

inmost lives of all the millions of Erin, to mould their minds in his own thoughts, to move their hearts with his own great emotions to rouse their wills to the level of his own great purpose, and hurl their united energies in one irresistible assault against the citadel of wrong. Only a nature of marvellous depth and tenderness and sympathy and power could be a fit instrument in the hand of Providence for such a work; and it was to this that God was silently, hiddenly moulding his whole being in this first stage of his Providential preparation. Then Providence led his young mind to a higher level. One of his favourite haunts was the old ruined Abbey of Darrynane. The quaint old architecture, so different from that of the houses around, charmed his fancy and made him wonder who they were that had reared those walls and dwelt within them long ago. His father answered his eager questionings, and told him of the generations after generations of holy and learned monks who had lived there centuries before—told him of the similar generations of saints and sages who had made glorious the names of Ardferit, Aghadoc, Inni-stallen and Muckross in his own loved Kerry, besides hundreds of abbies like them all over Ireland. These hints of a better and brighter age long gone by fired the heart of young O'Connell with eagerness to know all about those vanished glories. He gathered every accessible detail from masters and from books. And then, he tells us, that Golden Age of Erin was the favourite theme of his boyish meditations. He paused not to dwell on the devastation of Danish and Norman and Saxon invasions which had quenched that wondrous radiance. He passed beyond the storm-clouds and basked in the radiance that once illumined all the land. In later years his soul was to burn with indignation against the tyrant oppressors who had quenched this matchless radiance and robbed his country of her ancient glories. But now it sufficed him to revel in the memories that were his rightful inheritance and to drink his soul full of their inspiration. It was to be the inspiration of his life, as it had been during all these centuries the inspiration of his Erin.

#### LOVE OF RELIGION AND LIBERTY.

Faith, religion, love of God and Christ and Mother Church became the mainspring of all his energies, the motive power of his whole life. Every great life must be possessed by some lofty ideal, must be lifted up and broadened and ennobled by some mighty motive, must be upheld and impelled by some transcendent purpose. All this the soul of that boy was drinking in, almost unconsciously, from his charmed musings on the Christian glories of Erin's past. And while the simple, vigorous life he lived was building up in him that stalwart physical strength that he would need for the herculean labours of his future career, he was growing at the same time into the life-purpose which was to give that career its direction and its greatness. He longed to drink deep of learning. But poor devastated Erin had no schools in which he could find it. The hand of the spoiler had swept them all away. He was too young to grasp the full meaning of the English Penal Code that ground down his country; but he had a glimpse of it when he was compelled, in order to get an education, to seek it in foreign climes. During the four years that he spent in the colleges of Liège, Louvain, St Omer, and Douay, while plodding faithfully in the ordinary curriculum, his mind and heart were ever intent on the thoughts of his early boyhood. He loved history, because it pictured to his youthful imagination the life-long struggle of humanity for right against might, for justice against wrong, for liberty to live, as God meant that mankind should live, in peace and welfare; for liberty to grow, as God meant that mankind should grow, unto the full stature of manly self-control and responsibility. Thus side by side with his early love of religion there grew up in his soul a mighty love of justice, of liberty, and a great wrath against tyranny in any shape or in any part of the world, that would rob men of their rights, that would force on them the rule of wrong, that would shackle or restrain them from legitimate enjoyment of justice and liberty.

#### HORROR OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

While he was working all this out for himself in the quiet seclusion of his classes, infuriated multitudes were working it out in bloody shape at the barricades of Paris and on the battle-fields of France. At first his soul sympathised with them because they battled against manifest wrong, because they marched under the banners of justice and liberty. But ere long he saw that they had lost the great ideas which constitute justice and liberty, that Voltairian sophistry had robbed them of the principles which underlie all human welfare; that in their mad rush for liberty they were desecrating all the sanctuaries of liberty and breaking down all its safeguards; that thus they were driving on to wild extremes, and extremes must meet; that Mirabeau was preparing the way for Danton, Robespierre and Marat, as these would logically lead on to the iron despotism of Napoleon. When he left Douay for his home, in 1793, at the age of eighteen, those convictions were already clear and strong in his mind. He felt sure his life would be spent in a struggle for his country's rights, in the mighty endeavour to wrest from English tyranny justice and liberty for Ireland. God was already whispering in his ear: "Come, and I will send thee that thou mayest deliver My people, and I will be with thee." But he saw clearly that the strife in which he was to be a leader must be totally different from the awful and bloody and godless struggle of the French Revolution. From that conviction and that resolution he never swerved for an instant.

#### MORAL POWER HIS CHOSEN WEAPON.

His conclusion was drawn, positively and irrevocably, not by physical force was the victory to be gained, but by moral power. His plan was formed, definitely and unchangeably; he would unite into one vast army every man and woman in Ireland; he would arm them with weapons against which guns and bayonets would be powerless; he would fill them with clear-sighted conviction of their rights and with unflinching determination that those rights must be granted; he would teach them to declare their grievances, to protest and petition and agitate for justice, till the whole

world would ring with their complaint and all mankind agree that their complaint was just; he would fling the indignant public opinion of his whole country and of the whole world like an irresistible phalanx against the British Parliament and force it to surrender, force it to do justice, force it to emancipate enslaved Erin. To prepare himself for that task was now the one study of his life. Partial relaxation of the Penal Laws now made it possible for him to study law and be admitted to the Bar. He unhesitatingly chose this career because it would give him standing and influence; because it would make him a master in all legal procedure; because it would give him opportunities to right injustice; because it would train him in perfect power of speech, the magic power by which he was to win and direct the energies of all his people and to battle down the opposition of all their foes. Ere long the stalwart, handsome, eloquent, hard-working young lawyer attracted general attention, and won general esteem in the courts. Wider and wider spread his fame, and when, on the eve of the abolition of the Irish Parliament, this young barrister of twenty-five arose in mass meeting and thundered against the proposed iniquity, against this outrageous injustice to Ireland, the whole people felt that a great power had risen among them, a man in whose heart there was an echo to all the patriotism that had ever armed her sons for her defence, a man of wisdom and power and nobleness of soul whom they could trust, whom they could follow and obey in the mighty struggle to which his finger was already pointing them.

#### THE DIFFICULTY OF WINNING CONFIDENCE.

On and on he pushed in his splendid career, winning fame and fortune for himself, but winning also what he prized far more—the confidence of the Irish people. It was no easy task. They had grown so used not only to tyranny but to betrayal, that it was no wonder that they had grown diffident, suspicious of every would-be leader. Especially was this true of the clergy and the bishops. They had so often seen their poor flocks roused to frenzy and led out to certain slaughter by well-meaning but imprudent demagogues, that they were not to be blamed for long mistrusting this new arch-agitator, who spoke in such thunder-tones against long-rooted injustice, and was beginning to stir so profoundly the hearts of the entire nation by his demand of justice for Ireland.

No wonder that nearly all who were engaged in trade or who possessed vested interests feared that this agitation would disturb economic adjustments and entail pecuniary loss on themselves, and that, therefore, they should deprecate it with all their might. And no wonder, too, that many a hot-headed, enthusiastic patriot, whose blood was boiling with anger against British tyranny, who had lost all hope, if he ever had any, in British justice, who was full of the spirit which in '98 had risen half-armed and rushed to death for Ireland, should now scoff at this lawyer patriot, scoff at his denunciation of physical force, scoff at his peaceful agitation, at his law and order campaign, scoff at his hope and his promise that through mere moral power the Irish people would wring from England what they had failed to win with guns and pikes. All this O'Connell had to overcome ere his people could be one with him; and he overcame it all. It took him ten years and more to conquer all mistrust, to answer all objections, to remove honest prejudices, to expose and defeat self-interested opposition, to pour his own strong convictions and his own lofty purpose into every Irish heart. At last every mind in Ireland saw the truth and every heart was with him, and from end to end of the land he was acclaimed the Man of the People. Then began the long campaign of assault upon the foe.

#### RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL LIBERTY HIS OBJECT.

Two great rights O'Connell was determined to wrest from British tyranny: religious liberty and civil liberty. He put religious liberty first, because it is the more sacred of the two, because the man who has not liberty of conscience has no rights that are worth having. And so throughout the land the cry went up for Catholic Emancipation. Meetings were held in every town and on every hill-side, to hear O'Connell tell them of their country's rights and their country's wrongs. Thousands and tens of thousands hung upon his words, exulting and weeping by turns, as he pictured to them Erin's Catholic glories in the blessed days of yore and Erin's piteous desolation now, as she sat wan and wasted in her ruined home, wailing over the myriads of her sons that had been slain for loving her, weeping over the down-trodden multitudes of her children that were treated as Helots in their own land, despised by the Sassenach because, like their mother, they loved the religion of Jesus crucified, and found their consolation with Mary and John at the foot of the Cross. Their blood boiled as he dwelt upon the crying injustice of refusing civil rights to Catholics, as such, in a land where, in spite of centuries of persecution, nine-tenths of the people were Catholics. Outbursts of honest indignation arose as, in strains of withering invective, he repelled the lying assertion that Catholics, as such, were less fit to be loyal citizens of the empire than their Protestant neighbours. And when, in tones of matchless eloquence, he thundered forth the demand for Catholic Emancipation, those tens of thousands sent forth a shout whose echoes came with startling force to the ears of King and Parliament. On went the agitation, till every man and woman in Ireland was in it. On it went, till it became manifest to all observers that this was not a passing outburst of enthusiasm, but the calm, strong utterance of a conviction and a purpose that had "come to stay" and that must prove irresistible.

#### THE CONDITION OF IRELAND.

He had left Ireland a mere boy, full of the sweet imaginings of childhood, living in fancy with his heroes in the bright glories of the past. He returned verging into manhood, his intellect developed and trained, able to look facts in the face, to estimate them rightly, and to draw practical inferences. He had read of the condition of his country, writhing under the heel of oppression; but now he saw with his own eyes what Ireland was, and the spectacle wrung his heart, nay, almost broke it. Everywhere he beheld the dire results of seven centuries of tyrannical oppression and three