AMONG THE BLIND IN DUBLIN.

Father O'Reilly's Visit to an Asylum Controlled by the Sisters of Charity.

MERRION, near Dublin, Nov. 27.—This beautiful seaside suburb of Dublin, situated on the southern shore of the bay, is well known as a summer resort. It takes its name from a stronghold, either of the Danes, who built Dublin and fortified all the approaches to it, or of the early Anglo-Norman invaders, who occupied it as an outpost of their metropolitan colony, and a barrier against the incursions of the native Septs. In later times it became the inheritance of the Herberts, to whom belongs a wide district all around. In 1866 Merrion Castle was but an ivy-mantled ruin, when a chain of providential circumstances caused the property to fall into the hands of the Sisters of Charity, whose Asylum for the Blind, at Portobello was both insalubrious and unable to accommodate the ever-increasing number of applicants for admission. In October of that year the mediæval ruin had disappeared, and Cardinal Cullen solemnly blessed and laid the corner stone of one of the handsomest conventual structures in all Ireland. But I must correct myself by saying that the convent proper, the small and modest abode of the Sisters, is thrust out of the way while the asylum and the adjoining industrial school, with the beautiful chapel, form a group of buildings which strike the visitor as singularly appropriate and substantial. But the architectural merits of both the exterior and interior, much as they cannot fail to impress the cultivated observer, will be soon forgotten in the delightful spectacle which awaits all men and women who love their kind and sympathize with the most God-like work of charity.

Of the Industrial School I must not be tempted to speak now, admirable and successful though it be in every way. Mind and heart are so full of what I have just seen in the neighboring department, St. Mary's Asylum for the Blind, as it is called, that I must at once put my impressions on paper. What may be called the germ of this institution was formed some fifty years ago by an humble young Irishman, one of those great-souled Irish priests whose charity embraced all classes of the suffering and needy. The £100 which constituted his entire fortune at his death is to this day the only funded property of St. Mary's Asylum. The modest house which this good man at first rented for his little flock of the blind was situated in an obscure street of the metropolis. In 1858 he besought the Sisters of Charity to take charge of it. As things were at the time they could only pay the house a daily visit. But even this passing visit was an inestimable blessing. In October, 1859 however, Mrs. Telford was asked by her superior if she could undertake the entire care of such an establishment, trusting solely to Providence for the means of supporting it. She accepted. The blind were transferred to the Portobello Hotel, but the fourth year, where their number increased so rapidly, and the accommodations were so low, and the air so insalubrious, that a change to the pure atmosphere of the country became imperative. How this change was brought about by Providence I must not now stop to say. It was sufficient for Mrs. Telford was able to emigrate with her large and helpless family to the beautiful home erected on the site of the old Merrion Castle, and almost within a stone's throw of the beach.

Should any of those who happen to peruse these lines ever inquire why the single sisters of our best families, the most accomplished, the most brilliant, the most richly endowed in mind and heart, have chosen a life of poverty, prospects to become the servants of the poor, I could point to the case before me, of one who, trusting to God, to the cooperation of heroic women like herself, and to the unfailing resources of Irish generosity, undertook to create such an institution as St. Mary's Asylum. Let this be the answer that St. Mary's is for the blind, not a school to which they come to be educated, and then return to their families, their education finished. Of the 150 women and children who have from the beginning been received by Mrs. Telford, not one, educated, or uneducated, cared for with infinite tenderness, as without exception, came from the very lowest walks of society. There is not in this day in the asylum a single woman or child who must not have been in the workhouse if an angel had not guided them to the Sisters of Charity. Some little children, orphans of this three-blessed shade, they rescued from the world of misery into which they had been born, and begin their acquaintance with a new world which in verest truth becomes to them a foretaste of paradise.

So, then, the little children of all ages, whom I have just seen living together in such unspeakable peace, comfort, and union of hearts, are in what is to be their home until death causes the veil to fall and discloses the glories of the beatific vision. And this home, with its security, its contentment, its happiness, and its education, it bestows on these disinherited waifs of humanity at its poorest and worst, is under God, the work of one woman, the result of twenty-five years of self-sacrifice and untiring devotedness to her blind charge. What a family of adopted children she has! What a return and reward in the loving love and charity of a great motherly heart! Who will say that a convent life is barren when there are such glorious examples of devotion to the poor rewarded by such fruitfulness in good, and such wonderful care and supernatural affection?

After exploring every part of the wing appropriated to the industrial school built under the direction of the Redress herself, we enter the blind asylum proper, where Mrs. Telford's intelligent forethought had made architects and scholars of every detail for the comfort and education of her infirm children. I thought the building and its arrangement were perfection. These poor blind girls, whether in consequence of early neglect and privation or on account of their infirmity itself, are exceedingly delicate, and it requires the greatest precautions to shield their health against sudden and fatal changes. The wide and lofty corridors are heated by steam and pervaded by a gentle and equable temperature, so are the class rooms and work rooms, as well as the large dormitory, which contains 50 sleeping cots.

We entered a class room. Girls of from 10 to 14 were seated around tables, some reading some writing. There is nothing here to remind one of an ordinary class room. It is to all appearance a cosy circle of study with a motherly mistress or assistant and two writers with a number of others. One class of writing, reading, and printing is that of Braille, which Mrs. Telford and a Sister companion went to Paris to learn some eighteen years ago. The books for the blind printed in England are clumsy, this system were found the most adapted to the physiques and mental capacities of the blind. Honest Mr. Ford at about eighteen books specially adapted to the need of her children. And now they have at their disposal a precious and varied selection in words cleverly adapted for their mental and moral improvement. And they devour them.

These children read for as wrote. I was made an umpire in arithmetic for an and one of them sat down and the rule written and printed a piece of poetry. Two girls stood up, one at those nearly dressed and well-bred girls, with their handsome and intelligent features, I thought they were the daughters of wealthy or well-to-do parents who had sent them here to school. I only learned their history when in the middle of an exercise in reading and singing. Mrs. Telford called them by such endearing terms, and there was in her manner so paternal real tenderness, and in theirs so evident a return of deepest filial love, that the thought never occurred to me that these had been little outcasts picked up in the street or from the squalid misery of the poorest slums. One girl, with fair face, as its owner and its "The Assyrian eagle down like the wolf on the fold," was covered with a veil of deep sadness. She was preparing to go to Paris to have a dangerous and delicate operation performed on her eyes. The thought of having to stay there for some time, and of being thus separated from her beloved mother and her happy home was a deep trial to the child. But just when she had done reading Mrs. Telford whispered to her that she would only have to stay a few days in Paris, and this at once banished the cloud from her face. Afterward I learned that this interesting child was an orphan literally starving from the effects of a drunken and widowed father. It was a thrilling tale that of the terrible privations endured by the little blind girl and her brothers and sisters. The youngest child of this class room was about 7 years old, most beautiful, with dark-brown sightless eyes and dark-brown hair. And she was just learning to read and write.

"You are fond of these children," I ventured to say to the Redress, as she went from one to the other caressing and encouraging them. "And they seem to be equally fond of you."

"I love them all," she replied; "they are so angelic in soul."

Was it not the God-sent love of these admirable sisters that was creating these souls anew, bringing the light of a new existence into their darkness, and kindling therein sacred fire never to be extinguished?

We passed in succession through the larger class rooms, where are the less advanced pupils in various stages of training, a large hall, where one division is reading from school books, but they are seated in groups at the sides of the room, chatting merrily, not noisily, and every one of them knitting. Their knitting brings them pocket money. We were not allowed to leave this sanctuary of goodness without having a specimen of those hand gloves, musical skill for which they are very remarkable. Remember that in cultivating this faculty the Sisters have in view that their pupils can ever turn it to any pecuniary advantage in the world outside. Of late years Mrs. Telford has consented, at the urgent solicitation of some friends and benefactors to allow her children to give a yearly concert in Dublin in aid of the funds of the establishment. This, however, has been only an incident. The cultivation of music has with them for its sole purpose to brighten their own existence with all their genius, and to add to the solemnity of divine worship in their beautiful chapel.

The music hall, constructed for their private use, is large and well suited to its purpose. We certainly were not expected when we entered it. On the raised platform at one end two of the girls were seated at their harps and five were practising at the piano. Some thirty or forty were seated in groups at the other extremity, talking in subdued tones, and knitting as fast as their fingers could ply the needles. After a few words of introduction and greeting the musicians were asked to play one of their exercises. It consisted of selections from "La Fille du Régiment." The playing was marvellous, and I listened like one in a trance. There was something weird and unearthly in that group of blind musicians. The girlish heads erect and thrown slightly backward, as if the sightless orbs sought to look upward into a world unseen by us, but visible to their inner sight. The girl, who sat at the piano between the two harpists, and seemed to direct the performance, reminded me of Raphael's St. Cecilia in the Museum of Bologna. Her head, her pose, her whole air wore the same rapt expression. Only you sought vainly in the eyes of the blind musician for the unfathomable depth in those of Raphael's ecstatic saint. Still the light on the face before me was the same, and so was the far-seeing, upward gaze of the eloquent soul behind those features. Was it not some such experience as this that gave Cardinal Wiseman his type of the angelic Cecilia he has left us in "Fabiola"—the blind Christian maiden whose pure spirit fled, as they stretched her on the rack before almost the first pang of the torture was felt, and just as the rude hand of the executioner had touched her.

We had next vocal music—one of Moore's melodies. The singers glided in noiselessly and grouped themselves on the platform without the slightest embarrassment or confusion. The world absent of the scene increased in unearthliness. You cannot be long in familiarized with the strange expression of these many unseeing faces. It seems as though the dead arose and stood before you, still half wrapped in their sleep, and lifted up their voices to sing. The intense sadness of Moore's verses and of the ancient Celtic strain to which they were set, was still more intensified by the appearance of the singers. It was a wonderful performance. And to lift from us the spell it had cast they gave us a comic song. "The Broken Heart" was the title of it. The second surprised and charmed us by the mingled sweetness and extraordinary power of her voice. What a prima donna she would make!" exclaimed one of our company.

Then came from Mrs. Telford's lips the history of the Institution from its first beginnings. Religious difficulties, even when they take in God's poor, have often to tell strange and thrilling tales about their long struggle with poverty. Generous persons in the outside world, occupied as they are with their own pursuits and their own cares, have no conception of the terrible ordeal a Sister of Charity at the head of a large house, has to bear. When she has two or three hundred mouths to feed daily, and nothing to rely on but the timely aid of some good souls, and the care of that Providence that we never trust in in vain Mrs. Telford's story is so startling, so intensely interesting, so intensely interesting, that I must reserve it for another letter in connection with other great institutions of which St. Mary's Asylum at Merrion is only a type. What especially pleased me here was to see that charity and Christian charity in its divinest form and fullest meaning, had found means to make earth a paradise for things apparently born to nothing but darkness, misery, and sin.

BERNARD O'REILLY.

THE YANKEES OF RUSSIA.

Petroleum Kings, Corner Makers, and Rich Merchants Among the Czar's Subjects.

ST. PETERSBURG, Oct. 28. It is a current notion that the Russians are naturally slow, inactive, and unenterprising. Nothing can be more erroneous. The Russians are the Yankees of the Old World. Take for instance the brothers Nobel, the petroleum kings of Russia. Some twenty years ago everybody in the city of Baku was boring for petroleum and amassing money. Yet kerosene was too dear for common use, and a great majority of the houses in Russia were lighted as in ancient times, by fir splints. Only well-to-do families could afford kerosene. Then Louis Nobel appeared on the scene. He invested a large capital in the industry, and introduced machinery which had never been seen in Russia. Small petroleum producers laughed at him and called him crazy. However, in a few years the whole industry was changed, and Nobel attained results of which no Russian had dared to dream.

Fir splints fast disappeared from Russia and the purest kerosene began to pass from the Russian kerosene drove the American product from the country and even began to compete with it in the markets of western Europe. Baku was transformed into an oil city, and the firm of the Nobels now produces 2,000,000 pounds of petroleum every month in that town. Petroleum tanks, barges, and railroad cars were made, the Trans-Caucasian Railroad was built, and now a petroleum pipe from Baku to Batoum is in process of construction. All these things are due to the energy and enterprise of the Nobels.

On the Volga, near the city of Tsaritzin, there is a place called Nobel town, where the principal distillery of the firm is situated. Only five years ago the place was a wilderness scarred with deep ravines, and now it is one of the most thriving towns in Russia. It has a little American city. It has sixteen immense cisterns with a capacity of from 2,500,000 to 3,150,000 pounds of kerosene each. Petroleum is carried there from Baku in iron schooners, each of which contains twelve iron tanks. The Nobels own 1,000 of these schooners plying in the Caspian Sea and up the Volga. Last year the Nobels sent to their distillery 210,000,000 pounds of petroleum.

Not far from Tsaritzin there is another Russian Yankee, Mr. Lapoucheff. When he came to Tsaritzin from the Isle of Sakhalin, where the Russians get their salt, Tsaritzin was a place of fifty houses and 1,000 inhabitants. Now it has two or three hundred mouths to feed daily, and nothing to rely on but the timely aid of some good souls, and the care of that Providence that we never trust in in vain. Mrs. Telford's story is so startling