



0. EVICTED, STARVING PEOPLE - Story Preface

1. SEEDS of BRITISH RULE in IRELAND

2. SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN

3. A FAILED PLAN for FREEDOM

4. FRANCE versus BRITAIN in IRELAND

5. BRITAIN CREATES AN IRISH MARTYR

6. THE PENAL LAWS

7. A NATIONAL DISASTER

8. EVICTED, STARVING PEOPLE

9. LIVING IN BOG HOVELS

10. THE CRISIS DEEPENS

11. DEMANDS for IRISH RULE

12. THE EASTER RISING

13. THE BLACK and TANS

14. CIVIL WAR and its AFTERMATH

Not only were Irish people starving, during the Great Hunger, they were evicted from their homes under the watchful eyes of troops sent by authorities. To make sure that the tenants—who were often prior homeowners—would not continue to live in their houses, those homes were destroyed (sometimes by the very people who then owned them). This contemporary illustration, titled “The Ejectment,” was published by *The London Illustrated News*, in its 16 December 1848 issue.

Unable to pay rent, thousands of families were evicted from their dwellings. It’s not like people lived in middle-class housing. Most homes were hovels with thatched roofs.

Some people, like [Tim Downs](#), came from families who had lived on the same land for generations. *The London Illustrated News* reports that Tom

...and his ancestors resided on this spot for over a century, with renewal of their lease up to 1845. He neither owed rent arrears or taxes up to the present moment, and yet he was pitched out onto the roadside, and saw then other houses, with his own, levelled at one fell swoop on the spot...None of them were mud cabins, but all capital stone-built houses.

If people who owed no back rent were evicted, what would happen to people who did? Whole families were thrown out and, like Tim Downs, were helpless as they watched their erstwhile shelters become heaps of rubble:

- Mud cabins and stone houses were rammed by their owners to make sure tenants couldn’t come back.
- Places that had given families refuge from the cold were burned to the ground.
- Starving people with their possessions on their back, walked with their children to nowhere.
- Many dropped dead on the roads.

Poor houses were filled beyond capacity. Mansions of the wealthy were flooded with needy, starving, homeless families. Mothers begged for food to feed their living children and for coffins to bury their dead children.

Not everyone agreed, of course, that the British government could have done something to prevent the famine. T.C. Foster, a London barrister sent to Ireland by *The Times* soon after the 1845 crop failure, observed:

For the poverty and distress and misery which exist, the people have themselves to blame.

Other first-hand accounts vehemently disagree with that conclusion.

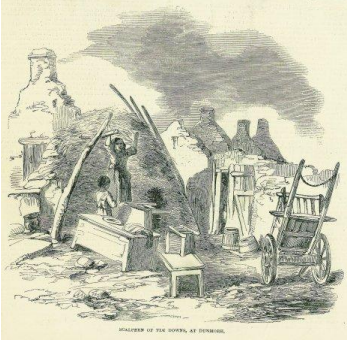
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/EVICTED-STARVING-PEOPLE-Wind-that-Shakes-the-Barley>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/EVICTED-STARVING-PEOPLE-Wind-that-Shakes-the-Barley>

Media Stream



Tim Downs - Evicted from Ancestral Home - Poor Laws

Image online, courtesy Clare County Library (Clare County, Ireland).

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tim-Downs-Evicted-from-Ancestral-Home-Poor-Laws>



Begging Mothers - The Great Hunger in Ireland

Image, described above, online courtesy Vassar College.

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