

**THE HON. MISS
FERRARD. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. III**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649606634

The Hon. Miss Ferrard. In Three Volumes. Vol. III by Mary Hartley

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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MARY HARTLEY

**THE HON. MISS
FERRARD. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. III**

THE
HON. MISS FERRARD.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "HOGAN, M.P."

"Only a learner,
Quick one or slow one;
Just a discernor,
I would teach no one.
I am earth's native:
No rearranging it!
I be creative,
Chopping and changing it!"
BROWNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON.
1877.

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251. d. 916. 1




THE HONOURABLE MISS FERRARD.

CHAPTER I.

“ A pleasant ill is this disease of love,
And 'twere not ill to sketch its likeness thus :
When sharp cold spreads through all the æther
clear,
And children seize a crystal icicle,
At first they firmly hold their new-found joy,
But in the end the melting mass nor cares
To slip away, nor is it good to keep ;
So those that love, the selfsame strong desire
Now leads to action, now to idleness.”

SOPHOCLES (*Fragments*).


 HE bright sun of a sweet spring morning shone into the Mill-house, and through the two gable windows of Helena's room at the

top of the house, lighting up the dingy red hangings of King William's couch, and displaying in strong contrast the grey dust-wreaths that choked its every cranny. It was a queer room, and the bright light seemed to set out its incongruities with double intensity. In the corners of the ceiling were cobwebs of every stage of antiquity and thickness. Long threads, as if for convenience of telegraphic communication, joined the settlements of each angle to one another, while cables and hawsers, which in some places were so numerous and interlaced that they reminded one of the rigging of a ship, depended downwards, and served the families for that aerial exercise so pleasing to spiders. Nor were spiders the only specimens of animal life. The ivy which grew in rank luxuriance up the walls outside, and encircled the windows in a thick green training, furnished countless contributions of moths, and a goodly stock of the creatures classed under the

comprehensive heading of creeping things; sparrows and rats, sometimes, were as familiar in Helena's room as in their own quarters without. Despite the sun light which flooded the room and lit up every chink and cleft; despite the scented wind that poured unchecked through the wide gaping windows and out at the open door, bringing with it a message from the primrose banks and daffodils in the fields across the river—the room had a dreary, ugly, depressing look. And Helena, who was sitting in a low chair in the window from which the river was to be seen, with a book open in her lap, seemed to have caught for a moment the forlorn desolate expression of everything. Her arms were raised, and her head rested on the hands which were clasped behind it. Her eyes were straying far out over the landscape; but as they were full of tears, it is doubtful whether she saw any of the brightness or light there.

Helena's eyes saw only a winter landscape, passed away now four months ago. Tobergeen was white with snow, and Madam Really's cottage looked as black as a crow's nest above a huge drift. The Galtees were crowned with a cold diadem that flashed and trembled before her eyes. The river-path to Darraghmore had seven feet of snow-water on it, and Isi and she had scrambled along the dangerous high-road where the bramble and hedge-tops alone warned them from the gulleys where they would have sunk and smothered had they fallen. That was before Clan went, and Clan had been beating and bullying her and Isi (by way of farewell, possibly, for after that day they never saw him again); and they had run away out to Jim Devereux, their friend, for shelter and protection, at least until night.

Hel remembered that day well. The warm, half-dark kitchen, where Jim was



by himself nursing a sickly calf by the fire. Isi ran off with the dog after a hare, and Hel came in alone and sat down. He made her tell him the whole story. She could see his face redden and his eyes flash with anger; then he came over and seated himself beside her on the bench, and wiped away the tears that were running down her cheeks; she could almost feel the gentle touch of his strong hand and the sweet breath that stirred her dishevelled hair. They said nothing for a long time. Then he leaned forward a little, and looking straight and close into her face, said in a very low trembling voice:

“Hel, unless you give me the right to interfere with Clan, I oughtn’t to. You understand me, dear?”

“Yes.”

“And—and—you do then?”

Hel did not answer at all, but the two faces came somehow nearer and nearer—neither knowing exactly how or why, and