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DANIEL O'CONNELL

VOL. I.

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Daniel O'Connell

CORRESPONDENCE
OF
DANIEL O'CONNELL

THE LIBERATOR

EDITED WITH NOTICES OF HIS LIFE AND TIMES

By W. J. FITZPATRICK, F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE, TIMES, AND CORRESPONDENCE OF BISHOP DOYLE'
'LIFE AND TIMES OF LORD CLONCURRY' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I.

With Portrait

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1888

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'Once to my sight the giant thus was given,
Walled by wide air, and roofed by boundless heaven:
Beneath his feet the human ocean lay,
And wave on wave flowed into space away.
Methought no clarion could have sent its sound
E'en to the centre of the hosts around;
And, as I thought, rose the sonorous swell,
As from some church-tower swings the silvery bell;
Aloft and clear from airy tide to tide
It glided easy, as a bird may glide.
To the last verge of that vast audience sent,
It played with each wild passion as it went.'

(SIR EDWARD LYTTON BULWER'S *description of O'Connell*
as an orator.)

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PREFACE.

It has been remarked by the historian Lecky that 'whoever turns over the magazines or newspapers of the period must at once perceive how grandly O'Connell's figure dominated in politics—how completely he had dispelled the indifference that had so long prevailed on Irish questions—how clearly his agitation stands forth as the great event of the time.'

D'Aubigné says that 'the only man like Luther—in the power he wielded—was O'Connell.' But Luther was never Master of Cabinets and a great personality in the government of an Empire. The political power of Napoleon has often been compared to that of O'Connell; but 'the uncrowned monarch of Ireland,' without the effusion of a drop of blood, governed a people more absolutely than Napoleon did, was idolised while he ruled, and received a 'Tribute' envied by kings.

Mr. Fagan, M.P., a biographer of O'Connell, describes him as 'the greatest man this or any other country ever produced.' This statement may be open to question: however, the truth of Greville's words will, at least, be recognised: 'History will speak of him as one of the most remarkable men who ever existed; he will fill a great space in its pages; his position was unique; there never was before, and there never will be again, anything at all resembling it.'¹

¹ *Greville Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 386, Vic.

The secret thoughts and acts of one who played a part so important cannot be without interest to the reader, or value to the historian. My purpose has been to discover and preserve a record of those thoughts, not to write a detailed life of the Liberator, which has been already done by various hands.

The letters of O'Connell here embraced—with the exception, perhaps, of some to Dr. MacHale published by Miss Cusack—are unknown to his biographers, and show the frequent inaccuracies of their detail. Persons who are aware that various interesting letters, headed 'The O'Connell Papers,' appeared in an Irish serial,¹ may confound the two undertakings. But they are utterly different in their character. In the case of the magazine, the editor found ready to his hand a selection from such letters addressed to O'Connell by friends and strangers as the recipient happened to preserve. My labours in collecting the letters *written by* O'Connell began more than twenty years ago. A gifted daughter of his had previously attempted the task, but failed. The most important portion of the correspondence was confined to a few who guarded it as a sacred deposit; and in more than one instance death had to be waited for ere I could hope to acquire the coveted treasure.

'This is a mere collection of letters,' some readers may exclaim. It would be far easier for me to write a 'Life of O'Connell' than to amass the literary wealth here presented. No one but he who has himself tried can form an idea of the toil involved in this effort. The apathy, the prejudices, the scruples, the narrow fears and objections, the false sense of etiquette that have to be argued against and overcome, are obstacles and worries unknown to the popular author, who throws off his books *currente calamo*. The tardily given promise to search for and furnish letters

¹ *The Irish Monthly*.

is too often succeeded by procrastination; and when certain packets of papers are at last opened to me, and the best parts carefully transcribed, permission to publish has then to be obtained from other parties who claim to have a joint ownership in the letters, attended by a new and tedious correspondence full of the old difficulties; the whole suggestive almost of the labour of Sisyphus.

To explain, by copious notes, passages or allusions, often designedly obscure, necessitated an examination of the newspapers of the day, reference to the archives of contemporary statesmen and politicians, and to other out-of-the-way sources. In most collections of letters notes are few, as critics have not failed trenchantly to point out. Many of my notes have been more than once recast, and for this reason—it was not easy to read O'Connell's fevered words without catching contagion from them; and though a certain warmth would not be deemed, perhaps, much out of place or surprising in one whose mind has been long saturated with O'Connell's correspondence, I thought it well to confine my comments within strictly historic lines.

As regards O'Connell's own language, his style is so well known that probably no apology is needed for its strength. No man was more fiercely denounced by him than Lord Cloncurry, who, in a public letter to Smith O'Brien in 1847, said: 'These outbursts were a part of his nature, otherwise so kindly and so good.' Cloncurry added that, throughout the fiercest of these sallies, he always loved O'Connell. Political feeling ran high at that day; and O'Connell's words are indeed not more strong than the language employed by the highest Tory organs, notably the *Quarterly*, *Blackwood*, and the *Times*.

The late P. V. FitzPatrick possessed from 1830 the *Liberator's* confidence to a most remarkable degree. To him O'Connell would write, often twice in one day,

unbosoming his inmost thoughts, and detailing facts—interesting at the time, and of historic value now. ‘It lightens my heart to write to you,’ he says, on March 11, 1833; and in these volumes countless confidential utterances will be found. To no other man did he open his mind so freely. Without him the great Agitator’s power would have been much less; for FitzPatrick held not only ‘the sinews of war,’ but certain diplomatic agencies capable of producing wonderful effects. How necessary ‘The Tribute’ was to carry on the Agitation and to reimburse O’Connell, a glance at p. 212 *infra* will show. Partly to stimulate FitzPatrick in organising ‘The Tribute’—which rose to 16,000*l.* a year, and is stated by Dr. Madden to have sometimes reached 30,000*l.*—O’Connell paid him the compliment of all others the most prized.

O’Connell’s *prestige* stood so high that it is not easy now to realise its fulness; and the confidence he reposed in FitzPatrick was enough to intoxicate a mind less strong.

It will be seen that Richard Barrett—a Protestant and a Tory—became the staunch disciple of O’Connell, and started a newspaper which was long the organ of his policy. To fan Barrett’s fervour O’Connell conferred on him—though to a less extent—the same class of compliment that made FitzPatrick so envied. O’Connell knew the men on whom to bestow that vital connection which may be styled the very nerves and arteries of friendship. His letters to Barrett came into my hands so far back as the year 1859.

I desire to thank the Right Hon. the Earl of Bessborough, who gave me many important letters addressed to his late father, Lord Duncannon, when a member of the Grey Cabinet. Some of these and other letters are marked *confidential*: but the family of O’Connell are of opinion

that, however private such letters were at the time, they may be now, without scruple, given to the world.

In thorough contrast to his wrathful tone on public questions are the tender letters to his wife and daughter. I gratefully acknowledge the kindness of the latter in placing her father's letters in my hands; equal acknowledgment is due to Daniel O'Connell, Esq., D.L. of Darrynane, grandson of the Liberator, who made some interesting transcriptions and entrusted me with many curious papers.

The Knight of Kerry courteously threw open to me the archives of his family. The same remark applies to the late Earl of Donoughmore, the Right Hon. the O'Conor Don, and the representatives of the Right Hon. Anthony Richard Blake.

N. S. O'Gorman, Esq., placed at my disposal the letters addressed to his late father, Nicholas Purcell O'Gorman, 'Secretary to the Catholics of Ireland.' Mrs. Morgan John O'Connell furnished letters addressed to John O'Connell, of Grena, by his brother Dan; and I must also thank the representatives of Sir Thomas Wyse—James Dwyer, Q.C., M. Crean, and Major MacNamara. The letters to Staunton I got from himself.

The Right Hon. the Secretary of State had the kindness to cause search to be made in the archives of the Home Office, and, aided by the Master of the Rolls, to furnish the result. Lord Stanley of Alderley has also been very kind. From Lords Lansdowne and Normanby I was not fortunate in obtaining any reply.

O'Connell, on December 21, 1818, and again on June 15, 1819, assures O'Conor Don that he is 'the very worst letter-writer in the world.' That, in face of this fact, I should have succeeded in gathering so many letters, will be acknowledged as satisfactory. See also vol. i., p. 297, where Sir W. King complains that 10*l.* he sent O'Connell

for his defence was never acknowledged. Even the letters of great ecclesiastics were often left unnoticed. Dr. Donovan, Domestic Prelate to the Pope, is told (December 18, 1825) :—

‘ You will attribute to the proper cause—extreme hurry—my not answering letters. If I had time yours would be certainly one of the first.’ And O’Connell only writes to him then to beg that he would influence Bishop Doyle on a very delicate point.

These letters throw light not only on the personal life and thoughts of O’Connell, but on Courts and Cabinets—the intrigues of public men, and the subtleties of political organisations. Few periods of greater moment in England’s history have yet arisen. The papers referring to the youthful Princess and Queen have special interest at a time when public attention is being re-directed to the early stage of the Victorian Era ; and even ‘ Mr. Punch ’ re-issues his cartoons exhibitivive of the Young Queen, O’Connell, and Lord Melbourne. Every document not possessing some public interest, or revealing a personal *trait*, has been weeded out.

Two letters written by O’Connell’s sons are introduced as helping to complete the political history of the hour ; also a few from his chaplain, Dr. Miley, supplying, in remarkable words, facts known only to himself. Lord Duncannon’s letters come within the former category.

For the assistance I received from John Murray, Esq., junior, while these volumes were passing through the press, I desire to record my appreciation.

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Errata.

Page 483, note ¹ not forthcoming, *should be omitted.*
„ 487, line 1 of note, *for Carthusian read Cistercian.*

APPENDIX.

THE CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION.

Mr. John Smith, of London, who had rendered important services to the Irish during the season of famine, received the following letter from O'Connell in 1825 :—

Merrion Square : January 11, 1825.

Sir,—Pursuant to a vote of the Catholic Association of Ireland, I have the honour to transmit to you £20 as a donation from that body to the ' Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty.'

The amount is small, but it strikes me that it derives an importance from the principle on which it was voted. It was voted by Catholics to maintain the rights of Protestant fellow-Christians, and upon the principle that conscience ought to be free, and that neither force nor fraud should be allowed to interpose to prevent the exercise of that faith which is conscientiously and sincerely believed.

I have always felt a pleasure in the assertion of this principle, and I am, indeed, delighted at the opportunity of communicating with you upon such a principle—with you, whose name is cherished with ardent affection by the people of Ireland. That fine people want, as is admitted, food and fire, clothing and hospitable dwellings—but they do not want kindly dispositions or generous sentiments ; and so long as human hearts can throb, or the human voice utter words, so long shall your name be repeated amongst us with affection and gratitude. Allow me to say, that there is not one who participates more strongly in those feelings than he who has the honour to be, etc.,

DANIEL O'CONNELL.

To Godfrey Massy,¹ Esq., of Ballinakill, County of Limerick.

Darrynane Abbey: September 24, 1832.

My dear Sir,—I had the honour to receive your letter of the 14th instant, and I confess it gave me singular pleasure. To find that the measure of all others most necessary to the welfare of Ireland—the Repeal of the Union—had found an advocate in a gentleman of your respectability, principles and connexions² gave me heartfelt delight. I am conscientiously convinced that it is utterly impossible to restore prosperity to Ireland, or to advance her agricultural and manufacturing interests without a domestic legislature. I am equally convinced that such a legislature can give safety and security to the rich, and employment, wages, and comfort to the poor. With these impressions on my mind, and devoted, as I trust I am, to the good of Old Ireland, your letter gave me heartfelt satisfaction. I wish now, for your sake, that I possessed more influence in your county. What I have shall be cordially and cheerfully at your service. The persecution instituted against you by the Anglesey Government alone entitles you to the support of the honest part of your countrymen—especially as that persecution originated in your constitutional and strictly legal exertions for the extinction of tithes. That odious impost will not long continue to burthen our agriculture—and whilst we respect vested rights, believe me that the government attack on you will go far to assist in destroying the abusive system now pressing on the people of all classes and persuasions. The union ought not to be repealed as a triumph for one part of the Irish nation over any other part of the Irish people. It is only in the combination of men who have differed upon other points as you and I have done, that valuable and useful success can be obtained. That for which I have ever sighed—that for which good men have long prayed—was that the day should arrive when men of various religious sentiments and of different politics should find a ground of national utility, common to them all, on which they could join and combine for the liberty and prosperity of their common and beloved country. In the Repeal question we have found that ground; and it becomes the good, the honest, the virtuous, the patriotic men of all parties to reach out the hand

¹ Mr. Hugh Massy had long previously represented the county Limerick, and in 1776 was created

a Peer.

² See page 307, *ante*.

of amity one to the other, and vow eternal fidelity to Ireland and Irish interests on this political altar of national, constitutional, and truly loyal independence. I offer you my hand, and my heart is in it—in the name of Ireland and for the restoration of her self-government. Ireland is, and ought to be, our first thought—the repeal of the union our first duty. I hail with delight this combination of Irishmen which you and I and our mutual friends will, I trust, exhibit. In the oblivion of past feuds, and in the cultivation of cordial conciliation and honest and sincere co-operation, does real Irish patriotism consist. I do, therefore, honestly and sincerely embrace your cause—I do honestly and sincerely desire your success—and I am ready to contribute to that success by any and every exertion in my power.

Your very faithful friend,

DANIEL O'CONNELL.

WILLIAM COBBETT.

To Edward Dwyer.

Darrynane Abbey: 11th September, 1834.

My dear Friend,—I perceive by the papers that Mr. Cobbett is on his way to visit Ireland. I wish we were able to give him a reception worthy of his talents and public services. He is really one of the most extraordinary men that the world ever saw. When one contemplates the station in society to which he has raised himself, and then looks back to his commencement in life as a labouring boy, enlisting as a private soldier, one knows not which most to admire—the value of that strong mixture of the democratic principle in British institutions which has allowed him to make such an advance, or the extraordinary and vigorous intellect that enabled him to overcome the many difficulties which a counteracting aristocracy have thrown in his way, and to become one of the most prominent and useful men now living.

He has, it is true, changed his opinions of men and things with sometimes unaccountable rapidity and violence; yet when we look at his astonishing literary labours—when we see that he has published the very best and most practically useful books of instruction—that he has written the most pure English of any writer of the present day, and has embraced, and illustrated, more

³ See page 504, *ante*.

topics of popular and sound politics than any other living or perhaps dead author—that, even his errors and mistakes are brought forward with so much distinctness and fairness, that they also advance the cause of truth and justice, by stimulating to and requiring most attentive and considerate discussion. In short, take him for all in all, I am convinced that he is, of living men, one of the greatest benefactors of literature, liberty, and religion.

Aye, of religion—for his History of the Protestant Reformation in England has all the interest of a tale of mere invention, whilst there is not one allegation in it but what can be sustained by the most distinct evidence of contemporary and even adverse writers. . . .

I extremely regret that I cannot be in Dublin to meet him. You, my excellent friend, as Secretary to the late Catholic Association, must supply my place. You must get up a public dinner to entertain him, at which he may receive the respectful attentions of the sincere friends of civil and religious liberty in Dublin. As he goes through the country, he will, I doubt not, receive public testimonials of regard; and I hope he will go back convinced in his opinions that the people of Ireland do not deserve the cruel treatment they have received, and still continue to receive, from the British Government.

Do me the kindness to wait on him the moment of his arrival in Dublin, and hand him the letter I enclose, marked 'private.' I beg of you to enforce for me the request it contains, that he will come to visit this mountainous district.

Yours very faithfully,

DANIEL O'CONNELL.

HOW TO TRANQUILLISE IRELAND.

** To William Sharman Crawford, Esq.*

Darrynane Abbey: 27th September, 1834.

My dear Sir,— . . . You and I are perfectly agreed that tranquillity is essential to the well-being of Ireland. But tranquillity itself must be an effect flowing from other causes, before it can become in its turn an efficient cause of prosperity. There are two modes of producing tranquillity; causing, however, quite different consequences, because, whilst the tranquillity produced by the one mode is full of every cheering hope, that produced by

the other is only the consummation of mischief and misery. I deal with the latter first. The mode of producing this species of quietude is by force, by violence, by—in short—*Coercion*; for that is the favourite word of modern tyrants. The kind of tranquillity thus produced is indeed

A death-like silence, and a dread repose.

The authors of it are properly described by the British chieftain, *Ubi solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant*. This tranquillity is produced by suppressing complaints, by strengthening the oppressor's arm, by binding hand and foot the wretched victim of bad laws, and of worse ministers of these laws—by giving more power to the wrong-doer, and by overwhelming the sufferers from such wrong—by making iniquity triumphant, and leaving the objects thereof altogether defenceless. This is the tranquillity produced by Insurrection Acts, by Coercion Bills, by military license, by police slaughterings. It causes, to be sure, 'a death-like silence,' but it is only for a time. It creates a repose, but that repose is 'dread,' and awful, and above all things it is transitory. No man can rely on its continuance; no one confides in its duration. It resembles the slumberings of a volcano, tranquil for a time, only to burst forth with accumulated horrors and increased ruin. I write not of imaginary things. I do not draw upon my fancy for unreal sketchings. I tell by abstract propositions the story of Ireland. I draw no inferences. I simply write history—the history of Ireland. For seven hundred years these have been the means resorted to by our English rulers to tranquillise Ireland. These are, alas! the only means which they have to this hour, aye, ever up to this hour, employed to produce peace in this ill-fated land. They are, I do really believe, as ready to repeat the atrocious experiment as if seven hundred years of similar mis-rule had not proved that although the exhibition of discontent may be suppressed for a season, yet, that it, after a short pause, shows out again in renovated and increased rage, vigour, and wildness of revenge. Such is the first mode of producing tranquillity. Such is the only mode hitherto resorted to; and above all, observe, I pray you, such is the species of tranquillity produced by that mode.

There is another mode of rendering Ireland tranquil—a mode hitherto untried; but which assuredly ought to be tried, if it were for nothing else but for the sake of novelty. The second

and hitherto untried mode is by redressing all wrongs, by suppressing oppressions, by abolishing grievances, by correcting abuses, by discountenancing oppressors, by encouraging industry, by fostering agriculture and commerce, by having religion perfectly free. In a word, by doing justice to all the people of Ireland. This is the mode, my excellent friend, which you and I would adopt with a certainty of success. It is thus that we would produce that desirable tranquillity which, far from being the silence of hopeless slaves, would be the moral atmosphere of contented freemen. A tranquillity which would give leisure and opportunity, and furnish stimulants to the attainment of the highest degree of national and individual comfort and prosperity. Such is the tranquillity we desire, such is the amelioration of the social state which is the darling object of our honest ambition—a tranquillity which, in the deepest recesses of my conscience, I am convinced can be produced only under the tutelar care and protection of a domestic and parental legislature. But in the meantime let us give the enemies of Repeal no excuse. Let us point out to them the wrongs that require to be redressed, the grievances which require to be abolished. The most obvious and pressing of these is the Tithe System. Until the tithe system is abolished—totally abolished, not in name only, but in essence and in practical reality—Ireland cannot experience tranquillity. There is no tranquillity for Ireland until the tithe system is annihilated root and branch. There can be no compromise with it. *Delenda est Carthago*, should be our motto. The tithe system must be abolished by law, and for ever. . . .

Yours faithfully,

DANIEL O'CONNELL.

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