

**TRAITS AND
STORIES OF THE
IRISH PEASANTRY**

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Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry by William Carleton & D. J. O'Donoghue

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WILLIAM CARLETON & D. J. O'DONOGHUE

**TRAITS AND
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TRAITS AND STORIES OF
THE IRISH PEASANTRY

IN FOUR VOLUMES
VOL. IV



W. C. C. C.

TRAITS AND STORIES OF
THE IRISH PEASANTRY

486

BY
WILLIAM CARLETON



EDITED BY
D. J. O'DONOGHUE

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TRAITS AND STORIES OF
THE IRISH PEASANTRY

TUBBER DERG

OR, THE RED WELL

THE following story owes nothing to any colouring or invention of mine; it is unhappily a true one, and to me possesses a peculiar and melancholy interest, arising from my intimate knowledge of the man whose fate it holds up as a moral lesson to Irish landlords. I knew him well, and many a day and hour have I played about his knee, and ran, in my boyhood, round his path, when, as he said himself, the world was no trouble to him.

On the south side of a sloping tract of light ground, lively, warm, and productive, stood a white, moderate-sized farmhouse, which, in consequence of its conspicuous situation, was a prominent, and, we may add, a graceful, object in the landscape of which it formed a part. The spot whereon it stood was a swelling natural terrace, the soil of which was heavier and richer than that of the adjoining lands. On each side of the house stood a clump of old beeches, the only survivors of that species then remaining in the country. These beeches extended behind the house in a kind of angle, with opening enough at their termination to form a vista, through which its white walls glistened with beautiful effect in the calm splendour of a summer evening. Above the mound on which it stood rose two steep hills, overgrown with furze and fern, except on their tops, which were clothed with purple heath;

they were also covered with patches of broom, and studded with grey rocks, which sometimes rose singly or in larger masses, pointed or rounded into curious and fantastic shapes. Exactly between these hills the sun went down during the month of June, and nothing could be in finer relief than the rocky and picturesque outlines of their sides, as, crowned with thorns and clumps of wild ash, they appeared to overhang the valley, whose green foliage was gilded by the sunbeams, which lit up the scene into radiant beauty. The bottom of this natural chasm, which opened against the deep crimson of the evening sky, was nearly upon a level with the house, and completely so with the beeches that surrounded it. Brightly did the sinking sun fall upon their tops, whilst the neat white house below, in their quiet shadow, sent up its wreath of smoke among their branches, itself an emblem of contentment, industry, and innocence. It was, in fact, a lovely situation; perhaps the brighter to me that its remembrance is associated with days of happiness and freedom from the cares of a world which, like a distant mountain, darkens as we approach it, and only exhausts us in struggling to climb its rugged and barren paths.

There was to the south-west of this house another little hazel glen, that ended in a precipice formed by a single rock some thirty feet high, over which tumbled a crystal cascade into a basin worn in its hard bed below. From this basin the stream murmured away through the copsewood, until it joined a larger rivulet that passed, with many a winding, through a fine extent of meadows adjoining it. Across the foot of this glen, and past the door of the house we have described, ran a bridle-road, from time immemorial, on which, as the traveller ascended it towards the house, he appeared to track his way in blood; for a chalybeate spa arose at its head, oozing out of the earth, and spread itself in a crimson stream over the path in every spot whereon a footmark could be made. From this circumstance it was called Tubber Derg, or the Red Well. In the meadow where the glen terminated was another spring of delicious crystal; and clearly do I remember the ever-beaten pathway that led to it through the grass, and up the green field which rose in a gentle