

generally made easy for those who do not understand much about dressmaking. Many of these are trimmed with the new lace of woollen llama, called in the shops "Dentelle de Khartoum," and others have circles of braid, tinsel, chenille, and wide braid for trimming.

For ordinary use and early morning wear the generality of dresses are entirely of wool, and all *morning-gowns* appear to get plainer and plainer as the weeks go on. Wide military braid is very popular; but with the last month fur trimmings have grown to be the correct thing for dresses as well as mantles, and fur is used to all the good woollens, cloth, serge, and vicuna. For those who cannot afford real astrachan, there is the woven astrachan, which is an excellent imitation of the genuine fur, and is dyed in all colours, as well as in the orthodox black and grey. All kinds of rough things, coarse and rough serges, friezes, and tweeds are in favour for morning wear and for walking dresses; and the choice of these in the drapers' shops, made up into pretty and well-fitting skirts, is immense, and at such prices as place them within everyone's reach. With this help, and furnished with a jersey, even the most helpless girl can obtain a dress with little trouble and expense, and if she have a good pattern of a bodice she has only that to make, and need feel no anxiety about the skirt.

For better dresses velveteen is mixed with woollen and trimmed with fur, or fine woollen is trimmed with the rich llama lace which I have before mentioned, and which is made in every colour, and is of such a width that it is often used as one deep flounce over a silk foundation.

Figured materials are never made up alone, but plain ones are; and it is probable that in the spring plain silks will be made up as they used to be, with no second material.

The plain skirt seems almost universally worn, and I have illustrated in one of the single figures how this plain skirt looks. It has always a narrow ruching at the edge, and tucks above, or else wide braid or a fur band. The next single figure has a skirt with pleats at intervals, and braid runs down where it is plain. All these skirts, though called plain, have a gored lining underneath them, and this smooth foundation ensures the skirt setting well and that there will be no pulls nor rucks. The plain skirt is also indispensable when steels are used in the dress, as they are placed across the plain width at the back.

An effort after greater simplicity is evident in the cut of the tunic, and they are really more like the thing they are called, viz., an overskirt, looped up to be out of the way. They are neither very long, very short, nor very full, but medium in every way; far less stuff being used than was the case a few months ago.

Waistcoats are as much worn as ever, but there is no change in the make of bodices or sleeves.

The sketch of the "Walk in Kensington Gardens" gives most of the shapes now worn in mantles, jackets, and cloaks. Small tight jackets are used as much as ever by young people, but they are not of bright colours—red and prune, as they were last winter—but grey, trimmed with grey astrachan; or dark brown, or drab, trimmed with the same fur, or otter, beaver, or seal. These jackets may be made of cloth, velvet, or corduroy.

All mantles are short behind, and cut in a curve down the front and sides, until they meet in a point, as represented in the centre figure of the three advancing ladies. The majority are made of terry-ribbed silk, but plush and velvet are also used. Almost all are trimmed with fur, or thick chenille trimmings. Fur balls, fur fringe, and fur tails seem the most usual finish on all mantles—

those trimmed with fur especially. The large coats all have sleeves, generally coming from the back. They are all very full at the back, and do not show much of the dress skirt. All of them have large fur collars, to protect the neck.

Sealskin paletôts are very much worn; they are long and ample, and the fronts hang straight down. Large dolmans of seal are also seen, and so are numbers of sealskin tight-fitting jackets and capes; either with long stole ends that hang down in front, or without them. The new capes are carefully fitted, sloped at the back, and all have shoulder seams. They are generally worn with cuffs, for greater warmth to the arms; they are very deep, and are colsed with elastic on the inside, to allow of their going over the sleeve comfortably.

I must not forget to say that the newest buttons for dresses are of fine close wood, turned and carved more or less delicately, according to expense. Then there are some marbled buttons, like stones, pebbles, or fancy marbles, which are selected to match the dress in colour; these are very pretty and elegant. Some very expensive buttons are also to be seen of enamelled metal in delicate Eastern hues. Buttons are not quite so small as they were, and consequently are not so many in number down the front of dress bodices, and for jacket bodices fastening half way down the front very large ones are used.

All the winter hats are tall, and very heavily trimmed, especially toward the front, where the feathers, wings, or bows of ribbon stand very much upright. Bonnets and hats are of felt for ordinary wear, with trimmings of terry or velvet. The crowns of all bonnets are quite pronounced—some of them may be called high. The crowns are of velvet, of soft felt, or of woollen stockingette (for the latter, I am told, many milliners use real stockings), and all three are puffed or pleated in small, regular pleats, or they may be smoothly covered.

The "Olivia" shape, as it is now reintroduced, is very pretty, and is made in worsted lace, as well as terry and velvet; it bids fair to be more generally used than when it came in three years ago. The strings of bonnets are much shorter, and measure about three-and-a-half inches across; when tied there are hardly any ends. An easy way of making a bonnet is to purchase a small felt shape, and put a piece of fur at the edge, and sew on a pair of the new woollen velvet strings. Woollen materials of all sorts seem to be used for making the crowns of bonnets, even crochet-crowns laid over velvet; straw crowns are little seen, but there are some feather bonnets and hats completely covered with dyed feathers laid on one over the other in layers, with a brim of velvet.

I forget if I have mentioned the triple folds of crossway canvas that have been introduced from the Continent, and have taken the place of neck frillings. They are of white, cream, or other colours, and may be either plain or spotted with chenille dots. The price of these folds will probably make them common too soon, otherwise they are most useful and neat-looking.

Almost all ribbons are reversible and thick, and the woollen velvet ribbon, which I have mentioned, is the most valuable of our recent introductions, as it will probably wear well and look better than silk ribbons for winter wear. Following the universal English custom of naming dress articles after the seat of war absorbing the interest of the day, this ribbon is called "Tonquin."

Our last illustration must be given up to the winter fashions of the juveniles amongst us, for they are an important consideration to so many sisters and mothers. This sketch shows a blouse frock for a little girl, a paletôt and

cape made of either real or imitation astrachan for a boy, with a scarlet Tam o' Shanter and a brown quill feather. A loose, very rough pilot cloth paletôt for a little girl is shown beyond, which is worn with a Tam o' Shanter to match, or of brown velvet. The little maiden of five summers wears a paletôt or pelisse of rough cloth, trimmed with fur, and a large, granny-like bonnet with a cap inside. Nothing but rough materials are used for infants and young children—even the long cloaks of infants are now made, not of the finest cashmere, as of yore, but of cloth, flannel, or white serge, and are trimmed with flat bands of knotted woollen or a white ball fringe. Woollen laces are also used for the same purpose; but the rage for both the out-of-door and indoor clothing of babies is crochete or knitted dresses. These are usually tricotées, and have a cape as well as a cap, and gaiters to match—violet and dark crimson are the best wearing colours of which to make them. Double Berlin may be used, or a good fleecy wool, and the pattern of any petticoat will do for that portion of the dress, while the bodice, being quite straight, and the sleeves also, any good hand at crochet will not need much help beyond measurements to guide her. Sometimes coloured silks are introduced in stars, or embroidered lines, to brighten the dress. We have become rather more sanitary this year with our children's dress, for even the very babies, as soon as they are short-coated, are put into long stockings over the knee, which match the frock in colour and are tied with ribbons at the ankle, as the little "bootees" were, to make them pretty; and having once arrived at this, it is to be hoped we shall see no more bare legs for some time.

As regards the hats worn by children and young people, they are generally in the shapes worn by the older people; only with fewer trimmings. The Tam o' Shanter seems, however, to outshine everything else in popularity; but to many children it forms a far from becoming head-dress; and when the face is thin it should on no account be worn, as it is quite unsuitable. The worst of a popular fashion is, that it is adopted too universally, and, however pretty, gets so quickly into disfavour, as one style cannot possibly suit everyone and all conditions of life. The wisest people are those who are not carried into extremes by the influence of the multitude; and who try to think well, and to form an opinion of their own on all subjects, great and small, regarding none as too trifling and beneath their notice which may contribute to a seemly appearance, the pleasure to those whom it is their duty to consult, or of economy, health, or the general convenience of the wearer.

PENNY DINNERS.

By PHILLIS BROWNE, Author of "The Girl's Own Cookery Book."

ALL schoolgirls know that if through some accident the dinner-hour is postponed, and they try to learn their lessons when they are faint and hungry, the lessons somehow will not get learnt. Figures appear to jumble themselves together in the brain, towns and rivers will not show themselves upon the map, and all is failure and confusion. After dinner, however, the requirements of Nature being supplied, these difficulties arrange themselves, and lessons are easily mastered, because necessary food has been taken.

It is very sad to think that in this land of ours there are thousands of children who are obliged to study, yet are not well fed, simply because their fathers are too poor to buy them food, while their mothers either do not know how to cook the daily meals, or are, it may be, compelled by necessity to go out working by

the day, and so cannot make use of the knowledge they possess.

Living within a stone's throw of these half-starved little ones are numbers of girls who have a great deal of leisure time on their hands which they do not know what to do with. Would it not be a good thing if some among them would try to mend matters by establishing in poor districts "Penny Dinners" for destitute children? The idea is not by any means a new or an unpracticable one; it has been tried, and has succeeded in various parts. Sir Henry Peek, M.P., was the first to attempt it. Ever since 1876 he has supplied the children attending the National School at Rousdon, in Devonshire, with one sufficient meal a day on the five days a week they attend school, and the material has not cost more than a penny per meal. The consequence has been that at Rousdon School the children who before were wretched and ill-fed, and unable to learn their lessons, became healthy and vigorous, and succeeded so well in their examinations that it was stated in the House of Commons by Mr. Mundella, the Minister of Education, that "it was impossible there could be a better school."

As might have been expected, Sir Henry Peek's example was followed by a few others of like mind with himself, and "Penny Dinners" have been established here and there. During the last few months the attention of the charitable has been repeatedly called to the subject, and very earnest efforts have been made to induce those who have leisure and means at command to begin the work in their own neighbourhoods. If a network of "Penny Dinners" could be established all over the country, we might expect that a great improvement would be made, not only in the health and intelligence but also in the morals of the community, for we all know that people are never more like'y to quarrel and fight, and to fall victims to drink and disease, than when they are ill-fed.

At the present time I believe twelve kitchens have been opened in different parts of London and a few in various parts of the country. These are, however, nothing to what is needed; and if any adequate good is to be done the work must be extended in every direction. It is in the hope of persuading some of my friends to undertake it that I now write.

There is wanted for the successful establishment of these kitchens not money so much as workers. Money is required, certainly, to start the business—to provide the coppers, fuel, basins, spoons, and plates, and to hire the room where the meals are given, and to buy the supplies to commence with. The cost of the first outlay, however, for a hundred children, has been stated by those who have carefully calculated the expense to be under ten pounds; and after this first outlay the idea of the promoters of the scheme is that the dinners should be made to pay. Luxurious individuals may say that it is absurd to imagine that a sufficient meal for a child can be bought for a penny; but this is not so—the thing has been done again and again. Everyone who has had experience knows that it is much more difficult to provide economically for a small family than it is for a large one. I could cater much more liberally for a family of twelve on ten shillings a week per head than I could for a family of two with the same allowance. To provide for numbers requires management. You need to know how to market, where to go, and what to buy; how to lay out money to advantage, and how to utilise scraps; but with equal knowledge and skill in both cases, twelve people could live quite comfortably on the same proportionate allowance which would be hard work for two or three.

It is particularly hard upon poor folks that just because they have very little money they

cannot lay out that little to the best advantage. They are obliged to purchase what they want in driblets, and this means that they should pay the very highest price for it, and perhaps get it also of inferior quality. The rich man who at the end of the summer lays in a stock of coal enough to last him till warm days come again, pays in proportion very much less for his coal than does the poor woman who fetches a few coals from the shop in her apron. Just so the pennyworths of bacon and ounces of tea which are sold in poverty-stricken localities are much more costly than are the same articles when bought in large quantities. Housekeepers of experience are accustomed to say that "a store is no sore," and that to buy food in tiny portions is to "let the money run out at the heels of one's boots." They know that just as, if they can buy potatoes by the sack they will save in all probability a farthing in the pound, so they never buy meat, groceries, vegetables, or any necessities so frugally as when they buy a quantity—that is, supposing always that the supply thus provided is used judiciously and made the most of. Yet the poor can never enjoy this advantage. If they had the money to lay out they have no room where they could bestow their goods, and so they have to live from hand to mouth in the most costly manner.

It seems to me that the promoters of the "Penny Dinner" movement are doing this kindness for the poor—they are enabling them to make the most of their pennies. One penny, standing alone, is not very powerful; but a number of pennies put together, laid out by experienced persons who know how to "make it turn round twice," as the saying is, will procure a substantial dinner for the owner of each individual penny. The girls of our cookery class could scarcely devote the skill and power of management which they have acquired to a better purpose than by thus co-operating with their poorer neighbours for the good of the latter.

The first thing which girls who feel inclined to undertake this work would have to do would be to communicate with a few of their friends, and get the promise of assistance. In enterprises of this kind it is a great mistake to be short-handed, and for one or two persons to undertake the entire responsibility thereof, and have the detail in their hands also. To do this is to anticipate failure, for although experiments are very interesting while they are new, they become very wearisome with time, and they are much more likely to be carried through if the burden is divided amongst a number of reliable persons, than they are if left to one or two. There are not many girls who would have the heart, even if they had the strength, to keep on every day, and day after day, with the same monotonous detail; and yet it would be foolishness to begin this work and not persevere in it. Spasmodic philanthropy is worth very little—it is not real, it is a sham. The girl who can go down now and then on a bright winter's morning and amuse herself by helping to hand round the plates and cups to ragged children, may flatter herself that she is being very self-denying and useful; but the probability is that unless she is prepared to go on systematically she is only occupying the room of someone who would work longer than she.

It would be well, therefore, if those who are organising these dinners would remember that not occasional helpers, but reliable helpers are needed—girls who will promise to devote a portion of time regularly to the undertaking—take one day a week, or two days a week, as they can afford, and then make up their minds not to enter into other engagements, or allow bad weather, weariness, fatigue, or pleasant invitations of any kind to

interfere with their self-appointed duty. Having made this resolve, they may be quite sure that every pleasant party they would like to attend will be fixed for this particular day which they have promised to give up. But let them remain firm. In time their friends will understand that they are engaged on certain days, and will make their arrangements accordingly.

Although it is thus desirable that the work should be divided, it is also necessary that one experienced and competent person who has a talent for organisation should be responsible for its accomplishment. These "willing and capable" individuals are the mainstay of all undertakings, philanthropic or otherwise, and it is because they are not often to be met with that so many excellent schemes fall to the ground. These people are usually very managing, very energetic, and very modest. I have been privileged to know one or two of them in my time, and I have noticed that when the public meeting is held, and compliments are being freely distributed all round, the real workers, the wire-pullers, are generally in the background. Yet what does this signify? We all know that there will be a gathering one day, when they will have to leave their obscurity, in order to listen to the words of the Master, "Well done, good and faithful servant." For the present, however, they are not thinking of honours for themselves, they simply see that the work wants doing, and they are taking steps to get it done. They are always glad of help, and they are delighted to give full credit to anyone who will join hands with them. They are never so successful as when they have the capacity, not so much of working themselves, as of setting others to work. There are plenty of "hands" in the community, willing and active enough, sometimes too active, but the "heads" are comparatively few. The characteristic of these responsible individuals is that they have "head;" which means that they have wit to perceive, judgment to choose, skill to guide, and strength to control. If in a committee of twenty, or fifty, or five hundred, there is but one member who has capacity to take and bear the responsibility, all will be well. If there is no such person to be found, the work had better not be commenced, for it is certain to fall through.

The committee being formed, the next thing is either to rent or obtain permission to use a room suitable for the purpose. In many districts mission-halls are established, which are made use of chiefly in the evenings, and not used during the day. In other districts there are buildings in connection with the schools which the children attend, which can be utilised for the purpose. If it can be arranged that one of these rooms can be made use of, all the better, especially as mission-halls, at any rate, are frequently provided with a copper for boiling water for tea-meetings. Where there is no mission-hall or out-building available, a room must be looked for and hired, and then in all probability a copper will have to be fitted on purpose. The putting in of a proper cooking apparatus is a very important item. When it is expected that a large number, say one or two hundred children, are to be provided for, one or more good-sized coppers, capable of holding, say, 10 gallons, will be needed. Coppers which are already erected are generally made with brick-work flues. The price of one of these will vary with the locality and with the ideas of the tradesman whose assistance is called in. Portable coppers heated by gas, are not very costly, and they answer the purpose almost better, because with gas the heat is so easily regulated, while the cost of the gas once fixed is very trifling.

In a little pamphlet written by the Rev. W. Moore Ede, Rector of Gateshead-on-Tyne.

called "Hints for the Management of Penny Dinners," there is a practical suggestion on this point which is worth knowing. Mr. Ede relates experiences connected with providing "Penny Dinners" at St. Mary's National Schools, Gateshead, and tells his readers that there the difficulty of the cooking apparatus was met by the invention of the following very simple arrangement. A box was made, three feet high, two feet wide, and one foot nine inches deep, with an outer case of sheet iron; the sides and lid were lined with two and a half inches of felt, and inside this, again, was a further lining of tin. Underneath the box, which was capable of holding thirty gallons, and large enough to cook for 250 children, were placed two of Fletcher's atmospheric gas burners. The felt being a non-conductor, nearly all the heat from the gas was utilised, while a comparatively small expenditure of gas was sufficient to raise the temperature of the contents of the box to boiling point or to the heat required. With this "Cooker," when once the desired temperature is obtained, one of the burners can be turned off and the other lowered, and the temperature can be maintained for hours by means of a merely nominal expenditure of gas; while even when the gas is totally extinguished, many hours will elapse before the food cooked will become cool.

It should be explained that the food is cooked, not in the box, but in an inner pan which is placed inside the box, and which contains room for rather more than twenty gallons in the largest-sized "Cooker." The space between the inner pan and the side of the box is filled with water, which is kept at the desired temperature by means of the gas-burners; the expenditure for fuel is very slight. Mr. Ede found that gas costing seven-tenths of a penny would with this apparatus raise five gallons of water to boiling point, and less than threepennyworth would boil thirty gallons. This shows how economical gas is. I have not seen these "Cookers" in operation, but in connection with some dinners organised by some very clever and efficient philanthropists in London, I have seen two portable coppers, holding ten gallons each, which were fixed for about £6, and it has been found that the cost of heating each of these by gas is a penny an hour.

"Penny Dinner Cookers," similar to the apparatus thus described, are supplied by Messrs. Walker and Emley, Newcastle, and the price is £6; smaller ones, however, capable of holding fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five gallons, are to be had for £4 10s., £5, and £5 10s., respectively. It is, however, evident that in the matter of arranging the cooking apparatus large demands will be made upon the managing capabilities of the committee, and especially of the responsible member thereof.

If I were asked to choose between gas and the ordinary fire, I should pronounce in favour of gas, partly because it is cheaper, partly because it is so manageable and makes so little dirt, and consequently entails less labour on the person who is in charge. In cases, however, where an ordinary boiler with brickwork flues is already fitted, there need be no difficulty, because a little experience will soon make all things easy in cooking by its means.

In arranging what the dinners are to consist of, it is very desirable that there should be plenty of variety. Mr. Ede, in the pamphlet to which I have already referred, publishes a number of recipes, giving the quantities required for dinners for one hundred children, with prices attached. The difficulty connected with naming the cost is that prices vary in different localities, so that what may be followed implicitly in one neighbourhood seems like a dream in another. For instance, we are not able to buy bacon at a fraction over twopence-halfpenny a pound, rice at three-farthings a pound, or neck of mutton in good

condition at fourpence-halfpenny per pound, as some of our friends are. Yet here experience must be the great teacher, and the member of the committee who lays in the stores and arranges the daily bill of fare, will doubtless after a fortnight's trial know more than anyone can tell her of what can and cannot be done in her district. As it would be, however, very difficult to make a beginning without having some idea of the quantities required, I subjoin a number of recipes which have been very kindly given to me by one of the "willing and capable" ladies of whom I have spoken, and which have been worked out very successfully, leaving a small margin for unforeseen expenses at the end of the week. The dinners are calculated for 100 children.

Currant Pudding.—25 lbs. flour, 4½ lbs. suet, 4½ lbs. currants. Make up into twenty-five puddings, and divide each pudding into four pieces. Allow 3 oz. of suet to 1 lb. of flour. A piece of bread and jam was given with this dinner, which was very popular. I think I should have added a little baking-powder.

Suet Pudding.—Same as currant pudding. Instead of currants, half an ounce of jam was put on the plate with each portion. Treacle might, I should say, be occasionally substituted for the jam.

Rice and Milk.—7 lbs. rice, 7 quarts of milk. Soak the rice in water for some hours. (This makes it cook more quickly.) Boil it in water till nearly tender, drain it, and put it for a little while at the last with the milk. Bread and jam were given with this dinner. If approved, the rice may be served with fruit or treacle, as well as milk, and 2 lbs. of finely-grated suet may be boiled with the milk and rice, to make it more nourishing.

Ox-head Soup.—1 ox-head, 15 lbs. peas, 6 lbs. potatoes, 1s. worth onions, carrots, and turnips. Slice of bread given with the soup; three-quarters of a pint of soup for a portion.

Beans and Bacon.—8 lbs. bacon, 14 lbs. beans. Slice of bread given with this dinner.

When recipes of this description for large quantities of food have to be carried out in ordinary boilers with brickwork flues, it is not a bad plan to begin the cooking over-night, then let the fire go out, when the heat of the pan will cause the stewing to continue during the night. With gas, however, a low heat may be maintained during the night. When large quantities of food have to be cooked day after day in the same boiler, there is no time to waste, especially as in preparations of this sort the nourishment is best extracted by slow, long-continued cooking. One advantage connected with cooking the food in a tin surrounded by water, as in the apparatus described by Mr. Ede, would be that there need be no anxiety about the food burning, because the heat in the inner tin would never reach boiling point. Where suet puddings had to be cooked they would need to be put into the boiling water, not into the inner pan, about two hours before they were wanted.

Bacon and Potatoes.—8 lbs. bacon, 50 lbs. potatoes. A slice of bread.

Soup and Suet Puddings.—A good dinner may be made by boiling onions, turnips, and carrots in the water in which the bacon and beans were boiled. A slice of suet pudding may be given with this.

Peas Soup.—1s. worth of bones or any stock, 15 lbs. peas, 1s. worth vegetables, 6 lbs. potatoes. Slice of bread.

I was present at one dinner when a ham sandwich—that is, two slices of bread with boiled bacon between, and a slice of jam and bread, was given to the children, who approved it very highly.

In arranging for these "Penny Dinners" it is usual to engage a woman to cook, wash the various utensils, and do what rough work there is to be done. The remuneration given to this woman must be paid for out of the

dinners, and it amounts, on an average, to 1s. per day, although in some neighbourhoods more than this is given. When the dinners are given in a mission-hall there is sometimes a caretaker living on the spot, who is glad to undertake the business. But although the rough work may with propriety be handed over to a hired assistant, it is very desirable that all purchases should be made and the details be under the supervision of voluntary workers, chiefly ladies. Where there are, say, from 100 to 150 children, there should be on the spot not less than five ladies every day: one to take the pence or the tickets at the door, one to be in the kitchen with the cook and see that the portions given out are equal, and all that they should be (a most important detail), and three more to give the children their food, preside while they sing or repeat a short grace, and keep order. It is an education in refinement for children to be made to take their food quietly and to behave properly; yet if left to themselves, poor, wretched children will be rough, and throw the food about, and push one another in a scramble for places. It is chiefly in securing order that ladies may be useful.

It would be a very good thing if in arranging the dinners certain foods to which the poor are not accustomed, and which yet are wholesome, nourishing, and cheap, could be introduced. This is, however, exceedingly difficult. All who have had experience in work of this kind agree that the poor are very conservative about their food; while, strange as it may seem, those who are half-starved are exceedingly fastidious. I have heard people say, "This food is very good; those who cannot eat it cannot be very hungry; let them go without until they are less particular." Remarks like these are rather hard, and I think, also, rather unjust. When children have not a sufficiency of food their digestive powers become weakened, and they cannot swallow what they do not fancy. I have seen thin, sickly, half-starved little ones sitting before a good wholesome meal, and looking almost sick at the sight of it, and my heart has ached for them. But we must have patience. When through having become accustomed to good food the children have grown healthy and vigorous, they will take what is given to them and eat it with appetite. Till that point is reached, perhaps the unusual foods had better be omitted.

For example, there is macaroni—that nourishing, inexpensive, and easily cooked food. It would, doubtless, be a good thing if macaroni were more appreciated than it is, and my friend, of whom I have already spoken, very sensibly tried to introduce it. It was no use, however, the children would not eat it; a few were induced to try it, and they liked it, but numbers left it untouched. One of the ladies went round and explained what macaroni was, described the method of its preparation, and told how much the people of Italy thought of it. I happened one day to be standing near a small boy who was looking at his portion of macaroni with great disfavour, although listening quietly to what was said. When Italy was mentioned his face suddenly brightened. "There was a herthquake in Italy a while ago, wasn't there?" he remarked; and on being told that this was so, said, "All right, I'll eat it!" The majority of the children did not, however, share this boy's enthusiasm for earthquakes, or perhaps they did not associate them, as he did, with macaroni, and so macaroni had to be discontinued.

Before closing, I must say one word about the morality, if I may so term it, of "Penny Dinners," and the wisdom of giving them. Happy are the philanthropists who, while trying to do good, have no cause to be troubled by qualms of conscience which make them fear

that they are missing their object and are doing harm. It is probable that there never was a time when so many right-minded people were earnestly trying to lessen the misery which is around us as now. A large proportion of these are, however, in great doubt as to which are the best methods and what the right plans to pursue. This is as it should be, for there is no doubt that much mischief has been wrought in the past in consequence of zeal outrunning discretion, and feeling over-mastering judgment. When we see a case of distress it is a very easy thing for well-to-do people to put their hands into their pockets and give of their abundance to those who need, but it is not always certain that the gifts thus bestowed prove of real benefit to the receivers. Indiscriminate charity produces pauperism, by discouraging efforts for self-help. The Roman Catholic Church has from time immemorial enjoined almsgiving upon its disciples, yet it is notorious that there is no other community to which so many beggars, wretched, dirty, and squalid, are attached.

With regard even to this "Penny Dinner" movement, I know that there are experienced philanthropists who believe that it is harmful because it relieves the parents of the responsibility of providing for their children, and so makes them less anxious to do their best. By relieving the hunger of the children of a drunken parent, we may be taking away the one motive which would lead him to reform, and yet in the long-run it would be better for the children that their father should become sober than that they should get a few good dinners. This is quite true; but I think the objection is pointless so long as the dinners are not given, but are paid for to their full value by the pence of the children. To provide dinners and sell them, is, as I have already said, to co-operate with the poor in enabling them to get the full value for their money. The energies of the organisers of the movement should be directed therefore to this end, to make the dinners self-supporting; and, if this is accomplished, surely no harm can be done. Also, they should be most par-

ticular to sell the dinners, not to give them. It is a good plan to get the teachers of schools which the children attend to sell the tickets in the morning, instead of allowing pennies to be paid at the door.

Perhaps it will be said this is all very well for those who have pennies, but what about those who have none? This opens a large question, into which I do not feel that it is my province here to enter. I may say, however, that if with our modern civilisation honest, sober, industrious folks who are willing to work cannot command a penny a-day for a child's dinner, there is something wrong, and we had better turn our attention to altering it, rather than prolong it by tinkering it with injudicious gifts. Meanwhile the fortunate ones of the world have "abundance" of something besides money to bestow—they have sympathy, leisure, energy, kindness, skill, and knowledge, and they may be very sure that we are never wrong in sharing these with our poorer brothers and sisters.



CHRISTMAS WITH OUR POETS.

FOR an account of Christmas, under its various aspects, we have only to refer to our poets of past and modern times. Indeed, this truly glorious festival of the Church has afforded our poets rich opportunities—which they have not failed to use—of depicting the beauties which its sacred teaching and associations suggest. Many of our poets, also, have bequeathed to us the most varied allusions to the mode of its observance in days gone by; a few of which may interest our readers in the present paper. Thus, amongst some of the well-known allusions to Christmastide, may be mentioned Milton's "Ode and Hymn on the Nativity"—

"It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born child,
All meanly wrapt, in the rude manger
lies."