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THE DAUGHTER OF TYRCONNELL.

A TALE OF THE REIGN OF JAMES THE FIRST.

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It was evening—the rich, mellow evening of an Autumnal day, and the golden sun had just flung his parting beam on the earth—it was an hour of soft, harmonious repose, when even nature seemed hushed into silence, and when even the human heart, that busy restless thing, might have borrowed tranquillity from the general stillness. Alas! it is not so—small power have the beauties—the hush of earth or sky over the heart of man weighed down by sorrow. So it was that this beautiful eve brought enduring grief to the heart of Mary, for it saw her made an orphan in very deed and truth.

Let us then enter the apartment where Eveleen lay in a feverish slumber. The chamber was of lofty height and spacious proportions, yet its furniture was rather comfortable than luxurious, denoting the moderate fortune of its owner. The yellow moon shone into the apartment through the thin silken curtains, and within the room there was no sound save from time to time the low moaning of the sufferer. Besides the bed knelt the tear-stricken child, watching with steadfast eye the rapid changing features where the impress of death was already legible. The conviction of her mother's danger had slowly broken in upon her mind, and the dread reality had stilled the very pulses of her young heart and transfixed her every limb. Not a tinge of color gave light to the cheek—her lips were almost as pale and closely compressed—her eyes were fixed and rayless as they rested on the face of her mother, and her long, dark hair escaping from under a small round cap, hung down in careless profusion over her shoulders. Yet how very beautiful she was, as she knelt with clasped hands and bowed head beside her mother's pillow. She might well have passed for a sorrowing angel, had not the agonized expression of her whole features betrayed the human heart within.

A small silver night lamp shed its flickering light through the room, and in the fireplace at one end burned a log or two of wood, laid longitudinally over a brace of brazen dogs on the hearth.

Once an elderly female protruded her head within the apartment, but quickly withdrew in obedience to a gesture of the youthful watcher. Just then the sleeper awoke with a sudden start, and turning her languid eyes upon her daughter, a sweet smile stole over her wan but still lovely features.

'My child,' she fondly murmured, 'how early do you enter upon the apprenticeship of sorrow. Yours is a weary task, and a sad one, my sweet daughter, and oh, how unmeet for the sunny time of youth! Have I been long delirious, Mary?'

'Three days, mother, three long days, and I thought you would never have known me again—oh, mother, my own dear, dead mother, how wretched I have been!—alone, all alone—for you could not speak to me with your own sweet voice of love, nor look at me as though you knew me, and then I was indeed alone. Oh, how glad—how very glad I am that you are again my own tender mother.'

'Alas! my daughter,' said her mother in a faint voice, 'you have but small cause for gladness. For your sake I would fain live, were it God's will, but I know that the grasp of death is upon me. Now, then, is the time to exert your fortitude. Arm yourself, my child, with the strong arms of faith and resignation, for your trial is even now at hand. The loneliness of the last few days was but the type of that greater loneliness which awaits you—the years of your life shall be henceforward unguided by parental care or affection. But weep not, sweetest, for that God who thus bereaves you will Himself be your guide and your protector. I would remind you, too, that you have yet a brother who may one day afford you safe and secure protection.—Brought up, as I trust he has been, at the court of some Catholic prince, he will, we may reasonably hope, have learned to fulfill his duties as a Christian.' Here she was interrupted by her daughter who could no longer be silent.

'Oh mother—mother! talk not to me of a time when I shall not have you to love me!—who—who—on all this wide earth will supply your place?—none—none—I neither ask nor hope for comfort when you go hence—my only prayer shall then be that I may soon rejoin you. Oh! that I might go with you from this miserable world!'

'Child,' said her mother with solemn earnestness, 'the wish is as sinful as it is vain—reflect for a moment on the life-long suffering of Our Divine Model and your own conscience will condemn you. Had He—the sinless—the Holy One, a life of ease? Was He surrounded by tender friends? For shame, Mary! you profess to be a disciple of the 'man of sorrows' and yet resist the will of God when for the first time

He afflicts you. No—no—I see the cloud has passed away and my daughter is herself again.—For you, my child, a firm and unwavering faith is doubly necessary—were your life to glide away, as it has hitherto done in this quiet valley, shut in from the seducing glitter of the world, then would your heavenly path be one of comparative ease and safety—as it is, your lot is cast in the Protestant court of Britain—your self-constituted guardian is the weak, unprincipled King of England—the heretic son of a pious Catholic mother. A strange fate is yours, my Mary, to be adopted as a child by him who pursued your father to destruction—the declared enemy of your race—the unrelenting persecutor of your faith. But that faith, my child, she resumed, after a pause, which her extreme weakness rendered necessary,—that faith—the sole inheritance which I have to leave you—that sublime—that time-borrowed faith, for which your father endured all—lost all—that faith which has for so many ages formed the brightest crown of your princely ancestors—that faith which I, in anticipation of the coming trials, have endeavored to form and foster within your soul, that faith will be assailed, I well know, by all the arts of seduction. Flattery—threats—abridgments of every kind—all these you will have to encounter—but all these you must strongly resist, under pain of eternal ruin, remembering always that it will avail you nothing to gain the whole world and lose your own soul. You will be called by the royal name of Mary Stuart, for so the king had ordained at your birth—imitate well the lively and persevering faith of the martyred princess who last bore that name, but avoid the weakness which proved so fatal to her. Remember, above all, that by whatever name you are known in the world, you are still the daughter of Roderick O'Donnell—and be your chief pride that of repelling the odious advances of heresy. You will one day, I trust, meet your brother, the young Earl of Tyrconnell—should that happy moment arrive give him my last, best blessing, and tell him to love and cherish his orphan sister for the sake of the mother whom he has never known. And now, my child, I would see Father Kinsheila!—She sank back exhausted on her pillow, and Mary hastened to seek the priest.

During the delirium of the countess Father Kinsheila had rarely quitted the house, anxiously awaiting a lucid interval in order to administer the last sacred rites. Mary withdrew to the ante-room while her mother proved herself by confession preparatory to receiving the Blessed Sacrament. But few minutes had passed however, when the little household was summoned to the chamber of death where the Viaticum was about to be administered. This last and greatest duty performed, the windows were thrown open at the request of the dying lady, that the cool night breeze might once more fan her burning brow. The moon was sailing in cloudless splendor athwart the deep azure firmament—not a breath of wind disturbed the stillness of the early night—and within the chamber all was calm as the world without. The assistants were bowed in fervent, though silent prayer—the countess herself lay motionless, hovering, as it were, between life and death—no sound was heard to escape her lips, yet they moved as though essaying to articulate the prayer which arose from her heart. At one side knelt the aged priest, his long grey hair falling back from off his high bald forehead—his eyes immovably fixed on the face of the dying, the others answering with heartfelt devotion. The priest had well nigh reached the end—he had raised before the eyes of the countess a small ebony crucifix which had been lying on her bosom.—A serene smile shone for a moment on her face as her glazed and heavy eye rested on the consoling symbol. Another moment and Father Kinsheila gently replaced it on her bosom—the eye which had so lately looked upon it with love and hope was even now closed in death, and the soul had taken wing to the judgment seat. Instantly the prayers for the dying were changed for those for the dead, and until they were concluded not one sound of mourning was heard, so perfectly did Mary succeed in obeying the injunctions of her mother.

When the prayers were at length ended she buried her face in the coverlet and wept aloud; the good priest making a sign to the servants that she must not be disturbed. When nature had somewhat exhausted herself, in this unrestrained burst of grief, the young orphan raised her head and gazed around with a bewildered air as though she half forgot the cause of sorrow—one glance, however, at the face of her mother—the dead, motionless face—recalled the whole sad truth, and she was again breaking forth into loud lamentation when the priest took her tenderly by the hand, and led her from the room. Having spent some time endeavoring to calm her mind, he left her to the care of her mother's faithful attendant, and returned to the death chamber. He it was that closed the eyes

and lips of the countess, and doing so he could not but notice the benign smile that rested on the faded features.

'Yes! woman of the sorrowful heart,' he slowly ejaculated, 'your woes are, I trust, even now ended—that placid smile assures me that your first glance through the opening portals of eternity imparted celestial joy to your soul.—Sure am I, oh patient and long-suffering soul! that the ears of your body were scarce closed when you were greeted from above as the good and faithful servant who had well done the will of her heavenly Master. Sleep, daughter, be your rest a happy one!'

In compliance with the last instructions of the countess, Father Kinsheila had written to the Countess of Kildare, who chiefly resided at the English court, acquainting her with the late melancholy event, and requesting to know her wishes with regard to her orphan grandchild.—While awaiting her reply he assiduously applied himself to the better preparation of his young pupil for the serious trials she was, in all probability, so soon to undergo. Under his pious direction she made a solemn protestation that, as far as in her lay, she would be assiduous and persevering in the service of God, according to the rules prescribed by His holy Church, and that the great business of her life should be the salvation of her own soul. Could the venerable guardian have looked even a few years into the future, assuredly his heart would have been rejoiced by the noble and exact fulfillment of that promise. As it was, he could only leave the issue to God.

PART II.

'And this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.'—1. John v. 4.

It was fortunate for Mary that, on her arrival in London, she found her dreaded relative the occupant of a sick bed. Worn down by a tedious illness, but little of her natural sternness remained, and the haughtiness of manner, for which she had all her life been remarkable, was chastened by long suffering into something like mildness. Alone, too, in the solitary grandeur of her stately dwelling, she had lain, day after day, on her bed of pain, receiving from the hands of hired menials those services which, but for herself, as she sadly felt, might have been rendered by a tender and loving child. While surrounded by the gaieties of the court she had seldom thought of her daughter, or thought of her but as of one who had blighted her dearest and most cherished schemes of ambition. She then missed her not. Her strong, and active, and self-relying mind found sufficient employment in the various and complicated political intrigues of the court, nor thought that a day might come when all these would lose their value, and when that heart, now so hard and proud, would pine for the soft voice, and the soothing attentions of one now so little cared for. Now, that time had come. The strong mind was shaken and bent—the stern will had become more pliant, and the heart more susceptible of pity and regret. Even bigotry last for the time much of its harshness, and the lonely old woman yearned for the presence of her only child—nay, she felt as though, to purchase the comfort of her affectionate care, she could almost forgive her being a Catholic.—Such was her frame of mind when the news of her daughter's death arrived, and then came remorse—bitter, enduring remorse, 'empoisoning with its deadly venom the tenderness of a mother's sorrow, until, in the keen anguish of her mental sufferings, she felt that death itself would be a priceless boon—yes, even that death which she had so dreaded. During her illness she had often taken pleasure in imagining the exquisite joy with which her daughter would receive her pardon, and be again restored to the long-estranged heart of her mother. Many a time had that repentant mother thought of the long, long years of mourning and bereavement which had darkened the young life of her own, her only child—she recalled with bitterness of heart the callous indifference, the cold neglect with which she had treated her—thus adding gall and wormwood to her already so bitter cup. Yet such moments as these were no utterly void of consolation, for their deepest gloom had been cheered by the hope of making ample compensation for the wrongs of the past. But now—now—all these airy visions were at once dissipated, and the fabric of hope crushed as by a thunderbolt. She had no longer a daughter, and the debt of 'late repentant love' could never be paid.

Truly might the countess, in the anguish of her heart, exclaim in the beautiful and touching language placed by Felicia Hemans in the mouth of Cœur de Lion, when addressing the lifeless body of his ill-used father:—
'Oh father! is it vain—this late remorse and deep? Speak to me, father, once again—I weep, behold I weep! Alas! my guilty pride and ire, were but this work undone, I would give England's crown, my sire, to hear thee bless thy son!'

Even so would the remorseful mother have willingly bartered the earldom of rich Kildare, for 'even one moment of the past' that would have enabled her to pronounce her child's forgiveness, and thereby soothe her departing hours. But hope and wish were alike vain—the dread portals of eternity had fallen on her daughter and remorse was all that remained for her. In the overwhelming shock of the announcement with which Father Kinsheila had opened his letter, Lady Kildare had entirely overlooked the paragraph relating to her granddaughter; when, on referring again to the fatal letter, she discovered that her protection was claimed for the orphan child of her lost Eveleen, a tide of sudden joy rushed in upon her soul.

'Now, Heaven be praised!' she cried aloud, 'I have still some one to love and care for.—The Lord Most High, yea, even the God who hath special care over His elect, hath surely catered for the loneliness of mine old age. What is there, Ramsay, or whosoever may be waiting, send hither anon Master Jenkins and Mistress Mallet. Lo! this is, indeed, glad tidings.'

The persons summoned were not slow in appearing. They were a grave pair of reverend and staid demeanor, besetting their respective avocations, the gentleman being the usher of the household, and the lady, the favorite gentlewoman of the countess. These sedate personages were charged with the honorable office of conducting the young Princess of Tyrconnell to the abode of her noble relative, receiving her ladyship's particular injunction to use all possible dispatch in the fulfilment of their mission.

Such being, then, her grandmother's dispositions as regarded her, it is needless to say that Mary's reception was at once consoling to her affectionate heart, and gratifying to her childish pride. Immediately on her arrival she was introduced to the presence of the countess, by whom she was welcomed with every mark of even tender affection. Raising herself on her pillow, Lady Kildare ordered the curtains of a window near her bed to be drawn back that she might see more clearly the face of her newly-found grandchild. A momentary survey was enough, for Mary's natural loveliness was rendered yet more touching by the sombre dress she wore, and by the wondrous sadness impressed on every feature.

'Come to mine arms, fair child of mine own Eveleen,' cried the countess, in a voice tremulous and broken, 'come, for those eyes, those soft azure eyes, looking out through their long silken fringe, give you yet another claim on mine affection. Such, alas! were once those now closed in the sleep of death. Come hither, child, why dost thou shrink back?'

Seeing that the little girl still hesitated, and stood gazing on her with a look half-doubt, half-fear, she added:

'Why so timorous, little one—art afraid of me? This was said a little peevishly, and served, therefore, but to increase Mary's reserve.

'I am not afraid, madam—' she began.

'Call me grandmother, girl! and thou wilt. Knowest thou not who I am?' broke in the countess querulously.

'Yes, grandmother, I know—I know very well—and I am not afraid of you—that is, I mean I would wish to love you if you will only permit me, because you are—' she suddenly stopped, and cast down her eyes.

'Go on, child—because I am what?—speak out, and dismiss these silly fears!'

'Because you are the mother of my dear dead mother, and you loved her very much once—a long time ago—so she often told me. I am only afraid, then, that you would be angry with me because I am her child, and because you hated her so much.'

These childish words were uttered in a tone of artless deprecation (without one tincture of reproach) that went straight to the heart of the listener, and made her tears flow abundantly.—Mary looked up, and the unexpected sight of her grandmother—her proud, cold grandmother—in tears, instantly thawed away the ice of distrust from around her naturally warm heart, so that when the countess again, but silently, extended her arms, she no longer hesitated, but threw herself into her grandmother's embrace, and they mingled their tears together. From that moment, Mary became the dearest thing on earth to the long-aching heart of Lady Kildare, and it would have been no easy task to make her believe that passion or prejudice could again steel that softened heart, or rend asunder the endearing bond of affection thus gladly, even joyously formed.

Mary was, next day, self-installed as her grandmother's chief nurse. The experience so dearly purchased by the death-bed of her own beloved mother was now made available, and her arduous task performed with an attention that never flagged, and a judicious care worthy of more advanced years. True she had much to try the patience of one so young, instead of the

unvarying meekness with which her mother had borne her sufferings, she had here to encounter a natural ascerbity of temper, heightened by sickness, and the querulousness common to old age. Yet all this did Mary endure with a firmness and self-control very unusual to her age, and none might behold on her placid features even a shade of discontent. If she wept or mourned it was when alone with God and her own heart in the solitude of her chamber.

Lady Kildare was however far from being blind either to her own captiousness and irascibility, or to the contrasting sweetness and patience of her young relative, and one day she suddenly asked her how, at so tender an age, she could command so high a degree of patience and resignation.

'Why, grandmother,' replied Mary in a tone of surprise as though wondering how any one could possibly be ignorant on such a subject,— 'why, grandmother, the reason is plain enough. If, at any time, I feel inclined to murmur, I do but recall to mind the sufferings which Our Lord endured for us, and I ask myself how I can complain for a matter so trifling. And then I pray to His blessed Mother that she may obtain of Him for me an humble and patient spirit, and she always hears my prayer, for she is my mother also, and loves me very much.'

The countess said no more, but a frown gathered on her brow, and she said within herself: 'So, so, this must be seen to. Truly I had forgotten that this sweet child had been brought up and nurtured in the superstitions of Popery.—She prays to the Virgin Mary—how my soul loathes these idolatrous practices—I will even leave her alone till my health hath been restored and then I will, in God's name, endeavor to reclaim this soul from the ways of error and corruption. Methinks, notwithstanding, it were well to try milder measures first. Assuredly, we must have her a good orthodox Protestant before presenting her to the king's highness. Marry, but she shall be drawn from the dominion of Satan!'

During this pious soliloquy of the countess Mary went quietly on with some little office appertaining to the sick room, never dreaming that her last words had been in any degree reprehensible. Still less could she have suspected that they had become the foundation of a system of trial and persecution that was to embitter years and years of her future life.

It was sufficiently evident that Lady Kildare derived mental consolation as well as bodily comfort from Mary's gentle presence. The tedious hours of convalescence were beguiled by her fond reminiscences of her departed mother, and though these touching recitals were productive of pain to the silent listener yet did their repetition produce a contrary effect, and become at length a source of great though melancholy pleasure. Mary had scarcely been a month in attendance on her grandmother when the old lady was so far restored to her usual health as to decide on appearing again at court.

'Not,' said she to Mary, 'that I have any longing after the fleshpots of Egypt—the vain amusements of the court have, I trust, but little charm for me, for now that I have been face to face with death, my mind hath undergone a serious change. For your sake, nevertheless, I must go. The king hath doubtless forgotten his promises in your behalf, and it becomes my duty to jog his memory thereupon.

In vain would Mary, in her childish dread of majesty, have persuaded her grandmother to let the matter rest as it was. 'Hush, thee, child hush thee!' exclaimed the countess, 'you understand not this thing, but I do, and, therefore, you go to court with me to day.'

She then gave particular orders to her trevwoman concerning Mary's costume, and, having ascertained that all was as it should be, she set out in her heavy state-carriage, accompanied by her granddaughter.

Arrived at the palace, the countess sent her page to inquire whether it were possible to obtain an audience of the king. A groom of the chambers came in person to the door of the carriage to inform her ladyship that his majesty was just then engaged with the Spanish Ambassador, but that, as the interview had been already of considerable length, it would probably soon terminate. Hearing this Lady Kildare determined to wait, and was conducted with her young companion to an apartment adjoining that where the king then was.

The countess made use of the intervening time to give Mary a few hints touching her replies to the king's inquiries, and on those points of court etiquette, bearing on the approaching interview. Mary listened in respectful silence, but her heart trembled with a vague feeling of awe amounting almost to terror. She was about making some allusion to her unconquerable fears, when the door was thrown open, and James entered alone. Nearly thirteen years had passed since we last saw him, and those years had not failed to leave their trace on the inert features