

DANIEL O'CONNELL KING OF IRELAND

A Play by Mike O'Donnell
March 2013

Note to Director: *This may be produced as a one-man play or otherwise. In the case of a one-man performance, Daniel O'Connell is in a drawing room.*

Cast:

Daniel O'Connell (DOC)

Local Man

Stranger (Juror)

Court Registrar

Two Hourigan brothers

Chief Witness

Colleague of O'Connell

Bartender

Mr. Scriven (Barrister)

Commentator/Journalist

Periwinkle seller (Boy)

Hunting Cap (Uncle of O'Connell)

Young man seeking O'Connell's assistance

Robert Emmet

John Narcott D'Esterre

Local Woman

Frederick Douglass

John Burke

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ACT 1 Scene 1: Early Life

1. **DOC:** I remember the very day as vividly as I see this hand before me
2. When my mother released me from her womb into a beautiful Kerry;
3. A land hugged and washed along its edges by endless, curing seas;
4. Loved and caressed by the breath of its eternal, soothing breeze.
5. I was that cherished gift so promised to my parents;
6. A child who, by divine intervention, appeared on this earth
7. On the 6th day of August 1775,
8. Ending the solemnity of loneliness in my parents' eyes;
9. An appearance which, by any fool's calculation,
10. Not only mitigated that showery day's watery purification
11. Through the mild winds emanating from my lungs' exclamations,
12. But also through my prompt - and personal - congratulations
13. To mother for having borne me as the first son of her husband Morgan;
14. An event, I should add, coincidental with the beginning of the American War of Independence.
15. While history would change its course through bloodshed there
16. And England be chastened by America's superior military flair,
17. Neither the breaking of bones nor the shedding of blood
18. Would be the method by which I would make Ireland good;
19. For mine, as revolutionary of itself as the best invention,
20. Would bring England to book by the bones of language and the blood of reason.
21. But first, in preparation for what became this life-long's occupation,
22. For four years in the mountains - amongst bird and beast - I took up accommodation
23. In the tender, fostering hands of the wife of my father's herdsman;
24. No better place could one have hoped to be tempered in the art of reason.
25. It was there, in that theatre of divine natural beauty,
26. That I first cultivated my powers of oratory.
27. A mere pronouncement - even being given birth
28. In the antecedent breath before the syllable of a first word was uttered -
29. Convinced man and beast that what I had to say was worth hearing;
30. Both stopped in their tracks, transfixed, compelled to action - especially when I would announce 'I'm teething!'
31. Fowl and animal would line up like a company of fighting men
32. And upon my words do what they do best - through simple, clear, persuasion.
33. No need for angry cries, nor the flogging of willing horses
34. As the army of beasts yielded to my pastoral instructions.
35. No disappointment can embitter nor wearying years diminish;
36. No distraction can dissuade me nor cause my heart not to cherish
37. This land of kings from whence I was sprung
38. Above all other places or desires near or far-flung.
39. I knew I had been born into an unmistakable heaven
40. To which all other places were lesser
41. And, as soon as I took my very first breath,
42. I knew it was my duty until my death
43. To leave this land even better as I had found it
44. From the date of my birth to the date of my departure;

45. My first feat being perhaps an interminable one after I returned home:
46. Mastering the alphabet from scratch in one whole, long, single hour
47. And knowing in my heart that anyone who excelled at any venture
48. From hopscotch to algebra would, in meeting me, yield to his superior.
49. I swore at an early age I'd never let my uncle Maurice 'Hunting Cap' down;
50. He was my sponsor, without whom I could never achieve renown.
51. No determination of mine would degrade to fanciful imagination;
52. No ambition would succumb to useless perspiration.
53. I would know nothing but success, superlative supremacy
54. In any matter of human endeavour requiring outstanding intellectual agility.

ACT 1 Scene 2: Education in France

55. From the tutelage of Master O'Mahony, along with my brother Maurice,
56. I graduated to an assemblage of colleges this side of Paris
57. Culminating in our placing in St. Omer's no less,
58. Where our uncle assiduously followed our progress.
59. Here I excelled, above and beyond expectation
60. So much so that we were both moved by my uncle to Douai.
61. It was here that I, at first hand, saw the meaningless of bloodshed
62. As the sparks of the Revolution began to become manifest.
63. We heard the King of France himself was dead;
64. And before this land spiralled into anarchy, to London we had fled.
65. I often enquired of my brother for fun
66. If it was truly he who had sparked the French Revolution.
67. After what I had witnessed of this terror and oppression,
68. It fixed in my mind, as an immutable impression:
69. Blood and liberty, as loathsome as hate is to love
70. Never the two should be hand in glove.

ACT 1 Scene 3: Studying for the Bar in London

71. Despite my best attempts to study for the Bar in Dublin,
72. My uncle, who controlled much of my destiny with his purse-strings,
73. Ensured that it would be in London I would remain,
74. Committed to the course in Lincoln's Inn where as a barrister I would train.
75. I read Voltaire, Rousseau, Goodwin and Bentham
76. Ensuring I would always be a democrat and radical.
77. There was no more zealous a student of the power of the word;
78. I read and studied, listened and observed
79. Immersed myself in books, theatre, oratory, politics and of course, court.
80. I explored, gauged and tempered, conferred
81. About how to appoint and deliver the most appropriate word.
82. For I knew that a well chosen word - effectively delivered -
83. Could slice an army of flashing sabres in half, destroy a naval fleet unsheltered,
84. Scatter a cavalry with the power of a tempest
85. And bring madness to its knees through the plain articulation
86. Of clear argument and sound reason.
87. Using the power of the word and the application of wit

88. There was no greater exponent than the Prime Minister William Pitt.
89. I saw him in the House of Commons
90. Enunciating his points with artistry and measured passion.
91. I would later employ these observations in my native land
92. Where I would address throngs of my own people – man to man
93. And look into the very eyes of each of the hundred thousand
94. Who stood there attentive to my every pronouncement.
95. Each would stand as if I alone were present as his kinsman
96. Acclaiming his power, asserting his own and rightful dominion.
97. But that time would have to stay in abeyance
98. While I made necessary training and preparation.
99. I learned of the affairs of men
100. And plucked the strings of the hearts of women.
101. I got into a few scrapes – who wouldn't?
102. Who from Kerry couldn't?
103. I studied the complexities of living;
104. Scarcely on the follies of entertainment, spending even a penny.
105. Not a single penny of my uncle's would I improperly disburse;
106. For every penny I would account for as a woman for what is in her purse.
107. Every penny, shilling, pound and guinea I held in trust;
108. No waste, no want – I accounted for each like its watchful nurse.
109. When I finally reached Dublin I worked to complete my studies at the Bar
110. Enjoying reading and debating and the frequent intellectual spar.
111. Lord Edward Fitzgerald made an impression on my mind:
112. The United Irishman, dapper, dazzling to the eye.

ACT 2 Scene 1: Attempts at Revolution in Ireland

113. But what stirred me most was when the flames of revolution
114. Calling for liberty through the invocation of violence
115. Reached these shores in 1796 through Theobald Wolftone
116. With a French fleet off the coast of Bantry in tow.
117. The desire for liberty was laudable, noble as a cause
118. But through rebellion, the cause of liberty would fall.
119. These were well-intentioned, pure, admirable rebels, it must be said.
120. But why resort to a doomed scheme when all that is assured is death?
121. I would have to join the yeomanry corps in service of the state
122. Despite the protestations of my uncle whose protests finally did abate.
123. And in my uniform, a hero I looked, to darling Eliza I must have been the
bee's knees
124. I was a considerable shot, using a canon, but could never earn a romantic
squeeze.
125. What a terrible place Dublin had just become!
126. A regime of repression caste down upon the palpable ferment for revolution:
127. I saw with my own eyes men, women and children being driven from their
houses
128. In the dead of night, all because of a word from the odious informer's mouth.
129. I witnessed a young man strung up, eyes gouged out, blood dripping through
broken teeth
130. 'We'll teach ye rebels a lesson!' spat his torturer - an able administrator of
atrocities.
131. I was called to the Bar in the fateful year of '98
132. And earned my first guinea, a hot guinea which I promptly went and spent.
133. But had my heart been cast in lead, my blood as cold as the deepest blue
134. I would still have known that I would have to use all my pluck to end
oppression soon
135. While the men of Wexford, with pikes aloft, were driven to insurrection
136. By the insane cruelty visited upon them by Lord Kingston.
137. But when maddened mobs victory do gain,
138. Oh Liberty, what horrors are perpetuated in thy name!

ACT 2 Scene 2: O'Connell's First Political Speech

139. At the Royal Exchange, under the shadow of Dublin Castle
140. My first political speech was nearly interrupted
141. By the oppressive sounds of horseshoes
142. And the falling of muskets at their hoofs.
143. It was here I pronounced my stand against the Act of Union
144. That it should be repealed, and Ireland herself, by herself rule.
145. And what a monstrosity it was that our people's rightful self-government
146. Should now be usurped by London's House of Commons.
147. It was such a serious measure, that no Irishman
148. Could not, on this issue, take a stand.
149. **Commentator:** What a wonderfully eloquent speaker this man;
150. How well he articulates and presents his vision.

151. Effortlessly, voice pitched to the perfect key
 152. He holds his audience so magically;
 153. Moved they are but still at ease
 154. As the wand of O'Connell their attention does cease;
 155. No shouts, no bellows, just clear projection;
 156. No strain, no coarseness, no bawling evocation.
 157. He can sweep from moments of the most hilarious wit
 158. To the deep pathos of silence reserved for death.
 159. He can generate laughter with a turn of phrase
 160. And in an instant caste all in a daze.
 161. He can well a throng's eyes full of tears
 162. And break the tension inducing a cascade of cheers.
 163. You feel you know him, he makes you feel bigger than you know
 164. You see what was in him is somehow your own.
 165. When you realise he is better, finer, more brilliant than you have ever seen
 166. These qualities, for those precious moments, inhabit your being.
 167. Each present feels he only addressed him
 168. His eyes grip one's undivided attention.
 169. More and more, you can hear your mind calling
 170. God give us this man, is it for him we have waited
 171. Through struggle, confusion, with hope so faded?;
 172. I want more of this man – for him I am yearning.
 173. What a man of rare wisdom and true learning!
 174. Thus he had his audience silenced, captivated, ensnared,
 175. As he spoke so magically on Merrion Square.
 176. With a whisper the multitude he could sway
 177. Intoxicate their attention so utterly.
 178. To say Catholics would sell their country, he declared
 179. Was naked calumny they must repudiate!
 180. The audience was swept off its feet
 181. Newspapers carried his full speech.
 182. When O'Connell had finished, there was a pervasive silence
 183. Opportunistically broken by a little boy's voice
 184. 'Periwinkles fresh from the Kerry coast itself
 185. Approved by the great Counsellor himself!
 186. Never did a cart of periwinkles of uncertain provenance
 187. Sate such a fashionable Dublin audience.
 188. The boy being possessed of a shrewd street wisdom
 189. Was often seen selling wherever O'Connell spoke again.

ACT 2 Scene 3: The Act of Union is Passed

190. **DOC** I heard the bells ring out over Dublin as the Act of Union was finally
 determined
 191. Heralding the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
 192. I retreated homeward during this sad hour of despair
 193. For it was always there I found solace and repair.
 194. I knew my speech would be read with horror and indignation

195. By my uncle who would never forgive me the stating of my conviction.
196. Ireland had sold its rights to self-government;
197. Its rights to its sovereignty
198. On the foot of blatant corruption;
199. My blood was boiled, mad from this disruption.
200. This false union must be reversed;
201. It is unbecoming of Ireland, unnatural and perverse.

ACT 2 Scene 4: Pressure to Marry from O'Connell's Uncle, Hunting Cap

202. Hunting Cap in his wisdom decided that I should wed
203. A Miss Healy from Cork – a considerable heiress
204. Whose plainness was perfectly complimented
205. By a nose of some distinction
206. So long that even a blind man would have seen it as a useful stick;
207. With this alone, I would have been demented.
208. The temptation I resisted
209. Even though my uncle persisted.
210. But love does have a habit of sweeping the heart of the vulnerable
211. And so it was at that time I met the beautiful Mary O'Connell.
212. She was a cousin from Tralee whom I married in secret
213. In Irishtown well away from the prying eyes of the indiscrete.
214. To Mary I promised by undying love
215. My eternal devotion and unremitting affection.
216. She had the sweetest, most heavenly temper
217. A most beautiful and angelic creature.
218. I married her for love not for money
219. And in this course threaded precariously
220. And in time she gave birth to my son
221. By calling him Maurice,
222. My very first offspring
223. I was sure to have won
224. My uncle's affection.
225. **Hunting Cap:** How outrageously sinful!
226. From me he'll get an earful:
227. I'll change my will!
228. No part of my estate shall he win
229. What does he think I am
230. A doting avuncular ignoramus?
231. My wishes he has resisted
232. He shall receive no further assistance
233. He is a nephew of no merit
234. Him I shall disinherit!
235. **DOC:** With this repudiation
236. I made further my determination
237. To make a success at the bar
238. As I was now both a husband and father.
239. I descended upon Dublin from the wilds of Kerry

240. 'Isn't that place remote?' would be people's enquiry.
241. 'Remote from what?' I would reply,
242. 'From vagabonds, upstarts and chimneys to the sky?'

ACT 3 Scene 1: Towards Emancipation

243. **DOC** The Catholic aristocracy had made a major miscalculation
244. That their support for the Union would provide Catholic Emancipation.
245. Not even Pitt who had earlier groomed their favour
246. Would be moved to consider it for putting on the table.
247. To achieve this I set about one resolution:
248. To repeal the Act of Union.
249. My professional success progressed beyond my wildest dreams:
250. Guinea after guinea ensured my ascendancy amongst my peers.
251. But being a Catholic I was denied the most lucrative briefs
252. Given to others – inferiors - with a Protestant belief.
253. So even though I could command fees unheard of for a junior,
254. From the greatest briefs I knew I'd forever be precluded.
255. Thus from the Inner Bar I was excluded
256. And on the Bench I would have been an intruder.
257. From every aspect of government
258. In a country steeped in a Catholic tradition
259. I would be like an outlaw – forbidden.
260. The widespread systematic, perpetual Catholic humiliation
261. The dwindling of Dublin's trade and finances
262. The sowing of animosities
263. To perpetuate destructive ferocities
264. Would require not supplication
265. Not prayers, nor toleration
266. But agitation.
267. Religious discord played into the hands of the enemy
268. Roman Catholic, Protestant and Presbyterian
269. Should their differences abandon
270. And should unite as the Irishman!
271. We Catholics often petitioned the our sovereign the King
272. About matters pertaining to our rightful emancipation
273. What liberty was there if we had no vote, let alone a Parliament
274. Which had voted itself into solemn non-existence!
275. All men are entitled as of right they may
276. To religious and civil liberty;
277. This would emancipate Catholics in Ireland
278. Protect Protestants in Italy and France
279. And destroy the Inquisition in Spain.
280. The entanglement of the Church and State is profane!

ACT 3 Scene 2: Rebellion of Robert Emmet

281. **Robert Emmet:** My lords, my ministry is now ended
282. My lamp of life is nearly extinguished
283. It is 1803 and my race is run;
284. The grave opens and I sink into its bosom
285. When my country takes her place amongst the nations of the earth
286. Then, not until then, let my epitaph be written.
287. **DOC:** And so the sentence of death was passed
288. And on Thomas Street Emmet from this life did depart.
289. Was a madder scheme ever devised?
290. To wage war on the government with pikes?

ACT 3 Scene 3: The Case of the Dublin Evening Post 1813

291. The case of the Dublin Evening Post exercised me
292. Where, along with my best attempts to defend John Magee
293. For alleged libel on the Duke of Richmond,
294. I took the chance to put on trial the government.
295. My prosecution was composed of all who held Ireland in slavery:
296. Saurin, the Attorney General and Peel – then the Chief Secretary.
297. Of course Magee was found guilty as sin
298. For attacking the repressive, anti-Catholic administration;
299. But I took the opportunity with my every word
300. To put the government's position to the sword:
301. 'I ask, what is it we seek?
302. Week, after week, after week.
303. Why, to be allowed participate in the constitution!
304. Why would we do so if we sought its destruction?
305. Our cause is a majestic march;
306. Its progress rapid and obvious
307. Its success is as assured and as certain
308. As tomorrow's rising sun!
309. This single intervention
310. Produced a gale of sensation
311. With gusts of anticipation
312. Throughout the Irish nation
313. That the aristocratic pretension
314. Would finally give way to democratic insurrection.
315. Meetings were held all over the land
316. In Louth, Kilkenny, Kerry, Wexford,
317. Galway, Limerick, Waterford
318. With Cork being another stronghold.
319. What was needed for this nation
320. Was nothing short of unqualified, unconditional emancipation!

ACT 3 Scene 4: The Strange Petition of the Dublin Lord Mayor

321. And by way of uncommon treachery our Protestant Lord Mayor
322. Composed his own petition demanding 'no popery'
323. He had it signed by an usual smattering of fellows
324. A strange set indeed as their names I examined:
325. There were Hidgens and Fidgens, Huzies and Hozies
326. Their cousins the Posies and the gallant Rosies
327. Fitzgibs no doubt were relations of the Fitzgobs
328. The Mogratts, the Yoebatts and not forgetting the Nobbs.
329. There were Sporlings and Sparlings, Hurlings and Harlings,
330. Paddams and Pittams, Feetlings and Yardlings.
331. Pounders and Pillings, Gonnees and Gillings
332. Not to mention the Spinnies and the well heeled Winnings.
333. Not one of the above signatories was ever produced!
334. Not one ever existed I did deduce.

ACT 3 Scene 5: Leading to a Fatal Duel with D'Esterre (1815)

335. An event unfolded that I could never have foreseen.
336. I spoke out once again against repression and subjugation
337. Of Catholics and our need for emancipation;
338. It was no surprise that I should use my colourful tongue
339. Upon those defenders of what was clearly wrong.
340. On this occasion the subject of my wrath
341. Dublin Corporation and the bigotry they wrought.
342. The phrase I employed was innocuous I felt
343. 'A beggarly corporation' – no major offence was meant.
344. But alas, offence was taken against this phrase
345. By one John Narcott D'Esterre.
346. It was said he had once been in deepest debt
347. And my words his heart did perforate.
348. The language of metaphor he did not comprehend;
349. It was a personal insult that he could just not take in.
350. After some correspondence had ensued
351. Between me and D'Esterre, we settled on a duel:
352. We would bring the matter to its resolution
353. In a manner befitting two gentlemen:
354. When all other means of solution were spent
355. This was the honourable course between men -
356. To be held at Bishop's Court in the County of Kildare
357. Two contingents gathered there.
358. Our respective supporters gathered round
359. All in high spirits on the grassy ground.
360. Relatives, friends, the curious and concerned
361. Gathered to see whose life would end.
362. I knew that this whole enterprise was a scheme
363. To humiliate and destroy me for eternity.
364. D'Esterre the crackshot;

365. O'Connell the sitting duck.
366. I thought it a matter for my own protection
367. To act against such unprovoked aggression.
368. This duel was not a personal affair but a political one;
369. A matter from which I could not walk away or run.
370. We both took our pistols and walked back apace;
371. We turned round and were at some distance face to face
372. D'Esterre shot first, his bullet entering the ground before me;
373. I returned fire and my opponent slumped forward immediately.
374. He collapsed fully on his face
375. And to his side some surgeons did race.
376. A wound inflicted was low to his thigh
377. And proved overwhelming – I heard him cry.
378. I received news he had perished after two days had passed
379. I was tormented with grief for the life that was lost.
380. I made an offer to his wife of a pension that I would pay in perpetuity;
381. She refused but her daughter accepted an annuity.
382. Although this unfortunate matter still my heart torments
383. I knew I had shown that O'Connell was not without courage.

ACT 4 Scene 1: The Catholic Association

384. Finally I struck upon the notion
385. That only a Catholic Association
386. Would further advance the cause of Emancipation
387. Through proper popular agitation.
388. If only a million would pay
389. Per month one penny ,
390. Or a shilling per year
391. And those who could, pay a guinea.
392. And so it began:
393. A national association
394. For the advancement of a cause
395. That neither God nor government could halt;
396. The Catholic Association prospered penny upon penny
397. Growing in size with unprecedented popularity.
398. But as I anticipated, it caused concern for the Home Secretary
399. A gentleman called Peel, who considered it too revolutionary
400. And trumped up charges against me
401. For stoking sedition through my commentary.
402. I had he believed incited insurrection
403. And he proceeded with prosecution.
404. The charges were thrown out, no indictment was found;
405. The Association pronouncing its utter loyalty to the Crown.

ACT 4 Scene 2: Election in Clare

406. I stood for election in County Clare
407. Imagine a Catholic for the House of Commons a candidate!
408. Great crowds assembled in Dublin before I left on my way
409. As they did at every stop we made to Clare on that day.
410. There were bonfires on every hilltop
411. Roaring crowds and excited mobs.
412. Driving me on for election
413. The enthusiasm infectious.
414. Every facility was employed to effect success
415. For my election as MP in the town of Ennis:
416. Bribery, promises, soup and accommodation;
417. Strong drink, seduction, threats and persuasion.
418. Polling continued over five long days:
419. My majority grew inexorably.
420. And when my victory was announced
421. I was tossed to high heaven - with my opponents trounced -
422. Amidst torches and flowers and glorification
423. The crowds roared in exultation:
424. 'Long live, King O'Connell!' the throngs did cry;
425. I'll never forget the excitement until I expire.
426. I was thrust upon a profusely decorated carriage
427. And drawn through streets where wild celebrations did flourish.
428. And there it happened, the tide had been turned;
429. The people now felt they had emancipation earned.
430. I went to the House of Commons to take my well-earned seat
431. Only to find every obstacle before me that a man could meet
432. The oath I had to make made a mockery of my faith
433. The House was in consternation and my matter did debate
434. I was returned for Clare yet my seat had to vacate.
435. A new election was set for the County of Clare
436. And I was elected unopposed and a new oath I did swear.

ACT 4 Scene 3: Taking Seat in House of Commons

437. Once I did take my seat I was met with much slur
438. Allegations relating to immorality through wicked written words
439. From the editors of miscreant newspapers
440. Especially Lyndhurst – that contumelious and distinguished cur -
441. Who poured vemon into the quill of Disraeli
442. Who wrote everything he could to dismay me
443. Dishearten, deflate and depress me.
444. But it was when faced with overwhelming adversity
445. That I always summoned from within the best of me.
446. **Local Woman:** but isn't what is said in the papers true
447. You're a philanderer, a moral wanderer
448. Many women have you got into trouble;
449. What kind of a boyo are you, O'Connell?

450. What about the young lassie Courtenay?
451. Who won the attentions of your wandering eye?
452. Didn't you raid her maiden innocence?
453. Take advantage of her with your brilliance?
454. You are not at all what meets the eye
455. A bit of a rogue, O'Connell, my boy!
456. DOC: What stallion, I ask , gallops
457. Through a town on two legs?

ACT 4 Scene 4: O'Connell's Abolitionist Stance

458. Upon entering the House, representations were made to me
459. To cease my demands for the abolition of slavery
460. In exchange for support from the West Indian interest
461. Who would see to it that I would be supported in Irish matters.
462. It seemed to me that, if the Union held any benefit,
463. It was that the Irish anti-slavery sentiment could be expressed.
464. This proposal I therefore rejected
465. As sordid, pernicious and contorted.
466. My detestation of enslavement was not a newly acquired taste
467. But had its roots in my meeting with James Cropper, the Abolitionist.
468. An Englishman, he visited Ireland on an ingenious matter:
469. That we could provide textiles to trade with Indian sugar;
470. This would bring to an end Irish poverty
471. And extinguish West Indian slavery.
472. I spoke on this matter in Exeter Hall
473. And abolitionists the world over did enthrall.
474. I condemned America which, while declaring liberty,
475. Countenanced the evil of southern slavery
476. In its very constitution it stated: '*All men are born equal and free*';
477. Tell that the to the cotton-picking negro in Tennessee!
478. Andrew Stevenson – the American Ambassador -
479. I called a 'slave-breeder' and for my trouble
480. His Excellency - of course knowing it was true -
481. Challenged me, as the gentleman would, to a duel!
482. Abolitionist groups in the Land of the Free
483. Were thrilled to have an ally in me.
484. My vituperative language - while occasionally affronting their patriotism -
485. Was useful for them in moving American public opinion.
486. I was fearless in my condemnation of Irish-Americans
487. Who stated that abolition would threaten their interests;
488. I withstood pressure from those who said my position
489. Would diminish Irish-American relations.
490. I opposed the emigration of my fellow countrymen to the West Indies
491. Fearing that they would become white Irish slaves.
492. My address to the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society made a strong appeal
493. That Irish- Americans should cling to the abolitionists with all their memories.
494. This provoked the Bishop Hughes of New York to allege

495. My address was nothing more than interference!
 496. No man who supported slavery in my eyes was an Irishman;
 497. An English abolitionist was more my kinsman.
 498. But I was always aware that the conditions of many Irish men
 499. Differed little from those shackled to enslavement.
 500. One such slave who escaped his master
 501. Came to Ireland some time after:
 502. Frederick Douglass – listened to what I had to say on abolition
 503. He was suitably impressed, by my restrained derision.
 504. **Douglass:** His oratory I never heard surpassed
 505. As he addressed a crowd so vast
 506. He was powerful in his logic
 507. Majestic in his rhetoric
 508. Biting in his sarcasm
 509. Melting in his pathos
 510. I have heard many speeches since my escape from my manacles
 511. But none as captivating as Mr. O’Connell’s.
 512. I am grateful to him.
 513. American slavery he has shaken.
 514. In whatever position I may fill,
 515. I will speak with grateful emotion of Mr. O’Connell.
 516. **DOC:** Thus spoke Douglass who, for his troubles,
 517. The slave - now free - thereafter known as the ‘Black’ O’Connell.

ACT 4 Scene 5: Emancipation at Last

518. The government knew the people’s passions I had stoked
 519. Would they now assist me in granting what I proposed;
 520. Or would they resist and wash the country with blood
 521. When all that was yearned for was constitutional?
 522. They knew their armies could not be trusted
 523. - had an insurrection erupted.
 524. They offered Ireland concession after concession,
 525. Even the a national school system,
 526. Which provided a state supported education
 527. Even before this happened in England!
 528. But the government knew that the Irish were true
 529. In their conviction that Emancipation was the primary desire they knew.
 530. And so Wellington finally conceded it:
 531. Our Waterloo we had achieved it!
 532. Without the striking of a single blow
 533. Emancipation was ours for ever more;
 534. Bloodshed averted, the people appeased.
 535. Not before time, I do decree.
 536. The law was enacted in 1829
 537. Oppression was lifting, it felt wholly divine.
 538. A lament was provided by King George the IV
 539. ‘O’Connell is King of Ireland; His Majesty, Dean of Windsor!’

540. The shackles of oppression seemed finally loosened -
541. Inequality was now just a historical nuisance.
542. From being a poor barrister
543. I was now hailed 'Liberator'.
544. Freedom was won
545. Through bloodless revolution.
546. But my work was not done
547. Until I repealed the Act of Union
548. Ireland would never a shire of His Majesty the Sovereign.
549. This was the work I would engage upon.

ACT 4 Scene 6: The Jewish Question

550. I recall meeting Isaac Lyon Goldsmid who was preparing a petition
551. To achieve a Jewish emancipation.
552. Ireland was, I assured him, the only country that I knew of
553. Unsullied by a single act of anti-Semitism.
554. I entirely agreed with him
555. On the principle of the freedom of conscience;
556. He would always find in me a constant and active friend
557. To every measure that to Jews civil liberty would extend.
558. And it was with some glee I remember a cartoon
559. Depicting a Jew being impeded from entering the House of Commons
560. By the Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington:
561. This declared: 'Agitate, friend of Moses, Agitate, my man!
562. That's how I, Daniel O'Connell, got in!'

ACT 4 Scene 7: Contribution to O'Connell

563. The appreciation of the people was boundless
564. And as a measure of this
565. Knowing that my husbandry of my personal pecuniary affairs
566. Was as reckless as it was insane
567. A grand sum of £50,000 was granted to me
568. For 29 years I had represented them for no fee.
569. This saved me from constant embarrassment
570. And gave me much respite from my financial entrapment.

ACT 5 Scene 1: The Doneraile Conspiracy

571. Fresh sea bass surrounded by gorgings of the finest shellfish lay prostrate
572. On my most delightful china breakfast plate.
573. All had been captured and fried from the morning tide
574. And specially prepared for my palate.
575. But before I could provide this feast the sanctuary of my tongue
576. There was a wild storm of knocks as the doorbell was rung.
577. What matter could disrupt the tranquillity of Derrynane?
578. Who was extinguisher of the Sunday morning calm?
579. **John Burke:** Counsellor, Liberator, Mr. O'Connell you are needed!
580. **DOC:** 'Come quickly to Doneraile!' the excited man pleaded.
581. **John Burke:** My name is John Burke, I have ridden overnight
582. To beg your assistance for defence to provide.
583. You are the one last hope of men on trial
584. Who depend on you for their very lives.
585. **DOC:** The messenger reported that twenty two men
586. Were on trial before a specially convened commission,
587. It having been alleged that they had conspired to murder
588. Local gentry among others.
589. On the previous Friday,
590. The messenger related,
591. Four of the men received the death sentence
592. After a jury's twenty minute deliberation.
593. The single ray of hope that the desperate remainder possessed
594. Was the prospect of me defending their interests.
595. No begging was needed as I took to the road;
596. These men I would defend from the hangman's rope.
597. Ninety miles I travelled through stone and muck;
598. No obstacle would stop me, neither fire nor flood.
599. As I reached the courthouse - which was full of commotion -
600. My horse collapsed and died from exhaustion.
601. 'O'Connell is here, he has come at last!'
602. The prosecution stood back, pale and aghast.
603. 'My lords, apologies for my dishevelled state
604. Perhaps I might eat my breakfast.'
605. Between bucket loads of milk I raised objections
606. As I cast from my mouth prolific projections
607. Against the prosecution who was led by Solicitor General Doherty,
608. Who displayed great talent for bombast and pomposity
609. With equal contempt for justice and fairness;
610. His witnesses were from the dregs of quareness.
611. With merciless fervour I decimated each witness
612. Each a liar, an informer – each a miscreant.
613. One came forward and took the stand again
614. Stating that he had seen a written order for the assassination.
615. New evidence that he had supposedly forgotten;
616. I knew from that moment that the prosecution's case was rotten.

617. The chief witness I exposed as an incredible rogue
618. An inventor of evidence - it could easily be told.
619. 'Not guilty' was the verdict the jury returned;
620. The pretensions of the prosecution, they had unanimously spurned.
621. The men were unshackled and to the streets were freed
622. Amidst most wonderful scenes of relief and gaiety.
623. Meanwhile the condemned were transported across the sea -
624. From any hangman's noose a liberty.

Act 5 Scene 2: The Death of Mary O'Connell in 1836

625. The greatest blow of all came in 1836
626. My wife Mary succumbed to a devastating illness.
627. She had the purest spirit that ever dwelt in a human breast.
628. Her dying wish being that, even in misery, to Ireland I would give my best.
629. From her dying moment I resolved to avenge my country's injuries
630. And keep working until I saw its people happy.
631. But I knew that I would never know happiness again
632. My beloved departed, my life, my finances a mess.
633. The Repeal of the Act of Union was a faraway land,
634. Impossible as a dream, as a stairs of sand.
635. The darkest despair took up residence in my mind
636. The illness of despondency in my heart did reside.

ACT 5 Scene 3: Becoming Lord Mayor of Dublin

637. But all was not lost as I mustered new energy from my precarious state;
638. I was elected Lord Mayor of Dublin and its Chief Magistrate.
639. A new Lord Lieutenant for Ireland was appointed – Lord de Grey
640. I paid my respects with my usual frankness and honesty:
641. 'I neither respect nor disrespect the honourable appointee
642. A good-humoured, good-natured, good-for-nothing is he!'
643. I announced I would attend New Year's Mass in my official capacity
644. But of course was attacked by orange newspapers for my royal infidelity:
645. No Lord Mayor could attend Catholic mass in his robes:
646. It would incur a £100 fine and cause a furore.
647. But to the Mass I strode
648. And at the door dutifully disrobed:
649. 'The Lord Mayor may be Catholic', I declared with a laugh,
650. 'But his robes are good Protestants – and there's no arguing with that!'

ACT 6: Scene 1: Repeal Movement

651. I decreed 1843 as the year that we should strive for Repeal.
652. There should be no violence, no riots, no tumult or breach of the peace.
653. We would use every means at our disposal
654. To achieve Repeal, once they are legal.
655. Once the Union was repealed
656. Ireland would be free.
657. I spoke at a large outdoor repeal meeting in Limerick
658. Where thousands had gathered at a monster meeting.
659. I denounced Saxon rule in this country
660. As having brought nothing but distress, destruction and robbery.
661. The sheer moral power of Irish opinion
662. Had in 1829 forced the hand of Wellington.
663. England now faced domestic, imperial and foreign challenges
664. That now should assist the breaking of the union.
665. I appealed to the discontent of the people
666. About many matters to forge ahead with Repeal.
667. Meetings were held on Sunday afternoons
668. As the weather warmed, people's spirits they soothed.
669. I told each crowd as they had assembled before me
670. That they were the most virtuous, religious, famed for their loyalty,
671. Intelligent, brave, diligent and strong,
672. One of the greatest people that the world had ever known -
673. That they would win back their sovereignty
674. If they followed me;
675. For they knew as I did in my soul
676. That nothing is politically right that morally wrong;
677. The hurts they had to endure would be healed;
678. The Poor Law would be repealed;
679. The tithes rent would be abolished;
680. The Protestant Church disestablished.
681. There would be clear separation of Church and State
682. With perfect religious liberty and equality.
683. All this would be achieved through nonviolent agitation;
684. Precious liberty, I maintained, was not worth one drop of blood of an Irish
person;
685. Disciplined public opinion was more effective than revolution.
686. And I promised to lead them if the government waged war upon them.
687. The Repeal movement won the support of the agrarian masses,
688. Catholic bishops, priests, curates, monsignors,
689. The city proletariat, the lawyers, the shopkeepers,
690. All found common cause in the zest for freedom.
691. Pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters were sent to our Association
692. From Philadelphia, New York, Pittsburgh, Boston.
693. Alas, realising that Peel would make no concessions on Repeal
694. I devised what I considered a workable scheme:
695. Ireland would have its own parliament;

696. Set up a provisional government;
697. Maintain allegiance to the crown;
698. With Queen Victoria as its rightful sovereign;
699. Ireland would have its own legal system
700. And rule its own affairs without English interference.
701. There was hope and joy among the people
702. They sensed the termination of the protracted evil
703. That stunted their capacity to reach their potential
704. And become – more the subjects – free citizens.
705. Their hopes and dreams were articulated well
706. By poets and singers who chests used swell
707. When they recited and sang new works their hearts weaved
708. That their dreams might soon become a reality.
709. I recall a poet who rose from a crowd at Ardfert
710. And spent two hours reciting from the heart
711. Poetry that moved and enchanted the crowd
712. With words that would make the most unfortunate be proud.
713. My only words were: ‘who can answer to that?’
714. With their chins up the crowd departed.
715. Lamentably, the Queen herself made a speech
716. Praising the good sense and patriotism of Prime Minister Peel
717. And condemning insidious agitation
718. Throughout the beleaguered Irish nation
719. Which of course I rejected as being an excess of stupidity and impudence
720. And not the queen’s true view on the Irish question.
721. Her majesty was merely echoing the views of her ministers
722. And I promised to liberate the queen from the influence of these miscreants.
723. Prime Minister Peel and his ministers I accused of treason
724. By undermining the love the Irish people have for their beloved sovereign.

ACT 6 Scene 2: Tara and Clontarf

725. What a wonderful monster meeting we had on the Hill of Tara in Meath
726. The seat of the ancient powers and High Kings.
727. *The Times* reported that a million had gathered
728. With miles of surrounding lowlands covered with men.
729. I promised to the people in my speech
730. That, within a year, we’d have a new Irish Parliament in College Green.
731. A monster meeting was arranged for Clontarf in Dublin
732. But I noted the martial tones of its proclamation.
733. In my view, the Union was totally devoid of principle and constitution
734. But that any bloodshed on the matter would be utterly useless.
735. The government however saw that such an event
736. Would amount to a declaration of Irish independence;
737. The meeting was declared unlawful
738. Even though crowds were travelling from every quarter.
739. A large army with artillery was moved to Clontarf
740. Ready to fire on the crowds to cause a massacre.

741. I was not going to allow blood be shed for our cause;
742. The meeting would be cancelled so that no one would fall.
743. This decision was met by considerable unease;
744. There were those around me who said it was the government I appeased.
745. Our cause may well have been wounded and humbled
746. Demoralised and depleted, my support was broken;
747. But I was unrepentant in my direction
748. Discretion being the better part of valour.

ACT 6 Scene 3: The Trial of O'Connell

749. Relying on what they called seditious libel,
750. The Government decided to arrest me and put me on trial.
751. Along with six others, I was charged with the indictment
752. Rather brief – being less than one hundred yards in length.
753. The trial was set for the January 1844
754. So I stayed in Derrynane for some months before.
755. Where I found I had not been in better wind and spirits
756. For hunting these many a day – among hounds, hares and rabbits!
757. Everything they could think of under the sun
758. They accused us of in their case for sedition:
759. Exciting discontent and disaffection among her majesty's subjects;
760. Creating an alternative Irish judicial system;
761. Diminishing confidence in her majesty's union;
762. And undermining her law and constitution.
763. These are just a flavour of the charges we faced
764. Their very complexity, their ultimate weakness.
765. I finally came to represent myself
766. In a case that was long, tumultuous and tense.
767. I addressed not only the jury – all Protestant gentlemen,
768. But also the kings and peoples of the universe.
769. I summoned all my wit to attack the prosecution:
770. The strangest ever instituted.
771. What was laid before the court was an account of history
772. Not an ounce of conspiracy –
773. No concealing, no secrecy, no private conversation
774. All was public, avowed, proclaimed in publication!
775. But defence was useless in the face of bigotry;
776. Our cases were rejected with a predictable 'guilty'.
777. It took some weeks for sentence to be passed
778. To the streets we emerged where crowds had amassed.
779. It would have been easy to cajole the throngs
780. Into anger, into riot and extreme violence.
781. I knew that one word from me, even an intemperate gesticulation
782. Would have wrought the horrors of Civil War down upon my nation.
783. We were sentenced to various terms – me, twelve months
784. And would serve that sentence in Richmond.
785. I reminded the bench - with complete self-possession

786. And in the clearest possible terms - that an injustice had been done.

ACT 6, Scene 3: Imprisonment

787. But Richmond was no Tower of London -
788. The preparatory grave for a condemned man.
789. Instead it was in the hands of certain group of gentlemen
790. Otherwise known as Dublin Corporation.
791. Each of us had an apartment:
792. Spacious and airy and nicely carpeted.
793. I was overwhelmed with visitors
794. From near and afar.
795. I started to compose these memoirs, one word at a time,
796. But necessary solitude was difficult to find.
797. My spirits drooped - at times to a state of despondency;
798. Weary and fatigued I used succumb to melancholy.
799. But this state was soon dispelled
800. When I fell prostrate under Cupid's spell;
801. I fell in love with the beautiful Rose McDowell
802. One of the most superior beauties I ever found.
803. With intellect, sound judgment, fascinating sweetness,
804. How could she resist my amorous insistence?
805. She refused to marry me, as was her will
806. But my adoration of her is in my heart even still.
807. My correspondence with her was destroyed at my request
808. So that no one should know the final affair of my heart.

ACT 6, Scene 4: Release

809. The House of Lords overturned our convictions
810. While we remained unawares as prisoners in Richmond.
811. When the ship carrying the news reached Kingstown pier
812. People waved handkerchiefs and hats as they cheered;
813. Offices and shops all the way to the prison
814. Emptied of people who joined in the clamour.
815. I greeted the news with calm disbelief.
816. 'You're free, Liberator, you're most certainly free!'
817. Men of high position wept with emotion,
818. Including the governor who collapsed in the commotion.
819. From the rooftop of the prison I beheld the crowd
820. Who cheered incessantly from the streets aloud.
821. The following morning a procession was held
822. To celebrate my release from imprisonment.
823. From Richmond it proceeded to Merrion Square
824. Where I briefly addressed the thousands there.
825. I hadn't made a speech in three long months
826. So my pipe was out of tune, I joked.
827. They would have their Repeal - I promised them that;
828. Then I asked them to disperse in peace and happiness.

829. A more tumultuous release was had the following day
830. When some half a million saw me emerge from the prison gates.
831. Upon my head I proudly wore a green velvet hat
832. Sitting on an enormous carriage pulled by six white horses.
833. When the six mile procession arrived at College Green,
834. I stood up from my seat and raised my hat to wild cheers
835. It was here that we would soon have our parliament restored;
836. Again and again I repeated the gesture to joyful roars.

ACT 7, Scene 1: Famine

837. No joy, no celebration, no ounce of freedom
838. Could reverse the unremitting march of the seasons
839. But although my mortality weighed heavily upon me
840. It was nothing compared with the deadly calamity
841. That began to reveal itself through the presence of blight
842. On potatoes – the people’s staple diet.
843. Hunger was quickly followed by disease;
844. Dysentery, typhus and cholera spread with ease.
845. No invocation to high heaven
846. Could dispel the impending suffering of '47;
847. Hundreds of thousands perished from the most frightful species of death.
848. I appealed for assistance from the hand of parliament
849. Which listened but no bounty would part with.
850. I was haunted as I saw the people I so cherished
851. Fall like flies and on our sacred soil perish.
852. A terrible scene I cannot dispel from my mind
853. I saw near Tralee - no more shocking a scene was I prepared to find:
854. Our own people were walking the roads
855. To the town on hearing there was a dispersal of loaves.
856. Words could not capture their torment and grief
857. Articulations between them were in the form of cries and shrieks -
858. Not of the human kind but of dehumanised beings
859. In a strange language composed along a register of screams;
860. I saw some salivating dogs follow one ragged walking corpse;
861. They snarled at each other waiting for the man to collapse.
862. The order of nature was turned on its head;
863. The animals now ascendant over the infested human dead.
864. I saw a young woman with a dead babe at her breast
865. Who would not part with her until she herself had passed.
866. These are the people who had vested me with their confidence;

867. Now they are perishing from hunger and pestilence.
 868. What a calamitous misery was visited upon them
 869. Hunger, death, disease, destitution.
 870. Yet food I hear is being exported
 871. While thousands succumbed to this hellish misfortune.
 872. No population deserved such a terrible fate
 873. I recall a man cry 'there's nothing to ate!'
 874. These words echo repeatedly in my mind -
 875. Words from those of my own kind.
 876. I know in my heart that for generations hence and for times unthinkable now,
 877. As long as the winds blow from its shores and mountains stand from its
 ground,
 878. A deadening silence will pervade this land from field to lonely field
 879. Speaking of the loss of those of my own flesh and blood - dead, departed,
 never to be seen:
 880. Makers, creators, singers, dancers, people of craft;
 881. Men of wit, music, sport and art.
 882. The laughter of children never to be sung but in the airs of the birds,
 883. The curlew will forever sing of those people lost in her lonely notes.
 884. Winds through the trees will lament the absence
 885. Of the busy sounds of existence
 886. Yielding, in the end, to that silence that breaks a promise of what might have
 been:
 887. All things prosperous but not ordained by destiny.
 888. It is a silence that will have borne witness to the people's destitution
 889. To the shocking ignorance and indifference to their deprivation
 890. A silence that will linger from these generations to the next
 891. A kind that will never allow survivors or descendants to forget.
 892. Fields and hollows thus far uncultivated by the hands of men
 893. Have now become the shallow refuge of our fallen
 894. Men, women and children
 895. Who compose a slaughter of innocents;
 896. They lie just beneath the surface of the ground
 897. Within a breath of the black fog that has put them down
 898. Under the soil where they do not belong
 899. When they should be above it working, dancing and singing songs;
 900. Souls who do not fall for cause religious or political
 901. Who do not struggle to subvert their oppression
 902. Who do not die with blood on their hands
 903. Who do not exact a tyrant's revenge
 904. Who are not taken in by a frenzy of greed
 905. No they are an impoverished nobility
 906. Who toil for what is most valuable
 907. The simple bread of life itself.
 908. There's is not the fate of the horsed classes
 909. Who know not want but wine-filled glasses
 910. Whose abodes know not cries of hunger and sadness

911. But the contentment of health and happiness.
912. Who in their fortune give thanks to God
913. For comforts that the starving could never have sought.
914. I see many creatures who prefer to die quietly than to beg or to steal
915. Who, despite their terrible misfortune, retain an inalienable dignity.
916. This was incomprehensible to a visitor acquaintance
917. Who was speechless at the people's stoic acceptance
918. Of a lot that somehow was bestowed upon them
919. And spares few only by divine intervention.
920. Woe to the blackening fog carried by that wind
921. Easier to remember an enemy than a friend.
922. No bird for want of food falls from the skies
923. No fish is washed ashore and with empty belly dies.
924. Where is God in all of my people's misfortune?
925. Surely the saddest people upon whom the sun has ever shone.
926. Some seek deliverance not from the church gate
927. But from the soup given as a form of charity
928. At the expense of a starving Catholicism,
929. What good an empty stomach to a soul in desperation?
930. I have given them all that I can
931. All that I can muster at every expense
932. Alas, it's insufficient to replenish the weak
933. It seems to postpone inevitability.
934. A man called to my door some time ago
935. Not for help but with a tale he wanted told.
936. He carried a fine woollen cloth around his wrist
937. Which still bore the scent of his baby now deceased.
938. 'She lived a little longer than I expected,
939. Because of you, Counsellor, and your kindness'.
940. She was his daughter but was now mine too
941. Afterwards I had them both buried in a specially-made tomb
942. So that together they should always lie
943. As I had imagined them willingly entwined.
944. An anguish abounds among those who withstand this torment
945. Borne out of their belief that they do so at their neighbours' expense.
946. Pervasive as this anguish may be
947. It does not relieve the case for the administration's responsibility.
948. It cannot allow the people die like flies
949. And yet steal their corn from under their eyes.
950. The administration conspires with nature
951. Despite my endless pleas, it does not demur.
952. Do I have to drag a dying soul or a dead corpse
953. To Westminster to show that our people have enough?
954. If reason does not move them to respond with humanity
955. Perhaps this might move them to cure the insanity.
956. But of course it should be reported as an assault on the dignity of members
957. An affront to their sensibilities and comfortable splendour

958. That they dare see a denizen of the hungry fields
 959. A hideous article plucked from the calamity
 960. Lest it shake them from their comfortable indifference
 961. To act with an ounce of charitable pittance.
 962. To endure the scalding blight of nature upon that of England's;
 963. Between them both there cannot be a more convulsive nightmare dreamt.
 964. A living nightmare so appalling it corrupts the soul
 965. What will be left after this calamity takes its toll?
 966. The crown jewels of Ireland are being wrenched from it head
 967. The very soul of the nation being left for dead.
 968. A man of the cloth explains that this as our people's agony in garden,
 969. But how, I ask can there be, from this, any resurrection?
 970. What redemption is there in the rolling eyes of a hungry child
 971. In the hands of a ragged parent delirious and wild
 972. For nothing more than a bite for now
 973. With no thought or dread of tomorrow.
 974. Or what greater sorrows it will bring
 975. All irredeemably inevitable.
 976. They die without the comfort of a prayer,
 977. Consumed by hunger, disease, despair.
 978. Is it not enough for my own to be oppressed by political design
 979. For them to bear this overwhelming curse of nature so malign.
 980. Not to know the taste of bread on their tongues
 981. As king and nature act in dreadful union!
 982. Their food is spoiled or stolen
 983. Milk is taken from the mouths of infants.
 984. How many more are to perish or as they flee
 985. This stricken land dying with disease?
 986. What have they ever done to merit this unthinkable fate?
 987. Where is their solace in men or in faith?
 988. Oh God! Oh Universe, listen to me straight!
 989. Please, in your mercy, let this storm abate!
 990. Rid this land of catastrophe
 991. And instead take me.

ACT 7, Scene 2: Death

992. My heart broken, my spirits beyond repair,
 993. My health faltered – I 'm on the brink of despair.
 994. I have become but a shadow of my former self.
 995. I shall go to the continent for the sake of my health;
 996. To France first and from there to Rome;
 997. There I shall receive the blessing of the Pope.
 998. I have lost feeling, my body is cold;
 999. I cannot swallow, into violent delirium my mind readily goes.
 1000. Promise me that I am dead before you bury me!
 1001. My heart must go to Rome; my body to Ireland
 1002. My soul must wing upwards.

1003. I think I've got Repeal; I've got Repeal!
1004. Tell them, I've got Repeal!
1005. Jesus, have mercy on me,
1006. Jesus, your devoted servant I shall be.
1007. Be merciful to me a sinner
1008. And lead me on towards Heaven.

END

