



DECEMBER.

THE YULE BLOCK.*

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

A cross-grain'd block of elm we'll take
And by his light hold merry wake!—**OLD BALLAD.**

When holly leaves and ivy green,
With berries bright and dark between,
Around the cottage room are seen,

The simple place adorning—

What joy before the cheerful blaze,
The almost conscious fire displays,
To sit in Christmas' merry days,

Ay! sit up till the morning!

And hear the early carillon
Of village bells—while old and young
Are mingled in that festal throng,

Through life we aye remember!

To feel the heat of Summer's glow,
In frosty depth of Winter's snow
And think we're *Maying* it, although

'Tis flowerless December!

To join the hearty laugh around,
When some coy damsel's feet are found
To thoughtless tread the fairy-ground
The Mistletoe that's under;—

And see some longing lover steal
A kiss from cheeks that ill conceal
The secret joy they inward feel,
Neath frowns and blushing wonder!

What face with summer's sun embrown'd
Was ever half so joyous found
As those in ruddy gladness round
The YULE-BLOCK'S† cheerful gleaming!

Romance may seek wild solitudes,
By waterfalls in lonely woods—
But Mirth and Love, with happier moods,
O'er Christmas hearths are beaming!
W.

* Yule from the Saxon *yeol* or *yehol*, the Christmas time.
† In many parts of the country it was a practice to preserve a portion of the yule block to the next year in order to light the new Christmas log.

CHRISTMAS is now no longer marked by that fervid hospitality which characterised its observance among our forefathers. At present, Christmas meetings are chiefly confined to family parties. The wassail bowl, the yule clog, and the Lord of Misrule, with a long train of sports and customs, which formerly prevailed at this season, are nearly forgotten: even Christmas carols are nearly gone by; and the decking of churches and of a few houses of people in humble life, with holly and other evergreens, forms now almost the only indication that this great festival is at hand, if we except the distribution of warm clothing and creature comforts among the poor by those whom heaven has blessed with "the luxury of doing good." In olden times—

On Christmas Eve, the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve, the mass was sung;
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;

The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe;
Then opened wide the baron's hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all.

The pursuit of the fox may be now enjoyed in perfection; the fox, the hounds, and the horses having, by exercise, obtained good wind and good running condition altogether. Hares which by previous over-feeding were rendered somewhat sluggish will now stand up well before their pursuers, and afford as good runs, if not better, than at any other period of the season.

ANGLING.

USE the same baits as last month. In favourable weather, pike, roach, and chub, may sometimes be taken; but all other fish have retired to their winter retreats, to screen themselves till the voice of Spring again re-animates, and calls them forth to their old haunts.