



Daughters of Ireland: The Rebellious Kingsborough Sisters and the Making of a Modern Nation

Janet Todd

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They were known as the Ascendancy, the dashing aristocratic elite that controlled Irish politics and society at the end of the eighteenth century—and at their pinnacle stood Caroline and Robert King, Lord and Lady Kingsborough of Mitchelstown Castle. Heirs to ancient estates and a vast fortune, Lord and Lady Kingsborough appeared to be blessed with everything but marital love—which only made the scandal that tore through their family more shocking. In 1798, at the height of a rebellion that was setting Ireland ablaze, Robert King was tried for the murder of his wife's cousin—a crime born of passion that proved to have extraordinary political implications. In her brilliant new book, Janet Todd unfolds the fascinating story of how this powerful Anglo-Irish family became entwined with the downfall not only of their class, but of their very way of life.

Like Amanda Foreman's bestselling *Georgiana*, *Daughters of Ireland* brings to life the world of a glittering elite in an age of international revolution. When her daughters, Margaret and Mary, were at their most impressionable, Lady Kingsborough hired the firebrand feminist Mary Wollstonecraft to be their governess, little realizing how radically this would alter both girls' beliefs and characters. The tall, striking Margaret went on to provide crucial support to the United Irishmen in the days leading up to the Rebellion of 1798, while soft, pleasing Mary indulged in an illicit, and all but incestuous love affair that precipitated multiple tragedies.

As the Kingsboroughs imploded, the most powerful and colorful figures of the day were swept up in their drama—the dashing aristocrat turned revolutionary Lord Edward Fitzgerald; the liberal, cultivated Countess of Moira, a terrible snob despite her support of Irish revolutionaries; the notorious philanderer Colonel George King, whose sexual debauchery was matched only by his appalling cruelty; Britain's cold calculating prime minister William Pitt and its mad ruler King George III.

With irresistible narrative drive and richly intimate historic detail, *Daughters of Ireland* an absolutely spellbinding work of history, biography, passion, and rebellion.

From the Hardcover edition.

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