

## DECORATION FOR CHRISTMAS.

THIS is sanctioned by constant usage from a period long before the Reformation.

Stowe, in his "Survey of London," (A. D., 1598), says:—

"Against the feast of Christmas every man's house, as also their *Parish Churches* were dressed with holme, ivy, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green." The evergreen "Holly" is evidently a corruption of "Holy," showing the antiquity of the custom of decking Churches with holly leaves and berries. After the Reformation, the practice was continued. The Church Wardens' accounts in various parts of England are full of items of expenditure for Christmas decorations.

For instance, in the Parish accounts of St. Margaret, Westminster, of which Canon Farrar is now in charge, we read in 1647, "Item, paid for rose marie and bayes that was stuck about the Church at Christmas, 1s. 6d." Even in the days of Cromwell and the Commonwealth, the custom was not altogether discontinued. George Herbert, in the "Country Parson," 1656, says, "Our parson takes order that the Church be swept, and kept clean, without dust or cobwebs, and at great festivals, *strawed and stuck with boughs.*" There is a peculiar propriety in using our evergreens, the symbols of immortality to deck our Churches, and express our joy at the Birth of the Redeemer of the race. They are the outward expressions in the House of God, of the inward joy which the soul should feel on the anniversary of the first Advent. Let harmony pre-

vail among the workers, and good taste be shewn in the decorations. Let the temples be wreathed in green, and art symbolize the coming of the Infant Saviour. As Bishop Coxe has sung:—

"Go ye to the forest,  
Where the Myrtles grow,  
Where the pine and laurel,  
Bend beneath the snow:  
Gather them for Jesus,  
Wreathe them for His shrine,  
Make His temple glorious  
With the box and pine."

"Wreathe your Christmas garland  
Where to Christ, we pray  
It shall smell like Carmel  
On our festal day;  
Libanus and Sharon  
Shall not greener be,  
Than our holy chancel  
On Christ's Nativity."

## THE VALUE OF RELIGION.

I HAVE known men, and still oftener women, nearly all of whose culture had come through religious activity. Religion had helped their intellect, their conscience, even their affection; by warming the whole ground of their being, it had quickened the growth of each specific plant thereof.—[Theodore Parker.

Do you call yourself a professing Christian, dear reader, and yet at this blessed Christmas Season harbour envy, malice, or hatred, against your neighbour? Think of your quarrel, or your difference of opinion with *you know whom*,—think of your estrangement, or your petty falling out with neighbours. What trifles they are! How absurdly small they seem! Go and make them up! Do your best, to any rate, to be friends. Let the blessed influence of the Holy Child be in your heart. Forgive, as you