

THE ERA OF O'CONNELL.

BY REV. HENRY GILES.

(Concluded.)

Upon the whole range of this genius or on its varieties in detail, I do not venture to enlarge. It is unnecessary, at this time, to do so. O'Connell's oratory in every department, has been so often and so accurately criticised and described—upon the whole, so justly estimated, that any, except some incidental observations on it, would now, be very much out of place. One observation of this kind, I will begin with: it is, that O'Connell, as I have generally heard him, would greatly disappoint any one, who went to listen to a *set orator*. An impression forces itself on my mind, that many of the general notions of an orator are mistakes; mistakes arising out of our school boy fancies; strengthened by misapprehensions of the classics, and by the formal declamations of the stage. From books of elocution, also, and from elocutionists, we acquire the idea, that an orator is a man of modulations and attitudes, of exordium and perorations, until the conception of natural speech is lost in cut-and-dry, and stifled artificialism. We do the ancients, I fancy, injustice in our notions of them. We take them from books; but books will not give us the fullness of men as they were in actual life. They were men of like passions with us, and passions with them as with us, did not speak after the manner of books. Their speaking concerned real and serious business as well as ours, and no doubt they spoke as men of their time would speak, as men of their time would expect them to speak, on real and serious business. Their civilisation, their manners were so different in many points, from ours, that how this would be, we cannot realise from the mere reading of Demosthenes or Cicero. And, whatever their method might have been, though natural in them, it would only be in us imitative, frigid, and artificial. The idea of an orator from the lessons of an elocutionist, are likely to be still farther from the truth, if these lessons are not regarded as they ought to be, as mere subordinate discipline. To regard them otherwise, is as absurd, as to make the lessons of a dancing master the test of graceful, natural walking. It is, however, very difficult to rid the mind of the prejudices which such influences leave in it. By means of them we find it hard to conceive of an orator as a free, natural, informal speaker—a speaker that uses words in their simple order, and for their simple end. A child, that I knew, had got the idea into his head, from reading ancient stories, and from prints, that a philosopher wore a gown, and had a long beard; he was extremely chagrined at being told that a certain gentleman who drank tea with his parent, who talked as others did, and worse than all, wore pantaloons and a swallow-tail coat, and had no long beard, was an eminent philosopher. We carry many of us this childishness into our whole lives, concerning orators. I am so persuaded as to the extent of the prejudices, that in general, I take the statement which most persons make to me about speakers, in the reverse order—and when I am told of one speaker that, he was very powerful, but no orator—and of another, that he was not very strong, but very eloquent, I understand that the former was a master both of sense and words—that is—an orator—that the other was master of neither—that is—a prater. But O'Connell was not likely to meet the best formal conception of an orator. He was apparently very *inartificial*; yet, he was a speaker of most industrious, and most elaborate preparation, but his preparation was general; a preparation guided by no outward or foreign model, but of his own inward and individual personality. His knowledge mingled with his nature, and imbued the life of it—his observation, which was rapid, intense, tenacious, acute, and extensive, was incorporated with his knowledge, all that he got from reading, all that he learned from men entered into his vital being; his nationality, his prejudices, his passions, became portions of this living identity—out of this he spoke, and all that made the *man* for the time, made for the time, *the speech*. Of words he was always master, and words of purest Saxon, and the speech was, therefore, only prepared as the *man* was prepared. But, the *man* was changeable on many points, and capricious—and so O'Connell's speaking was, comparing one time with another, inconsistent. The man was also versatile, manifold in his mode, varied in the phases of his mind, as the sun and shade upon the grass and heather-clad hills of his own country, or upon the autumn-colored forests of ours—with a phraseology that reflected every changing mood and phase. It was this constitutional versatility and susceptibility of genius which made him the greatest of popular orators. He had strong sense, but it was put into apophorisms, when he spoke, and not into arguments—he had a rich and capacious fancy; but sought not to soar to the wilds of imagination—it gathered its beauties, and it scattered them, in the familiar and home-consecrated regions of human hearts. He was not the man for a task, which demanded a sustained and concatenated logic; and, therefore, at the bar, he was not considered great on cases that involved profound and complicated difficulties of title and property. But his equal was not known, in sifting a witness or in addressing a jury. More powerful speakers there were in parliament, but none came near O'Connell before a multitude; and for the reason, that I have already given. A genuine multitude is intolerant of formality, it is impatient of a stately arrangement; laughs at obtruded sentiments; and it will not endure long-winded or discursive philosophising. None of these faults, belonged to O'Connell. He made his facts speak for themselves, and speak forcibly, because he left them to themselves. He did justice to the masses—and did not treat them as children, that must be instructed with abundance of illustration,

familiar to the most ordinary capacity. He therefore put his positions into broad, brief, and homely statements; and when he had clinched them with some pertinent instances—he let them take their chance. Knowing that the mind, above all things, craves variety, and that men standing and crushed together, sweltering and uneasy in a crowd, must have it or tire of an angel, he ever and ever changed his manner, and his topic—and joke, story, insinuation, sarcasm, pathos, merriment, a lofty burst of passion, or a bold personality, indignant patriotism; or subdued and conciliating persuasion, came and went in quick transition, so that all within hearing of his rich, strong, musical voice, became unconscious of inconvenience, and wished only for the enchantment to continue. O'Connell did as much justice to popular taste, as he did to popular intellect. He was never boisterous; he was seldom even vehement; he used only moderate gestures; and though he could, and often did, rise to transcendent figurative and impassioned speech, his general manner was easy and conversational. The multitudes that O'Connell was accustomed to address, were, of course, Irish multitudes; and if this was the cause of some faults in his speaking, it was also the cause of striking and peculiar beauties. No other multitudes can be so electrified by flashes of emotion, or can be so aroused by the expression of a sentiment; they are susceptible to every allusion of tenderness; and to wit, humor, sadness, every fibre in an Irish mass trembles. They do not mock at poetry of expression; for that is their native language, and their daily phraseology. Speakers in sympathy with them in their views, fear not to speak with the utmost freedom of impulse and fancy, and all true eloquence is the child of confidence; it cannot be born, or it cannot live, if born, in the severe climate of criticism. Yet, O'Connell, though in the very spirit of his temper, and in the spirit of his words *Irish*, was not peculiarly so, in the structure of his language; not certainly, as Grattan was, or Curran, or even Shiel; and this un-Irish manner was a subject both of surprise and of remark to the critics of the provincial press, who heard him, for the first time, in England. Still it was with the Irish multitude that O'Connell was in his glory. O'Connell understood the Irish soul from its lowest note, to the top of its compass. Schooled in human nature, generally by original genius, and professional experience, the knowledge of Irish nature was not an acquirement with him—it was his breathing, it was his life. His genius was the genius of the nation, and faithfully expressed it—now soft as its harp, and now rugged as the storm in its mountains—now in sparkling jest and laughing banter—then in fierce invective and tempestuous wrath. The people felt their being in the personality of O'Connell: the sorrow of the past, and its anger—the love of their country and its afflictions—and they felt this in words plain to their intellect, and in a manner endearing to their hearts; in a poetry as rich as their own wild fancies, and in passions as ardent as their hopes.

O'Connell did not often make what is commonly called an oration. His speech had seldom that orderly regularity, which the term oration implies. His speaking would not meet the Greek standard, as we judge according to Greek books—but, then we are not certain that even Greek speaking itself would. Neither would O'Connell's speaking accord with the standard of the French, nor am I sure, that it would with the standard of this country. It accorded better with the English idea, than with any of these standards—in its generally easy, practical, and conversational directness. Yet O'Connell did often make connected and very finished speeches. Some of his pleadings at the bar were instances of consummate forensic oratory; and some of his efforts in parliament, were very artistically conceived and constructed. Even when he seemed to be desultory there was method in his apparent want of method. He never forgot his object; and in all the wildness of his negligence, there were contrivance and calculation. When he appeared to scatter prodigally, he wasted nothing—he scattered only, that he might the more profusely gather. Directly or remotely, he made everything he said, subservient to his design, and while to those, who would judge by artificial rules, he might be least the orator, he gained the sublimest triumph of oratory.

Still, I return to my original position, that in the popular assembly it was, that O'Connell held his proudest rule.—For this sphere of speech he was opulently gifted; with commanding height, he had great breadth of body, an elevated head—an open face—a full sweet voice—imperturbable cheerfulness—ready wit—a strong vernacular style, and an earnest address. Of strong thoughts as vivid as they were athletic—of glowing passions, kindly or angry, as the case might be—of varied impulses, touching feeling in every chord, and sounding it in every tone.—O'Connell swayed a popular assembly with despotic will, aroused to indignation, or melted to tears, convulsed to fury, or soothed to prayer. O'Connell was a true speaker for great masses of men. He had hearty sympathy with masses, and masses by an instinct, know the speaker who sympathises with them. Mirabeau could not establish a more intimate communion between himself and a multitude, than could O'Connell. Nor, was O'Connell's power in this way, confined to an Irish multitude. He went once through the length of Britain, denouncing abuses in the House of Lords, and proclaiming the necessity of its reform. His speech in Edinburgh, with its accessories and its effects, had surpassing grandeur. He stood on Calton hill, which overlooks the city. The sky was clear and blue, and a mellowed sun-light spread afar and along upon flood and mountain, some tens of thousands ranged themselves on the side of hill, with their sea of upturned faces on the stalwart man from Ireland. The city of palaces lay below them—the city of romance and story—the city of Mary—of Knox—of Scott—the city of resplendent

genius, and of heroic memories. The panoramic vision stretched into the infinite through glory and loveliness—and the eye gazed over frith, and lake, and brae, and highland, until it was dazzled and drunk with beauty. To this sublime scenery O'Connell pointed, and opened with an earnest eulogium upon Scotland. The palace of Holyrood was beneath. He called up the shade of Bruce, and quoted Burns. He glorified the beauty of Scottish women, and the bravery of Scottish men. He said to the women, that he would tell their sisters beyond the channel, that the daughters of Scotland could feel for the woes of Ireland. He dwelt with enthusiasm, on the independence which Scotland had always maintained—giving sovereigns, but receiving none, and allowing no foreign tyrant to keep his foot upon her heathered hills. He spoke of the covenanted women who ashes lay around them in every quiet church yard. He paid a hearty tribute to that honesty of conscience, for which those noble men had fought—for which they prayed—for which they died. He then turned in most eloquent despondency, to Ireland. He pictured the hard and desolate sway of the oppressor—the humiliation which for centuries had crushed his countrymen, who unable to be free, were unwilling to be slaves. He enlarged on the beauties of his native land, and her miseries—the waste of all her energies—the hope deferred until her very heart was sick.—With patriotic sorrow, he mourned that she had yet no true place among the nations—had yet no history. Then with strongest indignation, he denounced unequal laws—a compulsory church—an oppressive oligarchy—and he denounced them as an incubus on the people, a bane to their welfare and their liberty—alike the curse of Englishmen—of Scotchmen, and of Irishmen. After three hours, he was silent. Then the collected enthusiasm of that sublime mass arose in one loud shout; it rent the skies with its boomings, and rolled in long drawn echoes through the rocks and hills.

REFORM OF THE CHURCH SERVICE.

(From a Correspondent of the Spectator.)

London, December 10, 1850.

In the stir and strife of our lively ecclesiastical politics, I have looked with anxiety into most of our papers, waiting to know if any one who abuses Tractarianism suggests the idea of a reform in the rubric; or whether, amid the volleys of anathemas against Romanism and Puseyism, some stray shot may not be directed against those parts of our Sunday services which, in spite of our dull silence about them, I believe are felt to be very great obstacles to the heartiness of our worship. Do you think, Sir, seriously, that on any given Sunday of the year, in any English parish-church whatsoever, twelve people could be found who would not rejoice to hear that the morning service was henceforth to be made shorter? I do not think of the careless and undevout in asking this question, but of the religious part of a congregation, even those who least easily tire, and who have a real enjoyment of the Liturgy; yet these, I believe, from regard for all around them—for children, for servants, for ignorant persons, especially—would be thankful for a curtailment of the repetitions, for a selection from the Psalms, and for a careful revision of our translation of the Scriptures, or at least for the omission in our public readings of what is indecorous and in point of instruction wholly valueless. It is a painful thing to say, but it is I fear true, that in public schools, at college, and afterwards in the reading-desk, our clergymen become hardened to these things. I almost give up the hope of their pleading for the removal of what common men and women feel to be intolerable. They are scarcely, perhaps, aware of the occasion given for profane jesting at the sacred Scriptures, or at the pain and deep consciousness of this, which passes over the minds of many sensitive persons when those passages are read. The very obtuseness with which good and pure-minded men, who would not tolerate an immodest word in a heathen author, pass contentedly over these things in the Scriptures, should be a lesson to us not too uncharitably to presuppose an immoral state of mind in the Roman Catholic priest, who has perhaps only been subjected to a hardening process of a very similar kind, and scarcely views as wrong that which disgusts others.

Most unjustly, surely is the cry against Tractarianism raised by those who have always hushed up all attempts to reform the rubric: yet what so obvious as this, that if candles, if the use of the cross, if the exhibitions at St. Barnabas, be admissible according to the rubric, it is the rubric rather than St. Barnabas which is in fault. I will only advert to one other omission in our Book of Common prayer, which our beloved Queen might, one would think, be the happy means of bringing about. It must be allowed, that neither in times past or future can we always possess the blessing of "a most religious and gracious" King or Queen. It has not been always true; it cannot be true for ever in future: then why compel both priest and people to utter before the face of God, in the solemnities of worship, words like these? He who knows the secrets of all hearts can alone say *who* is "religious and gracious." Who of royal birth and race can wish in such a presence for more than to be devoutly and affectionately prayed for by the people?

A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

PROTESTANT WORSHIP AT ROME.

To the Editor of the Times.

Sir,—In Mr. Walter's speech at Reading on the 25th ult., as reported in *The Times* of the following day, are these words:—"What is the case now in Rome, the head-quarters of Romanism? Why, English Protestants are not allowed to have a chapel within the walls, and yet they say we persecute them."

In this, Sir, there is a slight unintentional error. It is solely on account of convenience that the English Protestant Church at Rome is now situated *extra muros*. The present Dean of Lincoln and myself are, I believe, the only survivors of its first establishment. The English clergymen then at Rome at the end of the year 1816 applied to Cardinal Gonsalvi (Minister of Pius VII.) for permission to have divine service on the Sundays, on account of the great number of British Protestant subjects then at Rome. The answer to the petition was that no "formal and direct permission" could be granted, but that British subjects would be allowed to assemble in any large room for divine service, provided they did so quietly and without noise or ostentation. For some years we met every Sunday in a large room in the square of Trajan's Column; afterwards for some years in a street near the Barberini Palace; and at length, on account of the increasing number of British residents at Rome, and of temporary visitors, the place of worship was voluntarily removed to a large corn granary, a little out of the Porta Flaminia, where I have seen from 800 to 1,000 British subjects assembled for the purpose of public worship, and where it has since been uniformly celebrated without the least molestation from the Papal Government.

I have the honor to remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN B. MAUDE, Senior Fellow.

Queen's College, Oxford.

A "LAPSUS LINGÆ" OF DR. McNEILLE.

On Sunday last, the 8th ult., the Rev. Dr. McNeille, Canon of Chester, and Incumbent of St. Paul's, Liverpool, preached a sermon on the difference between the "judgment of God and the judgment of man." In the progress of this discourse the Rev. gentleman referred to the "Confessional" as an organ used for "man's judgment of his fellow-man." He described in glowing and impassioned terms its whole catalogue of abominations, and then demanded, in the name of justice and religion, the punishment of all Priests who wielded so fearful an organ of spiritual tyranny. There might be many modes of punishment suggested, but the only one effectual for the purpose was death. "Many good and tender-hearted men," continued the Rev. gentleman, "felt a prejudice against capital punishment; but let them remember that banishment would only be to spread to our colonies and to other climes the pestilential influence." This sentiment caused a marked sensation, and was much canvassed after the service. It is said that one gentleman wrote a letter immediately on reaching his house to demand a recantation of the sentiment. In the evening the Rev. doctor did not preach, but after reading the Belief he left his pew, and, ascending the reading-desk, between the Curate and the Reverend Mr. Minton, he thus addressed the congregation:—"My Christian Friends—I generally address you from another place, but must make an exception on this occasion. I desire to withdraw the atrocious sentiment which I uttered in the morning. I have withdrawn it before God, and now withdraw it before you. Those who heard me in the morning will understand my meaning: those who were not here will please not to trouble themselves about it."—*Correspondent of Morning Chronicle.*

THE ALLEGED IMMORALITY OF CATHOLIC PRAYER-BOOKS.

(From the Tablet.)

An illustrious writer of the present day has truly and forcibly remarked, "it is the boast of the Catholic Church that she keeps the young heart pure." The boast is a just one. The Immaculate Spouse of Christ has an almost agonising desire to keep the young and unwary little ones committed to her charge free from the stain of impure thoughts, words, and deeds. But the devil, who is impure as he is malignant and unholy, seeks, above all things, to make the world believe that the Church is the teacher and patroness of impurity. He raises a loud shout and clamor, bellowing out what he is anxious all souls should believe, that he may the more easily make them a prey to the very ruin about which they pretend to be so frightened.

Specimens of this artifice of the impure spirit have lately been afforded by letters in the *Times*, signed "A Protestant, Thank God," and "Another Protestant, Thank God," in which the writers revived the old charge about questions occurring in Catholic books of self-examination, suggestive, as they say, of immodest ideas. Of course, the moment a thing of this kind was mentioned, there would be a rush of Protestants to buy the book, not certainly from any necessity they had to see it, but just because they wished to satisfy an impure curiosity. A correspondent of the *Coventry Herald* observes:—

"The only good that I have heard of produced by the letter of 'A Protestant, thank God,' is, that it has enabled Rockliff and Co. to dispose of a great number of 'Daily Companions,' which had long lain unheeded on a dusty bookshelf; and I doubt not Messrs. Rockliff will dispose of the remaining stock, and their sins into the bargain, to 'A Protestant, thank God,' if he has not already enough of his own, and at a very moderate price."

Well, we make no doubt that the Devil has cheated himself, and that the *Times* has only defeated its own end by the detestable letters to which it invites attention, by heading them "Roman Catholic Obscenity." The simple state of the case is this. The human heart is desperately wicked; it is liable to be continually tempted to impurity. Protestantism leaves it to the mercy of its own passions. Catholicism insists that, at whatever cost, it shall either not be overcome, or, having unhappily been overcome, it shall and must be cleansed. It will not permit the Christian soul to rot in sin; but it insists that the