Peter O'Connor died at his residence, Cairnsfoot House, on August 29th, 1893, aged ninety-one years. His death occasioned sincere and widespread grief among all classes and creeds. 'Never in the history of Sligo was the announcement of the decease of one of its residents received with such widespread regret as was the new of Peter O'Connor's demise', commented the *Sligo Independent.* Catholics and Protestants alike joined in a final tribute as the funeral cortege movely slowly and silently through the thronged streets from the Cathedral to Sligo cemetery. His mortal remains were laid to rest with those of his wife, Ellen, and his own child, Mary Ellen, in the imposing family vault, to the right f the main entrance gate. From this hallowed spot his spirit looks out over his believed Sligo and the plains of Carbury, where, for centuries untold, his ancestors ruled as able chieftains of the great O'Connor-Sligo clan.

JOHN O'DOWD

The name of John O'Dowd, Home Ruler and Nationalist, Parliamentarian and Poet, a man who rendered long and distinguished service in the interests of his native land, deserves an honoured remembrance in our gallery of eminent Sligonians. His devoted and unselfish service for the welfare of the people he represented in public life for almost half a century has few parallels in the annals of Sligo.

John O'Dowd was born at Goldfields, Tubbercurry, on February 13th, 1856, the son of John and Catherine O'Dowd of Sligo farming stock. He received his early education at the local school, and at an early age he emigrated to the United States and settled in Albany, New York. He continued with his education there, working by day and attending school by night. He returned to Ireland in 1878 and established his own business in the village of Bunninadden, where he resided for the remainder of his life. Shortly after his return from the States he became actively involved in the great national movements of the day, notably, the Home Rule

Movement, the Land League and, later, the United Irish League. He was a Nationalist to the core and all through life devoted his time and energies wholly and unselfishly in the interests of the cause he held dear. His activities brought him into close contact with all the prominent leaders of his time, Davitt and Parnell especially. O'Dowd first met Davitt at a monster Land League meeting at Gurteen in November, 1879, and from that day forward a warm friendship existed between them. In 1898, with P. A. McHugh and others, he organised celebrations marking the centenary of the 1798 Insurrection. He addressed meetings in Ballymote, Tubbercurry, Collooney and Sligo, and headed the subscription lists towards the cost of erecting the Teeling Monument at Carricknagat, Collooney, and the '98 Memorial at Market Cross, Sligo.

O'Dowd's nationalist activities attracted the attention of the British authorities. He was one of a number of County Sligo 'suspects' who came under the Forster 'Coercion' Act. After his arrest in November, 1881, he was taken to Dundalk Gaol where he was imprisoned for six months. 'Mr O'Dowd devoted all the ability he possessed in the people's cause, and hence we presume became odious to the authorities,' wrote the *Sligo Champion* in a comment on his arrest. On January 14th, 1882, the same paper published a poem entitled *Eighty-Two*, which he had written in gaol on New Year's day under the signature of 'A Sligo Suspect'. After his 'unconditional release' from captivity on May 16th, 1882, his homecoming was marked by an enthusiastic demonstration of loyalty and support by the Nationalists of South Sligo.

From then onwards John O'Dowd became a prominent figure in the public life of the county. He served on the Tubbercurry Board of Guardians, and was elected Chairman of that Body for ten years, from 1888 to 1898. In 1892 he was selected to fill a vacancy in the parliamentary representation of County Sligo, but he declined to let his name go forward. However, eight years later, following the resignation of Bernard Collery, M.P. (q.v.) in February, 1900, he was unanimously selected to fill the resulting vacancy in the North Sligo constituency at a United Irish League convention in Sligo Town Hall. On this occasion he submitted to the wishes of the Nationalists of the area, and was elected unopposed. Commenting on his success, the *Irish People* wrote:

> By far the most interesting event of the week is the unopposed return of John O'Dowd as a member for North Sligo. . . Mr O'Dowd is an excellent example of the kind of whole-cloth

> Nationalist with which any effective National Party will have to be stiffened. Every drop of his fighting blood is Nationalist to the heart's core. His life is a guarantee for his sincerity. He is wholly free from partisan or personal bias. He will be a willing comrade of all who mean earnest and self-sacrificing fight for Ireland.

At a subsequent victory celebration in Bunninadden, O'Dowd expressed his grateful thanks to the people of North Sligo for their whole-hearted support, and in return promised to work in the interests of 'the sacred cause of Irish nationality and the glorious principles of the United Irish League'.

At the General Election in the Autumn of 1900 John O'Dowd was unanimously chosen as Nationalist candidate for his own South Sligo constituency at a convention in Ballymote. In thanking the delegates for the unique honour conferred upon him, he explained that he had allowed his name to go forward for South Sligo simply because the Nationalists of that division expressed a strong and unanimous wish that he should represent his native district in Parliament. 'South Sligo is my own happy hunting-ground,' he declared, 'where for many years I have mingled with the good men from the plains and the hills.' In conclusion, he confessed that his only qualification was a determination to be 'an honest representative, never betraying the cause so dear to all patriotic Irishmen'. At the subsequent election he was elected without opposition, 'much to the joy and satisfaction of his friends and supporters'; and, in the words of the historian, Tadhg Kilgannon (q.v.), 'he had thus the distinction of being the only Member of Parliament who could boast of having been elected in two different constituencies in the same year without opposition'.

O'Dowd was once again returned unopposed for South Sligo at the 1910 General Election. He represented this constituency in Parliament for eighteen years. In the House of Commons he displayed marked ability in debate and a firm grasp of the issues at stake in the major political discussions of his day. The downtrodden tenant farmers of Ireland had no greater advocate nor a more honourable and self-sacrificing public representative than the Nationalist Member for South Sligo. He was what was known as a 'constitutional agitator', and few Irish Parliamentarians at Westminster agitated more vigorously and more consistently than he. In a stirring address to the Sligo Home Rule Demonstration in November, 1907, he outlined the strategy by which Home Rule

could be achieved:

> Parliamentary agitation depended on determined agitation in Ireland, together with a strong, active, and, if needs be, hostile organisation; and, therefore, I appeal to young and old to organise and combine, and push the work of National regeneration. This is a time for hope and encouragement, for in the carrying out of the national programme by the old methods and the old tactics lies Ireland's regeneration. . .

When the first County Council was established in 1898 John O'Dowd represented his native district on the Council, and, after the lapse of a few months, he succeeded P. A. McHugh, M.P. as its Chairman, a position he was destined to hold for twenty years. He finally retired from public life after his defeat by the Sinn Fein candidate, Alex. McCabe (q.v.), in the 1918 Parliamentary election.

Apart from an active life in his country's cause, John O'Dowd did much with his forceful and virile pen to arouse enthusiasm and keep the flame of nationalism alive. He was a regular contributor to T. D. Sullivan's *Weekly News*, *The Shamrock*, *The Nation* and the *Sligo Champion* under the pseudonym of 'Adonis' or 'A Sligo Suspect', and his writings attracted much favourable comment. In 1889 he published a book of verse entitled *Lays of South Sligo: a few wild flowers of National Poetry*. This collection contained a number of stirring ballads as well as some finely wrought Home Rule and Land League poems. 'This is a delightful collection of lays.' commented the Belfast *Morning News*. 'The author has caught the inspiration from the brilliant poetic effusions of the Repeal Movement and has welded noble sentiments into sweet verse.' One of the most popular poems in this collection is the ballad of 'Tim O'Shaughnessy', which clearly indicates the poetic ability of the author:

Anear the Moy's blue waters,
  Beside old Knocknashee,
Within a sheltered cottage,
  Dwelt Tim O'Shaunghnessy.
A peasant young and handsome,
  Light-hearted, bold and free;
The soul of truth and honour,
  Was Tim O'Shaughnessy.

At every dance and pattern,
At every wake and fair,
From Dohern hill to Gurteen town
You'd surely find him there.
Footballing on the meadow,
Or hurling on the lea,
The soul of every gatherin'
Was Tim O'Shaughnessy.

One day the glorious tidings
Flashed through the wondering land —
'The French are in Killala,
The hour is now at hand
For which we're sighed and waited
And prayed for fervently' —
'Then forward, boys, for Ireland',
Cried Tim O'Shaughnessy. *Etc.*

John O'Dowd's devotion and labour in Ireland's cause was long and fruitful, and greater, perhaps, than that of many men whose deeds are better known. His sterling qualities, his integrity, his honesty and sincerity were much admired and highly applauded in his native Sligo and beyond its boundaries. His death in October, 1937, in his eightieth year, severed one of the last links with the great national movements of the nineteenth century in County Sligo. In a tribute to his memory, the then Vice-Chairman of Sligo County Council, the late Hugh O'Donnell of Gurteen, remarked:

> A really great son of County Sligo has passed away. The late John O'Dowd was a landmark in the county, and it will be a long time before Sligo produces a son as eminent as he.

MARTIN RODDY

One of the most prominent figures in Sligo in recent times was the late Martin Roddy, T.D. He had the distinction of being, as yet, the only Sligoman to be appointed a Parliamentary Secretary since