

"You make me quite ashamed, dear sir," stammered Winkler; "you leave me nothing to do."

"Why really, with twelve *convives* at your everyday board," said the Landgrave, good-humouredly, "you seem to me to have your hands full enough to content you. I have no such large family, and a higher salary, I suspect, so don't distress yourself about my christening burthen. But what is your salary? I feel curious about it, and my prospective sponsorship gives me some right to your confidence."

From so kind a friend urging so kind a plea, Winkler could not have concealed anything, if he would; but, truth to tell, his heart was so full that it was a relief to speak out, and so he gave a history in full of all his difficulties, all his straits, all his hair-breadth escapes from starvation, all his own and his wife's dexterous shifts to keep the wolf from the door, not omitting to dwell with pious thankfulness on many an unexpected providential deliverance. His tale was listened to, not only with the deepest attention, but the warmest interest; and, had Winkler been less absorbed in his relation, he must have been struck with the strong emotion, the deep pity, and even the cordial admiration, which alternately painted themselves on the countenance of the Landgrave, as he listened to the simple detail of patient suffering and of pious resignation which the schoolmaster unconsciously set before him. But Winkler was far too much engrossed with the recollection of the outward difficulties and inward conflicts which this rehearsing of the true story of his life called up, to bestow a passing thought on the *effect* of his communications; he truly felt and yielded to the strong impulsion to unburthen his mind to a being who had seldom crossed his path, viz. a sympathizing friend. But, suddenly recalling the shortness of their acquaintance, he stopped short, saying: "You must kindly pardon me, honoured sir, if I have wearied you with this outpouring of a father's heart. You requested it, and—it has done me so much good! To my peasant neighbours it would not do to unbosom myself; and to whom else?"

For several minutes, which perhaps seemed an age to Winkler, the Landgrave sat silent, apparently lost in thought, while he drew all sorts of figures with his cane in the sand at his feet; and many and various were the feelings which crossed and recrossed themselves in his agitated mind. At length, looking up wistfully in the schoolmaster's face, he said, "You may well say you *could* ask the government for a good deal; have you never made the attempt?"

"Once, indeed, I did try," said the stricken man, casting down his eyes to the ground, "but I got a refusal; and so I never made another application."

"Most assuredly it never reached the Landgrave's ear," said the prince hurriedly, as he looked fixedly at the schoolmaster; "he, I am positive—that is, I think——"

"Oh, quite sure, never!" interposed the schoolmaster, in a cordial tone, "for he is described by those who have access to him as a kind and benevolent prince."

"But why did you not go to him yourself?" questioned the Landgrave. "It is always best to go to the fountain-head."

"What! I go to his grace the Landgrave? Oh, Mr. Forestwarden, how could such a thought come into your head? I could never have found courage to look his highness in the face."

The Landgrave smiled, and then said, as he rose from the rustic resting-place: "The sun is already high in the heaven, and I must be going, else my folk at home will be wondering. Now, therefore, do you return in God's name to your good wife, and bring her my hearty greeting and this here, that she may nurse herself well, and want for nothing." And so saying, the prince shoved into Winkler's hand something wrapped in paper, which he had, unnoticed by Winkler, contrived to abstract from his waistcoat pocket, and thus conceal from prying eyes.

"Next Sunday, please God," continued he, "we come to the christening; but let me have no baking of cakes, nor any other preparation of eatables, remember, for all that is my province; and now, God be with you. The Darmstadt journey is not needed now—eh?"

No one could be more joyfully aware of that fact than our schoolmaster; and so, with reiterated thanks for the token to his wife, and for the honour put on the whole family by the promised sponsorship, Winkler, with a light heart, set out vigorously on his way home, while the Landgrave, in higher spirits than he ever remembered to have felt, turned his steps towards his city palace.

OXFORD NEW MUSEUM.

It used to be customary among a certain class of public writers to sneer at the University of Oxford as obstructive and hidebound, doggedly bent on pursuing the old beaten track, and slow to yield to the progressive requirements of the age. There might be at one time some ground for this accusation, but very much has been done to remove it within the last ten years. Not only have four examinations been established instead of two; not only have two new supplementary "schools" been instituted (in natural sciences, and in law and modern history), through one of which—or else through the mathematical school—every candidate for a degree must pass; not only have the middle class been admitted to the benefit of a public examination for the title (not degree) of Associate of Arts; but the University has already expended the magnificent sum of £90,000 on a building devoted to the culture of the physical sciences. No university in the world can point to such an institution as the museum just opened in the "parks." It cannot fail to give a great impetus to the study of natural science in Oxford, more especially as several of the colleges have set apart scholarships and fellowships as rewards for this branch of learning.

The museum received a fitting inauguration some months ago, by being selected for the meeting of the British Association; and at the evening *con-*

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 gladness. 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