

## REVIEWS.

### *A History of the Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland.*

By T. DUNBAR INGRAM, LL.D. London and N. Y., Macmillan & Co., 1887. — 8vo, x, 231 pp.

This work is a history of the apologetical order. The author has come to the conclusion that the legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland was a measure of unqualified advantage to both kingdoms, and, furthermore, that it was accomplished by means entirely consistent with recognized principles of political morality. It is announced in the preface that the demonstration of these two propositions is the object of the book. As to the first, his task is comparatively easy. Outside of the small band of extreme Irish nationalists, few persons will be found at the present day, who, with any knowledge of the subject whatever, will defend the absurd system under which the two kingdoms were connected just previous to the union. Assuming that the best interest of both Great Britain and Ireland lay in the permanence of their connection, the legislative independence secured by the latter in 1782 proved to be a most dangerous boon. I say *proved to be* most dangerous; for that is not to maintain that from the outset it was necessarily so; and it is wide of the mark to abuse Grattan as our author does, for perversions of Irish freedom by other persons. Dr. Ingram is on treacherous ground when he intimates that Grattan was an enemy to the connection of the kingdoms. As a matter of fact, the granting of legislative independence in 1782 was, on the part of England, an act of irresponsible panic. When she recovered from the stunning effect of the American war, she could not revoke the concessions she had made to Ireland, but she was able to take care that they should go no further. Grattan and the Irish Whigs, who had secured the independence, found themselves thwarted in every attempt to perfect the system of constitutional order which they had hoped to rear upon the basis of a free legislature. The English government found means to keep Grattan in an opposition which rarely came within fifty votes of the majority in the Irish parliament, and which finally dwindled away to a bare half dozen members. Surely it is a little difficult, under the circumstances, to attribute to Grattan all the evils which developed in the system. It is true that the latter did, on several occasions, successfully urge the adoption of measures which unquestionably could be construed as having a separatist tendency. But his success on

these occasions was clearly owing to the fact that, with denunciations of what seemed to him palpable invasions by England of the independence formally granted, he blended the most emphatic asseverations of his devotion to the connection. Though frustrated in the perfection of that scheme of constitution-building of which a free parliament was the foundation, Grattan was surely justified in every effort to maintain that foundation for possible use in the future. The author's whole treatment of the Irish Whigs is disingenuous. Anything else, however, could scarcely be expected from one who avowedly writes as an advocate rather than as a historian. In the discussion of the regency difficulty, in 1789, the bias of the author is particularly misleading. George III became suddenly insane, and the two kingdoms were left without a head. There was no law and no precedent for action in such a contingency. The recognition of the Prince of Wales as regent was the solution naturally suggested. But the prince was not in high favor with the Pitt ministry, and the latter accordingly delayed action in the matter till the prince could be brought to submit to certain restrictions on his power. The Irish parliament, meanwhile, having no especial interest in the restrictions desired in England, promptly tendered him the regency of Ireland with full royal powers. By a law of Henry VIII, the crown of Ireland is inseparably united with that of England. The Tories, whom our author follows, claimed that this union included the whole executive power in the two kingdoms, with all its incidents and phases, of which the regency was one; and that, therefore, Ireland had no right to act till England had first determined the depository of the power. There are many and strong reasons for this position, all of which are duly set forth by the author. But he does not even allude to the chief argument by which Grattan and his followers defended their action; namely, that when, as in the present instance, the executive fell entirely in abeyance, and England presented no holder of that power to recognize, the very first law of national existence, that of self-preservation, imperatively required of the Irish parliament the filling of the gap in the governmental organization. It would seem to the unprejudiced mind that there is sufficient strength in this view to warrant its statement in a "history," if only for the purpose of refutation. The animus of the author, however, is perfectly revealed in this deliverance in reference to Grattan: "Nor should it ever be forgotten that he was the author and expounder of the meanest political doctrine ever preached to man, *viz.*, that England's necessity is Ireland's opportunity." As if England ever did, in all her history, concede any share of power or privilege to a subject or dependent state, except under pressure! To any but an Englishman, the author's plaintive moan is simply amusing.

Misrepresentation and abuse of the Irish leaders is wholly unnecessary to the demonstration of the fact that the prestige of Great Britain, as well as the prosperity of both kingdoms, was constantly in danger under the connection as maintained after 1782. This fact is made sufficiently clear in the work before us. The necessity for a stronger bond to hold Ireland to England became imperative through the developments of the French revolution. A more or less disaffected and semi-independent kingdom on England's flank was a very poor equipment for the hard fight Pitt saw laid out for him by France. The security of the British empire was the one great and overwhelming consideration that actuated the ministry in the incorporation of Ireland by the union. Much was said, of course, about the great advantages to be derived by Ireland from the new system; and such advantages there were. But these were merely a matter of incidental detail. Pitt's continental policy required that, at all hazards, the combined forces of all the British isles should be well in hand for the grapple with France and French republicanism. It is this fact that has confirmed almost universally the belief that the means adopted to obtain the Irish parliament's consent to its own abolition were not in every case reconcilable with the abstract principles of morality. The author of the present volume believes that there is no ground for the charges of corruption generally regarded as proven, and undertakes to present good reasons for this opinion.

The general charge of corruption is ordinarily supported by the following specifications: First, the support of the owners of close or private boroughs was secured by a compensation bill, awarding £7500 for each seat vacated by the reduction of the commons from three hundred to one hundred in number. The million and a quarter pounds devoted to this purpose, it is held, was a mere corruption fund. Second, the Roman Catholic interest was conciliated by a definite agreement that the complete emancipation, which could hardly be expected from the Irish parliament, would immediately pass a united parliament. The agreement was not fulfilled by the ministry, but the hope was unquestionably very influential with the Catholic hierarchy. Third, promises of rank and pensions were freely used to draw waverers to the government's side. Fourth, Castlereagh used the secret service money of the government for the direct purchase of votes.

As to the first of these charges, the fact of the compensation is undeniable; but our author denies that such compensation was in any way corrupt. He admits that the union could not have been effected without the payment of some sum to the borough-owners, but he refuses to see in such payment any element of bribery. The difference between his view and that commonly adopted seems to consist in a fundamental difference in the conception of what constitutes bribery. If to be bribed

is to allow one's act in a public capacity to be determined primarily by one's interest in a private capacity, there seems to be scant room for the author's view. He makes the ingenious assertion that, since the abolition of the private boroughs would be a confiscation of what had come to be recognized by custom as property, "to have refused compensation would have had the effect of virtually packing the House of Lords against the union. . . . The only way to render them impartial and capable of weighing coolly the advantages and disadvantages of the union, was to offer a fair and reasonable compensation for the loss of rights." When we consider that for some time a constant agitation for parliamentary reform had been kept up by Grattan and others, and that the widespread influence of the French revolution was at this time making the inveterate abuses of the representative system especially conspicuous objects of attack, the impartiality and cool judgment consequent upon this opportunity to convert an evanescent property into solid cash can be very clearly appreciated. The means by which the Catholics were conciliated to the support of the union were quite legitimate. No exception can be taken to the hope of full political rights as a motive for a judgment on a political policy. The doubtful point in this particular is the morality of Pitt's promising what he could not perform. Catholic emancipation as held out by the government in 1799, and the same as almost fought for in 1829, do not seem to be the same thing.

Our author defends the bestowal of titles and pensions as a reward for services rendered, on the ground that it was a common practice, which is perfectly true, and that there were not nearly so many bestowed on this occasion as on several other less important occasions, which does not appear especially relevant. His treatment of the charge of direct personal bribery for cash is characterized by similar non-sequiturs, though here the notorious difficulty of proving a charge of secret bribery is on his side. He could probably secure a verdict of not proven without dragging in such irrelevant evidence as the assertions of Cornwallis and Castlereagh that the opposition bought votes, or testimonials to the general good character of the former. As Castlereagh, by virtue of his leadership in the Irish Commons, was the man most closely connected with the actual working of the House, testimonials to *his* general good character would be more in order. The author seems aware of the difficulties that lie in the way of the one who seeks for these. He therefore limits himself in this respect to a letter of condolence written twenty-three years later by Plunket, an anti-unionist who afterward accepted office under Castlereagh, in which the latter's brother is assured that Plunket feels sorry that Castlereagh is dead, and that the deceased was wise and liberal in "all his public objects and opinions." And then

our author asks in complete triumph: "Is it possible to come to the conclusion that if he [Plunket] had believed the accusations of corruption, he would have attended his [Castlereagh's] obsequies with praise of all his public objects and opinions?" The answer is supposed to be obvious. A skeptic, however, might ask whether the purchase of a vote is to be classed as a public object or a public opinion. The reader of Dr. Ingram's history will derive both pleasure and profit from it, only by bearing in mind that the author is a lawyer pleading a rather difficult case.

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*American Statesmen. Patrick Henry.* By MOSES COIT TYLER.  
Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1887.—  
16mo, x, 398 pp.

Of all the figures of the Revolution, there is perhaps not one which the mists of a century have so enveloped in legend as that of Patrick Henry. A Patrick Henry myth has been formed, and has been fixed in literature by the uncritical character of his first biographer. It is creditable to the candor of Wirt that, though he unconsciously infused so much of his own imaginative spirit into the picture which he drew, he did not make that picture altogether favorable: when he admitted that Henry was perhaps illiterate, a poor case-lawyer, and an indifferent governor, it seemed like the unwilling concession of an advocate. Jefferson's criticisms on Henry, on the other hand, had the successful effect of many of his venomous attacks; and we owe to him more than to any one else a popular notion of Henry's lack of education and of his political instability.

Professor Tyler has therefore taken upon himself a double and difficult task: he has a firmly established tradition to break down; and he then undertakes to place before our minds a man dead nearly a century, who left few memorials, and whose character is unusual and in some respects incongruous. That Professor Tyler has succeeded in both parts of his task is due to unwearied and careful research, and to the historical judgment and skill with which the results are presented. Every possible clue seems to have been followed out; the papers which the Henry family generously placed at his disposal have yielded up material unknown or unused by Wirt; every available record of Patrick Henry, left by men who knew him, has been examined. It is not too much to say that the real Patrick Henry for the first time stands before us.

The duty of correcting misapprehensions has made parts of the book defensive and even polemic; but the plea is in general convincing. Against the charge of illiteracy, sufficient evidence is brought that Henry