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THE DAUGHTER OF TYRCONNELL. A TALE OF THE REIGN OF JAMES THE FIRST.

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In the meantime one, two, three years had well nigh passed away, and still the hopes of the pious countess were as far, nay, farther than ever from being realised, for Mary Stuart was as firm in her faith as on the day when she first set foot on English soil. Owing to the kind indulgence of her grandmother she was the mistress of a tolerably extensive library extensive at least for that day when books were comparatively few and difficult of access—and one of her own apartments had been fitted up to her taste as a study. It was a small apartment, having but one window, yet that was a large one, and gave sufficient light for all the purposes of study. Her mother's harp had been transported hither from Ireland, and placed in the recess of the window, and to this her most ancient friend was wont to fly for consolation when irritated almost beyond endurance by her grandmother's untiring invectives against the Church of Rome, and the race of the O'Donnells. Notwithstanding the constant watchfulness of the countess, Mary had succeeded in procuring several rare and valuable works of Catholic piety, hunted up from the unnoticed shelves of certain bookstalls in the far purlieus of the good city of London. Day after day had Mary gone alone through these petty and seemingly forgotten repositories of old books—whose extreme insignificance and obscurity found their safeguard from the searching eye of the penal statutes, until she had succeeded in securing several works of great profit to her soul. On some of these occasions she had encountered certain individuals, whom she suspected were of the proscribed religion, burrowing like herself in these forlorn seats of literature for some spiritual aliment whereon their famished souls might feed. Often, as she marked the timid air with which they regarded herself, fearful of her being a Protestant, she felt the unbidden tears rush to her eyes as she recalled the days not far distant when all glories alike in the religion of the cross—when England, from the royal Tudor down to the meanest artisan or tiller of the soil, was Catholic all. But alas! the robber—the midnight robber—had entered the fold and stolen away its riches; and now the Church of England was a desecrated thing. It had ceased to be the Church founded by Augustine—it had become the handmaid of such men as Henry Tudor and Cranmer, and the courteous servant of the remorseless tyrant Elizabeth.—Alas! for the Church of Alfred and of Edward the Confessor, thus driven by their degenerate successors from the high places of the land; and, alas! for a nation so cruelly led astray. More than once she had found it impossible to conceal her emotion, and had been obliged to depart precipitately, fearful of exciting observation. These visits of discovery were for the most part made before the countess had left her room in the morning, and while Mary was supposed to be asleep. But not so, she had early learned to rise betimes, and now the custom was blessed to her, for in one of her morning walks she had stopped at one of her favorite bookstalls, and was engaged in turning over some worn-out volumes which had been given her from a bookshelf, when she felt herself tapped on the shoulder, and on turning suddenly she perceived an elderly female beckoning to her from a sort of back room, partitioned off from the outer stall. Unwilling to obey the signal, she looked at the old man who usually attended the customers, when the latter, smiling benevolently, asked in a low voice: 'My good young mistress, wouldst thou like to hear Mass?—if so, enter in God's name, and my wife Hester will conduct thee to the spot. Have no fears, young madam! Christ and His blessed Mother are with us.' There was a mild candor in the venerable countenance of the speaker which involuntarily convinced Mary that she had, indeed, nothing to fear, and without any further hesitation she glided after the old woman, in a tumult of hope, joy, and expectation. Having ascended a dark and narrow staircase, she followed her conductress across a small lobby, when Hester tapped lightly on a door, and it was opened, giving to view a full confirmation of Mary's hopes. A small table opposite was fitted up as an altar, having a thin waxen taper at either end, and before it knelt a priest in his robes, his back, of course, being turned towards the door. Around the room were kneeling six or eight individuals of both sexes, their garments denoting them as belonging exclusively to the lower orders. Never had so much joy burst upon the heart of Mary as when she looked for the first time in several years on an altar arranged for Catholic worship, and when she again beheld a true minister of God preparing to offer up on her behalf the sacrifice which 'taketh away the sins of the world.' She looked around with a loving heart upon humble

Christians with whom she was at length permitted to join in prayer, and then dropping upon her knees, just within the doorway, she there remained in almost motionless adoration till the end of the Mass. Oh! what exquisite joy illumined her soul when the priest turned to give his final benediction, and as she bowed her head meekly to receive it she felt as though she could now withstand all the attacks of temptation. As she descended the stairs, followed by Hester, she learned from the garrulous old woman that this priest, who was a Dominican friar, had eluded, during many months, the piercing eye of the law and its rapacious myrmidons, and contrived, God bless him, to say Mass at her poor place once a week or so. 'And that our poor people may have the comfort of receiving the bread of life,' went on Hester, 'his reverence comes here by day-dawn in the morning, when he does come at all, so that any who are so disposed may be shriven before Mass. Alas! and alack-a-day! how matters are changed since my young days, but God's will be done. I suppose it must needs be so—ah! well-a-day!' Here then was a favorable opportunity for Mary, and one which God himself, as she gratefully acknowledged, had provided for her.—Placing a large golden coin in the hands of the delighted Hester, she turned away, fearful lest her grandmother might have discovered her absence. Her fears were groundless, for the countess was not yet stirring, and in a tremor of joy she sought her chamber, where she tenderly grateful acknowledgments to Him who so tenderly watched over her spiritual as well as temporal welfare. From this day forward Mary regularly arose at daybreak, and daily visited, by varying and circuitous routes, the little bookstall. Sometimes the priest was not there, and she had her walk for nothing, but much more frequently she had the happiness not only of hearing Mass but of receiving the blessed Sacrament. Yet she was always ready for her grandmother's breakfast-table, and at times even assisted at her toilet. It chanced one morning that as Mary was quitting the house where she was wont to hear Mass, she was startled by the sound of footsteps close behind. Vainly did she quicken her pace, for the footsteps of those who followed were in like manner quickened, and ere she had time to draw her large hood around her face, she was passed by two cavaliers, both of whom turning looked inquiringly into her face. 'Do mine eyes deceive me, one of them exclaimed, 'or do I really find the Lady Mary Stuart entirely unattended, at such an hour, and in such a place?'—His companion, who appeared several years older, cried out in Spanish, 'Holy Miguel! how beautiful she is!—a living likeness of Inez de Castro!' Mary trembled from head to foot, for in the younger cavalier she at once recognized a nobleman whom she had sometimes met at the private assemblies of the queen. In an instant he was bending down to inquire whether he might have the supreme pleasure of protecting the Lady Mary to her home. 'No—no,' stammered Mary—'I cannot but thank your lordship for your great kindness, but the only service you can render is to forget that you saw me here, and suffer me to pursue my way alone.' A deeper shade than the occasion might seem to warrant gathered over the brow of the young cavalier—and truly it was a high and an open brow. When he spoke, too, his voice had a deep tone of sadness, altogether incompatible with the seeming lightness of the occasion.—'Then I have but to withdraw mine odious presence, and to express my heartfelt regret that circumstances should call me hither at this unseasonable hour; had I dreamed that the result would have given pain to you, oh, believe me, sweetest lady, I would rather have plunged into the farthest depths of yonder muddy river. But let me remind you, lady fair, that there may be danger in your homeward path—suffer us, then, to attend you.'

Mary smiled rather scornfully as she answered: 'Your lordship forgets, I am sure, that you address the daughter of Tyrconnell. I should have much degenerated from a well known characteristic of my family were I to suffer my mind to be causelessly disturbed with fear. The O'Donnells, my lord, are a fearless race!' She was passing on with a farewell salutation, when the Spanish cavalier addressed her in broken English, yet contriving to make himself perfectly understood. 'Have I rightly caught your ladyship's meaning—are you, indeed, a daughter of the great Irish house of O'Donnell?' 'Assuredly I am, Sir Spaniard!' returned Mary, in undisguised surprise, as she turned her piercing eyes on the foreign cavalier. 'You, then, are the sister of my young friend, the Earl of Tyrconnell—as such suffer me to make your acquaintance.' The Spaniard, taking off his plumed hat, bowed to the lady with

all the grave courtesy of his nation, while Mary, in a tumult of joy, in which doubt and apprehension strangely mingled, turned to the Marquis for an explanation. The young man gracefully stepped forward and introduced his friend, Don Pedro Mezara, a nobleman high in the confidence of her Highness the Infanta Isabella. All doubt was at an end and Mary Stuart, with a frank dignity that well became her, placed her hand in that of her brother's friend, while she eagerly inquired for that dear brother, and her heart swelled with grateful pride as she heard the eloquent eulogium pronounced on his virtues, the dark cheek of the Spaniard glowing with the fervor of his feelings. 'And my brother is a true Catholic, signor?' demanded Mary with the animation of hope.—'A Catholic, lady, in heart and soul—a Catholic as devoted as were any of his royal ancestors, even when they raised monasteries and churches at their own expense for the good of our holy mother the Church. But I have other matters to communicate from your brother did time and opportunity permit.' 'Alas! signor, however great be mine impatience, I dare not, must not longer delay.—But can we not meet again?' Don Pedro looked to his friend who readily answered in the affirmative. 'I propose introducing my friend to-morrow evening to the queen, as she affects no hatred of Popery, or the Popish Spaniards. The Lady Mary can easily manage to be present as she is ever a welcome visitor at the palace.—But come, good friend, and the dark cloud gathered again on his brow, 'let us not forget that we trespass on this lady's privacy.' Then with a grave and formal bow he was turning away, when Mary's voice arrested his steps. 'My lord of Hereford, you shall not go hence bearing one doubt of Mary Stuart! I care not who knoweth my business in this poor place, seeing that I should rather glory therein. Surely, my lord, it will not surprise you, to hear that a daughter of the house of O'Donnell walks steadily in the steps of her ancestors. I am a Catholic, my lord of Hereford, and have been here assisting at the celebration of the holiest, most sublime of our mysteries. Now go. I ask you not to keep my secret, but others there are whose safety is here compromised, thanks to the equitable and divinely founded laws of England.'—She spoke in a tone of bitter irony, but it quickly changed to one of noble candor as she concluded: 'For them alone would I have observed secrecy, but I know you, my lord, and have no fears on this head.' She was moving away with a rapid step, when Hereford was again at her side, and seizing her reluctant hand, vehemently exclaimed: 'Thanks—a thousand thanks for your charming candor.—And of this let me assure you ere yet we part—though I am far from being a friend to the doctrines of your Church, I yet cannot help rejoicing that you—the daughter of a princely and eminently Catholic house—are endowed with courage and firmness to preserve the faith of your fathers—such constancy to a cherished belief amid dangers and trials which none know better than myself, does but increase the esteem—the admiration—he would have named a warmer sentiment had not a certain grave dignity in Mary's countenance at the moment driven back the rising confession, and he concluded in some confusion—'in short, the sincere friendship with which I have learned to regard you.' Then bowing upon her hand, he breathed a low farewell, and taking the arm of his Spanish friend, moved away in another direction. Mary, left alone, quickly sought her home, admitting herself by a master key, and was rejoiced to find her grandmother still in her own apartment, though the day was now some hours high. It was no difficult matter for Mary to obtain her grandmother's consent that they should next evening visit the queen; as it was, however, by no means usual with her to express such a desire, the old lady descended to rally her granddaughter on her beginning to entertain a more favorable opinion of the court. Mary smiled as she replied in a gay tone that she might probably become in time even too much addicted to the masques and balls, and gaieties of the court. 'God forbid such a sinful attachment,' cried the countess with a solemnity that increased Mary's mirth. Respect for her stately parent forbade her to give the reins to her merriment, and she hastened to change the subject of discourse, fearful of giving offence. Little did Lady Kildare suspect the real motive of Mary's request, or it would have been promptly refused, as she had many and great reasons for keeping her grandchildren far apart, and the probability of any communication being opened between them would have given her serious alarm. When they entered the private saloon of the queen they found but few visitors, and Mary's heart sank within her when she observed that amongst those few there was neither Hereford nor his friend. Having paid her compliments to the queen, and received from her majesty some

flattering marks of kindness, Mary withdrew behind the queen's chair, and remained an almost silent spectator, to her grandmother's no small surprise. More than once she had been obliged to give her a hint that she should at least assume more gaiety, when at length the anxious eye of Mary detected the entrance of those so eagerly expected, and instantly a bright glow mounted to her cheek. Her pensive features became all at once full of animation, and she could scarcely refrain from advancing to meet the two noblemen. Fully alive, nevertheless, to the indecorum of such a proceeding, she calmly awaited the moment when having in turn kissed the hand of the queen, and conversed a few minutes with her, they both, as with one accord, cast their eyes around, and Mary knew that she herself was the object of their search. Hereford was the first to discover her where she stood in the shade of the queen's high-backed chair, a smile of indescribable archness giving life to her lovely features. In an instant he was by her side, while the Spaniard, with the lofty grace peculiar to the cavaliers of his nation, stood bowing before the queen—in acknowledgment of some polite encomium on a sovereign of whom all Spaniards were justly proud. From time to time Don Pedro glanced towards the Lady Mary, and at length Hereford advancing released his friend by entering into conversation with the queen, with whom he was deservedly a favorite, upon which Don Pedro approached Mary, who had now taken a seat, and beckoned him to do likewise. Surrounded as they were by prying eyes and listening ears, Mary had been apprehensive that she could not safely listen to the important communications of the Spaniard, well knowing that the very appearance of a confidential intercourse between herself and a foreigner would at once excite observation. How great, then, was her joy when Don Pedro addressed her in tolerably good Irish. A gay smile lit up his dark features as he noted her surprise. 'Ha! fair princess of Tyrconnell!' he archly exclaimed, 'thou wert not prepared to hear a son of Spain address thee in the language of thine own fair land. And yet methinks it should give little cause for marvel, since the great founder of thy race was of our nation. Beyond all doubt, Milesius gave his own language to the country of his adoption, and however widely the dialects may have since wandered from each other, they are and must needs be of kindred spirit since their root was the same. Leaving this matter, however, to those who affect the study of languages, let me inform my fair and noble auditors that to the friendship of Hugh O'Donnell I stand indebted for a knowledge of this most ancient and beautiful tongue which the exiled youth himself acquired from the illustrious guardians of his childhood, the Prince of Tyrone, (or, as the English would say, Earl), and his excellent wife, Catherine.' Once embarked on any subject which concerned his young friend, Don Pedro could have talked on and on without heeding the lapse of time, but Mary saw that the keen eye of her grandmother was fixed upon her from the midst of a group of elderly ladies in whose conversation she seemed entirely engrossed, and fearing that this golden opportunity might pass away without profit to her, she at once reminded the Spaniard that he had been so good as to promise her some interesting information regarding her brother.—'Politely excusing himself for his momentary forgetfulness, Don Pedro bowed, and proceeded to the desired point. 'From the time,' said he, 'when Tyrconnell attained the age of reason he has been most anxious on thy account. Indeed the chief object of his life has been, and is, to wrest his orphan sister from the thralldom to which she hath been so long consigned. Himself a true child of the Church, he feared for thee—of thy temper or qualifications, or high moral courage, he could know nothing, but he had all to fear from the fact that ere yet the age of childhood had passed away thou wert thrown into the power of a woman who, whatever her other virtues may be—and from her treatment of his mother, he augured unfavorably—was devotedly attached to the fatal doctrines of the Reformation—as Protestants are apt to call it. The king, too—one of the most unprincipled and degraded monarchs that ever filled a throne—had declared himself thy special protector, and this more than all caused my friend to tremble for thee. Shall I confess it, that many a time and oft I have seen him quivering with fear as he described to myself the manifold dangers by which thou wert surrounded. 'Were I but assured,' has he sometimes said, 'that this sister, so tenderly beloved, though, alas! unknown, were under the guidance of good and true Catholics, even were she obliged to labor for her daily bread, methinks I could rest contented; but oh! my friend! there is torture in the thought that the subtle poison of heresy may be instilled into her young mind, and that the daughter of Roderick O'Donnell may grow up a follower of some upstart sectarian—turning her back on that divine Church which has been the glory and the pride of so many generations of our fathers.' 'Dear, dear Hugh,' murmured Mary, with difficulty restraining her bursting tears. She could say no more, but she motioned the Spaniard to proceed. 'And now,' he went on again, 'come we to the main point. It is now some years since the Marquis of Hereford, then a stripling, having accompanied a nobleman who was his uncle on an embassy to the court of Madrid, conceived a friendship for me which I very truly reciprocated, and he exacted from me a promise that when opportunity offered I would pay him a visit to London. Time rolled on, and owing to the bad understanding between the English and Spanish courts, I found it impracticable to fulfil my promise to Hereford. In the meantime, I had made the acquaintance of thy brother, and from the first I regarded him with an affection almost paternal, he being little more than half my age. From my earliest recollection I have loved thee, thine own beautiful form—and when thine illustrious uncle, that puissant warrior, Roderick O'Donnell, came to Spain to solicit aid, although scarcely more than a boy at the time, yet I would willingly have enlisted under his banners, and was only prevented from doing so by his unexpected death, which event cast a gloom, indeed, over many a noble heart in our chivalrous Spain.—Taking advantage of the present amicable arrangements existing between our governments, I resolved to pay my long-promised visit to my English friend, whereupon Tyrconnell implored me to find thee out, and assure thee of his fraternal affection, offering thee, at the same time, in the name of her highness the Infanta, a sure protection and a joyful welcome, shouldst thou find it either necessary or expedient to quit England. Not daring to inquire after thee of Hereford, I availed myself of a letter of introduction to a certain Dominican father, hoping that as he haunted the vicinity of the court he might be able to tell me what I most desired to know.—As I was well acquainted with the liberal sentiments and noble generosity of the marquis, I scrupled not to avail myself of his superior knowledge of the windings of this city, and we were, as you know, within a few paces of the house where the father in question had desired all letters for him to be conveyed, when we were so fortunate as to encounter the charming object of our search—I should say rather of mine, for I have already told thee that Hereford knew not the ultimatum I had in view.' When he ceased to speak, Mary drew a long sigh, as though released from a heavy burden of care. A glow of tenderness thrilled through her heart as she thus received the assurance of her brother's fond solicitude for her welfare, while a smile of almost triumphant expression irradiated her whole features, as she hung on the eloquent encomiums of that brother's virtues. 'Thank God, then,' she murmured in a half-stifled voice, 'my brother is indeed all my heart could wish, and I am prouder of Hugh O'Donnell, peniless and in exile, but still maintaining the unsullied dignity of our house, than if I saw him marching at the head of his clan over hills and vales which the foot of the invader had never trod.' Suddenly she looked up, and her eyes fell abashed before the ardent and admiring gaze of the Spaniard. The wrapt enthusiasm of her mind shone out through her countenance, and in his own heart had Pedro exclaimed, 'She should have been born in our own sunny Spain, for the lofty soul of the Spaniard is hers.' From that moment her beauty assumed a new character in his eyes, and a new and brilliant world opened on the instant before his mind—a world of light and beauty, where Mary's image reigned supreme. Unconscious of the changed feelings of her auditor, yet somehow impressed with a notion that in her intercourse with a comparative stranger she should be more guarded in giving expression to her sentiments, she said in a calm voice:— 'It is unfortunate for my gratitude that I cannot, signor, invite thee to pay me a visit at my home. But my grandmother has so great a horror of Popery and all Popish people that it were risking the loss of her favor and protection were I to venture to ask one of thy nation to enter her house. In fact, the very mention of thy sovereignty as his Most Catholic Majesty is sufficient to excite her ill-humor. And yet I would fain see more of my brother's friend while he sojourns in London.' 'Nay, but you shall see more of him—we part not here,' cried Don Pedro, with an energy that surprised and startled Mary, causing her instinctively to draw back. Seeing the effect of his almost involuntary exclamation, the Spaniard hastily added: 'As I purpose to remain but a few days longer in this city, I must endeavor to see the Lady Mary again, in order to arrange a plan of correspondence for my friend.'