

cheerless enough, but here is a whole land without a child's laugh in it. Cabins full of children and no boisterous glee. No need to tell these youngsters to be quite. The famine has tamed their restless spirits, and they crouch around the bit of peat fire without uttering a word. Often they do not look a second time at the stranger who comes into their desolate cabin.

My personal investigations proved that the misery that my witnesses have outlined is not exceptional but representative; that the Irish peasant is neither indolent nor improvident, but that he is the victim of laws without mercy, that without mercy are enforced, and my studies, furthermore, forced me to believe that the poverty I saw, and the sorrow and the wretchedness are the predetermined results of the premeditated policy of the British Government in Ireland to drive her people into exile.

This, also, I believe and say—that Ireland does not suffer because of overpopulation, but because of over-spoliation, because she has too many landlords and not enough land-owners.

Irish Landlordism is in the dock today, charged with the high crime and misdemeanor of ruining a great people. I am one of the jury that has sat and taken evidence. "Guilty or not guilty?" My verdict is—GUILTY! The Irish people will never be prosperous until Irish Landlordism is abolished.

Let me say a few words to my auditors of American birth.

Americans believe that it is England that rules Ireland, and that the Irish in Ireland enjoy the same rights that the English enjoy in England. The belief is an error. England delegates the most important of all legislative power—the power of taxation—to the absentee landlord; and he assigns the odious task of impoverishing his people to his irresponsible agents. The Irish landlord is a little local Plantagenet with no salutary fear of a veto by strangulation; and the British Government is only his vassal and his executioner.

The Irish landlord has no more pity for his tenant than the shark has for the sailor who falls between his jaws. If Shakspeare had known them he would have made Shylock an Irish landlord. If Dante had seen the misery that these

miscreants have wrought, as my own eyes have seen it in the West of Ireland, he would have gone there to collect more lurid pictures of human wretchedness than he conceived in his *Inferno*.

From 1847 to 1851 one million and a half of the Irish people perished from famine and the fevers that it spawned. This hideous crime has been demonstrated by a man whose love of Ireland no man questioned, and whose knowledge of her history no man doubted—John Mitchel.

These victims of landlord greed and British power were as deliberately put to death as if each one of them had been forced to mount the steps of a scaffold. And why? To save a worse than feudal system of land tenure—for it is the feudal system stripped of every duty that feudalism recognized—the corpse that breeds pestilence after the spirit that gave protection has fled—a feudal system that every Christian nation, excepting England only, has been compelled to abolish in the interests of civilization.

Now, what are the duties of the friends of Ireland? Our first duty is to feed the people who are starving. If I have opened your hearts, I beg of you that you will not say "God help them!" Just help them yourselves. They don't need more prayers. They need more meal.

I trust that I have shown you to-night, by the testimony of more than 10,000 witnesses, that the accounts of the Irish famine have not been exaggerated in America. I know that not one-tenth of the sad truths have been told about it. It is true, I hope, that not more than a score or more of peasants have died from hunger. The organs of the landlords say so; and it is almost the only truth that they have told. No thanks to the landlords for their mercy! If the people had depended on the landlords for help in this their time of need—one hundred thousand of them would lie mouldering in the graves from which the charity of Australia, and Canada, and America, have rescued them.

My statistics were brought down to the 1st of March. But the latest despatches from Ireland by cable show that the distress is not decreasing but increasing. The bishops and the priests whom I met or who wrote to me before I