

far behind it. If we had any means of identifying a pair of stars which were certainly so situated, the inquiry would be certainly undertaken; but it would not improbably happen, if a pair of stars were chosen at random, that they would be both in the cluster, and thus the attempt would be abortive. It is doubtless this feeling which has prevented astronomers from devoting their attention to an arduous and protracted series of observations, of which the result would not improbably be futile.

We may, however, feel certain that the distance of this group is quite comparable with the distances of stellar bodies which have been ascertained, and this fact is sufficient to create a conception of the true splendour and magnificence of the cluster. We know that many stars in space are really suns, of a brilliancy and a size comparable with that of our own sun; but we do not see these objects as suns, we can only perceive them as points—bright and beautiful, no doubt, but still quite wanting in the surpassing glory that our sun possesses. They are simply dwarfed into comparative insignificance by their appalling distance. Were our own sun to be taken away from us to the distance of even the nearest star, it would have to be about two hundred thousand times as far from us as it is at present. Even to our glorious orb of day we must apply the same laws of measurement as are employed in the much more humble purpose of determining the candle power of a gas flame. We know that if a candle be moved to a double distance its light is diminished to one-fourth; if it be moved to a threefold distance the light is reduced to the ninth part; and if it were taken to a tenfold distance the light is reduced to

one-hundredth part of its amount. People do not always remember how greatly light decreases when the distance of the source diminishes. I remember being shown the reading room of a superb clubhouse in London, one of the attractions of which was the beautiful illumination which the incandescent electric lights in the ceiling were supposed to diffuse. But I thought the light for reading purposes very poor indeed. The fact was the designers seemed to have forgotten that a single candle one foot away is quite as good as an electric light of one hundred candle power which is even ten feet distant. It is this cruel decrease of light with distance which pales the stars to insignificance. Were our sun himself situated at the distance of the nearest of them—that is, 200,000 times as far away as he is at present—you would have to divide his present light into 200,000 equal parts, and then subdivide each of those parts into 200,000 again before you obtained a just notion of the reduction of his brilliancy. The sun in such a case would decline to the lustre of a small star not nearly so bright as many of those which twinkle around us every night.

To render due admiration to the glory of the clusters in Perseus, we must think that each of those gems which adorn it is itself a sun. I do not assert that those suns are as large as that to which we are so greatly indebted, but it may very well be that some of them or all of them are so. We know nothing which would seem to render this impossible or even unlikely. Whether there can be dark bodies in that system which revolve around these suns as this earth revolves around ours is a matter of which we are utterly ignorant. No

matter how vast a dark body might be, it would be utterly invisible to us by the mere reflected light which it would emit. Let us reverse the situation for a moment and suppose an eye from the cluster in Perseus was gazing at our system, in which the sun had dwindled to a star, what likelihood would there be that such an eye could see either our earth or the planet Venus, which is a globe of about the same size? Venus no doubt, as the evening star, is a glittering and lovely object, but its beauty is only due to its raiment of sunbeams, of which it receives just so much as fall upon it. Now the sun radiates over the whole vault of heaven, and emits many millions of times as much light as Venus could intercept, hence from a distance the sun must look hundreds of millions of times brighter than Venus, and if the sun then be only a star, what chance is there that a body so inconceivably less luminous should be visible at all?

The cluster in Perseus is thus a vast associated group of many hundreds of brilliant suns diversified by various hues, from white to red. Here is indeed a spectacle on which the astronomer is never weary of gazing. Every time I look at the system I do so with renewed astonishment and admiration. It but too often happens that the pursuit of the purely technical parts of his occupation is apt to make the astronomer oblivious to the sublime and the picturesque feelings which such objects are calculated to awaken. I do not, however, think that even the most unimpressionable of observers can ever renew his acquaintance with the cluster of Perseus without some sensation of rapture.

(To be continued.)

OUR AMERICAN SALE, AND HOW WE WORKED IT.



To those whose lot it is to work among the poor in London or any large city, it becomes a very pressing problem—How, with strictly limited resources, are we to meet the constantly increasing demand for aid in cases of sickness or poverty? I am sure that all who do work of this kind—district visitors, Sunday-school teachers, and others, of whom there are many among the readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER—have often wondered how they are to meet the demands made upon them. The visitor—the “visiting-lady,” as the poor call her—when she goes her rounds, finds that the cases of sickness or want caused by the breadwinner being out of work are, as a rule, far more than the slender monthly allowance for relief will enable her to help as she would like to do, and she feels that it is very hard to have to go on in the work without enough of money to supply the sick and needy. And then in every parish and district there are sure to be very deserving objects in want of

funds. The “Mothers’ Meeting” may be in debt; the Sunday-school library may sorely need some new books; the Temperance Society may find it hard to make both ends meet; the day schools may want help of one kind or another. It does not always do to look to the same people over and over again for support, and it is always desirable to extend the circle of money-givers, and make all who possibly can help in good works.

An “American Sale” proves a most excellent method of raising money, and it has the advantage of drawing it from other than the ordinary sources of parochial revenue; and the poor have a direct interest in making it a success, as the larger the receipts are they directly or indirectly benefited.

Now some of my readers may naturally ask, “What is an American Sale?” Well, the answer, shortly, is this:—An American Sale is a sale of all kinds of clothing, household requisites, furniture, carpets, etc., etc., which are contributed by kind friends to be sold to the poor of a parish. I do not mean *new* articles, but the clearing out of wardrobes and houses of many things which their original owners would never either wear or use again, but which prove very acceptable to their poorer neighbours. Why this should be called an “American” sale I know not; perhaps the idea originated there; but the scheme is a most excellent one, as our experience will show. It has been tried, I believe, in several places with very great success, and it is with the idea of making its usefulness more widely known, that I venture to describe it in this article. Some people may object, and say that the poor are not likely to buy these kind of things, or that it is only in certain places that

it may succeed. All I can say to this is, just try it, and if your district is anything like the one I have in my mind, where our experience is gained (a parish within ten miles of London), I do not think you will find it fail.

Let me now describe how we set to work, and what success attended our efforts. First and foremost, it is necessary to get someone to act as secretary, who must be exact and methodical in the work; it will not do to go about it in a slipshod way. We were most fortunate in securing the services of a gentleman who entered into it most zealously and systematically. A committee of ladies, nearly all district visitors, was then formed to collect articles for the sale. Then a circular was drawn up by our secretary, stating the things most likely to sell well, and this, as you will see, was a most exhaustive one. Here is the substance of it. It began by stating that an American sale would be held on such a date, and in such a place, and requested contributions from friends of any of the following articles: “Upper and under clothing for men, women, and children, especially cloth clothes and flannel garments, socks, stockings, collars, scarves, handkerchiefs, gloves, neckties, boots and shoes (especially women’s and children’s), slippers, hats, caps, bonnets, bed-linen, table-linen, umbrellas and parasols, pieces of floor-cloth and linoleum, and carpet in strips (if not too large to be sent in a parcel), mats, rugs, curtains and fittings, articles of furniture, if in fair repair (but not large ones if sent from a distance), perambulators, bedding, and blankets; toys of all kinds, children’s picture books, Christmas, birthday, and other cards (if not written on), pictures in frames or mounted on cardboard; razors, scissors, smoking pipes, purses, etc.; crockery, china, glass (but not jam pots or ordinary bottles), old dinner,



A STALL AT THE AMERICAN SALE.

breakfast, and tea services,* or parts thereof (but crockery and brittle goods should not be sent from a distance), hardware, kitchen utensils, brushes, etc., kettles and scuttles, but these should all be in good repair (leaky saucepans are of no use); knives, forks, spoons, etc. N.B.—Iron or other heavy goods and very bulky things should not be sent from a distance. Small contributions of money will be gladly received from those members of — parish and congregation who are unable to help in other ways."

Such was the circular we sent out, and I think the reader will admit that it was of a fairly exhaustive character, and that there are few households which could not furnish some articles, useful or ornamental, to place upon the stalls.

In most places it would not be difficult to get together enough articles to attempt a sale, at least on a small scale.

When we had sent out our circular a reasonable time was allowed to elapse, and then the exact date was fixed. The next question which arose was with regard to the tickets of admission. We found that the poor in all the districts were very ready and willing to secure them. At our first sale we had two classes of tickets; those at twopence admitted the holders to the sale half an hour before the holders of tickets at a penny each; but we found after the first experiment that this did not answer, and we have since then only issued tickets at twopence each, and opened the doors to all at the same hour. These tickets were bought up most eagerly by the people; the only restriction to the district visitors (through whom the tickets were sold) was that they should not sell them to any persons who had shops for the sale of "old clothes."

A few days before the sale the things begin to come in, and they are received by various kind friends in the parish, who take care of them until the day of the sale.

When that important occasion arrives, the heterogeneous collection of goods, consisting of all kinds of clothing, carpets, books, pictures, crockery, ironmongery, lamps, etc., which had been sent to the various centres, was collected and brought to the parochial schools, where the sale was held. This was done early in the day, and then the various stallholders came and commenced the work of pricing those things which were allotted to them. In this they were guided on the first occasion by an experienced hand in these

matters, but the sellers quickly learned what the things were worth. As a rule to each stall we appointed two or three ladies and one or two gentlemen, whose duty it was to protect the sellers when the rush came. We generally divide our goods among the following stalls:—1, men's clothing; 2, women's clothing; 3, hats, bonnets, and umbrellas (at this stall remember to have a looking-glass); 4, fancy articles (this includes pictures, books, ornaments, toys, etc.); 5, carpets and curtains; 6, crockery and china of all kinds; 7, ironmongery, 8, underclothing for women and children, and men's collars and ties, etc.; 9, boots and shoes of all kinds; and last, not least, a refreshment stall where for a penny a cup of tea and biscuits or cake could be procured. This stall was very fairly patronised when our numerous clients had exhausted themselves and their purses, and met together to discuss their bargains.

These various stalls were ranged round the walls of the schoolrooms, and in front of them a stout barrier of timber and rope was fixed to prevent the crowd getting in the way of the sellers. It was found desirable to secure the services of two stalwart policemen, to prevent a rush at the first opening of the doors, and to watch over the proceedings generally.

Our hours were from 5 to 8 p.m., and, as we always hold the sales upon a Saturday, it seems to answer very well, it has never, however, been of so long continuance, as we are generally pretty well cleared out in a little over an hour. When the moment of opening draws near, every stallholder has to be at the post assigned to him or her. The moment the doors are opened the crowd, which has assembled outside some half hour previously, comes in with a rush. Like eagles upon their prey they swoop down upon the stalls, and the sellers have at first a very warm time of it. The stalls which are at once most fiercely attacked are men's clothing, women's clothing, and the carpets. The last named is generally cleared out in about half an hour, which leads us to suppose that we, as a rule, price these things too low. Around a fairly good bit of carpet the battle of the purchasers rages very fiercely, and those whose duty it is to protect the fair saleswomen have no easy task of it. The rush on the men's clothing stall is also very great, and in a marvellously short time it follows the example of the carpet and curtain stall, and the sellers are free to help others. It is quite

a novel experience for those who are accustomed to ordinary bazaars, where every effort has to be made by the stallholders to attract oftentimes unwilling purchasers, to find themselves surrounded by a crowd who are only too anxious to buy, and whom it is necessary to repress in order that those who are not first in the field may have a chance of getting something.

The stall for hats, bonnets, and umbrellas often affords no small amusement, and the looking-glass has a busy time of it, as all who try on the hats or bonnets must have a look to see how they suit the would-be purchasers' style of beauty. Among the men's hats we found that silk hats were always a drug in the market; the British workman does not seem to care for such things, and often very good hats would not be taken on any terms. Felt or soft cloth hats went very fast, but it is a curious thing that it was very difficult to find one to fit the working classes. In almost every case the hats sent in by gentlemen were much too large. Whether this is due to a superior education and more reading, or not, it is hard to say, but in dozens of instances we found this was the case.

The boot and shoe stall is one which is much patronised; the articles there are often of a very miscellaneous kind, including wading stockings (sent in by some enthusiastic salmon fisher), dress boots, pumps, slippers, shooting boots, etc. Here there is apt to be a considerable congestion of purchasers, as it takes time to try on the boots, and it is necessary to have some space round the stall and some chairs or forms near at hand.

The ironmongery does not, as a rule, find so many customers, nor do we generally get in so many articles for this department, the reason being, I suppose, that while the things are fit for use, the owners do not part with them, and after that, it is not easy to find purchasers for a saucepan which, although it may be very clean and bright looking, yet refuses to hold what is put into it; and the same remark applies to kettles, coffee pots, tea urns, etc.

The refreshment stall generally gets a good many supporters when the people have spent what they have on clothing, for then they repair with their very miscellaneous bundles to refresh themselves with the harmless cup of tea, and to discuss their purchases before carrying them off in triumph.

It takes usually about two hours to clear out our stock, and at the end of that time empty stalls and weary stallholders are to be found.

We made a rule that no small children (except those in arms) should be admitted, but somehow this rule gets broken, and in the rush in at 5 p.m. we find that the wary mothers often manage to bring in a small boy or girl with them, and the said boy or girl as often gets temporarily lost in the crowd, but quickly is brought back to the mother by either the kindly policeman or one of the staff of helpers.

So much, then, for our sale, and its various incidents. Now, it may be asked what profit is likely to be made by such efforts? That depends, of course, very much on the resources of the place, and the number of kind friends who will help in the matter of sending in articles for sale. There need be no fear of not getting buyers if the thing is properly made known in the parish. Ours is probably a very typical parish of which there are hundreds about London and any other big town, and

we find the people most eager to purchase tickets to admit them, and ready, only too ready, to buy when they get there. There are in every household heaps of things which the owners do not need, and which must be got rid of some way, and as a rule we have not found any difficulty, if the work is begun in time, and sufficient notice of the sale given (say three months or thereabouts), in getting articles sent in. The expenses need not be very heavy. Printing is the chief item, and the necessary help in getting the room ready on the day of the sale, and the hire of, say, cups, etc., if the parish has not got a supply, as most parishes have. The expenses of police and a man to take tickets at the door complete the list, except where the carriage of articles has to be paid, but this will not always happen.

We have had three American sales, and we find that the net profit of these, after the

payment of all expenses, comes to £118. This sum was taken from the people themselves in a parish of under 8,000 in ten months!

Almost all of this money went back again to the people in the shape of extra relief, to the district visitors to meet cases of sickness, and to deserving people in misfortune. Some of it was given to mothers' meetings, some to school repairs, and all, as I have said, to the direct benefit of the working people. It would not be wise to attempt these sales more than twice a year; there were exceptional reasons for our having had three in one year.

I hope what I have said in this paper, in calling attention to this means of raising money to help the poor, may be useful to some interested in that work, and that they (if they attempt an "American Sale") will meet with the same success as we have done.

T. B. W.



ONE WORD.

(From the German of Carmen Sylva, the Queen of Roumania.)

By THE REV. JOHN KELLY, Author of "Louisa of Prussia, and Other Sketches," etc.

IT said it plainly—"Mother!"
My child hath said to me;
It laughs, again repeats it,
When asked, right winsomely.

Quite plainly—"Mother!" Ponder
This word so potent still:
I wish that I, by coaxing,
Could draw it forth at will.

But when I would to others
My skill with pride display,
Then does the silly infant
Quite dumb remain away.

Then do they laugh, and tell me
That I myself deceive;
And then the child repeats it
When they the chamber leave.

As if it were a secret,
'Tis only said to me,
And I would fain proclaim it
To all men publicly.

O men! I am a mother!
Ye winds, the tidings bear!—
My child hath mother called me—
Ye birds, the news declare!

I feel quite wild and foolish;
My happiness runs o'er,
My heart to my mouth leapeth
And laugheth evermore.

My dear old native language,
This lovely word is thine,
And every day to hear it
With fresh delight 'tis mine!



HOW TO PLAY THE ZITHER.

FROM time immemorial the inhabitants of the mountainous districts of Germany have had an instrument not unlike the dulcimer and guitar, called a zither or zither. The modern zither is so fast becoming a favourite in England that a few words about it and its advantages as a drawing-room instrument may not be wholly uninteresting.

I say modern zither, because during the last few years the mechanical appliances and power of tone of the zither have been much improved.

Perhaps our respect for this little instrument may be heightened when we remember that it is the descendant of a long line of stringed forefathers—from the semi-barbarous "kissar" of the Nubian, to the "lyre" of the highly-polished Roman. All ancient nations of

whose musical instruments we have any knowledge have had their own peculiar form of stringed instruments, more or less primitive in construction, but bearing a certain resemblance to one another.

In Persia, Hindostan, and other Asiatic countries we find the "sitar," so called from the word "si," three and "tar," string. The instrument has practically five strings, which are struck with a small plectrum or hook, made of leather or horn; and modern sitar players in India are still said to enrapture their audience—not a European one, we presume!

The "kissar," or Nubian lyre, is made of wood hollowed out in the form of a bowl, and covered with sheepskin. It has five strings, usually made from the intestines of the camel,

and they are also twanged with a small plectrum. The ancient Greeks had their "cythera," and the early Assyrians a lyre of ten strings; while among the Hebrews the "kinnor" took a prominent place. It was a triangular lyre, formed of two flat pieces of wood joined at right angles; across it were stretched eight or nine strings. It was held under the left arm, and played probably with a plectrum; and with an instrument such as this David subdued the "evil spirit" of Saul.

The Romans delighted in the lyre, the origin of which they ascribed to Mercury, who, according to mythological tradition, constructed it from the shell of a tortoise which he chanced to pick up on the banks of the Nile.

From primitive instruments such as these,