

**TALES OF THE PEERAGE
AND THE PEASANTRY: IN
TWO VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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Tales of the Peerage and the Peasantry: In Two Volumes. Vol. I by Barbarina Dacre & Arabella Jane Sullivan

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BARBARINA DACRE & ARABELLA JANE SULLIVAN

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TALES

OF THE

PEERAGE AND THE PEASANTRY.

EDITED BY LADY DACRE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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P R E F A C E.

THE authoress feels much diffidence in sending forth to the world a tale which by its title gives promise of treating, not only of history, but of Scottish history—an act of presumption from which she is anxious to clear herself: and at the same time she wishes to reassure those readers who may not like historical novels from a woman's pen, that she has entered no further into public affairs than as they may have influenced the fortunes and feelings of the one admirable woman who forms the subject of the following memoir.

Since in the human heart the same passions and the same emotions are found in all ages, she hopes she has not trespassed beyond the limits assigned to one who is conscious that all she writes bears the stamp of feminine authorship, in attempting the development of a female character, the firmness and tenderness of which may be gathered from Lady Nithsdale's own beautiful letter to her sister.

The foundation of the story of the Hampshire Cottage is strictly true. The appearance, the characters, the sentiments, and the death of the old couple are entirely from nature. Their very Christian names have been preserved; and the circumstance of the blind old man feeling too low for the head of the little girl, who had outgrown his recollection, actually occurred to the authoress when visiting the cottage after a long absence.

For reasons which perhaps may be understood by her friends, she adds, that the tale of Blanche was written in the year 1832.

London, June 25, 1835.



WINIFRED,

COUNTESS OF NITHSADLE.

CHAPTER I.

- My father stood for his true king,
- Till standing it could do nae mair ;
- The day is lost, and so are we,—
- Nae wonder mony a heart is sair.

Jacobite Song.

THE sound of the organ pealed through the chapel of the English Augustine convent at Bruges : a bright gleam of sunshine, streaming through the painted window to the south of the altar, shone upon the clouds of incense which arose in silvery folds from the censers ; it shone upon the white-robed assistants, upon the priests, and upon the calm brow of the young nun who had that moment taken the irrevocable vows which separated her from the world—a world of which she knew but little ; but which, from the circumstances in which her family was placed, offered not to her the temptations it usually holds out to youth, beauty, and rank such as hers.

The Lady Lucy Herbert was the fourth daughter of William, Marquis of Powis, who, having devoted himself to the cause of James the Second, and accompanied his queen in her flight to France, received from the exiled monarch, as a reward for his uncompromising loyalty, the empty titles of Marquis of Montgomery, and Duke of Powis.

James afterward appointed him steward and chamberlain to his household—offices which, although of small

advantage, may have been gratifying to his feelings, as proofs of the estimation in which he was held by the master to whom he had sacrificed every thing.

Upon the Duke of Powis's death, which took place in 1696, his widow placed her two youngest daughters in the English Augustine convent at Bruges; while the three elder remained with her, at the melancholy shadow of a court still kept up at St. Germain.

It was no grief to the widowed mother when she found that the bent of the young Lucy's mind was sincerely and enthusiastically directed towards a religious life. Although the attainder had been reversed, and her son had been restored to the marquise of Powis, it was not till some years afterward that she had ventured to return to England; even then she lived in retirement and privacy. The widow of so zealous an adherent to King James could not be regarded without suspicion; her means were scanty; her elder daughters had not then made the advantageous alliances which they afterward formed; and joyfully did she hail the vocation which she hoped would secure, to one of her children at least, a peaceful and tranquil existence, secure from any further vicissitudes of fortune.

But to one person the decision of the Lady Lucy Herbert was a matter of deep and unmixed sorrow. Her younger sister, the Lady Winifred, loved her with all the devotion of a fresh and unpractised heart. They had been early separated from the rest of their family. At the period of their father's death, when their childish hearts had for the first time been made acquainted with grief, they had been thrown entirely on each other for support and consolation.

Though many years had now elapsed, the moment was still fresh in their memories, when their mother, in her mourning habit, with pale cheek and streaming eyes, delivered them over to the care of the friend who was to convey them to Bruges. The sad countenances and black garments of their sisters, and of the few domestics who still remained of their former establishment, coupled with the vague, ill-defined feeling, half resembling fear,

half shame, which children experience when they witness grief, more intense than their young minds can comprehend, had left a deep impression upon both the youthful pensioners. When first they found themselves in the convent, with none but strangers around them, the timid Winifred clung instinctively to her sister; while Lady Lucy, forced, as it were, to become the prop and stay of one younger and weaker than herself, acquired at an early age the habit of seeking strength and support from above.

Loving and admiring her sister as did the Lady Winifred, it may excite wonder that she did not imbibe her strict religious notions; that she also should not have looked forward with joy to the idea of devoting herself to pious seclusion, and thus, at the same time, preserving the society of the being she most loved on earth. But it was not so. On the contrary, she felt her sister's vows as a barrier of separation between them.

Although she had no wish to wander beyond the walls of the little convent garden, though she seldom even went to the parlour grate, and never wished to avail herself of the occasional opportunities which occurred to the pensioners of mixing in society, still she felt an instinctive horror of irrevocable vows, to renounce—they knew not what. It was with a feeling amounting to despair that she witnessed the funeral rites, that she heard the service for the dead, that she saw the black veil dropped between her sister and the world, of whose pains and pleasures they could form no idea. Moreover, these vows for ever precluded the possibility of her seeing their native country in company with that beloved sister; and in the heart of the Lady Winifred there existed the strong instinctive affection for the land of her forefathers, which the coldest and the most hardened are not wholly without, but which, in minds of a more ardent temperament amounts almost to a ruling passion. She had never beheld the British shores, she had never breathed British air, and yet she felt as if England was her home—her natural resting-place.

When first the young girls had been sent to Bruges, an