

## VOLUME III

### CHAPTER 1

“But by record of antique times I find  
That women wont in warres to bear most sway,  
And to all great exploits themselves inclined  
Of which they still the girdle bore away;  
Till envious men, fearing their rules decay,  
Gave coin straight lawes to curb their liberty.  
Yet sith they warlike arms have laid away,  
They have excelled in arts and policy,  
That now we foolish men that prayse give eke t’envy.”

*Faërie Queene.*

DIANA BURSFORD determined to go to London as soon as she heard of Mr. Hogan’s success at Peatstown. She had indeed been considering the desirability of such a move for some time previous to that event. The family friend, Mr. Saltasche, having told her mother that his *protégé* was likely to be in Parliament ere long, Miss Bursford kept the contingency in her mind’s eye. London was decidedly the best ground of operations; and, after all, leaving Dublin in the middle of the season was no great hardship—to her at least. For her mother, who loved her native city, and detested every place else except Florence, it would certainly be a grievance. But the old lady was used to travelling; it was by no means the first time they had pursued an eligible *parti* across the water; indeed, their cousins, the Bragintons, had a story to the effect that Diana had followed a man to Naples, and that he only escaped her by putting to sea in a friend’s yacht.

She wondered, as she planned the expedition one day at her toilette, what romantic legend these amiable people would concoct. She

was certain they had not a glimmering of idea that there was a man in the case this time. This season, and indeed for a good many seasons before it, her name had not been coupled with that of any one; so that they would have a difficulty in finding a groundwork on which to base their edifice of fiction.

As for arrangements, the house could be shut up,—which was a pity, certainly, at the time of year when houses were most in demand. What could be done with it? The new lace curtains only a month put up, and everything in such order! Miss Bursford laid down her hairbrushes, and began to think that she had heard that the O’Gorman Mulcahy and his family were in furnished lodgings in Clare Street, and that they were looking for a house. What a delightful arrangement to offer theirs! The Mulcahys were paying thirty guineas a month, and had all their own servants. She was quite certain her mother would be glad to get them to take her establishment off her hands. Then she put the finishing touch to her attire, and sailed leisurely down to luncheon. She found her mother in the dining-room, waiting for her; and the two ladies sat down together. When both had been helped to mutton broth, Diana broke the silence, saying, deliberately and coldly,—

“We were speaking of London, mamma; if we go we had better go soon.”

She had broached her intention for the first time the previous day at breakfast, and it had not been alluded to since.

Mrs. Bursford paused in the act of raising her spoon to her lips, and breathed a sort of little resigned sigh.

“To London? Well, yes; I suppose so, indeed. But really, Diana, when you consider the young——“

”I know, mamma,” her daughter cut her short, with a tone and expression which Mrs. Bursford had long learned to know. “What I wanted to say to you was this: the house is to be shut up, is it not?”

“Of course it will have to be shut up. What else can be done in the middle of the season? And the new lace curtains and the drawing-room carpets. What good have we had of it, after all the trouble?” And Mrs. Bursford took an aggrieved expression, nearly lachrymose.

“Don’t you think the O’Gorman Mulcahys would take it? They are paying thirty guineas a month for three rooms in Clare Street; and they

have not place for their servants: they have to lodge them elsewhere. It would save us a great deal of trouble.”

“I don’t like the idea at all of letting my house. Miss O’Hegarty never would allow any one into her house that way; she always shuts it up when she goes away, no matter for how long.”

“Stuff, mamma! Everybody does that sort of thing nowadays. The Helys have let their house in Carlow for the shooting season repeatedly. The Hepenstalls are trying to let their house in the Green for a year. Lord Brayhead, if you want an example now, has let his London house in Curzon Street to Mr. Wickers, the member for Lincoln, for the London season only.” “Let his London house, has he? The Bragintons will be so furious,—not that that makes much matter, one way or another.”

“Now that we have settled to go, we may as well go and see the Mulcahys about it.” “I don’t like the idea of the Mulcahys at all. They are so careless and dirty, and their Connaught servants are so destructive. I forget what they had to pay in their last lodgings for mischief; but it was really something terrible.”

“Well, tell them about it, and send them to a house agent to deal with. Then they’re responsible for everything they injure.”

“House agents require such a heavy fee—five per cent.”

“That wouldn’t come to more than two or three pounds; and the Mulcahys will do more than that much mischief.”

“Ah, no, Diana! it looks some way too business-like,—and with friends too, now.” “Please yourself, mamma. But they can have the house by this day week, you know.”

“By this day week?” Mrs. Bursford groaned as she finished her mutton broth.

She made no audible objection, though; for between her and her daughter there had been of late years a tacit agreement that Diana was to lead in these arrangements. It saved the old lady a great deal of annoyance afterwards, if it did entail present trouble and fatigue; for if matters turned out as Mrs. Bursford had got into the way of expecting them to turn out, Diana could not blame her. And Diana’s temper, however well managed and kept in hand, was latterly becoming a trial.

“Dermot Blake is coming home, Miss O’Hegarty was telling me, from New York; he’s there now. She does not know when.”

“Yes,” said Diana. “He has been in China and San Francisco, and—all round the world. He always was a queer creature!”

“She thinks it likely he’ll marry and settle now,—he’s thirty-five.” Mrs. Bursford as she said this looked at Diana in a sort of exploring way over the rim of her tumbler of water, as if to see whether the information took any effect on her.

But Diana, though fully conscious of her drift, hardly even seemed to hear. Ten years ago, Dermot Blake and she had had a passage of arms together; and she knew perfectly that she had no hopes whatever in that quarter. Her mother knew of this, too; and it vexed Diana that she should have forgotten, or should act and speak as if she had forgotten it. But Mrs. Bursford was always expecting miracles. She knew some woman whose lover, having thrown her over and gone off to Timbuctoo, came back after twenty years enormously rich, and married her there and then; and it would have seemed to her almost the natural order of things that Dermot Blake and Diana should marry in the same way.

Diana had finished, and was thoughtfully smoothing the salt with the spoon. She was a little vexed with her mother; and if she had had time and leisure to think over the grievance, it would have led to one of their not unusual scenes. She had other food for thought, however; for she was meditating taking some new dresses with her. It was cheaper to get them in Dublin, and she recollected a letter from a friend in London, giving some information as to the newest fashions and cuts, which she considered much more explicit and satisfactory than the engravings in *Punch*,—which, indeed, presented a finished whole, but left details and ways and means overmuch to the imagination.

“We must go round to the milliner’s, too, this afternoon, when we have settled with the Mulcahys, mamma; I want a couple, at least, of new dresses. I’ll get a bonnet when we can go to Madame Tripotte’s.”

“Dresses! why, Diana!”—and now Mrs. Bursford’s voice had a ring of real sharpness and authority in it,—“it’s impossible. Pray consider what you have had this year already,—and our journey. I cannot do it.”

“The fact is, mamma, I suppose, you have been sending money to Jervis again.”

Then there ensued a scene, and Diana came off victorious.

Jervis was Mrs. Bursford’s youngest son, younger than Diana, and a ne’er-do-well; living somewhere,—nobody knew where, and, save his

mother, nobody caring. Hopelessly idle and untrustworthy—and clever. He could act well; but manager after manager dismissed him for insubordination and unsteadiness. He could play the piano and sing; so he picked up a queer livelihood in music halls, betting and billiard-rooms, and such places; doing odd jobs for odd people, and liked by every one. He had all sorts of accomplishments, and not one single capability. He was always his mother's darling, and the terror of Diana's life; she fancied that any day Jervis might turn up and demand to live with them. Indeed, he had done that already. One winter that Mrs. Bursford was at Boulogne, the amiable Jervis dropped in with a carpet bag, and remained until his behaviour forced his mother and sister to fly the place. Just at present he was at Monaco; where Diana fervently hoped he might be induced to remain until her London visit was over; and where his mother was quite reconciled to have him stay, because Monaco was such a nice place for his delicate chest in this severe season.

When their dispute was over, and Diana had fumed and threatened until her mother had been brought to promise that she should have whatever she needed, and to give a sort of undertaking that Jervis was to be left to his own resources for some time to come,—an undertaking which Diana well knew was not to be depended on,—the ladies sallied out on their double mission; which, ere the day was done, was accomplished to the satisfaction of one of them at least.