

Extract from *Fishy Tales* -
Mary McDonnell (c 1898) *Fishy Tales*

home, was very kind to me – though later on she used to be extra strict to show that there was no partiality.

When I went to New Hall the 'improvements' had not begun. We slept in large dormitories, our beds being screened off with white linen curtains, and many were the games we had between those curtains. We ran downstairs in the morning to a primitive lavatory with a shelf above, upon which reposed sponges. I remember a walk I took on that shelf, from basin to basin, when I was not quite so heavy as I am now. Afterwards all this was changed and we had cubicles with dressing tables with drawers in front of them and hot and cold water laid on.

We were very well fed. Indeed I look back with wonder at the amount we got through. I have before my eyes wedges of mince pies and tarts of which I wonder I survived to tell the tale, and as for New Hall 'tartine' and gingerbread, they have a worldwide celebrity.

Christmas time was our great holiday. On Innocents' Day the two youngest of the 'Brats' were dressed as Rev'd Mother and Mother Sub Prioress and assisted by six of the big girls dressed as Novices ruled the house and ordered the Nuns about, making them do 'penance' such as singing comic songs, etc. Then came Kingstide for which we had prepared for ages, studying parts, dressing characters and painting elaborate programmes for our audience.



Dormitory – The Blue Room

Prelude – Excerpts from the Archives

We were supposed to speak French three days a week and if we did not we were given a badge which if we had in our possession at certain hours cost us a penance, so we were always trying to pass it on to another delinquent. Such French as it was but it gave one a 'fluency' which I have found very useful in later life.

Except when we went for long walks with the Chaplain for a treat, we never left the Convent grounds. This was no privation as there was an avenue a mile long and lovely grounds shaded by lovely trees of all sorts, from the sentinel Cedars in front of the house to the splendid



Innocents, 1898