

VOLUME II

CHAPTER 7

Jean Paul Richter says:—"No man really believes his creed until he can afford to laugh at it."

NEXT MORNING, after a late breakfast, Hogan and his host sallied out and visited the farm and out-offices. The house did not show to much better advantage in the daylight. The plaster was rain-soaked, and in many places had fallen off altogether. There was no garden, although a fine southern slope at the left side of the house might easily have formed one. The farmyard was unpaved, and the animals stood half-leg deep in pools of stagnant water and stable muck. The outhouses were new, and consequently in fair order, although the internal arrangements were so dirty and slovenly as to offend every sense. Wasteful, disorderly plenty seemed the reigning characteristic. Not so much as a rose-bush or creeper against the walls spoke of the taste of the piano-playing ladies within, and the dairy, to judge by the smell which saluted Hogan's nostrils as he put his head in, was equally in need of a supervising eye.

Shea, having shown his fine cattle and horses, desired that the car should be got ready and brought round to the front door; and in a short time they started to visit the town.

Peatstown, taking its name from the bog on the skirt of which it is built, lay in a hollow. There was a good main street, and a number of smaller ones branching off it; but the greater portion consisted of rows of miserable cabins, which, from their position and sunken state, must be often almost under water. The people were wretchedly poor, and the rags of the beggars, with whom of course the place was swarming, were a perfect marvel in point of variety of colour and texture. Shea drove straight

to Killeen's place of business, and alighting, penetrated with Hogan into the editorial sanctum. There they found the presiding genius of the *Peatstown Torch* smoking a short pipe and gossiping with a couple of worthies of the town. These were presented to Hogan in due form, and, after a short conversation, in obedience to a hint from Shea, left the editor with his new visitors.

"Father Corkran was in a while ago. It's well you had me engaged on your side, Mr. Hogan," began Mr. Killeen.

"What! there is to be a contest then; I thought all along it was a false report," cried the barrister.

"A telegram from Nice this morning, upon my honour. Mr. Theo. Wyldoates, him that's *attaché* at Constantinople, is on his way; bedad, you'll have a pull for it, sir."

"Oh ho! But there is no fear of him, Mr. Killeen; the family are very unpopular. Anyhow, Home Rule will carry it. You can't trust the Kilboggans, you know."

"Father Jim has got the grant of land for the chapel, whichever way it goes."

"He has, eh? has he?" said Hogan. "Well, if he be worth his salt he'll get what'll build him a chapel house too. Come now, Mr. Killeen, let us arrange our business, for I must be away to canvass."

Then some business matters were entered into in reference to the printing and placarding of posters and handbills. The charges for these astounded Hogan; but he was wise enough to settle nothing beforehand, and only stipulated that the figure should not exceed a certain sum. He expected Muldoon to arrive by the evening train, so they next went to the hotel to bargain for rooms for election purposes, and to see what use could be made of the ball-room at the hotel as a ballot office. Then Hogan started on a canvass among the shop-keepers. Few of them would promise anything, for fear of offending the priests. They made some allusions to the Ballot, however, which reassured the candidate. Shea indicated to him some houses into which it was useless to go, the inmates being employed by Kilboggan, or depending in some way upon the Castle. Agents were engaged and sent out to canvass; and Hogan, feeling that the farmers and outlying voters were the most important, and needed to be seen and talked to more than the townsmen, mounted the car and started towards Ballinagad, along by the river side.

The road was soft and dirty, and having been made in the old days when horse power was cheap and labour also, ran up hill and down dale with glorious indifference to the wear and tear of animal tissue. The vehicle was two-wheeled, as were all those they met; the reason of which became apparent when they reached the hilly ground. At the foot of every elevation lay a slough of mud, of various degrees of depth and consistency. No number of horses could have dragged a four-wheeled conveyance through it. The ditches at the sides of the road were full to overflowing; and watercress and other ditch-weeds grew over the footways. Gullies under the road led foaming streams to the river—already swollen and angry. Low-lying, marshy fields, over which hung a mantle of dark-grey fog, lay on both sides. The stunted hazels and alders, scarce rising above the level of the hedgerow, had every little twig hung with crystal-like pendants. A dismal, dreary country scene as man could behold, on a chill winter afternoon. It seemed almost a desert. Here and there, at long intervals, a cabin sunk below the road-level raised its brown indented roof in a sheltered corner. The thin blue reek of turf-smoke seemed to rise almost on a level with the face, while the cackle of the hungry geese wandering homewards through the mud pools, alone broke the wide-reaching stillness. Seagulls rose sometimes out of a ploughed field as they passed, or a solitary heron or a curlew, uttering its melancholy shriek, flapped upwards from the river sedges. They crossed a bridge, and leaving the river behind, took an up-hill road lying for the most part through a wood. After emerging from this, they struck again on a broad high-road, and kept on at a swinging trot for nearly an hour.

“Eighteen miles altogether, Mr. Hogan,” said Shea. “Yonder is Barney’s house. We’re into Ballinagad now.”

They turned up a narrow muddy lane, and Hogan saw right before them a two-storied brick house, which looked very much the worse for time and weather. In front of the hall door, if the entrance deserved that appellation, was a huge pool of water; stepping-stones laid down in this showed that it was a permanent institution. Fowls of all sorts seemed as much at home in the house as in the yard, which was indicated by a ruined wall running out beside it to the left.

Barney appeared now at the door, and after hallooing to a man to come and take the horse, welcomed the travellers to his mansion, and led the way in. Pointing to the holes in the floor of the entry, he warned

Hogan against putting his foot inadvertently in them, and related with glee how MacScutch, the agent, had twisted his ankle the day that he came up to inspect the state of the place. He led the way into the one sitting-room of the house—which, indeed, looked a great deal more like the robbers' caves to be read of in romance than a sitting-room in the ordinary sense of the word. There was no grate; and a perfect stack of turf was blazing on the hearthstone. A rickety painted table and half a dozen old chairs, in a fearful state of dilapidation, composed the whole furniture, save a broken sofa, one end of which was supported in a hole which had been made in the wall of the room apparently for that especial purpose, and which seemed the chosen home of a brace of fine pointers and a clever-looking terrier—all three of which were curled up on it. Daniel O'Connell, Robert Emmet in his memorable Hessian boots, and other worthies, graced the walls of the room. In every corner lay whips, saddles, bridles, and other implements of Barney's profession; for, although ostensibly a farmer, his sole occupation was horse-breeding.

This stalwart fellow had a dull, hoggish life enough; perched in such a weather-beaten eyrie all the year round. Unbroken in its sameness save when he started with some of his young stock for a horse fair or market, Barney's life was monotonous in the extreme. His profession was by no means an arduous one—it left rather too much idle time on his hands. He had no wife: the lease of his farm being almost run out, none of the match-makers around considered him worth their attention. Newspaper reading consumed most of his spare time. The *Enfranchiser* came down from Dublin daily; and he and a neighbour, a dairy farmer, subscribed for the *Daily Telegraph* between them. Every in and out of the Tichborne case was as familiar to Barney Shane as to any other newspaper student of the day, and filled up many a gap in the otherwise scant budget of gossip. He followed the fortunes of the Carlists with unwavering interest, identifying that particular party in some blind way with the Catholics and nationalists, and looking upon the Republicans with disfavour, as aliens and heretics. On wet days—by no means rare in his mountain district—Barney would retire to bed with a sheaf of papers collected from all parts (he never heeded dates), and read all day till dinner-time. Dinner over, the pipe beguiled an hour; and then, having finished his dudheen, Barney would kick the dogs off his sofa and take a nap. He usually spent the evenings in some of the neighbouring farm-houses: or if disinclined to go out, would despatch one of the “runners” al-

ways hanging about his place to fetch a neighbour, or, last resource, the school-master, to help to while away the long dull evenings.

Hogan seated himself by the fire, and looked round him with astonishment. The floor was bare, save for a plentiful covering of dirt, for it plainly had never been washed. The walls had at one time been whitened, but were now an indescribable dingy brown,—mud-coloured, indeed, they looked to be by the light of the home-made tallow candles which graced the table. A red-haired barefooted girl brought in a clean though coarse cloth, which she spread; then a dish of ham, and three or four dozen fried eggs, tea, and bread and butter made their appearance; to all of which they did ample justice. Barney was hospitality itself, and forced the viands on his guests with right good will.

Ere the supper was half over, a horse's foot was heard without; and the little curate, Father Desmond, having alighted with no small diplomacy on a dry stone, and picked his way through the pitfalls of the entry, presented his jolly countenance at the door of the room.

"Ah! By the powers, boys, is it here I find ye? Ned Shea, sure ye promised to dine with me to-day, and Mauriade has lost her temper (aisy losin'—God help the finder) entirely waiting for ye. Have you the news? Of course ye have."

"Aye; Kilboggan's at his old thricks," said the master of the house; "come on over here and sit down, Father Dan."

"Where's Master Dicky?" asked Father Desmond, taking his seat. "Sure he ought to be with you, Mr. Hogan."

"I could not get him away from the ladies down there, the little villain. It's soothing my voters he ought to be, and not the pretty girls."

"They ought to make a counsellor out of that chap," said Barney. "The divil's own tongue he's got in his head. Nothin' kills me but the cheeky way he walks into 'Jim.'"

"Ah! bedad then, boys," said Father Desmond, "look out for Sunday, at last mass. 'Jim' is going to fire on ye. Kilboggan will give the right of turf-cutting and the chapel ground, and maybe a handful of money into the bargain. The son is worse than ever—no hope of him for six months; and Theodore, the nephew and heir, is to be got in for certain."

"What's this right of turf-cutting?" asked the barrister.

“Faith, like many a more, it is giving us back a present of what’s our own,” said Barney. “He stopped the turf-cutting to the people along Sandy’s Lane; and they always had it. I’ll tell you who knows the history and the ins and outs of it,—Killeen.”

Hogan made a note of the item, thinking he might make capital of it.

“He took in the far common,” continued Barney, “that never was his at all; run a big wall round it, and dared any one trespass.”

“What’s his income now? This estate should be very valuable,” asked Hogan of the priest.

“Thirty-five thousand a year out of this county, sir. Yes, and he doesn’t spend as many pence in it. Neither here nor in Dublin does that man leave one penny of his money; and look at the state of the town. The people are literally bribed to go into the poorhouse. He wouldn’t drive a nail to keep a cabin from falling about their ears. No; keep them down, and down with them.”

“Look at that, Mr. Hogan,” said Barney; “our money—yes, ours! the rents of the lands that ought to be ours—carried out of the country; and look at the place. The people are fading off the land. The shop-keepers below there are broke. There’s less business doing through the country now than ever was. It’s the small people that are the support of the business people; and when they’re not in it, who consumes?”

“To be sure,” said Hogan. “He gives no employment of any sort, either, I suppose?”

“Divil a bit Mary!” roared the host, “are you coming with that hot water and glasses? I can tell you, Mr. Hogan, when we get Home Rule we’ll make a clean sweep of absentees.”

“Do you propose to confiscate their estates, or to put on a tax?” asked the barrister, who was making his punch.

“Oh, a tax—a smart tax,” said Ned Shea. “Mr. Hogan, what way is that you’re making your punch? Ah! come on, now; a half-glass.”

“A tax, wisha!” sneered Barney. “I’d tax him: strip him clean and bare, as he stripped many a one, and let the State take all his lands—the Protestant villain and swaddler!”

“Swaddler he is; no doubt of that,” said Father Desmond.

“Well,” replied Barney, “and look at Father Corkran, below there, maintaining a Protestant foreign tyrant against Mr. Hogan here.”

“Yes, indeed: a priest sending a Protestant into Parliament—it is very strange,” said the candidate. “What can we expect that Englishman to do for you,—if he were a Catholic, even?”

Hogan always insisted on displaying this special virtue when in presence of any of “the cloth.”

“Bah! Catholic or not, English is enough,” growled the host; “but for English Catholics, sure there’d be no Protestants at all.”

“Right, Barney; and if English Catholics in the time of Elizabeth had done their duty to the Religion, the Spaniards would have triumphed and England would be Catholic to this day. Lord Howard and the rest of them were, what they always were, cringing to the sovereign—the earthly sovereign—and neglecting their spiritual Ruler, who had the first claim on them.”

“Ah! come now, Mr. Hogan,” said Ned Shea, “soldiers are bound to fight for their flag; I can’t give in to that.”

Father Desmond only laughed good-humouredly. He had some experience of electioneering talk in his day, and was inclined to take the candidate’s professions with a grain of salt; he guessed very shrewdly that this ultra-religious zeal was put on for his especial benefit, and that if he were absent Church interests would be relegated to a secondary position in the discussion. Still, his was not a very high-pitched standard. Such as it was, Hogan, although he did not reach it, came as near doing so as any one else going; besides, he opposed Kilboggan, which was the recommendation. He took a slip of paper out of his pocket, and handed it to Hogan, saying,—

“I had to go round about the place to-day, Mr. Hogan, and those names are promised to you; and here are a few you would be as well to call on. Do you see? I am thinking, though, we should call a meeting down there in the school-house, and let them all come in—say on Friday night (this is Wednesday); then, Saturday night, have the meeting down below in Peatstown.”

“I must be in town on Saturday,” said Hogan. “Could you collect your men for to-morrow night and let me know?”

"I'll send out a couple of gossoons across the fields in the morning," said Shea. "Why not? Time's precious, and the writ is out already."

"I'll tell you who'll vote against Father Jim, anyhow," said Barney: "Hara's brother, Tom Hara of Beerstown."

"Bedad, he will," said Father Desmond.

"Why is that, pray, if one may ask?" said Hogan.

"Well," said Barney, nothing loth to tell the story, "one night at half-past ten Father Jim was going home from a dinner; and passing Hara's house, he saw a light in the windows. He was afraid there was some fun going on that he knew nothing about, so he ties up the horse to a rail and in with him into the house. Well, he brought the whip with him, and nothin' would serve but he hits Hara a crack of the whip, and, says he, 'What has you out of bed this hour of the night? Go 'long to bed, you vagabone, you.' Hara caught the whip from him, sir, and he bet him down the boreen till he broke it on his back. Devil a lie; and well done to him too!"

"Ah! but 'Jim' had it off him in the end," said Ned Shea. "When Hara's haggard burned down that autumn, didn't 'Jim' say from the altar 'twas just the price of him for lifting a hand against the priest?"

"*Pishogues!*" returned his cousin scornfully, "sorrow a more."

"Well, I heard a good story from Father Tom McCollumby the other day," said Father Desmond.

"Tell us that, Father Dan; it's sure to be good."

Father Desmond cleared his voice, took a sip of toddy, and began in a dry solemn way,—

"A friend of his, a priest, was hearing confessions one Saturday, and a boy came to him and said he had a rale bad sin on his mind. 'Well, me good boy, come on wid it,' said his reverence: 'sure we all must be forgiven; so what is it now?' 'Augh den, your riverence, I do be always sayin', Be the Holy Father.' 'You do?—that's very bad, me boy. Now, how often do you be sayin' that? do you say it twiced a day?' 'Oh! begor, an' I do, an' more, your riverence.' 'Do you say it twenty times a day, me good boy?' 'Augh! begor, an' I do; an' more than forty times a day, your riverence!' 'This is very bad indeed, me good boy. Go home, now,' said the priest, 'and get your sister to make you a bag, and hang it round your neck; and every

time you say, Be the Holy Father, drop a little stone in it, and come here to me this day week.'

"Well, that day week his reverence was hearin' as usual in his box, and he heard an awful noise in the church, so he looked out ov the dure; and what does he see but his penitent, an' he draggin' a sack up the body ov the church! 'Tady Mulloy,' says he, 'what do ye mane be sich conduct as that in de church?' 'Shure, yer riverence,' says the fellow, 'dese is all the Be de Holy Fathers, an' de rest of urn's outside in the dray.'"

"Well," said Ned Shea, when the laughter which greeted this anecdote had died away, "I think Father Corkran's story every bit as good."

"Come along with it, then; I haven't heard it," said his cousin Barney.

"There was a Kerry priest," began Ned Shea, "and he had the fashion of hearin' confessions wid a slate an' pencil; an' he'd write down every sin, an' the price of it opposite. Well, one day a big mountainy fellow came to his duty, an', says he, 'I bruk a man's head last Hallow-eve.' 'That's ninepence,' says the priest. 'I cut the tail iv Larry Kelly's cow.' 'That's a shillin': oh, begob, a shillin' that is!' and down it went on the slate. 'I murdered me wife twice.' 'That's thruppence,—go on.' 'I kilt an Orangeman.' 'Whoo!' says the priest, rubbin' out everything; 'that clanes out all the rest.'"

Much laughter greeted Ned Shea's contribution; and the evening wore on fast, amid stories and talk. Barney drank a fearful quantity of whiskey punch, related over and over again his pet grievance against Kilboggan, shook hands and vowed eternal friendship for and awful threats alternately against Hogan if Home Rule did not see him righted ere the two years' lease was out. At last they separated. Shea and Hogan were conducted to their beds in an upper room by the girl, and lost no time in bestowing them-selves for the night.

A pleasant warmth pervaded the bed room from the wood fire in the chimney. Shea stopped a great clock that was ticking loudly in a corner; but just as they were sinking to sleep a peculiar noise was heard in the kitchen beneath them.

"May I never," said Shea, sitting up in his bed, "if Biddy isn't making butter this hour of the night! I heard her tell Barney she'd churn, as the butter was out."

Sure enough, they could distinctly hear the thud of the dasher below. The servant, after her hard day's toil, was now setting to work at nearly one o'clock at night of her own accord to make butter for their breakfast.

"We ought to stop her; it's too bad, by Jove," said Hogan, who indeed was actuated more by fear of being kept awake than by consideration for the weary girl.

"Lord, no, man! don't do that," said Ned Shea; "she'd rather than not, and it wouldn't be gracious."

Hogan resigned himself to sleeplessness for the night, or the better portion of it; and while admiring the hospitable thoughtfulness of the poor handmaid, wished in his heart she would take it into her head that a night's rest was of more importance to the guest whom she delighted to honour. Not so, however: the dasher went for hours; the monotonous sound ceased at last, and Hogan was able to follow the example of Shea, who, less sensitive of nerve, had long before sunk to sleep.

At about eight o'clock they rose and went to the pump where the master of the house usually performed his ablutions. Refreshed by the cold water, Hogan enjoyed his breakfast—a repetition of the supper of the night before, except that there was no punch; and directly afterwards they sallied forth to business, accompanied by Barney. The morning was dry and clear; and the sun, a welcome and rare visitor, lighted up the landscape cheerily. The grass seemed greener and fresher, the larches' silver bark and the red coats of the pines glistened and glowed after the rain; and behind, at the foot of the hill, the river shone like silver between the rows of tall bulrushes. They pulled up on the top of a hill; and away to the left, just at the bend of a distant wood, Hogan saw the smoke of the railway engine curling upwards, and just a faint echo of its rattle reached his ears. Shea pointed him out several of the farmhouses they were to visit, lying at different points of the landscape before them: bare, ugly buildings, the plastered walls looking hideously discoloured by the rain. The great straggling ditches were overflowing, pools of rain-water lay on the fields, and came up almost to the doors of the houses.

"It's a terribly bare spot; wretched-looking! Have these fellows no leases? or what is the reason they have so little care of their places?"

“All tenants at will,” returned Barney; “and if they were only to let MacScutch know they ate a good dinner, he’d be down on them and raise the rent in no time. It’s their interest to be as poor as they can, and to look poor and miserable,—let alone to keep up a decent appearance. They’re afraid to buy manure lest he should find it out; and that was always the way with these people.”

“They have no capital to farm with?”

“Not a penny. See, there’s Daly’s house below,”—and Shea pointed with his whip to a long thatched house on the brow of a slight eminence opposite, to them. “Daly married a girl with a fortune of six hundred the other day; well, instead of putting that in the land, he gave the two sisters two hundred each and portioned them off, and then the old father and mother got two hundred for their share in the farm and place. That’s the way down here; they’d never think of spending their money on stock, or putting it in the land at all.”

“The two hundred the sisters each got will no doubt go in the same way.”

“Exactly the same way: ‘tis the custom. You know it wouldn’t be fair for the son to get everything. He has the land, and then the money he gets with the wife fortunes off his sisters; they have a right to their share as well as him.”

“But would it not better to put that money in the land, and——”

“It is to have the rent raised on him; and who’d take the sisters off his hands, either? These men never marry without a fortune.” “Ah! Daly’s a queer chap,” said Barney: “a real clever fellow. He had a deal to do in the Fenian scare. Sure, he was a head-centre, and in prison too; he had to run to America. Wait till you see the place where the rifles that came from America were hid, and the old still in the haggard. Sure, he used to make four or five gallons of whiskey in the week.”

“And was never found out?”

“Never. He gave it up, though, a while ago. You see he thought to make money on it; but all the neighbours round about used to be sending for a pint now and a quart again; an’ so, begad, they all got it in a neighbourly way. Pat Daly was never the fellow to refuse them. So where was the good of wasting money and time, for them to have it to drink with their potatoes and buttermilk?”

“Not a very profitable business, certainly.”

The horse now turned into a deep muddy lane, that led up the slope to Daly’s house; and after a quarter of an hour’s splashing and climbing, they found themselves before a broken gate. The house, beside which lay a stable-yard, ill kept and ruinous, like all the rest, was a long one-storied thatched building, that, had it been at all well kept or orderly, would have been comfortable and pretty to look at. The windows were broken, and the thatch out of repair; and a grassy slope, the lie of which would have delighted a gardener, before the house, was abandoned to the tender-mercies of a lank pig and her family, who had wandered out of the farm-yard. A couple of half-fed dogs, which were roused from their sleep under the hedge, now set to barking with all their might and main.

The door of the house flew open, and a tall man, about thirty-five years of age, dressed in a smart suit of grey tweed, made his appearance. He wore a moustache and “goatee,” like a Yankee, and used an immense number of Yankee idioms in his speech: in fact, but for the native brogue underlying and cropping up every now and then, he might almost have passed for a New York loafer.

“Now, Daly, this is Mr. Hogan—our member that is to be, please God,” was Barney’s introduction.

Mr. Daly at first thought of simply bowing, but remembering the usage of his adopted country, he held out a dirty hand, and honoured Hogan’s with a prolonged shaking.

“Most proud to be acquainted, sir. Are you calk’lating to stay long with us in our part of this country, sir?”

Hogan explained his visit, and apologized for the necessary shortness of its duration. Mr. Daly, who grew more and more Yankee in his accent as he resumed his self-confidence, led the way into the parlour, first driving out a couple of hens which had got in and were perched on the end of an old horsehair sofa. Hogan heard a scamper and rustle as he entered, and guessed sapiently that something else besides the poultry had received notice to quit. The floor was of clay, which certainly harmonised well in colour, and in other ways too, with the furniture and fittings. At one end of the room was an old square piano, open, perhaps with a view to showing that it really was a piano, and not another article of furniture; its small size and peculiar shape being calculated to give rise to doubts on the subject. At the other was an old-fashioned spin-

dle-legged mahogany buffet, curiously inlaid with brass and bits of carved wood, but so thick with dirt, so encrusted with the dust and grease of ages, that it was only where the chance rubbings of passers-by had prevented extraneous accumulations that the original material could be seen. On this was placed, *mirabile dictu*, a gilt French clock under its glass shade—a paltry, vulgar thing, worth possibly some thirty shillings, and of which the hands were fixed in stock immobility; perhaps, like its owners, too full of dignity and pride to do an honest day's work. On the walls were the prints to be found in every cabin—O'Connell, Robert Emmet, and a few of the hideous daubs Germany sends broadcast over the world, under the names of some of the more prominent members of the calendar of Roman saints. Over the fireplace, begrimed and smoky, hung a sewed picture, representing St. Patrick issuing from a magnificent Gothic church, the purely pointed style of which would have delighted the heart of Ruskin and Pugin. This, with the cushions on the sofa, were the handiwork of Mrs. Daly—a “lady,” and of “shuparior edgication,” as denoted by the same productions. The chairs were horsehair, like the sofa; like it, too, the majority of them were broken. The fireplace seemed a wilderness of papers, broken bottles, and ashes. A stale smell of punch and tobacco hung about the place; and on the chimneypiece was a suggestive-looking row of glasses—most of them minus the shanks. Even Barney Shane's bachelor den was less forlorn and hopeless looking than this.

“Wal, sir, be seated. I'm proud to see you.” And Mr. Daly, after handing the most trustworthy-looking of the chairs to his guest, took up a free-and-easy bar-room sort of attitude on another. As a travelled man of the world, he assumed at once a superior tone with Barney and Ned Shea, meaning to impress them with his powers of conversing with the Dublin gentleman, and to establish himself at the same time in a proper position as a man of great political influence and experience, home and foreign, in the opinion of the member.

“Very bad weather for spring operations, Mr. Daly. Your sowing must be backward,” began Hogan.

“We are behind, sir. I opine we'll have a real moist time all raownd. Country's most depressed at present, except as to politics, sir; we're pretty lively on politics just now. Home Rule's a-going to shake up the Britishers. Make the Government a fine darned fix there, hey, Barney? The Fenian scare won't be a patch on this.”

“Ha, indeed! You are a Home Ruler, then, Mr. Daly?” Hogan was rather puzzled by the fellow, and scarcely knew where to begin.

“I should think I was: yes. Consid’able some, I am. Only the programme isn’t quite so clear laid down as what I’d wish. However, sir, I guess that’ll turn up all right. I hope it won’t be long till we see a real Irish Republic: no half measures; the whole hog or none, that’s my idea; and——”

“Ah! Come on now, Daly, wid yer stuff. Do you imagine Mr. Hogan is come to listen to your rubbish? A Republic, and a New York goverment—bah!” Ned Shea was the speaker, standing with his broad back against the chimneypiece.

“Why not?” said Barney. “Wouldn’t Kilboggan be worse than any government? Ireland for the Irish; and no English thieves of landlords carrying the money over the sea to spend it.”

“Right you are, Barney; and isn’t everything, whiskey and beef and potatoes and all, going over the sea instead of being kept here for our use? Wait till we’re up in Dublin, till you see the stopper we’ll clap on exportation for them—yew bet.”

“And where’ll I get the price for my fat stallfeds?” said Ned Shea. “Bedad, Daly, ‘tishn’t you and your Fenians and Home Rulers will give me my money for them, like the Liverpool salesmasters.”

“And how about the clergy, Mr. Daly?” asked Hogan.

“The clergy, Mr. Hogan? what about them? The clergy have changed their tactics entirely. They were with us in ‘48; but in this last—the Fenian affair, you know—how scandalous their conduct was! They proved themselves utter renegades—mere truckling aristocracy worshippers. They want nothing; and what do they care for our patriotic aspirations? Their influence is gone. I bet my life, sir, I have more influence in the town this moment than the parish priest; and this Ballot business will do for them entirely. It’s a real grand system, sir; and the landlords are equally defeated by it. Why, in America, sir,——”

There is no knowing where the loquacious Mr. Daly would not have dragged the conversation, had not the appearance of Mrs. Daly, in her Sunday silk dress, interrupted it. She was older than her husband; and had been a pretty woman, but was now slatternly and unhealthy-looking. Her manner to Hogan had an assumption of familiarity and equality somewhat displeasing, were it not for its ludicrousness. She affected

to be cool with Shea because his wife had declined her acquaintance, though both families could be “traced up” to an equal height in point of pedigree. She apologized for the absence of her “servant” (such people have always servants), and going to a press in the wall, produced a blown-glass decanter of whiskey and another of highly-coloured sherry. Then, holding the glasses up to the light, she discovered that they had not been washed since the last time they were used; so in the most natural manner she stepped into the bed-room, and reappearing with a very dubious-coloured, but unmistakable bedroom towel, proceeded to rub the glasses in it. Hogan’s gorge rose at the sight. Shea, who was as alive to the manœuvre as he, winked at him meaningly, as if encouraging him to an inevitable duty. It was of no use. Hogan begged for a cup of milk instead; and the hostess, good-natured and hospitable, however “clarty,” granted his request. In return, Hogan held it his duty to be agreeable, asked after Mrs. Daly’s uncle, the parish priest of a southern parish, for whom he had once conducted a case; hoped to have the pleasure of meeting her at Kingstown in the summer; invited the husband to attend and speak at the meeting to be held at Ballinagad, and engaged him as agent and canvasser at once. The conversation became general then, and after a short time the visitors rose to go. Hogan, struck by a sudden thought, invited Daly to dinner at the Kilboggan Arms; and after a flourishing exchange of civilities they again mounted the car and began to thread their way down the boreen.

“That’s a queer chap, now, isn’t he, Mr. Hogan?” asked Barney,—“a very clever fellow entirely; if Pat Daly ’ud only mind himself, what’s to hinder him going into Parliament, now, eh? Can’t he speak beautiful?”

“Arrah, Barney, man,” cried Ned Shea, “for God’s sake what are you talking of at all? That dirty blathering fool,—ah!—him in Parliament? You wouldn’t take the glass, then, Mr. Hogan?” and Ned Shea, now fairly out of earshot, laughed loud and long. “Well, that’s a fine-lady wife for you! Now you see Irish pride, Mr. Hogan. I suppose you never saw the like of that in Dublin yet. Well, well; and now, do you know, Pat Daly threw over a nice, smart, sensible girl, with a fine farm of her own, just because Miss Burke of Limerick was better family and had an uncle a parish priest. Ay,—right well you know it, too, Barney Shane, and yet you’ll believe in him!”

“I give in to you there, indeed, Ned,” returned Barney.

They held on now, up hill and down dale, through mud and water, on their round among the farmers. Everywhere Hogan received promises of support; everywhere he heard the same complaints of Kilboggan—the people all leaving for America, the little country shopkeepers rained, the small farmers sold out, the farms knocked together or “squared,” and let to those who could pay the heavy fines exacted, no leases renewed without fines, and all the money carried off to London and spent out of the country. Double wages to servants, and no servants to be had. The graziers and dairy-farmers were all sub-letting grass and cows to a factor, who put in his own servants and took all the work off the owner’s hands, paying so much rent per cow. This left the farmer little or nothing to do; and the spare time, it may be imagined, hung rather heavily on his hands. For all these evils Home Rule was looked to as the panacea. How, or why, they never troubled their heads to ask. It was the new shibboleth which was to succeed Fenianism, and to do all that Fenianism had left undone; just as Fenianism was to wipe up the tears of the young Irelanders or the Phoenix party—the fatal legacy of unrest and discontent that seems entailed on the Celt. Grand qualities these two: the first elements of progress in every nation, when turned in the right direction. Instead of setting themselves to hew a channel for these tempestuous waters, the would-be guides invoke the negative qualities beloved of Philistines from all time common-sense, and content. What has common sense done for the world? and what has not content left undone?

It was Hogan’s first exploration of the country parts of his native land; and he was astonished beyond measure at the Irishness of everything. He had seen Boucicault’s plays; and, like many of the audience, believed the characters to be the usual stock Hibernians that people the dramatists’ brains—evoked ready-made with as little trouble as are the costumes out of the property-man’s wardrobes; but here he might see Miles na Coppaleens and Shauns the Post walking by the ditches, dressed in the frieze coats, brimless hats, and knee-breeches so familiar to theatre-goers. The dirt, the carelessness, the merriment, the overflowing genuine hospitality,—all were present. Everywhere they went they had to take their glass of whiskey, which in the poorest place was always forthcoming, and drink to the toast of Home Rule. It was late in the day when the horse’s head was turned homewards; but Hogan did not grudge the time or exertion, for he felt his cause was gaining.

On arriving at Mulla Castle he found a bundle of letters. A telegram from Saltasche told him the stale news that Wyldoates was on his way home, and might reach Kilboggan Castle next day. The Bishop, as usual, sent a long epistle full of warnings and cautions. The Mother Superior of St. Swithin's scolded him for not coming to see her before leaving, and desired him on no account to omit to claim relationship with her in speaking to the Sheas, some of whose children were in her school. Hogan sat down until dinner-time to write letters, business and other. When he came down to the drawing-room, later on in the day, he found his host standing by the fire with a serious expression on his face.

"The priests are all gone to dine at Chapel House. That means a settlement of plans, Mr. Hogan. By this time they're all ordered to canvass for Wyldoates," began he.

"Whew!" returned the barrister, walking up to the fireplace; "that's the way now, is it?"

"Ah! you have no chance with them, sir. You see, Father Corkran's chapel is too small and too tumble-down entirely; and he wants that patch of ground off the main street that's Kilboggan's to dispose of, and Jim won't be given that for nothing. And then, too, the Quarries would be shut against him. Ah! it's a bad job—a bad job."

"Would no other plot of land but that lot suit him?"

"No: or he pretends not. Moreover, he don't like Home Rule—damn the bit. He knows well the Home Rule the people here are thinking of is just a regular Republic. In Dublin 'tis a sort of a Federal Parliament, with one of the Queen's sons for Lord Lieutenant, and a grand court and the rest of it. But, faith, 'tis a congress they want in this part; you can see it for yourself. Hear Daly."

"Do you mean to say that the priests and their candidate will carry the day against Home Rule? What! with the Ballot?"

"Bah!" put in Killeen, the editor, who just then came in; "not at all, Shea. Their back is broken, for good and all. I met Father Jim coming down street; and you might light a match on his face when I told him Wyldoates would be out in the cold. That's where he is, sure and certain, Mr. Hogan."

"Never fear, Mr. Killeen; but we have not a man to spare: recollect, over-confidence is very dangerous."

Knowing the indolent, easy-going fellows with whom he had to deal, Hogan determined to stick to that as his motto. They went down to dinner—a somewhat quieter repast than that of the evening of their arrival. Dicky turned up in time, having been out canvassing, in company with the two best-looking daughters of the house.

Mrs. Shea was rather low-spirited; she had met Father Jim, and he had passed by without pretending to see her.

“Didn’t see you, Margaret, hey?” said her husband; “wait till to-morrow, or next day, and he’ll stare at you and never see you. I know him.”

“And he’s invited to dine at the Castle on Saturday. The housekeeper was down to the hotel; all the party are to stay there, and they’re as busy as bees. Dear me!” sighed she wistfully, thinking it might be better that Ned had sided with the great folks. She felt confident that “The Castle” would win. It seemed so natural: grand folks, in Mrs. Shea’s mind, had always a sort of divine right on their side in everything. Moreover, the mere fact that the priests were acting in the opposite interest gave her an uncomfortable sensation. Nothing went right or well that they opposed or disapproved. How could it? And she began to conjure up in her own mind all the dismal stories she had ever heard: Hara’s haggard burnt down not six months after he quarrelled with his clergy; Mr. Magrath, of High Park, who married the Protestant lady and drank himself to death within the year; Biddy Flannery, that would marry the Presbyterian sergeant, and had a deaf-and-dumb baby, and never held up her head after. It was tempting Providence, clearly, with “foot and mouth” raging in the very next county; and she determined to send a pound to her sister, the nun Mary Columbkille, of the Poor Clues, for such “intentions” and prayers as could be had for the money.