

*Nineteenth-Century
Literature Criticism*

NCLC

199

Volume 199

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Philosophers, and Other
Creative Writers Who Died between 1800
and 1899, from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations



**Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism,
Vol. 199**

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Preface

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NCLC continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC) and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC).

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

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Frank, Joseph. "The Gambler: A Study in Ethnopsychology." *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*. Eds. Elizabeth Cheresch Allen and Gary Saul Morson. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995. 69-85. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Eds. Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker. Vol. 168. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. 75-84.

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William Carleton

1794-1869

Irish short story writer and novelist.

The following entry presents an overview of Carleton's life and works. For additional discussions of Carleton's career, see *NCLC*, Volume 3.

INTRODUCTION

To many modern scholars, William Carleton remains a pioneering figure in the development of modern Irish literature. His *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830) was one of the first works of fiction to depict the everyday lives of Ireland's peasant class. Carleton himself grasped the historical significance of the collection; in his introduction to the 1842 edition of the work, he asserted that he wrote the stories "more for the sake of his country than himself," with the aim of debunking the "gross and overcharged" stereotypes of Irishmen as "blundering buffoons" that had populated English literature for centuries. In many ways, Carleton's commitment to literary realism was inextricably linked to a powerful undercurrent of Irish nationalism, a sentiment that began to assume a prominent role in Irish political life in the 1830s and 1840s. In such novels as *Valentine M'Clutchy*, *the Irish Agent* (1845) and *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine* (1847), Carleton depicts the struggle of his native country to shed the various forms of imperialism through which England had dominated Ireland for centuries. For Carleton this domination was not only political but also cultural. Though he wrote in English, Carleton's prose style was deeply informed by Gaelic, and his concern with capturing the nuances and phrases of everyday Irish speech was, in many respects, an effort to preserve a vital part of his country's cultural heritage. Indeed, scholar Thomas L. Blanton has called Carleton a "literary journalist," arguing that his careful attention to the details of Irish life enabled him to create some of the first truly authentic works of Irish fiction. It is for these reasons that poet William Butler Yeats later described Carleton as "the greatest novelist of Ireland."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

William Carleton was born in Prillisk, a small town in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, on February 20, 1794, the youngest of fourteen children. His parents, James

Carleton and Mary Kelly Carleton, were peasant farmers. In spite of their impoverished circumstances, Carleton's parents were intelligent, creative individuals who played a vital role in shaping their youngest son's intellectual and artistic development. In his introduction to the 1842 edition of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, Carleton asserted that his father's memory for facts and literature was "absolutely astonishing" and served as a "perfect storehouse, and a rich one, of all that the social antiquary, the man of letters, the poet, or the musician would consider valuable." At the same time, Carleton's mother "possessed the sweetest and most exquisite of human voices" and earned wide renown as a singer at funeral services. As a child Carleton learned English and Gaelic, developing a keen ear for the "idiomatic peculiarity and conversational spirit" of both languages.

Although Carleton received little formal education, his intellectual gifts were immediately evident to his parents, and they determined that he should study to become a priest. Indeed, Carleton's mother and father continually elevated him above their other children; while his brothers and sisters worked in the fields, Carleton devoted his time to reading and playing sports, and a substantial portion of the family income went toward providing him with new clothes. Writing in 1896, scholar D. J. O'Donoghue described the young Carleton as an "intrepid athlete, a famous dancer, and something of a fighter" who "was known for miles round for agility and strength." Carleton also became an accomplished storyteller at a young age, impressing his family members with his knowledge of English and classical literature.

After the death of his father, Carleton left home to find work as a "poor scholar." For the next several years he wandered throughout Ireland, occasionally performing the duties of a tutor. Although he struggled to eke out a living during his travels, his encounters with various people from across Ireland exerted a powerful effect on his later writings; Carleton also chronicled his experiences as an itinerant teacher in the 1833 story "The Poor Scholar." He eventually settled in Dublin, where he applied for a job with a bird taxidermist. As O'Donoghue related, Carleton was turned down for the position when, upon being asked what he would use to stuff the birds, he replied, "potatoes and meal." After subsisting for several months on charity, Carleton secured a job tutoring the son of a man named Fox. A

short time later he met Fox's niece, Jane Anderson, whom he married in 1822. Carleton accepted a job as a clerk with the Irish Sunday School Society, a position that provided him with a meager income. During these years he also began to write short sketches and soon became convinced that he might earn a living as an author.

The pivotal moment in Carleton's career came in 1827, when he met Caesar Otway, the editor of the *Christian Examiner*. Impressed by Carleton's storytelling talents, Otway encouraged him to submit his work to the magazine. Carleton's first published story, "The Lough Derg Pilgrim," appeared in the *Christian Examiner* in 1828. The story was well received by readers; Carleton became a regular contributor to the magazine, while also publishing stories and sketches in other well-known Irish literary journals. These stories formed the basis of his first collection, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. The work caused an immediate sensation, both in Ireland and England, and received particularly high critical praise for its realistic depictions of everyday Irish life. As O'Donoghue pointed out in his introduction to the 1896 edition of the collection, Carleton was quickly "hailed as the discoverer of a new world" in that he introduced English audiences to an "entirely new and strange" society. The work appeared in numerous editions over the ensuing years; its enthusiastic reception inspired Carleton to publish a second book of short stories, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry: Second Series*, in 1833. Another collection, *Tales of Ireland*, followed in 1834.

During these years Carleton became a regular contributor to the prestigious *Dublin University Magazine*. His first novel, *Fardorougha the Miser; or, The Convicts of Lisnamona*, was printed serially in the magazine in 1837 and 1838; it was published in book form in 1839. *Fardorougha the Miser* was immediately praised by critics, and O'Donoghue later ranked the work "among the best of Irish novels." In spite of this success, Carleton ceased writing for the *Dublin University Magazine* a short time later, largely due to a dispute with its new editor. Indeed, Carleton published little over the next five years while he worked on a new novel, *Valentine M'Clutchy, the Irish Agent*. During the 1840s he produced two more important novels: *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine* and *The Emigrants of Ahadarra: A Tale of Irish Life* (1848). Although these works enjoyed both popular and critical success, they did little to allay Carleton's persistent economic difficulties, and he remained deeply in debt throughout these years.

Carleton received some relief in 1848, when a group of Dublin writers and political activists petitioned the government to provide the author with an annual pension. Although the assistance helped ease some of his difficulties, Carleton still struggled to survive, and he never

succeeded in fully paying off his debts. In the ensuing years, the quality of Carleton's writings began to decline significantly. His next novel, *The Tithe Proctor* (1849), failed to impress critics, and his subsequent works were, in O'Donoghue's words, "even less worthy." Carleton's later works included *The Squanders of Castle Squander* (1852) and *Redmond Count O'Hanlon, the Irish Rapparee* (1862). In 1868 Carleton began writing his autobiography. Serious illness prevented him from completing the work, however, and he died on January 30, 1869.

MAJOR WORKS

Many scholars consider Carleton's debut story collection, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, one of the first significant works of modern Irish fiction written in English. In many ways, the collection represents a watershed moment in the history of Anglo-Irish literature. The book's publication arrived at a pivotal moment in the history of Irish literature and culture, an era when the proportion of Irish citizens who spoke Gaelic was rapidly diminishing, and Irish intellectuals were beginning to recognize the importance of promoting a distinctly Irish culture. As Carleton himself later wrote, Ireland's "men and women of genius" had, in the past, "uniformly carried their talents to the English market, while we laboured at home under all the dark privations of a literary famine." Carleton's stated intention in writing the stories was to present a "truthful and authentic" depiction of his countrymen and countrywomen, one that would breathe life into his country's literary culture, while also challenging prevailing stereotypes of the Irish as crude, backwards, and uneducated.

In addition to his achievements as a story writer, Carleton also earned widespread acclaim for his longer fiction. His first novel, *Fardorougha the Miser*, concerns the struggles of a wealthy farmer to reconcile his devotion to his only son with his all-consuming desire for wealth. The novel is noteworthy for its vivid depiction of the farmer's psychological turmoil, as well as for Carleton's in-depth portrayals of the work's female characters, in particular that of the farmer's wife, Honor O'Donovan. *Valentine M'Clutchy, the Irish Agent*, a darkly comic work that satirizes the unfair practices of British land agents, is generally considered to be among Carleton's most incisive and influential political works. His novel *The Black Prophet* offers a harrowing look at life in rural Ireland during a period of severe famine, while *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* describes the relationships between three rural families as they struggle against the threat of financial ruin. Although it was never completed, Carleton's posthumously published *Autobiography of William Carleton* (1968) offers valuable insight into the central themes of his writings, as well as the various influences and life experiences that helped shape his literary career.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

According to D. J. O'Donoghue, William Carleton's *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* caused an immediate sensation among readers and critics upon its original publication in 1830, and Carleton enjoyed a reputation as one of Ireland's most important fiction writers throughout his career. Writing in 1844, *Nation* commentator Thomas Davis praised Carleton for the honesty and accuracy of his character sketches. Some contemporary critics, however, did take issue with the historical accuracy of Carleton's fiction; in 1847, a reviewer for the *Athenaeum* complained that Carleton was overstating the devastating effects of famine in his novel *The Black Prophet*. Carleton's work remained influential throughout the nineteenth century. Writing in the 1890s, William Butler Yeats argued that Carleton had played an indispensable role in shaping the course of modern Irish literature, while O'Donoghue evaluated the historical value of Carleton's writings. Mid-twentieth century commentators like Ernest A. Baker and John Montague both praise the verisimilitude and scope of Carleton's depictions of Irish life. Later scholars, notably Robert Lee Wolff and Eileen A. Sullivan, examine the moral underpinnings of Carleton's fiction. In a 1983 essay published in the journal *Éire-Ireland*, Cathal G. Ó Háinle discusses the Gaelic influences on Carleton's short stories. Maureen Waters and Declan Kiberd evaluate Carleton's use of Gaelic folklore and storytelling techniques in his writings, while scholar Elizabeth Harden focuses more on the realistic elements in Carleton's narrative style.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. 2 vols. [anonymous] (short stories) 1830
- Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry: Second Series*. 3 vols. [anonymous] (short stories) 1833
- Tales of Ireland* [as "The Author of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*"] (short stories) 1834
- Fardorougha the Miser; or, The Convicts of Lisnamona* (novel) 1839
- The Fawn of Spring-Vale, The Clarionet, and Other Tales*. 3 vols. (short stories) 1841
- Valentine M'Clutchy, the Irish Agent: or, Chronicles of the Castle Cumber Property*. 3 vols. (novel) 1845
- The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine* (novel) 1847
- The Emigrants of Ahadarra: A Tale of Irish Life* (novel) 1848
- The Tithe Proctor* (novel) 1849
- The Squanders of Castle Squander*. 2 vols. (novel) 1852

- Redmond Count O'Hanlon, the Irish Rapparee: An Historical Tale* (novel) 1862
- The Autobiography of William Carleton* (autobiography) 1968

CRITICISM

William Carleton (essay date 1830)

SOURCE: Carleton, William. "Preface to the First Series." In *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, edited by D. J. O'Donoghue, pp. xxiv-xxvi. London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1896.

[In the following excerpt, originally published in 1830 in the first edition of the book, Carleton discusses the social, historical, and cultural contexts of his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. Carleton assures the reader that the details included in the stories are "genuine Irish."]

In presenting the following *Traits and Stories* [*Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*] to the public, the Author can with confidence assure them that what he offers is, both in manufacture and material, genuine Irish; yes, genuine Irish as to character, drawn by one born amidst the scenes he describes—reared as one of the people whose characters and situations he sketches—and who can cut and dress a shillaly as well as any man in his Majesty's dominions—ay, and use it too; so let the critics take care of themselves. Conversant with the pastimes, festivals, feasts, and feuds he details, he may well say of what he has described, "*quorum pars magna fui*." Moreover, the Author assumes that in the ground he has taken he stands in a great measure without a competitor; particularly as to certain sketches peculiar, in the habits and manners delineated in them, to the Northern Irish. These last—the Ulster Creachts, as they were formerly called—are as characteristically distinct from the Southern or Western Milesians as the people of Yorkshire are from the natives of Somerset; yet they are still as Irish, and as strongly imbued with the character of their country. The English reader, perhaps, may be sceptical as to the deep hatred which prevails among Roman Catholics in the north of Ireland against those who differ from them in party and religious principles; but when he reflects that they were driven before the face of the Scotch invader, and divested by the settlement of Ulster of their pleasant vales, forced to quench their fires on their fathers' hearths, and retire to the mountain ranges of Tyrone, Donegal, and Derry, perhaps he will grant, after all, that the feel-

ing is natural to a people treated as they have been. Among this race, surrounded by Scotch and English settlers, and hid amongst the mists of their highland retreats, education, until recently, had made little progress: superstition, and prejudice, and ancient animosity held their strongest sway; and the priests, the poor pastors of a poorer people, were devoid of the wealth, the self-respect, and the learning which prevailed amongst their better endowed brethren of the south.

The Author, in the different scenes and characters he describes, has endeavoured to give his portraits as true to nature as possible; and requests his readers to give him credit when he asserts that, without party object or engagement, he disclaims subserviency to any political purpose whatsoever. His desire is neither to distort his countrymen into demons, nor to enshrine them as suffering innocents and saints, but to exhibit them as they really are—warm-hearted, hot-headed, affectionate creatures—the very fittest materials in the world for either the poet or agitator—capable of great culpability, and of great and energetic goodness—sudden in their passions as the red and rapid gush of their mountain-streams—variable in their temper as the climate that sends them the mutability of sun and shower—at times rugged and gloomy as the moorland sides of their mountains—often sweet, soft, and gay as the sun-lit meadows of their pleasant vales.

The Author—though sometimes forced to touch upon their vices, expose their errors, and laugh at their superstitions—loves also (and it has formed, as he may say, the pleasure of his pen) to call up their happier qualities, to exhibit them as candid, affectionate, and faithful. Nor has he ever foregone the hope—his heart's desire and his anxious wish—that his own dear native mountain people may, through the influence of education, by the leadings of purer knowledge, and by the fosterings of a paternal Government, become the pride, the strength, and support of the British Empire, instead of, as now, forming its reproach.

Metropolitan Magazine (review date May 1841)

SOURCE: Review of *The Fawn of Spring Vale, the Clarionet, and Other Tales*. *Metropolitan Magazine* 31 (May 1841): 51-2.

[In the following review, the author criticizes the collection for its unrelenting depictions of sorrowful events, describing the book as a "heaping of distress upon distresses."]

The tales that occupy these three volumes are of various and very opposite merits—with the exception of one or two, which can fairly lay claim to no merit what-

ever. Our sense of impartiality compels us to animadvert strongly upon the false taste that pervades and deteriorates the powerful writing in the first story, the *Fawn of Spring Vale* [Jane Sinclair; or, *The Fawn of Spring Vale*]. All the facts on which it is founded may be summed up in one sentence. The heroine falls in love with a beautiful youth, who proves false to her; she goes mad and dies. For three hundred pages the reader's feelings are harrowed by the most distressing incidents, and we have all the gradations of the lady's insanity chronicled with a fidelity that we should look for only in a mad-doctor's diary. This is a method so easy, and so meretricious, by which to excite a reader's feelings. The press formerly teemed with novels for the serious, always consisting of an interesting and a pale young clergyman dying of a consumption, who enacted the hero, and some three or four phthisical young ladies, who shared the heroineship between them, going off after him. The public soon grew sick of this, and we have lately escaped similar inflictions, until the *Fawn of Spring Vale* appeared. It is true, that when an ancient philosopher was asked as to which was the greatest of evils, he replied "Pain;" meaning physical sufferings; but we think that pain, as the principal agent in a novel, makes that novel intolerable. We detest this heaping of distress upon distresses, of carefully pointing all the arrows of anguish, and darkening every sorrow with the dismality of an incurable woe. If Mr William Carleton succeeds, we shall soon find him surpassed, and as he has made an insanity the heroine of his story, we shall soon have a cancer in the bosom, or an erysipelas playing the same part. We do not know why an inveterate fit of the gout would not make a respectable hero. How eloquent might be his groanings; how pathetic his appeals for ease from pain! This afflicted one might have for wife in an adjoining room a *tic dolooureux*—let the partition be thin—and there will be a romantic distress for you! We do assure our friends, that all the pathos in *Jane Sinclair, the Fawn of Spring Vale*, is produced after this fashion. We grant it possesses eloquence, and glows with the brilliancy of an ardent imagination; but these virtues serve only to make the vices of the composition the more glaring and repugnant to our feelings. "Sha Dhu, or, the Dark Day," the next story, partakes less of this failing. It is much less lachrymose, and contains some natural and manly feelings. Yet, in this, the author, when he gets hold of a distress, is dreadfully anxious to make the most of it. He seems to revel in an agony, and is never weary of plucking at the end of our nerves with his inexorable pincers. "The Clarionet" is full of woe, most woefully eked out. Reduced to one-half, it would have proved a sweet, and instructive, and a highly moral tale. "The Dead Boxer" abounds in improbabilities. The scenes depicted in it could not have happened in any civilised society. Grant the author his premises, and then we shall have an exciting, almost a

beautiful production. Such a story as “**The Dead Boxer**” could only have been written in Ireland, and to the Irish. After all, the author may have only been quizzing John Bull, and testing the depth of his gullibility. The two last tales of these volumes are of a nature totally different from the others, and bear the stamp of great excellence. The one bearing the title of “**The Misfortunes of Barney Branagan**,” is as good as it well can be, being not only in its totality, but through all its parts, not only possible but probable, not only probable but natural, yet very comic, and very, very Irish. Every one will read it with delight; and we ask, with astonishment, why does not the author always do thus? But if Barney Branagan was good, the resurrection of Barney Bradley is inimitable. It is the carrying of humour to its highest pinnacle. It is true that it is a burlesque, but a burlesque so rich, and so true to actual life, that we exclaim, if all this is not possible, it should be so, and we will not wrong ourselves of so much mirth by believing to the contrary. From a due consideration of all these specimens, it is most evident that the author is blessed or cursed with too fervid an imagination. We should argue from his productions that he is a very young man, were not the Hibernian mind always young. From this cause it arises that his besetting sin is exaggeration. He exaggerates a good thing until he spoils it—and very much indeed he has spoiled in that way. Yet some of the productions of his fancy are so truly sterling, that all the tinsel with which he overloads does not deteriorate them; and we tolerate what is gaudy and paltry in its finery for the sake of the true gold that is presented to us with it. When we next meet him, we trust that it will not be in the character of a mental surgeon, a scarifier of our nerves. Wo [*sic*] should be sublimated when it is recorded, in order to produce upon us its proper moral effect.

William Carleton (essay date 1846)

SOURCE: Carleton, William. Preface to *Valentine McClutchy, the Irish Agent; or, The Chronicles of Castle Cumber*, pp. ix-xxi. Dublin: James Duffy, 1847.

[In the following excerpt from his preface, originally written in November 1846, Carleton defends the authenticity of his portrayal of Irish society and customs against anticipated criticism from “bigotted or venal pens.”]

It was not my intention to have written any Preface to this book [*Valentine M'Clutchy, the Irish Agent; or, The Chronicles of Castle Cumber*], but to have allowed it simply to speak for itself. As it is very likely, however, that both it and the motives of its author may be misrepresented by bigotted or venal pens, I think it

necessary to introduce it to the reader by a few brief observations. In the first place, then, I beg to say, that the work presents phases of Irish life and manners that have never been given to the public before by any other writer upon the same subject. So far, therefore, the book is a perfectly new book—not merely to the Irish people, but also to the English and Scotch. I know not whether the authenticity of the facts and descriptions contained in it may be called in question; but this I *do* know, that there is not an *honest man*, on either side, who has lived in the north of Ireland, and reached the term of fifty years, who will not recognise the conduct and language of the northern Orangemen as just, truthful, and not one whit exaggerated. To our friends across the Channel it is only necessary to say, that I was born in one of the most Orange counties in Ireland (Tyrone)—that the violences and licentious abuses of these armed civilians were perpetrated before my eyes—and that the sounds of their outrages may be said still to ring in my ears.

I have written many works upon Irish life, and up to the present day the man has never lived who could lay his finger upon any passage of my writings, and say “*that is false*.” I cannot, however, avoid remarking here, that within the last few years, a more enlarged knowledge of life, and a more matured intercourse with society, have enabled me to overcome many absurd prejudices with which I was imbued. Without compromising, however, the *truth* or *integrity* of any portion of my writings, I am willing to admit, which I do frankly, and without hesitation, that I published in my early works passages which were not calculated to do any earthly good; but, on the contrary, to give unnecessary offence to a great number of my countrymen. It is due to myself to state this, and to say, that in the last edition of my works I have left as many of these passages out as I readily could, without diminishing the interest, or disturbing the narrative.

A fortiori, then, this book may be considered as full of truth and fidelity as any I have ever written; and I must say, that in writing it I have changed no principle whatsoever. I am a liberal Conservative, and, I trust, a rational one; but I am not, nor ever was, an Orangeman; neither can I endure their exclusive and arrogant assumption of loyalty, nor the outrages which it has generated. In what portion of my former writings, for instance, did I ever publish a line in their favour, or in favour of any secret and illegal confederacy?

Again, with regard to the Landlords and Agents, have I not written a tale called the “**Poor Scholar**,” and another called “**Tubber Derg**”? in both of which their corruptions and oppressions are exposed. Let it not be

mistaken. The two great curses of Ireland are bad Landlords and bad Agents, and in nineteen cases out of every twenty, the origin of the crime lies with the Landlord or Agent, instead of the tenant.

With respect to the Established Church of forty years ago, if there is any man living who asserts that I have not *underdrawn* her, rather than otherwise, he is less intimate with truth than I could wish. On this subject I challenge and defy inquiry. I grant you she is much changed for the better now; but yet there is much to be done in her still. It is true, Irishmen at present get Mistresses, a fact which was unknown forty years ago. We have now more Evangelicism, and consequently more sleekness and hypocrisy, more external decorum, and, I would also trust, more internal spirituality. We have now many eminent and pious Prelates in the Church, whose admirable example is enough even to shame the Clergymen under them into a sense of their duty. It is to be wished that we had many more such as they, for they are wanted. The Irish Evangelical party are certainly very numerous, and they must pardon me a slight anachronism or two regarding them, concerning what has been termed the Modern Reformation in these volumes. Are those who compose this same party, by the way, acquainted with their own origin? If not, I will tell them. They were begotten by the active spirit of the Church of Rome, upon their own establishment, when she was asleep; so that they owe their very existence to those whom they look upon as their enemies; and if it were only for this reason alone, there ought to be more peace between them. In England the same spirit has effected a similar seduction on *that* Establishment, but with this difference, that the Puseyites are a much more obedient and dutiful progeny than the Irish Evangelicals—in as much as they have the grace to acknowledge the relationship.

This book was written to exhibit a useful moral to the country. It will startle, I humbly trust, many a hard-hearted Landlord and flagitious Agent into a perception of their duty, and it will show the negligent and reckless Absentee how those from whose toils and struggles he derives his support, are oppressed, and fleeced, and trampled on in his name.

It will also teach the violent and bigotted Conservative—or, in other words, the man who *still* inherits the Orange sentiments of past times—a lesson that he ought not to forget. It will also test the whole spirit of modern Conservatism, and its liberality. If there be at the press, or any where else, a malignant bigot with great rancour and little honesty, it is very likely he will attack my book; and this, of course, he is at liberty to do. I deny, however, that modern Conservatism is capable of adopt-

ing or cherishing the outrages which disgraced the Orangemen of forty years ago, or even of a later period. And for this reason I am confident that the Conservative Press of Ireland will not only sustain me but fight my battles, if I shall be ungenerously attacked. Let them look upon these pictures, and if it ever should happen that arms and irresponsible power shall be entrusted to them, perhaps the recollection of their truth may teach them a lesson of forbearance and humanity towards those who differ from them in creed, that may be of important service to our common country. If so, I shall have rendered a service to that country, which, as is usual, may probably be recognized as valuable, when perhaps my bones are mouldering in the clay, and my ear insensible to all such acknowledgments.

As for myself, I have been so completely sickened by the bigotted on each side, that I have come to the determination, as every honest Irishman ought, of knowing no party but my country, and of devoting such talents as God has given me, to the promotion of her general interests, and the happiness of her whole people.

***Tales and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (essay date 1860)**

SOURCE: Introduction to *Tales and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, by William Carleton, pp. v-vi. New York: D. & J. Sadler & Co., 1860.

[In the following introduction, the publishers praise the diligence and exhaustiveness of Carleton's portrait of Irish life.]

The lesser tales of Carleton present, perhaps, as strong a claim to immortality as a delineator of national character can desire. Thomas Davis, speaking of the *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, well remarks, that we enter into all the sports and sorrows of the characters therein portrayed; and this charming quality of fascination will yet live and be attractive, when Carleton's stories will afford no matter for excitement, except that of curiosity towards a state of things extinct and passed away. When this era shall dawn it is impossible to determine; but certain it appears to be, that the last of our chroniclers belongs to the day we live in. And why? Because Irish nature and Irish grievance have been described in every phase and form, and there does not exist in either any possible variety which could demand a future painter.

Carleton then is the last of this order. He possesses an interest on this account, as well as from the knowledge that in scanning his pictures, we are regarding what was admired by the last generation, and will continue to be so for many yet to come.

If he has a fault, it is in the sudden boldness of his images; but truth exists in all, and that exquisite depth and warmth which strikes the eye and mind, and leaves them both enraptured. Whoever reads "**Tubber Derg**," will acknowledge a charm compounded of every-day truth, which must be always potent to work the heart into alternate softness and indignation.

Bayle Bernard (essay date 1874)

SOURCE: Bernard, Bayle. "1836-1838—Irish Fiction continued." In *The Life of Samuel Lover, R.H.A.*, pp. 180-209. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1874.

[In the following excerpt, Bernard extols the earnestness and versatility of Carleton's storytelling abilities. In Bernard's estimation, Carleton was the "greatest genius Ireland has produced."]

But the peasant life of Ireland has been illustrated by a still more distinguished pen than Banim's—that of William Carleton; a man whom, in his own sphere, I cannot help regarding as the greatest genius Ireland has produced. For every requirement of that sphere he possessed some adaptation—imagination, humour, pathos, knowledge, vehemence, and delicacy. There was not an aspect of the peasant that he could not reproduce successfully, if there were certain moods which most attracted him, and that he was best able to develop. He had all the poetic tenderness of Griffin in his exquisite rustic love-scenes; all the intensity of Banim in his pictures of crime and sorrow,—as witness the terrors of the traitor Flanagan, and the appalling curse of the evicted Widow; and, on the other hand, he could expand into the richest exuberance of Lover,—as in his immortal inquest on *Barney Bradley*, when the corpse suddenly reviving at a blow from one of the jurymen, knocks down the coroner, and, in turn, demands an inquest upon him.

William Carleton, in his peasant origin, his varied genius, his drudging life, and his convivial spirit, might with little impropriety be called the Prose Burns of Ireland. He had all the same mixture of emotions, the same contempt for fraud or falsehood, the same regard for home affections, and the same knowledge of the usages and traditions of the peasantry, which befitted him to tell in story what the great lyrist poured out in song. Hence it is that, with all his large imaginative power, it is to him we are indebted for the reality of rustic life, as it is to Banim we owe the romance. Passing his days among his fellow cotters up to his twenty-second year, when he bent his steps to Dublin in order to support himself by literature, it is he who gives us his humble

countrymen in all the daily and simple current of their pleasures and their sorrows, their sympathies and their enmities, their toils and superstitions, with a minuteness and completeness that can never be surpassed.

Carleton had also his own locality. What Munster was to Griffin, and what Leinster had been to Banim, northern Ulster was to him. The "Ulster Creaghts," as they were termed, were for the most part mountaineers, who, in virtue of their isolation, had preserved the distinctive features of their Celtic origin unimpaired; and it is these which he sets before us in his maiden effort, his *Traits and Stories* [*Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*], with such wonderful fidelity, whilst giving us glimpses of his youth,—as in the sketch of "**The Poor Scholar**"—the feeling and naturalness of which have so often been appreciated.

Carleton was limited, as I have said, to the area of real life; but it must be owned that, within that boundary, no mind could be more creative. He could imagine types of character as remarkable as any in modern fiction, if he had little power of constructing stories with the art displayed by Banim, or of inventing exciting incidents in order to give them animation. Sally MacGowan, the prophet's daughter, with her fierce, stormy, generous nature, left to run riot by neglect, or rendered savage by ill usage, yet melting into affection at a word or look of kindness, has a stamp of nationality that is apparent at a glance; and so also has that prince of sluggards, the inimitable Parra Sastha, with his abhorrence of all improvements, and devotion to the dirt and squalor of his easy-going ancestors. Scarcely less striking is his M'Clutchy, truest specimen of Ireland's old master scourge, a middleman,—Skinader, the usurer, who masks his cruelty under pretences of benevolence,—Hycey Burke, who robs his father, but still is a gentleman, because he keeps a hunter,—Kate Hogan, the tinkler's wife, stained with every debasement but impurity,—and last, not least, Fardorougha, sublimest creation of a miser—with love and avarice, like angel and devil, struggling for possession of his soul, till suffering comes to love's assistance and drives out the evil spirit.

An imagination which exhibits all this range as well as force, would have alone conferred on its possessor an eminent distinction; and yet, extraordinary as it is, it is not superior to his pathos. His *Fardorougha*, I venture to think, is the most pathetic tale in the language. The man himself—the most original conception in Irish fiction—is treated with a mastery that is as startling as it is curious and enthralling. The love that equally possesses him for his son and for his gold, and the tortures that convulse when the one is weighed against the other, are alike so human and so revolting, so pitiable and so