

## VOLUME I

### CHAPTER 5

“So gib mir auch die Zeiten wieder  
Da ich noch selbst im Werden war,  
Da sich ein Quell gedrangter Lieder  
Ununterbrochen neu gebar;  
Da Nebel mir die Welt verhüllten,  
Die Knospe Wunder noch versprach,  
Da ich die Tausend Blumen brach,  
Die idle Thäler reichlich füllten.  
Ich hatte nichts, und doch genug,  
Den Drang nach Wahrheit und die Lust am Trug.  
Gib ungebändigt jene Triebe,  
Das tiefe, schmerzenvolle Glück,  
Des Hasses Kraft, die Macht der Liebe,  
Gib meine Jugend mir zurück “

—*Faust*

ABOUT FIVE MILES out of Dublin is a place called Green Lanes, a tolerably select suburban village, consisting of one main street lying close to the railway station, and which comprised the usual shops and groggeries, the post-office, and lending library. Branching off this main street were dirty, frowzy lanes, peopled by slatternly women and children, where pigs routed at their own sweet wills, and hens, as demoralised and down-at-heel of appearance as their owners, sunned themselves and excavated their clay baths under the road walls. Leading down to the village, and from it in various directions, were wide high-roads, well planted and bordered by eight-foot stone walls, muddy and dreary now to look at, on a late November afternoon. Great elms and knotty ashes stretched their bare limbs across in wintry greeting to each

other; and here and there the long grey stretch of demesne wall was broken by an entrance gate overgrown with ivy, or a narrow grated door which gave the passer-by a glimpse of the sea view from which the jealous proprietor had so carefully excluded him. Scarce a house was visible, most of the mansion residences being hidden away as far from the thorough-fare as the extent of their grounds would permit, or cunningly placed at such an angle as to be veiled from the eyes of such curious persons as might chance to look in the gate-ways. Tall shrubberies of Scotch firs and laurels made evergreen tufts pleasant to the sight amid the wintry desolation now reigning around.

At a corner of one of these roads, where another avenue—also leading, but by a more circuitous route, to the village—joins it, stood in an enclosed space a queer old gabled house, with a yard in front flanked by high white walls with crenated parapets. A huge wooden gate, the pillars of which were surmounted by griffins sadly the worse for time and weather, gave admission to a large gravelled square. The front of the house was quite overgrown with creepers, which stretched their long bare arms round the latticed windows, and held even the topmost chimneys fast in their dry and thorny embrace. At this winter season they were hardly an ornament. Sparrows had built in the jessamine; and their abandoned nests, matted and unsightly tufts of straw and leaves, hung to the gables. Large tubs, painted green, held aloes, and stood in a stiff row across the gravelled square. A tiled walk led up from the gate; and a wicker paling, also overgrown with rose trees and creepers, divided the garden and out-offices from the front. Old-fashioned pointed windows, with queer little lattice panes, and tall stacks of chimney-pots, one-half of which were abandoned to the jackdaws, gave the white house a queer old-world look.

It was about three in the afternoon; a November sun was sending pale yellow rays through the elm branches, and lighting up the window-panes of the room where Nellie sat at work. Dressed in a plain black gown, the girl looked even better than in her ball-room bravery. The ivory contour of her neck appeared to advantage circled round with the dull black, and the tints of her hair and eyes seemed more brilliant for the dark relief. Her mother lay sleeping close by, and as the sunlight was rapidly drawing round to a point where it must fall upon the invalid's face, Nellie gently pulled down the blind, and then, having remembered a task downstairs, laid aside her sewing and glided noiselessly out of the room.

Catching sight of her brother in the garden from a lobby window as she passed, she went out to speak to him. The garden looked a wilderness. A few late chrysanthemums still lingered by the walls, and a pale bleached monthly rose showed its straggly petals from the hedge. The beds had been lately cleared of the refuse of the summer flowers. Blue lobelias, their tiny blossoms sadly faded, and white and red foliage plants were heaped here and there. The clay had a black and newly-turned look; the ivy on the walls looked a vivid green in contrast. Down at the end was the kitchen garden and tool-house; and here Dicky, seated on a water-can, among broken pots, compost heaps, and piles of dead leaves, was busy driving nails into a wheelbarrow which he had just broken. He was tall, as we said before, and had long handsome features, pretty fair hair, and eyes like his sister's, only lacking her steadiness of look. He was a pretty, interesting lad, clever beyond all doubt, but idle and wild. His escapades were condoned by many people on account of his pleasing, winning manner; and it certainly was difficult to refuse him anything he asked. He had recently taken a good place at the entrance examination of Trinity College, and he found plenty of congenial spirits in that abode of learning to help him in mischief.

He looked up when he saw his sister coming down the path, and after selecting a conveniently-sized pebble to throw at the house-cat, Tib, who was following her with stealthy foot-steps, and between whom and himself there existed the bitterest of feuds, resumed his hammering with deafening assiduity.

Nellie, who knew with whom she had to deal, waited patiently, wrapping up her hands in her apron. At last, the nail being driven home, and perhaps a little beyond it, the carpenter looked up.

"Dicky," began she, "you have never been at your books at all to-day."

"Pooh! how do you know that? I was at Fitzgerald Place this morning," he added, in order to change the subject.

"Oh, indeed! How is Dorothy?"

"Blooming. Gave us no tip, though, the old—the old," and failing to find a proper epithet wherewith to stigmatise Miss O'Hegarty's conduct, he hurled the hammer across the garden.

"You had money the other day."

“I lost it all to Orpen. I say, Nell, what do you think? Orpen told me he took one of the waiters for old Rafferty the other night. ’Pon my word, he came up to me and said, ‘I’m blest if I know the servants from the gentlemen here!’ and said he was awfully near asking the man who announced us to get him a partner. Ho, ho! They looked a great deal more at home in their evening dress, though. By Jove, he said that was the way he could distinguish them.”

“Which speech exactly proves that Mr. Orpen is a vulgar-minded snob.”

“Snob!” echoed the collegian scornfully. “He’s no such thing. His father is a country gentleman, and they’re most highly connected.”

“I can’t see what difference that makes,” returned his sister, dryly.

“Listen, Nell,” said Mr. Dicky, jumping up all of a sudden from his can, “just—ah—lend a fellow a couple of shillings, will you?”

“What for, now, Dicky?”

“Well, Mahoney Quain has a—tea-party in his rooms to-night, and Orpen and Griffiths are to be at it, and they’re going to help me with my mathematics; so I only just want a couple of shillings in my pocket, you know just to have them in my pocket,” he repeated, and he looked coaxingly at her, and held out one hand. “The governor’s going into the theatre to-night, and he and I’ll come home together,” he added, with a pleading look.

“What did you do with the money you had last week?”

“What money? Ah! sure I never have any at all.”

“Indeed you have, Dicky, and I can’t lend you this; it is too bad,” and Miss Davoren put on a severe air.

Dicky caught sight of Tib, and the pebble was discharged against his fat ribs with a force that sent the luckless animal flying in the direction of the house as fast as his legs would carry him.

“Don’t then, Miss,” retorted he viciously; “don’t, that’s all; and see if I’ll take you to Gardiner Street on Sunday—that’s all either,” and plumping back on the water-can, he began to sort out another nail to drive in the wheel-barrow.

“Listen, Dicky. I’m not refusing to lend you the money, but when *do* you mean to take to your books?”

“Ah! what do you know about it, child?” returned he, in a somewhat softened tone. “I’m not three months in yet; and look at all the hard work I did with those beastly mathematics there, to pass. Every man takes a rest after he enters, like that;” and he looked up out of the corner of his eye, to see how this told.

She remained silent; she had not heard him at all, for she was thinking of something else as she watched the gradually darkening sky.

“I saw your partner, Nell, to-day;”—Dicky struck into a fresh subject;—“that Mr.— oh, Mr. O’Rooney Hogan. Decentish sort of fellow that, now. He inquired for you.”

“Did he?” said Miss Nellie quietly, turning to go into the house.

“Oh, Nell! I say, Nellsie jewel, you’re forgetting the half-crown.”

“Oh dear! oh dear!” said she, putting her hand in her pocket, and giving it to him. “Now, Dicky, don’t be late, I beg of you.”

“I’ll take you on Sunday,” vouchsafed the youngster, now restored to good humour; “and oh! I say, Dorothy says she’s heard, next week or the week after there’s to be a command night at the Royal, and we’re both to go with her.”

Nellie gave no sign of having heard, beyond an inclination of her head as she aped back to the house; and the boy returned to his hammering with renewed vigour.

When she reached her mother’s room, she raised the blind again, and seated herself in her own chair by the window, looking out at the sunset, fast fading now. A grey mass of cloud, edged with a dull crimson, and through a rift lower down by the horizon a tiny fiery speck fast sinking out of sight. The spires of the city, lying between her and the west, were clear and hard against the light; and over towards the north a mist was gathering fast. Folding her hands in her lap, Nellie began to trace over again in her mind the events of the night; and many a smile rose to her lips at the incongruous figures that presented themselves to her memory. Hogan’s image certainly was prominent; and from the time of his being introduced to her to their last dance together, she followed every word and look as far as her memory aided her. How strange that she should meet him again there!—and she wandered back from the pale wintry landscape before her eyes, to that glowing, burning day in July when they sat together in St. Swithin’s schoolroom, amid the din and crash of pianos. There it was all a white hot glare, —white walls, white

dresses, and noise. She remembered well the headache it gave her. Her remembrance of her pleasant neighbour was scarcely so distinct—the Bishop’s nephew, and a barrister, and related to the Superior, Mother Assumption—so much the Raffertys, who seemed to hold him in great esteem, had told her. He had not seemed to respond to their pressing attentions the other night, Miss Nellie reflected, with the least possible tinge of mischief suffusing her consciousness. Would Dicky go to Gardiner Street on Sunday? and would Mr. Hogan be there? Surely by Sunday he would have forgotten everything about it. Then she began to wonder if she could recognize him; and she called up one by one the features of his face,—dark eyes, a long straight nose—Nellie painted an ideal portrait so flattering, that had its original presented himself before her, she would have found but few points of resemblance in her creation. She remained in the window-seat for a long time, weaving all manner of fancies, as strange and unstable as the flitting shapes of the clouds. The room was so quiet, so warm,—not a sound, save the fall of the wood-ashes in the fireplace, disturbed her reverie. The last pale rays of the sun fell on her mother’s portrait above the chimney-piece—a pallid chalk head, with wide low brows and almond-shaped wistful eyes—wistful and sad, though she was only twenty when it had been taken. Some faces bear the shadow of coming troubles even at their brightest and freshest. A little glass on the table held violets,—a few pinched things that had peeped up by mistake in a sheltered corner, and had been summarily cut short in their unseasonable career by Dicky. Their sweet faint odour reached Nellie in her window-seat. A redbreast perched suddenly on a branch beneath, and, fixing his bright little eyes on the window from which he was used to receive crumbs, struck into a loud shrill song. It sounded so near, Nellie almost started, and forgot dreamland. The cloud-castles were shattered, the bright lights faded in the west, and a cold green tone took the place of the crimson bar. The whole sky assumed that Indian-ink colour we see only in the late autumn; and when she turned her eyes round into the room again, she was astonished to find that it was nearly dark. She felt almost guilty as she picked up the neglected sewing which had fallen on the floor.