



Pleinstall Church—South-east view.



From Photographs by Mr. E. G. Ballard.

Pleinstall Church—Interior.



A short Epitome of a Paper on Plemstall Parish Church

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PLEMSTALL or Plegmundstall Church, about four miles from the centre of Chester, has its special claims to interest. It is more than a thousand years since the saintly and gifted Plegmund, for fear of the Danes, lived as a hermit on this spot, then known as an "Island of Chester." From this retreat he was summoned by Alfred (who had now—in 878—by the treaty of Wedmore, confined the Danes to the district north of Watling Street) to be the instructor and educator of both monarch and people. Subsequently, he discharged with piety and usefulness the duties of Archbishop of Canterbury, until his death in 914. The site of Plemstall Church is the only spot which fulfils the requirements of the Story of Plegmund. The geological and botanical features of the district show that, within a comparatively recent historical period, the district was overflowed by the sea, and under such conditions only the Parish Church of Plemstall and the Holme Farm could stand upon the watery waste as an "Island of Chester."¹ There is no Village or Township of

¹ See Paper read by Judge Wynne Ffoulkes before Chester Archæological Society.

Plemstall—only the Church and Parish bear the name of the Saint.

Doubtless, from the time of Alfred and Plegmund, Christians, from generation to generation, have been gathered together to worship on this interesting spot; but the architecture of the greater part of the present Church is Perpendicular, the work of Tudor times. The Rectory was at one time in the gift of the Monastery of S. Paul at Shrewsbury; subsequently it was appropriated to the College of S. John, Chester. Sometime after the dissolution, it was purchased by Bishop Bridgeman, from whose descendant, Lord Bradford, it passed by purchase to others. We have the names of the Rectors and Vicars from 1297; the Registers date from 1558. The Church consists of a nave and chancel, with an aisle on the north side, separated from the body by a range of six obtusely-pointed arches. The chancel is divided from the body of the Church by a fine wooden screen; and a Chapel of the Trafford family (now passed by marriage to the Barnstons) is divided off from the east end of the aisle in a similar manner. All the windows appear to have been decorated with rich painted glass. The date 1500 appears on the windows of the Trafford aisle, and in a window on the south side are some brilliantly coloured figures of "Thomas Smith and wyfe," with their seven sons and four daughters kneeling behind them. There are interesting memorials of the Hurleston, Trafford, Barnston, Pilkington, Hamilton, and other families. There is an interesting Well called "The Christening Well," near the Church, which may be S. Plegmund's Well. This is very much overgrown with weeds and thorns, but traces can be seen of stones with which it has been cased. The water in it is of a higher level than the stream or river which is not

far off, and its overflow feeds a pond in the adjoining field. The water is still taken from here, at times, for baptisms—just as we hear of water from the Jordan being used—so that there is still some justification for the title “The Christening Well.”

The Bible and Chain of Reformation times are to be seen in this Church. The structure is still filled with high square pews, and has a “three-decker,” which is in these days an interesting and almost unique feature.

