

## Transcribed Excerpt from Chapter XIX from "A History of the Irish Settlers in North America from the Earliest Period to the Census of 1850," 1852

The most affecting event, in the connexion (sic) of Ireland with America, is the conduct of the latter towards the victims of the Irish famine, which began in the winter of 1846 and 1847, and endured, in its worst forms, till the close of 1848.

The famine is to be thus accounted for: The act of union, in 1800, deprived Ireland of a native legislature. Her aristocracy emigrated to London ...

Her merchants and manufacturers withdrew their capital from trade and invested it in land.\* The land! the land! was the object of universal, illimitable competition ... But in 1846, Sir Robert Peel successfully struck at the old laws, imposing duties on foreign corn, and let in Baltic wheat, and American provisions of every kind, to compete with and undersell the Irish rack-rented farmers.

High rents had produced hardness of heart in "the middleman," extravagance in the land-owner, and extreme poverty in the peasant. The poor law commission of 1839 reported that 2,300,000 of the agricultural laborers of Ireland were "paupers;" that those immediately above the lowest rank were "the worst clad, worst fed, and worst lodged" peasantry in Europe. True, indeed! They were lodged in styes, clothed in rags, and fed on the poorest quality of potato.

Partial failures of this crop had taken place for a succession of seasons ... Still the crops of the summer of 1846 looked fair and sound to the eye. The dark green crisp leaves and yellow and purple blossoms of the potato fields were a cheerful feature in every landscape. By July, however, the terrible fact became but too certain. From every townland within the four seas tidings came to the capital that the people's food was blasted—utterly, hopelessly blasted. Incredulity gave way to panic, panic to demands on the imperial government to stop the export of grain, to establish public granaries, and to give the peasantry such reproductive employment as would enable them to purchase food enough to keep soul and body together ... it appeared there were grain crops more than sufficient to support the whole population ... ships laden to the gunwales sailed out of Irish ports, while the charities of the world were coming in.

In August authentic cases of death by famine, with the verdict "starvation," were reported. The first authentic case thrilled the country, like an ill-wind. From such inquests were held, and the same sad verdict repeated twenty times in the day. Then Ireland, the hospitable among the nations, smitten with famine, deserted by her imperial masters, lifted up her voice, and uttered that cry of awful anguish, which shook the ends of the earth ...

America did more in this work of mercy than all the rest of the world ...

By May, 1847 ... They loaded three barks and four brigs, for various Irish ports, all which safely arrived ...

It was the noblest sight of the century, those ships ... laden with life and manned by mercy, entering the Irish waters. England's flag drooped above the spoil she was stealing away from the famishing, as the American frigates passed her, inward bound, deep with charitable freights. Here were the ships of a state but seventy years old ... a state, but the other day, a group of unconnected struggling colonies. And here, in the fullness (sic) of her heart and her harvest, she had come to feed the enslaved and enervated vassals of Victoria ...

Those who know what it requires to feed an army, may imagine that, abundant as was America's gift, it was not effectual to banish famine. Oh, no! tens of thousands, served many thousands of precious lives, and gave an undying feeling of redemption to come, to all who lived at that day, in Ireland ...