

Life and Speeches of Daniel O'connell, M. P: Including Many Speeches Not in Other Collections (Classic Reprint)

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Excerpt from Life and Speeches of Daniel O'connell, M. P: Including Many Speeches Not in Other Collections

Daniel O'Connell, acknowledged leader of the Irish nation for the most important period of the nineteenth century, was born at a place called Carhan, beside the small post-town of Cahirciveen, near the harbor of Valentia, on the coast of Kerry, in 1775.

After a preliminary course at a school near Cove, he was sent to the Continent, and was successively at Louvain, St. Omer and Douai, till the French Revolution compelled his return. One of the effects of the European convulsion was a relaxation of bigotry in 1792, so as to permit Catholics to become barristers. Seizing the opportunity, O'Connell, in 1794, entered himself at the Middle Temple, and was called to the bar in the memorable year when his country made her last fearful effort to free herself from the galling yoke of centuries.

It was not the moment for a young untried lawyer to enter the field of public affairs; but when, in 1800, the so-called Union, but real provincialization of Ireland was proposed, O'Connell made his first appearance as a public speaker, and organized a meeting of Catholics, which, with the brutal Major Sirr and his blood-stained soldiery in arms around them, passed bold and intrepid resolutions, denouncing that iniquity, which it became henceforward his purpose through life to attempt to undo. That he failed to induce English statesmen and the English parliament to forego the advantage gained by a system of terror, fraud, and bribery, is a matter of history. Believing England honest, and ready to do what honesty required, he devoted his life to agitation for the Repeal of the Union. One great point he gained - Catholic Emancipation, - and much that England has since yielded is a result of his labors.

O'Connell as a barrister, was from the outset remarkably successful, and rose to a practice of the utmost extent.

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