



STRANGE DEDICATIONS

BY J-A-KAY



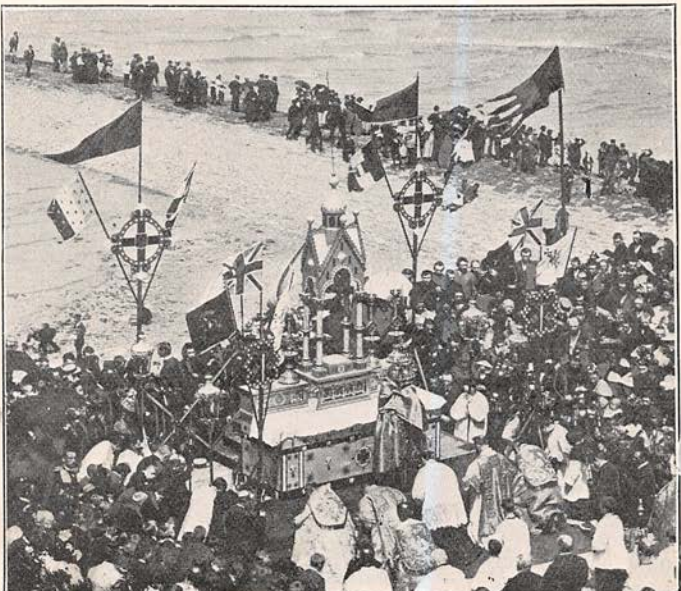
THE two photographs embodied in the heading of this article, illustrate a very remarkable dedication service which was recently held on that part of the Thames between the Tower and London Bridges, commonly known as "The Pool." It was on the occasion of the dedication of the mission ship *Alpha*, which works with the steam trawling fleets on the North Sea, serving as hospital ship, dispensary and floating church, and partly paying its expenses by trawling fish at the same time. The dedication service was conducted by Dr. Mandell Creighton, the late Bishop of London, and Archdeacon Sinclair.

Another strange dedicatory service presided over by Dr. Creighton, took place the same year in the school playground attached to the Church of St. Saviour, in Arcadia Street, Poplar. As our illustration on the next page shows, the little stone-paved playground, in the midst of Poplar's wilderness of bricks and mortar, had quite a brilliant appearance when the bishop dedicated the two new flags, which were then hoisted to the top of the school flagstaff. Dr. Creighton undertook this extraordinary dedication in order to show his regard for "Father" Dolling's work in one of the poorest districts in East London.

It is a pretty thought that fisherfolk, who earn their livelihood from the

sea, should hold special thanksgiving services to Him who made the fishes, the sale of which supplies them with their daily bread. A simple dedicatory service of this nature is held one evening every year amongst the fisherfolk of Hastings. But on the Continent services of this kind are much more common than in this country, and some of them are carried out on a very elaborate scale.

The illustration immediately below depicts the scene at the annual "Blessing of the Sea" at Ostend. This ancient ceremony takes place every summer in front of an "altar" erected for the occasion at the end of the Rampe de Flandre. The first part of the ceremony consists of a procession through the town to the beach. In addition to the priests and other functionaries of the Roman Catholic Church, the *cortège* is largely composed of children representing fishermen,



From a

BLESSING THE SEA AT OSTEND.

[Photo.]



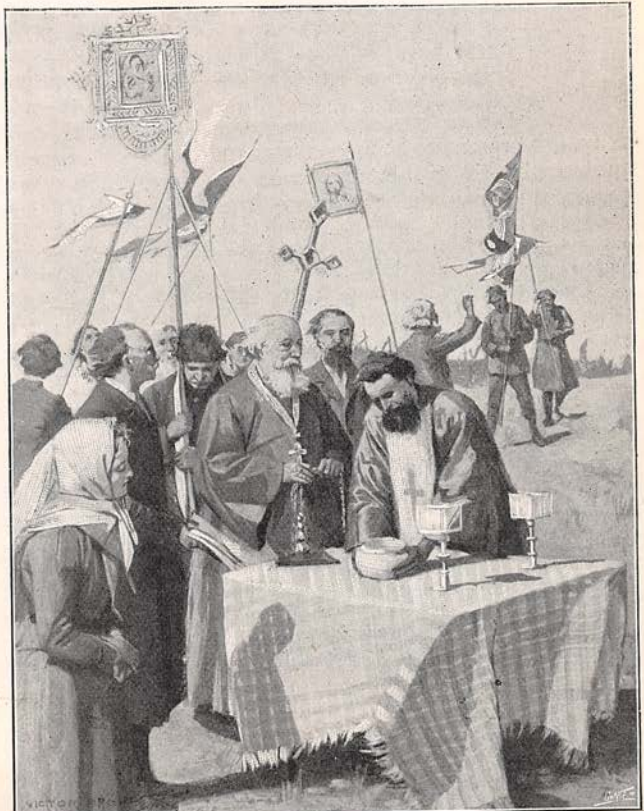
BISHOP CREIGHTON DEDICATING TWO FLAGS AT POPLAR.

village fifteen miles east of Boulogne, and the "Blessing of the Sea," as it is there performed, is typical of the custom as it is observed in many of the smaller French fishing villages. The procession to the beach is composed mainly of children in their white communion dresses, carrying banners, streamers, and garlands of freshly gathered flowers. Every one in the village turns out in his or her best, to watch the procession as it winds its way through the narrow irregular streets, and then follows in its wake, chanting the same hymn as the children have sung. When the Calvary on the sea-shore is reached the procession stops, and after a short service the bishop—who has come over for the occasion from some neighbouring town—blesses the sea. Then all return to the church and the remainder of the day is given up to merrymaking.

Harvest festivals take place every year in hundreds of churches in this country, but in many parts of the Continent, instead of holding a service in a church, a special dedicatory service is held on the harvest fields themselves. In Russia the annual ceremony

pilgrims, angels, and various Biblical characters. When all are assembled round the "altar," it is not long before every one's attention is centred on the crimson and gold palanquin, which can be seen approaching over the heads of the assembled crowd. Under this walks the vicar of Ostend, solemnly blessing the populace, who kneel bareheaded as he approaches. As soon as he arrives at the Digue, some hundred or so choristers burst forth into a chant, and then, after a few minutes' service, the vicar pronounces the "benediction of the sea," amidst the hiss of the summer waves as they break languidly on the shabby beach, and the booming of the guns from the warships of the offing.

The ceremony of blessing the sea at Etaples, which takes place every year at the end of June, or the beginning of July, is, though less gorgeous, a far prettier ceremony than the one at Ostend. Etaples is a little fishing



BLESSING THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE EARTH AFTER THE HARVEST IN RUSSIA.



THE PROCESSION OF CHILDREN AT ETAPLES AT THE BLESSING OF THE SEA WHICH TAKES PLACE EVERY SUMMER.

of "Blessing the Fruitfulness of the Earth," after the gathering in of the harvest, is one of the many important observances of the Greek Church.

Though there are so many quaint and religious ceremonies connected with rural and provincial life in France, none is more picturesque than the blessing of the fields

and orchards between dawn and sunrise. Those who have seen one of these peaceful processions, chanting solemn Latin hymns as it threads its way through the dew-washed fields in the early morn, will agree, whether they are in sympathy with such ceremonies or not, that there are few spectacles at once so simple and so impressive.



From the Painting]

BLESSING THE WHEAT IN RURAL FRANCE.

[by J. Breton]