

them to take an interest in their lessons. Of course it is much harder to induce some dispositions than others to do this, but it is possible to excite an interest in a measure in the mind of every little child. The great secret of this is for the teacher to be lively and demonstrative, and to appear to take a vivid interest in the lesson herself (I use the feminine pronoun, you perceive, for I think that there can be no doubt that women are endowed with more patience for this work of teaching young children than men). Well, be animated and talkative over the lesson, whatever it be, give praise when praise is due, and keep up the interest and attention of the young minds; but remember at the same time not to talk too much, for children soon grow weary of listening. It is an excellent plan to allow, or rather to encourage, the little folk to speak. I do not mean that they

should be permitted to chatter on irrelevant subjects, but that they should talk on the subject of the lesson, for this not only increases their interest and fastens it on their memories, but it also teaches them to think and to form ideas.

If you agree with me on that matter, you will also agree that it is a mistake, a grave mistake, to repel questions, and that it is a still graver one to laugh at the foolish and ignorant remarks made by little children. These small people are very sensitive to ridicule, and they will soon cease to ask for information if their questions are denominated as absurd or ignorant. I remember well how much I suffered in spirit from this ill-advised laughter, and how I often longed to ask questions, and thus gain information, but was deterred simply from the fear of being dubbed an ignoramus.

E. C.

PEOPLE'S CAFÉS.



Try to provide a counter-attraction to gin-palaces and public-houses is a praiseworthy enterprise. These institutions have hitherto been far too much in favour with our labouring population. But formerly there was this to be said for them: they were almost the only places available for

working people to meet in for refreshment, conversation, amusement, and the carrying on of their benefit clubs.

During late years, however, many efforts have been made to establish in different directions institutions which should to a great extent obviate this necessity—institutions which, although founded with the main idea of their being self-supporting, should nevertheless, owing to the entire absence of the usual desire for large profits, supply working men and others with refreshment and amusement at a price but just above actual cost, with a mere margin for working expenses and interest on capital. Houses of this description have been started with fairly satisfactory results in many localities, notably at Norwood, Stepney, and Notting Hill.

About eight months ago a movement was begun, headed by the philanthropic Lord Shaftesbury, to establish a number of People's Cafés in suitable situations in the more densely crowded parts of London and elsewhere. These were to be places where the public, and especially the working classes, could obtain good wholesome food, and drinks of a non-intoxicating character; where they could spend their leisure in conversation or amusement, and where they could conduct benefit societies, and other mutual undertakings. And the two leading features of the cafés were to be comfort and moderate prices.

The first café, opened in Whitecross Street, St. Luke's, on the 19th of April, has settled down to do a steady business, and up to the present time the attendance has been remarkably good.

The second one was on a larger scale. It was opened in High Street, Whitechapel, on the 13th of

May. As in the former case, there was a rush to see what this new claimant for popular favour had to offer. The bills mentioned, among other things, "The cheapest and most wholesome dinners in London." No wonder, then, that from five to six hundred—far more than the place could accommodate—came for the first few days; for "a good dinner," as Dr. Kitchiner says, "is one of the greatest enjoyments of human life."

As this Whitechapel café is, and is likely to continue, a representative institution, we have visited it for the benefit of our readers, and, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Griffin, the manager, have become possessed of some particulars of a not uninteresting nature.

About the building itself there is little to say. There is a pleasant come-in-and-make-yourself-welcome air about the exterior; and on stepping in from the busy thoroughfare of High Street, we enter a large, light, and cheerful room, the ventilation of which is as it should be. This room is set out with tables with white marble tops. It contains three bars, one for dinners, another for tea, coffee, bread and butter, whilst the third is miscellaneous, being devoted to American drinks, cigars, and such-like articles. Downstairs is what is to be converted into a bowling-alley; up-stairs are billiard and bagatelle rooms, rooms for meetings, and a dining-room for women-folk.

The café opens at an early hour. Business is begun in the cold winter mornings at five o'clock, so that men going to their work can have a cup of tea or coffee more satisfactorily than at those street-stalls which form so characteristic a feature of the early morning life of the metropolis. A considerable number appear to breakfast, but the great strain on the resources of the establishment is felt at dinner-time.

The Whitechapel dinner-time begins at twelve o'clock. Between that hour and two, close upon three hundred people are served, a large proportion of them being working men. After two o'clock fifty or sixty people, chiefly clerks, find their way east-

wards from the City. They, like all the rest who dine there, lose no time over their meal. A man comes in, gives his order, expects to be served at once, eats without looking up, fills his pipe, lights it, and hurries away. Time is precious in these parts.

From half-past four to seven is occupied with teas, and after that comes a season of teas and suppers, which brings us to eleven o'clock, when the doors are closed.

The total number of persons going in and out per day is from four to six hundred. The café is open to both men and women, but it does not seem to be much taken advantage of by the latter.

Times and seasons have an influence on the attendance. In cold weather, for example, the numbers coming to breakfast are considerable. In hot weather it is not so: the working man does not then feel the same necessity for drinking tea and coffee. On Mondays the attendance to dinner is not so large as on other days. This is accounted for by the fact that there has been a good dinner at home on Sunday, on the strength of which many feel that they can go till Tuesday. On Saturday also the numbers are small, as one would expect, seeing many go home on that day to dine.

The café is closed on Sunday, and the building is not made use of in any way on that day.

A very good test of the establishment is to ask if the meals it provides answer the description given in the bill which we have quoted. We think they do. We have heard of dinners as cheap in London, but if fated to encounter them, one might wish for the appetite of a cormorant and the digestion of an ostrich. The viands of the People's Café are wholesome and palatable, and even an epicure in the boiling of potatoes would find nothing in them to object to.

The following will give the reader an idea of the prices:—plate of meat, 4d. and 6d.; beef-steak pudding, 4d.; pudding, 1d.; soup, 1d. and 2d.; vegetables, 1d.; rasher of bacon, 2d.; cup of coffee, 1d. and 1½d.; cup of tea, 1d. and 2d.; roll and butter, 2d. Any one, it may be added, bringing a chop or steak can have it cooked for 1d.

All who take an interest in the wants of the working classes have heard of the Glasgow Cooking Depôts, founded about fifteen years ago by Mr. Corbett. These have all along been a great success. Their present proprietor, Mr. Jenkins, informs us that he has now twenty-six branch establishments, and supplies daily the wants of no fewer than ten thousand customers.

Now, it has occurred to us to compare the prices of the London People's Cafés with those of the Glasgow establishments. The difference is decidedly in favour of the latter. In Glasgow, at breakfast-time, one can satisfy a keen appetite for 3½d. For that sum he will have a bowl of porridge, bowl of milk, cup of coffee, and roll and butter. And dinner may be had for the fixed charge of 5d., consisting of a bowl of broth or soup; beef, hot or cold; potatoes; and plum or rice pudding. No doubt, however, the prices in the People's Cafés are at present as low as is consistent with prudence; and there are several reasons, into

which want of space forbids our entering, why they never can be so moderate as at the Glasgow Depôts.

The standard beverage of the People's Cafés is cold water. Perhaps the majority of those who frequent the establishment are abstainers, but they are not all such. It is not teetotallers alone who can appreciate the cardinal virtues of good cookery. The fact of the cafés being conducted on strictly temperance principles has been called a fault by some whose opinion is entitled to respect; but a working man—not an abstainer—put the matter to us in this way—

“There is no reason,” he said, “why beer should be sold everywhere. If I want a glass of beer, I know where to get it.”

So much for the matter-of-fact business of the café, namely, the eating and drinking. We now come to the question of recreation. The games are dominoes, draughts, bagatelle, and billiards. The charge for the use of dominoes and draught-boards and men is 1d. an hour. For bagatelle and billiards one has to pay 6d. a month and 1d. per game for bagatelle, and 2d. for billiards. A chess club has recently been started, with a respectable number of members. Music might well form one of the features of the place. As yet, however, it has not been introduced. As for periodicals and daily papers, a sufficient number of them is taken in to meet the demands of those who prefer reading to more social amusement.

The attendants are all girls. When the Whitechapel café was first opened, lads were tried, but they were not a success. As a rule, they were lazy, and disinclined to do more than their exact share of work. It is to the credit of girls, on the other hand, that they are active and obliging. Besides, men would rather be waited on by them than by those of their own sex. Their mistakes, when they do make mistakes, are more readily overlooked.

The interest taken in the People's Café movement by the working classes is unmistakable. When the Whitechapel establishment was started, those in the neighbourhood were afraid that they were going to be patronised. It was soon discovered that this was a wrong impression, and that the café was a place they could frequent without danger of being patronised or circumvented by anybody.

It is intended to give working men an opportunity of acquiring a direct interest in the People's Café Company. At present the capital required for conducting the undertaking has been subscribed in £1 shares, chiefly by philanthropic and public-spirited individuals. But as additional capital is required for extending the movement, the labouring classes are to be allowed an opportunity of taking shares, the payment being in easy instalments, say of 2s. 6d. a month. This is a good idea, and should tend to increase the popularity of the cafés.

In conclusion, it should be borne in mind by all who have the management of these cafés, that the first object to be attained is their foundation on strict self-supporting principles, altogether apart from charitable efforts, as in this way alone can their rapid spread and increase in usefulness be depended upon.