

GLADSTONE AND HOME RULE—I.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—In my last letter (see THE WEEK for July 18), I proposed to treat of Gladstone's unwitting attempt to disrupt the United Kingdom in 1886—untaught by his want of success to break up the United States in 1862. His failure in both instances was truly providential. It is not charged that he purposely sought to break up the United Kingdom into fragments, but to show how willing he was to sacrifice the national welfare to his craving for office and for a majority in the House of Commons; also some of the consequences that would result from Home Rule. Had he succeeded 103 hostile votes would have been struck out, namely 86 Parnellites, and 17 Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. This would have left him the absolute ruler of the House of Commons until the breaking out of civil war in Ireland and the consequent appeal to Great Britain. Since he has deserted to Parnell and purchased his 86 votes he can depend upon the latter, but only so long as he does Parnell's bidding. He has been compelled by relying upon them to sanction the obstruction and incitements to, and actual, disorderly conduct, which in his Unionist days he was the first to indignantly denounce.

*The political tendency is to aggregate.*

If we carefully read and reflect upon history we note that the general tendency is to aggregate—to grow from the little to the great; in fact a centripetal action. The same law which in the physical world has consolidated worlds out of nebulous bodies has in another sphere of action formed empires out of fragments. In the dawn of history it was the family; then it grew to the tribal condition—afterwards arose rulers on a somewhat larger scale. After a time these petty rulers gave place to an over-lord, a king on a larger scale, and so, unless interrupted by disruptive or subversive movements, from kingdoms to empires, or vast republics, empires in all but name. It has taken thousands of years to travel through all these stages. These facts point to a far distant future, perhaps thousands of years hence, when the brotherhood of man shall be thoroughly established, "and nation shall not war against nation any more." It is false statesmanship to hinder healthy and natural growth in that direction, highly blameworthy when a statesman, for self-seeking ends, labours to increase discord instead of appeasing it, to blow the smouldering embers of strife, to force his country backwards, instead of leading it forwards.

*France.*

Take the case of France. Eight centuries ago there were in France a dozen rulers of practically different petty kingdoms. There were different races and languages. This meant almost constant internecine strife and war. When France became a nation in the modern meaning of the word, the one solitary ruler preventing such wars was a great improvement. Yet even so late as 100 years ago the local jealousies, tariffs, laws, and inter-state tolls and obstructions greatly hindered healthy growth and well-being. Would any sane man advocate Home Rule in France? Suppose such a measure to be carried out, we should see protection in its worst form rule in some sections—in others English free trade—with inter-state custom houses. In the backward regions mediæval Catholicism, and in the Republican parts the exact reverse. All sorts of evil consequences would ensue; there is little doubt that it would end in bloodshed. Whereas now, instead of harking back to a bygone condition of things, the leading great questions awaiting solution in France are: 1. Free Trade; 2. Free Testamentary power, i.e., the power for a man to deal with and to will his property as he wishes, unfettered by the evil laws inherited from the great Revolution; 3. Abandoning the idea of a war of revenge against Germany; 4. The reduction of expenditure, and as a consequence a partial disarmament. If matters are left to a natural course it is probable that all these questions will be favourably solved within fifty years. Their settlement would greatly increase the moral growth of France, also its pecuniary gain. The interference by law with the free testamentary disposition of property reacts unfavourably, both morally and pecuniarily.

*Germany.*

United Germany, from its extent, central position, high standard of intelligence, large population and military completeness, may be called the political centre of gravity of Europe. The absence of such a centre of gravity has been an European misfortune for centuries. All know that until recently it practically had many different and independent rulers. Even now there is not perfect union in all respects. Previous to the French Revolution the disintegrating force, which we may call Gladstonian disintegration, had been increasing until, when the Republican raiders were let loose, the home-guarding force of the German Empire was a mere mockery, delusion and a snare. When France in 1792 commenced its piratical war, which even Robespierre voted against, some of the German rulers armed to defend their fatherland and others did not. There was not one of them that exerted his full strength. When the Duke of Brunswick marched against the French his army, composed of Prussians, Austrians, and the soldiers of some of the smaller German States did not exceed 100,000. Some of the contingents lagged so badly that the army started a month too late. Had Germany been only moderately united in the first place France would not have declared

war. It was the almost defenceless condition on its borders that tempted its rulers. In the second place, reckoning only 8,000 soldiers to the million of population, the smaller States exclusive of Prussia and Austria, would have contributed over 100,000 men, and been ready a month or two earlier. The allies, then in the French disorganized condition, would have easily marched to Paris, put down the small minority of tyrannizing republicans, anarchy, and murder, restored constitutional monarchy, and thus saved the lives of millions, the waste of untold treasure, and prevented 22 years of war. The great want of Europe since the peace of Westphalia in 1648 has been a United Germany. Had there been such at that time, Louis XIV. would not have waged his aggressive wars. The Germans are quiet and peaceable, and not vain, restless and aggressive.

*Italy.*

The history of Italy, also, vividly shows the evils of disunion. Up till 1859 there were, including Austria, seven independent rulers, each with his own army. Sardinia in 1792 had a population of about 3,000,000, one-sixth of that of all Italy, less than one eighth of that of France of that date. The French rulers were desirous to rob it of Savoy. Sardinia had an inefficient Government and was unable of itself to resist, so France commenced a wolf-and-lamb aggressive war. But if Italy had been one kingdom it would not have been an easy prey, and France would have left it alone. The first small invading army would have been outnumbered six-fold. One way of testing the value of a United Italy at that era is to consider what would have happened in 1796 had the Republic of Venice, with its army of 40,000 men, heartily sided with Sardinia and Austria, instead of standing aloof and awaiting its turn to be a prey. Although Bonaparte would have distinguished himself, it is certain that he would have failed to conquer North Italy. As it was, several times success hung evenly in the balance. He would have been unable to have remitted plunder to Paris, and the Republican conflagration after a short time would have died out for want of fresh fuel to feed upon. The historical student must never forget that the French Government for several years was kept going by the plunder either of foreign nations or of its own subjects. Italy, being now united, is another guarantee for European peace. Its population of 30,000,000 exerting its full strength would diminish by at least one-third the effective force of France in a war of revenge against Germany. This vastly lessens the chances of such a struggle taking place.

*Scotland.*

An easy way to get a vivid idea of the evils resulting from the rule of numerous petty rulers is to read a good history of the Highland class. Until the chiefs were brought into real subjection, the record is namely a history of outrages, wars and massacres. There was no real chance of progress for Scotland until it practically became one nation under one ruler. After its union with England it rapidly increased in prosperity.

*England.*

The wars of the Heptarchy, stigmatized by Milton as the wars of the Kites and the Crows, prevented progress until England had but one monarch. But the disruptive and "Red Indian" Danish wars for ages destroyed the good derived from the fusion of the Heptarchy into one nation. If Gladstone carried his disunion measures, there would be no good reason why Wales and Scotland should not also have their own Parliaments—in fact such local Parliaments have been recently proposed. There would be endless confusion with such a state of things. The truth is, the breaking up of the United Kingdom into different nations is self-evident nonsense, yet it would result from Gladstone's Home Rule Bill.

*Ireland.*

Ireland also affords strong proof of the miseries resulting from having a number of independent rulers. Old Irish annalists have recorded that "previous to the flood there were many princes," but that unfortunately through the fault of someone the records have been lost. Previous to the Christian era, there were 160 rulers, out of whom fifteen are stated to have "died comfortably in their beds," four apparently uncomfortably, and 141 either murdered or in battle. It recalls to mind Falstaff's halfpennyworth of bread to a gallon of sack. From that date till the time of Henry II., there appear to have been seventy-six rulers, forty-six of whom died violent deaths, exclusive of three under the somewhat Hibernian heading of "deaths from thunderbolts." These facts show what a constant state of internecine warfare prevailed up to the time of the Anglo-Norman conquest.

Those of your readers who wish for very full and exact information about the Irish Union should read "The Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland," by T. Dunbar Ingram, LL.D. The Liberal Unionist Association, Great George Street, London, have published a shilling edition.

*Irish Members at Westminster in the 13th Century.*

The pamphlet shows what few know, that in 1281 "barons, prelates and citizens were summoned from Ireland to serve in the English Parliament and did serve therein." The like also in the reigns of Edward II. and Edward III. "Owing to the danger and difficulty of the journey, the practice of sending representatives to the English Parliament was given up." As the English Pale diminished mainly owing to the Civil Wars in England, and the

Irish chieftains outside of the Pale enjoyed Home Rule, freedom from restraint, and the right of private war with all its horrible consequences, the Irish Parliament, if it can be called one, mainly consisted of the descendants of the Anglo-Normans and of those who spoke English.

*Spanish Evidence of Irish Lawlessness.*

There has been published in Spain the adventures of an officer of the Spanish Armada, who was wrecked off the coast of Ireland in 1588. He lived outside the English Pale among the then independent Irish. He gives a vivid idea of Irish Home Rule of that time—of local wars by one village against another village.

*The Irish Penal Law of 1689.*

When the Irish Catholic Parliament of James II. passed its celebrated Act of Attainder, there was a clause forbidding the King from pardoning any one mentioned therein. The list of the Protestants condemned to death by that Act "comprised 2 archbishops, 1 duke, 63 temporal lords, 22 ladies, 7 bishops, 85 knights and baronets, 83 clergymen, and 2,182 esquires, etc. Total, 2,445. In fact the whole Protestant peerage and gentry of Ireland were at one sweep condemned to death."

*The Protestant Penal Laws.*

Ingram points out that this explains why the Irish Parliament of 1702 acted as it did in re-enacting the Penal Code. It appears (although Ingram does not so state) that they waited for the death of William III. before they practically commenced. If in the Southern States they had during the Civil War passed a law condemning to death all those who were actively or passively opposed to secession, and enacting that their property should be confiscated, what would have happened when the Unionists got the victory?

*Early attempts for a Union.*

Ingram gives an account of the various attempts by the Irish Parliament in the early part of the eighteenth century to effect a union with that of Great Britain; also of those of eminent Irishmen who vainly laboured to bring it about.

*Rarity of great Statesmen.*

With respect to these failures, historical students should ponder over this capital fact, that really great statesmen are very rare. A man must be measured by the age in which he lives. It is doubtful whether America during this century has produced one great statesman. There is something in a wide suffrage which forbids such a man from attaining his natural position. Universal suffrage in France has not brought to the front even a second-rate man. In England, with the present suffrage, such men as Pitt, Edmund Burke and Macaulay would not as new men succeed in getting into Parliament. Facts like these must be borne in mind to rightly judge history. Is it fair to blame England because it has produced so very few great statesmen?

*Dangers of Separate Parliaments.*

Ingram gives some curious facts showing the dangers arising from two Parliaments—not only in Ireland but also in Scotland prior to the Union of the latter with England in 1705. More than once during the early part of the reign of Queen Anne, there was an approach to a state of hostilities between England and Scotland, although ruled by the same monarch. FAIRPLAY RADICAL.

CANADA'S CONSTITUTION—AN IMPORTANT STATE PAPER.

SOME months since Mr. Francis Stevenson, who takes great interest in colonial subjects, moved, in the English House of Commons, for a return showing the Constitution of the Executive in each colony, and, in the case of colonies having representative assemblies, the Constitution of those assemblies, the number of members, the number of electors, and the qualifications requisite for members and for electors. The replies sent in to this address from the several colonial governments have now been printed, that from the Dominion forming a supplementary return covering a comprehensive exposition of the Canadian Constitution from the pen of one so capable of dealing with the subject as the Dominion Secretary of State.

Mr. Chapleau's paper, says an Ottawa contemporary, is one admirably conceived and arranged, and in this, as in other respects, would well serve as a model for official documents of a similar class. It is divided into five sections or departments, each dealing with a particular feature, which is fully, though concisely, developed on the lines followed by May (the late Lord Farnborough), Todd, Bourinot, Doutre and other well-known authorities. The subjects severally considered are: (1) System of Government; (2) Executive Power; (3) Legislative Power; (4) Local or Provincial Legislatures and Municipal System, and (5) Judiciary. Introductory to the main portion of the work are some valuable historical notes touching the discovery and early settlement of the several British North American colonies now forming the Dominion, and at the same time illustrating the growth of parliamentary institutions and the establishment of constitutional government therein. It is explained that of the several communities or governments forming what is known as the North American group of colonies, numbering eight altogether, all have at various times since 1867