

THE ERA OF O'CONNELL.

The following excellent article on "The Era of O'Connell," is from the pen of the Rev. Henry Giles, an Irish Presbyterian Minister, who now resides in the United States. It originally appeared in the November number of *Holden's Magazine*, which is printed at Philadelphia. We copy it from our talented contemporary, *The American Celt*—

O'Connell was a native of the County of Kerry, in the South of Munster. He was born about the same period as the Independence of America. He was sent at the proper age to St. Omers, to receive his education, and on completing it, he returned to his native country. Having gone through the ordinary legal studies, he was called to the bar in 1798, and in 1802 he married his cousin, Miss Mary O'Connell. He rapidly attained to fame and practice in his profession. His advantages were such as rarely fail of eminence in the law. His intellect was of early strength and maturity; his memory was vivid and retentive; his manner was pleasing, and his address was eloquent. These were sustained by a solid preparation, and graced by a noble personal appearance. It was no wonder that he went on with a sure and rapid pace, to be the first advocate of his time. He became an impressive speaker, and brought uncommon talent to the side of the obnoxious party, that of the Catholics. He himself was a Catholic, an ancient Irishman, and, thus, by religion, race, and character, opposed to the party—the Orange party, then all-powerful in Ireland. It was only in 1793, that the Penal Statutes were so far ameliorated as to give Catholics leave even to vote at elections. The fact, then, of a young man attacking with shafted and satire eloquence, a party which had never before heard other words than those of slavish submission, must have been intolerably galling. It was, of course, all the more galling, that these shafted words came from a papist—a creature, that a few years before, the constitution did not admit to have in Ireland a civil existence. Even then, a papist was a creature that an Alderman of Dublin would scarcely consider as worthy to clean his plates; how insufferable was it then, that an upstart should behold the whole body of civil dignitaries in the grandeur of their Metropolitan omnipotence. But this O'Connell did. He denounced them—nay, worse than that, he laughed at them.—A person named D'Estier, more ardent than wise, made himself a champion for the Municipal worthies—and in the duel which he provoked, he fell.—O'Connell evinced sincere regret, and made a resolution against duelling, to which he was always afterwards faithful. The man had again and again provoked O'Connell—and although the arm was not justified which struck him down, he staked his life upon the die of vengeance, and the die was doom.

O'Connell was a man of action, and a man of speech. For both, he was eminently qualified by nature, by education, and by circumstances. His physical constitution, robust, healthy, hardy, enabled him to undergo any amount of labor, and to endure any degree of fatigue. Of this constitution he took prudent care. Regular in his life, temperate in his habits, he economized his forces, he wasted no power, and he brought the enormous energy of his natural strength into the arena of professional and political contest. And this athletic robustness was but the instrument of intellectual qualities, singularly in harmony with it. The union of both made him eminently a practical man—and a man of business. Of a sound and clear understanding—vigorous rather than comprehensive, sagacious rather than profound, he saw at once the available point of a measure, and undisturbed by abstract speculations, he seized that point and urged it. Possessed of strong passions, he never allowed them the ascendancy. He subjected his passions ever to a watchful control, and while they added reverence to his eloquence, they never disturbed his judgment. Opulent in fancy, it enlivened his way—but it never turned him from it. It gave raciness to his wit—pungency to his sarcasm—a rich glow to his humor, but it did not encumber his argument with adorning; it did not conceal the position he would establish, either by a mist or a halo; it never betrayed him into sentimentality, or idealism; it never overlaid that energetic common sense, which formed the texture of his mental constitution. The truth is, that O'Connell never appeared to less advantage, than when he laid aside this tone of his mind. Sentimentality did not become him. He was not graceful in the dalliance of fine speech. He was too heavy to wander in the garden of the muses, and he was somewhat too unwieldy to call the delicate flowers of poetry. All that was not connected with a direct purpose seemed foreign to him, and put on. Emotion he had, intense and deep, but it was emotion which was kindled by broad, practical conceptions. Enthusiasm he had also—enthusiasm grand and commanding—enthusiasm that rushed, soared, burned; yet this enthusiasm in its utmost impetuosity, had nothing in its manner of theoretical wildness, and, in its boldest aspiration, it always assumed the tone of a practical direction. Will, also, O'Connell had—firm and decisive; wherever he was, or in whatever movement he was concerned—his was the will that prevailed, and his was the will that governed. He had, however, the talent not to let this always appear. Like every great man of action, he had the art of using other minds, without seeming to compel them, and while pretending to leave them freedom, he made them most thoroughly obedient. But, though he could thus govern with a latent dominion, when occasion called for it, he could also assume an open command. He could front the storm; he could rule the tempest; and, in the might of his will, he could make nothing of opposition. Add to these qualities, a versatility which enabled him to oversee many concerns, and to direct them all—to watch over many interests, and to leave none of them neglected—a faculty of order, which, by aptitude of attention, and constancy of attention, allowed no labor to go to waste—an unconquerable perseverance, which despised resistance, and spurned at discouragement, and great as we may esteem O'Connell to have been in words, we shall esteem him to have been still greater in doings.

Having had these natural capacities for public station, and popular influence, to such ends the education of O'Connell was not less favorable. With a youth fresh from the mountains, with a mind trained in healthful simplicity, with an imagination receiving its first impression from the cloud-capped mountains of Kerry, and the billowy and boundless Atlantic, with a memory stored from treasuries of Celtic and Milesian legend, and from the wild and passionate complaints

of patriotic song and story, he was transferred to St. Omers, to complete his studies. Be the complaints against the Jesuits what they may—no man, but one whose bigotry must be deeper injury to himself than it can be to them, will deny their rare capacity, and unrivalled success in the instruction of the young. They divined at once the special talents of a pupil; and they trained him for the destiny to which these talents pointed. They awakened dormant faculties, and they awakened those already active. They brought the whole mind into harmonious exercise; they gave every power its due culture; and this culture was always regulated in reference to the individual nature. They did not put boys in confused hordes, and without regard to their abilities, their tastes, or their respective purposes in life, cause them to jabber mechanically, the same things in the same way. Their object was, so far as their office of school-teaching went, to rear up boys into intelligent men—prepared for their several vocations in the world. And this object they attained. It could not have been conspiracy, however extensive, or intrigue, however acute, which, for a long period, made them kings of European education. If through their superiority as instructors, they aimed at ulterior ends—then, questionably, their aim was surely directed—for that superiority they did most manifestly prove. Think as opponents will, I repeat, of their theories, they trained men consummately for the action and contest of the living, practical world. O'Connell is no bad example. From St. Omers he entered a school, the most varied and the most complex which human society contains, for the discipline of mind, for the exercise of talent, for the development of energy—I mean the life of a politician and a lawyer. His genius fitted him for the foremost rank in the law, and to the foremost rank his genius quickly carried him. The law is a profession which not only forces men back on the past, but most actively engages them in the present; which compels them to seek for changeless principles amidst obsolete forms; for a living spirit is a dead letter; for wisdom, not among a multitude of counsellors, but a multitude of decisions; and, yet, while thus seeking, to be ever active and busy in society. The law is a profession which, more than any other, requires an immediate and direct knowledge of men. It requires an insight into whatever they would most conceal; their disguised motives; their inward sophistries of thought; their cunning subterfuges; their real as distinct from their simulated opinions; their natural passions and purposes, distinct from their contrivances and evasions. As this is a knowledge most required by the profession, so the profession is one that most affords it; that most opens the heart of man in its secret foldings, and to study, in its nakedness, all the intricacies of its moral anatomy. The law is a profession which demands a liberal culture, external to itself, and is, in its own proper exercise, an unending discipline—necessitating caution, coolness, patience, power of endurance, an indefatigable study of character in its unconscious manifestation; a habit of comparison and inference; a rapid estimate of evidence; an instinctive discrimination of testimony; a mental vigilance which overlooks no incident or circumstance of the smallest value; and to the direction of the whole, the command of logical method, and the faculty of lucid exposition. Such is the training which the eminent lawyer must possess; and to a fitting genius, such is the training which his profession gives.

O'Connell's was a fitting genius, and it comprised the utmost excellence of original talent and practical experience. Nor was O'Connell's training confined to the law. He was disciplined for a more eventful conflict, and to fight on a broader arena. His forensic and his political career began at the same time. He had scarcely been called to the bar, when he entered with all his heart and soul on the work of agitation.—If, in one part of the day, he was an advocate before a jury; in another part of the day, he was a tribune before a multitude.

As a preparation to a correct estimate of O'Connell, we must consider this young advocate and tribune, as he stood related to the times out of which he had been born, and those into which he had entered.

I write these remarks in a country village, and without books, and, therefore, I may err as to dates, but I hope not at all to do so as to facts, nor materially, I trust, even as to dates. The first public speech O'Connell made, was against the Union, and this Union was accomplished in 1800. It was in that year, I believe, O'Connell's speech was made. As he had only then entered on the practice of his profession, and as he came to his profession young, he was merely beginning his manly life. Not many years previously, his religion would have debarred him from this profession.

In 1792, his religion would have rendered him incapable of voting for a candidate to Parliament. His boyhood must, therefore, have been very near the harshest rigor of the penal laws. I have read in old reports of the Irish House of Commons, in which, as late, I think, as 1792, a motion to allow Catholics to inherit and purchase real estate, was as indignantly scouted, as a motion would be in Congress to make a native of Tirabuctoo Postmaster-General, or as a motion in the British Parliament would be, which proposed a matrimonial alliance between the Prince of Wales and a daughter of the imperial house of Faustin the first. I am not going to specify those penal laws. They are sufficiently known to persons conversant with British history. For the general bearing of them, I would simply refer to an authority which no intelligent reader can accuse of being radical or revolutionary, and that is, to Burke's "Tract on the Irish Popery Laws." This, though an unfinished work, is most powerful and impressive. The writer in dwelling on those terrific statutes, rejects from his composition the ornaments of fancy, the movements of passion, and leaves the naked statement of facts to its own gaunt hideousness. These statutes, as may easily be conceived, were not only enacted without the consent of the Catholic people of Ireland, but for their misery and ruin. Burke, with great learning and logic, shows that they want every condition that constitutes law; that they were merely barbarous and arbitrary exercises of a savage power. The object of them was either to annihilate the religion of the people, or to reduce the people to ignominious and perpetual serfdom. To do this effectually, they were so shaped as to deprive Catholics of property, of education, of liberty to worship, and even of the right of self-defence.

Let us regard the bearing of these laws, merely upon two points—those of property and education—and we shall see how admirably fitted they were, if thoroughly carried out, to secure the end at which they aimed.

Consider, for instance, how exterminating laws can be, in their action upon property alone. Compel masses to be poor, and to remain poor, and most effectually you degrade them, and keep them degraded. The penal laws thus acted on the Irish Catholic. Even after Cromwell, Catholics had yet something to lose. A few proprietors of large estates were still of the Roman Catholic religion, and in a variety of pursuits, others had acquired wealth. To reduce such to the most sordid condition, and to entail that condition on them—the law must have a two-fold operation.—First, it must tend to the utmost division of inheritance; and, secondly, it must prevent accumulation.—Accordingly, Catholics were debarred from the right of primogeniture, and this acting only in respect to Catholics, gave immense preponderance of landed wealth to Protestants, who held obstinately by it. Division and subdivision of possessions, with no means of reproduction or repair, would stay the divisibility of property only at the utmost limits of indigence. The rights of bequest and settlement were in the same manner interfered with. The eldest son by conforming to the Protestant Establishment, reduced his father to less than a tenant for life; and every settlement which his father had previously made, the new convert could immediately annul, and to that amount he could alienate or sell forever. He could drag his father into chancery, compel him to give on oath a statement of his property, and put him on such allowance, as the presiding magistrate would decide. Any of the other children, by conforming, had the same power. And they might do this at the most tender age. As far as the law went, they could, as soon as they had words, use these words to renounce their faith, and impoverish their parents. To renounce faith with the first words of infancy, implies, I know, an absurdity, but this condition of the law is not more contradictory to the truth of things, than the consequence attached to the condition is revolting to every sentiment of nature. If the parent, too, sold or otherwise settled his estate, the child could force him to account for it. The court was empowered to seize a third of it for the child during the life of the parent; and, on the death of the parent, dispose of the estate in what manner it pleased, in reference to the family.—If the child or children suspected the parent of perjury or deception, he or they could at any time institute a new suit against him; and this could be repeated, interval after interval, upon any real or supposed improvement in its affairs. So, if the wife of a Roman Catholic husband, or the husband of a Roman Catholic wife, become a Protestant, the direct control of the children fell to the Chancellor. Parents lost the comfort and guardianship of their children, but had to bear the burden of their expense. The wife turning Protestant, became independent of her husband's will, for support after his death. The chancellor alone determined her part of the estate up to the one-third of her husband's whole clear substance. The husband in his arrangements could, neither by reward nor punishment, evince towards his surviving Protestant wife a sense of her affection or unkindness, of her good or evil. Legislation having once rendered the Catholic landless, it closed all opening to him for any new possession. He could not own land in fee simple, he could not rent land, but upon limited leases and defined profit. Nor did the matter stop here; for as the Catholic could, himself, have no property in land, neither could he have bond or security on the land of another; and if he dared to accept of such security, it was at the loss of all he lent to the profit of the informer. Catholics were excluded from civil freedom, from all the professions, from many mechanical trades, and from the meanest government and municipal employments. Such laws must have been designed, not only to impoverish and degrade the outer man, but to poison kindred affection in its very source, and to extinguish self-respect in the last recesses of the soul.

Another means to the degradation of a people, or to its perpetuation, is to reduce them to ignorance, and to exclude them from knowledge. Such means were likewise continued. A Catholic had, of course, no entrance into the universities; nor, indeed, into any of the great seminaries. No Catholic schools, of whatever order, were allowed; and it was felony even to teach in a private family. That every avenue to education might be closed, that no crevice should remain for a beam of knowledge, however slender, to shine into a popish mind, a youth was not allowed to go beyond the sea for instruction, and if he dared the risk, and was discovered, the law disinherited him and punished his parent. The most atrocious methods of inquisition were devised, in order to find out the connection of the parent with the educational exile of his child. It assumed this connection upon the slightest proof, and loaded the parent with oppressive penalties for this last effort of civilisation and of nature. The scientific, the certain, the damnable effect of these diabolical enactments, the terrific suitability of them to their purpose, the satanic wisdom of them, considered in reference to their intention, cannot be denied or doubted. Poverty of itself does not degrade, as mere wealth does not of itself exalt. A man, poor in material goods, yet conscious of his deeper life, and having opportunity still left him to enrich that deeper life, has wherewithal to support him in dignity and hope; to supply him also with pleasures that enable him to bear privation of early wealth without regret, and to look on those who possess it without envy. The Iceland, externally the poorest civilised man in Europe, deprived of the benefits which a bountiful soil furnishes in some countries, and of those which arts of comfort supply in others, finds exceeding treasure in his learning and his books. For many and long months in the year, with no light but his lamp, with no heat but in his stove, with hard and scanty fare in his hut, with only cold and desolation outside of it, the peasant yet is more a sovereign than a king, by the possession of a mind studious and intelligent; and by his delight in legend and in classic lore, he has an affluence of which neither climate nor penury can deprive him. But, impoverish a man, not only in his condition, but in his soul; then you rob him, not of his accidents alone, you attack him in his life of life. It was to effect and to perpetuate such moral and mental death in the Catholic people of Ireland, that these laws against knowledge were enacted and enforced.

This was the Past, which, in its darker elements, was but just receding behind O'Connell's youth; and let us now turn to the Present, on which his working manhood entered. The legislative union between England and Ireland was carried. The heroes who had fought the battle of parliamentary independence had been beaten. Curran was broken down, and the voice of Grattan had lost its potency. It was seldom heard, and when heard its tone was despondent. The

field was open for a new champion. That champion appeared in the vigor of youth, in the strength of power, in the enthusiasm of hope, in the confidence of ultimate success. There was much to excite him. Many penalties yet lay heavily, and many humiliations pressed upon him and the brethren of his faith. The power of Ireland was closed in the fixed grasp of the Orange party. The doors of the imperial parliament were compactly shut against transubstantiation, and could only be entered by passing the Church of England communion-table—stopping to kneel sacramentally at it by the way. The rebellion of 1798 was scarcely quelled. The heavy swell was yet rocking society, and the blood-red clouds had not passed from the moral atmosphere. The desolate yet mourned in the freshness of a grief that would not be comforted. Tears were yet falling from unsleeping eyes, and the nation was bowed down in sorrow for some of her best-loved sons. The convulsion of the French revolution was still agitating Europe; and not with the less force because all its elements had converged their power within the personality of one stupendous mind. Many deemed Bonaparte a tyrant; and such, perhaps, he was—but he was also the type of a changed civilisation. Old things had passed away; a new age had commenced. Determination took the place of fear—states arose in the strength of the nationalities—speech became daring—literature threw off the livery of patronage, and burst the collar of servility—vigorous in its youthful independence, it grew up at once to be dauntless and original. It would be remarkable if none of this came upon the glowing heart of Ireland. Upon that warm heart there fell a large measure of the inspiration. It came from the Past, and it went forth in the animated songs of Moore; it pointed to the Future, and it burned in the patriotic orations of O'Connell. It was a period of great deeds. The cannon of Napoleon were booming through the sky from the Danube to the Jordan: mingled with the din of conquests were the groans of expiring dynasties, and the crash of falling thrones. And while a sublime though destroying power was thus terrible on the land, a power not less sublime or less destructive was equally terrible on the sea. Britain was sweeping the ocean with her fleets—and the indomitable Nelson was tiring fame with the rapid succession of his victories, until at last she gave him to sleep, and wrapt him in a bloody shroud. While these heroes were gaining glory amidst the gloomy majesty of death, O'Connell was also doing a grand, but a more beneficent work. He was doing the work of peace, and not of contest: he was trying to avert war, and not to promote it: he was laboring to regenerate the hopes of his own country, not to destroy those of others; and he desired only such privileges for his country as would vindicate the claims of justice, and extend the rights of mankind. A crisis had come in the history of his country, and nature had formed him to meet it. A man of reflection, yet of decision; a man of diligence, but of enthusiasm; of boldness, but of prudence; ever fertile in resources; ever master of his faculties, the hour and the difficulty found him at no time unprepared. His words were daggers, and yet not libels. His actions were daring, and yet not treasonable. While passion burned in his heart, caution kept watch upon his lips. He instructed the Irish masses to exhibit strength, without defying power; to nullify bad laws, without transgressing them, and to gain the fruits of conquest without the risks of war. Within the visibly effective period of O'Connell's career, these statements, it will not be denied, are clearly borne out by facts. O'Connell, like Carnot, organized victory. There was this difference, however, between them. O'Connell's was the organization of opinion; Carnot's was the organization of force. There was this other difference between them; the victories of Carnot destroyed life—the victories of O'Connell preserved it. In 1823, O'Connell organized the Catholic Association, which became the leading agency of a great moral war; a war which continued for years, and of which he was the power and the soul. The Catholic Association became self-dissolved in 1825. But already it had done much of its work; and the act of parliament, to which in appearance it gave way, did not kill its spirit, but only changed its form. Detail here would be only tiresome, and it is unnecessary. The steps by which O'Connell led millions from helotism to citizenship have been too often traced, to render it otherwise than unpleasant to count them minutely now. It is not needed to mark the preliminary victories gained by him through the people against power in the elections of Waterford and Clare. The Catholic emancipation act, in 1829, crowned all these exertions.

IN WHAT SENSE IS ENGLAND A CATHOLIC COUNTRY?

(From the Tablet.)

We do not remember seeing spite and malignity exhibit themselves in a more contemptible light than on the occasion of the present onslaught upon Catholics. The Bishop of London and the *Times* recommend forbearance and tolerance towards us, in much the same spirit as a demagogue might beg his followers not to put an obnoxious individual under the pump. After having resuscitated the stalut lies and calumnies, in order to lash up the Protestant mind into a furious, persecuting spirit, they beg their readers to be charitable. Whether the misrepresentations of the press proceed from stupidity or malignity, it is difficult to determine; but it would be equally difficult to find a more complete specimen of combined stupidity and malignity than the leading article of the *Times* on Wednesday. After a sentence from the Cardinal Archbishop's Pastoral, in which *Catholic* England is said to be now restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament, there follows a quotation from a most imperfect report of Dr. Newman's sermon at Birmingham (which the reporter himself owned that he could not understand, attributing the deficiency to the Very Rev. Doctor's feeble articulation, instead of his own feeble intellect), which is characterised as a mixture of absurdity and blasphemy. From these two passages, it is concluded that we hold "the false and contemptible notion that the people of England and their spiritual guides are falling away from the pure and free Church of their forefathers, to relapse into the bondage of Rome." Indeed, the Archbishop is talking of Catholic, not of Protestant England. Is it to be supposed that any man in his right mind would say that the Established