

three years in existence, before it dared any act of importance. The following year (1809) it was suppressed by the Government. O'Connell saw that the time had come to act, and to act boldly. Henceforward his life was consecrated to the cause of two great reforms—Catholic Emancipation, and Repeal of the Union. But he determined to accomplish his aims by entirely different means from those employed by preceding Irish Leaders. He resolved to obtain by constitutional agitation, what other well-meaning, but imprudent patriots had failed to obtain by force of arms. Not that he was averse to violent means because he lacked the courage of a martial leader, but because he saw and realized the dreadful havoc and unhappy results of unsuccessful rebellion. And must not the rebellion of an unarmed peasantry prove ever unsuccessful against the power of the mightiest of Empires? His first act in pursuance of his policy, was to resuscitate the defunct Catholic Committee, under the name of the Catholic Board. Then going amongst the people he strove to rouse them from their stupor. He appealed to them as only O'Connell could appeal promising them liberty of conscience, liberty of legislation, if only they would do his bidding. At first they refused to listen. With the remembrance of '98 still fresh in their memories, they dared not look even to their Protestant representatives to intercede for them, and to plead their cause; yet here was an Irishman, a Catholic, an alien, like themselves, holding out to them the bright promise of freedom. Was it any wonder they turned a deaf ear to his entreaties? But gradually they allowed themselves to be persuaded, and finally, when they saw foreign lands—France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, the United States, Canada, British India, Australia—not content with honoring his name and proclaiming his praises, but contributing generously towards a fund for the furtherance of his plans, a veritable enthusiasm took possession of their hearts. They recognized what the fear at their hearts had hitherto concealed from their view—the transcendent genius of the man, who, single-handed, dared defy the might and power of England. They arose, and swore that they would be free, that they would

follow their Great Chieftain whithersoever he might lead. Then the Liberator organized his fellow-countrymen with an organization so perfect, as to elicit the admiration of the world. History presents no parallel of a nation being disciplined as he disciplined Ireland. The envy of even Napoleon the Great was provoked at the sight. "I can marshal armies," cried the great Corsican, "but this Irishman marshals a whole nation." But unfortunately the apathy of the people was not the only difficulty O'Connell had to overcome. He had to cope, also, with internal dissensions—that perpetual bane of the Irish cause. In 1813, Canning offered Emancipation under the sole condition that the people should allow the Government the right of vetoing the appointment of bishops to Irish Sees, and although the clergy, and the great mass of the population were uncompromisingly opposed to the acceptance of this condition, yet there were not wanting individuals of the wealthier classes who joined with the aristocracy in proclaiming loudly in favor of the proffered legislation. Fierce debates ensued in the meetings of the Catholic Board. Shiel was the spokesman for the vetoists. O'Connell voiced the sentiments of the anti-vetoists. Day after day, these two intellectual giants struggled for the mastery, "pressing logic, wit, rhetoric and facts" into their several arguments, with a reckless prodigality that would have left bankrupt any other minds of the Empire." The contest ended, as such a contest only could end, in the dissolution of the Catholic Board. Nor were the hereditary enemies of Ireland idle during all these years, for the Government and the Dublin authorities endeavored, by every means, fair or foul, to thwart his plans, and to cripple his power and influence over his compatriots. But O'Connell found means "to drive a coach-and-four," (to use his picturesque figure,) through the decrees of the authorities. As often as he was condemned in one form, he turned up in another, and yet (such was his intimate knowledge of the legal machinery,) his enemies, with all their malignant vigilance, could never succeed in entrapping him into the meshes of the law. As governmental persecution had only served to increase the popularity of the Liberator,