

VOLUME I

CHAPTER 6

“On ne sait rien d’une nation, tant qu’on n’a pas scruté les ressorts secrets de sa vie morale et analysé les forces organiques dont un examen superficiel ne montre que les résultats. Sous les apparences extérieures, qui ne sont que les indices, l’observateur est impatient de découvrir les principes d’actions, comme, sous l’enveloppe épaisse des muscles, l’anatomiste met à nu le réseau des nerfs. . . . L’homme fait ses dieux à son image. . . . Pour beaucoup de peuples, le caractère national et caractère religieux se confondent en un soul qui forme leur originalité dans la famille humaine. . . .”

—George Bousquet, “La Religion en Japon.”

HOGAN was on his way homewards from the Four Courts one afternoon. Deep in meditation, he was bethinking himself, as he steered his way through the mud, that he must, without delay, repair to the Bishop, to render up an account of his doings since their last meeting. It would not do by any means to take an independent tone with the old gentleman; and after all, the young man thought that he deserved so much attention. Then, if he should cavil or find fault, it was so easy to convince him; and he smiled as he thought of the simple artifices by which he had so often hoodwinked his venerable relative. Affairs were going on very well with him now. Briefs were plentiful, and the attorneys seemed to have taken him quite into their good graces. Before going on circuit he thought of giving a large dinner-party to some influential Dublin priests, and to some of his uncle’s colleagues. One of the most approved means of “working the clerical dodge” is to give big dinners to their reverences; and this nephew of a Bishop was by no means ignorant of how much a champagne dinner at the Tresham or Melbourne might do for him—especially now in the beginning of Term.

While ruminating in his mind a list of names to submit to his lordship's approval, he was almost knocked down by his new friend Mr. Saltasche, who was crossing the footpath of Bachelor's Walk to get to his car.

"Hillo, Mr. Hogan! is that you?—the very man I wanted to see. I had forgotten your address. Will you come down to my office with me? I want you to look over some papers, and give me your opinion of them."

"With pleasure, indeed," replied the barrister smiling.

Both gentlemen mounted the car. Saltasche, who seemed in the best of humours, turned, as if moved by a sudden thought, to Hogan:

"Can you dine with me at the Melbourne to-day? Have you anything better on hand?"

"Nothing doing to-day, Mr. Saltasche. Very willingly."

"I very often dine there or at Trude's—very often: it is so handy, instead of going out to the country, you know."

"You sleep in town, then?"

"Yes; I've got a little bedroom fitted up in my offices. I don't use it very often, though."

The car drew up at the door of the broker's office. He led the way up the broad, well-lighted staircase, and having pushed open the swing-door of his room, stepped in first, and held it for the barrister to enter. On turning round, he uttered an exclamation of surprise. In his own arm-chair, which had been pulled out of its place and turned towards the fire, sat a man puffing a cigarette.

"Hillo, Captain Poignarde! is that you?"

The intruder jumped up and shook himself together. Throwing the cigarette into the fire, he advanced to meet the broker.

He was by no means prepossessing, Hogan thought, who was looking askew at him as he stood under the gaslight. Of middle height, with whiskers and hair of the same faded blonde, his face bore all the marks of dissipation and vice: a furtive, watery eye, and tremulous lips, told the tale of excess. His speech proved him to be an Englishman, as unmistakably as his bearing and dress proclaimed him a military man.

"Good-evening, Mr. Saltasche. Sorry to disturb you at this late hour. I—er,—just wanted to tell you—" here he became aware of Hogan's

presence behind the broker's figure, and dropped his voice discreetly—"just wanted to tell you that I'd be obliged by your selling out—say a hundred and fifty, or more pounds' worth of stock to-morrow."

The broker raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Of course, Captain Poignarde, if you require it. I hope Colonel Anstruther is well."

"He's quite well, thank you," replied Poignarde, who showed some confusion in his tone, and seemed fidgety to get away.

"Well, what time to-morrow will you be likely to call?"

"Er—about twelve, Mr. Saltasche, I think. Hope it won't trouble you."

"Dear no—not at all."

So the military man blundered out of the room, glad to escape without farther parley.

The broker turned his head and looked after him with a sort of amused smile.

"Do you see that fellow?" said he to Hogan; "he's going the pace; he married an heiress—ran away with her, I believe some one told me. She, if she'd waited a while, would have been worth her quarter of a million. Fact, sir. As it was, she was cut off with four or five thousand; she was only of age the other day, and this animal is squandering every penny. I have heard she is exquisitely beautiful, too,—I haven't seen her."

"What could she see in him?" asked Hogan.

"God knows! I never heard the whole story. Some schoolgirl fancy," returned Saltasche, who was busy at a huge iron safe behind his desk.

"Look over those, Mr. Hogan, if you please," he said, flinging, as he spoke, some parchments on the table, "while I go to look what these fellows are after"; and he turned and went by a side door into the clerks' room to overlook the accounts of the day. An easy, pleasant master, this daily advent was no terror to his subordinates. In about twenty minutes he returned, to find Hogan standing with his back to the fire, holding one of the papers in his hand.

"Those I find all right and square, Mr. Saltasche, no hitch whatever; but this—h'm—you have seen the deeds referred to. I dare say it's all secure too."

“These belong to a Mrs. Bursford, a sister-in-law of the convert Monsignor Bursford—you know him, I dare say?—belong to her and her daughter; and she has sold her land in Wicklow to invest the proceeds in my care. Those are title-deeds lodged as security.”

Hogan folded up the papers and handed them to the broker.

“All right, sir—so far as I can judge from the deeds.”

“So I thought myself,” returned Saltasche; “but you see the Miss Diana Bursford mentioned there is Mrs. Bursford’s daughter; and about the reality of her fortune there seem to be doubts.”

“It seems to be a rather common complaint in regard to that article, nowadays,” laughed the barrister.

“By Jove, yes; it’s something tremendous the lying that goes on in this good city about money. This young lady started in life with the reputation of ten thousand pounds fortune. I do not think for a moment that her own family had anything to do with the absurd exaggeration, but there are always indiscreet friends—”

“Indiscreet friends who will run the figure up or pull it down with equal unvarnishedness.”

“Just so,” nodded the broker; “and of late they have turned to the pulling-down process. However, Hanaper and Diesele, the family lawyers, have sent me these; and further it’s no affair of mine. Lord Brayhead is one of the trustees for Miss Bursford’s money; and they—the ladies—are old friends of mine. Have you ever met them?”

“No.”

“Well,” said Saltasche, pulling out his watch, “time we were moving, sir, I declare. Come along round to Trude’s,—I sent them word about our dinner;” and pulling on his top-coat, he passed his arm familiarly under that of Hogan, and they turned their steps in the direction of the hotel.

The night had fallen now, and a chill north wind swept the fast emptying streets; carriages rolled by, on their way homewards towards the squares and private streets; cabs and cars poured in endless stream to the railway stations; workmen passed rapidly in knots and couples, shaping their course towards their haunts by the river; the brilliantly lighted shop-windows began to become few and far between, and the city was rapidly putting on her more sombre and quiet attire for the night.

Trude's was well lighted up. Red lamps shone on each side of the door, and a brace of smart waiters stood in attendance in the entry. Mr. Saltasche was evidently known to them; and without a moment's delay both gentlemen were shown into a well-lighted room, through which a large fire diffused a pleasant warmth, agreeable enough to new comers from the cold world without.

Dinner was served without delay. Saltasche showed his usual *savoir faire* in the composition of the *menu*.

"Capital ox-tail soup," said he; "no use going in for *bisque* or *purée* here. Soup is not an institution of this country, you know, like our Burton Banks oysters. So we must put up with what we can get."

"This is good enough for anybody, I should say," returned Hogan; "I don't believe, excepting people who go in for style, that they ever use it here at all."

"No; the Irish middle class, I venture to say, beat the English in point of incompetency as cooks, and upon my word that's saying a good deal. They're not so wasteful, because they're so much poorer; but they're a deal more uncomfortable."

Hogan assented tacitly. He was indeed thinking of the beefsteaks and chops his landlady served him in his lodgings near the Canal. Frightful beefsteaks, tough as leather, and chops fried and swimming in their own coarse fat. And her tea and coffee: if anything could be worse than the tea, was it not the coffee—muddy, flavourless, and usually tepid?

"The best cooks, to my mind, are the Italians,—better tempered than Frenchmen, more patient, and less nonsense about them. French cooks are perfect devils to have in a house. The Lord Lieutenant brought over his own cook, a Neapolitan. I am told the dinners are something superb. By-the-bye, I hear his brown mare, the one entered for the Spring Meeting, has hurt her shoulder."

"I don't know," returned the barrister carelessly; "I never was a horsy man, and anyhow the Castle doings are my aversion."

"God knows, I'm glad to hear you say so," returned the broker: "It is something infernal the way they are discussed in Dublin,—it is such a little place, you see. You can't turn round without every one knowing it. The most intensely snobbish place I ever was in."

“Yes,” returned Hogan, “I go with you there. You see there are so many reasons for that. It could not fail to be what it is: I only wonder, all things considered, that it isn’t worse.”

“Worse!—that would be hardly possible, I should fancy.”

“Bless us! yes, the root of it lies far back. You have to go back a century or more into the history of the country to see how deeply rooted is the class distinction between the two rival creeds. I assure you even Protestant tradesmen think they have the pull over any R. C. And that is a thing always gathers force as it gets older. So long as the Protestants were the recognized superiors of the others, they were not nearly so stuck-up and exclusive. There was far more friendly intercourse; and, in fact, there were not the wicked partisans on both sides that we have seen since the disestablishment,—perhaps since Emancipation.”

“Ah,” returned Saltasche, “however it came about, bad feeling was stirred up on both sides by Emancipation; the reason, I take it,” he added, “that it never subsided was, your clergy learned their own strength. O’Connell taught them the trick, among others; and like all men raised at once from a very low position to a very high one—that is, politically speaking, in the way of controlling elections and so on—they have abused their power.”

“Abused their power!” echoed the barrister. “Hum,—I don’t know that the Government can charge them with that. They certainly have an enormous personal influence over the people; but in political matters, why, look at this Fenian business: in all Ireland, it is a fact there was but one Fenian priest. Their lives were actually threatened, you know that.”

“I think,” said Saltasche, “and I base my opinion chiefly on my experience of the Church in Spain and Italy, that the reason of the clerical opposition to that movement was the dread of the republican free-thinking spirit imported into it, far more than loyalty to England.”

“Fenianism was low too,” said Hogan thoughtfully, “essentially low: it had not a single supporter of the social position of those who were concerned with the Young Irelanders; and I may tell you that priests are intensely aristocratic.”

“Well, there now, isn’t that what I say?” put in Saltasche, replenishing, as he spoke, the glass of his companion; “precisely my position. They abominate Radicalism and Republicanism.”

“Well now, in America we don’t find them acting in conformity with that principle. They are not struggling to overthrow the institutions there——”

“Hah! are they not indeed? I have studied that question closely, I assure you. You have very little idea of the condition of affairs in the States. Before we are many years older, my good sir, they will be trying conclusions over there in a very practical fashion.”

“I have never studied American questions of any kind,” returned the barrister; “it is not at all an interesting country to me. I think, however, it is a general mistake to make so little account of America.”

“I have very little Irish blood in me,” said Saltasche, who was playing with some filberts on his plate; but I do believe that for anybody who is fond of studying character, individual and national, a more interesting field is not to be found in the whole world than Ireland. Dublin society is really a perfect study.”

“Ay, a drop of ditchwater under a microscope; everybody pushing upwards on the social ladder, kicking down those behind. However, the Protestants have pretty well laid down the line to our people now, ‘So far and no farther,’ ever since the passing of the Church Act.”

“Now is that really your opinion?” asked Saltasche. “Do you think that the social intercourse between the two parties has been checked by that measure?”

“God bless me,—yes. All through the country the feeling is most bitter. Why, I know many instances of people refusing to keep a Catholic servant in their house.”

“Disgusting rubbish!” and the broker curled his lip.

“You are pretty liberal in your sentiments, Mr. Saltasche, like myself,” said Hogan, fixing, as he raised his glass of wine to his lips, a peculiar look on his friend.

“I am very liberal,” replied Saltasche, returning the look by one equally significant. “I don’t believe any man possessed of judgment, or knowledge of the world, could for a moment sympathise with the conduct of the English in this country—their conduct at this very instant. I only wonder your people bear it so patiently as they do.”

“You mean, of course, their attitude socially and religiously?”

“It is one and the same. The monstrous insolence of the English is at the bottom of all the troubles here. Talk of Infallibility and the Pope’s assumptions, God bless me! what is it, compared to the Anglo-Hibernian Protestantism? A trifle light as air. Their religion is themselves; and everywhere John Bull goes with his egotism and his Bible,—on the Continent, in India, Africa,—the story is identical; hatred and rebellion spring up at once. A friend of mine, a bank manager in this country, told me the rector of the parish once came to his house. When going away, he said to him, with a sort of a snigger, ‘You won’t take this as a visit—eh, eh, Mr.—ah—Nokes?’ ‘I shan’t,’ he replied; ‘but next time you presume to come to my house, I shall take it as a visit, and I’ll kick you out of the door.’ He did well.”

“India is a good example,” said Hogan, after laughing at the anecdote. “Look at that mutiny, caused altogether by the heartless, wanton insolence of English officers. It does not come out so much at home. You must see them out of their own country to appreciate their delightful qualities,—though, indeed, they do treat servants horribly.”

“Treat servants badly?” said Saltasche. “Have you noticed that? Why, nowhere on earth are they better fed and paid.”

“I mean their way of treating them as inferiors. Did you ever hear an officer swearing at his man, especially at his own servant? There is something most repulsive in it to me, that because a man takes your money to perform certain duties in return for it, you are entitled to treat him like a dog—like a creature devoid of all feeling or self-respect!”

“They are the best servants in the world,” said Saltasche, “the English; the most perfectly trained and comfortable, and—treacherous.”

“Treacherous! By Jove! I should think they are that; but since the days of Abraham I fancy there has always been that class hostility. Look at the servants of the Tichborne family. The English have some knack of always making themselves hated by their subordinates.”

“I don’t believe, now,” said Saltasche musingly, “Irish servants could do that. They’re not given to those deep schemes at all, so far as I know them.”

“Well,” said Hogan slowly, shaking his head, “I’ve had some little experience of them in the Four Courts, and, if they don’t concoct those infernal schemes their fellows do across the water, it’s merely because their heads won’t hold them.”

Saltasche laughed heartily. "That was a shocking murder down the country, eh?" said he.

"Yes, most extraordinary. The usual thing, eviction. It's a mistake to suppose that the Land Act, however conceived, will put an end to that sort of business. They mistake the cause altogether."

"How? It is not revenge—wild justice."

"Not at all. The Irish agrarian murders are prompted by the same motive as those French rural crimes we read of so frequently,—intense love of the land itself; and the landlord or his agent is not hated one bit more than anybody else that stands in their way,—not a whit. It is all nonsense to say that they hate the landlord as a foreigner, a usurper. Mrs. —, and that unfortunate Mr. —, were not English, and see how they were shot. Bless me! they shoot their own relatives, if they stand in their way, quite as readily as any Sassenach of them all."

"They do—not a doubt of it," said Saltasche thoughtfully. "Yet the English papers will insist on laying every murder on the everlasting 'disaffection.' It has nothing to do with ninety-nine hundredths of them."

"Nothing whatever. Believe me, they are more afraid of each other, more disaffected and more treacherous to their own next-door neighbours, than they are to England. Look at the farmers: they daren't white-wash their house, lest a neighbour should imagine they had money, and inform the agent. If they kill one of their own, geese or ducks, they eat it with closed doors and windows, for fear it should be thought they were well off. They lodge money in the banks at three or maybe two per cent. interest, and the very same men—will you believe it? borrow money at six per cent from the *same* bank to pay their rent. Just imagine it."

"Well, you see, though it looks absurd, there is a solid reason at the bottom of it. If the landlord gets a bill at three months or six months in payment of his rent, he fancies the fellow is poor."

"That is so. Now there must be something rotten in the state of things when it is the interest of the people to keep themselves poor, and to look poor. There is a heavy drawback on their prosperity and industry. It reminds me of the stories of the French peasants before the Revolution. And it is such a demoralising state of affairs. Habits such as are engendered under this *régime* are most destructive. The entire tenant-at-will system is abominable."

“I don’t in the least see how it is to be remedied. There would seem to be no medium between a confessedly mischievous system and wild schemes framed and proposed by Jack-o’-lantern politicians, having for object the simple spoliation of the proprietors.”

“Well, what can you expect of the people? Take into account their wretchedness and degradation, and their ignorance, they really are not one whit more civilized than the peasants whom Arthur Young describes in France a century ago. How, then, can you expect them to have more just or equitable ideas? It is, anyhow, a frightful and disgraceful thing that there should be a penalty on industry and enterprise.”

“How strange it is that the English are so devoid of this love of the land! An English farmer thinks only of the ground as he thinks of a machine, which, properly manipulated, will bring him in money. What on earth is the fascination it has over these Irish?”

“It has never been explained,” said Hogan. “The French peasant is the same. Perhaps it is some queer lingering love of the conquered race for its own land. The native Gauls and the native Irish have some points of similarity historically. It may have had its origin in that.”

“Extraordinary people!” mused Saltasche; “how in the world are they ever to be improved?”

“Sweetness and Light,” said Hogan with a smile, pulling up his chair closer to the fire.

“And there the priests bar the way. It is incomprehensible how the people follow them so blindly in refusing the national education system.”

“Tut, tut!—not so fast. The whole cause of the dislike, or rather distrust, lies in the conduct of the Protestant party. They always wanted to force Scripture, in some shape or sort, down the throats of the children, and insisted on their right to do it. Bah! the priests were quite right to resist such aggression. And let the parsons promise what they like, from the very first time they ever established a school in Ireland, proselytism was their business. There is not a brat as high as your knee but knows that, and hates them accordingly. Besides, the people have always had the idea, and that too with solid reason, that this proselytism was not for the sake of merely winning over their souls to the rival Church, but also, mark you, as a means of obtaining their allegiance, and thereby strengthening and securing the proselytisers’ own position as conquer-

ors in a subjugated country. So at all times a pervert, or, as the *Saturday Review* says, a ‘vert,’ was looked upon in the double light of a deserter and an apostate.”

“Is that so now?” asked Saltasche.

“It is literally as true at the present moment as it was a century ago. Even here in Dublin, as well as in the country, any Roman Catholic ‘going over’ is held to have sold himself body and soul for temporal advancement.”

“Anyhow the Church Establishment was a monstrous injustice. High time it was done away with. A scandalous absurdity.”

“Yes; but after all it weighed but lightly on the people—as compared, of course, with former times. I almost think it would have been more expedient to have postponed disestablishment for a time, or at least to have disestablished the Scotch branch first. The priests were, I believe, the chief instigators of that movement; and since its accomplishment, strange to say, seem tolerably indifferent; one might almost fancy they regretted being deprived of their pet grievance.”

“Hah! I’ll tell you why. They wanted to get the money. They fully expected to get their share.”

“Do you imagine they looked for concurrent endowment?”

“Hardly,” replied the broker. “They know better than to take a State provision; but they thought to get it, and think they will get it still, for a Catholic University.”

Hogan shook his head. “No, no,” said he; “Trinity is absorbing such Catholic youngsters as want college education and degrees. I think the Stephen Green University merely draws medical students. After all, they have a very good excuse for patronizing Trinity. Few people can afford to lose time and money taking out a degree that has no market value—a mere certificate. Look at me, for example. What should I be doing with a Catholic University degree? Moreover, who are their professors?—mere nobodies, or men trained in and belonging to the Queen’s Universities or Trinity.”

“It’s a pity, Mr. Hogan,” said Saltasche, “that you are not in St. Stephen’s; if you were to talk that way, you’d soon make your mark.”

“All in good time,” laughed the barrister, emptying his glass. “I hope to be one day.”

“I think,” said Saltasche, “that one important feature in the case is the social distinction of Trinity. That has an attraction for Catholics of a certain grade. There is a marked desire on the part of many of the professional set to know and mix with the other persuasion.”

“Decidedly so. And an equally marked desire on the part of their *ecclesiastical* rulers that they shall do nothing of the kind. Anyhow,” added Hogan, “if the Catholics want to get into Protestant society, they don’t go the right way about it. Men, of course, know each other; but it’s the *women* who bar the way. R. C. women are terribly behind the age. Did you hear the last story of Lady St. Aldegonde? She wrote to her friends, the Hawardens of Westmeath, to come up in time for the dinner of the 14th. “*We shall have only our own friends,*” said she; “*none of these dreadful Dublin lawyers’ wives.*”

“Ay,” said Saltasche with a laugh, “that’s a good one; but,” he added seriously, “what a curious affair this new marriage law is. Now tell me, if Catholics and Protestants can’t marry in Dublin, why can they in London? It’s the boast of your Church that her doctrine, etc., is the same and infallible everywhere. Yet this law is unknown in America, Scotland, England; and in Paris too, for a mixed marriage came off there last week.”

“I confess I don’t understand it,” replied Hogan. “Mixed marriages are seldom happy, they say.”

The broker laughed sardonically.

“That’s hardly a reason,” said he drily. “But I confess it looks odd to see people take a trip to London to get married, and come home coolly in spite of the awful denunciations, and live like other people, in the teeth of the priest’s assurance that they are not married at all.”

Hogan laughed and shook his head.

“It just proves thoroughly what the Infallibility means,” continued Saltasche. “I don’t wonder at the old Torys’ talk of *autos da fe* and the Inquisition. ’Pon my word, I’m liberal enough, but some things do make me uneasy.”

“Stuff,” said Hogan; “that’s all gone by and forgotten long ago—impossible and nonsensical.”

“How do they arrange,” asked Saltasche, “in the case of poor people who can’t afford to go to London, or to buy a dispensation?” And he looked askance at Hogan.

“I know of some cases—they get married by the Registrar, and never mind the religious ceremony at all. I think it a bad plan.”

“It is, begad. But in your Church they have always kept up the old tradition—one law for the rich and another for the poor.”

“Bah! tell me where it isn’t the same—it’s human nature. Wealth has everywhere its prerogatives and privileges.” The barrister laughed a little sardonically.

“Come and look in at the theatre; it’s only ten minutes past nine,” said the host, pulling out his watch as he spoke.

Now, Hogan had work before him at home—work, indeed, that would keep him out of his bed until quite the small hours of the morning; and he did not intend to waste any time in theatres. So he told his host plainly that he could not bestow further time upon him, he had two cases to get up.

Then a car was called, and Mr. Saltasche was dropped in Hawkins Street by Hogan, who vainly endeavoured to prevent that liberal gentleman from paying the man. Saltasche only laughed when the barrister tried to stay his hand, and chucking the jarvey half a crown instead of his legal shilling, disappeared under the arches of the theatre, while Hogan drove home alone to his work.