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

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The insatiate cupidity of the first Stuart had at length attracted its darling object, that of making the entire Province of Ulster one continued plantation of English and Scotch settlers.

The truth was, however, that to those who had studied the singular character of James there was nothing in this adoption at all inconsistent—hypocrisy was here at work as in the former case avarice and cupidity had been.

Having seen with her own scrutinizing eyes that she might safely make her report concerning the birth of O'Donnell's daughter, the Lady Westhaven went herself to inform the king, who loved a bit of gossip as well as any young or old woman about the court.

At the moment when her ladyship was ushered into the royal presence the monarch was engaged with his favorite Buckingham in the unkingly game of pitch and toss—his heavy features lit up with as much animation as they ever could be, and his attention as much engrossed by the progress of the game—as though it were the sequestration of an Irish province.

The announcement of the visitor passed unnoticed, and Lady Westhaven took her station in the recess of a distant window awaiting the moment when the king might become aware of her presence.

'So please your highness,' he laughingly exclaimed, 'you seem utterly unconscious of a great, a stern reality. Now there is that ancient roll of buckram, the dowager Westhaven, with a face as sour as a crab-apple, and she hath been keeping guard in yonder window for the last hour or so.

'Body o' me, man!' exclaimed the sly little monarch, for on overlooking the slipshod wit of Carr, and pocketing his copper with a sort of nervous tremor, 'body o' me! it was a good jest to make the belated wait, but thou knowest, Bobby lad, these cranky puritans are uncanny folks to deal with.

The Duke answered only by a light laugh, and, as the king hastened to where the dowager

stood, the incorrigible wag moved after him step for step, imitating so successfully his shuffling gait that any less grave spectator than Lady Westhaven must have laughed in the face of advancing majesty.

'Why, how is this, most worthy lady?' cried the deceitful monarch, 'his merry grace of Buckingham had succeeded in engaging us for the moment in a lightsome pastime, but we divined not, of a surety, that the Lady Westhaven, our very good friend, awaited us.

With a stiff apology for having so unwittingly interrupted his majesty's royal pastime (laying a marked, though, perhaps, unintentional stress on the adjective), Lady Westhaven briefly informed the king that the Countess of Tyrconnell had given birth to a daughter some few hours before.

'What said you?' cried James in unfeigned surprise, while Buckingham laughed derisively; 'does your ladyship mean to say that this Irish princess hath, of a verity, brought forth? The dowager bowed assent. 'Why, my saul!' turning to the duke, 'but this is great news! What think you, Bobby?'

'Your majesty, at least, seems to think more of the news than it is worth,' returned the favorite drily. 'But heard I your highness aright? methought you dignified this Irish lady (if lady she be) with the pompous title of princess?'

'And wherefore not, Robert? wherefore not, I ask you? Why, man, she is a princess, a veritable princess, so sure as my name is James Stuart. How can you controvert the fact?—tell me that now.'

'Oh! I beg at least a thousand pardons, my liege,' Carr rejoined maliciously, 'but I really had so often heard even royal lips speak of O'Donnell as an upstart Irish kern—nay, sometimes, a rude base-born churl, that it surpassed my poor understanding to hear the same honored lips endow his wife with the title of princess.—That is all, sire, I do assure you.'

'Pooh, pooh, man!' cried James, more than a little confused, 'when you heard us call our cousin of Tyrconnell by the ill-sounding names you speak of, it was because we found it useful so to do, and you know it, too, as well as we do.' The lowering his voice somewhat, he approached a step nearer to the duke—'nor do we take it well of thee, Bob, to speak in such wise. When in the plenitude of our royal wisdom, we saw it expedient to take unto ourselves the lands and territories of this earl, it behoved us to make the world believe him unworthy of holding them; but is that any reason why we should not pay some little attention to his wife and child? eh, Bobby, answer me that?'

But Bobby did not answer, save by a very obsequious bow, whereupon the king raised his voice to its wonted pitch, and turned once more to the lady.

'So now we have a mind to manifest our royal magnanimity in regard to this new-born infant.—Body o' me, it were a pity to leave her in obscurity, seeing that she is the last scion of a noble line, and of the feminine gender withal, so that we have nought to fear from her future ambition. By the soul of Robert Bruce! but we will take under our special protection this young princess, born in our good city of London. The world may never say that James of England had no compassion on those of his own blood. Before God, no—it shall not!' and he walked a step or two to one side in a towering passion, as though some one had opposed his design.

Buckingham, who had most disrespectfully thrown himself on a couch, went on picking his teeth with an air of perfect indifference, simply observing in an affected voice:

'I knew not before that your majesty claimed kindred with the wild Irishry. Truly you have acted with your usual prudence in concealing the fact from the cognizance of the king-at-arms.'

It was natural that the upstart Carr should at all times affect a supreme contempt for noble and ancient birth, but on the present occasion he happened to touch one of James's weakest points, and received in return a reprimand to which he was little accustomed. The King turned on the instant, and darted on the insolent speaker a look of angry reproof, while his usually rapid countenance assumed for the moment a look that was not deficient in dignity.

'You had better,' he said, 'betake yourself to study history ere you dare to speak of the genealogy of princes. We give you our right royal word, Robert Carr, that one of our proudest boasts is that of being descended from the princely Spaniard, Milesius, the direct progenitor of these Hy-Niall princes of northern Ireland.—Go, cleanse thy lips, audacious boy, ere thou

touchest upon so high a theme as the lineage of the royal Stuart. The subject, I tell thee, is far too lofty for thy discussion—thou whose nobility is of our own making. Go to, I say, and learn manners!'

To this characteristic valediction Buckingham only replied by a contemptuous smile which the more enraged James.

'Now, by our halidome,' he vehemently exclaimed, speaking with extreme difficulty, as was always the case when he spoke under strong excitement, 'by our halidome, but we shall indubitably adopt this princely child, and she shall be unto us as a daughter, to the exceeding detriment of some ungrateful upstarts whom we wot of!' And he sat down jabbering at the mouth after a fashion peculiar to himself.

Buckingham raised his large bright eyes and stared at the angry monarch, as though he scarce understood the cause of such unwonted passion. His fine face was, nevertheless, suffused with a tell-tale glow that belied his seeming unconsciousness.

'And who would dare oppose your majesty's gracious pleasure in this matter?' he asked with forced composure, while his thin lips trembled with suppressed anger. 'Of a truth your highness doth but conjure up phantoms to alarm yourself. No one doubts that it is in perfect accordance with your well-known magnanimity to bestow upon this child some mark of favor in token of your forgiveness of the crimes and misdemeanors of all her kin.'

'There now, that was well and wisely said, Bob Carr. 'Sdeath, man, but you can be civil when you are so minded, better than any man we know. Right, Bobby, right, it will be a proof of our kingly generosity. So, madam,' turning again to the silent and rigid dowager, 'you may say from us to this wife of O'Donnell that we do here formally receive her child under our royal protection, and, as proof of the same, she shall henceforth be known as Mary Stuart (rather than O'Donnell), in honor of the memory of our deceased royal mother of blessed and happy memory. We regret, my Lady Westhaven, that we cannot longer retain your agreeable presence, having matters of grave import to transact with our good lord of Buckingham.'

The lady curtsied a low curtsy, and James, with that affectation of excessive politeness which sat so awkwardly on him as the green jacket aforesaid, conducted her himself to the door, while Buckingham, eyed his motions with a strangely mingled expression of indignation and contempt.

Having carefully closed the door the king shuffled up hastily and took a seat near that occupied by the duke. He smiled an unmeaning smile—wriggled in his chair—rubbed his hands in a small ecstasy, and taking out a ponderous snuff-box, deducted a huge pinch of the favorite dust, and handed the box to Buckingham. The proffered favor was gracefully but coldly declined, an act which, coming from almost any other, would have mortally offended James; but Carr knew his power and took pleasure in exercising it freely.

'Now, Robert, what think you of that passage. Is it not a master-stroke of policy?'

'That your majesty's words and actions are ever governed by the laws of prudence no man or woman can deny,' said Buckingham with sly irony. 'But will your highness forgive the leaden dullness of mine understanding—if I own that I cannot penetrate the precise motives of this so exceeding great generosity.'

'Ha! ha! I knew it, man, I knew it!' cried James, highly flattered, as the other, doubtless, intended, 'I knew well that even you, with all your keenness of penetration, would scarce be able to unravel the mystery. And yet the meaning of my act lieth not far beneath the surface. You know as well as we do, Robert, that many of our royal brethren, the crowned heads of Europe (however policy may induce them to hide it from us), do, at least, sympathize with these runaway earls, and it suits not our further views that we should be considered by them as a cruel oppressor. The case as it stands, Bob, weareth an unsightly aspect, saul but it does; for it seemeth as though these lords were persecuted for their faith, the which cannot be agreeable to our royal confederates before alluded to, viz—those of Austria, France and Spain, not to speak of other sovereigns of lesser importance who abide in the Romish superstition. Dost thou yet comprehend?'

'I must confess myself still at loss, sire, even at the risk of being accounted an incurable blockhead,' returned Buckingham, who was not without some desire to unravel the whole silly web of James's self-lauded policy. 'But how is it that your majesty now speaks of these fugitives as lords—they were so lately turbulent and faction skera? why, one could almost believe that your majesty is at heart disposed to pity them as princes in distress.'

'And so they are, laddie! so they are undeniably. Of their distress I take no heed, they

deserve it all and more, too, but princes they are and must be, though in exile. Why, Robin, my good lad, there is not a man in these realms entertains a higher respect than we do ourselves, for the royal lineage of these O'Neils and O'Donnells, who are both the descendants in a straight line of the ancient monarchs of Ireland. Nay ourselves, as we have before indicated, deem it no small honor that we have the same blood to boast of. Verily, the royalty of the Plantagenets and the Tudors is but of yesterday when compared with that of the Hy-Niall. A fig for such mushroom kings, say we, and we cannot but marvel that nations will tolerate such rulers—men of straw—ay, straw, and nought else. It was, nevertheless, a grand stroke of policy that plot, to wit, which so soon sent them packing with their Popish royalty. True, it was the excellent device of our ancient plot-master, Cecil, but an' they had waited a day or two, we had ourselves furnished one as good. Furthermore, the merit lies all at our door, for Cecil is as prudent as he is ready-witted, and studies to please his master first of all, as a good courtier should. It was a most felicitous contrivance that, for it stamped these nobles at once as traitors—ha! ha! base-born traitors we have made free to call them, but all in the way of business, Bobby—all in the way of business—and to promote the establishment in Ireland of law and equity, and all civilization. Truly, my friend Bob, that game of hard words was exceedingly profitable unto us, seeing that it replenished our empty coffers, as no one knows better than thyself. But touching the matter now in hand, the birth of this child is a rare God-send unto us, as it will, of a surety, enable us at trifling cost to redeem somewhat of our lost reputation for clemency and justice. See you not that it will go far to propitiate, our Romish allies to hear that James of England has taken under his kingly protection the otherwise deserted daughter of O'Donnell?'

'I bow, as I never do, to your highness' superior wisdom,' said Buckingham, suiting the action to the word, though in his heart he despised and ridiculed the mean, shallow hypocrisy of the royal schemer. This matter once satisfactorily arranged, the interrupted game was renewed with increased interest, especially on the part of the king.

Let us now turn with willing heart from the unprofitable companionship of the unprincipled monarch and his profligate favorite to the fair but unfortunate Countess of Tyrconnell, where she sits within 'her gilded prison,' her infant in her arms. It was beautiful to see that pale young mourner bending day by day with ever-increasing love over the little tender flower whom Heaven had sent to cheer the desert of her sorrow. How earnestly she watched its progress, and marked with a mother's pardonable pride the gradual development of its young intelligence, and the opening beauties of its infant features. Nurses had been, indeed, provided for the highly-favored child, but their office was little less than a sinecure, for the countess was unwilling that those infantile caresses, those sunny smiles which could alone charm her heart should be wasted on a stranger, a mental. When in the bright days of summer she held her up to a window that she might catch the cheerful sunbeam, it was joy to look upon the dark eyes of the child as they reflected back the ray. Then her thoughts would revert to her absent lord, and the infant son who shared his exile. 'Surely,' she would inwardly ejaculate, 'surely my child is not destined to wear away her young years in captivity—oh no! no—even if I am never again to look upon the face of my husband, if Thou hast decreed that I shall never again clasp my little Hugh to this poor aching heart, oh! grant, at least, my God! that this precious child may live to console her father; deprive him not of both wife and child if it be Thy divine will.—Lands and rassals had he lost, country, home and wife—suffer, oh Lord, that his children remain to him that they may gladden his declining years. For myself I am resigned—do with me as Thou wilt—and even these, my treasures, of them, too, I would say in Thine own sacred words—'Not my will, oh Lord, but Thine be done.'

Many and anxious were her reflections as to the future fate of her child, particularly in the event of her own early death which seemed far from improbable, judging from the indifferent state of her health. If, on these occasions, the king's promised protection recurred to her mind, it served but to increase her apprehensions.

'I would have no fear,' she was wont to say within herself, 'were my orphan daughter to be thrown upon the charity of some pious Christian, even of the humblest grade in society, but to be brought up in the pestiferous atmosphere of a godless court, under the tutelage of the rankest heresy! oh Father of mercy! in such a case Thou, and Thou only, canst preserve within her soul the precious germ of faith. But why am I so fearful?' she would add, 'art not Thou the Father of the orphan, the protector of the

widow?—yes—yes—it is so, and on Thee will I rely.'

There were moments when the artless smiles of the little Mary enkindled in the forlorn heart of her mother a sweet and soothing hope, and she could almost realize to herself the delightful emotion with which she would place in Roderick's arms the child he had never seen. Ah, were that moment but arrived then could she die in the fulness of bliss.

Alas, for the fairy vistas through which the young heart beholds the future, and alas! for the high-ried hopes of Eveleen O'Donnell. Never again was she to hear the music of Roderick's voice; never again might her eyes behold that stately form which had been her pride—nor ever again was she to look upon the face of her first-born—her only boy! Scarcely had her daughter learned to lip the endearing name of father, when that noble father yielded up his broken spirit in the far-off land. He died amid the palaces of the Eternal City, surrounded, indeed, by dear and long-tried friends, and strengthened by the saving aids of religion, but far, far away from the young wife of his love, and cruelly anxious about her fate of which he knew nothing. Had not Rory O'Donnell possessed much of the fervid piety of his race, this harrowing uncertainty must have embittered his last hours. But for him, the trusting, hopeful Christian, there was no doubt, no fear. Relying on the ancient promises he knew that his gentle Eveleen was under the special protection of Heaven, and to the Omnipotent friend of the widow and the orphan he bequeathed both her and his children.

When these disastrous tidings at length reached Eveleen in her prison, she neither screamed nor wept. A paleness, like that of death, settled on her face—vainly did she try to articulate a prayer, for her tongue refused to utter a sound. She felt as though her heart were crushed by a heavy weight, and it was long ere she could raise her trembling frame from the couch on which she had fallen. She could not think, she could not weep, but she paced the room with a slow, unsteady step, ever and anon raising her eyes and her clasped hands to heaven, as though craving the gift of prayer for her dry and arid soul. Even her child was forgotten whilst this first ebullition lasted; but it soon passed away, for nature resumed the mastery, and the giant hand Despair could not long hold sway in a soul so good and pure as Eveleen's. She was first aroused from her lethargy of woe by the innocent prattle of her child, who, running to her, caught hold of her robe, crying 'Mother, mother.' It was almost the only word the child could say, and the mother, touched to the heart's core, caught the little creature in her arms, and the tears fell fast and heavy from her eyes, giving a momentary relief to her overcharged heart. But as Eveleen clasped to her bosom the child who was now her all, she suddenly remembered that she had a son, and a thrill of anguish shot through her heart. What was to become of her boy, her first-born, so early bereft of paternal care? Who was to foster his helpless infancy?

True she had learned that her husband's sister, the Lady Nolla O'Donnell had accompanied her brother in his flight—but might not that soft, woman's heart have broken under the pressure of affliction. 'Alas! my God? do Thou thyself vouchsafe to enlighten me on this head?'

She had scarcely uttered this brief ejaculation when, as it is answer, there flashed across her grief-darkened mind the recollection that Hugh O'Neil and his wife had both been of the party when her husband went into exile. In a moment Eveleen was on her knees before the crucifix that hung in her apartment, pouring out her grateful thanks for the consolation thus imparted.

'Great God! I thank thee for that Thou hast deigned to administer comfort to my distracted soul. I will, then, receive this token that in the noble daughter of Magennis—the Countess of Tyrone—my son will find a mother, and if so, from her humility, her lively faith, her tender charity, I may hope everything for Hugh, even though it please Heaven that his aunt should sink under the manifold afflictions which have fallen on her house.'

The fervent prayer of this pious mother was assuredly heard and accepted on high, for though she lived not to gather consolation from his virtues, yet was her son, the last Earl of Tyrconnell, the worthy inheritor of the faith and devotion of his parents.

When once death had removed from the eyes of James the fear of O'Donnell's return it was easy to obtain his consent that the widowed countess might retire with her child to Ireland. Her mother, the Countess of Kildare, was a staunch upholder of the doctrine of the Reformation, and she had never forgiven her daughter for having embraced the faith of O'Donnell, so that now, when appealed to by her widowed child, that she might receive her into her dwelling, she sternly answered, by letter, that she could not harbor a Papist, even though it were