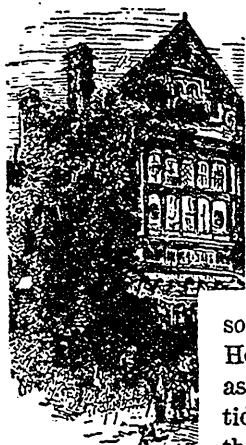


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CHRISTMAS IN ENGLAND.

BY ALGERNON BLACKWOOD.



THE MANOR.

OF late years, when there has scarcely been enough snow on the ground at Christmas-time to give the country even a seasonable appearance, it has seemed almost a mockery to continue to celebrate the same old customs and to perform the same ceremonies that are connected from time immemorial in the minds of the English people with a winter sky and landscape, which, in the days of our forefathers, were so rarely absent at this season of the year.

However this may be, the customs always associated with an old-fashioned Christmas-tide are still practised to a great extent; the piled-up wood fires still crackle and burn as brightly as ever in the ample old grates,

and the stout-legged oaken tables still support as tender roast beef and as tasty and indigestible a plum-pudding as they ever did in days of yore.

In England Christmas is a universal holiday. In the cities the banks are closed; offices are deserted. The stores in the towns and villages are all shut, and while the morning of Christmas-day is in every respect treated as a Sunday, the latter part of the day is given up to whatever out-door amusements the state of the weather may render suitable; the evening sees the assembly of joyous parties and friendly gatherings, which last into the small hours of the morning, and are looked forward to by the younger portion of the community with an eagerness which the passing years tend rather to increase than to diminish.