

leader

Independence. He asked that the United States recognise Ireland's claim for self-government. For six months, travelling across Canada and the United States, he promoted the Home Rule agenda and strengthened the links with the 'exiled Irish', the diaspora, and the IRB network.

“ Spy's cartoon of O'Connor Power, published in Vanity Fair's 'Men of the Day' series in December 1886, is captioned 'the brains of obstruction'

In the late 1870s, several years of severe weather and disastrous harvests in Ireland threatened another great famine, disease and deadly cold. Turf was so wet, it was unfit to burn. The struggle for tenant rights had been coordinated over many years, and it was at the meeting of the Mayo Tenants Defence Association in Castlebar, in October 1878, that O'Connor Power delivered the Land War battle cry, 'The land of Ireland for the people of Ireland'.

The first Land League meeting was held on April 20, 1879 in Irishtown at the centre of Connaught. O'Connor Power was the only MP present. Farmers took up military formations but the occasion passed off peacefully. Later non-payment of rent and a boycott of unsympathetic landlords and non-compliant tenants, intended to be a passive resistance movement, became a war of intimidation and retribution.

O'Connor Power condemned the violence and, in the Commons, attacked the "incompetency of the English Parliament" in dealing with the crisis. The Government had inaugurated "a reign of terror in the County Mayo". The people were "robbed of the fruits of their industry on the one hand, and then bayoneted by the police on the other". In 1880, on behalf of the Land League, he introduced the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, a stepping stone in a series of land bills preparing the way for independence. A year later he was called to the Bar. His legal training provided the skills to pursue his commitment to penal reform and his work on local

government and land legislation. Historian and parliamentary colleague Frank Hugh O'Donnell observed '[O'Connor Power] was universally recognised as an able and conscientious worker in all English and Irish reforms.'

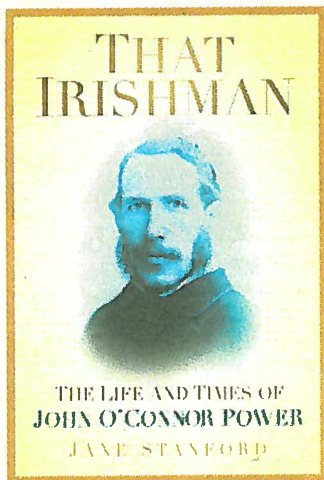
Believing he would be better placed to promote Ireland's interests, he moved, in 1884, to the Liberal party. In the National Liberal Club, he taught 'practical politics' and advised on election strategy, strengthening the party and the long-standing Irish-Liberal alliance.

A prominent journalist, he wrote for the Manchester Guardian. For decades the newspaper faithfully recorded his activities. He was a leader-writer for the influential Daily Chronicle, which had the largest circulation in England. In his articles he argued forcibly and persistently for Home Rule, land and local government legislation, prison reform and the enlargement of the franchise.

One of his favourite haunts was Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese tavern, off London's Fleet Street, where he met many celebrated writers, who borrowed traits from his colourful life for their literary creations, most notably Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty.

In 1893 he married the widow of a surgeon. Avis had worked as a nurse in the West London hospital. He died in Putney on 21 February 1919, a week after his 74th birthday, and was buried with his wife's family in Abney Park cemetery, Stoke Newington.

His classic *The Making of an Orator*, 1906, is available to read or buy online.



■ Jane Stanford is the author of *That Irishman: The life and times of John O'Connor Power* which is published by The History Press. www.thatirishman.com

LEADING MAN: Spy's cartoon of O'Connor Power who had spoken in favour of an amnesty for Fenian prisoners that met with indifference from Disraeli's government which led to retaliatory action from supporters of home rule.

