Forgotten Hero
(Andy Irvine)

The Landlord's agents standing with their crowbars in their hands,
Four little children watch the fire and do not understand
Just another family evicted from their home
And the memory never faded for one brave man from Mayo.

He grew up in an English town and ideas filled his head
He read about John Mitchell and what Fintan Lalor said
How the landed gentry with their property unearned
Took the food from millions gave them famine in return

Michael Davidd was nineteen when he joined the IRB
But the police they arrested him in 1870
And the lies of the informer sent Michael Davitt down
For fifteen years in Dartmoor as a traitor to the crown

The Landlord and his agent wrote Davitt from his cell
For selfishness and cruelty have no parallel
And the one thing they're entitled to these idle thoroughbreds
Is a one way ticket out of here third class to Holyhead

After seven years and seven months this convict was released
His spirit was unbroken his commitment but increased
And with one clear call he then unveiled his plan
We'll form a mighty Land League and we'll nationalise the land

O Forgotten hero in poverty you came
But you never looked for riches and you never looked for fame
The interests of the common man it was your life's aim
Forgotten Hero never vanquishes in the struggle

The rain lashed down all summer and filled the people's heart with fear
And the harvest was the worst since the dreadful Famine years
But the Land League's Monster Meeting showed the farmers they were strong
And if we all stick together, boys, it won't take very long

Out the ruins of the cottage where he first he drew his breath
Davitt said I hope that I may have pleasure yet
Of trampling on the ruins of this greedy useless band
And driving landlordism from the shores of Ireland

With Parnell as its leader the land war held his course
Hold the rent and hold the harvest they can't evict us all
And Davitt crossed the ocean saying give what you can spare
And the Irish in Amerikay they paid up their full share

But not for the first time and neither for the last
The Dublin Castle Bishops nailed their colours to the mast
And the Altars rang with warnings, respect the law we say
For these Fenians and these Socialists are leading you astray

With the laws of Private Property and the army at his back
Buckshot Forster then arrested all the leaders of the pack
In the Hallowed House of Commons the Gents did cheer and howl
When they heard that Michael Davitt was safely back in jail

And the treaty of Kilmainham Parnell threw it all away
It was the turning point in his career and he turned the wrong way
And the revolution missed its chance with victory in its sight
And fell down like a house of cards collapsing overnight

Davitt saw the Land war as the first step down the track
And he hoped to see the end of the Queen and the end of Union Jack
And I hope some tremor reached him where he lies in bleak Mayo
When they raised the Harp without the Crown above the GPO

O Forgotten Hero in peace may you rest
Your heart was always with the poor and the oppressed
A prison cell could never quell the courage you possessed
Forgotten Hero never vanquishes in the struggle

Sung by Patrick Street on "Irish Times"
Background: Michael Davitt was born in Straide Co. Mayo in 1846. His family
was evicted in his earliest years and he went to work in a Lancashire cotton
mill at the age of nine, losing his right arm in a Doffing engine accident
when he was just eleven years old. Imprisoned in brutal circumstances in
1870, his health was permanently impaired. He founded the Land League in
1879 and in the land war which followed, he
defy their landlords for the first time. Through his life, Davitt was driven
by a sense of justice for the common man and though dogged by poverty and
misfortune, he never wavered from his principles or gave way to bitterness.
In his last will he wrote: To all my friends I leave kind thoughts, to my
enemies the fullest possible forgiveness and to Ireland an undying prayer
for the absolute freedom and independance which it was my life's ambition to
try and obtain for her.

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