

They have generally been very much liked by the children, some of whom have been known to keep theirs for years after they left school, but they have never been defended on the score of prettiness.

Apart from the studies and the uniform, probably very little change has taken place in the school for very many generations. The great recreation days were the same in Miss Goldie's time at Dean House as now, in fact the only festive custom mentioned by her that is not in fashion still, is the "compliment" paid to the Reverend Mother on New Year's Eve, which consisted of two speeches, one in English and one in French. This custom has gone out of memory, but very many still living remember the "compliment" made to the first Mistress on the eve of her feast, when the youngest in the school, dressed in white, presented her with a huge bouquet, while the "first" read the address, the other girls being arranged in two semi-circles behind them.

Holy Innocents is probably kept in much the same way in most convents, though the opening ceremony known as "Court" may be peculiar to New Hall. The children walk in procession to the work-room, and two-by-two make a curtsy to Reverend Mother, and then walk backwards to their places. The youngest in the school, dressed in full choir habit with the cloak, and accompanied by the next youngest representing the Subprioress, enters last of all, and makes a little speech to the real Reverend Mother, to beg for the privileges of the Holy Innocents, after which the formality is over, and chatting begins.

Kingstide has always been known under the same name, and has been kept with the same festivities at least since the enlargement of the school in Reverend Mother Christina Dennett's time. It begins after Compline, on the Sunday within the octave of the Epiphany, or if the Epiphany falls on a Sunday, on the feast itself, from which time until 9 p.m. on the Wednesday evening all the rules of the school are considered to be in abeyance, except that of silence in the dormitories at night. In the place of rules however, what may be called a code of "old customs" comes in. The new children are taught by the old ones what these are and how far they may go with impunity in the reign of misrule. Eating sweets in the classes and playing cards are two of the privileges. But the plays are in reality not only the chief excitement, but to many the great occupation of the three days, for there are always last touches to be put to the costumes and the stage requisites. They are indeed the great occupation during the whole of the Christmas holidays. From time immemorial these have consisted of two weeks only, from Christmas eve until New Year's day, when



there is study for three-quarters of an hour in preparation for the following day. From January 2nd to Kingstide Sunday, a period varying for length from five or six days to nearly a fortnight, studies are taken up, but in a way that has for the last thirty years or so obtained for this time the name of Grey Week. Generally the first part of the morning is given to class, and certain class duties are done during the rest of the day, but considerable time is also given to private practice for the plays, also to the music and singing for Kingstide, and the second week is Kingstide week itself. As to the plays themselves we know that at Liège a great many were composed by Mother Felicitas. The "Masque of Alfred, by Thomson," for which he wrote "Rule Britannia" we know was acted twice at Liège in 1785 and 88. It has been acted once or twice at New Hall from the manuscript copy used then. At New Hall it would be difficult, though perhaps not impossible, to make out the list of plays acted. The "Great play," acted on the third night, has been sometimes, though not always, one from Shakespeare, and many former pupils have expressed their sense of the literary benefit they derived therefrom.

Outsiders would consider it absurd to name the "violet season" as one of the institutions at New Hall, but all old pupils will recognize it, though there is no need to describe it for them. The abundance of scented violets, white and blue, all over the grounds in spring is generally very great, but the pleasure which the children manage to get from them is far more remarkable.

As to the spirit of the school, a venerable old lady of seventy writes: "I think what struck me most in the school was the way we were trusted, and a feeling of honour among the children not to let another be blamed, but to take the blame to themselves where it was due. Also their great affection for the nuns and for their school which has always been so remarkable." She also mentions the facility which the children had in expressing themselves in writing, and attributes it to the "Letters from Memory,"—and the many "compositions" required of them. A pupil of much later date, a lady well known in Dublin, gives the same verdict as to the spirit of the school in her day, but as might be expected from a native of the sister island, she gives some humorous instances. Thus she reminds us of the consolation given by an old Chelmsford flyman to a child who was weeping over her first arrival at school: "Ah, miss, they cries when they goes there, but they cries twice as hard when they leaves." She writes on another topic: "We were very well

109 P23