

## The Rockwood Review.

### GRANDFATHER'S CORNER. SWALLOWBECK FARM.

(CONCLUDED.)

"Christmas comes but once a year," but is right royally observed when it arrives. It is "coming" long before it reaches the country fireside, and is looked forward to for months before its advent. It is the time of wassail and rejoicing, of reunion of families, of the ending and beginning of the old and new year, of comradeship and almost equality between master and hind. "It is a poor heart that never rejoices," and mean indeed is the man who, having opportunity, does not give himself up to the warm influences of an English Christmas upon an English farm. At Swallowbeck it was the chief festival, and was religiously observed in all that tended to make its "keeping a glad memory to the rural mind. The substantials made the table groan, mistletoe, and holly, and laurel, and red-cheeked apples, and bright ribbons were hung in a huge bunch from the ceiling of the dining-room, and another of even more majestic proportions was suspended from the beams of the old-time kitchen. There was no kissing by proxy, osculation was as real as the mince pies, the turkey, the goose, the stuffed chine, and the score other of Christmas dainties. Bob, and Tom and Jack, were for once masters of the situation, and made good use of the annual license and opportunity, while Nance, and Deb, and Poll, laughingly and becomingly submitted to the infliction. The Harvest Dance was nothing to the footing of it at Christmastide, and Twelfth Night had come ere times were ended. But even Christmas had its limit, and turnip dragging and straw cutting, and thrashing and marketing went on in usual regularity when the feast was over.

Turnip culture was an important matter in such a sheep producing county as that in which Swallowbeck stood, and from the preparation of the ground to the feeding of the last root, it engrossed much of the time of the farm hands. Many of the well-grown roots were deprived of heads and tails in autumn, and stored away for winter feeding, but more than half of the crop was fed off upon the land. The lambs of spring, grown into "brags" at the fall of the leaf, were turned into a portion of the turnip field before snow fall, to eat off the tops of the turnips, and, being removed to another division when they had done that work, were followed by last year's sheep, now known as "theaves" or "gimerers." These, in turn, were succeeded by the "yowes," which ate what had been left by their predecessors. In this manner every scrap of eatable turnip was consumed, and the land was made rich by the heavy coat of manure so assured. Light soils benefited by the solidifying tramp of numerous animals, and a good crop generally followed turnips. One of the pests of Swallowbeck was to be found in its "twitch grass," or couch grass, and the tearing up and gathering, and final burning of this nuisance gave employment to women and children as well as men. To us it was a grand institution, for the fires afforded blaze and warmth and excitement, and a day with the "twitchers" was one to be remembered. And one such is remembered as I write: "We uns," duly decked in pinafores covering our ordinary clothing, went into a field given up to the twitchers, on one fifth of November, a date dear to all English juveniles. We heaped up a pile of the dry grass into some semblance of a man, dubbed it Guy Fawkes, and set it in a blaze, rushing up, as we thought, nearly to