

The Rockwood Review.

GRANDFATHER'S CORNER. SWALLOWBECK FARM.

(CONTINUED.)

The "fun of the farm" was not confined to mere destruction of animal life. If the woods, the holts and the plantings afforded us sport, the ample stack-yards, with an odd stack of thrashed straw, left over after the winter's feeding, supplied us with a never failing fillip to our warlike propensities.

Our host was, in instinct and from extensive reading, a veritable soldier. Nothing delighted him more than to asserable us on the dining room hearth-rug, before a blazing fire, and to fill our young minds with the doings of Marlborough, of Nelson, and of Wellington, the greatest hero of them all. We were taught to verily believe that one English man could lick four, five, or even a half-dozen Frenchmen at a pinch, and that, next to Englishmen, Frenchmen could lick everybody else. We fought out the principal events of the Peninsular War, and other decisive battles, in that stack-yard. Armed with thack-pugs, crooked sticks used to hold down the thatch upon the stacks, we assaulted a Badazes, fought at Seringapatam, and did the "Up, boys, and at 'em" business at Waterloo, or, standing on a straw-stack, held it as a man-of-war, against all comers, repelled boarders, and fired endless broadsides into an imaginary enemy. It was next to a lively squirrel hunt in intensity, reality and blood-stirring episodes. And then the unused straw stack afforded entertainment as thrilling in another direction. Pigs were sometimes, not often, permitted the run of this yard, or paddock, rather when the grain had been thrashed, and burrow through a standing straw-stack in search of grain which had fallen to the ground. To crawl along the tunnel thus made by our

porcine allies, was a feat that had enough spice of danger to make it doubly attractive. To get through the mysterious path and come out at the other side, was a thing requiring courage to do, for there was a risk of the settling down of the superincumbent straw, and the smothering of the adventurer. To insure against such a calamity, the non-explorers were solemnly pledged not to climb upon the stack while the tunnel was under exploration, and the watchers were as solemnly adjured to give alarm if the adventurous traveller didn't get through in reasonable time.

To each stable was attached a fenced open space, termed a crew yard, and in which were tumbrils—huge wooden boxes upon four legs—in which fresh straw was constantly kept, and so fed to the cattle, the refuse being thrown on the ground and converted into manure. The store pigs burrowed into the straw in the next yard to the barn, and a sudden upheaval of the bright yellow mass preceded an eruption of snouts clearly indicating the presence of their grunting owners. To trample upon the straw, when opportunity offered, and produce a miniature earthquake, was a prized amusement, and one more appreciated by us, undoubtedly, than by the disturbed quadrupeds.

Above the horse-stable was a large dove-cot, the interior of which was fitted up with square boxes, in which nests were built, and squabs reared to early maturity, and that were seldom visited by other than the collector of the young birds for market. To obtain a peep into this busy, noisy and dirty home, was one of the most highly valued of rural sights. The opening of the cot door was the signal for a rush of grown birds to the outlets, and a scene of whirring wings ensued, which made due impression upon the juvenile mind. It was a peep