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

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The countess acknowledged the compliment with a stately grace peculiar to herself, and while she did so an observer might have been struck by the contrast between the cold, calm dignity of the Irish peeress, and the nervous flurry of England's most unkingly monarch, who seemed in his restless fidgeting as though intended by nature for a bodily illustration of the perpetual motion—his words and gestures all strikingly emblematic of his mean and vacillating mind.

'Pr' thee be seated, my lady of Kildare!' said the king as he graciously seated himself on a neighboring couch, 'but, gads me! who is this bonnie lassie? And for whom hath your ladyship donned those gloomy attirements?—eh! tell us that before we go farther into our commingling.'

Notwithstanding the disgust excited by this characteristic want of delicacy, Lady Kildare was so perfectly skilled in the courtly art of self-command that she replied with perfect composure:

'Your majesty hath happily touched upon the object of my present visit. I have done myself the honor of coming hither to-day for the purpose of announcing to your highness the recent death of my erring daughter, commonly called the Countess of Tyrconnell, and, furthermore, introducing to your royal notice a child who, by her mother's death, is thrown on me for support and protection. And yet she cannot be called an orphan, for even at her birth she was adopted by one great and powerful—yea, the greatest and most powerful, even your gracious majesty. Her very name is your munificent gift, so that in presenting her to your highness, it is not as the orphan child of the traitor O'Donnell, but the adopted daughter of the king. Come forward, Mary Stuart, and greet your lawful Sovereign.'

Mary obeyed, and while she gracefully bent before the monarch, her long silken curls almost concealing her sweet downcast face, and her hands clasped as in supplication, the harsh features of James gradually relaxed and a look of something akin to tenderness stole over his face. He stretched out both his hands, and seizing those of the little girl, raised her up, and held her standing at arm's length while he carefully examined her features.

'Gad so, my lady,' he blubbered out, 'but we will be the lassie's father still more than her sovereign. We do remember us of having adopted her as your ladyship says, but of a truth we feel moved with affection for the bairn. 'Sdeath, but she is exceeding comely to look upon, and right worthy to bear the name which we have given her, even that of our own royal mother, whose beauty, as your ladyship knows, was well nigh beyond that of women. By the rod of Moses we will do even more than we had promised on her behalf. Verily, she shall have from us a right royal dower, and one that, coupled with her rare comeliness, will entitle her to an alliance with any house in this broad realm of ours. Clear thee up, bairn, and tell us what thou hast been learning while beyond seas in the wilds of Ireland. Canst read English, or have thy studies been confined to the barbarous tongue of the Irishry?'

Mary modestly obeyed, and while enumerating in a low voice the various branches of study in which she had been initiated, it was fortunate for her that the king's ear detected the word Latin. For this latter accomplishment she was indebted to Father Kinshela, who had made her acquainted with the language of the Roman ritual, solely that she might appreciate the beauty and excellence of the various offices of the Church. She had tact enough, however, not to mention the name of her instructor, and James caught the announcement with pleasure.

'Ha! he exclaimed, 'you have been taught Latin—of a certainty your mother hath been a woman of some understanding, and profited well by her seclusion. It is an excellent accomplishment, my Lady Kildare,' he said to the smiling countess, 'and it doth afford us pleasure, we assure your ladyship, to know that our young ward hath been instructed therein. Indubitably we should wish it to become the language of our court.'

He then addressed to Mary a long harangue in the favorite language, being a formal repetition of his views in her favor, and when he had come to an end, Mary spoke her brief acknowledgment in the same tongue, which completely won the heart of James. When the countess rose to depart, expressing her satisfaction that she had been so fortunate as to find the king alone, he sidled close up to her, and, patting Mary on the head, said, as graciously as he could say anything:

'Before God, madam, we shall do as much for

th's bairn as in our power lies, and of that your ladyship may rest assured. Now ye can go, for we are observant of your preparations to depart; but, hark ye, my lady! a word in your ear—mind you come not hitherward without the bonnie lassie, and the oftener ye both come we shall be the better pleased. Gad so, we must present the bit bairn to our royal helpmate, at some reasonable opportunity.'

The countess bent low in acknowledgment;—Mary gracefully curtsied her thanks, and the king himself conducted them quite through the ante-chamber, chattering all the way according to his wont. When they were again seated in the carriage, Lady Kildare affectionately kissed her young charge, and warmly congratulated her on the perfect propriety of her words and demeanor. 'But how speedily you got rid of your silly fears, Mary,' she added with a grave smile.

'Why, grandmother,' returned Mary with perfect simplicity, 'a king is not so much to be feared after all. Is every king like this one, and do they all talk as he does? if so, I wonder people hold them in such reverence. For me, I think my dear old preceptor, Father Kinshela, was much more like a king. I'm sure he was more grave and dignified, and spoke with more grace.'

'Nay, nay,' said the countess, though in her heart acknowledging the justice of Mary's simple remarks, 'we are not to criticise too closely the words or actions of our rulers. They are placed over us by God himself, and are far too high and sacred for us to scan them with an eye of scrutiny. But never let me hear you again speak of a priest as your instructor; you would thereby grievously mar your own fortune, now of such fair promise, for his majesty cannot endure aught that savors of Popery. After a while your own good sense will make you ashamed of your Popish training, and you will cast it off as a soiled and worn-out garment. 'Tis all that is wanting to ensure your success in life.'

Though Mary was at no loss to understand her grandmother's meaning, she prudently kept silence, fearing probably to excite the displeasure of her venerable relative by an over forwardness unbecoming her age. In truth these repeated taunts and insinuations levelled against her religion became daily more biting in their sarcasm, and more hurtful to Mary's feelings. In all else she was treated with the most indulgent kindness, but in this regard there was neither mercy nor forgiveness, and this unceasing persecution more than counterbalanced, in her mind, all the attention lavished upon her, so that she would have been but too well content to give up all the glittering hopes held out to her, and returning to Ireland, shut herself up with her faithful nurse in the now deserted home of her childhood, could she but have enjoyed the freedom of worshipping again at the little altar in Father Kinshela's poor chapel. Although too young to see the full drift of her grandmother's senseless denunciation of Popery, yet to her who had been reared in the bosom of pure religion—whose whole past life had been made by a pious and loving mother one continual act of worship and of sacrifice, it was a grievous affliction to dwell alone amongst those who hated and reviled the faith which she had been taught to believe so holy—to hear the most subtle doctrines of her Church spoken of as idolatrous, and its most touching practices of devotion set down as grovelling superstition—this, too, by one whom she felt bound by every tie to love and honor. This, undoubtedly, was a sore trial for one so young, and being protracted day by day, week by week, and month by month, lost, by repetition, none of its bitterness, but rather became harder and harder to bear with every passing day. Yet Mary thought she could have cheerfully borne this persecution, had it been possible to have kept at certain times before some shrine or altar of Catholic worship, when her prayers for strength and resignation might have ascended to heaven with other and worthier supplications, or could she have received from time to time the bread that giveth life to the world and strength to the weak. When, too, she might hear from the lips of some pious priest those instructions that might guide her through the labyrinth she was treading so wearily. Deprived of all such aids, and cast so young on her own soul for resources, it was now that she could really value at its true worth the excellent training she had received. Now it was that she derived support and consolation from the precious instruction of that dear mother so early called away, and daily, hourly did she thank the Almighty Giver of good, who had so blessed her helpless childhood, and prepared her for the time of trial, now alas! already come.

The only religious relic she possessed was a small silver crucifix, which she had worn since her earliest infancy, and which still hung suspended from her neck. This precious memento became now doubly dear, and when alone it was her constant practice to draw forth this touching emblem of all-sacrificing love, and gazing upon it with eyes of tenderest affection, pour out to

the God who died on that cross all her hopes and all her wants. It was her daily practice, moreover, to recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and in all her trials, in all her temptations, she never failed to have recourse to that intercession which is never sought in vain. Thus it was that though totally excluded from the Sacraments, and shut out from all intercourse with those of her own faith, she yet succeeded in preserving that faith strong and fervent in her soul.

One of the first Sundays after the recovery of the countess, the latter requested, in a way that amounted to a command, that Mary should accompany her to church. Totally unprepared for such an emergency, Mary was for some time unable to answer. Silent and confused she stood with her eyes fixed on the ground, till her grandmother sharply repeated her request, or rather command, whereupon Mary raised her eyes, and ventured to say in a timid voice:

'You know, dear grandmother, that I am a Catholic, and if it will please you to send me to a church of that persuasion, nothing will give me greater pleasure. It is, indeed, what I most ardently desire.' She blushed and again cast down her eyes, awed by the sudden change in the features of the countess. A flush of anger crimsoned the thin pale face of Lady Kildare as she exclaimed in a raised voice:

'What! and dost thou dream, in thy childish ignorance, that this righteous city of London is still defiled by temples of idolatrous worship?—Not so—not one cumbereth here the ground, thanks to the godly zeal of our late glorious sovereign, Elizabeth, of thrice hallowed memory. Verily, the unclean spirit of Romanism hath well nigh departed from this Christian land, or if the monster still lives he is forced to hide his proud head, all foul as it is, from the sight of God's people. Go to, silly girl, and prepare to accompany me to church, where I shall pray for your enlightenment.'

Uncertain whether she might or might not lawfully comply with her grandmother's wishes, so positively expressed, she still hesitated, but at length she said within herself—'After all it cannot be a grievous crime—perhaps not even venial—to go with my grandmother to her church, when she commands me to do it. Surely it is not a pagan temple—it is the Lord my God who is worshipped there, though the worshippers have departed from the way of truth. Since, then, I can pray even there according to the faith of our Holy Church, I see not why it should be wrong—so very wrong to obey in this matter.'

Consoling herself with these reflections, Mary ignorant of the declared opinion of the Church, nay, her direct prohibition even to enter the consecrated of heresy during their public worship, went off with alacrity to make her brief preparations.

Great was the joy of the countess when she marked the sedate attention with which Mary demeaned herself during the earlier portions of the service. She listened with decorous respect while a chapter of Scripture was read, and during the prayers she prayed with the fervor of Catholic piety. So far all went well, but when the preacher mounted his rostrum, and instead of the unctuous discourse which she had been led to expect, began to spout forth the venom of hellish malice against what he called 'the harlot who sitteth on the seven hills'—meaning, of course, the Church of Rome—then Mary, crossing herself devoutly, threw herself on her knees, and prayed almost aloud, so that her ears might not hear, nor her mind entertain, even for an instant, calumnies so black and denunciations so un-Christian. This was sufficiently vexatious to her grandmother, who watched her every motion; and the worst was yet to come, for when the man of charity proceeded to descant on what he chose to style 'image-worship,' and in the superabundance of his zeal applied the most odious epithets to the crucifix in particular, and all signs and symbols of 'superstition' in general, Mary drew out her hidden treasure, and, kissing it again and again with kindling ardor, held it between her hands, and during the remainder of the sermon (so-called) she kept her eyes immovably fixed on the image of her crucified Saviour. The countess could scarce restrain her impatience till the conclusion of the service, and no sooner was the last Amen sung out by the clerk than, seizing Mary's hand, she drew her away, and silently placed her in the carriage. When the door was closed, and the vehicle again in motion, she poured forth a torrent of angry invective, accusing Mary of rank idolatry, and, as her least crime, of ingratitude to herself. Notwithstanding that Mary was at first terrified by this unbridled burst of passion, she soon recovered her bewildered senses; the very violence of such unjust anger served to awaken in her young mind a keen sense of wrong; a spirit, till then unknown, arose within her, and braced her soul for the struggle, supplying her, too, with words befitting the occasion.

'Madam,' she wisely interposed, when at length the countess paused to take breath, 'you will, I

trust, bear in mind that I wished not to go to yonder place—I say not of scornship—and when there, I did but pray God to confirm me yet more strongly in my faith. The Popish practices which have given your ladyship so much offence were but the sincere expression of my sorrow when I heard the holy things of God—nay, His own divine image—spoken of as vile and detestable. If it so please you, madam, let me henceforward worship the Lord in mine own chamber, that mine ears may not bear such foul aspersions. But with God's help I shall never again put myself in the way of hearing such sermons as that, for I would sooner be torn in pieces than enter again yonder house, falsely called the house of prayer. So help me the Blessed Mother of Our Lord, as I will never again bend my knee in a church dedicated to Protestant worship.' She said no more, but her usually mild eyes were flashing with the newly-awakened spirit—with the high and firm soul of the O'Donnells, and her young cheek was flushed with scarlet. Her grandmother saw at once that she had evoked a dangerous spirit, and one which might carry Mary even to fly from her protection—an event which would have been cruelly mortifying to her ambition, as well as painful to her heart, which really loved her young charge. She saw, then, that she might easily go too far on this track, and determined to assume a milder policy, leaving the work of conversion in a great measure to the influence of time, and the total exclusion of Catholic society. For the present she applied herself to soothe the irritated feelings of Mary, and expressed a wish that the subject might be forgotten. Mary was easily restored to her wonted gentleness, yet her suspicions remained on the alert, having every reason to fear the sincerity of the countess. Two days after Lady Kildare brought her granddaughter to visit the king. On the present occasion they found his majesty surrounded by a knot of obsequious courtiers, who, in the servile adulation prompted by ambition, were ministering to the morbid vanity of James. Here and there might be seen a lurking sneer on some grave countenance, while others smiled an ironical smile as they bowed profoundly to some sapient remark of the self-valued monarch. To one he addressed some singularly infelicitous quotation from some Latin author, to another some misplaced remarks upon some subject connected with the Greek classics, while to others again he spoke with stammering eagerness of the progressive improvement of Ireland—more especially its northern province—under his own wise and benevolent management. The auditors, so variously addressed, had barely time to edge in some suitable word of reply, chiefly eulogistic, as the inattentive vanity of the king urged him to a still further display of his various talents, so called by himself.

In the midst of all this display arrived Lady Kildare, leading by the hand her interesting charge, and no sooner did the king set eye upon them than he called out: 'Room there, for my Lady Kildare—a free passage, gentles, for the noble countess.' When, as the crowd drew back right and left, the old lady, still holding the hand of her granddaughter, walked with more than her usual stateliness between the ranks of the courtiers, until she stood right before the high chair, or species of throne, or, which James was seated. The king hastily arose, and, reaching one hand to the countess, he placed the other on Mary's head, and, putting back the glossy curls which shaded her face, he playfully exclaimed: 'Amid all the important matter here undergoing discussion we had not forgotten our lately-found youngling, and had been looking eagerly out for her coming. Verily we do hail thy presence right joyously, for it comes in the most fitting moment. Then turning the blushing girl full round, so as to present on either side a view of her rare loveliness, he went on—his ears being gratified by many a murmur of rapturous admiration—'so, what think ye, peers! of our youngest daughter? Now to our mind (and we indubitably claim for ourselves the capacity of judging correctly), this our latest-born doth exceed in comeliness the elder branches of our family.' He paused to gather in the reiterated encomiums of the noblemen present on the singular beauty of the young lady, together with the striking dignity diffused over face and figure, and rarely it ever seen at her age. When he had his vanity sufficiently tickled the king stared around upon the faces nearest him, and opened his large mouth as though to speak—he coughed, he sneezed, twisted about in his seat, as it were over-burdened with some great secret, then said, 'We do well nigh shame to acknowledge the parentage of this bonnie bit o'airn, seeing that it may, peradventure, prove detrimental to her, but in justice to our character as a sovereign it must be told. She is the daughter, then, of that traitor, Roderick O'Donnell, called by the favor of our royal predecessors, Earl of Tyrconnell—he who scamppered off to shun public disgrace and punishment in company of that other prime-

rebel, Hugh O'Neil. This treacherous Roderick, or Rory, died, as ye may have heard, at Rome, and, as his wife was delivered here in London of this wean, we then, in Christian forgiveness of her father's wrongs, did take her under our paternal protection, giving her, moreover our own royal name. So, here we offer her to the notice of our good nobles, not as the daughter of the traitor O'Donnell, but as the Lady Mary Stuart, our own adopted child—as such we wish her to be treated in our court.'

He again took Mary's hand, but drawing it hastily away, she spoke in apparent forgetfulness of her former bashfulness and timidity. Nervsed by the strength of her own outraged feelings her voice faltered not as she addressed the king:—'Nay, my lord the king, I wot me well that Roderick O'Donnell, my father, was no traitor. Robbed and persecuted he was—but never disgraced, for he never did ought to stain the spotless shield of O'Donnell. I name not that dear and injured parent by his English title, but I will tell your grace that, as the lord of Kinel-cannal—as the chief of the O'Donnells, I do glory in being his child—nor covet I for myself a prouder name than his. I am thankful for your highness' goodness in desiring to bestow on me your own illustrious name, but I would rather be known as Mary O'Donnell, and so please your majesty.'

So beautiful was the varying countenance of Mary, as inspired by the occasion, she spoke in a strain of language far beyond what might be expected at her age,—so lofty the dignity of her girlish form, as it seemed to dilate with the vastness of her ideas, that even James himself, notwithstanding his first indignation, gazed admiringly upon her until he forgot his anger in the gratification of his weak pride of ancestry. An exclamation of surprise, mingled with unqualified admiration, burst simultaneously from the starred and gartered noblemen around, many of whom did ample justice to the noble impulse which had prompted the young daughter of O'Donnell to raise her voice, where all were silent, in defence of her father's memory. Though the countess was at heart both grieved and displeased by her granddaughter's imprudence (miscalculating its effect on the king's mind), she was yet too much a woman of the world to permit her feelings to appear, so that when Mary, silent and abashed, pressed close to her side, she drew her arm calmly within hers. When James had a little recovered his surprise he looked around:—

'Now by the cross of Saint Andrew! (we swear not by it, lords, as a popish emblem—God forbid—but as the national ensign of Auld Scotia.) it doth profit the peace of our empire that this lassie is not of the opposite gender—gads, if she were, but she would be a red-hot firebrand, as red as her fiery and ferocious uncle Hugh ever was! And so, madam puss! thou dost dare to reject our most highly-valued gift—that of a name infinitely beyond and above thine own—but our generosity shall not be so balked—thou shalt be loaded with our favors, and thy name shall be as we have said—no O'Donnell in or about this court—we have had enough and too much of the name. And, hark ye, lassie! to let thee see that James of England can afford to overlook childish petulance, we do hereby empower thee to receive a sum which would well nigh purchase an earl's domains.' Whereupon he drew from his capacious pocket a sealed paper, plentifully drugged with snuff, and handed to the howling and smiling countess, her granddaughter making no attempt at putting forth her hand. The countess having briefly but earnestly thanked the king, and Mary muttered her acknowledgments, they made their obeisances, and were about to retire, when the king said:—

'We have mentioned this matter to our royal consort, who hath expressed a desire to see our new daughter. Your ladyship will accordingly pay the queen an early visit.' Lady Kildare bowed assent, and then led her granddaughter from the royal presence. They had not yet reached the door when they heard James say in his coarse way with a horse laugh:

'She is thirteen, young lords—mind that—so go home and meditate upon her charms, and be sure they are gilded by a princely endowment. 'Sdeath, but we are proud of our Milesian blood, when we behold it still illuminating such a princely lassie as this. Truly, ours is a goodly race and a comely, as well as being so purely royal. By the soul of David Bruce! but this bairn will be a bit-bit for the first family in Europe. So mind ye, youngsters, for lo! we have set before ye a right tempting prize. And now God speed ye all, for we must to other matters.'

Many there were among his listeners who took his words in their most serious meaning, and retired to consider the chances for and against their respective successes in their lately aroused hopes and plans, while all were alike impressed by the winning grace, the Hebe-like countenance, and the noble spirit of the orphan daughter of Tyrconnell. To more than one there present her departure was as the sudden