



ST. AUGUSTINE'S WELL.

From a photograph specially taken for THE CHURCH MONTHLY.

EBBSFLEET AND ST. AUGUSTINE.

BY M. PAYNE SMITH.

HALF way between Minster and Ramsgate, in the Isle of Thanet, the traveller on the South-Eastern Railway may chance to notice a tall stone cross standing at the corner of a field, not far from a grove of gnarled old elms. An inquiry of his fellow-passengers will probably elicit the vague information that "Somebody landed there"; but it is quite a chance whether any one will know that the "somebody" was St. Augustine, and that the cross marks the beginning of the Church of England, as at present existing.

The scenery has changed since 597. Then, though the chalk cliffs of Ramsgate made a white line at one side as they still do, Pegwell Bay was all water, and the estuary of the Stour, and the wide tidal channel called the Wantsum, which made Thanet a real island, was not silted up, but was the usual waterway for ships bound to London, which thus avoided the dangerous North

Foreland. Now the greater part of the estuary has become solid land, and grassy fields stretch down to the shallow and ever-receding sea.

Augustine brought Christianity to the English, but not to Britain, as the ruins of several Roman churches prove. St. Martin's at Canterbury, and St. Mary's in Dover Castle, both date back to Roman time, and there was very probably some kind of a chapel at Richborough. But the wild Saxons worshipped Odin and Thor, and as they conquered the country drove the British Christians farther and farther west, till they found a resting-place in the mountains of Wales, or sailed across St. George's Channel to find refuge in Ireland.

Hengist and Horsa are supposed to have landed in Thanet, very possibly at Ebbsfleet, which would be the most obvious landing-place for any one entering the bay. There are no cliffs here, but gently rising ground, and