

delay the fine new prayer-book he had brought her that very day from the fair of Carrick."

James himself was quick to see that an unusual pre-occupation and excitement, obliterating for the present all interest in his handsome present, possessed the usually frank and open-hearted Ally; and he could not help noticing, as he told his usual round of stories after supper, and was relating one, in particular, where a soldier's life had been saved in battle, from the bullet having glanced away from the scapular of Our Lady which he wore over his heart, that Ally gave a great start, and hardly suppressed a loud exclamation, James, therefore, was not surprised when he came to bid her good night to hear her whisper. "Daddy James, don't go away in the morning till I talk to you first."

He was much surprised and deeply interested when Ally unfolded her hopes and fears, and vehemently asserted her belief that "Our Lady would cure her by means of the holy scapular of Mount Carmel."

James listened attentively to the narration; and, while he wisely tried to moderate Ally's ardor, he took great care to say nothing that could lessen her beautiful confidence, or even inspire her with the idea of there having been anything unusual in the idea she had taken up about the movements of the picture.

"Trust in God and His Holy Mother, Ally *bawn*," said the old man. "I'll go to Father Aylmer to-day, and tell him the whole story. Most likely he'll come over himself to see my girl; and then we'll do what the priest tells you, Ally asthore; and that will be surely God's will."

With an anxious heart Ally, saw old James depart for Father Aylmer's, determining within herself to accompany him on her Rosary all the way; and great therefore was her joy when James returned towards evening with the welcome intelligence that Father Aylmer was to say Holy Mass at Kilsheelan next morning, and would come over to see her in the course of the day.

Father Aylmer had heard the story from James the Pilgrim, but he was naturally anxious to question the child

himself and see how much of her faith was pure confidence in God, or the result of a morbid fancy. He came then next day, and, having carefully cross-examined poor little Ally, he came to the conclusion that there was a fair reason to believe that her extraordinary faith in the scapulars was a divine inspiration, and he made up his mind to act accordingly. He told Ally that it was just nine days before the 8th of December, the glorious festival of the Immaculate Conception, and he bade her offer up special prayers each day, so as to finish the novena on the feast, when he would come himself and enrol her in the Order of Our Lady, bidding her at the same time to take her mother and uncle into her confidence. And such was the child's faith that, what would have seemed to many a weary waiting time, flew swiftly by with her.

Many were the preparations on that 7th of December, 1847, within the gamekeeper's lodge over at Kilsheelan.

"Crichawn" had told Mr. Meldon, and that gentleman took care to act in his own peculiar fashion, and so it was that early on that evening a mysterious box and basket were deposited at the lodge, and opened with much tremor and anxiety by Mrs. Hayes. Who shall describe Ally's delight, or her mother's astonishment, on finding in the box a fair statuette of Mary Immaculate, and in the basket a vase of hot-house flowers.

It took half the night, and much of poor "Crichawn's" ingenuity to decide where the altar was to be raised; but at last it was declared to be perfect, and the statuette and vase and two blessed wax candles stood, in all their new magnificence, on a snow-white cloth, near to Ally's cot. Ally says there was a sound of sweet singing through the room that night. Certain it is she did not sleep much, and early morning found her impatient to be dressed; and soon she was put in her new frock, reclining on her bed.

Father Aylmer, as usual, came early, and, having recited the Rosary with his little congregation, he drew out of his vest pocket a pair of new brown scapulars, which he had got from the Ursuline Convent at Waterford, and, having explained the nature and obligations of