

Manx Notes 31 (2004)

“THIS TRUE SON OF THE SOIL”
HALL CAINE AND EDWARD FARAGHER (1898)

(1)

3/May/98

My dear Sir,

It would interest me to hear of the old Manxman you speak of, but I fear I must say at once that I could neither promise to write about him nor to get contributions on his behalf. His position, however, appears to demand true sympathy & I fear that he cannot be earning much at Kinsale. You may not perhaps have as many opportunities as I have of knowing men of the same class in this island. I am glad to say there are not a few who would answer to the description you gave of your friend, but I am sorry to add that some are in positions almost as pitiable. As a Manxman I thank you for the great interest you have shewn on this true son of the soil.

With best wishes
Yours very truly | Hall Caine

(2)

Greeba Castle | IoM. | 18/June/98

My dear Sir,

I have read the poems with pleasure; but while I think they show a good deal of sensibility & poetic feeling, to certain homely states of emotion, I do not think they are sufficiently remarkable as literature to warrant any special attention. In fact I do not think the public would consider me justified in writing about the author as one who merited individual recognition on the score of his gifts apart from his many excellent personal traits.

This is my opinion after a very sympathetic perusal of what you have been so kind as to send me.

That the author is a man of very amiable character, & that his love of his native island is very tender & beautiful is sufficiently obvious, but I doubt if these are enough to warrant us in claiming for him any attention beyond that which is due to a really admirable man who has preserved a simplicity of natural feeling that is rather too rare.

With best wishes & thanks | Hall Caine

Source: (1) Letter from Hall Caine to Karl Roeder, 3 May 1898, Manchester Central Library, Manchester City Archives, M277/12/1-60; (2) —, 18 June 1898, Manchester Central Library, Manchester City Archives, M277/12/1-59.



No one reads Hall Caine now. However, when these letters were written, many did and would continue to do so while he was alive. His books are not read but not because they are stubbornly out-of-print. As the first author to possibly sell a million copies in hardback, they have been a jumble sale staple and taken up space on the shelves of second-hand bookshops for years. Indeed, because no one reads Hall Caine now, there has been a (slight) rise of academic interest in him.¹

The interest here is Edward Faragher; while he is not named in either of these two letters, he is the subject of them. The previous year, January 1897, Faragher had reported on the state of his health:

I received your kind letter and was glad to hear you are well as this leaves us all except myself I have been sufferin from headache and a bad cold. thank God I feel a little better but not half right yet I dont know whither I can go to Mackerell fishing or not yet I am engaged to go but I must be much better than I am at present before I go the rheumatism has nearly left me but this terrible cold weather is very trying for old people. [...] It will be about 6 weeks yet before we start for crookhaven If I am able to go I hope I will be well again before then.²

The Kinsale mackerel fishery off the southwest coast of Ireland was still being prosecuted, although by fewer boats from the Island.³ Faragher did go fishing that year and wrote to Roeder from Crookhaven about the run to the Irish coast:

I embrace the present opertunity of writing you these few lines hoping to find you enjoying the blessing of good health as this liaves me midling at present Thanks be to God for his mercies the rheumatism is no worse since I left home although I never had such a stormy passag before with high winds and snow and rain all the time. we got into Kinsale on friday week at 12 o clock at night in a very heavy gale of wind and rain and we were all very glad to get to shelter and we stayed there until monday morning.⁴

¹ David C. MacWilliams, “The Novelistic Melodramas of Hall Caine: Seventy Years On,” *English Literature in Transition (1880-1920)* 45.4 (2002). There is a recent biography, Vivien Allen, *Hall Caine: Portrait of a Victorian Romancer* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). For a review see J.O Baylen, “Vivien Allen, *Hall Caine: Portrait of a Victorian Romancer*,” *English Literature in Transition (1880-1920)* 42.3 (1999).

² Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 28 January 1897, Manx National Heritage Library (MNHL), MS 11064, Box 2.

³ On Kinsale, see I.M. Killip, “Going to Kinsale,” *Journal of the Manx Museum* vi.75 (1958).

⁴ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 10 April 1897, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2.

He gave his address as “Address E Farquhar / Luggar Willie Port st Mary / Crookhaven County Cork / Ireland.” But the fishing that year was to be poor:

[...] but we have done nothing of the fishing yet the weather is so stormy here we have innaugh to do to keep the boat from being blown out of the harbour I think this will be a poor season for there is half of the usual time over and not a shilling earned by the crookhaven fleet yet but lots of nets lost and torn to pieces we generally return the latter end of June.⁵

Roeder decided to act, no doubt fearing that Faragher might see 1898, but not much of it.

He had already been in contact with Caine, earlier in 1897. In March, Caine had replied to him:

I have been reading with a good deal of interest some portions of your folk-lore, and thank you very much for the pleasure you have given me. I intend to put the pamphlet aside for future reference. I am sure that we are much indebted to you for the interest that you have taken in a subject so important to Manxmen.⁶

The presumptive use of “we” and the condescension accompanying it did not bode well. In 1898, his first attempt failed to elicit any action from Caine bar further condescension: “You may not perhaps have as many opportunities as I have of knowing men of the same class in this island.” Roeder had had plenty of opportunity as his collecting tours had taken him from the north to the south of the Island. Despite this initial refusal, Roeder persisted, sending Caine samples of Faragher’s poetry, which drew the verdict that, “I do not think they are sufficiently remarkable as literature to warrant any special attention.”⁷

That same year, 1898, saw Faragher once again at the Irish mackerel fishing in the spring and again later in the year at the autumn fishing, which was a complete failure:

I am thankful to God that I am safe home again in the midst of sorms of wind and rain althoug we have brought no money home with us the fall fishing has proved a fealure this season we arived here yesterday after a weary passage we were put back twice we left Baltimore one morning and got castletownsend after three days the wind moderated and we got to Kinsale we lef Kinsale this day week and had wind

⁵ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 18 April 1897. Formerly, Douglas Borough Library, Roeder Mss, unlisted, now transferred to the Manx National Heritage Library and accessioned as part of MS 09447.

⁶ Hall Caine to Karl Roeder, 17 March 1897, Manchester Central Library, Manchester City Archives, M277/11/1–11. The pamphlet is an off-print, likely Charles Roeder, “Contributions to the Folk Lore of the Isle of Man,” *Yn Lioar Manninagh* iii.iv (1887). There is one further letter between the pair, undated, in response to Roeder having raised the idea of a Manx Museum with funding coming from the Carnegie Trust, M277/11/1–11.

⁷ This is now the general verdict on Caine’s own entire literary output.

and rain and put back to Howth twice and got to Port st Mary yesterday It has been hard times we could not catch mackerells enough to eat some times.⁸

It fell to Roeder to support Faragher, or rather to carry on supporting him:

I received your welcome letter and the books and order all right and I am extremely obliged I think you are too good to me the pipe is a very nice one and I think I am smoking oftener since I got the pipe.⁹

By “order” is meant a postal order,¹⁰ and Roeder appears to have sent them on more than one occasion. “I received the postal order all right and am much obliged,” wrote Faragher in a letter from 1899.¹¹ Their friendship continued after Faragher left the Island; “I know you are yet alive by receiving the examiner [*Isle of Man Examiner*] every week and I am very much obliged for it.”¹² Faragher was to die 5 June 1908 and it fell to Roeder to announce his death in the pages of that same newspaper.¹³

STEPHEN MILLER
VIENNA, 2004

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⁸ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 2 November 1898, MNHL, MS 2146/4 A.

⁹ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 8 February 1897, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2.

¹⁰ A postal order (available in various amounts) could be cashed for money at a Post Office.

¹¹ Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 11 August 1899, MNHL, MS 11064, Box 2.

¹² Edward Faragher to Karl Roeder, 20 December 1907, Manchester Central Library, Manchester City Archives, M277/12/1–141.

¹³ Charles Roeder, “The Late Edward Faragher, of Cregneish,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 20 June 1908.

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