

VOLUME II

CHAPTER 3

“JACK CADE.—Be it known unto thee by these presents, that I am the besom that must sweep the court clean of such filth as thou art. Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in creating a grammar school; and whereas, before our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and contrary to the King, his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper mill. It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb; and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.”

—*King Henry VI, Part Second.*

MR. SALTASCHE, who had been obliged to go to London for a couple of days on business, had telegraphed to Hogan from the Westminster Palace Hotel that he must see him on Saturday, and desired him to engage seats for the theatre, it being a Command night, and to meet him at the Melbourne Hotel at five to dinner. Hogan obeyed, being on his own side equally desirous to settle matters with regard to the Parliamentary business. After much and anxious consideration, he had determined to accept. The Bishop declined to interfere—saying that Hogan was as well aware of the risks as himself, and that, after all, it might be cheaper to try now than at the General Election, when the Tories would certainly be measuring their strength against the present Government, and entailing thereby a larger outlay. So, not without misgivings, he gave orders to his broker to sell out his shares of Great Southern Railway stock, and lodged the proceeds in the Bank to meet the expenses of his candidature.

At five o'clock he presented himself at the front entrance of the Melbourne, and found his friend standing in the hall, fresh and trim, and with a superb dark-red camellia in the lapel of his dress-coat.

"How do you do, Mr. Hogan? I'm glad to see you. No, I'm not a bit tired; too old a stager, I assure you. Come along; this way;" and so, talking all the while, they followed a waiter into a comfortable private room, where a round table was laid for two. Mr. Saltasche had ordered a capital dinner; the wines were the best to be had, the fish unexceptionable, and the menu carefully chosen. No word of business was uttered by either of the men until the last dish had disappeared. Saltasche threw himself back in his chair, which he had turned round towards the fire, and pointing to the opposite end of the hearthrug, motioned Hogan to bring up his.

The barrister changed his seat, pushing up his wine-glass and plate, and Saltasche opened the ball.

"Well, Mr. Hogan, about the business we were talking of: have you made up your mind?"

"Yes, Mr. Saltasche; I have decided to offer myself as a candidate for Peatstown. I need not tell you what a loss it will be to me if I fail."

"Don't speak of failure. Pshaw, man, you are perfectly safe. Your attorney is ——?"

"Mr. Muldoon. I mean, he will act for me, for as yet of course he knows nothing of my intention. I have pretty well decided the platform and address. Home Rule, absolute and unconditional; clerical control of Education, Tenant Right, Amnesty, and—ah—oh, of course the Holy Father's grievances. I think that's the whole list."

"By Jove, a complete litany, too!" said Saltasche; and he grinned to himself as he pictured Lord Brayhead's face on hearing the last item of the programme. What a pill that would be for the "swaddling lord" to bolt! "Well," continued he aloud, "of all your platform, you have not one solid, practical scheme: not one. Home Rule looks the only thing likely to raise a stir in the House. Clerical Education—won't hold water, that notion; the Government cannot, without giving the lie direct to their own principles, grant a scheme such as would satisfy the Cardinal. Tenant Right, or Fixity of Tenure, is blocked too; at least, until the days of universal suffrage, when the House will be full of Radicals and Reds, and them only. I decline altogether to give an opinion on Amnesty; a few blackguards more or less at large in society is of no great account; but the

moral of the army would be injured by such a concession. And as for the Holy Father's grievances, what! do you want to embroil the Government with Victor Emanuel?"

"Bah! don't go dissecting me so pitilessly as that. My conscientious opinion is that Home Rule for this country, and Scotland too, would be very beneficial. The country is really suffering by having everything drained out of it to London. Absenteeism has swelled to a fearful extent; you must see it yourself. People all flocking over to London, and the very people who are most wanted here: nearly all the brains of both countries are drained by the capital. It won't end well; I promise you it won't. And the evil consequences of it are already beginning to show themselves. I cannot see why statesmen refuse to entertain the idea. It seems to be too much the fashion to smell treason in every Irish project. People overlook the real good that lies beneath."

"Well, I don't doubt there is something in your views; but, Mr. Hogan, what the people mean by Home Rule—the people who are sending you to Parliament to demand it for them—is a rather more highly-coloured article. They want what O'Connell was always dangling before their eyes—a fight. Then another set want, not a mere Legislative Chamber, but separation and independence; and that third class of Irish malcontents, the returned Americans, and those whom they have infected, want a Republic. I'll tell you, of all other things in the world, what completely proves to me the impossibility of this scheme is the opposition of the clergy to it."

"They have not opposed it," interrupted Hogan hastily; "I know some priests who are in favour of the movement; there are, indeed, a great number; but, like all sensible men, they are waiting to see their way clearly before them."

"Ah! you will see in the long run. They don't oppose it now, because they would set the people against their nominees at the General Election. They may be wanting also to reserve it for a threat in case the Education Bill doesn't please them; but everywhere the Ultramontanes—"

"Now," interrupted Hogan again, "pardon me, Mr. Saltasche,—there you are falling into the cardinal error of the general Protestant public, in laying national agitation to the charge of the Ultramontane party. That party has no existence in Ireland. There are, of course, a few dignitaries and a few priests here and there whose views are identical with those popularly ascribed to Ultramontanes."

But the reason that the clergy oppose the mixed system is diametrically opposite to that generally imagined—that is, the reason given by the English journalists.”

“Humph! and now tell me what is this opposite reason?”

“In one word,” returned Hogan, “proselytism; and that includes nationalism. Little wonder, indeed, that the people follow the priests to the poll! They were always the very purest patriots. Look what the priests suffered in old times for their flocks. The early Christian martyrs were never more persecuted and hunted; that is not forgotten yet.”

“True, but *that is not any longer so*; and I think the clergy of the present day are rather trading on the reputation of their ancestors than taking any pains to earn one for themselves.”

“That’s as may be,” returned the barrister. “You remember, Mr. Saltasche, that in speaking this way to you I do so as to one who is above all prejudice, party or religious.”

“Quite so, quite so,” assented Saltasche.

“People blame them here for not accepting the purely secular education, and providing religious instruction separately for themselves. They do that in Scotland. But how could they depend on the secular books and secular teachers provided by a Government which made the introduction of some proselytizing subject an integral part of every educational scheme ever propounded, and, as I told you before, looked upon this proceeding as one calculated to win the allegiance of the natives as well as their souls? There could not be found a means better calculated than this blending of apostasy with treachery to turn the people against it.”

“Ah! that’s all over and past now. The devil of it is, you won’t let the hatchet be buried.”

“Won’t let the hatchet be buried!” And Hogan laughed out. “Why, these things are always present to their minds; they are never forgotten—never will be, either. It’s long enough since the Tithe was abolished, but the people will tell you stories of that time with as much gusto as if it were yesterday. Tradition never dies: faith, I think the older it is the better, like whiskey.”

“They are incorrigible; and where are they to be got at? Every door seems to be shut to improvement. The famine, as the *English Times* said, solved a great difficulty: not altogether. Ha! ha!”

“Not quite all”; and Hogan laughed too. “Emigration did a good deal. By themselves the people now could do nothing: there are too few of them. A mass meeting such as O’Connell used to treat them to would be impossible now.”

“Oh, utterly, utterly. By-the-bye, do you count on the support of the Bishop of the diocese? Can your interest do anything for you with him? The contest is doubtful, you see.”

“I could not say. So much depends on the parish priests. If he favours Home Rule, all’s well. He may prefer that some one with local interest and influence should get in. However, even if Lord Kilboggan’s nephew does come forward, I shall not care. You see the family are unpopular—rackrenting absentees! What hold they have over the priests remains to be tried; but just at present I could get in very easily on Home Rule alone.”

“You think so,” said Saltasche, nodding his head as if satisfied. “You will soon have an opportunity of trying, for I’m told there are no hopes whatever of the member’s recovery. Try this Burgundy: very fine; perhaps you would prefer dry sherry. An olive, please.”

Saltasche now lighted a cheroot, and began to smoke slowly and seriously.

“I called round at Mrs. Bursford’s the day before yesterday,” began Hogan, who was lighting his cigar at the gaselier.

Saltasche twisted his head on one side, so as to get a clear view unobscured by the smoke, and looked keenly at him. Then he turned his eyes towards the fire, and first exhaling a huge cloud, remarked indifferently, “Indeed: clever, stylish girl that. Did she settle with you about my charitable concert?”

“Bah!” said Hogan, “that question settles itself. I can’t have anything to do with it. Impossible!—a Protestant affair!”

“Pish! to be sure. I forgot: how stupid of me! How did you like the young lady?”

“Very clever, charming girl; very stylish indeed; fine looking,” said Hogan, quite warmly. He had been so plied with subtlest flattery by the

practised Diana that his unaccustomed brain was reeling. How well he remembered the scene! The half-light, the drawn curtain of blue brocade shedding a softening shadow on her blonde hair, the glowing hearth, the perfume, the softness and sweetness; and the low coaxing voice and veiled eyes looking into his as if every word he uttered had a thousand meanings and his listener feared to lose a single one.

“Very highly connected family, that is.” Saltasche, as he spoke, knocked the ash off his cigar. “Very: they go into the best set, here and in London. The mother has immense influence.”

Hogan, who seemed to have had some idea conjured up in his mind by his friend’s last speech, only smiled in reply; and after a few minutes spent in smoking silently, took his cigar between thumb and forefinger, and said to Saltasche,

“Were there no brothers, eh? I fancied I heard Miss Bursford had brothers.”

Mr. Saltasche pursed up his lips sententiously. “Certainly, my dear fellow; two,—no, three of them.”

“Dead—eh?”

“Well, they might as well be. Two of them ran wild; they were all older than the girl. And one—well, for some particular and not very well-known reason—lives in New Zealand. He made a *mésalliance*, I believe. The others disappeared *in toto*.”

“Dear me! What an astonishing thing, all three to go to the bad! How very unfortunate for the family! It is surprising how many men go to the deuce nowadays. Among my contemporaries at college, I assure you I could count up a large proportion of black sheep.”

“Yes, indeed. The trouble is, you see, they begin at it so young now—seem so completely their own masters; moreover, young fellows go in for a different sort of wild-oat sowing now to what they used to do. It is no longer the wild, rough escapades and practical joking that used to engage them. Their ways are more costly; instead of getting drunk periodically, they have taken to tipping daily, and that sort of thing generally. A vicious lot altogether!”

Hogan, whose mind was running on a story he had heard that morning, of the death of a young friend of his own, or rather the son of a friend—a lad of twenty—who had “gone the pace that kills” for the last

three years or so, nodded assent. How many men, indeed, had he seen fall by the way, even in the short measure of the road of life that he had travelled!

Saltasche, hearing the hall clock strike the quarter past eight, threw the butt of his cheroot in the fire. "Time we were off, by Jove! Mr. Hogan, shall we walk down?"

"Yes, if you please; it's a fine, clear night."

They set out arm-in-arm, and turning down Kildare Street, walked smartly in the direction of the Hawkins Street Theatre.

"I must ask you to allow me to leave early—at least, as soon as the piece is over. I could not stay for the after-piece," said Hogan.

"Oh, by all means; do what you like. I don't think I'll stop, either. I am rather tired. Some rascals in London been trying to catch me out, rigging the market. I've settled them, though. I calculate to clear fifteen thousand by the operations I have arranged yonder; in a week hence, too."

"Ha!" said Hogan, drawing in a deep breath. A sort of wonder, not unmixed with envy, filled him. A sudden thought occurred to him. The twelve hundred pounds lying at his bankers': why not ask Saltasche to use it, at a fair rate of interest? The bank gave only three per cent.—nothing at all. Saltasche would think nothing of obliging him, he was sure; yet it was with a slight feeling of nervousness he began.

"I—er—have a thousand or so in the Connaught Bank at this moment. Mr. Stonelock sold out my shares the other day. I lodged it to meet electioneering expenses. It may remain there some months, perhaps."

Saltasche turned with a sort of bound, and his brown eyes kindled with a sudden flash. "You'd like me to invest it—eh? Of course, of course; bring it to me to-morrow, and I'll see if I can't put you up to a good thing with it. Let's see: it must be invested where it can be got at easily, hey?"

"I don't mind telling you, Mr. Saltasche, it's pretty near all I have in this world. I just make, altogether, by my profession about three hundred a year, or less; and my expenses are large. Of course my income is increasing yearly."

Saltasche's face had that quiet, unmoved look that tells of rapt attention; and a glimmer in his eyes—could Hogan have seen them—denoted that this intelligence was a mark added to his score.

“All right,” said he, quietly. “There are plenty of ways for a man like you to get on. You write, I know. I have been thinking of starting a newspaper. Not here—dear no! In London. There is a firm in Sycamore Alley, Stier and Bruen, with whom I deal largely; and they have been meditating that move for some time. You have no idea what a help a well-managed, smartly-written paper is in business. A circulation once secured, you can do anything with it. You would be very useful as editor, or nominal editor, with some practical, experienced man in the background, until you get well started. Hey? Thus you see you have an independence clear, and a position, moreover, as editor, second only to your membership.”

“It looks remarkably enticing, I confess,” said Hogan thoughtfully; “but I am not returned yet, and I am not sufficiently practised as a ready writer to take such a post as editorship.”

“Bah! Keep your hand in; it is an invaluable accomplishment. I had a great turn myself that way, now. Yes, by Jove, I remember the day when I could have turned you out an article in first-rate style—trenchant and clear, you know: I often lament that my time is so taken up. One sees a thing requiring an answer so frequently. The *Financial Review* the other day had some rot on ‘Economic Values: the Comparative History of them.’ He hadn’t a notion of the true origin of *agiotage*. My fingers itched to reply to him; but time,”—and Mr. Saltasche shrugged his square shoulders,—“time I never have.”

A sneer curled Hogan’s lips. “Time, indeed,” thought he; “that’s all that’s wanting, of course!” Then the sneer turned into a good-humoured smile at his friend’s absurdity: “We all have our little weaknesses.” Then aloud, “It doesn’t take so long, I assure you: one knocks off a thing of that sort in—er—an hour or so. I nev—”

“Er—ah! I daresay. You fellers that have the trick, er—practice, er—and *leisure*.”

By this time they had reached the hideous gateway of the Royal.