## LIFE AND TIMES OF DANIEL O'CONNELL.

### A LECTURE RECENTLY DELIVERED AT AUCKLAND UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE CATHOLIC LITERARY SOCIETY BY THE HON J. A. TOLE.

THERE is not one of us who has not imposed on him or her some duty in relation to each other, whether in the domestic, political, or social relations of life. So I, as one of the patrons of this Society, have cast upon me some duty. What the duties of a patron may be are not very specially defined. Usually the chief obligations attaching to the position are to pay an annual subscription, fixed, I believe, on a scale commensurate with the dignity of the office, and distinguishing it from ordinary membership; to countenance the Society, and thus proclaim its usefulness and value to the whole community; to encourage others to avail themselves of its advantages—in other words, to be its showman—and also occasionally to address the Society upon some appropriate topic of interest. It is in the modest exercise of this last function that, in a good-natured, but probably unguarded moment, lured from my ordinary avocations and retiring disposition to come forward, at the instance of my esteemed reverend friend, the spiritual director of the Society (Father Hackett), I address you to-night. The subject of my remarks, also, has been chosen for me; but I don't find any fault with that, because, from professional and political points of view, it ought to be most congenial to myself; and, moreover, in regard to the young men of this Society, if they, part as they are of another generation, desire to imitate a noble life, to feel the true instincts of gratitude for the acts of a great man who devoted a life-long service and his herculean talents and labours for religion and country, and to emulate the oratory of the platform, the forensic skill of the advocate, and true character as a man, the life and times of O'Connell will stimulate their patriotism—should inspire them to heroic deeds for their own country, and fill them with that true national sentiment and advocacy of the claims for the liberty of the birth-land of their fathers, which Ireland is entitled to claim as a right from every descendant with a drop of Irish blood in his veins. A great deal could be said upon this topic of national sentiment, in relation particularly to the apparent apathy of not only the young descendants of Irishmen, but of Irishmen themselves, concerning the claims of Ireland; but this may more fittingly be reserved for some future occasion. One cannot enter on this subject of the life and times of O'Connell without an apologetic word. It is this—that the life of a great man, whose name has been, and always will be, a household word, is more or less so familiar to most of us, that the difficulties of successful treatment with freshness is almost an impossibility. But the memory of all that is good and noble, or even sorrowful, in the past is, in its respective relations to human life, one of the most useful, interesting, and pleasurable elements in our being; so that life is not monotonous, though it is simply the repetition of thoughts, words, and deeds. Many things that are said of one great man may be said appropriately of another by changing the name, with here and there some other slight difference. We annually recount the glorious works of St Patrick in faith and fatherland; periodically, indeed, also of O'Connell, we celebrate the achievements of his heart, mind, and vigorous tongue; and, passing over a long interval to the present day, does not the British nation everywhere annually review the events in the great life of Gladstone, mingling at the same time in our congratulations of returning years, the fervent prayer that God may spare him to successfully pursue, under huge difficulties, his noble work of religious and political freedom? So that I feel, after all, no apology is needed for presenting to you, even without freshness, a brief review of O'Connell, with his oft-repeated characteristics. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I need hardly tell you it is impossible, within the limits of an hour's talk, to present to you all the acts and triumphs of a life of 72 years—50 eventful years of which were affectionately entwined with the sufferings and life of the Irish nation, of which O'Connell was the idol. The events and incidents of his life, the reference to patriots who were his contemporaries, his political victories and achievements, his eminent contemporaries at the Irish Bar, his trials—legal and and personal, his social characteristics, his political status, his own great eminence as an advocate, his eloquence, his power as a platform and popular orator, his wit and humour—all would easily form themes sufficient to engage our attention and interest for twenty evenings. My task being a stupendous one of compression, my treatment of the subject, compared to its vastness, must necessarily be in the nature of a biogram in a nutshell. Daniel O'Connell, the great apostle of freedom, and especially Irish freedom, was born in Cahir House, the residence of his father, Morgan O'Connell, near the town of Cahirciveen, in the County Kerry, on the 6th of August, 1775. Cahirciveen was a small town, and when many years after a *Times* Commissioner derisively described it as not possessing a pane of glass, O'Connell replied humorously: "If the Commissioner had as many *pains* in his stomach, his tongue would be more veracious, and his wanderings less erratic" O'Connell was of pure Celtic blood; his mother was an O'Mullane of an old Catholic family near Cork, and possessed of fair estates. For her he had all that unbounded love that is characteristic of the Irish race, and used to delight in giving expression to his love and veneration for her. He proudly and fondly said: "I am the son of a sainted mother, who watched over my childhood with the most faithful care. She was of a high order of intellect, and what little I possess has been bequeathed by her to me. In the perils of life, and the dangers to which I have been exposed through life I have regarded her blessings as an angel's shield over me, and as it has been my protection in this life. I look forward to it also as one of the means of obtaining hereafter a happiness greater than any this world can give." He spent a year at Father Harrington's school, near the Cove of Cork (or now, Queenstown), and the boy's application and apparent ability struck the observation of his uncle—General Count O'Connell, who determined his nephew should have—what the cruel laws would not permit him to get in his native land—a Catholic education. The land of his birth, which centuries before had been the home of religion and wisdom—where the arts and sciences of the time and the languages of Greece and Rome were studied with passionate zeal—the nation where the Anglo-Saxon race derived so much benefit from the teaching of the Irish schools—the land where, in an Irish University, Alfred the Great of England received his education—here Ireland's bright, patriotic son would hardly be allowed to receive rudimentary instruction, certainly not an education. Hence he was sent to France—to Louvain, and afterwards to St Omer's—where he showed extreme cleverness, and burned with boyish ambition to be as distinguished as his uncle, Maurice, called "Hunting Cap." But O'Connell was destined for greater things—for national achievements. He was born at a stirring period, when a few infant communities or States, remote, unaided, and as i were unknown, had encountered and triumphed over the power of England. He was a month old when the American people had declared their Independence, and invoked the blessings of God on themselves and others forever. In his home he had heard the sad story of his country. He heard her varied history—the exasperating rule of centuries—the desolation of the land, and the butchery, or exile of the people, and their melancholy longing to strike a blow; then fortune smiling on arms, victory following victory, only to culminate in crushing defeat. He had heard the names of Ireland's brave sons down the long and gloomy path of her history; he had heard of their great sacrifices and deeds in the struggle for liberty. The Penal Code was in full force and in the plentitude of its wickedness. Catholic peers or commoners could not sit in parliament; Catholics could not vote, nor could they hold any office of trust; they were liable to a fine of £60 for absence from Protestant worship; and four J.P.'s could banish a Catholic or give his property to his next of kin; no Catholic teacher could teach a Catholic child; a Catholic priest coming to the country could be hanged; a Protestant suspected of holding property for a Catholic could have his estates taken from him; and so on. This bill of fare, though not a dainty or palatable dish, was food enough for the youthful and absorbent mind of O'Connell. Moreover, living in his childhood and youth were great orators and patriots; the intrepid patriot advocate Curran; Sheridan—

> The pride of the palace, the bower, and the hall,
> The orator, dramatist, minstrel, who ran
> Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all;

Flood, one of Ireland's greatest orators; Wolfe Tone, who, whilst a man of the highest talent and integrity, yet was the true father of Revolutionary Irish Nationalism; and the "noblest Roman of them all," Henry Grattan, the great champion of Irish Independence

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