

## VOLUME I

### CHAPTER 2

“But not their joys alone thus coarsely flow,  
Their morals, like their pleasures, are but low;  
For, as refinement stops, from sire to son  
Unaltered, unimproved, the manners run  
Hence Ostentation, here, with tawdry heart,  
Pants for the vulgar praise which fools impart.  
Here Vanity assumes her pert grimace,  
And trims her robes of frieze with copper lace.  
Here beggar Pride defrauds her daily cheer,  
To boast one splendid banquet once a year.  
The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,  
Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause.”

—Goldsmith, “Traveller.”

NOVEMBER had well set in ere Mr. Hogan returned to town, refreshed and reinvigorated for his winter’s work by a long walking tour through France, Switzerland, and the north of Italy. He had enjoyed the company of well-selected and congenial travelling companions; and his party, unlike most travelling parties, had all returned home on as friendly terms with each other as when they started.

His first care, of course, was to go and see his uncle, the Bishop. Him he found looking well and jolly, after a six weeks’ stay at a famous boarding-house in Kingstown, much patronised by the rural clergy, and where his lordship loved to spend his vacation in the society of his old school friends.

After the first greetings were over, and the young man had answered the Bishop’s enquiries about his foreign friends, the conversa-

tion imperceptibly glided into the old grooves; and naturally the first topic that presented itself, and the most agreeable—personal affairs—was awarded the place of honour.

“I want you, sir,” began the barrister, drawing as he spoke an envelope out of his pocket, “to arrange a small matter for me. I find this invitation to read a lecture on St. Ignatius Loyola before the Catholic Young Men’s Association of St. Columbkille next Thursday. Now, next Thursday won’t suit me, and I’d like to put it off. Saltasche is giving a dinner-party, and he wants me to meet—er——”

“Put it off, hey?” cried the Bishop, astonished; “and what on earth would Father Taggart say to that?”

The Bishop was intensely amazed at his nephew’s proposal. The idea of putting off a lecture to deliver which was such an honour, and moreover thereby to incur the risk of offending such a valuable supporter as a parish priest, seemed incredible to him. Besides, his name would be in the papers, and perhaps a report of the lecture as well; and everybody knows what an important thing it is for a rising young barrister to get and keep his name well before the public. Hogan had always recognised the truth of that axiom and from the beginning had steadfastly kept it in view and shaped his conduct accordingly. So much so, in fact, that he seemed to have made it an integral part of his plan of life to appear on every platform he could make his way to. Little by little he came to be known, and through the influence of the Bishop and his friends had managed to secure a fair practice: nothing very brilliant; but sufficient with his own means, and what he made by his contributions to journalistic and other literature, to keep him pretty comfortably. He owed a good deal to his own exertions—not that he was very hard-working, but that he was steady and regular of life; but he owed still more to his friends, and particularly to his clerical friends. Of this we may be sure the Bishop was well aware; and it is not to be wondered at, then, that his lordship was amazed at the notion of his nephew throwing over Father Taggart for a dinner-party—and a Protestant dinner-party! There was a ring of independence and audacity in the proposition that sounded strangely unbecoming.

“Well—er—it will be only postponed. I’m getting up the lecture in first-rate style for him, I assure you; and—er—there are to be people there whom I may find useful.”

“Now, John, I have told you before I don’t like your consorting with Protestants. ’Pon me word,” reiterated the Bishop, waxing warmer, “I don’t like it at all. People in general are against it. There’s loads of Catholics in Dublin wouldn’t know them at all. Haven’t you society enough in your own class? Why, there’s Mrs. Rafferty. Mother Assumption has told me she says she wouldn’t lose her time askin’ Protestants to her house. It is not approved of at all.”

“Oh, that reminds me I have arrived home in time for their house-warming. It’s to-night.” And the young man, not sorry for the opportunity of changing the conversation, took a gorgeous white and gold card out of his pocket. “Dancing at ten.’ H’m; they’re very early in the season, are they not?”

“Rather; but then you see they’re new people—ahem! and by getting the start of everybody, and asking a lot of the ball-giving ones, they secure invitations for the rest of the season.”

“They are sickeningly vulgar, to be sure,” said Hogan, calling to mind Mrs. Rafferty’s appearance at the convent entertainment in the summer.

“The father and mother *are* plain people; yes, plain, worthy people. The girls are very well educated—very.”

“H’m! to be sure,” assented Hogan, absently. He was thinking of the women he had met abroad: clever, well-bred English-women, bright American girls, who had been “all over” and “all round”; the pleasant artistic and literary talks, the clear bright air and crisp autumn landscapes. To come from all that to fog, and mud, and common-place, narrow-minded mediocrities, “Not know Protestants!” How droll it sounded, after the glimpse of broader, larger life he had just had!

“Now, my lord, I must be gone. I’ve a good deal to do, you know. I’ll drop round on Sunday afternoon. Good-bye.”

When he got into the street—which he did quickly, for some sort of impatience had come upon him—he drew a long, deep breath. Foggy and close as the air was, it seemed strong and bracing after that of the room he had just left. However, he was a practical, clear-headed young man; and he shook off the mood and train of thought suggested by the talk he had had with his relative, with a smile at his own absurdity, and started off down town, on business intent.

It was very late in the evening, almost half-past eleven, when he reached Mrs. Rafferty's house in Mountjoy Square. He had no difficulty in discovering the mansion, and was not a little amused at the appearance it presented. An awning stretched from the hall-door across the pavement, the steps were carpeted, and a couple of big policemen had enough to do to keep back the crowd of ragamuffins who were swarming up the rails and criticising the appearance of the supper-table, which was ostentatiously exposed to their consideration,—the slats of the Venetian blinds having been purposely opened. From the drawing-rooms above, the sound of the music and dancing might be heard across the Square: as the night, though dear and moonlit, was close and muggy, there was a valid excuse for opening the windows to their widest extent, and so securing the desired publicity and renown simultaneously with the necessary ventilation.

Mr. Hogan acknowledged to himself, as he took off his top-coat in the hall, that if the rest of the entertainment was on a par with the arrangements, Mrs. Rafferty was sure of a success. For new people, they seemed to have managed very well indeed. And he surveyed the stands of hothouse flowers and the fountain of perfume which was playing on the centre table, making the hot air more sickly still, with calm approval. At all events, there was plenty of evidence that they had not spared expense; and people are usually pleased by that compliment to their importance.

In a tea room on the first lobby, Mr. Hogan found one of the daughters of the house ministering to the wants of a group of people, the foremost of whom seemed to be his old acquaintance Miss Brangan, taller and stouter than ever, and radiant in a voluminous blue silk. She was accompanied by her papa, an alderman of nineteen stone weight, between whom and herself there was a striking resemblance; and her brother, a young gentleman of no small consequence, who had just left one of the diocesan colleges. Hogan shook hands with the Alderman, and having secured a cup of coffee, drew to one side and looked about him. Mr. Aloysius Brangan was conversing with Miss Rafferty in a patronising, offhand manner. Hogan was struck by the rare richness of his brogue.

"You're very lucky to have such a fine night," he was saying. "At Kellys', the other night, it poured rain on us. It's as dry as a bone, and moonlit."

"So 'tis," she answered. "We waited on purpose to have the moon."

Mr. Aloysius Brangan stopped in the act of raising his cup to his lips.

“Waited on purpose!” he exclaimed, in blank surprise. “Augh, then! and how did you know you were going to have it?”

“Looked at the almanac, of course,” returned she with a faint giggle, glancing at Hogan, who was obliged to leave the room abruptly.

Mr. Brangan saw he had committed a blunder of some kind; but with creditable *aplomb*, turned off the maladroitness by saying, with a sort of bantering air, as of one superior to all that sort of thing:

“You shouldn’t believe everything almanacs tell you, Miss Rafferty.”

As Hogan was passing up the stairs, he was joined by a trio of college lads with whom he had some slight acquaintance. One of them hailed him by name. He turned round:

“Orpen, is that you? How did you come here?”

Mr. Orpen, a pale-faced gentlemanly-looking young man, of about twenty, glanced over his shoulder and whispered confidentially:

“Don’t know, my dear fellah. Mulcahy is a relative of this lot, and he brought us.”

Further explanation was impossible, for they found themselves in the presence of the lady of the house, who, dressed in gorgeous amber satin, had taken up her position near the door to receive her guests. The rooms were full; and as the lions of the evening, the Lord Mayor and his party, had arrived some time before, dancing was going on.

Mrs. Rafferty introduced Hogan to the Lord Mayor, who shook hands amiably with him.

“Glad to see you, sir. Doctor O’Rooney quite well?”

The minor satellites who were standing round looked respectfully at the recipient of so much honour, who indeed comported himself with astounding easiness, and entered into almost familiar conversation with the Lord Mayor and those select members of the corporation who were grouped about him on the hearthrug. His Worship wore his chain of office over his dress coat; he was a little fat man, with oblique eyes of no colour, mutton-chop whiskers, and three chins. His manner was pompous and self-conscious, as became a self-made man. It must not be supposed, however, that he owed his wealth and high position to either

talent or industry. His father had been a working man; and at the age of twelve Mr. Bartholomew Malowney had entered the grocery and public-house of old Barton Rafferty as messenger. From this humble post he had risen to be barman, and after five years' experience of trade, during which time he had been distinguished chiefly by his rare capacity for keeping sober during business hours, he found a friend to be his surety with Trebblex the brewer, for the entry and stocking of a licensed house in Liffey Street. Father Dorney, the then incumbent of St. Columbkille—he was our Bishop's predecessor—lost no time in recommending this thriving young publican to the good graces of Miss Bridget Slattery, a penitent of his, who possessed five thousand pounds in her own right; and a match was speedily declared. So, as the profits on whiskey, especially in the retail trade, are enormous, it is not surprising that his Worship had the reputation of being very wealthy.

“What do you think of the news from France now?” ventured Hogan carelessly, for he knew exactly what the answer would be.

“Bad job, sir. Ah! what they want there is a king or the Impress; they want a strong hand over them, them Frinch.”

“Couldn't get along with a Republic now, you think?”

“Nothin' of the sort. Ah! that Emperor—poor man, God be merciful to him!—he was the one for them: a tight hand is what they require.”

“You're right there,” put in another City father, also a publican and sinner.

Hogan was listening with a polite smile of acquiescence, all the time scornfully contrasting the speakers with the *haute bourgeoisie* of the French provincial towns through which he had been traveling—well educated, clear-headed Frenchmen, amongst whom he had spent some pleasant and profitable hours—and then turned to the last speaker, who continued with an air of omniscience:

“There ar'n't any eminent men among them at all,—not one fit to come to the front. They're a poor lot compared to what they were—a poor lot, sir!” and the City father gave a sigh as of one who remembered better days.

Hogan smiled sardonically. Remembering the leading article in that morning's *Enfranchiser*, he wondered to himself what their views would be next week; and as he often wrote for that journal, resolved to treat these worthy citizens to some novel doctrine ere long.

“What a meeting that was in Glasgow!” Hogan said this to Alderman Brangan, in the hope of bringing on the Home Rule question, and taking the opinion of the “whiskey faction” on it.

“Yes, faith!” answered he; “an’ what it manes I can’t make out. What do those Glasgow Irish know or care about it? It puzzles me intirely.”

“You don’t go in for it, then?” put in the barrister quickly.

“I don’t see how we’re to get on,” broke in the whiskey importer, Rafferty, “if the trade between the two countries is to be interrupted. And, faith, that’s what it means with a large party of them. No one need tell me, for I see and hear it every day.”

“Augh!” growled the chief magistrate; “I don’t know nor care what it manes. Trade never was better all over the country,—never to my knowledge, than this year.”

Never, indeed! The street leading to the chief of his Worship’s public-houses was almost impassable at the moment he was speaking, owing to the crowd of drunken men and women who had just been turned out in obedience to the regulations, and who were brawling and staggering along the thoroughfare, making night hideous with their din.

“But throughout the country the feeling is intensely in favour of the movement?”

“Ay,” rejoined the Lord Mayor carelessly; “but it’s not so in Dublin, I can tell you.”

“You’re a Home Ruler, Mr. Hogan, ain’t you?” asked a little wizened man, a wealthy salesmaster, whose hands had completely disappeared up his coat-sleeves.

But Hogan, to his delight, was prevented answering this question by the hostess, who led him up to one of the Misses Malowney, and introduced him for the next dance. As they crossed the room, Hogan caught a glimpse of a face in the crowd which seemed familiar to him. It was that of a beautiful girl who was standing in a crowded corner. She looked at him, too, with a glance that had something of recognition in it. He puzzled himself for some minutes trying to think where it was he had seen her before. The floor was too crowded to dance with any pleasure, and he contrived to place himself and his partner at an angle where he could observe the young lady whose face caused him so much perplexity. She had

fine brown hair, rippled, and with a dash of gold in it; blue eyes with dark lashes and pretty sweeping brows; an exquisite neck and shoulders. There was something distinguished, in her appearance, as well as in her manner, which was excessively quiet and in no way self-conscious. High-coloured, dashing Miss Brangan, with her roving black eyes and furbelowed silk train, seemed to attract far more attention and observation, if not admiration.

Mrs. Rafferty, roaming about, on hospitable cares intent, caught her nephew, Stanislas Mulcahy, by the arm, and whispered to him anxiously, "Stanislas, d'ye see Miss Davoren anywhere? I'm fairly dazzled, and me eyes is no good. Where is she at all? I'm afraid she hasn't danced yet."

"Over there by the door, do you see?—in white, leaning on her brother."

"I'm all right. Now, Mr. Malowney, allow me to get ye a nice partner for the next. She's a connection of Lord Rathbone. Come along o' me"; and taking that gentleman by the arm, Mrs. Rafferty advanced towards her guest with a solemn air. She was intensely impressed with the importance of the task she had undertaken. Mindful of the large sum of money the entertainment was to cost, she was consumed with anxiety lest anything should go wrong, any important guest be neglected, or any solecism, whether of behaviour or arrangements, be committed. She had taken all possible precautions; the list of guests was very satisfactory. The Lord Mayor and his family, and nearly all the Roman Catholic members of the Corporation, were present. The Lady Mayoress had opened the ball, with the master of the house, just as she had done last Monday night at Mrs. Kelly's. More gentlemen than ladies had been invited; so there was no likelihood of complaints on the score of partners. Nearly all the eligible men of her set were present—some well-known doctors, for years looking out for heiresses,—dancing at every ball, promenading Grafton Street on week-days, and the Pier on Sundays,—most of them in debt, and all tolerably fast living,—putting off the day of retrenchment and economy until the rich heiress should turn up to make everything square, and bring them the connection which their own idleness and self-indulgence had prevented them making. Lawyers there were also, chiefly of the briefless variety, on the same errand bent; a few young men connected with Catholic legal functionaries, who were beyond Mrs. Raf-

ferty's ken, and a few college boys brought by her nephew. Business men of every description formed the majority of the male division.

Then for girls there were the Misses Malowney,—Aloysia Margaretta and Augustina Eily,—“beautifully educated” and gorgeously attired, who were of course the first in importance as the daughters of the Lord Mayor; then Miss Brangan, and a host of nieces, cousins, and connections generally. On the whole, Mrs. Rafferty felt that so far she could hold her own with the best of the ball-givers of her acquaintance. As for the supper, it had been ordered from the Lord Lieutenant's own caterer at so much a head, and she had no misgivings on that score. So she sailed about the room, pairing off the right couples together, taking care that the Misses Malowney got the most eligible of all the eligible young men, and that her own daughters came next in order of precedence. She was inclined to be gracious to Miss Davoren; so she brought her a very select partner in the person of Mr. Laurence Malowney, the Lord Mayor's eldest son.

The crowd was tremendous in the ball-room; it was quite impossible to dance; and after several attempts Hogan and his partner relinquished the endeavour, and got into a corner to wait for some of the couples to retire, and give them place.

“There are far too many,” said Hogan; we never could get through that crush.” He was perfectly content to look at Miss Davoren; and he had at last recollected where he had met her—at the Convent last July.

“Yes,” answered Miss Malowney, with a cross look at her flounces, a part of which had been carried off by a couple who had just plunged past. “It's nonsense to be askin' so many at once. However, that's the way now. Every one must be invited, or they'll only be offended. They ought to do like the Moores—give two balls, and divide the people that way.”

“This is the only ball they give in the year, you see.”

“I know; and it's a great mistake too. There's no comfort in going out at all now. There, see!”

Hogan looked in the direction indicated, and laughed at the elbowing and straggles of some half-dozen couples who seemed inextricably entangled.

Miss Malowney declined to risk another turn, and they took up their position by the wall. Hogan found it impossible to talk to her: she was a heavy, stupid young woman; besides, he was engrossed in watch-

ing the frantic struggles of the dancers. Just opposite, Miss Davoren and her partner—a stout little man, who seemed terribly out of breath and heated—halted for a moment. Hogan thought he never saw any one so beautiful. She was very slender of figure and graceful in her movements; and when a great stout woman, dressed in crimson and yellow, stood for a minute beside her, it seemed to him as if a big fall-blown peony had suddenly been contrasted with a delicate newly-opened jasmine star.

Meantime the dance went on: it was now about to stop; and those who had been despairingly waiting for the first batch to tire themselves out, dashed in recklessly. The scene became truly awful: shreds of tulle and gauze floated high above the heads of the dancers; somebody lost her head-dress; and a quantity of little muslin roses battered and dirtied beyond recognition were to be seen now and again in the gaps among the dancers. Miss Davoren resisted the earnest entreaties of her cavalier to risk the struggle; at last, an unfortunate couple fell; the music ceased suddenly, and everybody crushed out and downstairs to the cool room on the landing.

Hogan wanted to secure Miss Davoren for a set of the Lancers just about to form; and to that end he looked around for his friend Mr. Mulcahy. Discovering him in a distant corner, he made towards him. “Want a partner, eh?” asked Mr. Mulcahy, divining his errand, and rising from his seat.

“Yes: that young lady in white yonder.”

“Standing over by the lady in green, eh? Come along then;” and with an expression of unwillingness in his face which did not escape Hogan’s eye, his friend led the way across the room.

“Mr. O’Rooney Hogan, Miss Davoren,” muttered Mr. Mulcahy, and was gone, in obedience to a snail from his aunt. He bowed low and murmured the usual formula.

“I am engaged for this dance. Number five—the waltz? Yes, with pleasure; that is not engaged.”

Then Mrs. Rafferty, who had her eye on our hero, and had no idea of allowing him to be monopolized by outsiders, came up, and led him off to one of her own daughters. She happened to be engaged; but he had the tact to secure a quadrille with her later on, which restored Mrs. Rafferty’s good-humour. A distant cousin of the house was next presented to him, and they made their way together to the dancing-room.

Having taken up a place at the sides, Hogan seeing Miss Brangan opposite, asked his partner who she was.

“A daughter of Alderman Brangan. She’s only just out: she’s very young.” The lady spoke with the flattest Dublin brogue.

“Very fine girl indeed.” Hogan remembered her now, and began to laugh at the reminiscence.

“Rather too stout,” rejoined his partner, who, as one of Mr. Rafferty’s poor relations, acted as a sort of jackal to her patronesses. Miss Brangan was a rival young lady, and consequently not to be praised with impunity by any eligible young gentleman.

“Who is the young lady in white?” he said, indicating Miss Davoren. He knew perfectly well already, but some sudden whim took him to hear what his partner would say of her.

“She’s a Miss Davoren: her father’s in the Castle,—very good family. Her mother was one of Lord Rathbone’s connections.”

“Ah! yes, indeed. Protestant, then?” he asked, with sudden and eager curiosity.

“No; her mother was, or is, I don’t know which. She’s clever, and sings, I’m told, beautifully. She has a lovely *ahxent*.”

Hogan laughed outright at the tone of the encomium. “You seem to know everybody, Miss Doyle?” said he dryly, turning, as he spoke, to survey the lady herself.

“Yes,” she drawled carelessly. “Going out a great deal, one comes to know names and faces.”

She evidently went out a great deal. Her face had the parboiled pasty colour and her eyes the dead look that late hours and excitement always give, and her hair was showing signs of over-frizzing and torturing. There was no guessing at her age: it might have been anything from four-and-twenty to eight-and-thirty. She was pious and gossiping, not too ill-natured, and, as Hogan divined, knew everybody and everything,—a sort of walking biographical cyclopædia, in short.

“Who is the little man dancing with the tall girl?”

“That’s Mr. Alphonsus Kelly; and them two young gentlemen is his two brothers,—Paul Ferdinand and James Hubert. They’re nephews of Mr. Rafferty’s.”

The dance was over. Hogan led his partner back to her seat: he was just in time to hear a whispered and eager conversation between Miss Brangan and one of the young ladies of the house. The next dance was a waltz, and as such of course belonged to the list of forbidden luxuries yclept “fast dances.” Miss Brangan, as a *débutante*, was in a sad quandary; she bit her lips and frowned, and nibbled her pencil in mingled rage and incertitude. It really was no joke,—sixteen out of the twenty-four dances on the programme were “fast.” And now was she to sit still all night during those sixteen dances because of a promise made to a certain Mother Paul some three months ago? It was perfectly dreadful. The piano, and the fiddle, and the French-horn on the balcony outside the back drawing-room window, were playing the “Invitation to the Waltz.” And as they played, her resolutions melted away.

“Eily!” she whispered imploringly to Miss Rafferty, “look, Eily! what’ll I do? I’ll be sitting all night if I don’t.”

“That you will,” replied Miss Eily, who “fast danced” herself. “There’s very few quadrilles.”

“But what’ll Mother Paul and Father M’Quaide say to me?”

“I am not going to fast dance,” said the cousin whom Hogan had just taken back to her seat; “and Mary,” she continued, with a voice of frigid virtue, “at your very first ball too, ye oughtn’t to, now. *I* wouldn’t.”

“Augh there! Mary Doyle yourself, perhaps you’re not asked,” was the angry retort of Miss Rafferty, who did not want Miss Brangan, one of the *élite* of her guests, to be prevented in any way enjoying herself. “Look, Mary, there’s Rose Malowney—and this is her first ball—going off with Doctor MacSwiggan, now!”

Miss Brangan seemed inclined to judge the case more by precedent than on its own merits, so to say. For she was looking all round her eagerly to see who was going to set her an example of disobedience. Presently her eye fell on a couple who were moving in the direction of the dancing-room.

“Now, Eily!” she cried triumphantly, “there’s Father M’Quaide’s own niece, and the—ah—what’s his name? *I will* do it.”

“Very well, Mary—who will I get for you?”

“Whisper, Eily!” lowering her voice, “that young gentleman down there,—him with the lovely humbuggin’ eyes, I mean.”

“Oh, yes; that’s young Mr. Davoren. I’ll get him.”

In a moment the couple were whirling round in the waltz, leaving Miss Doyle seated still on her sofa in all the consciousness of virtue, and wearing an expression of envy and scandalized prudery mingled on her face.

Hogan, who was standing with Miss Davoren close behind the group, heard and saw everything, and was almost convulsed with laughter.

“I am glad to see you are not troubled with scruples,” said he, turning to her. “Isn’t that awfully absurd?”

She was about to answer; but just then an opening appeared, and they swung lightly into the whirling circle. After half a dozen rounds, they dropped out.

“Isn’t it nonsense to forbid waltzes and galops? What on earth is the meaning of it?” he continued, looking at her admiringly as he spoke.

“I don’t know, I’m sure. They seem to me to be all alike—quadrilles and the others. And after all, how *could* a ball be managed without dancing? Certainly it would not be appreciated by these people.”

“Well, and about the theatre? What do you think of the theatre being forbidden, too?”

“I don’t like the theatres at all. They are stupid and absurd: I mean the plays they’re giving now. That prohibition would not affect me in the least. All the same, it is no use defying people; and I daresay the audiences have only increased. Perhaps a few ladies do stay away on account of the prohibition; but the gentlemen, you know, do what they please. I don’t believe one of them has given up fast dancing.”

Mr. Hogan laughed. “You don’t see many of them at ten o’clock mass in the morning—eh?”

“Well, no; it would be strange if I did.”

“Do you mean to say, Miss Davoren,” said he, with affected solemnity, “that you don’t go to ten o’clock mass every morning?”

“I do.”

“May I be permitted to ask why?”

“For the same reason as the gentlemen,” she replied.

He thought a second. “And that is—?”

“I have something else to do.”

Here some couples quitted the dance, and they took a couple of rounds more.

“Suppose we go down and have an ice?” he proposed, as they quitted the room.

She assented, and they made their way down the stairs, which were crowded with sitters. The tea-room was now turned into an ice-room; huge crystal pitchers were filled with iced drinks, and blocks of ice and ferns made the air seem delightfully fresh in contrast to that of the rooms above.

They seated themselves in a window.

“Don’t you think balls a mistake?” asked he.

“There are more enjoyable sorts of entertainment, I fancy,” she replied.

“We have got into the way of thinking here that there is no other mode of enjoying society. In fact, the social system seems to depend wholly on ball-giving. Horribly expensive notion it is, to be sure,” he added, glancing round.

“Decidedly expensive, I should think,” she assented.

“A little more conversation, and a little less fierce dancing, some good music, and a less costly entertainment altogether; a few artistic, literary people, instead of—” a motion of his head towards Lady Shanassy. “Is that your idea, Miss Davoren?”

“I confess that my ideal is something like that,” returned she. “But it is utterly impracticable.”

“Well, you see, fashion has decided in favour of these big squashes. Now, these people may give a Sunday dinner; and after Easter a smaller edition of this; then for the rest of the year they will have not as much as a tea party.”

“That is a stupid way of doing,” rejoined Miss Davoren. “My cousins in Paris tell me that every evening they can go to a friend’s house, uninvited, or have people with themselves, but all without one sou of expense for dress or entertainment.”

“It wouldn’t be practicable here. Men won’t go out unless they are fed. The Mooneys’ ball, last Thursday, failed for want of men; and the

reason was the supper had not been up to the mark on a previous occasion.”

“Well, of course it looks—er—unrefined,” said Miss Davoren, laughing; “but really, to dance from ten till four without ceasing is exhausting work. And at those Parisian houses I know there is a great deal of music, parlour games, and that sort of thing.”

“It would be infinitely preferable to this,” said he, “were it only feasible.”

“It used to be supposed that ladies made society to their wishes. I mean, everything was conformable to their tastes. It is not so now, is it?” she asked.

“My dear Miss Davoren, that was in the old time, before the era of the convent school-girls. I know,” he interposed, “that I am speaking to a young lady of most liberal culture. You must observe for yourself how very uninformed those young ladies are in every way. They can’t talk on any subject. Some one I know says it takes five years for them to get over the bread-and-butterism they bring home from school with them. When a girl leaves an English finishing school she is always fit for the duties of a drawing-room.”

“There is something to be said for as well as against our system,” she said.

“Oh, of course. But if our rulers admit that there is to be society at all, why not go in for it intelligently and rationally?”

“By our rulers, do I understand you to mean the priests? What have they to do with educating us girls? I assure you girls learn at school just what their parents are able to pay for; and above all, just what is most likely to please—the gentlemen.”

“Ah, ah!” said Hogan, noticing her sarcastic tone and smile; “and now tell me what are the *branches*—is that the term?—that please the gentlemen? Antimacassars? piano playing?”

“I don’t know much about gentlemen’s tastes; but you know, of course, it is said that in every country women are educated up to the level of the men’s requirements, not beyond.”

“And *their* requirements,” retorted he, “are determined by *their* education. Now, who educate us in this country, and so fix the standard, eh? You see we revolve in a vicious circle.”

“Hadn’t we better go upstairs again?” said Miss Davoren, replying only by a look to the barrister’s daring speech.

Hogan returned to the aldermanic group on the hearthrug, and was speedily engaged in discussion with the dignitaries who formed it. He declined dancing as much as possible, except when it was with the daughters of the hostess or of the Lord Mayor; and when supper was announced, was deputed to the honourable post of convoying Lady Shanassy down, directly after the Lady Mayoress. After that dowager had taken in her supplies, and was replaced on her sofa, Hogan hastened to secure Miss Davoren, and carried her to a corner of the supper-room, now thronged with hungry people.

The supper was in keeping with the rest of the entertainment everything in strict accordance with the precedent set by the last Castle entertainment. Soup was no longer in fashion, so there was none. Cold fish was the rage, and hot meat; so an enormous salmon was at the foot of the table, and hot roast game to be found everywhere. Pink jellies and fruit jellies were the last novelties; and champagne, that *sine quâ non* of modern entertainments, was to be heard popping on all sides.

At the top of the room there seemed to be some unusual noise and loud talking; for a while the clatter of plates and popping of champagne corks drowned it; but at last there came a general lull, and a clear English voice was heard in altercation with one of the servant-men. The master of the house, who was just entering with a fat dowager on his arm, planted her in a chair, and straight-way marched up to the scene of action. A very young, fair-haired man was holding a bottle in his hand, and trying to force another from the man-servant’s grasp. Mr. Rafferty asked who the youth was, but no one could tell him. His nephew Mulcahy came up, and whispered that he had seen him enter the drawing-room at one o’clock, unannounced. Hogan caught Mulcahy by the sleeve, and informed him that it was one of the Lord Lieutenant’s aides-de-camp, named Wyldoates, an officer of the Dragoon Guards.

“I’ll settle him,” said the irate host; and stepping up to the half-tipsy lad, he asked, determinedly and pompously,—

“Mr. Wyldoates, kindly inform me to what cause I may assign the honour of your presence here.”

Mr. Wyldoates leisurely finished his glass of champagne.

“You—aw—have the advantage over me—aw—old fellow.”

"I have," was the reply. At a look from the speaker, Mulcahy seized hold of the intruder's arm, and the servant and his uncle assisting, the aide-de-camp was speedily deposited outside the hall door, minus his hat, which he did not return to claim.

The *contretemps* lasted only a second, and the business of supper-eating was speedily resumed—plates rattled, knives and forks jingled, as if nothing had occurred.

"Tell me," asked Miss Davoren, who had turned very pale during the *fracas*, "is that a specimen of English finish?"

Hogan laughed.

"That's a mere boy; you must not be hard on him. Mr. Rafferty will have an abject apology to-morrow morning; it's just some messroom wager. Officers, you know," shrugging his shoulders; "one can't expect anything else from them!"

"They are expected to be gentlemen, at all events," retorted she; "but the Guards, you are aware, consider themselves on foreign duty in Dublin, so they don't care how they behave to us aborigines."

"Now, now, I hardly think that," replied he, unconsciously taking the part of apologist. He was holding her plate as he spoke, standing before her. "You are a patriot, I fear, Miss Davoren. Of course you are."

"I am not exactly a patriot; but I must confess to a tinge, a very little tinge, of it," she added, in a jesting tone. "What would become of us all—of our energies and intellects—if we were not given to politics and patriotism? There isn't any other outlet for either, as things are."

"How 'as things are,' now?" asked he, with a look of seriousness and attention different from his previous manner.

"Do I need to tell you that?"—looking up into his face. "This country is so cut off from the other nations of Europe,—for it is a nation, in spite of geography, ethnology, and all the rest of it. Thanks to our rulers, we have no manufactures to employ our time; and then, worst of all, these wretched castes of Protestant and Catholic hinder so——"

A look on her listener's face warned the speaker to stop. She bit her lip, frightened lest she had said too much.

"Do you say that our religion, then," said he, watching her face closely, "does not allow any outlet for intellect or energy?"

“I don’t say that,” she replied hastily; “taking our disabilities into account, we could, I think, show as fair an average of intellectual achievement as any other creed.”

“*Taking our disabilities into account!*” Miss Davoren, were I inclined, I could turn that proposition against you nicely.”

But Miss Davoren chose not to notice what he said, and turned off the matter by asking him for a glass of water.

Then they returned to the drawing-room. On the lobby stood her brother: he advanced to resume his guardianship of her; and she, turning towards Hogan, said, by way of dismissal,—

“This is my brother, Mr. Hogan.”

Designedly or not, he chose to take it as an introduction, and held out his hand to the lad, saying pleasantly that he was glad to make his acquaintance.

The college boy was a little flattered, for he knew Hogan by repute; and they entered into conversation cordially. Miss Davoren was carried off by one of her partners.

“You have to go out of town to-night?” asked Hogan of her brother.

“I have to go out to Green Lanes. We live there; but my sister is to stay in Fitzgerald Place.”

“Do you live in college?” asked Hogan.

“No; wish I did. It’s such a bore to have to go in and out such a distance every day.”

The tone made Hogan laugh. He guessed pretty accurately it was not the trouble of coming in from Green Lanes daily that bored the young gentleman.

“Do you belong to the football club, Mr. Davoren?”

“I do.”

“Do you know Mahoney Quain?”

“Yes;”—this with a laugh. “That’s a nice boy. I’m going to the opera with him to-morrow night. He’s got a song for the top gallery that’ll make a sensation.”

“I’m going also,” said Hogan, “and I must look out for that. What’s the opera?”

“I don’t know: I ain’t fond of music. Do you know who that beggar was that kicked up the shindy below-stairs?—an aide-de-camp, I heard.”

“It was an aide-de-camp and an officer of the Guards, I believe.”

“Infernal cad,” was young Davoren’s comment. “He thinks he’s paying the place a compliment.”

“So he was,” interpolated another collegian, Mr. Orpen. “I never saw such a shop in my existence, Dicky. Look at that girl over there. Did you ever see a little dog with his tail curled up so stiff on his back that his leg had sort of gone up with it, and he walked lame? Now she’s got her hair drawn up so tight and stiff, her eyebrows are gone up with it. Look. I bet you my life she couldn’t wink, to save her soul. Are they all whiskey people, Dicky?” continued the critic. “You don’t hear these old buffers talking of anything else.”

“They’re not giving you whiskey to drink, Orpen.”

“No; I’ll allow the champagne is genuine. Supper’s A1, certainly.”

“Very well, Orpen. You know that’s what you came for,” returned young Davoren.

“I think, young gentlemen, that we’re expected to dance for our suppers; so come along into the room,” said Hogan, leading the way back. And the trio were speedily absorbed into a quadrille just forming.

Hogan by no means intended to distinguish any particular young lady by his attentions. He knew that a very little flirtation goes a long way with the chattering dowagers and chaperons, whose occupation in a ball-room is to watch and chronicle all such occurrences; and he did not want his name brought into any of their debates. At the same time he was considerably smitten by the beauty of Nellie Davoren; in fact, she had made on him a very deep impression. Guarded as he tried to be, his eyes, in spite of himself, followed her in the dance, and his partner’s conversation fell unheeded, save for monosyllabic replies, on his ears. He had danced twice with her already, and had taken her down to supper, and before that to the refreshment-room. He wondered if he might not risk another waltz. A good half-dozen or more dances still remained; and he prudently resolved to divide them between the Rafferty girls and the Malownes. Then nobody could be witty at his expense.

So he first inscribed their names on his card, and then walked over to her, and cut out. Mr. Orpen, who, bent on the same mission, arrived si-

multaneously. She was almost about to refuse him, saying she did not wish to remain longer; but he managed to induce her, and they moved arm in arm to the dancing-room. She waltzed well, and Hogan felt himself fully repaid for the five sacrifices he considered himself to have made.

After-supper waltzes are peculiarly delightful: there is a swing in the music, and a lightness and exhilaration in the dancers, that make the interval between that event and the breaking up the most enjoyable part of the whole entertainment. Hogan did not waltz very badly. He was indeed a little stiff, and looked rather too much at the ceiling; but he was light, and kept good time; and Miss Davoren was one of those dancers who carry themselves instead of making their partners feel their whole burden. They spun round utterly unconscious of everything but the delight of their own harmonious motion. The musicians played the "Wiener Tänzen" in capital time. A large detachment was down-stairs at supper; so the floor was not too crowded, and Nellie and Hogan enjoyed a thoroughly good waltz. They drew up breathless at last.

"That's the most delightful waltz I ever had in my life," said he in a tone meant to be significant, and which was certainly sincere. "What a pity it must be the last!" And he looked down straight into her eyes.

She smiled, but turned away her head.

"Miss Davoren, please tell me are you to be at Mrs. Maldoon's on Friday night?"

"No."

"No? Then neither shall I."

"Oh, how absurd! Were you really going, now?" and she looked up laughingly into his face.

He took a card out of his pocket, and showed it to her.

"I shan't go, because you are not to be there. Will you go and hear Father O'Hea at Gardiner Street on Sunday?"

"Possibly Dicky may take me."

There was not much encouragement in the tone, but the young man determined he would be there too; and on relinquishing her, he whispered to her brother to return after depositing his sister in Fitzgerald Place, and he would give him a lift on his way home.

It was not long before the youth returned; and, Orpen joining them, they donned over-coats and mufflers, and sallied forth cigars in mouths.

Mr. Orpen was indignant and disgusted, or pretended to be both.

“I didn’t know a creature in the place,” he grumbled, “give you my word. What the deuce did the people mean by askin’ us to such a shop? Dav., did you notice the Lord Mayor—old whiskey barrels—with his chain of office round his neck? Law!” continued the young gentleman, after an explosion of laughter, “why hadn’t the aldermen got on their gowns?”

“I didn’t mind him so much,” returned Mr. Davoren; “it was her ladyship took my eye. I was dancing with some girl who called on me to admire her ‘joolery’ (jewellery).”

“I wonder will the aide-de-camp get in a row for his lark to-night?” said Hogan.

“By Jove, I expect so. Of course those people will write a complaint to the Castle about him: only too glad of the chance. Beggars!”

“Not at all,” put in Hogan quickly. “Rafferty knows more than that. He kicked him out and that’s quite punishment enough, I fancy.”

“What a capital lark it was!” grinned Mr. Orpen, approvingly. “That Wyldoates is game for anything. What a joke he’ll have over to-morrow!”

“I hope he’s game for a new hat. I saw his under the hall table just now,” said Dicky, who did not look on the insolent aggression in the same light that his friend did—namely, as a pleasant novelty in the way of practical jokes.

“Where have you to go?” asked Hogan of Orpen, seeing a car approach.

“Close to Charlemont Demesne,” replied he.

“I’ll drop you. Get up, Mr. Davoren;” and all three drove off.