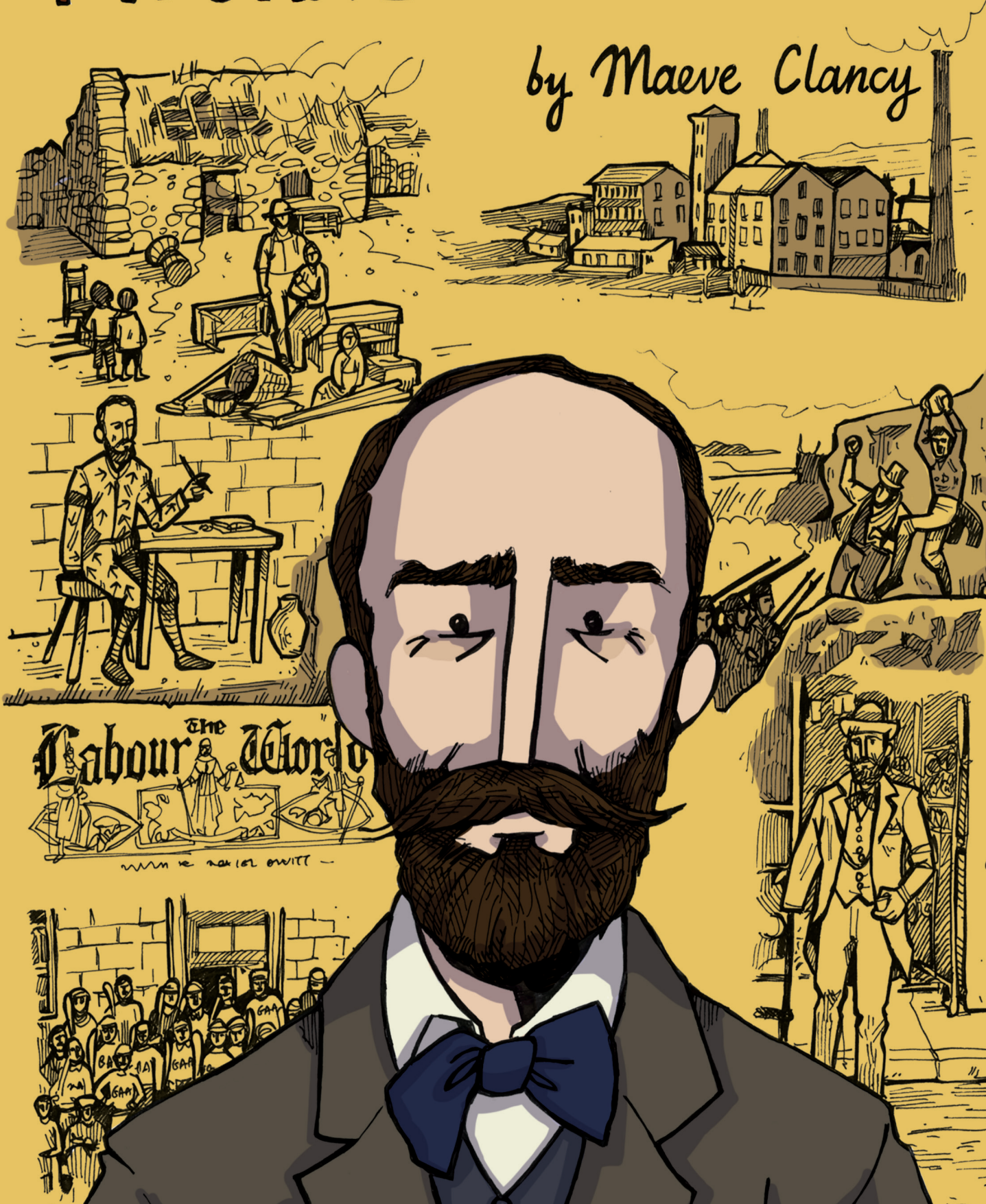


MICHAEL DAVITT

by Maeve Clancy



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MICHAEL DAVITT

GLOBAL REFORMER

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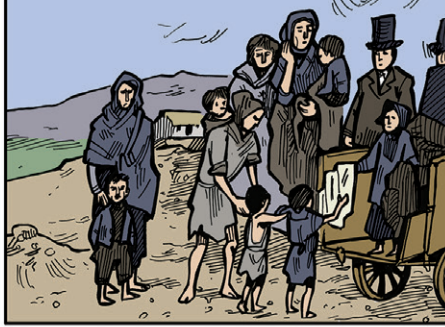
MAYO.IE

MICHAEL DAVITT WAS
BORN IN STRAIDE, CO.
MAYO IN 1846.



HIS FATHER WAS A
SMALL TENANT FARMER.

HE WAS BORN AT THE
START OF THE GREAT FAMINE,
IN WHICH AT LEAST A
MILLION PEOPLE DIED AND
A SIMILAR NUMBER EMIGRATED.



MAYO WAS PARTICULARLY
HARD HIT BY THE DISASTER,
WITH POOR LAND
AND POOR FARMERS.
DAVITT'S FATHER MARTIN
GOT WORK ON A
ROAD CONSTRUCTION
PROJECT WHICH KEPT
THEM GOING FOR A
FEW YEARS.
BUT THEY FELL INTO
ARREARS ON THE RENT
FOR THEIR FARM.

AND IN 1850, THE FAMILY
WERE EVICTED.



THESE EARLY LIFE
EXPERIENCES NEVER
LEFT DAVITT AND
FORMED MANY OF
HIS OPINIONS.



I WAS THEN BUT
FOUR AND A HALF
YEARS OLD, YET I
HAVE A DISTINCT
REMEMBRANCE OF
THAT MORNING'S
SCENE.

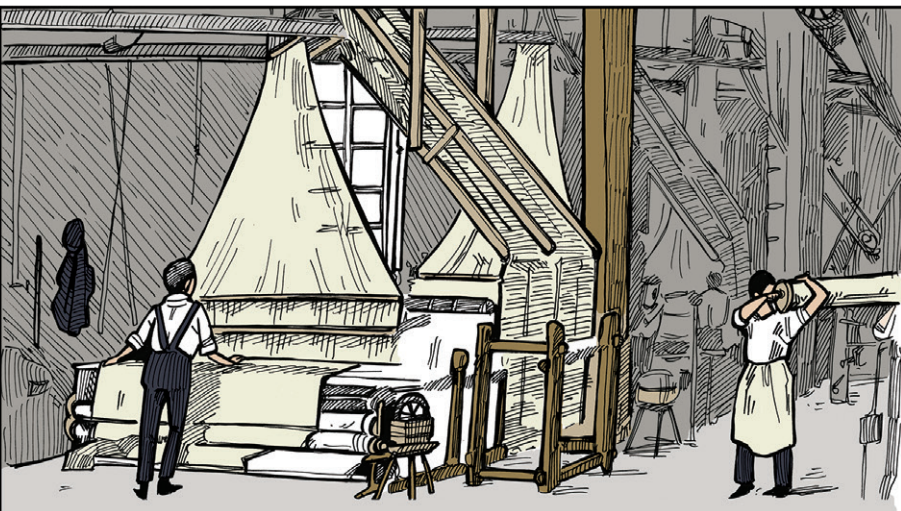
THE REMNANT OF OUR
HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE
FLUNG ABOUT THE ROAD;
THE ROOF OF THE HOUSE
FALLING IN AND THE
THATCH TAKING FIRE;
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
LOOKING ON WITH FOUR
YOUNG CHILDREN.

THERE WERE FEW
OPTIONS FOR EVICTED
FAMILIES IN THOSE
DAYS. THE ONLY ROUTE
LEFT FOR THEM TO
TAKE WAS EMIGRATION.

THEY MOVED TO
HASLINGDEN, A
TOWN JUST OUTSIDE
MANCHESTER IN
THE NORTH OF
ENGLAND.

HASLINGDEN HAD A
LARGE TEXTILE INDUSTRY.

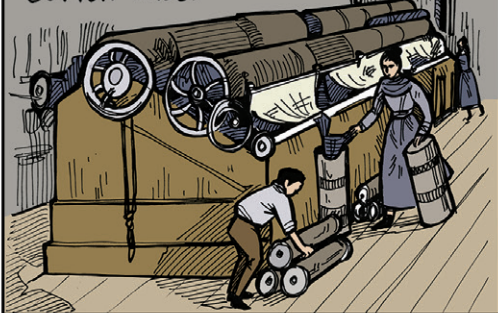
THE DAVITTS MOVED
THERE ON THE ADVICE
OF NEIGHBOURS WHO
WERE ALREADY WORK-
ING IN THE MILLS.



THAT AREA OF
NORTH LANCASHIRE
WAS THE CENTRE OF
THE ENGLISH INDUSTRIAL
REVOLUTION AT THAT
TIME.

THE INDUSTRIAL
REVOLUTION WAS THE
MOVE FROM HAND
MADE TO MACHINE
PROCESSES FOR
MANY INDUSTRIES.

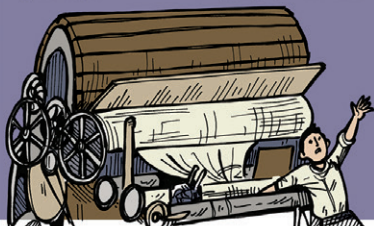
IT WAS IN THIS BUSY AND DIRTY WORLD THAT MICHAEL DAVITT BEGAN HIS WORKING LIFE AT THE AGE OF NINE AT PARKINSON'S COTTON MILL.



MICHAEL LEFT PARKINSON'S COTTON MILL AND EVENTUALLY BECAME EMPLOYED AT STELLFOX'S VICTORIA MILL, BAKENDEN, ABOUT TWO MILES FROM HASLINGDEN.



IN 1857 AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN, DAVITT HAD AN ACCIDENT AT THE COTTON MILL.



WHILE TRYING TO CLEAR A BLOCKAGE HIS SHIRT GOT CAUGHT IN A COG WHICH PULLED IN HIS RIGHT ARM, CRUSHING IT.

HIS RIGHT ARM WAS AMPUTATED. NO LONGER ABLE TO WORK, HE WAS SENT TO A LOCAL METHODIST SCHOOL.



THE ACCIDENT BECAME A BLESSING IN DISGUISE AS DAVITT RECEIVED AN EXCELLENT EDUCATION.

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOING TO A METHODIST SCHOOL ALSO GAVE HIM AN UNDERSTANDING



THAT RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY DID NOT HAVE TO DIVIDE PEOPLE.

IN 1861 DAVITT BEGAN WORKING IN HASLINGDEN POST OFFICE



- WHERE HE WAS ABLE TO WORK WITH ONE HAND AT THE SAME SPEED AS THOSE WITH TWO.



IN THE EVENINGS DAVITT ATTENDED TALKS BY LOCAL AND VISITING SPEAKERS.



THESE TALKS INTRODUCED HIM TO MANY NEW IDEAS AND WAYS OF THINKING.



ONE PERSON HE HEARD SPEAK WAS ERNEST JONES, THE LEADER OF THE CHARTIST MOVEMENT.

THE CHARTISTS PUSHED FOR THE VOTE FOR EVERY MAN OVER 21 IN ENGLAND.

JONES WAS A RADICAL IN THE MOVEMENT. HE WAS AGAINST THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND SPOKE IN FAVOUR OF IRISH AND INDIAN NATIONALISM.

DAVITT WOULD LATER SAY-

THE FIRST MAN AFTER MY FATHER WHOM I EVER HEARD DENOUNCING LANDLORDISM, NOT ONLY IN IRELAND BUT IN ENGLAND, WAS ERNEST JONES.

LIKE MANY OF HIS IRISH CONTEMPORARIES, DAVITT JOINED THE I.R.B. THE IRISH REPUBLICAN BROTHERHOOD WAS A SECRET ORGANISATION FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM FROM BRITISH RULE. THEIR OATH BEST DESCRIBES THEIR AIMS -

I, MICHAEL DAVITT DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF ALMIGHTY GOD

THAT I WILL DO MY UTMOST AT EVERY RISK WHILE LIFE LASTS, TO MAKE IN IRELAND AN INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: THAT I WILL YIELD IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE OF ALL THINGS NOT CONTRARY TO THE LAW OF GOD...

THE IRB BELIEVED THAT ARMED REVOLUTION WOULD WIN FREEDOM FOR IRELAND, SO THEY ADVOCATED THE USE OF VIOLENCE.

THEY ORGANISED THEMSELVES IN CIRCLES OF 10-100 MEN. THE LEADER OF EACH CIRCLE WAS CALLED THE CENTRE.

DAVITT QUICKLY BECAME CENTRE OF A CIRCLE. AS A MEMBER OF THE IRB, HE WAS KNOWN AS A FENIAN.

DAVITT WAS INVOLVED IN A FAILED ATTACK ON CHESTER CASTLE.

IN 1868 HE WAS MADE ARMS AGENT FOR THE IRB IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND.

HE RESIGNED HIS JOB AND BECAME A FULL TIME ACTIVIST FOR THE IRB.

THE BRITISH POLICE HAD HIM UNDER OBSERVATION.

DAVITT WAS ARRESTED ON MAY 14TH 1870 AT PADDINGTON STATION. HE WAS WAITING TO TAKE DELIVERY OF GUNS WHICH HE WAS GOING TO SHIP TO IRELAND.

HE WAS CONVICTED OF TREASON FELONY AND SENTENCED TO FIFTEEN YEARS IN PRISON.

A CONVICT'S SENTENCE AT THAT TIME HAD THREE PARTS:

- A SHORT PERIOD OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
- A LONG PERIOD OF HARD LABOUR, WHERE THE PRISONER DID HARD PHYSICAL WORK
- THE FINAL PERIOD ON A TICKET OF LEAVE BACK IN SOCIETY (SIMILAR TO WHAT WE NOW CALL PROBATION).

DAVITT SERVED THE SOLITARY PART OF HIS PRISON TERM AT MILLBANK PRISON.



HE WAS NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK AND WORKED AT BAG MAKING OR PICKING OLD ROPE.

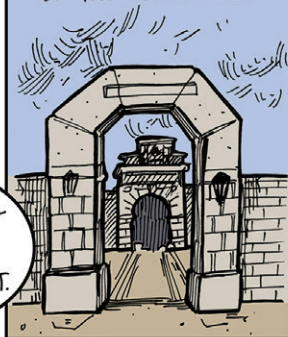
THE ENFORCED SILENCE WORE DAVITT DOWN.

THAT WEIRD CHANT OF WESTMINSTER CLOCK WILL EVER HAUNT MY MEMORY



AND RECALL THAT PERIOD OF FIRST IMPRISONMENT.

AFTER TEN MONTHS HE WAS MOVED TO DARTMOOR FOR THE HARD LABOUR PART OF HIS SENTENCE.



THE PRISONERS WORKED ON PUBLIC PROJECTS LIKE FARMING, STONE CUTTING AND BRICK-MAKING.



AFTER SERVING SEVEN YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS OF HIS SENTENCE, DAVITT WAS RELEASED ON LICENCE IN DECEMBER 1877.



THE IRISH HOME RULE PARTY LED A CAMPAIGN TO GIVE AMNESTY TO FENIAN PRISONERS WHICH HELPED THE RELEASE OF DAVITT AND OTHERS LIKE HIM. CHARLES STEWART PARNELL WAS A RISING STAR IN THE PARTY AND VERY INVOLVED IN BRINGING THE FENIANS INTO THE FOLD.

DAVITT FELT THAT HIS SUFFERING IN PRISON HAD ACHIEVED LITTLE-



I FOUND MYSELF IN PRISON FOR SENDING A FEW RIFLES TO IRELAND, WITHOUT THE CONSOLATION OF KNOWING THAT ONE OF THEM WAS EVER SHOULDRED TO SMITE AN ENEMY OF MY COUNTRY...THE YEARS I HAD LABOURED IN THE NATIONAL CAUSE WERE THEREFORE BARREN OF PRACTICAL RESULTS...AND I RESOLVED THAT NO OTHER PERIOD OF MY LIFE SHOULD BE SO IF I EVER REGAINED MY LIBERTY.

TRUE TO HIS WORD, DAVITT IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME.



HE BEGAN TO TRAVEL AROUND IRELAND, SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND ON A SPEAKING TOUR.

HE SPOKE ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF IRISH POLITICAL PRISONERS, DRAWING ON HIS OWN EXPERIENCES.



WITH EACH SPEECH, HE GREW IN CONFIDENCE AND SKILL.

IN JULY 1878, HE TRAVELLED TO THE USA. HIS FAMILY HAD SETTLED IN PHILADELPHIA.



OVER THE FOLLOWING MONTHS, HE TRAVELLED AROUND THAT COUNTRY GIVING SPEECHES ABOUT THE FENIAN CAUSE.



WHILE THERE, HE ALSO MET JOHN DEVOU.



DEVOY WAS A LIFELONG REPUBLICAN. AFTER A NUMBER OF PLOTS AGAINST THE BRITISH, DEVOY WAS EXILED TO THE USA.

HE HAD BEEN TROUBLESOME EVEN AS A PRISONER IN ENGLAND, ORGANISING A STRIKE IN PORTLAND PRISON. HE CAUSED THEM LESS PROBLEMS IN THE US, HENCE THE EXILE.

DEVOY WORKED WITH DAVITT ON HIS 'NEW' DEPARTURE, A FRESH APPROACH WHICH WOULD SEE FENIANS WORK WITH HOME RULE MPS. THIS WAS A RADICALLY NEW IDEA. DAVITT AND DEVOY ALSO LOOKED AT REVOLUTION THROUGH AGRARIAN (FARMER'S) ACTIONS.



DAVITT BECAME INTERESTED IN THE ISSUE OF LAND OWNERSHIP IN IRELAND.



HIS OWN FAMILY'S EVICTION IN 1850 WAS DUE TO THE SYSTEM WHICH WAS STILL IN PLACE 25 YEARS LATER.

IN 1870, JUST OVER 3,700 LANDOWNERS OWNED 87% OF THE LAND.



HALF OF THE TENANTS RENTED FARMS OF UNDER 15 ACRES. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO MAKE A LIVING FROM SUCH SMALL FARMS.



SOME TENANTS HAD A YEARLY LEASE. THIS MEANT THAT THEY HAD LITTLE TO NO SECURITY.

LANDLORDS COULD ALSO RAISE THE RENT EACH YEAR IF THEY WISHED.

IRELAND HAD A LOT OF ABSENTEE LANDLORDS. ONLY 41% OF LANDLORDS OVER 100 ACRES LIVED ON THEIR FARMS.

12% OF THEM WERE NEVER RESIDENT IN IRELAND.



THIS CAUSED MANY LANDLORDS TO BE DISCONNECTED FROM OR UNAWARE OF CONDITIONS ON THEIR ESTATE.

IN 1877-79 BAD HARVESTS LED TO AN INCREASE IN EVICTIONS. SEASONAL WORK IN ENGLAND ALSO DRIED UP. MANY FARMERS, ESPECIALLY IN THE WEST OF IRELAND, WERE FACING DESTITUTION.



IN HIS TALKS WITH DEVOT, DAVITT HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT AGITATING FOR LAND REFORM WAS BOTH BADLY NEEDED AND A PATH TO INDEPENDENCE.

ON HIS RETURN FROM THE USA, HE TRAVELLED TO MAYO.



IN CASTLEBAR HE MET JAMES DALY WHO WAS SUPPORTING SMALL FARMERS THROUGH HIS NEWSPAPER, THE CONNAUGHT TELEGRAPH.



THE LAND LEAGUE OF MAYO WAS FORMED BY DAVITT, DALY AND OTHERS ON 16th AUGUST 1879 AT DALY'S HOTEL IN CASTLEBAR.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE LEAGUE WERE -



TO DEFEND TENANT'S RIGHTS AGAINST LANDLORDS AND TO BRING ABOUT THE CONVERSION OF TENANTS INTO OWNERS OF THEIR LANDS THROUGH THE COLLECTIVE ACTION OF THE TENANTS THEMSELVES.



THESE IDEAS WERE QUICKLY TAKEN ON BY THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. JOHN DEVOT'S NEW DEPARTURE WAS ADOPTED AS FENIANS AND POLITICIANS BEGAN TO WORK TOGETHER. THE LAND QUESTION WAS SOMETHING ON WHICH ALL COULD AGREE.

BY 21ST OCTOBER 1879, DAVITT AND PARNELL HAD COME TOGETHER TO FOUND A NATIONAL LAND LEAGUE IN DUBLIN.

BOTH COULD SEE HOW THE LAND QUESTION COULD BE A STEPPING STONE TO INDEPENDENCE.



SO WHAT ACTIONS WOULD THEY TAKE TO BRING ABOUT THESE CHANGES?

IN 1880 TENANTS WERE TOLD TO -

HOLD THE RENTS. PAY NO MORE IN RENTS AND ARREARS FROM THE SALE OF CROPS THAN YOU CAN AFFORD.



BY COLLECTIVE ACTION THEY LOOKED TO MAKE LARGE CHANGES TO THE EXISTING SYSTEM. THIS BECAME KNOWN AS THE LAND WAR.

IN THE MEANTIME, DAVITT WAS ARRESTED IN NOVEMBER 1879.



THE CHARGE WAS 'USING SEDITIONARY LANGUAGE' AT A LAND MEETING IN GURTEEN, CO. SLIGO. 'SEDITIONARY' MEANS TO URGE OR CAUSE PEOPLE TO REBEL AGAINST THE STATE OR GOVERNMENT.

DAVITT'S TRIAL AT SLIGO COURTHOUSE WAS USED BY HIM AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPREAD THE IDEAS OF THE LAND LEAGUE.



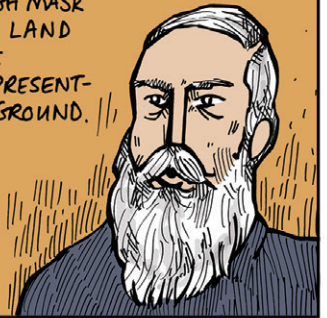
PARNELL ALSO USED HIS CONTACTS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CASE GOT A LOT OF PUBLICITY IN THE BRITISH AND US NEWSPAPERS.



THE CHARGES WERE DROPPED IN JANUARY 1880.

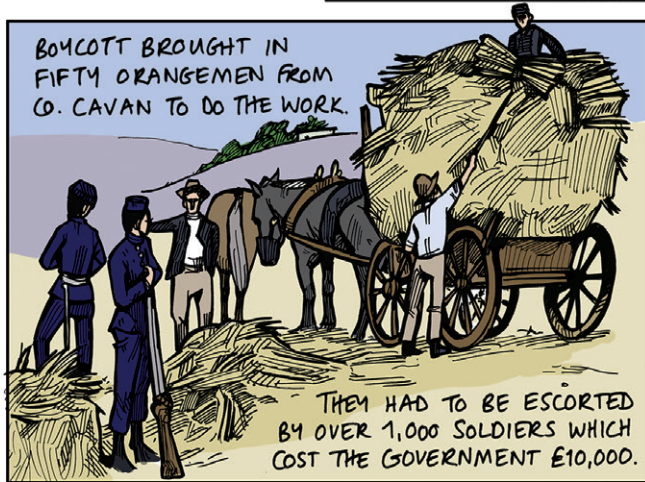
A SECOND METHOD OF THE LAND LEAGUE WAS TO USE A BOYCOTT TO STOP A NEW TENANT OCCUPYING THE FARM OF AN EVICTED FARMER.

THE WORD 'BOYCOTT' COMES FROM THE CASE OF CAPTAIN CHARLES BOYCOTT. HE WAS A LAND AGENT AT AN ESTATE AT LOUGH MASK IN CO. MAYO. A LAND AGENT WAS THE LANDLORD'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE GROUND.



BOYCOTT HAD EVICTED THREE TENANTS SO THE LAND LEAGUE RAN A CAMPAIGN TO EXCLUDE HIM. NO LOCAL WORKERS WOULD HARVEST HIS CROPS. WITHOUT WORKERS HE WOULD LOSE THE ENTIRE HARVEST.

BOYCOTT BROUGHT IN FIFTY ORANGEMEN FROM CO. CAVAN TO DO THE WORK.



THEY HAD TO BE ESCORTED BY OVER 1,000 SOLDIERS WHICH COST THE GOVERNMENT £10,000.

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF EXCLUSION BECAME KNOWN AS A BOYCOTT AFTER THIS.

AS WELL AS SUPPORTING BOYCOTT'S HARVEST, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT CAME DOWN HARD ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE LAND LEAGUE.



THE COERCION BILL OF 1881 GAVE THEM THE RIGHT TO ARREST AND IMPRISON WITHOUT TRIAL.

IN THE SAME YEAR, THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER W.E. GLADSTONE BROUGHT IN A LAND ACT.



IT IN EFFECT GRANTED THE THREE F'S: FAIR RENT, FIXITY OF TENURE AND FREE SALE.

LAND COURTS WERE SET UP TO ESTABLISH FAIR RENTS. A LAND COMMISSION WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR TENANTS TO PURCHASE THEIR LANDS WITH STATE LOANS.



DAVITT AND PARNELL FELT THAT THE BILL FAVOURED LARGE FARMERS AND DID LITTLE TO HELP THOSE IN ARREARS.



THEY DECIDED TO KEEP AGITATING AND TAKING ACTION.

DAVITT HAD HIS TICKET OF LEAVE REVOKED IN SPRING 1881. HIS EARLY RELEASE FROM HIS ORIGINAL SENTENCE WAS DEPENDENT ON HIS NOT BEING INVOLVED IN ANY CRIMINAL ACTIVITY.

HE WAS IMPRISONED IN PORTLAND PRISON IN DORSET.



AS A POLITICAL PRISONER, HE WAS TREATED LESS HARSHLY THAN THE OTHER CONVICTS.

IN OCTOBER 1881, PARNELL AND OTHER LEAGUE LEADERS WERE ALSO ARRESTED.



PARNELL WAS IMPRISONED IN KILMAINHAM WHERE HE WAS ABLE TO RECEIVE VISITORS.

AT DAVITT'S SUGGESTION A LADIES LAND LEAGUE HAD BEEN SET UP. HE KNEW THAT THE LEADERS WOULD BE ARRESTED.

ANNA PARNELL, SISTER OF CHARLES STEWART PARNELL WAS ONE OF THE LEADERS.



ANNE DEANE WAS ANOTHER CO-FOUNDER OF THE GROUP. SHE WAS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSWOMAN IN HER HOME TOWN OF BALLAGHERREEN, CO. ROSCOMMON.

SHE HAD STRONG NATIONALIST LINKS THROUGH HER UNCLE JOHN BLAKE DILLON AND LATER HER COUSIN JOHN DILLON WHO SHE PARTLY RAISED.



ANNE DEANE IS BURIED BEHIND THE MICHAEL DAVITT MUSEUM IN STRAIDE FRIARY.

THE LADIES LAND LEAGUE SUCCESSFULLY CONTINUED THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE ORIGINAL LAND LEAGUE.



THROUGH THE LADIES LAND LEAGUE, A CHILDREN'S LAND LEAGUE WAS SET UP. IT LOOKED TO EDUCATE CHILDREN ABOUT THE LAND LEAGUE AND OTHER NATIONALIST ISSUES.



IRISH HISTORY AND LANGUAGE WERE TAUGHT AT BRANCH MEETINGS. CHILDREN TOOK PART IN EVENTS AND MET TO LEARN ABOUT AND DISCUSS NATIONALISM.

ON 6TH MAY 1882, DAVITT WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON. THAT SAME DAY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY FOR IRELAND LORD FREDERICK CAVENDISH AND HIS COLLEAGUE THOMAS BURKE WERE STABBED TO DEATH AS THEY WALKED IN DUBLIN'S PHOENIX PARK.



THE MURDERERS WERE FROM A FENIAN GROUP CALLED 'THE INVINCIBLES' FOR DAVITT, WHO HAD BEEN A FENIAN ARMS AGENT IN THE PAST, THIS WAS A TURNING POINT. HE TURNED HIS BACK ON THE USE OF VIOLENCE. HE ALSO OPPOSED A FENIAN BOMBING CAMPAIGN IN BRITAIN IN 1881-87.

HE WROTE - "PRINCIPLES OF REFORM INTELLIGENTLY AND FEARLESSLY PROPOGATED ARE FAR MORE DESTRUCTIVE TO UNJUST AND WORNOUT SYSTEMS THAN DYNAMITE BOMBS, WHICH ONLY KILL INDIVIDUALS OR KNOCK DOWN BUILDINGS BUT DO NO INJURY TO OPPRESSIVE INSTITUTIONS."



IN 1882, THE SETTLED LAND ACT WAS BROUGHT IN. THIS HAD BEEN NEGOTIATED AS PART OF THE 'KILMAINHAM TREATY' AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH PARNELL.

THIS ACT ALLOWED POOR TENANTS TO HAVE THEIR ARREARS QUASHED AND THEY COULD THEN APPLY TO THE LAND COURT TO HAVE A FAIR RENT FIXED.



FOR PARNELL, THIS WAS ENOUGH TO CALL OFF THE LAND WAR. ON HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON, HE DISBANDED THE LADIES LAND LEAGUE. THE CHILDREN'S LAND LEAGUE WAS DIS-CONTINUED AT THE SAME TIME.



PARNELL ALSO REPLACED THE LAND LEAGUE WITH A NEW ORGANISATION CALLED THE IRISH NATIONAL LEAGUE IN OCTOBER 1882. THIS WAS UNDER HIS CONTROL.

FOR DAVITT, THE AIM OF THE LAND LEAGUE WAS THE DESTRUCTION OF LANDLORDISM.

AT THIS POINT, THE TWO LEADERS DISAGREED AND THEIR LIVES TOOK DIFFERENT PATHS.

PARNELL MOVED TO WORK TOWARDS HOME RULE FOR IRELAND THROUGH PARLIAMEN-TARY PROCESS.



DAVITT WANTED TOTAL INDEPENDENCE FOR THE COUNTRY. HE ALSO DEV-ELOPED A PLAN TO NATIONALISE THE LAND WHILE IN PRISON.



I BELIEVE A NATIONAL OWNERSHIP TO BE THE ONLY TRUE MEANING OF THE BATTLE CRY OF THE LAND LEAGUE.

DESPITE HIS CONVICTION, THIS IDEA WAS NEVER POPULAR IN IRELAND.

TENANTS HAD JUST FOUGHT HARD FOR THE RIGHT TO OWN THEIR LAND. THEY WOULD NOT GIVE IT UP READILY.

WITH THAT IN MIND, DAVITT ENTERED PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS. HE WAS ELECTED IN MEATH IN 1892 BUT A COURT CASE VOIDED THE RESULT.

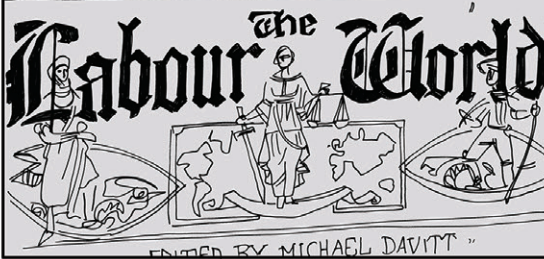
IN 1893 HE BECAME AN MP FOR NORTH EAST CORK AND WAS AN MP FOR MAYO FROM 1895 TO 1899.



IN 1893, AS AN MP, HE ARGUED IN FAVOUR OF GLADSTONE'S SECOND HOME RULE BILL. WHILE STILL COMMITTED TO FULL INDEPENDENCE, HE WAS WILLING TO USE HOME RULE AS A STEPPING STONE TO GET THERE.

HE OFTEN SUPPORTED THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY, SEEING IN THEM MANY OF THE SAME AIMS AS IN HIMSELF. HE BELIEVED IN THE POWER OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.

IN 1890, DAVITT LAUNCHED HIS OWN NEWSPAPER.



ALONG WITH ITS SISTER PUBLICATION, THE SUNDAY WORLD, THE PENNY WEEKLY PROMOTED THE LABOUR CAUSE. IT WAS INITIALLY SUCCESSFUL, BUT EVENTUALLY FOLDED IN MAY 1891.



BOTH IN HIS PUBLICATIONS AND ON THE FLOOR OF THE COMMONS, DAVITT SUPPORTED THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR AND DISPOSSESSED. HE ALSO ADVOCATED FOR THE NATIONAL RIGHTS OF OTHER BRITISH COLONIES.

DAVITT HAD BEEN A WRITER EVER SINCE HIS FIRST TIME IN JAIL.



HIS 'THE PRISON LIFE OF MICHAEL DAVITT, RELATED BY HIMSELF,' WAS PUBLISHED AS A PAMPHLET.

IN HIS YEARS AS AN MP, HE TRAVELLED WIDELY. HE WROTE EXTENSIVELY AND HAD SIX BOOKS PUBLISHED.



IN 1895, DAVITT TOOK A TOUR OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. OVER EIGHT MONTHS, HE GAVE SPEECHES AND STUDIED THE PRISON SYSTEM, POLITICS AND LABOUR MOVEMENTS IN THOSE COUNTRIES.

HE MET WITH LABOURERS, LIKE THESE MINERS IN AUSTRALIA.



IN SOME PLACES HE WAS WELCOMED BY LARGE CROWDS, AS HERE IN VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.



HIS OBSERVATIONS FROM THIS TIME WERE PUBLISHED AS 'LIFE AND PROGRESS IN AUSTRALASIA' (1898).



DAVITT WAS CRITICAL OF BRITISH ACTIONS IN THE BOER WAR, FOUGHT IN WHAT IS NOW SOUTH AFRICA.



HE FELT SO STRONGLY THAT BRITISH POLICY WAS WRONG THAT HE RESIGNED HIS SEAT IN PROTEST.

HE TOLD THE HOUSE OF COMMONS-

WE IRISHMEN ARE COMPELLED TO GIVE OUR SYMPATHIES TO THE BOERS, BECAUSE THEY ARE ABSOLUTELY IN THE RIGHT IN HEROICALLY DEFENDING WITH THEIR LIVES THE INDEPENDENCE OF THEIR COUNTRY



TWO AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS AND AN IRISH NEWSPAPER, THE 'FREEMAN'S JOURNAL' COMMISSIONED HIM TO WRITE ABOUT THE WAR FROM A BOER PERSPECTIVE.

THE RESULT OF THESE WRITINGS LATER BECAME THE BOOK 'THE BOER FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.' DAVITT FOUND IT EASY TO SYMPATHISE WITH THE BOERS AS HE CONSIDERED THEM A SMALL NATION FACING OFF AGAINST THE MIGHT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

THE RIGHTS OF THE ACTUAL NATIVES OF THE LAND, BLACK AFRICANS, WAS NOT CONSIDERED. THEY HAD BEEN ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED BY THE BOERS ON THEIR ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA. THE BOERS WERE MAINLY DUTCH SETTLERS.



MICHAEL DAVITT DEVELOPED A FRIENDSHIP AND A CORRESPONDENCE WITH PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT.



AT ONE OF THEIR MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON DAVITT PRESENTED PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT WITH SOME BLACKTHORN STICKS—



—AND TWO VOLUMES OF A BOOK, 'A SOCIAL HISTORY OF ANCIENT IRELAND.' BY PW JONCE.



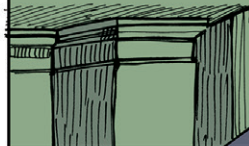
ROOSEVELT WROTE TO DAVITT, SAYING—

It is always a pleasure to meet you. Never pass through Washington without letting me know



WHEN DAVITT DIED, PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT SENT A LETTER OF CONDOLENCE TO MRS. DAVITT.

HE SAID PUBLICALLY AT THE TIME—



MICHAEL DAVITT WAS A PERSONAL FRIEND OF MINE AND I SINCERELY REGRET HIS LOSS.



ON TRIPS TO RUSSIA, DAVITT VISITED AND INTERVIEWED LEO TOLSTOY TWICE. TOLSTOY IS ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN AND WELL REGARDED RUSSIAN WRITERS OF ALL TIME. 'WAR AND PEACE' AND 'ANNA KARENINA' ARE TWO OF HIS MOST FAMOUS WORKS.



TOLSTOY WAS IN HIS LATE 70S AT THIS TIME. DAVITT TALKED TO HIM ABOUT THE IRISH INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND. DAVITT AND TOLSTOY FOUND COMMON GROUND IN THEIR BELIEF IN NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE.

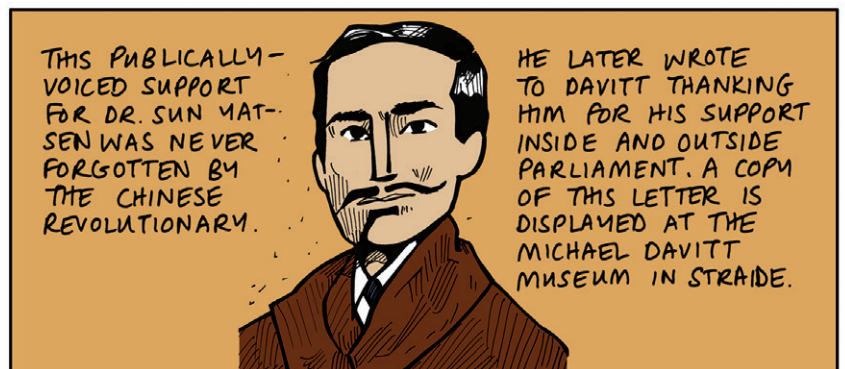
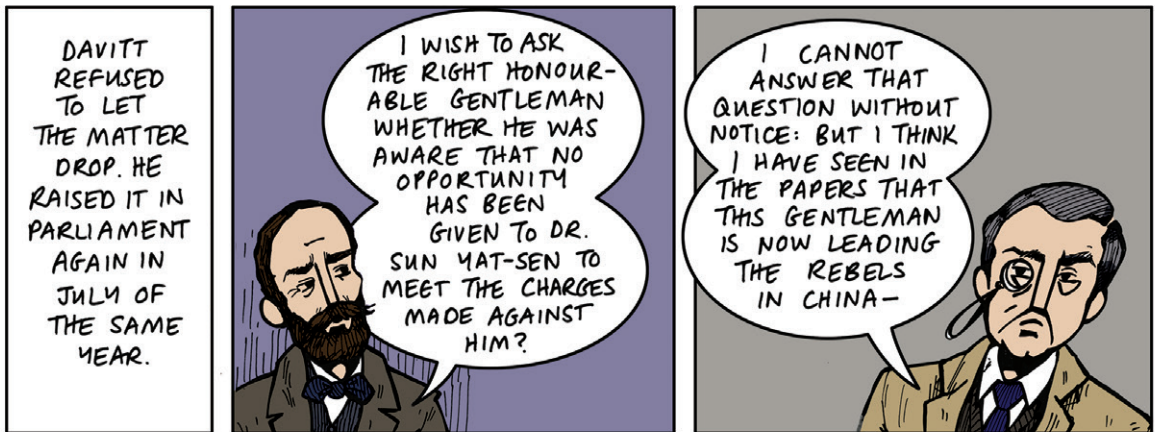
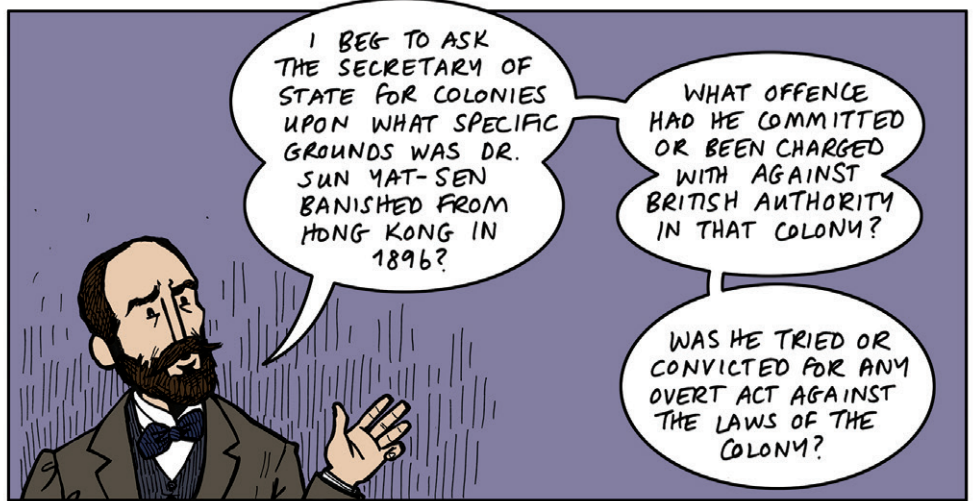
DAVITT WAS UNUSUAL AMONG IRISH PATRIOTS IN THIS INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT. HE ALWAYS LOOKED TO SUPPORT NATIONAL STRUGGLES AND FIND WAYS TO HELP THE POOR AND DISPOSSESSED.

ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS WAS DR. SUN YAT-SEN. HE WOULD LATER BECOME THE PROVISIONAL FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

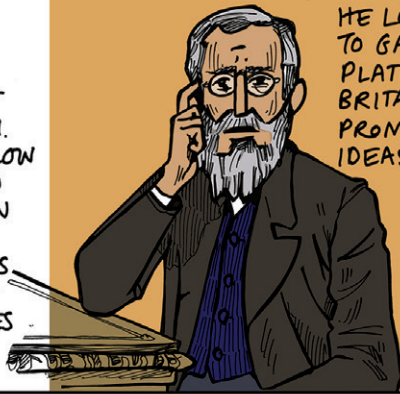


WHEN DAVITT WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE MET HIM IN THE 1890S, HE WAS A REVOLUTIONARY WHO HAD LED A REVOLT IN CHINA AND BEEN EXPELLED FROM HONG KONG.

DAVITT WAS STILL AN MP AT THE TIME SO HE USED HIS POSITION TO ASK QUESTIONS OF THE COLONIAL SECRETARY OF STATE IN PARLIAMENT IN APRIL 1898.



WHILE AN MP, DAVITT ALSO GAVE SUPPORT TO THE INDIAN NATIONALIST DADABHAI NAOROJI. NAOROJI WAS A FELLOW INTELLECTUAL WHO BROUGHT ATTENTION TO THE WAY IN WHICH BRITAIN WAS DRAINING INDIA OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND WEALTH.



HE LOOKED TO GAIN A PLATFORM IN BRITAIN TO PROMOTE HIS IDEAS.

DAVITT WANTED TO HELP HIM WITH THIS, SO PROPOSED NAOROJI AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE IRISH PARLIAMENTARY PARTY.



THIS WAS DISALLOWED BY THE PARTY LEADERSHIP.

DESPITE THIS, DAVITT CONTINUED TO SUPPORT HIS CAUSE. HE WROTE MANY ARTICLES ABOUT INDIA AND OFTEN RAISED ISSUES RELATED TO INDIA IN PARLIAMENT. AS HE HAD WITH SUN YAT SEN, HE USED HIS POSITION AS AN MP TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HAPPENINGS IN INDIA. IN 1892, NAOROJI WAS ELECTED AS A BRITISH MP FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY. HE WAS THE FIRST BRITISH-INDIAN MP. DAVITT CAMPAIGNED FOR HIS FRIEND.

DAVITT'S LINKS TO INDIA DIDN'T END THERE. IT IS BELIEVED THAT HE MET WITH MAHATMA GANDHI IN LONDON IN THE 1890S.



GANDHI WOULD LATER BECOME THE MOST FAMOUS INDIAN INDEPENDENCE CAMPAIGNER, WINNING FREEDOM FROM BRITAIN IN 1947.



HE TRAINED AS A LAWYER IN LONDON AND AFTER FAILING TO ESTABLISH A PRACTICE IN INDIA, MOVED TO SOUTH AFRICA. THERE HE WORKED ON A LAWSUIT BUT QUICKLY BECAME INVOLVED IN CIVIL RIGHTS FOR INDIANS.

IN SOUTH AFRICA, GANDHI USED NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE TO ACHIEVE CHANGE. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT GANDHI WAS INFLUENCED BY MICHAEL DAVITT AND HIS CAMPAIGNS OF NON-VIOLENT PROTEST.

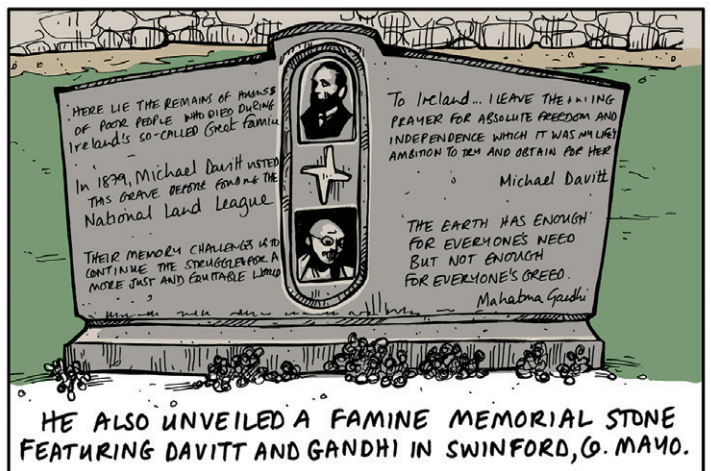
ONE OF GANDHI'S TACTICS DURING HIS LONG CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE BRITISH WAS TO BOYCOTT BRITISH GOODS. HE URGED INDIANS TO SPIN THEIR OWN YARN. HE ALSO LED BOYCOTTS OF BRITISH INSTITUTIONS, LAW COURTS AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT.



IN 1994, ARUN GANDHI, A GRANDSON OF MAHATMA GANDHI VISITED THE MICHAEL DAVITT MUSEUM -



- AND LAID A WREATH AT HIS GRAVE.



HE ALSO UNVEILED A FAMINE MEMORIAL STONE FEATURING DAVITT AND GANDHI IN SWINFORD, CO. MAYO.

MICHAEL DAVITT WAS AN EARLY SUPPORTER OF THE GAA. THE GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION WAS FOUNDED ON NOVEMBER 1ST 1884.

IT WAS FORMED TO PROMOTE NATIVE IRISH SPORTS, INCLUDING HURLING, CAMOGIE, GAELIC FOOTBALL, GAELIC HANDBALL AND ROUNDEES.

IT ALSO PROMOTES THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.



WHILE DAVITT WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE FOUNING, HE WAS ASKED TO BE A PATRON OF THE NEW ASSOCIATION.

HE ACCEPTED WITH DELIGHT. THE STRONG NATIONALIST ETHOS OF THE GAA MATCHED HIS OWN VIEWS.

AS IN POLITICS, THE EARLY YEARS OF THE GAA SAW A POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN FENIANS AND THOSE IN THE HOME RULE PARTY.

DAVITT WORKED ALONGSIDE HIS FELLOW PATRON ARCHBISHOP THOMAS CROKE TO STOP THE QUARREL BEFORE IT DAMAGED THE ASSOCIATION. CROKE HAD STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE LAND LEAGUE DURING THE LAND WAR.



DAVITT AND ARCHBISHOP CROKE'S WORK WAS A SUCCESS. THEY BROKERED A DEAL BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES TO ENSURE EACH WAS FAIRLY REPRESENTED IN THE GAA.

IN AUTUMN 1888, A GAA TOUR OF THE USA WAS ORGANISED. A TEAM OF HURLERS ACCOMPANIED BY ATHLETES AND OFFICIALS WERE LOOKING TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE NEW ORGANISATION. THEY TOURED IRISH COMMUNITIES.

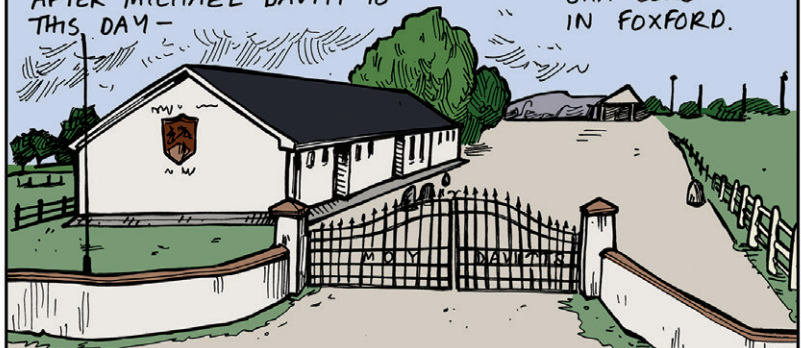


BAD WEATHER, POOR CROWDS AND A US PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ALL PREVENTED THE TOUR FROM BEING A SUCCESS. THEY HAD NO MONEY FOR THEIR RETURN TO IRELAND. MICHAEL DAVITT GAVE THEM £450 TO FUND THE JOURNEY. THEY BECAME KNOWN AS 'THE TEAM THAT DAVITT BROUGHT HOME.'

DAVITT PUBLISHED GAA FIXTURES AND EVENTS IN HIS NEWSPAPER 'THE LABOUR WORLD.'



A NUMBER OF GAA CLUBS AND GROUNDS ARE NAMED AFTER MICHAEL DAVITT TO THIS DAY -



- INCLUDING MOY DAVITT'S GAA CLUB IN FOXFORD.

MICHAEL DAVITT HAD LIFELONG LINKS TO SCOTLAND. AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE LAND LEAGUE CAMPAIGN IN IRELAND, HE TOURED THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND IN 1882. THERE WAS A STRONG AFFINITY BETWEEN THE WEST OF IRELAND TENANT FARMERS AND THE HIGHLAND CROFTERS.

EVEN THE LANDSCAPE AND HOUSES LOOK SIMILAR.



THE CROFTERS ASKED DAVITT TO STAND FOR THEM IN THE GENERAL ELECTION. HE HAD TO REFUSE AS HE WAS TOO BUSY.

ON HIS SECOND TOUR OF THE HIGHLANDS IN 1887, DAVITT ADDRESSED LARGE GROUPS OF PEOPLE. AT PORTREE HOTEL ON THE ISLE OF SKYE A PLAQUE COMMEMORATES HIS VISIT.



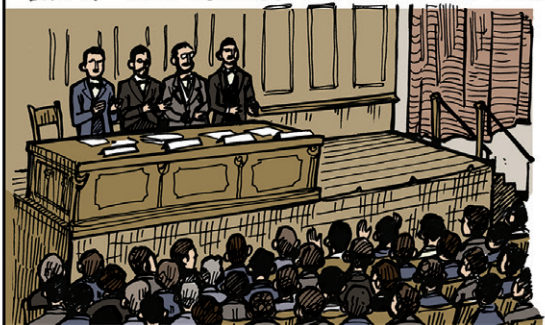
HE IS REMEMBERED AS-
"A FRIEND OF THE CROFTERS' CAUSE" AND IT MARKS "THE SHARED HISTORY OF THE LAND STRUGGLE THAT GAVE PEOPLE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN THOSE PLACES."

HIS AGITATION HAD AN EFFECT. EVEN QUEEN VICTORIA WAS CONCERNED WITH THE INFLUENCE OF IRISH NATIONALISTS ON THE HIGHLAND CROFTERS. SHE WORRIED THAT THEY WERE BEING -

- DUPED INTO IMPOSSIBLE DEMANDS BY IRISH AGITATORS.



GLASGOW CELTIC FOOTBALL CLUB WAS FOUNDED IN THE LATE 1880S. AT THE 1889 AGM, MICHAEL DAVITT WAS ELECTED PATRON OF THE CLUB.



HE TURNED THE CENTRE SOD OF THE NEW GROUND AT CELTIC PARK IN 1892.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE WORD 'CELTIC' WAS HIS IDEA, A WAY OF INCLUDING IRELAND AND SCOTLAND IN THE HERITAGE OF THE CLUB.



DAVITT WAS A LIFELONG SUPPORTER OF THE CLUB, ATTENDING MATCHES WHEN ON VISITS TO GLASGOW.

CELTIC HAS ALWAYS HAD A CHARITABLE BACKGROUND. IN 1892, DAVITT WROTE AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL PRAISING THE CLUB FOR PROVIDING £30 TO THE RELIEF OF EVICTED TENANTS.



THE MEMBERS OF THIS RENOWNED ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION ARE YOUNG IRISH MEN WHO ARE GENEROUS SUPPORTERS OF EVERY NATIONAL AND GOOD CAUSE.

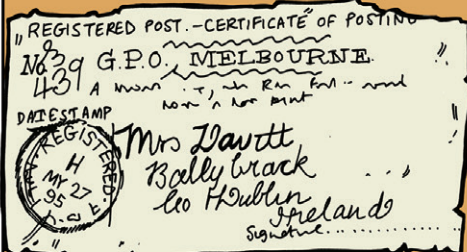
MICHAEL DAVITT MET MARY MORE, AN IRISH AMERICAN WOMAN, WHEN IN THE USA ON A TOUR IN 1880.

THEY MARRIED IN OAKLAND CALIFORNIA AT THE END OF 1886.



THE COUPLE SETTLED IN A COTTAGE IN BALLYBRACK, Co. DUBLIN. THE HOUSE WAS A GIFT FROM THE LAND LEAGUE - THE ONLY ONE HE EVER ACCEPTED.

THIS IS WHERE THEY LIVED WHILE DAVITT TRAVELLED AROUND AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.



THEY HAD FIVE CHILDREN, THREE BOYS AND TWO GIRLS. ONE OF THE GIRLS, KATHLEEN, DIED OF TB IN 1895.



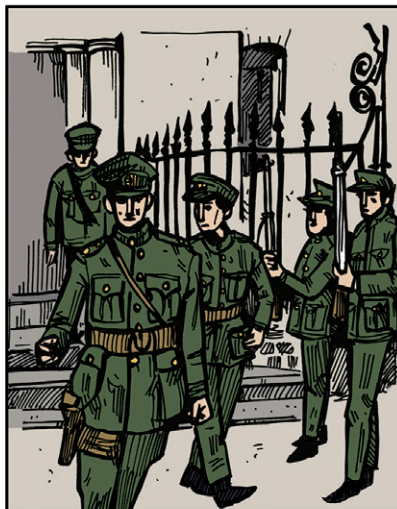
ONE OF THEIR SONS, ROBERT DAVITT BECAME A TD AND REPRESENTED THE MEATH CONSTITUENCY FROM 1933-1937. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE CUMANN NA NGAEDEAL PARTY WHICH LATER BECAME FINE GAEL.



AN OLDER SON CAHIR DAVITT WAS A JUDGE WHO WAS PRESIDENT OF THE HIGH COURT AND LATER A JUDGE OF THE IRISH SUPREME COURT.



CAHIR'S CAREER AS A JUDGE BEGAN AT A YOUNG AGE DUE TO THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD OF 1916-1923 DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1919-1921) HE WAS APPOINTED AS A DAIL COURT 'JUDGE' FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY SIDE.

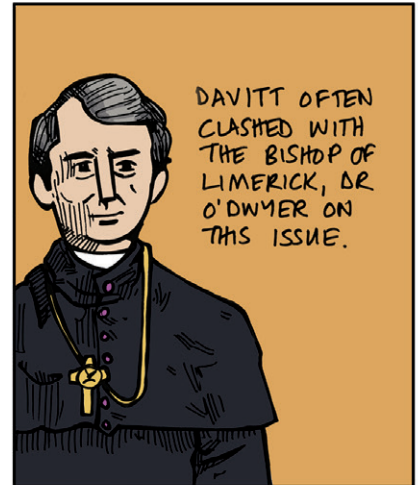
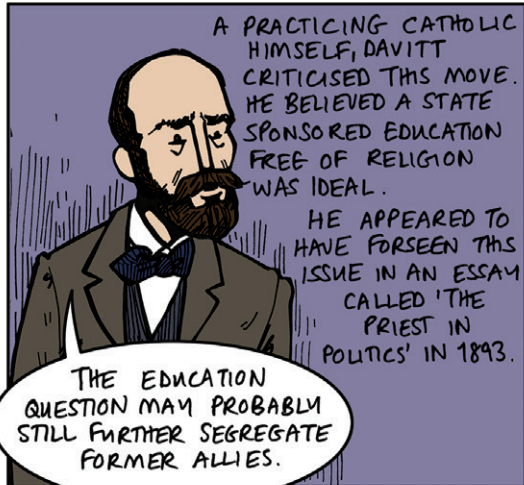


HE WAS ALSO ACTIVE DURING THE IRISH CIVIL WAR (1922-1923). HE STOPPED SOME SEVERE COURT MARTIALS AND PUNISHMENTS DURING THAT FRAUGHT TIME.

CAHIR DAVITT DRAFTED THE FIRST MANUAL OF REGULATIONS FOR THE FREE STATE ARMY.

IN 1906, DURING A GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN IRELAND, THE ISSUE OF RELIGION IN SCHOOLS BECAME IMPORTANT.

THE LIBERAL PARTY WAS IN FAVOUR OF NON-DENOMINATIONAL (NON-RELIGIOUS) EDUCATION. THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS BEGAN TO CAMPAIGN AGAINST THIS.

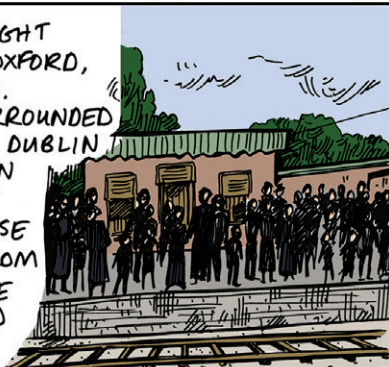


DAVITT WAS PURSUING THIS QUESTION FURTHER WHEN HE WAS TAKEN ILL AND DIED ON 30TH MAY 1906 IN DUBLIN.

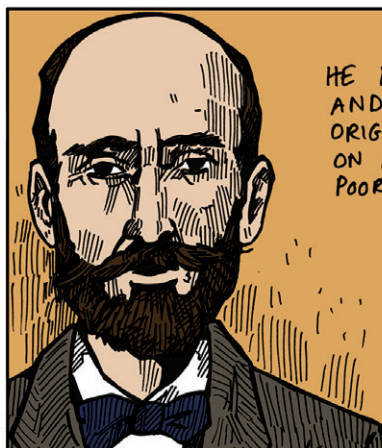


IN HIS WILL, HE HAD SAID- "SHOULD I DIE IN IRELAND, I WOULD WISH TO BE BURIED AT STRAIDE, CO. MAYO, WITHOUT ANY FUNERAL DEMONSTRATION."

HIS BODY WAS BROUGHT FROM DUBLIN TO FOXFORD, CO. MAYO BY TRAIN. LARGE CROWDS SURROUNDED THE PROCESSION IN DUBLIN AND AT EACH STATION ALONG THE WAY IT WAS TAKEN BY HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE FROM FOXFORD TO STRAIDE ON A ROUTE LINED WITH PEOPLE.



MICHAEL DAVITT WAS BURIED AT STRAIDE IN THE SHADE OF STRAIDE ABBEY.



HE LIVED A LIFE OF PRINCIPLE AND NEVER FORGOT HIS HUMBLE ORIGINS. HIS FOCUS WAS ALWAYS ON AND HIS SYMPATHY WITH THE POOR AND DISPOSSESSED IN SOCIETY.

MICHAEL DAVITT 1846-1906

MICHAEL DAVITT IS IRELAND'S GREATEST PATRIOT AND THE MOST INFLUENTIAL INTERNATIONAL IRISHMAN OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THE MICHAEL DAVITT MUSEUM IS DEDICATED TO THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF THIS PRE-EMINENT SOCIAL ACTIVIST AND GLOBAL REFORMER. THE MUSEUM COLLECTION IS HOUSED IN THE MAGNIFICENTLY RESTORED PRE-PENAL CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF STRAIDE, CO. MAYO. THE EXHIBITION IS ENHANCED BY AN AUDIO-VISUAL PRESENTATION AND BROUGHT TO LIFE BY THE MUSEUM'S AWARD WINNING TOUR GUIDES. THE MUSEUM HAS DEVELOPED A REPUTATION AS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AND HAS ATTAINED FULL ACCREDITATION UNDER THE MUSEUM STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND.

THE MICHAEL DAVITT MUSEUM IS ADJACENT TO STRAIDE FRIARY. THIS 13TH CENTURY NORMAN STRUCTURE CONTAINS SOME OF THE FINEST MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE AVAILABLE ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

THE ENTIRE AREA FORMS PART OF A BEAUTIFULLY MAINTAINED SPACIOUS SITE. PROMINENT FEATURES INCLUDE THE GRAVE OF MICHAEL DAVITT WHICH IS LOCATED TO THE REAR OF THE MUSEUM, WHILE ANNE DEANE, THE PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES LAND LEAGUE IS BURIED WITHIN THE FRIARY WALLS.



THE MICHAEL DAVITT MUSEUM
STRAIDE, CO. MAYO F26 FX37

EMAIL: DAVITTMUSEUM@GMAIL.COM
TELEPHONE: 094 9031942
WEBSITE: WWW.MICHAELDAVITTMUSEUM.IE

