

## A CHARMING VILLAGE SERVICE.

ONE of the most charming of old-time observances is that which is known as "well-dressing" or "well-flowering," a custom which is peculiar to Derbyshire.

The "village of the holy wells" is well-nigh hidden by woods and plantations, within easy distance of the river Dove. The name of this charming retreat is Tissington, and its great day is Ascension Day, when the famous festival takes place.

Some people have tried to trace in the "well-dressing" a relic of dim antiquity, when it was a pagan feast in honour of the water-nymphs. But it is more likely that it originated in a fearful drought which visited Derbyshire

in 1615. No rain fell, except three slight showers, from March 25th till August 4th. The greater part of the land was burnt to ashes, as far as the produce was concerned. But the wells of Tissington flowed all the time, and people drove their cattle for over ten miles to them to get water.

Then a thanksgiving was appointed annually, on Ascension Day, to bestow a blessing upon the five wells of the village. The thanksgiving takes the form of a service in church, at which specially appropriate hymns are sung, and the rector delivers a sermon in keeping with the glad festival. At the conclusion of the service the congregation forms a procession, headed by the rector; which proceeds through the village to the first of the five wells. A circle is formed here, and the clergyman gives out a psalm and afterwards a hymn, which are sung with great spirit by the assembly. This same performance is gone through at all the wells, except that, at the last well the gospel is read. When the rector has, after this, given the company his benediction, the ceremony comes to an end.

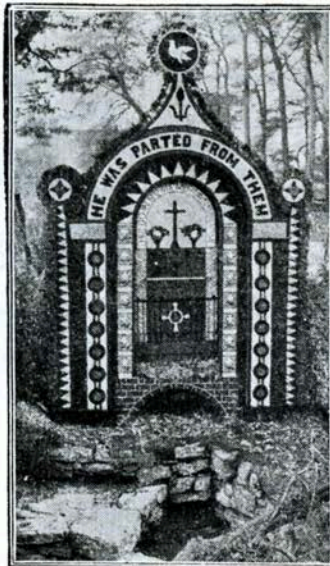
Now, about the "dressing." The name "well" scarcely gives the proper idea of these beautiful structures, they would be better termed fountains, as the water descends from above, and does not rise as in a well.

The height of these artistic devices round the well varies from ten to twelve feet, the front being often hidden by a wooden framework for holding the decorations. A fine layer of clay or plaster of Paris is placed upon the wooden structure, and, whilst it is still moist, flower-petals are stuck upon the clay, forming the most exquisite mosaics, of artistic and charming design.

On one the large yellow field buttercup was arranged in letters, so as to form a verse of Scripture. Sometimes it was a line of a hymn, or a well-known motto that was designed. On another arch a white dove was sculptured in the plaster, and set in a groundwork of violet. Another had the pretty daisy made to represent a sort of diaper in white and red. The two illustrations we give on this page show how effective was the "dressing" on the latest occasion of this pretty service.



DRESSING THE WELLS.



A "DRESSED" WELL.

### TEETOTAL BISHOPS.

THE days of "port-wine parsons" are long since past, and it is gratifying to all friends of temperance to know that, in addition to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of the following dioceses are abstainers:—Carlisle, Chichester, Durham, Gloucester, Lichfield, Newcastle, Peterborough, St. Asaph, and St. David's. The following suffragan bishops are also teetotalers:—Thetford, Stepney, Southampton, Crediton, and Derby. The Archbishop of Dublin and six of the Irish bishops are also abstainers.

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