

*Life of Daniel O'Connell*, and Sir Gavan Duffy's series of works describing the relations of O'Connell to the Young Ireland party.

Those who have been students of Irish history and of the historic relations between Ireland and England during the last two centuries have been grateful to Mr. Lecky for his extensive and masterful work in this field. They have now cause for further gratitude that he saw fit to revise and enlarge and put within the reach of our libraries and of intelligent readers these useful and attractive studies on the great Irish leaders.

JAMES A. WOODBURN.

*The Aaron Burr Conspiracy.* A History largely from Original and hitherto Unused Sources. By WALTER FLAVIUS McCaleb, A.M., Ph.D. (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company. 1903. Pp. xviii, 369, and index.)

THANKS are due Mr. McCaleb for having conducted such an extensive and minute search for material relating to the Burr conspiracy; and he must be congratulated upon the rich results that rewarded his efforts. The archives of Mexico and Texas yielded contemporary references to the conspiracy in official Spanish letters. Files of contemporary newspapers in New Orleans and middle Kentucky show what the public knew and how it felt. These, together with Burr maps, private correspondence, and official documents lying hidden and unknown in the department archives at Washington, add a mass of material as considerable in character as in size to all that previous writers upon the subject have had at their disposal. Not only is his knowledge of so much new material a justification in itself for reëxamining the old, but it has also afforded him an opportunity to do a public service in restating the whole story with accuracy of detail and with fullness of citation from the new sources not otherwise accessible even to students. But in performing this task Mr. McCaleb has felt compelled, in justice to his own convictions, to propound a new interpretation of the conspiracy which challenges attention. It is original; is it sound?

Mr. McCaleb holds that Burr did not commit, nor even conspire to commit treason. The proof is, first, the testimony of prominent Westerners who deny that they ever had any treasonable dealings with him; secondly, the fact, which the author proceeds to demonstrate, that the West was so loyal to the Union that a conspiracy to sever the Union was preposterous; and, thirdly, the falsity of the evidence hitherto accepted in support of the whole charge.

The contemporary idea that such a treasonable movement was on foot was due almost wholly to articles published in the *Western World* at Frankfort, Ky. The Frankfort *Palladium* repudiated them at the time, and the editors of the *World* admitted before the Kentucky grand jury that they were false. Nevertheless they traveled over the mountains to the East, where they attracted attention, were copied, and gained a credence for the story they told beyond the power of any denials to coun-

teract. Later, when Wilkinson turned against Burr, he told the same tale as if from original knowledge (p. 141). Jefferson gave full credence to the story thus corroborated, and published his proclamation against Burr. Thereupon the Western people, believing that Jefferson would not have acted thus without certain knowledge of the fact, were themselves convinced that Burr must have been conspiring with somebody in their midst to take them out of the Union (pp. 185, 189). So the vicious circle of evidence was complete, yet it was false and founded on two falsehoods.

There is then left the testimony of Merry and Yrujo, who in their contemporary letters to their superiors relate the treasonable conversation of Burr and Dayton with them. Perhaps the student might, with some confidence, be left to decide for himself which mass of testimony has the preponderance. On the other hand, the attempt to conspire with Merry might be confessed and avoided, so far at least as any implication of the West in it is concerned, by urging that no overt act was committed and that such a conspiracy, like the old Spanish conspiracy, "in the nature of things" must have been confined to a few "politicians" and "pensioners." Mr. McCaleb, however, undertakes to deny even this. He offers the explanation that Burr merely pretended to these men to be plotting the severance of the Union in order to get half a million dollars or less in money for his enterprise against Spain. Thus our author would acquit Burr of harboring any treasonable purpose at all by exhibiting him in the act of trying to obtain money under false pretenses, an offense the heinousness of which depends upon the amount of the money and the nature of the pretenses. In fact, between Burr the traitor and Burr the knave there is little choice. But it is something worth while to have the loyalty of the West vindicated.

Again, regarding Burr, Mr. McCaleb holds that he did commit a high misdemeanor against the United States in that he began on its soil an expedition against Spain. It was fortunate for Burr and Blennerhasset, but unfortunate for the truth of history, says our author, that the government failed to make out a case of treason against at least one of them. For, had they been put upon their defense, they must almost certainly have convicted themselves of high misdemeanor in the effort to escape the more serious charge (pp. 355-356). In the end they escaped punishment for the lesser crime also because of "a slight reaction in their favor," the disgust of their prosecutors, and the pressure of other matters (p. 361). It is impossible here even to summarize the evidence on this head which Mr. McCaleb gives, some very interesting parts of which come from Spanish sources.

One of the most striking features of the book is the attitude towards the idea of a filibustering expedition against Spanish territory which Mr. McCaleb attributes to the people of the west. The West had two characteristic attributes, he says — a vigorous national consciousness and an intense hatred of Spain. "Thus for years the West had harbored the most devoted adherents of the constitution and the most unscrupulous filibus-

ters" (p. 13). "In the mind of the westerners, closely linked with their hatred of Spain for her insolence on the one hand and her oppression on the other, came the longing for her fabulous riches, which they meant sooner or later to take for themselves" (p. 6). Burr shared, and was known to share, some of their sentiments against Spain. For this reason and in spite of his past he was in good favor with them; and it was an open secret that he had designs of some sort against Spain, with whom, according to the general expectation of the time, there was likely soon to be war. While the Westerners looked on with sympathy and gave such support as they dared, he planned a filibustering expedition which, as both he and they calculated and earnestly hoped, would, before its true character became so notorious as to bring down official condemnation upon it, be transformed into a lawful war expedition by the acts of both governments. It was Burr's chance to redeem his fortunes. Having prepared himself in advance and being so early in the field, he might expect to win the lasting gratitude of the United States by his achievements, and possibly win a kingdom for himself further south. Indeed there was some expectation that a President who had not interfered with Miranda would conveniently fail to see any filibustering movements in the west (p. 286).

One of the clearest and most convincing parts of the narrative is that devoted to the career of Wilkinson in 1806 and 1807. Throughout the spring and summer of 1806 it seemed as though war would be precipitated on the Sabine frontier. But Wilkinson was dilatory in getting to the front, apparently waiting for Burr to advance his preparations (p. 122). Arrived at length at Natchitoches, he found Herera between him and the Sabine, while Cordero, the superior officer, was at Nacogdoches beyond. The latter refused to recall his subordinate across the river when ordered and war seemed inevitable. But Herera without orders retired beyond the Sabine, and the chance for war was utterly spoiled. It was the situation caused by this act of Herera's which, according to Mr. McCaleb, determined Wilkinson in his purpose to betray Burr. The receipt of the famous letter from Burr just at this juncture afforded a favorable opportunity. If Burr's plans were as far forward as they should be, the failure of war would expose the filibustering nature of his expedition and overwhelm them both. Wilkinson, therefore, determined to save himself by charging Burr with treason and rushing ostentatiously to the rescue of his imperiled country. Then it was that Wilkinson compromised the rights of the United States to the land adjoining the Sabine on the east by making the so-called "neutral ground" (p. 152) treaty with the timid Herera in order to be free to hasten to the scene of alleged greater danger. Then began the process of magnifying the size and scope of Burr's approaching expedition and the danger from the alleged disaffection of the old citizens of New Orleans. Indeed, his own representations of the danger were his warrants for proceeding to govern New Orleans by martial law, although at every step both creoles and Americans, quite in opposition to what he pretended to believe, manifested unimpeachable loyalty and devotion.

When at last Burr's expedition arrived on the lower Mississippi, it numbered barely sixty men with no more arms and provisions, says Mr. McCaleb, than a band of Washita colonists might prudently have carried. Indeed, Burr knew before he left Tennessee that Wilkinson had come to terms with the Spaniards and that there could be no war (p. 266). Burr surrendered and was bound over to meet the grand jury, which, like the Kentucky grand juries, found no true bill against him. The judge, however, unaccountably refused to release him, and, fearing for his life if he should fall into Wilkinson's hands, he fled, was captured near Fort Stoddert, and thence taken to Richmond (p. 275). Jefferson was deceived completely by Wilkinson; and when others manifested doubt in regard to the latter's stories and criticized Jefferson's actions, he took it for partizan malice. At length he lost his temper and his self-control, and began to act obstinately and vindictively without due poise of mind and dignity of manner. The book is without a hero; Burr, Wilkinson, Jefferson are all seen in the light of their shortcomings. Only Burr could say in after times, "What was treason in me thirty years ago, is patriotism now."

The book is not an easy one to read. The narrative, complex at best, is often burdened with controversial matter. There are many long quotations. Though important to the argument and valuable to the reader to whom they are not elsewhere accessible, they often challenge study rather than carry instant conviction. In some important points the testimony is contradictory, and it is only by looking to the weight of evidence that a conclusion can be reached. But Mr. McCaleb's interpretation of the conspiracy, in its most important phases at least, will undoubtedly win acceptance. Few books in recent years have been more enlightening upon their particular themes than this book is.

FREDERICK W. MOORE.

*A History of the Peninsular War.* By CHARLES OMAN, M.A. Vol. II. From Corunna to Talavera. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Henry Frowde. 1903. Pp. viii, 664.)

PROFESSOR OMAN's first volume was duly welcomed. Now comes the second in a solid, sumptuous form, without and within. It is entitled to equal welcome.

The Peninsular War is a maze. Except for the one campaign of Napoleon, and the masterly labors of Wellington, there is no *ensemble* to it. Most events seem to occur in a haphazard way. Much of the good work done proves worthless. "To endeavor to grasp a Spanish corps," says our author, "was like clutching at a ball of quicksilver; the mass dispersed in dribblets between the fingers of the manipulator, and the small rolling pellets ultimately united to form a new force." The terrain was shut in and cut up, so that larger operations were lacking. Victual was scant. The English, aided by the natives, barely existed; the French starved. After reading of Ulm and Austerlitz, Jena and Friedland, and marching in plenty with the Grand Army from