo reverentia*." Any one who will walk along the high ground from Woolwich to Plumstead, and will mark the formation of the succession of breezy downs, with verdant "coombes" between them, can come to no other opinion.

Like those of many other water-side places, the old parish church of Plumstead was dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron saint of fishermen. It stands on the edge of the marshes, which reach from the high ground to the river, nestling under the side of the hill by the side of an old farm-house in a most picturesque manner, forming quite a subject for a water-colour artist's brush. A view of it, as it appeared a quarter of a century ago, may be seen in the *Illustrated London News* for 1854. This we have reproduced on p. 36. The fabric, in the words of Mr. Thorne, is "a somewhat incongruous admixture of styles and periods," and its chief beauty lies in its tall embattled tower of modern red brick, dating only from the early part of the seventeenth century. Its interior is sadly commonplace, and offers scarcely any scope for description.

The church is described in the "Beauties of England and Wales," in 1806, as "an old structure, partly dilapidated, and now consisting of one pace (? piece) only, with a neat tower of brick,

embattled at the north-western angle." In Ireland's "History of Kent" (1830) the fabric is described as having "formerly consisted of a nave, two side aisles, and a chancel; but," continues the writer, "in the early part of the last century the whole was in so dilapidated a state, that the roofing fell, in which condition it continued for nearly twenty years, when it was at length repaired. As to the south aisle, which now constitutes the whole of the church, forming the nave and chancel, it was restored, through the care and industry of Mr. John Gossage, an inhabitant of the parish, who died in 1672, and was there interred; the south wall of the church appears to be very ancient, having narrow lancet windows."

The church, as it appears in the present day, may perhaps be best described by saying that it is of the "nondescript" order. It has no chancel at all, and only on the south side an excrescence which might possibly be called a transept. At the junction of this transept and the nave, embedded in the wall, is a massive arch, which may be Norman, or even Anglo-Saxon. Some of the windows in the transept are apparently Early English lancets. The whole interior is painfully "neat," but remains much as it must have done under the Georges, except that the galleries have been removed. Under the tower is a pulley, doubtless once used for lifting the cover of the font. On the floor of the central aisle is a slab commemorating the above mentioned Mr. John Gossage, who, "by his care and industry, caused this chancel to be repaired, after about twenty years lying waste," and who died in 1672.

The red brick tower bears a strong likeness to that at Charlton, and probably was designed by the same hand. The chancel having been pulled down, the east end of the nave was walled up with stones many years ago, and a tasteless square headed window of two lights was inserted; but this also has since been bricked up. The north aisle appears to have been re-built about the year 1820, and within the last few years the church has been further improved by uncovering the ancient pavement and the bases of the stone columns.

The foundations of the original church have been traced in a north-easterly direction. Among other sepulchral memorials is one in memory of Dr. Benjamin Barnett, Prebendary of Gloucester and Vicar of Plumstead, who died in 1707; and a mural monument in commemoration of John Lidgbird, Esq., of Shooter's Hill, who died in 1771.

The churchyard has been largely extended on the south, in fact, nearly to the main road, so that it