

The Peach is Brandy. A Milesian Tale.

By Horace Walpole

Fitz Scanlan Mac Giolla l'ha druig, ¹ king of Kilkenny, the thousand and fifty-seventh descendant in a direct line from Milesius king of Spain, had an only daughter called Great A, and by corruption Grata; who being arrived at years of discretion, and perfectly initiated by her royal parents in the arts of government, the fond monarch determined to resign his crown to her: having accordingly assembled the senate, he declared his resolution to them, and having delivered his sceptre into the princess's hand, he obliged her to ascend the throne; and to set the example, was the first to kiss her hand, and vow eternal obedience to her. The senators were ready to stifle the new queen with panegyrics and addresses; the people, though they adored the old king, were transported with having a new sovereign, and the university, according to custom immemorial, presented her majesty, three months after every body had forgotten the event, with testimonials of the excessive sorrow and excessive joy they felt on losing one monarch and getting another.

Her majesty was now in the fifth year of her age, and a prodigy of sense and goodness. In her first speech to the senate, which she lisped with inimitable grace, she assured them that her² heart was entirely Irish, and that she did not intend any longer to go in leading-strings, as a proof of which she immediately declared her nurse prime-minister. The senate applauded this sage choice with even greater encomiums than the last, and voted a free gift to the queen of a million of sugar-plumbs, and to the favourite of twenty thousand bottles of usquebaugh. Her majesty then jumping from her throne, declared it was her royal pleasure to play at blindman's-buff but such a hub-bub arose from the senators pushing, and pressing, and squeezing, and punching one another, to endeavour to be the first blinded, that in the scuffle her majesty was thrown down and got a bump on her forehead as big as a pigeon's egg, which set her a squalling, that you might have heard her to Tipperary. The old king flew into a rage, and snatching up the mace knocked out the chancellor's brains, who at that time happened not to have any; and the queen-mother, who sat in a tribune above to see the ceremony, fell into a fit and³ miscarried of twins, who were killed by her majesty's fright, but the earl of Bullaboo, great butler of the crown, happening to stand next to the queen, caught up one of the dead children, and perceiving it was a boy, ran down to the⁴ king and wished him joy of the birth of a son and heir. The king, who had now recovered his sweet temper, called him a fool and blunderer, upon which Mr. Phelim O'Torture, a zealous courtier, started up with great presence of mind and accused the earl of Bullaboo of high treason, for having asserted that his late majesty had had any other heir than their present most lawful and most religious sovereign queen Grata. An impeachment was voted by a large majority, though not without warm opposition, particularly from a celebrated Kilkennian orator, whose name is unfortunately not come down to us, it being erased out of the journals afterwards, as the Irish author whom I copy says, when he became first lord of the treasury, as he was during

¹ *Vide Lodge's Peerage of Ireland, in the family of Fitzpatrick.*

² *Queen Anne in her first speech to the parliament said, her heart was entirely English.*

³ *Lady Lady Ossory had miscarried just then of two sons.*

⁴ *The houssekeeper, as soon as lord Ossory, came home, wished him joy of a son and heir, though both the children were born dead.*

the whole reign of queen Grata's successor. The argument of this Mr. Killinorackill, says my author, whose name is lost, was, that her majesty the queen-mother having conceived a son before the king's resignation, that son was indubitably heir to the crown, and consequently the resignation void, it not signifying an iota whether the child was born alive or dead: it was alive, said he, when it was conceived—here he was called to order by Dr. O'Flaharty, the queen-mother's man-midwife and member for the borough of Corbely, who entered into a learned dissertation on embryos; but he was interrupted by the young queen's crying for her supper, the previous question for which was carried without a negative; and then the house being resumed, the debate was cut short by the impatience of the majority to go and drink her majesty's health. This seeming violence gave occasion to a very long protest, drawn up by sir Archee Mac Sarcasm, in which he contrived to state the claim of the departed foetus so artfully, that it produced a civil war, and gave rise to those bloody ravages and massacres which so long laid waste the ancient kingdom of Kilkenny, and which were at last terminated by a lucky accident, well known, says my author, to every body, but which he thinks it his duty to relate for the sake of those who never may have heard it. These are his words:

It happened that the archbishop of Tuum (anciently called Meum by the Roman catholic clergy) the great wit of those times, was in the queen-mother's closet, who had the young queen in her lap.⁵ His grace was suddenly seized with a violent fit of the cholic, which made him make such wry faces, that the queen-mother thought he was going to die, and ran out of the room to send for a physician, for she was a pattern of goodness and void of pride. While she was stepped into the servant's hail to call somebody, according to the simplicity of those times, the archbishop's pains encreased, when perceiving something on the mantle-piece, which he took for a peach in brandy, he gulped it all down at once without saying grace, God forgive him, and found great comfort from it. He had not done licking his lips before the queen-mother returned, when queen Grata cried out, "Mama, mama, the gentleman has eat my little brother!" This fortunate event put an end to the contest, the male line entirely failing in the person of the devoured prince. The archbishop, however, who became pope by the name of Innocent the 3d. having afterwards a son by his sister, named the child Fitzpatrick, as having some of the royal blood in its veins; and from him are descended all the younger branches of the Fitzpatricks of our time. Now the rest of the acts of Grata and all that she did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Kilkenny?

This tale was written far Anne Liddel countess of Ossory, wife of John Fitzpatrick earl of Ossory. They had a daughter Anne, the subject of this story.

⁵ Some commentators have ignorantly sposed that the Irish author is guilty of a great anachronism in this passage; for having said that the contested succession occasioned long wars, he yet speaks of queen Grata at the conclusion of them, at still sitting in her mother's lap as a child. Now I can only confute them from their own state of the question. Like a child does not import that she actually was a child. she only sat like a child; and so she might though thirty years old. Civilians have declared at what period of his life a king may be of age before he is: but neither Grotius nor Puffendorffe, her any of the tribe, have determined how long a king or queen may remain infants after they are past their infancy.