

NEWS

Masterpiece on life of Davitt

Impressive book focuses on his post-Land League journey

A MASTERPIECE on the life of Mayo man Michael Davitt, a central figure in the Land League struggle, has been published in time for the Christmas market.

Entitled 'Michael Davitt After the Land League 1882 - 1906', it is a fascinating insight to the Straide legend's time as parliamentarian, a journalist, an advocate for penal reform and a champion of human rights.

Written by Dr. Carla King, who was a lecturer in modern history at St. Patrick's College,

Drumcondra, before joining the academic staff of Dublin City University, it represents one of the most comprehensive studies ever undertaken on a man who exercised such an integral role in shaping his country.

Peter O'Connell of the book's publishers, UCD Press, told *The Connaught Telegraph* there are few lives that have enjoyed a second act, but in the case of Michael Davitt, it can be said that he had a second and even a third.

Davitt's life story is one pop-

ulated by an impressive cast of characters, including Leon Tolstoy, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, Teddy Roosevelt, Randolph Hearst (role model for Citizen Kane) and socialist Eleanor Marx.

Even Lady Agatha Russell, widow of the Liberal Prime Minister Earl Russell, who had ruled Ireland during the Famine, was friendly with the son of an evicted tenant.

O'Connell elaborated: "The 'Father of the Land League' is rightly remembered for his work and leadership during the Land War of the 1870s and early 1880s.

"But the truly remarkable, eclectic and extensive activities of his mature years

- which range from the Rockies to Russia geographically, and include counter espionage, journalism, penal reform, women's rights, anti-imperialism and romance in terms of activity - remain largely in the shade."

Carla King's comprehensive biography, more than a decade in preparation and writing, uncovers Davitt above and beyond the Land League, focusing particularly on the 24 years between his leadership of the Land League and his death in 1906.

She brilliantly unveils the leading themes in Davitt's life post Land League: education, democracy, prison reform, imperialism, the advancement of women and his unstinting support for the labour movement.

Dr. King explained: "Davitt was a parliamentarian, a journalist, an advocate for penal reform, a champion of human rights before the concept even became fully defined. He even almost bankrupted *The Times* of London.

"His continued dedication to the land question and Irish affairs never faltered, as evidenced by his focus on Home Rule, the Plan of Campaign and the United Irish League.

"In an era that predates air travel and mass communication, the extent of his travels and advocacy is startling.

"Davitt journeyed across Western Europe to the United States, the Middle East, Russia, and Australia, championing the rights of indigenous peoples, highlighting religious persecution, and seeking to advance the causes of the marginalised and disenfranchised.

"His passion for international affairs from Anglo-American relations, British imperialism to the Boer War and Russia's treatment of its Jewish population are all in the book."

Dr. King painstakingly studied thousands of Davitt's

rialist nationalism that was far ahead of its time.

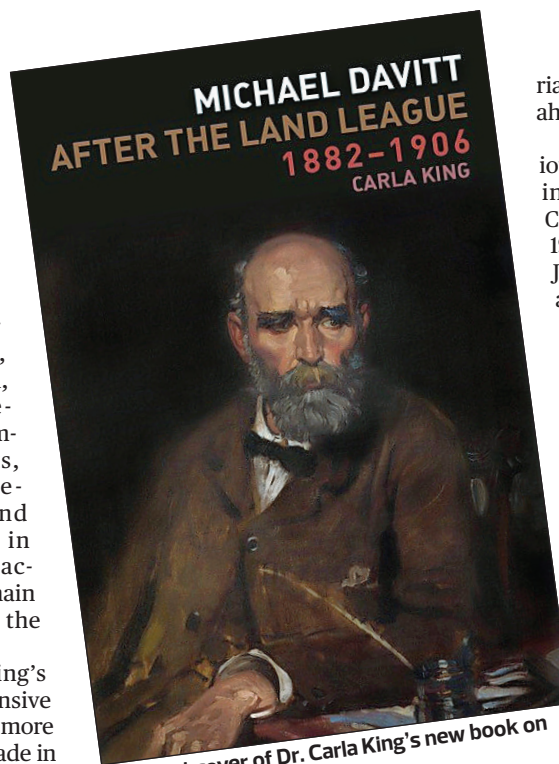
Dr. King has published various works relating to Davitt, including Michael Davitt: Collected Writings, 1868-1906 (2001), Michael Davitt, Jottings in Solitary (2003), and she co-edited with W. J. McCormack, John Devoy's Michael Davitt: From the Gaelic American (2008).

She has also contributed articles on Davitt to scholarly and popular journals.

Daughter of the late Justin Keating TD and grand-daughter of artist Seán Keating, her grandmother's family came from Kishinev, in Moldova, scene of the Russina pogrom about which Davitt wrote.

This impressive hardback, which features 16 pages of rare and previously unpublished images, is available in bookshops, online and from www.ucdpress.ie (RRP €40).

It's a book that deserves to find a place on the bookshelves of all history-loving Mayo people at home and abroad.



The front cover of Dr. Carla King's new book on Michael Davitt.

Santa Letter

REMINDER

HELLO BOYS AND GIRLS...

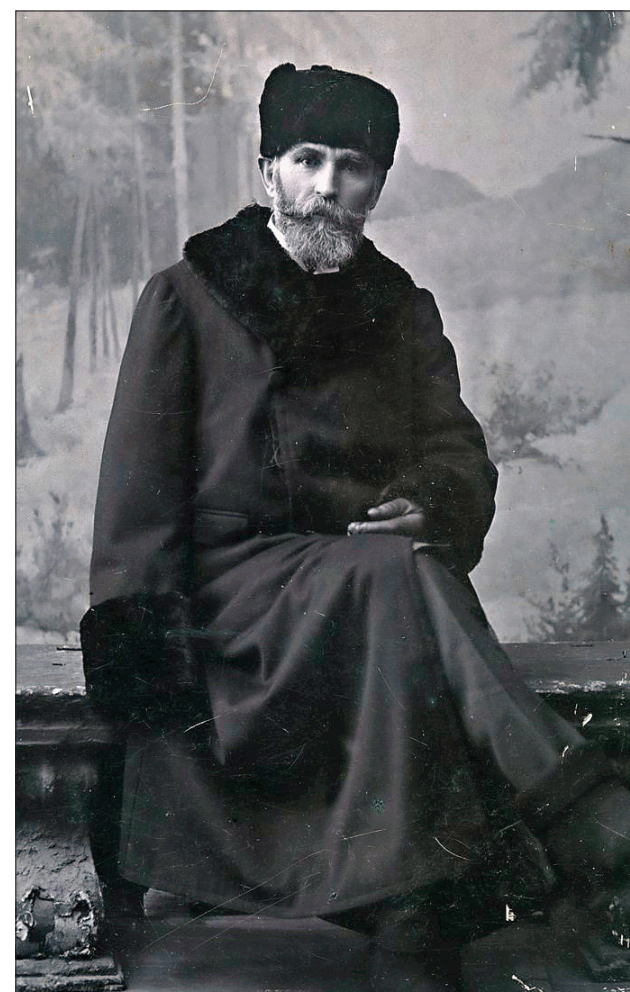
It's that time of year again and all the elves are very busy here in my workshop at The North Pole, helping Santa to wrap and pack all of your toys and presents.

All of my friends at The Connaught Telegraph are also getting ready for the very special "Letters to Santa" pages which will be published in The Connaught Telegraph on Tuesday December 20th.

To have your letter to Santa published in The Connaught Telegraph this year, you must email it with any photos to santa@con-telegraph.ie.

Just remember Boys and Girls and Mammies and Daddies that the latest time we can receive your letters is **Friday December 9th** at Noon, so do your best to get them to us before then. Remember, Santa can only include letters this year that he receives by **email!!**

Ho Ho Ho!!!
Santa Claus



One of the many great images in the book. This is Michael Davitt pictured in Russia in 1905. Photograph courtesy of the Board of Trinity College, Dublin.