

Fulneck. We have since learned that Mr. Asquith left Moravianism to join the Catholic Church of which he is, like the late Sir John Thompson, a most earnest, fervent and practical member. Probably it was owing to his close connection with Sir Charles Russell, himself an eminent Catholic, and his daily intercourse with so great and so good a master, that determined his choice of Catholic truth and practice. It was certainly owing to his position of junior to the admitted chief of the English Bar, that England is indebted for the invaluable services of a Home Secretary, of whom the writer says, that when better known and understood there will be few more popular men in England than Mr. Asquith.

It was in the Parnell trial that the Home Secretary first made his mark as a man of depth and of infinite resources. Sir Charles Russell had cross-examined at great length Mr. Soames the Times Principal witness, and to little purpose. After lunch he said to Mr. Asquith, "I feel worn out, you had better take McDonald, the next witness, in hand." "But this is most absurd," said Mr. Asquith to his chief, "he is one of the most important witnesses in the case, and of course you will cross-examine him yourself." "No," said Sir Charles—I am tired and you will do it well enough." When Mr. Asquith rose to address his first question to the manager of the Times, he was about at his wits' end. Neither he nor his chief, nor any of the Irish party dreamed of the luck in store for them. By some good fortune he put a question to Mr. McDonald at the commencement of the examination which that gentleman answered in a supremely silly fashion. The answer was a revelation to Mr. Asquith, and he at once saw he could play his fish with good results. He did so and all the world knows with what result. His cross-examination was one of the most brilliant displays of skill that the Commission had witnessed. Poor Mr. McDonald was turned inside out and held up to a scoffing world.

It was in connection with the same trial that Mr. Asquith impressed with his great abilities not only the House of Commons, but all England. Sir Richard Webster, then Attorney-General, made a speech on the forged letters, in a way which laid himself open to the rapier-like thrusts of Sir Charles Russell's junior. Mr. Asquith saw his opportunity and availed himself of it to the full. His eloquent and masterly reply to Sir Richard Webster stamped him as one of the ablest men in the House, and safe for a position in the next Liberal Administration.

As Home Secretary Hon. Mr. Asquith has proved the wisdom and appropriateness of his appointment by Mr. W. E. Gladstone. Among Englishmen it would be difficult to find one more devoted to the cause of humanity and general freedom. With relentless vigour he has been ferretting out and destroying the sweating dens, in which certain capitalists were growing rich on the miseries and premature deaths of thousands. He sent commissioners to ascertain the sources of poison and death in the white-lead industries that are represented in the

commissioners' reports as equalling in horror Dante's description of Hell. In Belfast for years mortality among the linen workers has been exceptionally high. Mr. Asquith sent a thoroughly competent official over to the Belfast Linen Works to investigate the cause of all the premature deaths recorded each month among the operatives. He reported, hot damp air, charged with the waste product of linen manufacture, too little ventilation, and consequent phthisis, or lung disease. The recommendations of Mr. Asquith's commissioner were acted upon with commendable promptitude by the linen manufacturers of Ulster. The improvements which he pointed out should be introduced, costing an expenditure of several thousand pounds, are all being carried out by the employers without any act of Parliament or any other agency, beyond the wish of the Home office expressed through its ordinary channels.

In order to insure permanency in those beneficent regulations, a bill has passed through a committee of the House of which clause 6 deals with the powers "of inspectors and the penalties to be imposed for the employment of persons in places injurious to health."

Mr. Sexton, ever vigilant of the interests of the poorer classes in Ireland, and to safeguard the cottage industries, inaugurated chiefly by Lady Aberdeen, from the officiousness of Government inspectors, moved an amendment to insure their protection. It was to be regarded as a new subsection—providing that "Inspectors' powers shall not apply to any place which is not in a city, town, or other populous area, unless the carrying on of the work in that place is dangerous to the public health, by reason of the existence therein of infectious diseases."

Mr. Asquith completely sympathized with the object his hon. friend had in view. That object was to restrict the ample powers of inspectors, so as to prevent the scope of this provision being extended in the direction of cottage industries in Ireland or have any tendency to prevent such cottage industries being carried on.

It must be admitted that a wonderful change for the better "has come over the spirit of England's dream," when a mere suggestion from an Irish member is accepted as a reason for amending the laws of the realm; and when an English Home Secretary is found entering thoroughly into the views of Irishmen, appreciating their difficulties, and safeguarding their local interests.

Mr. Stead concludes his admirable sketch with the flattering commendation: "In bringing to a close this rapid and fragmentary survey of the career of a man who stands as it were on the threshold of still greater things, we are glad to bear testimony to the universal conviction of those who know him best, as to the simplicity, the integrity and the unselfishness of his character. He a man of affairs, a man of common sense and a man with a level head, and if, as seems not unlikely, the influence of his wife (Miss Margot Tennant) and the pressure of great responsibilities tends to break down the somewhat too stiff crust of remorse and enable him to reveal the inner man as he really is before his countrymen, there is little reason to doubt the highest expectation of his friends will ere long be realized."

### The Children's Aid Society.

Notwithstanding that some form of misery is the lot of every man that cometh into the world, and for all that provision is made to temper every ill, there are some aspects of life in the lower strata of society which would be deemed incredible by many, and which are known only to patient students of abnormal social conditions. It was to meet one of these phases that the Children's Aid Society was founded, and that the Ontario Legislature accorded to that Society extraordinary powers and privileges.

The officer of the Society is empowered to take into custody any child who is found begging, stealing, receiving alms, sleeping in the open air, wandering about without apparent home, or who from want of rational safeguards or proper association is likely to grow up a menace to society, and worse than useless to himself.

For some considerable time this work was in the hands of none but Protestants. Unfortunately those who came within the operation of the law held some times, though in ever so small measure, the Catholic faith. The disposing of these was not such as would conduce to the preservation of that faith; indeed, for such a child to grow up an enlightened Catholic would be little short of the miraculous. To meet this difficulty, several gentlemen, with the hearty co-operation of his Grace the Archbishop, formed a Catholic body working upon similar lines. The St. Vincent de Paul Children's Aid Society of Toronto was organized and Mr. Remy Elmsley, President; Thomas Long, J. J. Murphy, Dr. M. Wallace and Wm. Burns, Vice-Presidents; Hugh T. Kelly, Treasurer; Alexander Macdonell, Secretary, and P. Hynes, Assistant Secretary and Agent, became its first officers.

At the date of writing there are two boys confined at St. Nicholas Home. Another case is that of a girl of about twelve years, who, being cursed with unworthy support, had taken to sleeping in such places as the street affords. Her clothing was of the worst. Drink had handicapped her from birth. Sometimes she engaged in picking rags. Her condition was literally of the wildest character. It is hoped that a few years of good food, regular living and the efficient training given by the Sisters will reclaim this life which bade fair soon to become a human wreck.

Yet another interesting case is that of two boys, the children of Swiss parents, who were taken in charge by the original Children's Aid Society some time ago. The parents were unfortunate and unable to provide for their children. Both parents were in the General Hospital through illness. At a later date they both entered the House of Providence and finally became Catholics. Both children are quite young, and, remaining in the charge of the Aid Society, will, unless a transfer can be effected, be trained as Protestants. Herein we have an instance of the need for Catholic support to such a society, a support which has been generously given to begin, and which it is to be hoped will so continue.

### Lady Aberdeen's Real Interest in Irish Affairs.

It has been avowed, even by certain Irishmen, that Lady Aberdeen's sympathies with the cause and material interests of Ireland were assumed in order to win ephemeral popularity among the uneducated and poorer classes. But were such the sole motive of her beneficent and philanthropic career she would be no less entitled to admiration and the gratitude of the many, it may be said the thousands, in whose welfare and uplifting she has taken such a decided, continuous and practical interest. The world, although cold and ungenerous, takes people generally not for what they profess to be but for what their deeds, whether selfish or charitable, leave no doubt as to the motives which inspired them. Had her Excellency at the solicitation of a committee of a literary association of young Irish Catholic ladies, delivered a lecture on the music and literature of the Emerald Isle it were a most gracious act of condescension and womanly kindness, whose value and just appreciation should not be lightly considered either by the members of the association so honored or by the public which derived so much profit and instruction from the lecture. Of all those who have presided over the destinies of Canada while an infant colony or while growing to the dimensions of a great Dominion, the Earl of Dufferin, himself an Irishman, was the only one capable of doing justice in a public lecture to the true history, the genius and character of the Irish race. Yet although largely sympathizing with Ireland's sacred cause and efforts to become a nation, it most probably never occurred to him how gratifying it would be to his fellow countrymen "in this far off countree" that he should see them assembled in some capacious public hall, and speak to them words of cheer and encouragement. That Lady Aberdeen, having found a way to do this, has accomplished her grateful and gratifying task most admirably and to the general satisfaction must be admitted even by those who take little or no interest in the questions affecting Ireland or the Irish.

Lady Aberdeen's sympathies with Ireland's sad fate and history are not superficial or of yesterday. It would be utterly impossible for any lady or gentleman no matter how accomplished or gifted to deliver an able and exhaustive lecture on the literature of any people or nation, who had not already been thoroughly well versed in every detail of that nation's early history, and who had not already in a labour of love and kindly interest, mastered the origin and the progress, the glories and causes for decline of that nation, with all its possibilities of return to a new life and a glorious resurrection. No one who listened to Her Excellency's instructive and admirable lecture can harbour a doubt of the heartfelt interest Lady Aberdeen takes in every move made for the betterment of Ireland's condition. The thousands of Irishmen and Irishwomen who were not present but who read with avidity every word of her grand address in the public journals, feel that they owe her a very deep debt of gratitude. They cherish the hope even that one day, and that not a very distant day, it may be in the power of an Irish Legislature to give ample and adequate expression of the national sentiment in monuments more lasting than marble or bronze.