



The Dropping Well.

Spring-water, even that which is the most transparent, generally contains certain mineral substances, gathered from the soil through which the water flows. The substances are often so completely dissolved as to leave the water clear and sparkling, while they add to its wholesome qualities, and also render it agreeable to the taste.

It is owing to these mineral substances that many springs have the property of petrifying objects,—that is, covering them entirely with a stony crust, which makes them appear as if changed into stone. Such springs are seen in several parts of our own country; but far more strikingly in foreign lands, in the neighborhood of volcanos. The Dropping Well at Knaresborough, in Yorkshire, is one of our most noted petrifying springs. It rises at the foot of a limestone rock on the south-west bank of the river Nidd, opposite to the ruins of Knaresborough Castle. After running about twenty yards towards the river, it spreads itself over the top of a cliff, from whence it trickles down in a number of places, dropping very fast, and making a tinkling sound in

its fall. The spring is supposed to send forth twenty gallons of water every minute, and while in rapid motion, the fine particles in which it abounds are carried forward, or very slightly deposited; but as it approaches the cliff, or rocky elevation above named, it meets with a gentle ascent, becomes languid in its pace, and then deposits abundantly on grass, twigs, stones, &c., a petrifying substance which renders them exceedingly beautiful. The cliff is about thirty feet high, forty-five feet long, and from thirty to forty broad, having started from the main bank, upwards of a century ago, leaving a chasm of two or three yards wide. The water is carried over this chasm by an aqueduct; but there is sufficient waste to form beautiful petrifications in the hollow. Small branches of trees, roots of grass and other objects, are incrustated with spar, and, together with pillars of the same substance, like stalactites, fringing the banks, form an interesting sight. The top of the cliff is covered with plants, flowers, and shrubs, such as ash, elder, ivy, geranium, wood-anemone, lady's mantle, cowslips, wild angelica, meadow-