

## CHILTHORNE DOMER. OPENING OF A NEW REREDOS.

Chilthorne Church has been presented with one of the most magnificent specimens of wood-carving, in the form of a new reredos, to be found in the county. It is no secret that when the church was restored several years ago, it was contemplated by the then rector, the Rev. W. T. Dixon (father of the present rector), to add to the chancel, at his own expense, some embellishment worthy of the sacred edifice. The hand of death prevented the realisation of his intentions, and it was thus left to his children not only to complete the unfinished work, but to erect at the same time a memorial of a departed friend. The reredos, which has been given to the church by the Rev. Henry Elliott Dixon, M.A., Elizabeth Frances Dixon, and Isabella Mary Smith (son and daughters respectively of the late rector), is a marvel of skilful work, displaying in the highest degree the carver's skill, and all who love art would be amply repaid by a visit to the church. The reredos has been executed by Mary R. Pinwill and her two sisters, daughters of the Rev. E. Pinwill, of Ermington Vicarage, Devon, who have adopted carving as their profession. Their work is of the first order, and entitles them to be classed amongst the finest wood-carvers in the country. The reredos stretches across the whole width of the east end of the church. The centre is divided into three panels, representative of the Nativity, the Ascension, and the Lord's Supper. Each panel is two feet wide, and the centre one three feet six inches high. The carving, cut out of a solid block six inches thick, is five inches deep. The different figures and groups are beautifully arranged and very delicately carved, the utmost care and finish having been bestowed on every detail of figure and drapery. The ascending Saviour, as represented in the centre panel,

passing through a cloud of descending angels, is executed with remarkable skill. The double canopies are wonderful specimens of art. They are surmounted by beautiful finials, while on the four columns stand angels with upturned wings, each playing a musical instrument. The sides of the reredos, which stretch to each wall of the chancel, are one mass of carving from top to bottom. An exquisite cresting is followed by a superb bordering of vine leaves. Then are emblems of the Evangelists and of the Passion; underneath, fine diaper work, and on the styles and rails many beautiful patterns are carved. On either side are engraved the initials of the late Rector and his wife—"W.T.D. Vicar, 1860—1884. Ob. 6 July, 1884," and "J.I.D. Ob. 4 April, 1884," respectively. An adequate idea of the exquisite beauty and richness of the work can only be gained by an inspection, and the parishioners of Chilthorne may well be congratulated on possessing in their church this remarkably beautiful work of art.

A special dedication service was held on Tuesday evening, when there was a numerous congregation. The Revs. H. Smith (rector of Mamhead, Devon, and son-in-law of the late Rev. W. T. Dixon), G. Dawes (vicar of Hattons Ambo, Yorkshire, and formerly of Ash, Martock), J. Rowe (Long Load), E. Pinwill (vicar of Ermington, Devon), and E. J. Welch (curate-in-charge of the parish during the absence of the rector), took part in the service. The hymns used were those commencing "We love Thy house O Lord," "Now let us join our friends above," and "The Church's One Foundation," Miss Hallet presiding at the organ. Before the hymn preceding the sermon, the clergy, accompanied by the churchwardens (Messrs. W. Dampney and W. Vigar), approached the reredos, and the Rev. H. Smith offered a dedicatory prayer. The sermon was preached by the Rev. G. Dawes, from the words, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom at the rose." Towards the close of an eloquent discourse the

preacher said they were dedicating to God's honour a work of singular skill and beauty in loving memory of those who in their day and generation did their part faithfully and diligently to make this wilderness, through which they were all passing, to be glad, this desert through which their homeward journey lay, to blossom as the rose. It was scarcely necessary that he should relate to them the history of that latest addition to that work of restoration and adornment of God's house in which, headed by the late rector, they all entered with glad hearts and willing minds some years ago. As it was not possible at that time to complete the work it was in the late Mr. Dixon's mind to leave the chancel unfinished a year or two in order that the last adornment should be an offering from himself worthy of the place and the occasion. But to God it seemed otherwise. He was called to his rest before his purpose was accomplished, and to his children there had thus been left the two-fold satisfaction of contributing what was at once a detail of great beauty in the plan of the restoration, and also a worthy memorial of filial love and gratitude. Those who had lived in that parish and worshipped in that church would regard with much satisfaction the beautiful memorial of their late rector and his wife. It was not that anyone of the present generation would want any outward remembrance of their kindly and faithful ministries in things temporal and spiritual, for as

long as one child in that village remained the recollection of her unfailing, anxious kindness, and of his careful, conscientious training of the people, especially of the young people, committed to his charge, would not die out. Still, as a memorial of those whom they loved and valued, that beautiful reredos would be continually a thing of joy as well as of beauty. The preacher proceeded to say that the Christian religion welcomed into her service that which was beautiful in sculpture and painting and music, symbols of spiritual mysteries and visible presentments of holy conceptions, tokens of pious and grateful feelings which the Spirit of God inspired in Christian souls; and concluded by a supplication to God to accept the offering for His service.

After the service, the reredos was inspected with much interest by a number of the congregation, and it was universally admired.

On the south wall of the chancel of the church a marble tablet has recently been erected by the parishioners, as a further memorial of the late rector.