

David Farr. *Henry Ireton and the English Revolution*.

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Historians' obsessions with Oliver Cromwell have a tendency to skew our understanding of the English Revolution as a whole. There is an urgent need for studies to put other figures at center-stage — if only to test the hypothesis that Cromwell was indeed “Our Chief of Men” from 1647 (if not 1642) until his death in 1658. Foremost among these rivals for attention is surely Cromwell's son-in-law Henry Ireton, and in this new biographical study David Farr emphasises that, for the period between the spring of 1647 and the new year of 1649, “one of the most important influences on Cromwell . . . after God, was Ireton” (13). Furthermore, there were occasions when Ireton was far more important than the “hesitant and unsure” (158) Cromwell in pursuing the revolutionary agenda, and it can be argued that many aspects of the regicide and the republican settlement are down to Ireton alone.

Farr's framework is chronological, but his central chapters are analytical and thematic. They cover Ireton's importance within the army, both in its clashes with Parliament in the spring and summer of 1647 and in the various internal debates, whether at Reading, Putney, or Whitehall, that followed. Ireton was also a key figure in the radicalization of the army during the second Civil War of 1648, which led to Pride's Purge of Parliament and a new, hard-line attitude toward Charles I as demonstrated in Ireton's own manifesto for regicide, *The Remonstrance*. In January 1649 the death warrant of the king had Ireton's fingerprints all over it. Farr's new picture of Ireton is compelling. By contrast to a hesitant Cromwell, Ireton is now revealed as the primary motor of revolution. Nor

is Farr restricted in his focus to the relationship between Ireton and Cromwell — in many ways Ireton's friendship with other committed revolutionaries, such as Thomas Harrison or Hugh Peter, was just as important. Ireton's own motives are also discussed in detail, and Farr emphasizes the role of religion, rather than his background in the law, as underpinning Ireton's political thinking as well as his political actions, and concludes that "Ireton was no classical republican but a Bible republican" (154).

The power of these central chapters is not always matched by those earlier and later in the book. While Farr's in-depth account of the "making" of Ireton before 1642 is convincing, his account of Ireton's "reshaping" during the first Civil War (chapter 2) is less impressive, as the narrative is disjointed, and lacks the context necessary to guide the nonspecialist. Important events such as the "self-denying ordinance" (49–50) and the "recruiting" of MPs (51–52), and key players such as the "adjutors" (62–63), are passed over with little explanation. The final two chapters, on Ireton's career in Ireland in 1649–51 are also disappointing. Once again the narrative is confused (and there is no map to help the uninitiated), the argument less well supported, and details are sometimes wrong. Surely "Carwick" (240) should be Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary, and is "Lemene" (242) Lemaneagh in County Clare? Overall, it seems that the author is less comfortable with dealing with the nitty-gritty of the Civil War and Ireland than with the ideology and politics of the New Model Army. But such criticisms should not detract from Dr. Farr's achievement. In his central chapters he has succeeded in bringing Ireton out of the shadows, and in demonstrating that Cromwell was only one of a number of godly soldiers who brought about the English Revolution.

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