## VOLUME II

# CHAPTER 5

"Why did I ever one brief moment's space,
But parley with this filthy Belial?
. . . . Was it the fear
Of being behind the world, which is the wicked?"

—*A. H. Clough.*

"Come, then,
And with my aid go into good society.
Life little loves, 'tis true, this peevish piety;
Even they with whom it thinks to be securest—
Your most religious, delicatest, purest—
Discern, and show as pious people can
Their feelings, that you are not quite a man."

—*Edan.*

STRANGE TO RELATE, Dicky Davoren's sanguine expectations concerning his friend Orpen's speculation were fully realized. Mr. Orpen took fifteen to one against a horse which won the Churton Cup; and the firm of bookmakers, on the Monday after the race, sent a cheque for sixty-five pounds, payable at the Bank of Ireland, to that gentleman. On Tuesday morning, therefore, Mr. Orpen's advent (he was not a resident student) was anxiously watched for in the precincts of Botany Bay. Mr. Gagan, and his friend and cousin Tad Griffiths, a youth who had been oftener on the verge of expulsion than anybody else in Trinity, stuck their heads out of window every two minutes.

At last Orpen, Mahoney Quain, and Dicky Davoren came in sight; they walked quietly and decorously along until they turned the corner and were out of sight of the crowd coming out of the morning lecture;

then the exuberance of Mr. Quain's animal spirits broke forth. Lifting Dicky over his head with both hands, he playfully gave him his choice of having his head knocked against the wall or the granite pavement. Dicky snatched off his tormentor's mortarboard, and shied it as well as he could, considering the disabilities of his position, down the path. The young giant was on the point of putting his threat into execution, when Dicky, seeing Orpen, who with his usual matter-of-fact business-like way had walked on ahead, turning into the doorway leading to their destination, raised the alarm, "There's Orpen bolting with the money!" Mr. Quain, entering into the spirit of the suggestion with perhaps more completeness than its originator intended or wished, dropped his burden on the flags, and taking as many steps at a time as his long legs would compass, rushed up the stairs. Dicky followed, and they all burst into the room at once.

After an interval of horse-play, Mr. Orpen produced a bundle of notes, the letters which had been received from the bookmakers, and their statement of accounts. According to this document, the commission at ten per cent. amounted to seven pounds ten; then some other items were alleged, in order to justify their retention of two pounds ten as well: in all ten pounds; which, deducted from the profits of the transaction, left sixty-five pounds (seventy including the stake) to be divided among the four subscribers. Mr. Orpen handed each gentleman a clean ten-pound note, then a five-pound, two one-pound notes, and a half-sovereign. Then ensued a general reckoning of scores.

Mr. Gagan had drawn largely in advance of the expected dividend. His Ulster coat hung in its accustomed place behind the door—a place, indeed, which knew it seldomer than did the shelves of the accommodating "bank." A gold seal-ring and pin formed conspicuous items of his toilette, and the bookshelves groaned under the unaccustomed weight of a complete set of medical and classical books. The box of tobacco on the chimneypiece was so full that the lid refused to shut down, and the fragrant bird's-eye overflowed around it. A new pipe was stuck in the rack above the chimneypiece, and bottles of porter, ginger-beer and ale for shandy-gaff; together with spirits and soda-water, in thoughtful deference to Mr. Orpen's advanced tastes, littered the apartment.

Mr. Gagan took out a battered pocket-book and a metallic pencil, and sitting on the table, began to tot up a column of very straggling entries.

"Hold your row, Mahoney, will you? Where was I? Yes, the fees, six pound ten; and 'taking out' my traps was two more; and, Orpen, what's your little bill—hey?"

"You know right well; so pay up, and look pleasant over it," was Mr. Orpen's answer, delivered in a jocular good-humoured tone, as of one already in possession of the amount.

Mr. Gagan responded by flinging three sovereigns and some silver on the table; then he counted the remainder and stuffed it in his pockets. Mr. Tad Griffiths was paid his small account by his friend Mahoney, who said, good-naturedly,—

"Where were you this age, Tad? You might have been in for this pot of luck if we'd only seen you."

Mr. Tad replied by a comical grimace.

"I had to keep quiet. Got in a ruction down on the Quay; and didn't they follow me half over the city? I never got in till next day at all, and I was watched for at the gates for nearly a week; so I just read up that blessed Hebrew for old what's-his-name. I say, Gagan, are these bottles here to be looked at, or are you bloated capitalists going to stand treat?"

The various drinkables were quickly discussed. Dicky Davoren, who had scant inclination for stout or ale so early in the day as twelve o'clock, nevertheless drank glass for glass with his more inured companions; and then various plans of amusement were broached and discussed. At last it was settled that they were to drive down on an outside car to Bray, and dine at the hotel, then return to town and visit the theatre (not the Royal,—a minor theatre, of not too good repute, was recommended by Mr. Orpen, and agreed on by the young gentlemen); and finally wind up with a thorough spree anywhere: in fact, to make a night of it. When these preliminaries had been arranged, Dicky begged for time to run out on some errands of his own. Orpen, who had no notion of losing sight of him while the seventeen pounds was in existence, cautioned him not to be long, or they might start without him. Dicky, who had very little intention of missing the fun, hastened across College Green and plunged into a dirty lane not far up Dame Street. Out of this he emerged in a moment or two, carrying a large strap full of books under his arm; then he disappeared into a hatter's, and bought a low hat, which, with the books, he asked to have kept for him until next day. He

then, with unwonted care, folded up the receipted bill, putting it carefully in his pocket.

As he stood for a moment waiting to let a number of carts pass before crossing the Green again, he became aware of a hand laid on his shoulder. Looking up quickly, he saw Hogan and Mr. Saltasche.

"Do you care to earn fifteen pounds, Davoren, eh?" said Hogan, with a good-humoured smile.

"Yes! I've no objection," answered the youth coolly enough, and wondering to himself if the floods of Pactolus were not pouring themselves at his feet.

"Would you like to help in an election, eh? Will you be sub-sheriff? There will be an election at Peatstown directly."

"Peatstown! Oh! I know Peatstown. I have been there: my father has a cousin, a big farmer there I've often been there with him."

"By Jove! have you, though?" Saltasche now struck in. "Then write to him, Master—*Mr.* Davoren" (he corrected himself),—"and tell him you'll bring down your friend the new member that is to be, and introduce him to all of them." And Mr. Saltasche nodded at Hogan, as much as to say, "This is he."

"You know Mr. Muldoon's son, Ignatius?" asked Hogan; "he will be a sub-sheriff too, and you could work together."

"I shall be delighted," said Dicky; as indeed he was.

And the next day, when he returned home at midday sick and weary, and with only seven pounds of the seventeen left, he thought over Mr. Hogan's proposal, and made up his mind that the projected expedition would be very desirable indeed. He felt miserable and ill, and crept up to bed, avoiding Nellie, and never going near his mother's room until late in the afternoon; then, after having bribed a servant to procure him a bottle of soda-water, he felt somewhat more comfortable, and concocting a lie about having lost the last train and sleeping with a friend in town, presented himself and told his story with cool assurance. His sister, however, followed him out and began to question him.

"Where have you been? As for sleeping with Mulcahy, sir, look at your eyes! You have been up all night, I do believe."

"No such thing. It's biliousness. I don't feel at all well."

Still she distrusted, and as a last resort asked him sternly,—

"Where is the new hat you got seven-and-sixpence to buy, some days ago?"

For answer he nodded at the hat-rack in the hall, where the article in question hung. He had not forgotten to carry it and his books back with him. Nellie retreated, baffled, though by no means satisfied, to her mother's room. After a time she was called down-stairs, and going into the parlour, found Dicky stretched on a sofa near the fire and shading his burning eyes from the light with his hand.

"Is that you, Nellie? I've a piece of news you would like to hear." Seeing that she paid him no attention, and was turning out of the room, he sat straight up on the sofa. "Your friend Mr. Hogan is going into Parliament soon."

"What do you say? Soon? And for what place, eh?"

"Yah! you'd like to know all about it," returned he mockingly, letting himself fall back into his recumbent position. "You wouldn't lend me that couple of shillings, then, last week; so now find out for yourself, Miss."

"I really think you very mean to be taking all my money from me, that way, Dicky! It's most unmanly: and you never pay me back."

The youth made no reply, but taking a sovereign out of his pocket, jerked it silently across the room in her direction. Nellie picked it up in utter bewilderment, which increased when he jerked a second sovereign at her. Then he sat up again, and watched her face and attitude closely.

"Now, Miss Shylock, how much do I owe you now?"

"You owe me money still; but never mind that. Where did you get this? and how? Do tell me, Dicky."

"Never you mind. Am I to account for every penny to you, please? That's a joke! Listen: if you don't tell the governor on me, I'll let you keep that money, and—ah—I'll tell you all Mr. Hogan told me to-day."

"I shan't promise: if I am asked I must tell; you know that very well. And your conduct is scandalous. I heard of your card-playing in Mr. Saltasche's stable, with Jasper Grey and the gardener and coachman, and drinking with them. Are you not ashamed? And how did you get into the house? Coming in at three in the morning through the window. However, I have had that nailed up, and a new lock put on the garden gate."

Mr. Dicky looked conscious and penitent—to outward view, at least; but in reality he was meditating which night his sister alluded to, because on one or two occasions the company at the stable card-parties had numbered other guests than those she mentioned. Who could have told? he wondered. The coach-man's wife, no doubt: she was employed sometimes by Nellie, and had carried the story.

"Well, there's an end of that, since you've nailed up the window," he growled. In reality he had used another mode of ingress, and meant to use it again. "Now listen, Nellie: Mr. Hogan is going to stand for Peatstown (didn't you see in the *Enfranchiser* this morning the death of the member, Mr. Wyldoates, at Paris?), and he is going to take me down as sub-sheriff,—worth fifteen guineas, let alone the fun."

"Oh, I see," she cried, jumping to conclusions with the usual feminine alacrity; "and you have been paid in advance! isn't that it?"

A sudden flash of intelligence illumined Mr. Dicky's rather heavy-looking eyes. It had not occurred to him to combine the circumstances so neatly; but now he did not scruple to avail himself of the junction so presented. So he nodded a sort of Burleigh nod, and lay down again, feeling quite sure his usual luck would carry the day.

The dinner passed off to his satisfaction. His father, who was tolerably indifferent, except for occasional spasmodic fits of severity, to Dicky's general conduct, asked no awkward questions, and accepted the glib excuse without comment. Not that he was unaware that it was a lie; but it did not suit with his temper at that time to investigate or sift the affair. Another time, as his son well knew, he would have encountered a torrent of questions, cross-questions, and perhaps blows, for a comparatively trivial offence. It all depended on the humour of the moment, and also on the personal bearing of the delinquency. If anybody made a complaint to himself of Dicky, and thus annoyed or disturbed him, woe betide the lad! But anything that did not concern Mr. Davoren senior (however remotely) personally, was passed over comparatively unheeded; unless, as has been said, the escapade afforded an opportune vent for the ill-humour of the moment.

After dinner Nellie slipped up to her mother's room. Mr. Davoren went to town, as was his custom at times, to amuse himself; and Dicky, disinclined for out-door adventure or work, dragged a sofa up near the fire, and having turned out the gas and put fresh coal on the fire (for not being very well, he felt chilly), lay down for a sleep until eight o'clock tea.

At about half-past seven a sounding knock at the door startled him from his uneasy slumbers.

"It's that beggar Mulcahy; dear, oh dear! who the mischief wants him this hour of the night?" And with a cross, sulky face he proceeded to push back his couch and relight the gas. But when the door opened and Hogan's face appeared, Mr. Dicky's humour changed, and he advanced to meet him, hiding his surprise under the heartiness of the greeting.

"Good-evening, Dick," said the barrister; "how are you, my boy? I called to ask your father about letting you go down with me to-morrow morning to Peatstown to help me with my canvass, as you have friends there. Hey? what do you say to it? Will your father allow you?"

"I'm sure he will; he is out now, and won't be in till late: but wait,—I'll call Nellie down."

Dicky went up to his mother's room, and beckoned Nellie out. She came out on the landing with her book held open in her hand, and looked interrogatively at him.

"Come downstairs—quick," said he; "Mr. Hogan has come about that business I told you of to-day."

"What! the election?"

"Come along," he whispered impatiently; "he wants me to go down by the midday mail to-morrow."

"Wait an instant, Dicky, please," said she; and running into her own room, she washed her hands and smoothed her hair. No adornment did she permit herself: some sort of proud instinct forbade that. Then she hurried down after the impatient Dicky, and with a heightened colour, due partly to her haste and astonishment, partly to consciousness (it is certain that Mr. Hogan ascribed it entirely to the last), entered the room.

"How do you do, Mr. Hogan?" she said, advancing to meet him. "I am sorry papa is out."

"I am sorry too," he said; "but after all, you can let me know his decision to-morrow morning. Dicky, of course, has told you everything about my intention. He would be very useful to me; and my friend Ignatius Muldoon is also to be sub-sheriff; however, the writ is not out yet, and until it is and business has really begun, he does not appear on the scene. I wish you would allow Dicky to come down and canvass with me; he would be invaluable, knowing the place as he does."

"I am sure papa can't make any objection. You go down to-morrow?"

"Yes; to-morrow, by the midday train from the Kingsbridge."

"We must telegraph to the Sheas in the morning, Dick: you must, at all events, for I don't know them."

Nellie seated herself, as she spoke, by the fireside, opposite to a large easy-chair which Dicky had advanced for Hogan. She looked exquisitely pretty; the firelight played on her soft brown hair, and lighted up her clear, fine skin and eyes. She looked so fresh, so rosy, and so young: childish, almost, as compared with Miss Bursford, to whom Hogan (alas!) had paid a third visit that very afternoon. Miss Diana had also sat by the fire with him; that is, she had reclined in the most graceful manner in a velvet-covered low chair, and instead of allowing the flickering blaze of the coals to light up the hollows of her face, had discreetly shaded it with a handscreen, used in the most airy, coquettish manner, and from beneath the shadow of which she had darted languishing glances now and again; and when he spoke of himself, as our hero was slightly addicted to doing, she would lean her chin in the palm of her hand, and, stooping forward, concentrate her attention on every syllable he uttered. It was very pleasant, very flattering; but there "was something more exquisite still" now, in watching, as he was doing, the colour come and go, the eyes dilate and half-close with every word, and the unconcious simplicity and naturalness of Nellie.

They begged Hogan to stay for tea; and he, nothing loth, although he had promised to see the Bishop that evening, remained. Then Dicky opened a door leading into the drawing-room, and lighted up a round three-windowed room, on the ground-floor like the parlour, and looking out on the garden. There was no fire; but the warmth from the sitting-room penetrated it. Here was the piano; and Dicky, who could play pretty well, sat down and dashed into a spirited waltz. Nellie seated herself on an ottoman in the centre of the room; and Hogan, taking himself an album off a table, placed himself close to her, and began to turn over the leaves. Of course, she had to look at each as it presented itself; and Dicky, glancing around, might, had he been so disposed, have made the discovery of the exact number of shades of differences between the golden-brown of his sister's and the black-brown of the barrister's hair,—the two heads being in the precise position needful for such observation. As for their conversation, it consisted of nothings, vain repeti-

tions of already answered questions, opinions and judgments flattering and otherwise.

"I hope Dicky will be of use to you," said Miss Nellie. "I am glad he is going; then we shall know early how matters are progressing for you."

"Yes, yes," he answered. I shall tell you that myself." And then, taking the half of the great photographic book that she was holding, he closed it, and stooping a little nearer, looked straight, with his keen grey eyes, now softened with an unwonted tenderness, into hers, and said in a low tone and quickly, for Dicky was crashing the *finale* of his waltz, "May I come and tell you my success?"

She could not trust herself to answer, but her eyes spoke for her; she glanced, half involuntarily, upwards, and then rose and went over to the piano. Dicky made her play a soft Schubert melody, that seemed like a pleasant dream after his wild, chaotic, though rhythmic, dance.

She was a little distant with Hogan for the rest of his stay, which shortly ended. She felt frightened more than anything else, at present, and confused with a strange new sense as yet unknown to her. On his side, he feared to have acted on the impulse of the moment, and tried to conjure up a new meaning for the startled though not displeased look in her eyes as she rose. They bade each other good-night ceremoniously. Hogan did not venture to press her hand when parting; but when down at the entrance-gates—whither Dicky, chattering like a pie, convoyed him—he turned and saw the dark tall figure in the doorway, the light on her graceful head, as she stood waiting to see him out of the gate and call her brother in, he looked admiringly, and waved his hand to her. A frank, pleasant laugh answered him; and, reassured, the young man went his way to town.