

At the time O'Connell was receiving his education at St. Omer and Douay, the French Revolution was at its height: England having formally condemned the excesses of that sanguinary time, Englishmen in France came under the ban of being "aristocrats, and were insulted and maltreated.—It became prudent on their part to leave the country, blessed with principles of "fraternity," that sent to the guillotine all who were guilty of wealth and birth; O'Connell and his brother were, therefore, directed to return to England; and after some anxious, and to some extent, dangerous delay, they set out for Calais on the 21st of January, 1793, the very day the King was beheaded at Paris. They reached Calais on the 23rd, and sailed immediately for England in the packet that brought over the intelligence of the King's death. The two youths, had been compelled for the safety of their lives, to wear the tri-coloured cockade; but the deeds done by those whose symbol it had become, they regarded with detestation; and, as the packet boat passed out of the harbour, "Mr. O'Connell and his brother tore out of their caps, the tricoloured cockade, which the commonest regard for personal safety rendered indispensable to be worn by every one in France; and after trampling them under foot, flung them into the sea. This boyish outburst of natural execration of the horrors which had been committed under that emblem, procured them a few of those sonorous curses which only a Frenchman can give, from some fishermen rowing past at the moment, by whom the cockades were rescued from the waves, and placed in their hats with all becoming reverence.

The same vessel brought to England the two Shearases, who a few years afterwards (1798) engaged in one of the wild insurrectionary movements of the period of the rebellion, and were executed. Their principles, the events of the time, and the fate of these misguided men, made a powerful impression on O'Connell; and from this time may be dated his aversion to all violence and bloodshed for any purpose whatever. The frightful excesses of the French Revolution and the Irish rebellion filled him with horror, and reflection confirmed him in the belief that there are great things to be struggled for it is not by "brute force and mutual destruction they can be accomplished.

On the 30th of January, 1794, he entered Lincoln's Inn as a student. In Easter Term, 1796, he was admitted at King's Inn's Dublin, as Daniel O'Connell; and, two years afterwards, namely, in Easter Term, 1798, he was called in due course to the Irish bar. From this time till he began to be publicly known a few years elapsed, during which he continued his reading and research with the same untiring industry that distinguished him throughout his life. His powers of working, and capability of enduring fatigue that would have killed any other man, were extraordinary. Bodily strength and a good constitution are two of the elements of greatness no less important than mental power. It has been remarked how often judges and great lawyers live to extreme old age; but, in fact they owe their rise in profession, and are great lawyers and judges, precisely because the vigour of their minds is seconded by their physical stamina. The world sees only the winners in the race; it takes no note of the hundreds who die in training, or break down ere half the course is run. Woe to the weakling who essays to lift the strong man's burden!

In England a Barrister generally devotes himself to one branch of the law, and a man who practices in equity may be worth nothing in a common law or criminal court. In Ireland, in O'Connell's day this was not the case, and he became, by dint of hard work and practice, a good lawyer in every branch of the profession, and in more than one he was without an equal. He had all the qualities of a lawyer—quick apprehension, clearness, the power of analysis and arrangement, and that knowledge of men and things which to some minds seems to come intuitively, and enables them to penetrate motives by a glance. To these powers, and the learning which was his instrument, he possessed eloquence, humour, and inimitable tact."

He took a popular part early in his career, having appended his name to the bar petition against the legislative union. In 1806 he was first known on his circuit, and rose gradually into notice until 1810, when his business in the Four Courts, Dublin, was good. A Society called the Catholic Board (a sort of minor Irish Parliament) had been organized, chiefly through his exertions, of which, in 1809, he was a leading and influential member. In the conflicts of the delegates and the board with the Executive Government, he was one of the Counsel for the traversers, which augmented his professional renown, and procured him political consideration and popularity. He continued to rise until 1813, when he received additional *eclat* for his defence of Magee, Publisher of the *Dublin Evening Post*, for libelling the Duke of Richmond. He had to contend with an excellent lawyer, Attorney General Saurin, and although he did not procure his client's acquittal, yet the manner in which he grappled with his antagonist redounded to his fame. From 1813 to 1823 he was engaged, either as leading or junior Counsel in almost every important case, Chancery suits excepted, to which practice he did not aspire, his mode of pleading, and management of a case, qualifying him more eminently for the practice of Common Law. The narrative then proceeds:—

"At this time, his political life was yet subordinate to his profession; he had married, against the wishes of his uncle, his cousin, Miss O'Connell, the daughter of a physician, who brought him no fortune; and there was some prospect of his continuing to be the successful lawyer, and little more; but a wider and greater field was yet to open before him. Those who imagine that O'Connell's advocacy of the Repeal of the Union was a late adopted principle—a second agitation begun, when the Catholic question was settled, as a mere means of keeping up his influence—do the man wrong; it was his firm and steadfast faith from the first hour of his public life; his first speech was made against the Union, then just carried; and those who cast doubts on his courage, should know that, to do this, in those days, was to be guilty of little less than treason; there was then real personal risk to be encountered; when O'Connell denounced the English Government for the crimes by which the Union was carried, he spoke with an armed guard of soldiers, under the orders of the notorious Major Sirr, in the room! Not long before that, shooting an Irish Catholic was considered rather good service to the State; we doubt if "Young Ireland," though its talk is fiercer, would have done half as much as O'Connell did, and that with complete caution and forethought; the Government would have been too happy to have seen him commit himself; they would have made short work of such froth and flash as that of Mr. Meagher, "of the sword," and his colleagues; but, in O'Connell, they had quite another kind of intellect to deal with."

From the time he became distinguished as a public man, contention waxed fierce, until at length the Catholic Association was formed. O'Connell attacked with equal violence the Ministry of the day, and the Dublin Corporation, with each of whom he waged "war to the knife." In 1815, a Mr. D'Esterre, who had been an officer of marines, was a member of the Dublin Corporation, and, it is said, struggled hard for a

lucrative office. Either irritated at O'Connell's attacks, or induced to believe that the fall of the common enemy would pave his way to office, (the narrator insinuates the latter, but that insinuation should be mistrusted,) he sought a quarrel with him. O'Connell had called the corporate body a "beggarly corporation," and for this D'Esterre threatened him with personal chastisement. O'Connell demanded satisfaction, and a meeting was the consequence. Both parties, attended by their friends, met on the 31st January, at Bishop's Court, in the County of Kildare. Sir Edward Stanley attended Mr. D'Esterre, and Major Macnamara attended Mr. O'Connell. The chances were in favor of the former, (according to human calculation,) who could "snuff a candle at twelve paces;" but at the first fire he fell mortally wounded. The narrator continues:—

"Mr. O'Connell ever felt the deepest remorse for this act though he was driven to it; and as the enmities he woke at every step often subjected him to similar provocations to the field, he did actually fight another duel, and was on the point of meeting Sir Robert Peel, then Secretary for Ireland, when the law interposed: he made a vow never to accept a challenge again."

It is all very well for a person who has "slain his man" in a duel, to forswear duelling for ever after, but really this looks not so much the result of the workings of conscience, as it does the result of calculation. Mr. O'Connell ever had a most offensive tongue; blustering and insulting language was always upon his lips, and challenge after challenge was the consequence. No doubt but he reasoned thus with himself: "I must either give up duelling or give up blustering, otherwise the chances are that I shall soon lose the number of my mess also." But blustering was dear to him—it was a native habit, and the abuse of "the *Sassenach*" brought him popularity; so he gave up duelling. Had he been wrought upon by remorse for D'Esterre's death, he would not have fought another duel, nor been prevented meeting Sir Robert Peel by the interference of the authorities. O'Connell once insulted Lord Alvanley in the House of Commons, out of which an amusing circumstance grew. Lord Alvanley challenged him; the challenge was not accepted; whereupon his Lordship publicly threatened to horsewhip him, and not only himself, but other members of his family. Maurice O'Connell, his son, was aroused by this threat, he met his Lordship, and, if our memory serves us, slightly wounded him. Some time after this, D'Israeli having been abused by O'Connell, wrote to his son Maurice, telling him that, as he knew his father would not fight, and understanding that he, Maurice, arranged all his father's quarrels, he called upon him for satisfaction! Maurice did not relish this responsibility for his father, and declined. Again we follow the narrative:—

"It was subsequently to this event he organized the Catholic Association. It was proscribed and proscribed at various periods, but, under one name or other, continued to exist; and, by his skill, it defied all the efforts of the Government to suppress it. O'Connell had given up his immense practice at the bar to devote himself wholly to the cause, sacrificing a certain income of many thousands a year. From this time he came more fully and broadly before the English public. In 1825, he proceeded on a deputation from his co-religionists to the people of England; but, notwithstanding his strenuous efforts, the question of emancipation remained uncarried, and he returned to agitation and his profession, or probably we ought to say to his profession of agitator and advocate, with renewed zest. The election 1826 afforded him fresh scope, and his achievements at Waterford, Monaghan, and Westmeath gave him heart and hope to gird himself up for the victory of Clare. The subsequent appointment of Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald as President of the Board of Trade opened to him the opportunity of standing for Clare county, and, after a vigorous contest, he was returned."

This story of his "sacrificing several thousands a year" is an *Irishism*. He gave up his business, with its emoluments, but instead thereof he received from the Association, as prime agitator, £25,000 a year! The narrator then proceeds thus:—

"The claiming his seat in Parliament on this election brought matters to a crisis, at which one thing or other must be done—either the Catholics must be granted their rights as English subjects, or the Government must have plunged into a civil war. Wellington and Peel, the sounder judgments of the Tory party, saw the change was inevitable, and submitted. The Catholic Bill of 1829 was introduced and carried, and O'Connell acquired, with his seat in the House of Commons, a great influence in the English political world. Nothing showed the wonderful powers of the man more than the facility with which he adapted himself to his new sphere. It is said that lawyers seldom make effective speakers in the House; but O'Connell could harangue a mob, address a jury, and speak in the House of Commons, with perfect command over each of them. He was, in style and manner, almost as distinct as if he had been three different men. Russell and Peel have passed all their public life in Parliament—O'Connell was fifty-five before he entered it! He used his powers to procure a series of measures for Ireland, that were the necessary consequences of the Emancipation Bill—particularly a reform of the representative system, and the municipalities. He pointed out the social evils of Ireland, her poverty, the risks of famine; he urged, he wrote, he spoke, he implored the Government to think of the necessities of the land, and provide for them. And, as measure after measure was brought forward for England, he supported it with all his strength; and to O'Connell and Ireland are Englishmen mainly indebted for the Reform Bill. But all he proposed for Ireland was met with determined opposition from Earl Grey's Cabinet and the Tories: Lord Stanley was his chief foe; their animosity was most intense, and the conflicts in which they engaged were like "wars of the giants." His motion for a Repeal of the Union, made on the 22nd of April, 1834, was defeated by an immense majority: his speech on this occasion occupied six hours; Mr. Spring Rice's reply to it, which was nearly as long, promoted him to a peerage. Year after year did O'Connell wait, in hopes that some real legislation would be commenced for Ireland, but the Whigs were seized by apathy, and seemed incapable of any positive policy: they were sinking, and they knew it: O'Connell preferred them as a body to the Tories; and, by his influence it was that the Melbourne Cabinet was kept in office from 1835 to 1841. He had lost hope in them; but, from old preference and

associations, he would not oppose them. Bitterly are both England and Ireland now suffering for the feuds of the two parties, which made legislation for Ireland impossible. We now come to the more recent period of O'Connell's history, and this we must pass rapidly over. After the accession of Sir Robert Peel to power, in 1841, O'Connell organized the Repeal Association on a more extensive scale; he absented himself from Parliament, and devoted himself wholly to the agitation; Repeal was debated for a week in the Corporation of Dublin; the agitation continued and increased through 1842; in 1843 came the "monster meetings;" and Repeal rent mounted to many hundreds a week. Hundreds of thousands of men gathered on the Hill of Tara, the Curragh of Kildare, the Rath of Mullaghmart. A great meeting was announced at Clontarf, and this the Government prohibited by proclamation, and some show of military force, which the ready compliance with the behests of the authorities, as O'Connell's express injunction, rendered unnecessary."

The statement here made is remarkable for its cool impudence; "either the Catholics must be granted their rights as English subjects, or the Government must have plunged into a civil war!" This sentence could have been more honestly rendered, thus—the Catholics were to be propitiated in whatever they chose to demand, or they would rebel. If Peel and Wellington were influenced by this view of the case, and succumbed because they feared an outbreak, they would deserve to be denounced as cravens, and merit the opprobrium of all good men. Woe betide that nation which grants what is arrogantly demanded, or succumbs to the threats of demagogues. The rubicon once passed, they must either advance with the rushing tide, nor stop till every vestige of the constitution is swept away, or, by making a stand at last, provoke the crisis which firmness in the first instance might have avoided. The assertion that the tottering Melbourne Ministry was sustained some years by O'Connell and his party, is a notorious fact, and to the disgrace of the Whigs be it remembered. In enumerating the pseudo-reform measures of the Whigs, the narrator might also have stated that he took an active part in the affairs of the English Church, although he (and all other Roman Catholic members) had sworn not to interfere with it. We quote again from the narrative:—

"The intended meeting at Clontarf was fixed for the 8th of October, 1843; on the 14th of that month, O'Connell received notice to put in bail, to appear on an indictment for sedition. On the 2nd of November, proceedings commenced in the Court of Queen's Bench; the whole of Michaelmas Term was consumed by preliminary proceedings, and the actual trial did not begin until the 16th of January, 1844. The indictment was of monstrous length. Twelve gentlemen of the bar appeared on behalf of the Crown, and sixteen defended the traversers; who, then, can wonder that this remarkable trial did not close till the 12th of February? The attention of the Court was occupied with that subject alone for the space of twenty-five days. At length, Mr. O'Connell was sentenced to pay a fine of £2000, and be imprisoned for a year. He immediately appealed to the House of Lords by writ of error; but, pending the proceedings on the question thus raised, he was sent to the Richmond Penitentiary, near Dublin. On the 4th of September, the House of Lords reversed the judgment against O'Connell and his associates; Lords Lyndhurst and Brougham being favorable to affirming the proceedings in the Irish Queen's Bench, while Lords Denman, Campbell, and Cottenham were of an opposite opinion. Mr. O'Connell was therefore immediately liberated, and a vast procession attended him from prison to his residence in Merion-square, and made his liberation a triumph.

"But it was almost the last of his long career. It is believed that his imprisonment, although he affected to make light of it, preyed on his mind and broke his spirit; he could not conceive that a jury of his countrymen could be found to return a verdict of guilty on a charge of conspiracy, when all his actions had been open and public; when he had demonstrated the ruin the Union had brought on them. "Young Ireland," too, had begun for some time to give him great anxiety. O'Connell had seen the days of bloodshed and anarchy, and dreaded them; the new generation thought him timid and time-serving, and spoke "for war." He was obliged to reprove and denounce; hence bickerings, discontent, and the cry of "a split in the camp."

Thus passed 1844 and 1845. He was more occupied with his young opponents at home than with the Government. In 1846 he entered the House of Commons again to assist Sir Robert Peel in abolishing the Corn-Laws, for O'Connell had always been a supporter of Free Trade. But it was seen with regret that the stalwart frame was yielding, that the overtasked energies of the man were fast giving way; his voice, once so powerful, so varied in its tones, had not indeed "turned again to childish treble," but had sunk to weakness; it could not be heard; the first symptoms of its decay appeared on his trial, when it was ascribed to cold, alas! it was time and over exertion! It would sway and thrill the hearts of thousands no more! When the Whigs came in again O'Connell was restored to the Commission of the Peace; again he supported the party, and the indignation of "Young Ireland" was extreme at this "surrender." The famine now deepened over the land, and all political strife was hushed in its dread presence; it completed the wreck of O'Connell's energies; disasters accumulated round him in proportion as he became less able to struggle with them. He appeared a few times in the House of Commons this session, and spoke once, briefly, on the distress in Ireland. But his illness increased; he removed to Hastings, and, from thence, left England, with the intention of going to Rome; but it was too late for a more genial climate to be of any avail. By various stages he reached Paris, Marseilles, and Avignon, refusing to receive the numerous visitors and deputations that waited on him, with one or two special exceptions. He reached Genoa only to die."

We shall not recur to the disgraceful scene of reversing the sentence, in the House of Lords. It resulted either from a compromise between the Ministry and the hoary offender, or because they lacked stamina to carry out the sentence of the Court below, dreading the consequence. From O'Connell's subsequent peaceful behavior, when compared with his former conduct, it is evident that even his own countrymen, who had been again and again such willing dupes to his absurd promises, at length suspected him; and this, of itself, with the rise of the "Young Ireland" party, was sufficient to embitter his existence. We cannot believe that O'Connell ever believed that the Repeal of the Union would be effected through his

agency, although he was constantly promising it to his miserable followers in a year, and sometimes in six months! An English audience would—upon a second occasion—have, taunted him with the failure of his former promise, but the poor gullible Irish never doubted his word, and right merrily they plundered their starving families in order that they might drop a "copper mag" in his tremendous begging box. His biographer excuses him from any intention to rebel, or to excite to rebellion; but surely a man of his penetration must have foreseen that it was a dangerous game to attempt to overawe the Government by *physical demonstrations*. He must have been familiar with the old adage that "it is dangerous to trust children with edge tools," and he knew—no man better—that Irishmen, for excitability, with or without a cause, are mere children. He must have known that "he that soweth the wind reapeth the whirlwind," and that in exciting the people by inflammatory harangues at "Monster meetings," he was raising a spirit he might not be able to lay. Besides, supposing he placed implicit confidence in his own powers to allay the storm; he was an old man, and who could foretell the consequences after his death? No, no: O'Connell must have foreseen, and proceeded reckless of the consequences.

That the "split in the camp" had an effect upon his spirits is very probable. He who had so long swayed the land by the magic of his voice, and a popular cry, must have suffered much from mortification to witness his influence in the wane. It was this—with the consciousness that he had deserved it for deceiving the people—which "preyed upon his spirit." In addition to this, perhaps, was the conviction which must have pressed itself upon his mind, that the efforts of his life had been thrown away; that his talents and his wonderful energies had been misapplied; that the Catholic Emancipation, instead of bettering the condition of the people, had but made them more idle and restless; that he had stirred up, and kept alive in his country, religious animosities, which but for him might have been allayed. Is it not likely that these convictions preyed upon his spirits? and if, as we may suppose, the spirit of a man who has reached the ordinary term of bodily existence, is prone to look back and review its past deeds, and the effects of its crimes, surely his soul must have been stricken with remorse to see his native country smitten with famine, and to feel the consciousness gnawing within that a portion at least of the suffering and unparalleled misery lay at his door, for if he had taught the people industry instead of idling away their time by assembling to curse the *Sassenach*, the famine would not have been so general! If remorse came, it came too late, but terrible must have been that remorse, when from London, and from the Continent, he looked back upon his country, and saw the starving millions fed by the hands of that *Sassenach* he had taught them to curse; while he, their idol, had deserted them!

We have but one comment more to offer. How does it come to pass that in all the accounts published of his last illness, there is not one word about Ireland? Surely he did not utterly forget his native land in this her hour of deepest misery! The bare supposition is absurd. He must have adverted to the wretched state of that country, and from the silence of his attendants—from the entire suppression of all he said upon the subject—we infer that he not only saw and felt, but *recanted* his errors; but that recantation, not being favourable to those who would perpetuate them, its publication has been suppressed. We now come to the closing scene;

O'CONNELL'S DEATH.

"On Monday, May 10 (says Dr. Duff,) I saw Mr. O'Connell for the first time, and he was then suffering from profuse and involuntary diarrhoea, with great pain of abdomen under pressure, strong rapid pulse, flushed face, &c. Mr. O'Connell had also chronic bronchitis of some years standing. From the remedies employed, these symptoms were much ameliorated, and on the morrow he seemed convalescent. But, from Mr. O'Connell's great repugnance to swallow even the most simple medicine, this state of improvement could not be followed up. On the evening of Tuesday (11th) the new symptom of congestion of the brain presented itself. Active measures were immediately had recourse to, and from them there was a decided improvement. Again, the aid of internal remedies was denied, Mr. O'Connell refusing to take any medicine. Towards the evening of Wednesday (12th) the symptoms increased, Mr. O'Connell was restless, and sometimes slightly incoherent. Our former measures were again employed, but with slight success. During Thursday all the symptoms increased, with great tendency to sleep, from which, however, he could easily be roused; the breathing was much embarrassed; circulation became difficult and in some degree indistinct, and the mind wavered. Thursday night was passed in a state of profound heavy sleep, with increased difficulty of breathing, and, in addressing those about him, he imagined himself in London, and spoke to them as if there. On Friday he was much worse, the breathing very laborious, the voice scarcely audible, and the words half formed; all the symptoms had increased. In this state he lingered on till Saturday night, seemingly conscious of the presence of those about him, but neither attempting to move nor speak. My treatment of Mr. O'Connell was always in conjunction with Dr. Beretta, of this place, and a young French physician, who had accompanied him from Lyons, and, on the day preceding his demise, we had the advantage of consulting with Dr. Viviani, the oldest practitioner of Genoa, and of high repute. By his advice, and as a last resource, a farther application of leeches to the temples was adopted, but all was in vain; he expired last night (the 15th inst.) at half-past nine o'clock p. m., apparently suffering little pain. During the whole period of our attendance upon Mr. O'Connell it was with the greatest difficulty he could be induced to take medicine, or even necessary food, and he perseveringly abstained from drink for fully forty hours. Had this been otherwise, the period of death might have been procrastinated, but his failing health and spirits, with constant tendency to cerebral congestion, rendered certain his death at no very distant period."

The *Journal des Debats*, on the authority of a letter from Genoa, dated May 16, says that the only words Mr. O'Connell uttered were "I am dying." Conclusion on page 183.