

## VOLUME III

### CHAPTER 16

“What vertue is so fitting for a knight,  
Or for a lady whom a knight should love,  
As courtesie; to bear themselves aright  
To all of each degree as doth behove?  
For whether they be placed high above  
Or low beneath, yet ought they well to know,  
Their good; that now them rightly may reprove  
Of rudeness for not yielding what they owe;  
Great skill it is such duties timely to bestow.”

*Faërie Queene.*

HOGAN had not followed his *fiancée* to Dublin. He preferred for many reasons to remain in London. For one, he did not deem it prudent to turn his back on the scandal, slight as it was, in which he had been involved by the inquiry into the affairs of those companies whose assets Mr. Saltasche had carried off. He had, thanks to the timely aid afforded him by the Bursfords, weathered the storm which had nearly engulfed him. As he acknowledged to himself at the time, he had escaped by a hair's-breadth. There were ugly rumours about him in Dublin, and we may be sure in Peatstown too; the Irish newspapers had fastened on them greedily. However, a *douceur* to his supporter Mr. Killeen, of the *Peatstown Torch*, had, he fancied, set that all right so far as his constituents were concerned. There was ample time for everything to be forgotten ere Dissolution should arrive. He did not want to sever his connection with the brokers in Sycamore Alley, whose newspaper he still continued to edit, aided by Mr. Chaffinch; and he hoped to be able to raise money by some lucky hit on 'Change, and to pay back the Bursfords' thousand pounds and get out of his engagement to Diana.

The more he thought of it, the less he liked the prospect of this marriage. Although he had been overwhelmed with gratitude and relief at the time, as soon as the sensation of danger had been removed the impression began to wear off, and his gratitude gave way to an uneasy feeling of having purchased the accommodation at too high a price. He even began to tell himself that he had exaggerated the position, and that he had been taken at an unfair advantage. Nevertheless he could see no way out of the difficulty. It seemed almost impossible to find anything like a paying speculation; and Stier and Bruen appeared to think that his salary of five pounds a week ought to content him, and were disinclined to let him into any of the good things that might be going. The *Beacon*, too, was by no means the paying concern it had been. Stier and Bruen were very close-fisted in their dealings—unlike Saltasche; and the financial articles were nothing like what they had been in his days.

He had not written to Nellie now for some time—only once, indeed, since their short conversation on the pier at Kingstown. A fortnight or so before Christmas he observed an intimation of her mother's death in an Irish paper, and wrote immediately a letter of condolence, as kindly and feelingly worded as he could make it. After an interval he received a short note of thanks, indited in a trembling, broken handwriting, and breathing of such sorrow and affliction that his heart—not too sympathetic, as we know—felt deeply touched. He wrote again to her, this time at length; but as vaguely and guardedly as ever. He said nothing of his plans or prospects: the usual moan over his hard work, his loneliness, his dependence upon yet remote contingencies, and his hopes; his mental sufferings that rumours so prejudicial to him, and so hurtful to the feelings of those who were interested in his welfare, should have gone forth. He trusted to time to set him right; and so on.

There was something in it that jarred upon Nellie in spite of herself; she compared the long involved sentences which said so much and meant so little with Dermot's straight-forward way—the hints and half-sayings with his blunt outspokenness. She saw a good deal of Dermot just at this time. Then she remembered the unbecomingness of thinking of such things now; and she threw the letter—the only one of Hogan's she had ever treated so—into the fire before she had even finished reading it.

That very day Diana also received a letter from her intended, the tone of which displeased her mightily. There was some talk in it of an in-

vestment, by means of which he hoped to be able to repay certain and sundry obligations, contracted unwillingly though gratefully, etc. Diana drew down her eyebrows and her upper lip as she read. When she had finished, she handed the letter across the breakfast-table to her mother.

“What do you think of this? What ought you to do?” asked the elder lady, as she returned it.

“Go over at once, I think. I shall write to him to-morrow—not until to-morrow; or had you better do it, mamma?”

“Very well, Diana,” assented Mrs. Bursford with a sigh; “perhaps I had. I can excuse your doing so, you know.”

So the next day but one Mr. Hogan found a huge monogrammed violet envelope on his table in Half-Moon Street. He opened it with some slight misgiving, and unfolded the following from his Diana’s mother:—

“MY DEAR MR. HOGAN,—

“As dear Diana is suffering from a slight headache, the task of acknowledging your letter of yesterday devolves upon me. Diana and I expect to be in London on Monday or Tuesday next. I hope we shall see you without delay in Clarges Street. We are somewhat astonished at some expressions in your letter which seem to indicate a possible misconception on your part of your and her joint position. However, we may leave all discussion on that point, should there be (which I hope there will not) any necessity for it, until we meet.

“I remain, my dear Mr. Hogan,

“Yours most sincerely,

“Emily Bursford.”

Hogan laid down the letter with a deep sigh, and took a few turns up and down the room. Then he seated himself at his desk, and wrote rapidly an affectionate inquiry to Diana about her headache, demanding to be informed on what evening or morning they might be expected at Euston Square, that he might have the pleasure of being of some service to them.

Diana, on perusing this missive, felt there was no occasion to hurry their departure from Dublin; and the eventful session of ’73 had com-

menced before they were installed once more in Clarges Street. Hogan was now almost driven to bay. He was too pusillanimous to risk an open rupture; and he cast about him in vain for some means of paying back that hateful thousand pounds. He imagined, foolish man, that if that could be accomplished he was saved. The memorable struggle of the Government over the ill-fated University Bill was carried on without any assistance from him. He sat in moody silence on his bench, as member after member entered his protest against the measure. He might as well have been sitting in the drawing-room in Clarges Street with his Circe. Then came the resignation of the Ministry—the resignation which they were obliged to withdraw, to the intense delight of their supporters, and the fatuous self-glorification of the Liberal Party in general. Hogan passed an interval of terrible suspense until the answer of the Opposition was made known. He began to realize what his position would be if he failed to procure his re-election: he would literally have to begin the world afresh, and that with drawbacks so terrible that he doubted his power to overcome them.

Diana also was very anxious. She felt it was high time the affair was being settled one way or the other. She knew that Hogan was penniless. He possessed, to be sure, some three or four thousand pounds' worth of stock, which at its present value was not good for as many shillings; but as her intended said, there was no telling how or when it might go up in the market. Hogan had infected Diana with some of his habits—that of trusting in luck, for example, as we see. There had been no farther attempt on his side to approach any pecuniary settlement of the debt between them. Diana and her mother were arranging the execution of a long-matured plan—namely, to remind a relative of theirs highly placed in the Government of a promise he had once made to Mrs. Bursford: that he would procure a Government appointment for her ne'er-do-well son Jervis. Diana contended that this promise could be transferred to Hogan; and if that gentleman would only come to an arrangement, this additional inducement could be made known to him.

Day after day he made his appearance in Clarges Street, and disappeared without making a sign. At last Diana, taking heart of grace, seized the opportunity of his mentioning casually the name of Lord Blanquière to relate—making the most of it, we may be assured—the tie between him and the Bursford family. Hogan seemed impressed, as she intended he should be; but as usual took his leave without saying anything in particular. As soon as he was gone, Mrs. Bursford, who had left

the room purposely that he might declare himself without restraint, came in.

“Diana, it is time this was put an end to. To-morrow, when he comes here, I shall have a talk with him.”

“I really think you must, mamma: we are now nearly six months engaged. I told him about Lord Blanquière; he seemed to take it in.”

By “to-morrow” a great many things were settled that the Bursfords had not anticipated. The Ministry announced their intention of appealing to the country; and Hogan, M.P., was plain Mr. Hogan once more. Before eight o’clock in the morning he was in Clarges Street, and engaged in an impassioned discussion with the mother and daughter. Hogan was for starting at once for Peatstown, so as to be in the field early: the Tories had been at work this long time, he declared. Their registries were in perfect order, and he feared a serious opposition. So he was talking, nervous and flushed, when Mrs. Bursford cut him short. Diana left the room, in obedience to a look from her mother.

“Now, Mr. Hogan, may I ask you how long do you intend my daughter’s engagement to last?”

“Mrs. Bursford, my means at present, as you know, do not permit me to marry. If I am re-elected——”

“Stop, Mr. Hogan. You will not be re-elected for Peatstown; you have not a chance of it. You have no means. Now, Lord Blanquière, whom I saw yesterday evening, has promised to use his influence to procure a Government post for—ah—the person in whom I am interested——”

“Mrs. Bursford, I am willing to marry Diana now; but you will hardly, I think, insist on her prospects and mine being sacrificed to precipitation.”

“You are willing to marry my daughter now?” said the old lady. “Well and good, Mr. Hogan; and you will allow, I think, that her prospects are as dear to me as to you. However, now we shall go to business; and I must tell you that you are losing time and money in going over to Peatstown. I know Peatstown well, from the Wyldoates’ accounts. You are not advanced enough in your ideas; and you have disappointed your friends there. Now, if you will take my advice, you will ascertain your chances before you go even as far as Dublin.”

Diana now came in, and joined her entreaties to the arguments of her mother. Hogan consented to telegraph to Dublin and to Peatstown, to Killeen, on whom he fancied he could rely. If it then proved to be a fair prospect of success, he could go. If not, there was nothing for it but to trust to Lord Blanquière's good offices. So he took his leave of the ladies, and went down to the Clubs, and to Westminster, to learn what was going on. He felt stunned and apathetic now; and amongst the angry, excited crowds who were discussing the news, he seemed so calm and indifferent, that many eyed him suspiciously, and asked each other could the member for Peatstown have got anything from the Government? There would be some crumbs of patronage to be divided. But what had Hogan done to deserve anything? So that hypothesis was abandoned.

Before returning to Clarges Street he turned into his own house, to see if any news had come from Dublin. There was a telegram from the Bishop, curt but significant. "Don't mind coming. D. Houlahan is gone down to Peatstown by the morning mail. I'll write to-day."

Dinny Houlahan—Dinny the Hare—gone down! That was a good joke indeed: and Hogan laid aside his hat and sat down in his easy-chair. Dinny Houlahan was a barrister whose principles it were kindness to designate as uncertain. He had been in prison in '48. His enemies declared him to be an informer, and that the imprisonment was a mere blind—an expedient to "save the situation." However, he had suffered imprisonment in the cause; and, aided by an impartial jury, he had been instrumental in procuring the acquittal of a murderer of the agrarian type, as recently as the previous autumn. And this was the gentleman who, "with his blushing honours thick upon him," was to supplant Hogan. There was another telegram—one from Ned Shea: "You will have my support, and a hearty welcome; I cannot answer for anything more." This was enough. He rose from his chair, and took a couple of turns up and down the room. While so engaged, the servant came in with a note in her hand. It was from the Cole Alley office, and was addressed "—Hogan, Esq."

"DEAR SIR,—

"We regret to inform you that we have no further occasion for your services as managing editor of the *Beacon*. We have made arrangements to sell the paper to Schepeler, Ignatieff and Co., of Fenchurch Street. We

shall be most happy to recommend you to them, should you wish it. You will be pleased to hear that the detectives have at last got on the track of Mr. Saltasche.

“Faithfully yours,

“STIER AND BRUEN.”

Hogan stirred the fire, and burnt the three communications. He stood watching the shrivelled fragments as they floated up the chimney in the draught. A queer conceit entered his brain as he stood looking at them. The Bishop’s telegram, which might be held to personify his Parliamentary career and its brief illusory existence, had scarcely kindled when it took wing, all ablaze, and disappeared into the region of smoke; Ned Shea’s burnt out quite, and divided into crumbling atoms; while Stier and Bruen’s thick double sheet lay for a while, and turned yellow and brown ere it kindled: even when the flame had exhausted itself, the writing seemed to glow, and the letters turned red again and twisted strangely. He remained a long time staring idly into the fire; and it was not until a single stroke of the clock warned him of the hour—half-past four—that he moved from his place on the rug.

Then to Clarges Street, where he found Diana in the most charming afternoon toilette waiting for him. She received the news of his determination to abandon the contest with the composure bred of foregone conviction. The afternoon passed rather pleasantly. Hogan did not mention the news about Saltasche; he hoped in his heart that the detectives might yet be baffled, for he by no means relished the idea of the inquiry that must ensue upon that gentleman’s trial. Neither did he think it necessary to tell Diana or her mother that the editorship was gone from him; they were both left in the pleasant delusion that the *prétendant* had five pounds a week of his own. Before he left the house Diana had named the day—which the gentleman, with an eagerness that was very lover-like and was thoroughly sincere, begged might be fixed at as early a date as possible.

Mrs. Bursford declared emphatically that everything should be as yet conditional on Lord Blanquière’s good offices. She was writing to his lordship by that post. The old lady was indeed at her davenport, scribbling away on her thickest-toned, most monogrammed paper. When Hogan took his leave, Diana followed him to the lobby.

“Lord Blanquière may not be able to do anything for us,” she said, resting her hand on the balustrade, and looking at him scrutinisingly.

Hogan was equal to the occasion. He took her fingers in his.

“Dearest Diana,” he said, “surely that need be no cause for further delay. I am no poorer than before.” We must do him the justice to say, that in speaking thus he had an eye to the recommendation of Stier and Bruen, and a prospective if not an actual five pounds a week. “If Lord Blanquière can offer me a position, so much the better; if not——”

If not . . . there were two thousand pounds still of Diana’s, and her mother’s jointure of four hundred a year. Five hundred pounds would clear off his debts. And he could pull along, as he told himself, until something turned up.

If not . . . Diana filled up the hiatus by a glance expressive of unlimited capabilities of self-sacrifice and heroic undertaking.

“I suppose,” she said, “now that you are not in Parliament, we shall live in Dublin. With mamma, you know, in Merrion Street?”

“No, no,” he replied sharply; “I must stay in London. Much better to have your mother remove from Dublin. She could live with us here infinitely more conveniently. How could I edit a newspaper from Dublin? You had better talk to her about that, Diana.”

Then he went away; and Diana set to work to persuade her mother how much more suitable and convenient it would be to bring over her furniture to London, and establish herself with her son-in-law in some nice house in the Bayswater or Paddington district. How this proposal was received, we leave it to the reader to imagine.