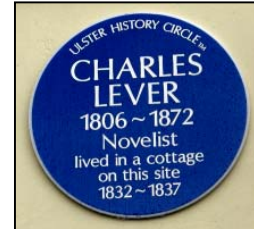


HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE



CHARLES LEVER (1806 –1872)

Charles Lever was born in Dublin in 1806. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1828 with a degree in medicine. After some time in Europe he was appointed in 1833 to a medical post in County Clare during a cholera outbreak. Later in that year took up a post a dispensary doctor in Portstewart where he married and settled down for the next five years. His literary career began during his student days when he wrote for literary magazines. In 1837 he began serialising *The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* in the *Dublin University Magazine*. *Lorrequer* was a string of rollicking stories, and Lever, who had written them late at night after the serious business of the day was over, was astonished at its success. "If this sort of thing amuses them, I can go on for ever." And go on he did, producing a long list of similar publications over the years.

In 1837 Lever had left Ireland for Brussels and a more lucrative medical practice. The success of *Harry Lorrequer* was soon followed by *Charles O'Malley: the Irish Dragoon*, also in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1840, and published by Curry in 1841, and *Our Mess* in 1843-4. In 1842 Lever gave up medical practice and moved to Templeogue, south-west of Dublin. The house became a mecca for those interested in fine hospitality and witty conversation. The young Thackeray visited Lever there, looking for material for his *Irish Sketch Book* (1843), later dedicated to Lever.

Between 1841 and 1845 Lever was Editor of the *Dublin University Magazine*. While in Dublin he published collections of his writings in volume form, including *Arthur O'Leary: his Wandering and Pondering in many Lands* (1844) and *Nuts and Nutcrackers* (1845).

In 1845 Lever moved back to Brussels and subsequently lived in various places in Germany and Italy, settling in Florence in 1847. Over the next decade he produced numerous novels including *The Knight of Gwynne* (1847), *Roland Castle* (1850), *Confessions of Con Cregan* (1850), *Maurice Tiernay: Soldier of Fortune* (1855), *The Daltons* (1852), *The Dodd Family Abroad* (1854) and *Sir Jasper Carew, his Life and Times* (1855).

In 1858 he was appointed vice-consul at La Spezia. This suited him as the post carried light duties and allowed him to concentrate on his writing. He produced a series of novels including *The Fortunes of Glencore* (1857) and *Davenport Dunn, a Man of our Day* (1859).

From 1864 to 1872 he contributed pieces to *Blackwood's Magazine*, while continuing to publish including *Barrington* (1863), *Luttrell of Arran* (1865), *Tony Butler* (1865), *A Rent in a Cloud* (1865) and *Sir Brooke Fossbrooke* (1866). In 1867 he became consul at Trieste. He continued to publish novels including *The Bramleighs of Bishop's Folly* (1868) and *That Boy at Northcott's* (1869).

In 1871 Lever was awarded an honorary degree of LLB from Trinity College. His final novel *Lord Kilgobbin: a Tale of Ireland in our Own Time* was published in 1872. Lever died in Trieste on 1 June 1872

Location of plaque: 22a The Promenade, Portstewart, Co. Londonderry

[The Ulster History Circle erects blue plaques in public places throughout the province to commemorate people who have made a significant contribution to the community locally, regionally or in the wider world. Not all are well known and many have been forgotten in the place where they were born or worked.]