

We know something of what a novitiate for Heaven these Ursuline schools are every where; and in the case of Ally Hayes, nature and grace worked in unison with the best efforts the good nuns could exert. "She will surely be a nun," they whispered on the day of her First Communion, when she seemed to breathe only in an ecstasy of love. And "You will soon come home to us, Alice," were the last words of Sister Mary Gonzaga, as Ally, weeping bitterly, bade her kind teachers good-bye, when two short years had flown past.

And thus we have explained why it was Mr. Meldon had crowned Ally Hayes as "Queen of the May," and how it was he seemed to think so highly of her.

CHAPTER VII.

SHOWING WHAT FATHER POWER WAS, AND DEVELOPING MR. MELDON A LITTLE, AND THE WONDERFUL SUCCESS OF THE "POOKA" CONSPIRATORS.

FATHER POWER was not the parish priest of the parish which he served; and, as the time is yet somewhat recent, we will not mention the name of the locality. Father Power was senior curate, however, and, when a parish priest has become old, the senior curate is a man of large importance. At any rate Father Power's character very much squared with his name. He was six or seven and thirty, not tall, but muscularly knit, with very bright steady grey eyes and an expression of mouth which revealed pride and firmness. He was devoted to sick calls and to the other onerous duties of his profession; but he did not forget either literature or politics, though he made both subservient to his views of religious duty.

And Father Power's politics—what were they? Well, they were of the "peaceful" kind, which seems often to be wickedest of all, because they are "peaceful" only for want of what the Irish call a "vacancy." The other kind—the brave, thoughtless, headlong movements—are easily met and easily subdued; but the cool head that secures success by calculation and patience can never be conquered. That was the kind of head Father Power seemed to possess.

It was interesting to watch the good

priest's inquiries and his exertions. "How things were going on" became known to him as regularly as to any chieftain of the advanced party; and often after preparing as many as sixteen for death—death in blackening typhus—he found himself at some meeting in the evening giving wise counsel, or in conference with some parties by whom the people, whom he dearly loved could be reached.

The parish priest, Father Aylmer, had a wholesome fear of Father Power. Father Aylmer approached the four score—may be had passed it—but his eye was still clear, and his step, though slow, was firm. The little differences between himself and his senior curate were generally about money. Father Aylmer, for bad times, had a fair revenue; but what was a fair revenue to Father Aylmer! The last year, poor man! he had succeeded in selling his little bits of plate, unknown to Father Power, and, now, three or four months before the "Christmas dues" would come in, he had succeeded in emptying his modest treasury.

"Why, Father Aylmer," Father Power answered, when he learned this unpleasant fact, "I have put into your hands since April, over one hundred pounds. Where is it?—where is it gone to?"

"Well, 'tis hard to say, avic—money goes so fast, you know."

"But how is your house to be supported? How are you to get on for four more months?"

"Oh! God will provide. He is a very good Father, Ned."

"His goodness, Sir, will not supply extravagance! He will not patronize what is wrong."

"Extravagance!" repeated the old man; and he looked at the breast of his threadbare coat, and his old eyes filled with tears.

"Oh! Father John—Father John! have I distressed you! Oh you know—you know, don't you?"

"Avic mo chroidhe," (My heart's son) cried the old priest, "you are better than two sons to your old friend and teacher. But, you know, the Caseys are very low, and the family is large, and, though the little farm was there, it gave 'em nothing—nothing, avic. I didn't