

**MY VISIT TO
DISTRESSED
IRELAND**

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My Visit to Distressed Ireland by Richard F. Clarke

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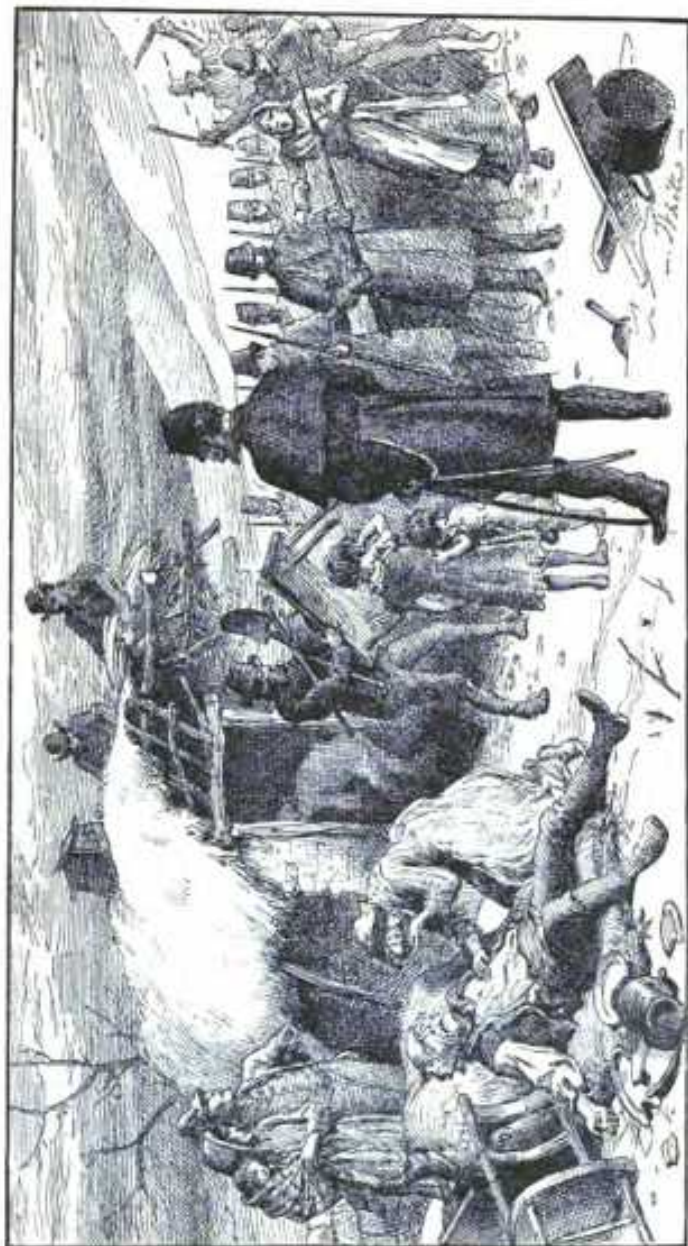
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RICHARD F. CLARKE

**MY VISIT TO
DISTRESSED
IRELAND**



AN EVICTION IN IRELAND.

MY VISIT TO
DISTRESSED IRELAND.

BY

RICHARD F. CLARKE, S.J.,

Formerly Fellow and Tutor of St. John's College, Oxford.

A sea of evils drives its waves of woe,
One falls, but in its place
Upon our country's helm a triple crest
Roars rushing on space.—*ESCH. Sept. 758-61.*

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, AND ST. LOUIS :
BENZIGER BROTHERS,
PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE.
1883.

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

It is a source of great satisfaction to me to have the opportunity of issuing in America itself an American edition of my "Visit to Distressed Ireland." The fairness, impartiality, and keen sense of justice which characterize the citizens of this great Republic, from whatever race and of whatever descent they come, will, I know, secure for the cause of poor Ireland a fair and favorable hearing. Not in vain has poor Erin stretched her hands once and again across the wide Atlantic in her time of need; not in vain has she solicited help for her famine-stricken children, when they cried out for bread and she had none to give them. Not in vain, when her sons were driven forth by the stranger from the homes of their forefathers, did she ask the generous citizens of America to aid the outcasts in finding a new home in the Far West, and in establishing a new Ireland which is growing day by day in numbers and in importance. And in return for their response to her appeal a bond of love and sympathy unites the two nations. Ireland, ever grateful to those who show compassion to her children, has strengthened the American nation by an army

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of powerful men and healthy women. Hundreds and thousands of the flower of the Irish nation have settled in the cities and villages of the United States, bringing with them not only their strong arms and vigorous constitutions, but the faith which is Erin's pride, and the high standard of morality which earns for her children, even in the natural order and in accordance with natural laws, a prolific and healthy offspring.

It is true that many of the immigrants, coming as they did from homes where a cruel serfdom had crushed out their energy and an oppressive legislation destroyed their spirit of enterprise, found themselves at first in an inferior position amid the activity of transatlantic civilization. Many, too, foolishly lingered in the large cities skirting the Atlantic seaboard, some of whom fell into poverty, misery, and degradation. But these were the exceptions, and exceptions, too, the number of which I hope and believe diminishes day by day. The children of Irish settlers who are born in America, while they retain their love for their ancient country and the faith of St. Patrick, gradually shake off the hopelessness and improvidence which unjust laws and unjust taskmasters had engendered in them in their cabins at home. Nay, it takes but a few years to transform the Irish peasant himself, who under the yoke of a cruel landlord or his agent had been trodden down and robbed of all hope and re-

duced to a sort of reckless despondency, into a smart, intelligent, active, enterprising, self-reliant citizen.

Of the dangers which threaten England from the side of New Ireland, I have spoken in the pages of this little book. I pray God that they may be averted. I think they will be averted, for the simple reason that there is at present prevalent among Englishmen a continually increasing desire to do justice to Ireland. Many, like myself, have visited the country themselves, and returned full of love for Erin. In some cases, they have shown themselves *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*. Others again, and especially those connected with the Government or belonging to the political world, have a desire to do justice to Ireland which is not unmixed with a fear of Mr. Parnell and of the solid little phalanx (small now, but destined ere long to double and treble its numbers) who follow him in the English House of Commons.

The great obstacle to the union on fair and equitable terms of England and Ireland is the class of Irish landlords. Founded in injustice; doomed to destruction; opposed to their tenants in religion, in sympathy, in politics, in everything; holding in their own by force, the object of the dislike of the Irish people—they poison the minds of Englishmen by their misrepresentations and denunciation of those whom they oppress. At present they are rendered

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specially violent by the recent Land Act, and adduce the occasional cases of hardship to individual landlords which necessarily occur as if they were a conclusive argument against the Act as a whole. I am, of course, speaking generally, not universally: there are good landlords, men of high principle, and full of justice and charity. But they are few and far between. The good landlord is, I fear,

Rara avis in terris, nigroque simillima cygno.

In fact, I am sorry to say that those who are in other respects good, prudent, charitable and sensible men, are in the matter of landlordism impervious to reason.

I have left the text of the following pages almost identical with that of the English edition. I have not attempted any material change, although there are several passages which I should have modified, if I had visited New York and Boston previously to writing them. I would ask the American reader to remember that these passages were penned before the writer had any personal experience of those great cities. I would also ask him not to forget that the writer is an Englishman, brought up amid all the ideas and prejudices common to the majority of his countrymen. But at least he loves Ireland most heartily; and not Ireland alone, but the Irish race, the faithful children of St. Patrick, who are in God's good providence spread throughout the whole world.

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

I AM publishing the following pages by the advice of various persons whose opinions I value, and who have asked me to publish my experiences in Ireland during my recent visit there. I make no pretence to solve the Irish difficulty. I simply desire to contribute my little meed of sympathy to Ireland, and to put before my fellow-countrymen in England as best I can a few facts which may not be familiar to them, and a side of the question which they may hitherto have failed to appreciate.

As an Englishman, knowing the temper of Englishmen, I am convinced that the great mass of them misjudge Ireland simply because they never come into contact with her as she really is.

It is my firm conviction that if Englishmen would themselves visit Ireland, and mix with the people, enter their cottages, hearken to their tale of sorrow and of wrong, judge of them not merely from the colored reports of agents and their employers, but from the unguarded statements of those who have an intimate knowledge of the Irish peasantry; if they would listen to the Catholic Bishops who devote their lives