

versaciones, when lighted up and filled with a well-dressed crowd, moving about in all directions to observe the curiosities exhibited, it presented a sight which will not soon be forgotten by any of the thousands who attended.

The main building consists of a cloistered quadrangle of two stories, 112 feet square, the inclosed space being covered in with a glass roof, supported by light and foliated iron columns. In this area, of which a view appeared in the "Illustrated London News" for October 6th, 1860, will be placed the valuable collections which the university already possesses, but which, for want of adequate space, it has hitherto been unable to exhibit. The cloisters are richly adorned with sculpture, and with polished specimens of various British stones, arranged in their geological order; and round the quadrangle are placed statues of the most eminent natural philosophers of ancient and modern times. The capitals of the pillars in the arcades are well worth notice, being not mere conventional resemblances of the plants they profess to represent, but accurately copied from the living plant.

Connected with this central structure are three subsidiary buildings. One is devoted to anatomy and physiology, and is furnished with dissecting-rooms, etc.; another to chemistry, including a splendid laboratory constructed on the model of the celebrated old kitchen at Glastonbury Abbey; and the third is the Curator's house, at present worthily occupied by the Geological Professor, Phillips.

All along the cloisters, both upper and lower, are doors opening into lecture-theatres, class-rooms, and experimenting-rooms, intended for the various sciences. They are fitted up with all manner of appliances, and adorned with fresco paintings by members of the university. There is besides a noble library and reading-room, running the whole length of the *façade* (200 feet), and surmounted by a lofty tower.

In short, the museum is a building of which Oxford may be justly proud, and which tourists will do well to visit. The only part open to objection is the outside, which, to a critical eye, presents one or two defects. The porch and windows, however, are beautifully sculptured, and some of the carving has been presented by that great *arbiter elegantiarum*, the "Oxford Graduate," Ruskin.

THE CHRISTMAS INGLE.

MANY of our national festivals have become obsolete, or have fallen into decrepitude and decay, retaining not even the shadow of their original substance. Christmas, however, still holds somewhat of its original place amongst us, and, from its glorious associations, well it may. As we write, we can almost feel the huge bundle of labour falling from the shoulders of the nation, and see the millions of bright eyes and happy hearts giving silent yet universal thanks to Him who, from his lowly birthplace in Bethlehem, eighteen hundred years ago, inspired the song of songs, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

This great festival belongs not to city or country only—it is the heart-welling patrimony of all Christendom. It comes with all the geniality that the social heart can gather in and be merry with. It tunes the tongue of youth, till myriads of young voices sing, out of the abundance of their joy—

"Christians, awake, and greet the happy morn
When Christ the Saviour of the world was born."

It blunts the edge of keenest, deepest sorrow, and whispers to the mourners that, over and above all human care and grief, there is a joy in the natal day of Him who became mortal, and walked and talked in the earth till darkness fled away, and God's great light shone forth for all time and ever. There will be vacant chairs in many a Christmas ingle, truly, but it is only the common lot of things. The pulsations of the universe will be the same; pain and sickness will not cease, nor death hold back his fatal shaft. But over the whole there will be, as there ever has been, a calm serenity, making pain less poignant, and the hand of the destroyer less cold and awful. These are no imaginings; we have felt much of it deeply and keenly.

We need hardly say, on the other hand, that joy will be more joyful and gladness more gladsome. Every heart that possibly can, will assuredly make holiday at such a season. The vast commercial world will nominally, if not generally, close its books; the banks will suspend payment for this day; and the million workers in the mart and workshop will throw down their tools, and breathe the pure air of freedom and pleasure for a season. In our very workhouses the poor will forget their poverty this day, and even in the prisons will be heard unwonted sounds of cheerfulness.

There was one Christmas Eve of our boyhood (how vividly it comes to recollection) which found the writer of this paper, at the gloaming, at his labour in the huge metropolis: our dear old native ingle and pleasant *Christmas* festival was twenty-four miles away in the Hertfordshire lanes. There was no railway then, nor any coaches running thus late in the evening. Our employer did not relish these holidays at all, and said as much to us, when we begged to be released early in the afternoon, so as to be able to walk home before dark. He might have consented, for that boy's heart of ours was at home already, and embracing the dear mother, who was sure to be ready with open arms to receive her weary, footsore child. Eight o'clock came, and in five minutes after we were on our way home—light of pocket and light of spirits also. The thronged streets were soon threaded, and with quickened steps we found ourselves at the outskirts of London as the clocks struck nine. The next strokes of time fell upon our ears from a far-off country churchyard, and they numbered twelve, and the half of our journey at the same time. It was a clear frosty night, and the wide world lay under its broad blanket of snow. Few sounds came either to cheer or sadden us; but we were going home, and that was the inspiring talisman. Now and again the solitary rattle of a sheep bell, from a neighbouring turnip-field or farmstead as we passed along, broke the monotony of silence. By and by, on reaching a quiet village town, we were cheerfully surprised

to hear the first notes of a Christmas anthem in which we had joined when a boy in the country. Tired as we were, and anxious not to linger—the hour, the occasion, the blending of a number of fresh vigorous voices in the pure buoyant air, held us silent and happy till the last echo died away. We could see the old house at home a good mile off. A candle was in the window (we see it now) to let us know that the dear folks were waiting; and ere the old church clock struck three in the morning, we were snug in the Christmas corner.

Ay, and we have spent a Christmas day in a debtors' prison. An unfortunate but truly honest friend found himself lodged therein when he least expected it, and for auld lang syne we considered it our pleasurable duty to make the circumscribed holiday as cheerful as companionship could suggest. We had spent occasional half-hours therein for some days previous, and anticipated a dull, dismal festival indeed, since the every-day life gave no hope of spontaneous heart festivity. But Christmas is Christmas all the world over. On entering the day-room, we were agreeably surprised to find it beautifully garlanded and festooned. The genius of the season had not failed to look into the debtors' prison, and give it a grace and comfort most cheering to dwell upon. Every dark, dingy corner was set off with lightness, and the whole room was as clean as a new pin. And that sort of self-satisfied carelessness (in some it is recklessness) which seems to cling to the skirts of these "unfortunate males" during such probation, had given way to a smartness of dress and bearing of person quite as agreeable as the decorations of the room. Loose language and ribald talk, wild mirth and riotous repartee, were eschewed as unfit for the happy occasion. Few but could display some seasonable present from those whose hearts yearned for them in their captivity; and with the present there was a sweet morsel of comfort folded tastefully in a Christmas envelope, and this was read again and again, till the walls of the prison resounded with seasonable mirth and enjoyment. Some sweet little family pictures there were also, where the grey-haired grandfather, long a dweller therein, or the vigorous man full of energy and sweet manhood, welcome each their kindred from childhood upwards, who had come to make a sunshine in that otherwise shady place, and render, as best they might, all honour to the joyful holiday. We anticipated gloom and sadness, and found instead, gladness and pleasurable sociability in the debtors' prison on that Christmas day, not so long ago.

We have in our mind's eye a cheerful-hearted hopeful woman of some forty years. Her home is in the country lanes. She is both wife and mother, without her husband. Some seven years ago he rushed off to the diggings to make a fortune in a month, and return home again in less than twelve. He failed, as many do in the world's vineyard, and the faithful wife has toiled hardly all these years to keep a house above his children and get them bread. There is a great heart-tear in her eye. She has this moment got a long, long-expected letter, and its burden is: "I am on my way home, and, all being well, shall be with you on Christmas day."

The whole struggle, the hopes, despairs, and heart-aches of seven years fade into forgetfulness at these cheering words; and every little festival plan is set about and accomplished to make the Christmas come very cozy and very glad. And thus it ever is. Distance can scarcely prevent it; money will be husbanded to accomplish it; time shall be set apart for it, if something less worthy should be postponed. "We will be with you at Christmas, God willing;" is the burden of the national postman for weeks before the day dawns.

Then welcome Christmas—merry, cozy, genial old Christmas. As a hearty friend who has made the cycle of the world in three hundred and sixty-four days, we greet you on the threshold of the three hundred and sixty-fifth. Our right hand is held out to draw you in and welcome you to our family circles. Therefore, put your staff aside, sit in the great arm-chair, make the ingle cheerful with your smiles, while merry children climb upon or dance around your knee, and blushing maidens wreath your patriarchal head with glittering holly. Listen to the sounds of joy ringing through cottage and hall. The whole universal heart breaks forth into song at your presence. The humblest homes are set in order, the simplest hearts all open to receive you. Not a single cloud shall pass over the horizon of mirth. All enmities and bickerings—vast chasms of wrath and severance—shall be bridged over to make your passage pleasant and free to our national hearth. Youth, manhood, and old age, all join in one great chorus of love, till it fills the welkin and throbs in merry ripples across the world; for art not thou the earthly herald of the heavenly song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men?"

WINTER.

"There's not a flower upon the hill,
There's not a leaf upon the tree,
The summer bird hath left its bough,
Bright child of sunshine, singing now
In summer lands beyond the sea."

MARY HOWITT.

"No mark of vegetable life is seen,
No bird to bird repeats his tuneful call,
Save the dark leaves of some rude evergreen,
Save the lone red-breast on the moss-grown wall."

SIR W. SCOTT.

WHY has the redbreast stayed behind, and a few kindred species, to brave the winter with us, when so many of their cousins and congeners have departed to the summer lands of the sunny south? It seems singular at first sight that some should migrate to avoid the inclemency of the season, while others of not very different habit remain. But a little attention to natural history will explain the reason. Many species of caterpillars live through the winter; and in open weather, earth-worms and small slugs occasionally make their appearance. They form the principal food of soft-billed birds, like the redbreast, who can thus manage generally to get a meal when it is wanted, aided by crumbs at the cottage door. A sharp look-out is kept by the robin and the wren upon the roots of trees and