

That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands in
prayer
Both for themselves and those who call
them friends?
For so the whole round earth is every
way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God.
But now farewell. I am going a long
way
To the island valley of Avilion,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep meadow'd, happy, fair, with orchard
lawns
And bowery hollows, crown'd with summer
sea."

In the church said to be founded by Joseph of Arimathea, Arthur was buried, within sight of the thorn tree on Wirral Hill. It had always been said that Arthur would pass away to the island of Avalon, and in the olden times, when it was known to be simply a community of Christians, happy in the blessings which the Gospel brings, it may have been the often-expressed wish of Arthur to end his days in the peaceful seclusion of this fruitful valley, or to be interred in this sacred spot; and the more ancient songs of the British bards recorded the fact of his burial in the church on the island of Avalon; but after the death of Arthur the Saxons came over to England in stronger force, the British chiefs were divided against themselves, and Britain was conquered by the Teutonic tribes, while the ancient Celtic inhabitants took refuge among the mountains of Wales, or in the distant wilds of Cornwall, and many crossed the seas and settled on the coast of France, in what was afterwards called Brittany. The marshes around the Island of Avalon were drained, the sea had receded from the land, so that the Avalonian hills no longer formed an island, a monastery was built there, and soon a town sprang up around it. The Saxons called it Glaston, from "glos" (water) and "ton" (a dwelling). The monastery became celebrated, and in the days of the Saxon kings the famous St. Dunstan was its abbot. Later the town became a borough and took the name of Glastonbury. Only the thorn tree remained the same, and still put forth its blossoms at Christmas-tide, in remembrance of the flowering time in its southern native land. It was now regarded with veneration as a sacred tree; for people had begun to pay more regard to the outside things associated with religion than to religion itself, and were more anxious to see with their bodily eyes any wonder regarded as miraculous than to fix the eye of faith on Jesus Christ, their Saviour. The name of Avalon had now passed away, and no one remembered that this was what the valley had formerly been called. When the Saxon gleemen and Norman minstrels used to sing the legends of King Arthur, they used to conclude their songs by telling how Arthur, after the last fatal battle on the Cornish coast, had been carried by magic to the fairy island of Avalon, for they thought there never had been such a place on earth, and they sang that Arthur still lived in fairyland, and would come back again to England some day, when the world had grown purer and wiser, and he could do his work in it.

This was how the legends of Arthur ended, until the time of Henry II., and then, as the king was going to Ireland, he passed through Wales, and the Welsh bards came before him to sing the stories of their race, when Great Britain belonged to them. They sang of Arthur and his death, and in their songs the place of his burial was so exactly described—between two pyramids, near the altar, in an abbey church—that Henry recognised it at once as Glastonbury. On his return home he told the Abbot

of Glastonbury what he had heard, and a search was made for the tomb. One of our old chroniclers, Giraldus Cambrensis, describes himself as an eye-witness of the discovery of Arthur's grave. "Seven feet below the surface a huge, broad stone was found, with a small plate of lead in the form of a cross upon it, and bearing, in very rude letters and barbarous style, the inscription in Latin, 'Hic jacet sepultus Inclytus Rex Arturius in Insula Avalonia'—'Here in the island of Avalon lies buried the glorious King Arthur.' Nine feet deeper was found, in the hollowed trunk of a tree, the remains of Arthur himself, and by his side lay those of his queen Guinevere. The bones of the king were of extraordinary size; the skull was covered with wounds; ten distinct fractures were counted, one of great size, apparently the effect of the fatal blow. The queen's body was strangely perfect; the hair was neatly plaited, and of the colour of burnished gold, but when touched it fell suddenly to dust."

Edward I. had so great a desire to see the body of the British hero that he came to Glastonbury with his queen Eleanor, and had the tomb of Arthur opened again. The skulls of the king and queen were set up in the treasury of the monastery, and Edward caused a splendid monument to be erected over Arthur's grave. This was destroyed at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. One of the sculptured lions, however, which were placed at each angle of the tomb was discovered in 1825 in the crypt of St. Joseph's chapel, and is still preserved. This is the only tangible relic connected with that hero whose character and exploits have fired the love of moral beauty in the heart of almost every English poet, from the days of the Romance singers to the time of our own Poet Laureate, and whose name has been the theme of song beyond that of any other in the world. The Glastonbury thorn still blossoms,

"'Gainst that season comes,

At which our Saviour's birth is celebrated,"
and reminds us of the time when the light of Christ's Gospel was first brought to this island, and of how its rich blessings have spread over the land, so that not in one small, secluded valley only, but throughout the length and breadth of the country, we now enjoy a state of happiness, peace, and prosperity far beyond all that the poets sang of the wonderful Isle of Avalon.

HOME IMPROVEMENT SOCIETIES.

By DORA HOPE.

"THIS way to the exhibition," shouted a boy just in my ear. "Admission on'y sixpence, and child'en 'alf price."

He was an unauthorised showman, and had no business to be disturbing the neighbourhood by his cries; but being exceedingly anxious that there should be a large gathering to see him receive a prize, he had taken upon himself to announce it to the world in this way. He was successful, too, for we should have passed by the place without noticing it, had not our attention been thus called to the doorway wreathed with flags.

"Oh, auntie, do let us go in," begged a little nephew who accompanied me. "Look at the flags; and I can go half price, you know."

It was not an expensive entertainment, and I reflected that he deserved a reward for having, twice over during our walk, gone out of his way to avoid pools of mud, a principle I had long been trying to instil into his mind; so we went in, preceded by the irrepressible

boy, who was so elated by victory that he was compelled to use up a little of his superfluous energy by turning a Catherine wheel along the path in front of us, a performance which so filled little Jack with admiration and envy that he produced from the depths of his pocket his best top, which he offered to the youth as a bribe, if he would only teach him how to do it. He reluctantly desisted when I pointed out that if he got his clothes muddy he would have to go ignominiously home again without seeing the exhibition. But little Jack has a secret affinity for street Arabs, and such an accomplished one as this was not to be slighted, so he hovered near us for the rest of the afternoon, and I occasionally overheard scraps of conversation, such as:

"I say, my name's Jack; what's yours?"

"My name's Joe; leastways it ain't; but there's such lots of Bills down our way, so they calls me Joe."

"I have a rocking-horse at home; have you got one?"

"Don't know what that is, but I've got a 'ganier.'"

"What's a 'ganier?'"

"Why, one of them red flowers what grows in pots in the winder; but that's for the next show, that is. We always has a show in the summer for flowers and sech things; and that there set o' furniture's mine, you know. What! not seed it? Here, I'll show it to yer; this way." And he began to elbow his way through the throng who crowded the entrance of the Board school, the use of which had been granted for the show. With such a determined leader we soon reached the part of the room devoted to models, where the boy pointed exultantly to a tiny suite of furniture cleverly carved from old corks.

"Look! William Dubbin! that's me," he explained, pointing out the card marked "First Prize," which was placed in front of the model.

Having duly admired his handiwork, and had all its beauties pointed out, Jack and I proceeded to make a tour of the room, and inspect the very miscellaneous collection of objects displayed there. Behind the first table we stopped at was a placard, inscribed "Class six. Adults. Carpentering for home-use." The exhibitors had displayed their skill in carpentering in a great variety of ways. The first prize had been awarded for a three-legged table, made by exhibitor; the second for a pair of engravings cut from some illustrated paper, neatly framed in deal, stained, and varnished. There were a large number of other exhibits, more or less neatly made; a tea-caddy; a pair of footstools; a box-seat, made of a packing case, padded and covered with chintz, and the lid opening with hinges; some fretwork brackets, and many other things.

Adjoining these were the exhibits of the same description, made by children under fifteen. These included a hanging book-case; plain deal footstools; salt and knife-boxes; window boxes for flowers; solid-wooden brackets, and money boxes; and one ambitious youth had made a very substantial substitute for a perambulator, with a carefully planed wooden box, mounted on four wheels (bought at a second-hand dealer's), and drawn by means of a long wooden handle.

Then came tables for the display of useful needlework. One prize had been offered for the most neatly-darned stocking; another for button-holes; for a boy's shirt, both the cut and sewing to be taken into account; for knitted stockings, socks, and comforters, with still another prize for any kind of work the exhibitor might choose to send in.

Adjoining this were the competitions for the cookery prizes. These had been offered.

for the best and most economical stew; for the best soup made of lentils or haricot beans, without meat; for plain suet pudding, with several other plain and nourishing dishes. Only small plates of these had been sent in as samples.

My young companion, however, found these exhibits rather uninteresting, so we hurried past the table for patchwork, all made by competitors over seventy years of age, with its companion one for children under ten, as well as the children's exhibits of needlework and cookery. I was anxious to stay and examine a large table of drawings and maps; but these reminded Jackie so painfully of his lessons, for which he had a particular aversion, that we hurried on.

The crowd of people soon began to move towards another room, where we found the prizes were about to be distributed by a benevolent gentleman, who addressed a few words of friendly counsel to the exhibitors before calling up the prize winners.

The first prizes to be distributed were books, for the best essays on kindness to animals, on bringing up children, and on spending money. Then followed prizes in kind—teapots, coal-scuttles, materials for dresses, packets of groceries, and other useful presents for adult competitors.

At last Joe's turn came, and he marched proudly up to the table to receive the first prize for models by children—five bright new shillings. The applause which greeted each prize winner was vigorously assisted by little Jack as his new acquaintance passed us with a grin of triumphant recognition, on his way out to make room for others. Jackie's interest in the proceedings having come to an end, we followed Joe out, and found him gazing with affectionate admiration at his cork furniture.

"What shall you do with your money, Joe?" I asked.

"Don't exactly know," he replied. "Wants a new suit o' clothes werry bad. But there," he added after a moment's reflection, and gazing down at his dilapidated garments, "it ain't so cold as wot it was, and p'raps they'll do till the summer."

I felt considerable doubts about them holding together myself, but would not hurt his feelings by saying so, and he went on—

"You see, we ain't on'y got one chair, and it's werry ilconvenient when father and mother both wants to sit down at once; and my boots is pretty well wore out, so I think I'll 'ave a pair o' boots and a chair."

I felt Jackie pulling at my sleeve while we were talking, and when I turned, he whispered eagerly, "Auntie, do let me give him that pair of boots I kicked a hole in the other day."

So, taking the boy's address, we promised that Jackie and I would go and call on him some day, and take him the pair of boots, and see his "ganier," which he was hoping to nurse through the winter, and to win a prize with at the summer flower show.

Here Jackie's interest in the "Home Improvement Society" ended; but mine was only beginning, and I took an early opportunity of calling on a friend whom I knew to be interested in the society, to get some further information in order to begin a similar exhibition in my own neighbourhood. She gave me sundry pieces of good advice, which I will repeat as far as I can remember them, for the benefit of others who wish to get up similar exhibitions.

Two shows are held during the year—a winter and a summer one. The neighbourhood is mapped out into districts, and a lady or gentleman undertakes the post of visitor to each. This duty involves distributing notices of the show some months beforehand, with the lists of prizes offered; and an occasional visit afterwards to encourage or advise the

would-be competitors; and on the last visit, a printed copy of the "Regulations for the Show" should be left at each house. These "regulations," state the place and time of the exhibition, the time at which exhibits are to be brought (usually the day before the show), and when removed, and whether or not the exhibits may be marked for sale; with any other particulars which circumstances may suggest. One invariable rule is that each exhibit must be plainly marked with the name and address, and, in children's competitions, with the age of exhibitor.

The committee and visitors usually act as judges, sometimes, if their number contains no one competent for the task, inviting professional carpenters, gardeners, and others to assist them. The judges should meet early in the morning of the show, divide the work amongst them, and then, before beginning, they should walk round the whole exhibition, so as to get a general idea of the degree of merit to expect, and should talk over their different standards of excellence, so that the prizes may be fairly awarded in each class. There is sure to be some grumbling, however carefully the judges have performed their task; they should be careful, therefore, to notice, and be able to point out to disappointed exhibitors, the special blemishes which have prevented their work from winning a prize.

New members must give in their names to one of the visitors of the society, not less than two months before the show at which they intend to compete; this precaution is necessary to ensure the exhibits being really their own work, and not bought or hired for the occasion. On payment of the entrance-fee (generally twopence or threepence), a card of membership is given, which holds good, without further payment, for all subsequent shows, and their names are enrolled in the books of the society, as well as in that of the visitor in whose district they reside, and who is responsible for them, receiving any notices which may be issued. To avoid any possible mistake, it is usual to have both prize lists and members' tickets for adults a different colour from those for the children. It is found advisable that numerous small prizes should be given for children's competitions, rather than few and valuable ones, as a reward, however insignificant, encourages them to try again.

In populous neighbourhoods, where there are many Board or Ragged schools, prizes are sometimes offered for class singing, in which the various schools compete together.

In addition to the judges at the exhibition, a number of gentlemen should be requested to act as stewards, to keep order, marshal the prize-winners to their places, answer inquiries, and do anything else that is required of them. They should always wear some distinguishing badge, that everyone may see to whom to apply in any difficulty.

These were the principal points of my friend's advice. The details of management must vary according to the neighbourhood and class of people amongst whom the work would be started. It can be undertaken without any difficulty, provided always an energetic manager can be found, with a few sensible people to form a committee. The expenses are, of necessity, rather large, as, in addition to the printing of prize-lists, tickets, and the various notices, a good deal has to be spent in prizes; but it is generally found that many tradesmen in the neighbourhood who do not care to subscribe in money, are willing to give presents in kind suitable for prizes.

We hear a great deal lately about the poor and how to improve them. There is an old saying that God helps those who help themselves, and a society of this kind just steps in to teach and encourage the poor to help them-

selves. A great deal depends upon the tact of the visitors, who should suggest work suitable to each member, if, as is often the case, they have no ideas of their own; and if energetically and sensibly carried out, it may be made a powerful aid in raising the condition of the poor. Comfortable homes, and something wherewith to occupy themselves there would do more to close the public-houses than any amount of talking; the object, therefore, to be aimed at by this society is to induce the women, by improvement in needlework and cookery, to make their homes more attractive than the public-houses, and to persuade the men to add to the comforts of their homes, and provide themselves with amusement in the evenings by carpentering, or any other useful employment they may fancy.

If in addition to the regular work of the society, classes can be raised for cookery, carpentering, fretwork, brasswork, sewing, or any other kind of useful and practical work, an enormous amount of good may be done, and one answer be found to the oft-repeated question, "What can be done to help the poor?"

NEW MUSIC.

JOHN B. GALBRAITH.

It was but a Milkmaid's Song. Words by Sarah Doudney. Music by Allan Macbeth.—Pretty verses, attached to a charming and appropriate melody; needs only to be heard to become a favourite.

Also by the same composer. Words by G. Clifton Bingham—

The Voice of the Waters.

Only You.

Morning Land.

Old Antwerp Town. Words by Claxton Bellamy.

The melodies are expressive and varied, and the accompaniments, though not difficult, are appropriate and masterly.

Sir George on the Storming of "Old Gibraltar." Written by W. D. Boston, B.A. Music by James McHardy.—A patriotic song, written in a vigorous and tuneful style; rather above the average of this type of composition. It is in two keys—E flat and G.

Intermezzo. "Forget me not." Composed for string orchestra, and arranged for pianoforte by Allan Macbeth.—An interesting piece; the effect greatly increased with orchestral accompaniment.

Dorina Valse. By Carl Volti.

Colinette Valse. By M. Nalla.

These waltzes, although not very original, are good as exercises.

Two Characteristic Pieces. By Peter W. Cassels. No. 1, March. No. 2, Gavotte.—Easily arranged; highly satisfactory compositions.

ALPHONSE BERTINI.

To-day and To-morrow. Words by Edward Oxenford. Music by Arthur W. Marchant. With harmonium accompaniment (*ad lib.*).—A sentimental song, but words and music in good taste, and with the harmonium accompaniment is sure to be appreciated.

BOOSEY AND CO.

The Old Flag in the Abbey Nave. Words and music by J. Barrett Browne.—A patriotic song, words and music well expressed.

JOSEPH BISHOP AND CO.

Gavotte. For the pianoforte. By A. W. Sebastian Hoare. Worthy of recommendation; well written and tuneful.

BANKS AND SON.

Genevieve. Minuet. By George H. Smith, Mus. Bac., Oxon.—A graceful and tuneful composition, well worthy of notice.