VOLUME III

CHAPTER 4

> "La vraie poésie d'un tel amour, c'est la chanson de Printemps, du Cantique des Cantiques—poëme admirable, bien plus voluptueux que passionné. *Hiems transiit, imber abiit et recessit. Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra. Surge amica mea et veni.*"
>
> —*Ernest Renan*.

IT WAS an April afternoon, soft and warm, for the east wind was gone. There had been showers all the morning, but now, between three and four, the sky was perfectly clear. Everything smelt sweet and strong after the rain. Rows of wall-flowers—brown, yellow, and streaked—gave out bitter-sweet odours; tufts of yellow primroses and double lavender primroses, tall pale narcissi bending their faces inwards, stiff-necked in their modesty, filled the air with most delicious incense. The apple trees had on charming pink robes; and the tomtits took a thousand impudent liberties among the blossoms, cutting summersaults, hanging head downwards, and celebrating the warm weather with uncountable antics.

Beyond the garden hedges the chestnuts had the faint transparent green shade to be seen for a few days only, just while the leaves are peeping out of their brown sheaths, and the flowers are hidden altogether in a tiny knot in the centre. From the wood came the voices of the nesting birds, shrill and clear, and echoing all round.

> "The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
> With orange-tawny bill;
> The throstle, with his note so true;
> The wren, with little quill."

Had one the gift of Solomon, it were a pleasant employment on such a day to go as a spy among the feathered people, and learn what they all were saying. Just like ourselves, no doubt—making love and making mischief, and using their charming voices in various unpleasant ways. Solomon must have had but few illusions; and that which we rejoice in as a charming idyl, or madrigal, was to him but a dispute as to right of way, an ejectment suit, or a vulgar connubial quarrel.

There was a walk, hedged by espaliers, which ran across the garden, and divided the flower-beds and greensward from the plots of vegetables. It was edged with box, trimly cut; and between the box and the row of espalier apple trees were quantities of sweet-smelling spring-flowers and herbs. Up and down this walk, slowly, and often standing quite still, in earnest converse, walked our friend Nellie and Mr. Hogan.

Nellie was paler, and looked taller than when we last saw her; taller, because she had grown thin. Hogan also was changed; his eyes had lost the bright, confident expression of old, seemed both darker and larger than before, and the bluish lines under them told of hard work and late hours. At the same time he had improved. A certain priggishness of look, a little condescendingness of tone, and an over suavity of manner, had given way to a simplicity and naturalness, not unstudied perhaps, but far more pleasant and becoming.

"I do think you might have written me a line, if only one, Miss Davoren. It was very hard of you," he was saying.

"You did not ask me, Mr. Hogan. And what could I have to tell you that would interest you?"

"Ah, you don't know that. My dear Miss Davoren, tell me, is it not pleasant to come out here into this delightful garden, after the close heat of a crowded room, among the flowers you are fond of—that you know and tend? Believe me, a letter from you here to me in London—stifled, and tired with work and talk, and disagreeable strange people—would be just as sweet and refreshing. And I longed for such a letter, just as you might pine for this spot if you were—say, in prison."

Nellie did not answer; she only looked at him timidly and searchingly, as if fearing to find in his eyes the contradiction of his words.

"Is your life, then, so disagreeable?" she asked, after a pause.

"Disagreeable! no, decidedly not. One must take the rough and the smooth, you know; and if a man goes into Parliament to work as I have

done, he must not expect to have it all skittles and beer, as the saying is. It's too much of the one thing, though—the opposite of skittles and beer. There has been a deal of heavy night-work this session—private bills, and all that rubbish."

Amongst the rubbish, Lord Brayhead's scheme was included; we may be sure it was not one whit nearer to being settled than ever.

"And the Home Rule question? Have you been working at that? Is it any nearer being settled?"

He laughed, and shook his head. "It is not even licked into shape yet; and I'm not the man to do that. I wonder what my Peatstown friends are about? There are a couple of gentlemen there who have their eyes upon me. One wants a farm, and the other wants a republic; and if they don't get them by means of Home Rule, which, by-the-bye, is to be got first,—ere two years are over, I am a doomed man."

"A pleasant prospect, truly. Dicky has told me enough about Peatstown."

"How is my friend Dicky distinguishing himself in college?"

"I don't know, indeed. Really, I hardly see him except at meal-times; he might as well live there always. It is wonderful to me how he likes to be always away. I'd get tired soon of that perpetual amusement."

"Perpetual amusement! ah, ah! So that is the way with him. Well, all boys seem to be inclined that way. There are very few workers now. I don't know how it is."

"He never opens a book. Of course he has his studies; but if you were to see the story-books he buys! I assure you he reads those 'penny awfuls' and novels that one would imagine a servant, and a servant alone, could care about."

"Yes, that's the way; most boys are the same. I recollect them well enough. After all, a taste for reading requires to be cultivated; and they have not yet taken that into account in our universities. There is something absurd in a man being able to read the Greek and Latin classics, and knowing and caring nothing for his own. However, there are more absurdities than that remaining to us from the monkish founders."

"I don't like the university system at all. I don't see why a number of young lads should be shut up together in a sort of barrack—it is that—if they are to live at home, and if they are intended for family life;

it is not a good preparation for it. And Dicky has got so rough since he went there, and so independent; he won't tell a thing about himself, or answer a question; he is utterly changed."

"Ah, he'll change back again, never fear. It is not possible he could be rough to you—he or anybody. I never had a sister," Hogan continued, after a short pause, and changing his tone. "You have no idea what a loss it is to a man—one is always different from other men, somehow."

"I can fancy that; for girls who have no brothers are very different from those who have. I fancy they are always more companionable to men, and understand them better when they have been brought up with men. They are more sensible, too."

"It is a great improvement to the brothers, anyhow. Yes, I have missed many a thing in this world, I think. I hardly remember my home, and I have had to fight my way single-handed upwards, without a friend, even."

"You must have been lonely," said Nellie, looking at him sympathizingly.

"Yes," said he; "I've often thought how I'd like, when the day's work was done, to have some one—some one like you"—and he turned to her—"to talk to me and advise with me—to be my rest and my consolation, my good angel."

She did not answer, but her heart beat fast and faster; she met his eyes one moment, but the look in them brought a hue like that of the apple-blossoms to her cheek.

"Tell me, Nellie: would you be that to me—could you? You don't know how I think of you; how I long for the day when I shall be independent—*when I can* ask you to be—to be something nearer still. Not yet; but soon. I wouldn't bind you, Nellie,—I could not, fairly; but tell me, dearest Nellie,—don't take away your hand,—tell me you'll promise to do nothing—to take no step without telling me. You do?"

A look gave her promise; and he went on.

"You'll trust me, and confide in me; you'll write to me?—and I'll write to you—I'll tell you everything. You'll be my Egeria, my goddess! Dear child, you don't know how happy I am—how grateful I am to you! Why are you pale?—surely you are not afraid? Nellie, dear, I go back to London with a new heart. I'll work harder than ever; and in the summer,

dear—in August we'll meet. Shall we not?" and he took both her hands in his.

"Let us go in, please; we have stayed too long. No! please don't keep me. Yes, I'll remember to write. I will, indeed—I promise." Nellie was trembling and pale. She felt very happy, and also not a little frightened; and she almost wished he were gone, that she might run away up to her room to think of it all in quiet.

They returned to the drawing-room, entering by the glass door that opened into the flower garden. Here Dicky was found with his friend Orpen, who had called ostensibly to get a book of his (in reality to make an appointment); and Hogan was obliged to take his leave. Nellie did not like Orpen, and she was glad to excuse herself and get away. When she reached her mother's room, she sat down again in the window seat where she had sat and thought over her first meeting with Hogan. Then it was a dark winter afternoon; and she remembered well the sunset, into whose clouds she had woven doubting, half-hearted fancies and day-dreams,—which she had confessed to herself were but day-dreams. How quickly it sank and faded! But now it was different, and spring, with all its light and promise, seemed really to have come—not merely into the land, but into her heart and her life. She opened a little latticed-pane, and let in the song of the thrushes and the smell of the new leaves and buds; and she felt as if, like the birds, she could have sung for joy; like them, too, she wove and built an ideal future—an ideal home; heedless of enemies, of coming change and storm, or the sudden malice of cruel, unrelenting fate.

When Hogan left Nellie he proceeded by a cross road, leading past Green Lanes, in the opposite direction from the Davorens' house, to Mr. Saltasche's mansion, where he was to dine and spend the evening. He sauntered along leisurely; and it was just ringing six when he reached the entrance gates. The house was built, although situated on a large piece of ground, close to the road, which it faced. The high wall, however, prevented it being easily seen. There was nothing remarkable in the facade. It was a large square stone house, overgrown with vines, and every window had a majolica box filled with flowers. No *parterres* before the house,—only a green, close-cut grass plot. The hall was filled with pyramids of flowers in pots, among which were a couple of fine statues. The drawing-room was a large room opening into a superb conservatory. A Persian carpet covered the centre of the floor, only the rich mellow oak of

which showed itself wherever Indian matting and snowy sheep-skins and queer embroidered rugs were not. The hangings were of maroon velvet; and the walls of the room were stained a pale oak colour that set off the fine pictures,—some of which were hung up, while others stood on easels. A carved black oak cabinet, and a couple of chairs which matched it nearly enough, although they came from widely different places, stood at one end. Portfolios of etchings—some of them more valuable than Saltasche ever owned to his most intimate friends—were lying on the table. A veiled virgin of Marochetti's, bronze figures of beautiful workmanship, beautiful vases of hot-house flowers, were judiciously bestowed wherever a dark background served to set off their fragile beauties. A splendidly executed intaglio portrait of Saltasche, and one of his sister, Miss Saltasche, by the same sculptor, hung on each side of the fireplace. The various mementos of foreign travel which people bring home with them were not wanting; but all of them were uncommon—of form and material which commended themselves at first glance to the connoisseur. China hung here and there in quaintly-arranged groups on the walls, and was reflected in the mirrors, and an old chased silver flagon and cups surmounted a cluster of strange foreign weapons with hilts of every shape, and some with jewels sunk in them. The windows all looked out on the pleasure-grounds; and a tempered light came through the curtain of flowering creepers hanging before the conservatory door. A sweet and heavy odour filled the room, partly from the flowers and partly from the Russian leather folios and books.

Hogan sat down in a low easy-chair, and ran his eye round the room. The curious and artistic arrangement was lost upon him; but he could judge that everything was of the richest and best of its kind. He thought it odd, and out of the way, that there should be no carpet; and he put down this, to him a defect, to the foreign tastes of the host. There was no piano either to be seen; it was in a smaller room at the side. Mr. Saltasche considered that the piano spoiled the general effect, and had it kept in a smaller room, divided from the other only by a velvet curtain.

In a moment three ladies entered by the conservatory door. Hogan had met Miss Saltasche before, and shook hands with her cordially. She was a stout, sombre-looking woman of fifty, who must have been handsome in her youth, for she had magnificent eyes, and features that were regular, if rather coarse. She never dressed, as the saying goes; holding, with her dissenting notions, that fashions and jewellery were carnal indulgences. A ruffle of Flemish lace at her throat and wrists

somewhat relieved the plainness of a heavy black silk; which, in these days of furbelows and flounces, was Quaker-like in its simplicity. Her hair, plentiful, however streaked with grey, was gathered up under something that was not a headdress and yet not a cap. She was quite without style or *ton*;—"Dissenter, every inch," would have been Miss O'Hegarty's comprehensive summary. And yet one would hesitate before saying she was not a lady. She was an admirable house-keeper, and there was nothing in the way of needle-work that she could not do. She made lace—real Brussels point, sending to Brussels for her materials; she had embroidered the chairs, table-cloths, and curtains of the drawing-room in the most beautiful manner,—the designs having been made by her versatile brother.

Hogan had never met the other two ladies. One was Mrs. Grey, a faded woman, with a troubled, careworn face; the other was Mrs. Poignarde, looking more beautiful and interesting than ever. He recollected directly where he had seen her before—at the theatre, that night with Saltasche; he remembered, too, with a smile, how struck his impressionable friend had been; and now he took a good look at her while they sat waiting the arrival of the master of the house. She was not his style at all; but still, she was a beautiful woman. He did not like her manner, it was too indifferent; and he watched her replying in monosyllables to Miss Saltasche's cumbrous attempts at conversation,—scarcely raising her eyes, as she spoke, from the little bouquet of pale white primulas she had brought in with her from the conservatory.

Hogan left his chair, and sat down nearer to her; he was curious to hear her speak, and wondered could he find any subject that would interest her. After a commonplace or two, he asked directly,—

"Are you long in Dublin, Mrs. Poignarde?"

"No: eight months. I was for six weeks in Cork, before that."

"And which city do you prefer? Dublin, I hope."

"I hate both!" she said curtly, ignoring the second clause of his question.

"What a pity!" Hogan spoke in a condescending, half-chaffing tone. He knew something of her history from Saltasche, and had seen her husband. He felt sorry for her misfortunes, certainly; but mixed with the compassion was a tinge of something akin to contempt. Worldly people, with the best intentions, have always a shade of that running through

their charities. "What a pity!—and why so? Our climate is it, or ourselves, now?"

"Ah! your climate—ugh! Your winter is a torment—always present, almost; and your summer, a disappointment."

"That is almost an epigram, Mrs. Poignarde. And ourselves?"

"I don't care for Irish people," she answered bluntly. "What I have seen of them, with an exception or so, they bore me." As if to point this more, she went through a semblance of a yawn, barely opening her mouth, and drawing down her chin and up her eyebrows. It was rather a becoming grimace, and he admired it as much as he did her coolness. Then she pulled over a book, and opened it leisurely. Scarcely had she done so when the door opened, and in came Mr. Saltasche. The hand that held open the cover, dropped it—very suddenly, Hogan thought; and as he rose from his chair, he noticed a quick glance, full of meaning, flash from her eyes to those of Saltasche. Then they all went to dinner. Miss Saltasche took the head of the table; Hogan sat beside Mrs. Poignarde, who took no notice whatever of him. After they were seated, the reverend Mr. Grey came in, apologizing for being late. The synod had detained him. The conversation at dinner ran wholly on Church matters. Hogan was amused at his friend's ready sympathy with the victims of Disestablishment, and his acquiescence in all the doleful forecasts of the clergyman.

"The country parts will be reduced to a sad state. The clergy gone, and their influence removed, the gentry, you may be certain, will be more of absentees than ever. How are the lower orders to be dealt with?"

"You admit absenteeism to be an evil, then?" asked Hogan.

"Certainly I do. I had a parish in the south, and the landlord resided almost all the year round on his estate,—Sir ——, a most excellent man. You have no conception how the poor people improved. They kept their cottages in good order; he built out-offices and pigsties for them, and encouraged them in keeping little gardens. You might almost fancy yourself in a really English village. They had flowers in their gardens and in their windows. They kept themselves cleaner. In fact, it was wonderful, when you compared them with the tenants on the other estate."

"All owing to the landlord's encouragement and assistance; his daughters, too, worked very hard in that parish," added Mrs. Grey.

"Well," said Hogan, "I have seen something of Irish country villages; and it is deplorable that the landlords don't reside, for ever so short a time in the year. In English counties it is so different. The "great house" can do so much. If the young ladies of the landlord's family would do in Irish villages what they do in the English ones,—refine the poor by their example and presence, teach them to make their houses a little more human-like, raise them out of the barbarism they are now sunk so hopelessly in,—the good would be incalculable."

"It is not merely the poor who suffer by absenteeism," said Mr. Saltasche; "but the better classes in country towns. The doctors, and their families, attorneys, agents—all that class—lose immensely. These people, for want of stimulus and example, I suppose, too, sink below their own level. They have nothing to look up to, and they require that. They do indeed. We all require it. Even here in Dublin, what would become of manners, refinement—society, in a word—if it were not for the Court, wretched little travesty that it is."

A faint smile played on Mrs. Grey's lips, as she recollected that the speaker was disqualified from attending the same wretched travesty.

"There have been projects of abolishing the office of Viceroy," said Hogan; "and I can't imagine, were it so, that manners and refinement would utterly vanish from Dublin with it."

"I daresay they will do that," said Mr. Grey, with a most melancholy voice. "It will be another step in the direction of abolishing all traces of order and decency, paving the way to revolution and destruction. Unhappy country!"

"Take some strawberries! Out of my forcing-house? Yes, they are, Mrs. Poignarde," Saltasche said; then in a lower key, "This is so tiresome to you, is it not? Have you shown Mrs. Poignarde the greenhouses, Elizabeth?" he asked, looking at his sister.

"Yes; but not the fernery. We could not get in."

"Ah! you must see that by-and-by. I have some new ferns."

A glance swift as lightning followed. She interpreted it, "I have something to say to you."

Some hours later, after tea, he led her out into the conservatory off the drawing-room. The doors remained open between. A swinging lamp hung in the centre from the dome; and under a great tree-fern, the leaves

of which grew to the roof, and then bending back, hung down so as to make a sort of arbour, were wicker seats. All round were tiers of beautiful flowers: creamy yellow roses, curious broad-leaved geraniums, trumpet lilies—scarlet, yellow, every brilliant hue—relieved by the cool masses of ferns and the background of dark stephanotis and passion-flowers, climbing behind on the sides and hanging down in graceful wreaths from the roof.

"Sit down here one moment," he said, drawing forward one of the low chairs.

She seated herself, and leaning her elbow on the arm of the chair, rested her chin in her hand and turned her eyes upward, wide open and impatient, full on his.

He seemed nervous, and almost avoided their gaze.

"We mustn't stay here long," he whispered, glancing back at the open door of communication. Your husband was with me to-day, and he has drawn another couple of hundred pounds. That leaves in my possession only one hundred of his now. I hear he is laying heavily against a horse."

"Bah! Is this all?" she interrupted scornfully; "have you brought me here for this? Say the last penny of our money is gone, at once—the sooner the better, too. I am weary for the end: I am indeed." And she clasped both her hands in her lap despairingly.

"Let me counsel you, Adelaide," he whispered close in her ear. "The end cannot be far off. Poignarde cannot succeed at book-making: he drinks; and that science, as they call it, requires a clearer head than his at the best of times."

"I know," she answered, and turned away her head listlessly. "I thought we were going to the fernhouse."

"Wait one moment," he said; "I forgot something. Then he went back to the drawing-room, and taking a taper, lighted it. He returned with it to the conservatory, where she was, and said in a loud voice, "Follow me, if you please, Mrs. Poignarde; I am going to light up the fernery." He opened a door leading into a peach-house. They passed through this, and entered a labyrinth of rockwork, all overgrown with beautiful and rare ferns. Clusters of maidenhair and queer foliage plants filled every nook. There was a fountain in the centre, and its tiny cascade fell into a pool in which gold fish glided lazily away to hide from the light under

broad hart's-tongue leaves. Gold and silver ferns, silvery mosses, all glittered when he lighted little lamps fastened here and there. Some of these were placed so as to shine through the red-veined leaves of the begonias, which looked like curious beetles of mammoth size. Mrs. Poignarde looked round in delight and wonder. He extinguished the wax taper, and there was now only the pale light of the coloured lamps among the leaves. A damp, faintly acrid perfume filled the air, and the dripping of the little fountain was the only sound. Saltasche took her by the hand, and led her close to one of the lights.

"Now," said he, "look down there." Outside, in the clear twilight, she could see across the garden to the pleasure-ground, and to the weeping ash tree, now in full leaf, where he and she had sat that night two months ago.

"You remember? What did I tell you then?—to trust me, and me only, and to call upon me when in need. I know your wretchedness; but the end has now come. To everything——"

"But—but he may win. Then he would have enough to go on for a long time."

"He will not win; he will be utterly beggared. He may have to leave the army; then he won't want to keep you with him. He will let you go where you like; and where can you go, now?"

"And I will go to Rio,—back to Uncle Rodolphe: he will receive me, I know. You will help me to do that, will you not, Mr. Saltasche?" and she raised imploring, tearful eyes to his, which were turned away. "Help me to go back home."

He looked at her pitifully, holding her hands in his without replying to her question, wondering to himself how she would bear the news that was waiting for her at home—the news of the death of Rodolphe Chrestien, the merchant-prince of Rio Janeiro, which had been telegraphed to him from London that evening. To-morrow it would be in the papers; no doubt the agent had written to her the bad news too. Saltasche had a kind, sympathetic heart, however lax he might be in morals; and he felt sorry for the pain this friendless creature was to undergo, even though it furthered his own plans.

She could not see his face clearly; but she could see his eyes bent upon hers. A strange light seemed to shine in their depths; and it seemed to her as if he were smiling. Could it be that he was mocking her? She

drew her hands away with a violent effort, feeling that she could have bitten her tongue with rage for having yielded to such weakness; and with a look that was defiant and frightened, she made a sudden turn to go. With one step he was before her, and barred the path with his arm.

"Let me pass, Mr. Saltasche, at once."

"Hear me. You will know why I say nothing; you will indeed,—soon—too soon!" Something in his tone reassured her, and at the same time gave her to understand that there was something behind; and she looked at him as if for an explanation.

He walked beside her to the door. There he stopped for a moment, and said to her in a low, meaning tone: "You will send for me, won't you? You will look on me as your best friend."

"I may easily do that," she answered despairingly, "for I have not a friend in the world."

"You have *one*! Go now, go! We shall be missed."

In the drawing-room they were discussing parish affairs. Miss Saltasche, by her brother's directions, took a strong interest in the schools and charities of the neighbourhood. If she had her own will, she would have attended a queer little Bethesda in a lane off the village main street; but with Cosmo's aristocratic proclivities, that was out of the question, so she was forced to content herself with the tepid ministrations of the Reverend Wilmington Grey.

Hogan was yawning over a book of exquisite etchings, which his untaught eye could not appreciate. He was wondering to himself how anybody could draw such ugly faces and figures, and what on earth was the use of putting pots and pans in a picture.

"Ah! you have that, have you? Some fine bits there," said Mr. Saltasche, leaning over him. "See Ostade signed under that horse. Do you like pictures? Come over here. That, now: where do you think that came from?" and he pointed to a picture hanging on the wall. "That is one of Jordaen's best pieces; that picture was stolen at the sacking of the Palais Royal in Paris in 'forty-eight. It is invaluable. This frame, look," (and he turned to another picture,) "that is more than two hundred years old. Fact: that is a Poussin."

"The bust? Yes, that Veiled Virgin: Marochetti's. He did it for me. Clever idea? Yes; but it's a mere trick—a mere trick."

And so talking, he led Hogan round the room until they came to the door. He stopped a moment, and taking a cigar-case out of his pocket, held it up, calling to the clergyman,—

"A cigar, Grey?"

He was answered, as he expected, in the negative; and then, with Hogan, he went out to the garden.

"I had a word to say to you before you go," he began, as soon as his cigar was lighted.

"Lord Brayhead is very irritable about this Bill. You see it is an unpleasant position——"

"Most confoundedly so. I wish to God I had never heard of it. It is utterly impossible and ridiculous to expect to get a day for it, with the present crush of business. Unreasonable! Does he think that not only my own, but the business of the country, is to stand still for his crotchet?" There was a little too much heat in Mr. Hogan's tones. He knew very well that only for this crotchet he would not be in Parliament at all, and, moreover, that the six hundred pounds which Lord Brayhead had contributed towards his expenses gave his lordship a real claim—not the less real because it could not be openly avowed—on his services.

"I was talking to him about it on Saturday; and he seemed very angry at the session being lost. He counted on you to attack it-at-once, you see. I think you had better see him and explain matters."

"I'll give him back his money, and be done with him."

"Softly, Mr. Hogan," said Saltasche, in a cold voice that Hogan had not heard before. "You cannot throw us over in that fashion. And we have reason to complain of the way you have done the work. The night the motion was made by Sir Harry Vane you were not ready to answer the objections brought up by Duffield on behalf of our opponents; you failed, also, to make that point about the mineral resources. In fact, you have not attended to the business."

Hogan's cigar almost fell from his lips. The sudden way in which Saltasche had identified himself with Lord Brayhead, the tone and manner he had assumed, all took him with a shock as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown over him. He quickly realized the position, however. He acknowledged to himself that he had not done his utmost for the Bill: it was hard to strive and work for an absurdity; and knowing the accursed

thing to be an absurdity, he had treated it so as to deserve his lordship's censure. But that Saltasche should pull him up, and identify himself with "the old fool," was, for half a second, incomprehensible. Then he remembered the tuft-hunting proclivities of the man—remembered what the Lord Brayheads were to him, not merely in society, but in business—and he almost wondered at his ever expecting anything else. And then, too, he had got his price: he was a member of Parliament, and he had realized nearly five thousand pounds, or saw his way clearly to realizing that sum, by the good offices of Mr. Saltasche. He acknowledged all this; but he remembered, too, that there were considerations on his own side: he had helped Saltasche and Stier and Bruen to float many barques on the financial ocean that were intended to sail very close to the wind indeed. But what of that? (and he tried to put his own share in those ventures out of his mind). Hundreds of men in better position would do the same—were only too glad to get the chance. He comforted himself with precedents—prompted thereto by something of the same sheep-like instinct as Mrs. Bursford. Perhaps he had caught the trick from her. He was a good deal in her company of late.

"I am obliged to confess," replied Hogan, "that more might have been made of that occasion; and, though I don't offer it as an excuse, I must tell you that when public opinion and your own judgment are against a thing, it is difficult to work it up."

"That is not to the purpose," Saltasche went on—speaking now, however, in his own tone. "See him to-morrow, and make the best case for yourself that you can. On no account give him to understand you think his project hopeless; mark that, please."

"It is notorious, in the House and out of it, that he is doing it for a spite against the Broad-gauge Company. What do you say to my offering to refund his money?"

"You will please yourself as to that. Considering that his lordship could have got some one else to do as much, and also," (here Saltasche spoke with emphasis,) "that the obligation does not rest there, your course should be obvious."

Hogan, as he walked home that night, made up his mind to see Lord Brayhead and eat humble pie. It was the first time, and the savour of the dish was not pleasant.

So unpleasant was it that, as he left Lord Brayhead's presence the next day, he almost swore he would throw up the whole thing and go back to his practice—the practice which he had despised, and which his uncle the Bishop had declared to be the safest and the surest in the long run. He had always been independent before; and now——well, he had got what he bargained for, and this was part of the price. Lord Brayhead had spoken to him as he might have done to his servant-man. As for Saltasche, whose tone in speaking to him rang through his ears still, and affected him just as a bad taste does one's palate, Hogan hoped soon to be able to throw over that flunkey. On the whole, he went back to London in bad spirits.