ITALY, PRESENT AND FUTURE

VOL. I.

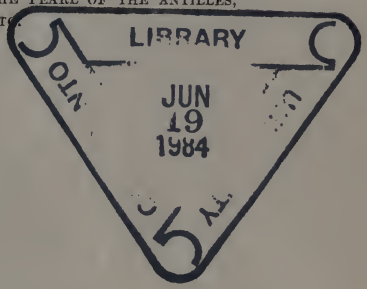
ITALY, PRESENT AND FUTURE

BY

A. GALLENGA

AUTHOR OF

"SOUTH AMERICA," "RUSSIA," "THE PEARL OF THE ANTILLES,"
ETC., ETC.



IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL
LIMITED

1887

Richard Clay & Sons,
bread street hill, london,
Bungay, Suffolk.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

TO

Alfred Austin, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF

'*SAVONAROLA, A TRAGEDY*,'

These Volumes

ARE INSCRIBED BY HIS OLD FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

ITALY, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

INTRODUCTION.

The Italians judged by foreign nations—The Italians judged by themselves—Difficulty of reconciling conflicting opinions—Impression of Italy and the Italians upon a traveller on his return after several years' absence—The bright and the dark side of the picture—Aspects of the country—Habits of the people—Carnival and Patriotism.

THERE is a book of mine, 'Italy, Past and Present,' first published in London in 1841, the aim of which was to show how a country, crushed at the time under the weight of centuries of unremitting adversity, was yet destined to rise again, like a phœnix from its ashes, to a new and glorious existence.

And there was another book by this same hand, 'History of Piedmont,' following upon the first after a fourteen years' interval, revising the annals of the princes and people of that subalpine region, and ending with a conjecture—that the Unification of the Italian Peninsula, at which so many of the

Savoy rulers had been working since the days of the first Humbert founder of the dynasty, would be brought to a termination by the young scion of that house, then Prince of Piedmont, heir of the throne, in whom the name of Humbert was auspiciously revived for the first time after a lapse of seven centuries.

Strong was our faith in those youthful days, and sanguine our hope. To me, as to many of the Italian young men of that period, there seemed to be equal happiness in living or dying for our country's cause; and for my own part, I can freely assert that there never was an act or a thought of a long life (more than half of which was spent abroad) that did not tend to the fulfilment of our dearest national aspirations.

Our success was altogether out of proportion with the efforts by which we strove to achieve it: Italy became an independent and united country; and not only under Humbert, but several years before the commencement of his reign.

This recall of Italy from death to life, with some of the consequences which it involved, must for ever rank among the most portentous exploits of the nineteenth century—an exploit in which, as in the

sacred poem of the old bard, "Heaven and Earth equally lent a hand,"[1] inasmuch as, on the one side, it was owing to a generous outflow of human sympathies, to the force of European opinion, to the sense of gratitude of modern civilization towards the gifted race once placed in its van; and, on the other, to a combination of circumstances in which it seemed impossible not to recognize the hand of Providence, and which enlisted in the revival of Italy the interests of those very neighbours, French and German, who had for so many centuries conspired to her extinction.

But whatever causes may have contributed to it, Italy is now a *fait accompli*, a "thing done," and, as the French phrase seems to imply, "not to be undone;" a French phrase, and very strange in the mouth of a nation which since 1789 has only been doing, undoing, and doing over again.

Wiser people than the French know very well that Fate strikes eternal compacts with no man: with no man, and no race of men; that in the life of nations regress is as inexorable a necessity as progress; that ideas and even principles have their course; and

[1] "Il poema sacro
Al quale han posto mano e cielo e terra."
Dante, *Paradiso*, xxv. 1, 2.

their phases are as changing as the seasons of the year, and the cycles of good and bad harvests; so that what one generation proclaims as truisms are almost invariably scouted as sophisms by their immediate posterity.

Italy is made. Granted! but can nothing ever happen to *unmake* her? Italy is a nation: she has all the elements to be a *happy* nation. Is there any reason why she should not also be a *great* nation? It is to these questions that it seems to me important to seek a solution. Are there in that country the germs of true greatness? Is there even the basis of durable security? To achieve its mission a nation must before all things be sure of moral as well as of material independence. It must feel that, for defensive purposes at least, its existence is as safe as that of any of its neighbours. Has Italy as yet this consciousness of perfect safety? Is her edifice as solid as it is marvellous? In the country itself any doubt on that score would be rank blasphemy; but outside its boundaries that conviction is somewhat less deeply rooted. The existence of Italy as a self-governing country, her neighbours argue, has been recognized by all the European Powers; but it has been guaranteed by none. And indeed neither

for Italy, nor for any other state, can there be a permanent compact of international insurance. A nation must stand either on its own strength or on its policy. It must either be a match for any of its neighbours, or it must know how to avoid every quarrel with all of them. In her valour and wisdom Italy must find her sword and shield.

There seemed, at the outstart, no probability of any disturbance arising for Italy on the part of the great States of Central Europe. Both France and Austria, or Germany, had had quite enough of their rivalry for the possession of a land which they had for centuries been watering with their best blood. They had withdrawn from it in good earnest, and no mere love of conquest would now tempt them to venture across the Alpine barrier again.

Unfortunately the re-construction of Italy, in itself a great event, determined a catastrophe of even greater magnitude—the fall of the Papacy; and the Papacy, when all is said, is still more of a power than the Italians imagined; a greater power in the opinion of Protestant than of Catholic states: a power to which Gladstone's England secretly truckles, a power which Bismarck's Germany has met more than half-way to Canossa.

The dethronement of the Pope-King was the bitterest drop in the cup of humiliation that France had to drain in the issue of her fatal contest with Germany. So long as the Pope is "a prisoner," so long as Italy is One, France cannot be said to have spoken her last word. Every stick is good to beat a dog; should France at any time have her will—it little matters whether a Thiers or a Gambetta, a Freycinet or a Floquet, or even a priest-eater like Clemenceau or Rochefort, be at the head of the Government—in the absence of any better cause, the Pope may still at any time furnish a pretext for a French crusade against Italy. And in any such occurrence Italy would have her enemy's ally within her own boundaries, in the very heart of the country.

War between France and Germany, however remote, is still almost an inevitable contingency; and as infallibly it will begin with France's onset upon Italy; nor is it unlikely that this may happen when Germany's hands are so tied down, so busy elsewhere, as to compel her to leave Italy to shift for herself.

That France is bent on seeking a quarrel with Italy, all her conduct since 1870 may be looked upon as irrefragable evidence. The experience of

these last few years, and the sense of her present position, all tended to impress upon Italy the necessity for a policy of forbearance and discretion as well as of firmness.

Whether in the affair of Tunis, in the purchase of Assab, in the occupation of Massowa, and other recent complications, Italy has been sufficiently wise, whether she has consulted her dignity as well as her safety, seems to me very doubtful; and, as we all know that the blunders of diplomacy have not unfrequently to be atoned for by war, it becomes a question whether in the event of a struggle, Italy would be as strong as her friends would desire.

Italy is, no doubt, armed to the teeth, and prepared at least for defensive warfare. But the strength of a nation lies not so much in its land and sea forces as in the elements from which these forces spring; in the nation's wealth, in its institutions, in its character, in its energy of action and tenacity of purpose. Land and sea forces are but the suit of armour in which a warrior comes to muster; whether the suit will protect him by its temper or crush him by its weight depends on the constitution, on the strength of body and soul the combatant brings with him into the field.

Can Italy in any emergency rely on the valour and wisdom of her children? The Italians were conspicuous enough for both those qualities in ancient and mediæval times. But what of the present? What of the future? The country has gone through centuries of degradation from which, not so much her valour and wisdom, as the pity inspired by her dire sufferings almost miraculously wrought out her redemption. Can these six or seven-and-twenty years of free life have at once changed the nature of the Italian people? Has social and moral improvement kept pace with political development? And is the generation that has sprung up since 1859 much better or much worse than those which in 1820, in 1831, and in 1848 went through their baptism of fire and blood?

Here lies the whole problem; and on these topics it is but natural that the Italians should entertain different views from those of such of her neighbours as are interested in Italy's well-being. There may be conceit and self-flattery south of the Alps, and there may be envy and uncharitableness on the other side. For a nation as for an individual, self-knowledge is as difficult to arrive at as mutual appreciation and justice. The Italians may, as a

rule, have been severely handled abroad; they may have lost the sympathy without winning the respect of other nations; there may be a vast amount of ignorance and jealousy working to their disadvantage. But, on the other hand, there is evident disappointment and despondency even where the disposition to think and hope the best of them was most constant and earnest.

Between the conflicting opinions of the too partial friends, and of the too harsh enemies of emancipated Italy, I may, perhaps, be allowed to take up a neutral position.

Born and brought up an Italian, but driven abroad at an early age, I have however so often re-visited my native land (especially at every stage of her struggle for existence), and I have at all times taken so vital an interest in her destinies, that I ought to be considered no unfair judge of the good or bad qualities of the Italian people; while, on the other hand, my wanderings over various parts of the world ought to enable me to draw comparisons between things as I have seen them abroad, and as I have from time to time found them at home.

And it is with this object that, wishing now to write a book on Italy, which will in all probability

be the last, I have deemed it expedient to undertake what may also prove a final journey to the country, to see what change matters may have undergone during the last ten years of my absence.

The first impression that a traveller—especially one coming from England—experiences as he crosses the Alps is one of unalloyed delight. The "interminable smile of heaven and earth"[1] which greets him as he breaks through the broad open barrier of Susa, and as he proceeds along the Riviera and the valleys of the Arno and Tiber to Rome—even though the endless succession of tunnels barely allows him glimpses of the ever-varying landscape—cannot fail to inspire him with love at first sight. And a little of the interest which the country awakens in him at every stage in his progress is also bestowed on the inhabitants, especially if he arrives on a Sunday, and his first halt is at Turin, where the streets are crowded with groups—family groups of well-dressed, well-behaved holiday makers, whose cheerfulness and friendliness might seem intended to greet a stranger with a special welcome.

[1] "E dell' Itala pianura,
Al sorriso interminabile
Dalla balza s'affacciò."
Berchet, *Il Romito del Cenisio.*

As he goes further to Genoa, to Florence, to the Capital, the lower classes are perhaps a shade less tidy or less clean, but more lively and picturesque, while the innate courtesy and readiness to oblige which characterized Italian civilization from time immemorial, never and nowhere belies itself. Politeness in France may be more elegant, in Spain more stately, but nowhere is it so natural and cordial as in Italy.

The population, if the stranger was at other times familiar with it, is still the same; but if he is an observant traveller, he will not fail to perceive, especially in the rising generation, a more upright bearing, a surer glance, an apparent consciousness of manly strength and dignity, pleasantly contrasting with the vacancy of mien and dejection, with the uneasy look of suspiciousness the same race exhibited in days of passports and *espionage*. Altogether, if the traveller is a man of any sympathy, he will equally be won over to the country and the people, and avow that the symptoms of general amelioration are everywhere apparent.

Presently, however, some of the drawbacks which formerly broke the charm for the stranger as he prolonged his stay, and took a closer survey of things

about him, begin to force themselves on his attention. The beggars and priests are less frequently seen about the streets; but they are not all gone yet, and their numbers greatly increase as one advances from north to south; the prowling beggars with their hideous whine, the lolling priests, many of them fat and sensual-looking, both of them in many cases sheer impostors, hardening men's hearts against true charity and piety, and producing a general impression that "things are not what they seem." The streets are swept and watered as they never were before; but vile odours and sickening sights, offensive to the senses and outrageous to all ideas of decency, still meet you at every turning, at every corner, at the doors, and even in the vestries of the churches—say even of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence—the stench not to be smothered or disguised by all the incense from Araby the Blessed, and convincing the traveller that it is in vain to look among the Latin races for that "cleanliness" which is "akin to Godliness."

And Italy is the land of noises as well as of smells. More deafening than ever is the din of the jangling bells, louder than ever the bawling of *Il Messaggiero*, *il Secolo*, *il Biricchino*, and other more ribald half-

penny papers, the shouting of *Pronti!* *Partenza!* to speed a train that never seems inclined to budge; more than ever shocking is the profane and obscene language of young and old, of men and women; the incessant, all-pervading turmoil and hurly-burly, making the large cities, and especially incorrigible Naples, a pandemonium only befitting a land of savages.

The Italians are considered a fine-looking race. And their women never appear to greater advantage than towards the close of their short but sharp winter season, when the wholesome *tramontana* calls forth the rich tints of their dusky complexion which the summer heat had washed out, and braces up their light but elegant and well-rounded forms which the wasting *scirocco* had loosened and draggled. But among the handsome crowds in the streets, and especially at Turin, on your arrival, you see in one day more dwarfs and cripples, a greater variety of loathsome diseases and deformity, than you would meet in London in a whole year. The causes of this sore affliction are not well known. The crowding together of whole families in one room (in some towns, as in Milan, in the porter's lodge, on the damp, sunless ground-floor; in Turin under the unceiled

roof of large mansions) may to some extent account for the evil. But the race has evidently been ill-fed, ill-lodged, tainted and vitiated from generation to generation: the whole mass looks undersized and stunted; and the disorders attendant on the fathers' sins will not perhaps for ages be rooted out of their misshapen and rickety descendants. In the south, as in Naples, the unhealthiness of the habitations is in some measure compensated by the mildness of the climate, which allows the poor to live in the open air. But their squalor and wretchedness is all the more conspicuous, and, no doubt, little if anything has as yet been done to allay or mitigate such evils.

It is also not denied that Italy is entitled to the appellation of the "Land of Beauty." She is the "Garden of Europe," and there is hardly a spot, even in its flattest districts, where the eye is not gladdened by the combined effects of land and water, air and light. But if nature has done its best for man in Italy, it must be allowed that ungrateful man, in return, has exerted himself to his utmost to spoil and deface nature's work, and that he has robbed both his land and his climate of those advantages which had been intended for his enjoyment, by the ruthlessness with which he has stripped the mountains of

the primeval forests reared by Providence for the protection of the lower regions.

The havoc and devastation date chiefly from the beginning of the present century, the signal being given by the French on their first occupation under pretext of driving the brigands from their shady nests in the bush and behind hedgerows. But it has proceeded hand in hand with the opening of roads and railroads, and the extension of all means of land and water communication.

Not but there are still trees in Italy. The plains and open valleys are forests of dwarf mulberries, olives, and almonds; the hill-sides are beautifully mantled over with the walnut and chestnut. Consideration for the support of the festooned vine, for the feeding of the fattening pigs, pleads for the preservation of elm and oak saplings here and there, in the central and southern regions, in the Marches and Umbria. But no mere forest tree, no foliage only yielding pleasant shade, is suffered to live. You see along the highways, by the water-courses, the mere bare stumps of poor poplars and willows, lopped and clipped, hacked down year by year within an inch of their lives, mere skeletons, suggesting the expediency of organizing "Societies for the Protection of Trees,"

as there are "Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals."

On the hills, in the plains, round the cities, close to the dust of the road, the land is studded with villas and palaces staring and glaring in the sun—that sun of which an Italian seems never to have enough; the houses rising all bare out of the ploughed fields, with the furrows running up to the very door and windows, or leaving at the utmost a little slip of ground for the beans and cabbages of the kitchen-garden. There is nothing so mean and niggardly as the utilitarianism of Italian husbandry. Unmitigated heat and glare forbid country residence in these dwellings from June to September, and what is called *villeggiatura*, whatever there is of it, is perforce limited to a few spring and autumn months. Italy is the shadowless *Schlemihl* among civilized nations.

But far more fatal are the effects of this senseless war waged against the trees in the upper regions of the Alps and Apennines. It has torn open the leafy shelter which, like a Spanish cloak, equally screened the land from the extremes of heat and cold; which, like Providence, tempered the winds to the shorn sheep; which fed the moisture, slackened the thawing of the snows, bridled the streams, and ruled the water

—that water which, like fire, is the best of servants till it becomes the worst of masters. It thus deprived the land of irrigation, while it exposed it to inundation.

Shattered hill-sides, choked-up valleys, and by turns flooded plains, or deserts of gravel and stone in the ever-widening torrent-beds — such are the traveller's sights as he fares along the skirts of the Apennines throughout the Emilian and Tuscan lowlands. The mountain region all the way to Rome is crumbling down in landslips and ravines—the puzzled artist, all the time and everywhere, at a loss for a fore-ground to this grand but yet too often dreary Italian landscape.

It is an old evil, and the Italians have long felt and lamented it; and, in as far as it may be deemed reparable, they are now bestowing their thoughts upon it. Attempts are made at forest laws and forest schools in Italy, and the Government, with some of the landowners, are busy coaxing up a few shrubs and thickets wherever the soil is not needed for more profitable purposes. But the *Rimboscamento*, or re-planting of forests, like the *bonifica*, or draining of marshes, and the *sistemazione*, or embankment of rivers, are gigantic works, and call for far greater energies than

the Italians have hitherto shown—greater energies than they would need to ward off French or Austrian invasions. It is always easier in such matters to make laws than to see them observed ; easier to appoint rural and forestal guards, than to enforce their attending to their duties instead of idling in wayside inns drinking and playing cards.

All enterprises of that nature have hitherto proceeded rather lamely. Much is talked and written, but little is done. The general tendency is to exaggerate the arduousness, or to question the expediency, of such colossal undertakings as the health and wealth of the country would most strongly recommend, either by denying the existence of the evil, or by dwelling on the costs and uncertainty of the remedy. It is melancholy to think that a nation should be unequal to the task of draining the Trasimeno or the Lake of Bolsena, where an individual—Torlonia—managed, single-handed, to drain the Fucino.

The aspect of the country has, therefore, hitherto undergone but little material modification. Much of the so-called improvement is to be seen in the towns, especially in the large cities. Building is going on everywhere within their gates, though not always with sufficient regard to the exigencies of the localities or

the rules of good taste. For such life as may as yet be perceptible in Italy, one should look rather to local than to general government. Democracy has not yet invaded the *Municipio* or Town corporation, as it has overwhelmed the National Legislature and Executive. The "Syndic" or Mayor of a large town, like Milan or Turin, Venice or Genoa, Bologna or Florence, usually a man of rank or wealth, is always a personage of greater consequence than the Prefect of the province—the latter a representative of the Central Power, and a paid functionary, but who has little more than his scanty salary to rely upon for the support of his social influence. Faithful to her ancient and mediæval instincts, Italy administers the city somewhat more providently than she manages the country. But there is something rather too Italian even in her municipalism. Too much is thought of outward embellishment, too little of substantial, practical improvement. Judging from the smells, the cities, especially south of the Apennines, are little better than white-washed sepulchres. Even two or three years after the terrific visitation of the cholera, Naples is still as glaring a scandal and disgrace to the country as it ever was. Of that *Sventramento* or "disembowelling" of the town, by which its

infamous *fondachi*, or unventilated cellars, were to be thrown open to air and light, and for which the nation voted a subsidy or grant to the city of £4,000,000, one has yet to see the beginning. It is melancholy to think that for the Italians, as for all their brethren of Latin race, so little impression should hitherto have been made by the fact that the cholera has made itself as freely at home amongst them as in the most barbarous towns of Asia and Africa; that they should put up with its sporadic visitations year by year, never understanding the necessity of those sound hygienic measures, those cleanly habits, by which Teutonic and Scandinavian races keep the scourge at arm's length without the quarantines, fumigations, and other precautions of which the futility has been almost mathematically demonstrated. Of all Southern towns Naples is sure to be the last to concern itself about a distant danger, and the one which will most abjectly cower before it on its approach.

Altogether what most forcibly strikes a stranger on a cursory survey of the country, is the listlessness and apathy with which questions even of the most urgent interest are shirked or adjourned. The interest of the Italians for their country is cooling day by

day. They had their wish. No room, one would say, is left for further aspirations. No more crying for the moon. No more "Roma o Morte!" No more "Italia Irredenta!" And who could expect them to run wild with clamours for Assab or Massowa?

Unlike the English, the Italians are easily satisfied with the world and with themselves. They are no grumblers. Their country is their own. They have as yet hardly made up their mind what they are going to do with it. Of course they do not like their taxes. They rather despise their Government. They are tired of their Prime Minister, Depretis, who, though above seventy, is never even by his best friends designated as the "Grand Old Man." But there is no real agitation for or against the ruling powers. When politics are not to his taste, an Italian simply *cuts* his politics. "I leave politics alone and speak of something else," says poor Pellico, when released from Spielberg;[1] and a soldier might just as well say, when worsted in fight, "I leave the war to take care of itself, and turn monk." His country's business, an Italian reasons, is everybody's

[1] "Simile ad un amante maltrattato dalla sua bella e dignitosamente risoluto a tenerle broncio, lascio la politica dove ella sta e parlo d'altro."—*Le mie prigioni*, cap. i. p. 1.

business; consequently nobody's business, and at all events not *his* business. What is most common in Italy is the lack of all sense of duty, a deficiency of public spirit of which the representatives of the nation in both Houses of Parliament give the most glaring example.

Step into a café; listen to men's talk at any public or private gathering; you will be surprised to hear what a mere ha'p'orth of sense goes to an intolerable deal of silly, though lively and not unamusing, verbiage. Individually one meets in Italy men of high intellectual culture, and even higher moral worth. But in the mass the Italians appear now as frivolous a race as they ever were. Everything seems contrived to make them trifle and fritter away existence in mild and harmless but senseless dissipation. You come in between Christmas and Easter, you find the people bent on the fun and frolic of Carnival. And you would sympathize with them if they really enjoyed themselves, if their amusements sprang from the natural exuberance of their own animal spirits. But these are hard times for Italy as for all Europe, and little would be the rejoicing if the people were left to themselves. But masks and dances are becoming serious institutions;

they are promoted as a clever speculation, and idleness is forced on the multitude. Private and public subscriptions, State and town subventions, are needed to galvanize men's flagging spirits, and stimulate their blunted tastes. The great object is, as the French say, "*de faire rouler les écus*," to bring grist to the mill of petty inn and shop-keepers; to scrape from poor people's pockets the few coppers that the tax-gatherer or the State lottery have left them; above all things, to make good Italy's claim to her old appellation of the "Carnival nation."

Were it not for the English, the American, the German, Russian, and other foreign tourists who come to make asses of themselves on the Corso or at the Veglione, there is little doubt but the tom-fooleries of Carnival, Carnevalone, and Mid-lent would come to their natural death. But for the decline of those old saturnalia the Italians make up by the frequency of Church and State festivities. San Gennaro's miracle, or the anniversary of some great man's birth or death, the inauguration of a statue, the dedication of a street or square to some worthy's memory, the commemoration of some auspicious event, the mustering of the Curtatone heroes, or other *Reduci dalle Patrie Battaglie* (true or sham veterans

just back from their country's fights)—everything that may bring together a sight-loving multitude, answers the purpose of an idle and noisy holiday. In their amusements the Italians will be children to the end.

Eppur si muove! And yet there is work done in Italy, there is progress, even though slow and desultory. It will be *all right a hundred years hence.* It will take two or three new generations ere we can learn to what extent free institutions, manly education, intellectual development, and moral control have already modified the Italy of the Present, or may eventually affect the Italy of the Future.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARMY.

Italian Aspirations—The Italian Claims—How to be Enforced—Ambition and Discretion—Can Italy be Neutral?—Should she only act as Auxiliary?—Conditions of the Italian Army—Military Aptitude of the Italian People—Italy's Geographical Position—The Italian Frontier—Necessity of Land and Sea Defences.

Few words with respect to Italy better deserve to be treasured up than those spoken by Massimo d'Azeglio when, amidst the exultation of the first meeting of an Italian Parliament, at Turin, in 1860, he exclaimed, "Italy is made. There remains now to make the Italians."[1]

D'Azeglio, both the warmest-hearted and coolest-headed of Italian patriots, well knew by what long and painful stages freed men must rise to the dignity of freemen. What was true six and twenty years ago continues to be a truth at the present day,

[1] "Abbiam fatta l'Italia. Resta ora a far gl'Italiani."

although more than one half of the living population are free-born, and would not readily agree with the fact. Had the emancipation of the Peninsula been the result of a ten years' struggle with Austria, or, if need were, with the whole world, the energies called forth by a sustained action would have given birth to a new race, as it happened in Switzerland at the rise of the Forest Cantons, or in Italy itself at the epoch of the Lombard League of the twelfth century. But the Italy of our days was not—fortunately, as some people think—sufficiently tempered by the fire of adversity. She came too easily through the ordeal of 1859. She fought but little in that year; she fought again, not victoriously, in 1866; she won by defeat. The generation of "Rebels" or "Conspirators," as men may prefer to call them, who gave their blood, their homes, or their fortunes for their country's cause, is rapidly dying out, and a new set of politicians has sprung up, who seem to look upon the long trials their fathers had to undergo as mere legends or traditions,—*Cose antiche*, they call them,—and laugh to scorn the idea of their possible recurrence. They do not inquire by what virtues or by what chances their country became their own; they do not expect to be called upon

to produce their title-deeds. It is *their* country, of course. "Italy for the Italians."

This consciousness, that they have a birthright to their own land, a land formerly the greatest, and perhaps still the most beautiful, too readily suggests to the Italians the notion that their country should at once take rank amongst the most powerful. And, indeed, we have seen that there might be circumstances in which Italy might have to show that she is strong enough to hold her own.

No greater injustice could be done to that people—whatever other faults may be imputed to them—than to suppose that ambition, covetousness, vindictiveness, or any other passion will ever get the better of their strong and sound political sense. A first impulse may easily mislead them; but one should trust their second thoughts. "Back again!" is their motto, as it is of the Scotchman; not the *en avant!* of the headlong Frenchman; not the *durch!* of the headstrong German. In that respect it has been observed that the Italian temperament has something in common with that of the English. The enthusiasm of the Italians, in spite of all vapouring, is easily kept under control; they seldom fail to take a practical view of all subjects; they stick

to realities, leaving their Latin cousins, especially the French and Spaniards, to run after ideals. The very priests in Italy are no fanatics. No Guzman, Loyola, or Torquemada was ever born among them.

That a nation so constituted, so long-headed, should be ambitious, ought not to seem unnatural to the English, considering how deeply they are themselves infected with that "last infirmity of great minds." We hear it only too often repeated that Italy is a restless community, tormented by an insatiable earth-hunger, putting no limits to her schemes of annexation and colonization; so blind in her conceit as to give herself the airs of a first-rate power. And perhaps she is all that; we should be surprised if she were otherwise. There is enough to excuse her pretensions, at least till she shows a disposition to act upon them. *Noblesse oblige:* the past is all there to bid Italy be what she was, or cease to be. She cannot forget her achievements as a fighting, ruling, civilizing nation; she cannot blind herself to the fact that her position called her to be Queen of the Mediterranean; that that sea has been twice "an Italian lake"; that she only lost the command of it when, by the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope, the inland sea had lost its importance in the world's

trade; and that she might hope to recover it now, when, by the opening of the Suez Canal, the world's trade is being brought back to its former channel; both those events almost miraculously coinciding, the first with the decline and fall, the second with the resurrection of Italian nationality.

The aspirations are indeed lofty; but it cannot be denied that the Italians have shown themselves able, and not unwilling, to curb them. From the fact, for instance, that they had, no matter how, made good their claims to their country, there sprang the corollary that they had a right to the whole of it. Hence the outcry for those *unredeemed* districts on the frontier of the Tyrol and Istria, of the Canton Ticino, and the islands of Corsica and Malta, which seemed for a moment not unlikely to involve the Italians in hostilities with Austria and Germany, with Switzerland, with France and England. Hence, again, from the idea that they are called a "great nation, one of the Six Powers," and as such interested in maintaining the equilibrium between the European States, arose their foolish conceit that anything calculated to disturb that balance, any aggrandisement by which one State might threaten to sink the scale on one side, or to "modify the

map of Europe,"—as, for example, Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or France's *coup de main* upon Tunis,—should, by way of compensation and counterpoise, justify Italy's demand for a corresponding increase of territory on the other; such being the pretensions of the France of Napoleon III.—those pretensions which gave her Savoy and Nice, but ultimately caused her the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.

These covetous tendencies, natural and common to every family as to every individual of the human species, met with prompt encouragement among the unthinking classes in Italy, a country where speech has been made free even to license; in the vapouring declamations of stump orators, and in the bragging effusions of farthing prints; but they have been hitherto invariably disavowed, and promptly, eagerly, and sincerely rebuked by responsible statesmen in and out of power, and hushed up by the authority of their official and semi-official organs. The *Italia Irredenta* has had her day, and is now dead and buried; but, be it remembered, not because the Italians have the least doubt of the justice and reasonableness of their national claims, but because there is reason enough among them to understand

how hopeless it would be for the frog to swell himself to the size of the ox, or how little profitable for the dog to bark if he has no fangs to bite.

The Italians, in sober moments, are well aware that hardly any Continental State may be said to be circumscribed within what are called natural frontiers; that every kingdom or empire has within its boundaries, as every landed proprietor within his ring-fence, some petty *enclave*, some debatable border-district, some Naboth's vineyard, which gold cannot purchase and force cannot seize, without undergoing heavier sacrifices or incurring greater risks than the longed-for prize would be worth. The Italians, wherever they look, can see instances of great powers, such as France and Germany, bearing with patience an intrusion upon their natural limits, as the former in the Channel Islands, the latter in Heligoland; they can see them falling back from pretensions which might be deemed legitimate, submitting to arbitration, accepting compromise, and even putting up with affront, for the sake of that peace which is a common necessity, and in acknowledgment of that right of possession which preponderates over the law of nature. And how could the conviction of this necessity, of this preponderance of established might against

disputable right, this amiable disposition to give and take, not be forced upon a new State whose walls and bulwarks are barely rising, whose solidity, it must be avowed, like that of Don Quixote's pasteboard helmet, withstood but indifferently the first trial to which it was exposed ?

For, after all, at the bottom of all this uneasiness, of this jealous, exacting sensitiveness of the Italians in all matters concerning their position in the European concert, there undoubtedly lurks and rankles the recollection of their defeats of Custozza and Lissa. Their instinct tells them that the first claim an untried nation may put forth to the consideration of its neighbours must rest on its character as a fighting power. It may never have an occasion to put forth its strength ; it will be praised and loved for its forbearing and long-suffering temper, for its pacific disposition ; but, all the same, to a new State, as to a young man, Polonius's precept to his son Laertes should be equally applied :—

> "Beware
> Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,
> Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee." [1]

Fight a nation must, if needs be, and not only bravely, but also *victoriously*. For little will it avail

[1] *Hamlet*, Act I. scene iii.

to blame either its soldiers or its generals, or ill fortune, for its reverses. It is only success, no matter how won, that will make a nation's neighbours seek it as an ally or dread it as an adversary. *Væ victis!* is a lesson that Italy has been taught by experience since the days of Brennus. The old, cruel, and in some respects flagrantly unjust taunt, "Italians don't fight," still grates in their ears, and they feel that the baptism of blood, by which the regeneration of a people can be effected, did not go far enough to remove the stains which centuries of degradation have left in their social and moral character. Much as they might otherwise love peace, the Italians might almost be thankful for any opportunity of a fight for mere fighting's sake. It would be a hopeless task to attempt to persuade them that they can never have a war except of their own seeking, or that a war provoked by them can never turn to their advantage. No argument could prove to their satisfaction that their only safety lies in a military organization based on the Swiss system, which should reduce the standing army to a minimum, and muster the whole population into militia regiments and volunteer rifle corps. All reasoning would be in vain.

Of course the Italians are aware that their country

under present circumstances could be no match for France, Austria, or Germany, or for any Power, unless it be Turkey or Spain. But they reckon on the chapter of accidents. They look upon war between the great Powers as an inevitable, and not a remote contingency; and following the traditional policy which has for so many centuries, and so admirably, answered the purposes of the dynasty of their sovereigns (the policy which won for them Solferino, Sadowa, and Sédan), they trust that in the next war they may, being well armed, still be able to sell their co-operation to the highest bidder; so that, either as auxiliaries or as neutrals, they may come in for their share of the gain of the chief victorious combatants.

That such calculations are ignoble, that such a policy would be undignified, and lower their country to the position of the jackal among the European lions, the Italians must readily acknowledge. But they plead necessity as their excuse. Geography gives them no better chance—that geography which, as it was said, "did not allow the Savoy princes to be honest men."[1] They conceive that no pacific attitude on their part, no declaration of non-inter-

[1] The Prince de Ligne, in his *Mélanges Militaires, littéraires*, etc.

vention, would ward off those calamities of foreign invasion from which their fertile plains have so often suffered. It ought to be sufficient to Europe, they argue, if Italy never be the cause of an outbreak or give the signal for it. But if her good-will avail not, if she must needs be dragged into the *mêlée*, it would be too much to pretend that she should permit events to find her unprepared, unable not only to stand her own ground, but also to make the most of other people's necessities, or to turn their blunders or their mishaps to account. Italy, her children conclude, cannot hope to exist on sufferance. Her protection from attack lies on her ability to defend herself, or simply on her reputation of such ability. And they clench the argument with their proverb, "*Chi pecora si fa, lupo la mangia.*"[1]

Unfortunately, as we have seen; Italy can put but little reliance on her military reputation. Ask a French or a German general, and he will tell you, he would feel less confident of success in an encounter with a mere handful of sturdy mountaineers of the Swiss Cantons, than in an inroad into Italy with her hundreds of thousand combatants; and this because the Swiss have on their side the prestige of Sempach

[1] Make yourself sheep, and the wolf will devour you.

and Morgarten, Morat, Grandson, and Marignan, whilst from the days of Fornovo, in 1495, to the date of Custozza, in 1866, the military annals of Italy have only the record of inglorious disasters. Not but the Italians have on many encounters shown themselves valiant soldiers. Not but Emmanuel Philibert and Eugène of Savoy, Alexander Farnese, Spinola, Montecuccoli, etc. (to say nothing of Massena and Bonaparte), have taken high rank among military commanders. But, somehow or other, either the soldiers or the generals have been at fault. It was only as generals at the head of alien troops, or as soldiers under alien generals, that the Italians very frequently behaved with honour. "Conqueror or vanquished, ever to be slave," as the poet sang,[1] has been the country's invariable fate.

So far as mere numbers are concerned, Italy has now a military establishment based on the census of the population. She is fifth among the "armed nations" of the European Continent, coming immediately after France and the three Empires. Her army, on the war footing, can muster a first line of 870,958 combatants, and by the addition of the "movable" and "territorial" militia, the land forces

[1] "Per servir sempre, o vincitrice o vinta."—*Filicaia.*

amount to a total of 2,407,344 men. These troops are, besides, well armed and equipped; they show to advantage on parade, and constitute a well-behaved army, a model of subordination and discipline. The infantry of the line is somewhat under-sized, though robust and active. The cavalry is not all well mounted, but the men, both in that arm and in the *Bersaglieri* and *Carabinieri*, are well picked; and the artillery is admirably appointed and served. The officers are, with hardly an exception, well-instructed, gentlemanly men, full of zeal and honour, proud of their calling, unremitting in the discharge of their duties.

It is a gallant array, no doubt, and looks well on paper. It is the force on which King Victor Emmanuel grounded his hope that the Italian nation should be "not only respected, but also feared." But what is thought of it abroad? A French Prime Minister had the assurance, in a speech in which he gauged the importance of the Powers of Europe from the strength of their military and naval establishments, to dismiss the Italian army with a cool sneer, describing it as "*une quantité negligeable.*" Surely the Italian army deserves "*ni cet excès d'honneur, ni cette indignité.*" Whether she be dreaded or not, Italy

is respected, and her Army, though worsted at Custozza, was not at least so utterly disorganized as were the French troops in their short campaign from Saarbruck to Sédan.

But the proof of an army is in the battle, and how can one answer for its conduct in the field, if it numbers very few officers, and hardly any of the rank and file, who have ever seen fire? Among the veterans of the Lamarmora school, death, or frequent changes in the administration, have wrought terrible havoc. With exception of Cialdini, Cosenz, Ricotti, and very few others, Italy has no tried generals. The Italians, very justly, take no little pride in the exploits of their troops at Palestro and San Martino. But the men engaged in those encounters were not pure Italians. One half of the Piedmontese army was recruited in those districts of Savoy and Nice which were at the close of the campaign made over to France; and the other half chiefly consisted of those Subalpine mountaineers (men tempered by the nature of their rugged soil and climate) whose bravery and fidelity never belied itself in the best or worst times of their connection with the Savoy dynasty. It was by the Savoyard that the Piedmontese was made a soldier. Out of these and out of their

Lombard and Emilian brethren of the valley of the Po, between the Alps and the Apennines, recruits available for good work have at all times been draughted. But these were already the minority in the ranks that mustered at Custozza, and could not as yet have leavened the mass of conscripts taken from southern lands (Tuscans, Romans, and especially Neapolitans), men who have too long been in the hands of priestly or unwarlike lay sovereigns. If we except Piedmont, which always maintained an independent attitude, every effort was made by the former Italian rulers to unstring the nerves and break the spirits of their people. The subjects of those petty despots could never show themselves craven enough to reassure their masters' suspicions and allay their fears. The princes themselves were, as a rule, arrant poltroons and weaklings. Had they been otherwise Austrian jealousy would soon have disposed of them. Cowardice was for hundreds of years forced upon the Italians.

But now the times are changed: Italy has a warlike race of sovereigns at her head, and every effort should be made to reawaken the manliness of a naturally soft and indolent, but not irretrievably debased population. And, unfortunately, what has hitherto been attempted has not met with sufficiently

encouraging results. The rifle clubs and shooting galleries opened with great eagerness on the first outburst of patriotic enthusiasm, in 1859, were either closed or abandoned, in most instances, not many years after their inauguration, being looked upon as possible elements of disorder by the Liberal Government, not fully recovered from the consternation into which it had been plunged by the catastrophes of Aspromonte and Mentana, and the subsequent mad freaks of the *Italia Irredenta*.

More lately, and in quieter times, the experiment of giving a new impulse to these institutions has been renewed, but, away from Rome and from some of the Piedmontese districts (where the practice of rifle-shooting had never altogether been discontinued), with little success. In some provincial towns people seem hardly to have heard of the new enactment about the *Tiro a Segno;* and there is great probability of that bill, like so many others, going to swell the heap of legislative waste-paper. Athletic sports, walking tours, Alpine climbing, boating and riding, are not the diversions in which many Italians take pleasure; similar amusements, like the Alpine clubs and horse-races, being in reality alien importations in which the mass of the people take only

a very mild interest. Since the introduction of the Prussian system of universal enlistment, the Italians seem to think that a soldier's training need only apply to the conscript or recruit, while in Germany, and everywhere in the North, it is with the mere boy in the school that the physical and moral discipline of the future soldier begins. German ideas, with respect to military matters, are indeed making their way into Italy; but, somehow, there is no very deep nor rapid mutual understanding between races which have been for so long a period unsympathetic, if not antagonistic; and the scheme of sending several hundred Italian young officers to learn the practice of the service in Prussia, as well as of young midshipmen commissioned to see a little sea-faring life in English training-ships, may never perhaps overcome the jealousy and self-conceit of the nation which, on its very first start, was confident of its ability to "*far da sè.*"

The National Guard, a French institution, mustering mere "men with a musket," hybrid beings, half-soldiers, half-citizens, intended as a Palladium of freedom, but turning out an instrument of disorder, ended (as everything else that is French ends in Italy) when it had ceased to be the fashion in France;

and as for anything like the English volunteer army, it is an institution which, like everything else that is English, has little chance of being understood, and none of being adopted, in Italy, were there even sense of duty and patriotic devotion enough, and money enough, among the upper and middle classes south of the Alps, to keep up such a force with as little assistance from the Government as it receives in England. Moreover, were even the conditions of the country favourable to such a scheme in all other respects, it would soon fall through and be tabooed as tending to foster invidious distinctions between the different classes of citizens, by putting muskets into the hands of those who alone could afford the time and defray the expense of the service. By far the most business-like corps in the Italian Army is perhaps the smart force of the *Cacciatori Alpini*, a recent institution, consisting of conscripts chosen among the hardiest and most active yearly recruits from the mountain districts, and quartered in the towns and villages at the foot of the Alps, intended for the defence of the northern frontier. These are all so trained as to fit them for that stern and severe work which Alessandro Lamarmora imposed on his famous original battalion of *Bersaglieri*

in 1843, and which had in some measure to be lightened and softened when it was extended to ten regiments mustering 32,000 men on the peace footing. The Alpine Chasseurs, about 25,000 strong, are the flower of the Italian Army, fine men who would most probably hold their own against French Zouaves, Tyrolean Schützen, or any other riflemen with whom they might have to exchange shots.

Taken altogether, it would, of course, be difficult to say what may be the real worth of the Italian Army as a fighting instrument till it is tried. But there is no doubt that it has had and will have wonderful effects towards the general physical and moral development of national self-reliance, the rapid advancement of the whole people, and the amalgamation and fusion of the various races belonging to it. It has awakened the intelligence and raised the moral standard of the Italian youth of the most abject classes, and established compulsory education on the ancient Spartan or modern German system; the only system upon which it can be promiscuously enforced by inexorably assigning to all men for a shorter or longer period a home in the barracks; a system which, while it gives every man a chance, will not prevent the rising of the better classes to the rank

that belongs to them by the advantages of birth, wealth, and culture; for blood must, under all circumstances, find its own level, and the Army, whatever may be the fate of other institutions, must still be based on aristocracy. There must always be soldiers and officers, men and gentlemen.

The results of this improvement are already perceptible, but will be more distinctly visible when the system shall have been at work for another quarter of a century; when the elements of corruption sown by so long a prevalence of former misrule shall disappear with the last remnants of the fast-waning generation; when the soldiers, after their three years' training, shall bring home with them the fruits of the instruction picked up in the barracks, especially should their energies be called forth by the trials and hardships of active service in the field.

Of all the institutions connected with the new life in Italy, no one has given more satisfactory results than the Army, as it appears now, on the peace footing. This does not, of course, imply that the Army would be in a position to meet the forces either of France or Austria in open warfare. Independently of the numerical superiority of the big battalions which either of those two Powers could

bring into the field, and of the advantages arising from long-established cohesion and *esprit de corps*, and from the consciousness of the renown won by veteran troops in a long career of warlike achievements, Italy would have, in a defensive contest, to draw up her untried forces on a line of frontiers which her neighbours have laid out for their own convenience. For it cannot be denied that in that Alpine barrier which nature reared up between the three nations to deter them from mutual outrage and aggression, there are the three gaps of the valleys of the Adige, the Ticino, and the Roya (to say nothing of the open way across the Isonzo), through which invasion from the east, from the north, and west is not easily warded off. That last wedge of the Southern or Italian Tyrol (the *Trentino*), where Germany, from the days of Otho I., in the tenth century, established the March of Verona, intending it as her own thoroughfare into Italy over the Brenner, is still as wide open as it was in the Middle Ages. On the very shore of the Lake of Garda, at Riva, and all along the valleys of the Brembo, the Mella, the Piave, etc., Austria keeps the keys of all the gates of Italy on her own side; the great Quadrilateral itself being originally contrived as a

weapon not of defence for, but of offence against, Italy.

Equally accessible are the plains of Italy from the defiles of the Canton Ticino, across the St. Gothard, and over the Lakes of Como, Lugano, and Maggiore, where the only protection of the southern land rests on the international compact of Swiss neutrality, a compact, since the days of the First Napoleon, only safe in those peaceful times in which it is nobody's interest to violate it.

West of the Ticino the giant chains of the Pennine, Graian, Cottian, and Maritime Alps are indeed a fairly well traced and sufficiently secure bulwark against French restlessness; but in the arrangement consequent upon the cession of Nice in 1860, by which the boundary was to be determined by the parting of the waters, the French staff officers wilfully overstepped the natural landmark reared by nature, and fixed by the wise Romans on the great headland at Turbia (Tropæa Augusti), a landmark placed on the last bluff of the Maritime Alps, and intended as the partition wall between Liguria and Gaul, or Italy and France; the French thus extending their dominion into Italian territory over Mentone and Roccabruna (districts of the Monaco principality,

and ancient feudal dependencies of the House of Savoy), and thus clearing for themselves a path into the valley of the Roya, at Ventimiglia, an arrangement to which the Italians, for a variety of reasons, were not at the time in a position to offer any availing objection.

But, even with the enemy's foot already within her threshold, a nation of 29,000,000 ought to be able to oppose to either of her neighbours, or to all of them, a front sufficient to repel any attack, were her hundred and hundred miles of coasts so armed as to protect their land forces from hostilities in their rear. But, as things now are, a powerful navy is as necessary for Italy's safety as the most efficient army.

CHAPTER II.

THE NAVY.

Italian Maritime Enterprise in the Middle Ages—Venetian and Genoese Settlements in the Levant—Their Policy—Extent of their Trade—Their Wealth and Power—Italian Travellers—Decline of Italian Colonies—Their last Exploits—Maritime Aspirations of New Italy—The Italian Navy.

THERE are few facts more striking in history than the analogy between the part played by the Italians within the narrow stage of Mediæval Christendom, and that performed by England on the more extensive theatre of the modern world. For the best part of three centuries—from the taking of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, to the fall of that city into Turkish hands in 1453—the maritime cities of Italy exercised an almost absolute sway in the Eastern seas. While the Northern warriors of the Cross prayed, fought, and pillaged, Venice, Genoa, and Pisa prayed, fought, and—traded. Venice won three-eighths (*un quarto e mezzo*) of the spoils of the

Byzantine Empire, while the Genoese made themselves at home on the Bosphorus, in the Crimea, and all along the coast which is now Southern Russia.

The spirit and energy displayed by the Italians in those maritime enterprises were hardly as remarkable as the policy by which they contrived to secure their hold of every inch of ground on which they gained a footing. Trade was the thin end of the wedge by which they opened their way to territorial dominion. Wherever the stout men of the North founded ephemeral principalities, the supple Italians established commercial factories. They obtained for them charters and privileges which soon raised them to the rank of self-governing communities, and when the Latin Empire in the East went to pieces, and the Greeks regained their ascendancy on the Bosphorus; or, more lately, when both Latins and Greeks were overpowered by the Turks, it was found that while all the flimsy principalities of the Crusaders vanished, hardly leaving a trace, the Italian settlements alone had sufficient vitality to withstand the shock of all successive vicissitudes, and it was only on Venetian and Genoese bulwarks that the Cross to the last confronted the victorious Crescent.

There is nothing in the achievements of ancient

Rome that may be said to have exceeded the energies of the Italian cities of that stirring period; and if the results were not so great or equally permanent, it was because Mediæval Italy had too many Romes; because each of those Lombard and Tuscan cities was too strong to be utterly overcome and absorbed by any of its rivals; because in their mutual jealousies and animosities they neutralized one another; because there was seldom co-operation, seldom consistency, seldom scope and method in their friendships or enmities; there was no steadiness in their alliances, no implacable perseverance in their hostilities.

There was also, be it observed, no other social element in those Italian communities than the City. Though slavery in Italy was abolished at an early period, the rural population was of no account. Outside the walls there were none but peasants. The nobles, owners of the land, had been stormed in their castles. They lived now in the towns; nominally as mere burghers, but in reality as patricians, leaders, and eventually masters and tyrants of the people among whom they had settled on the footing of equality. Hence the Italians who went out as Crusaders were only citizens. Their settlements in the East were merely commercial factories; they had

nothing of the stability of agricultural colonies. The Italians had a footing in the East as merchants; they did not establish themselves as immigrants. Their *Scali di Levante* (Eastern sea-ports or stations; literally, landing *stairs*) were merely mercantile speculations, founded on the same conditions as the Anglo-Indian possessions; nothing like the plantations of Virginia or Maryland; nothing like the grazing farms of Australia or New Zealand.

Yet even as mere bazaars for the exchange of commodities, it is wonderful to read what development those Italian settlements attained. The Venetians, as allies and partners of the Latin Emperors of Constantinople, had their own separate quarter in the capital, a kind of Latin-Christian *ghetto*, which they fortified with walls and turrets, shutting its gates against all intrusion. They had their own docks, wharves, and piers where their goods landed free of duties; they constituted an independent community, ruled by its own municipal laws, subject only to its *Bailo*, or supreme magistrate, a nominee of the Doge at home; an officer to whom the Pisans in their own settlements gave the name of *Consul*, while the Genoese called theirs *Podestà*.

The Genoese, who had a hand in the restoration of

the Greek Empire in 1261, and, again, in its final overthrow in 1453, were allowed both by Greeks and Turks to establish themselves in the suburb of Pera-Galata, on that hill facing the city of Constantine (ancient Byzantium, now Stamboul) across the Golden Horn, which is the harbour common to both. That hill the Genoese girt with three lines of battlemented walls, and crowned with the Tower of Galata; an edifice of the thirteenth century, which still strikes the traveller as the most conspicuous landmark in that *unique* panorama as one enters the port. From their respective head-quarters on either side of that port, the Bailo of Venice and the Podestà of Genoa, like the English Resident at an Indian Court, monopolised the trade, and with it the wealth and the real power of the East.

The trade of the East, and in a great measure of the North and South, had all in those days to travel across the Mediterranean. It either came up from the Red Sea, across the isthmus of Suez and along the valley of the Nile, or from the Persian Gulf, following the course of the Euphrates, or from Central Asia, along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea and the skirts of the Caucasian isthmus, or finally it flowed from the great Russian rivers, the

Volga and the Don, through the Caspian Sea, the Sea of Azoff, and the Black Sea into the Mediterranean, and across it to the Western world. Along the shores of Azoff and the Black Sea, on the coasts of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, the Italians had their *scali* or steps of commercial intercourse. But they were not satisfied with a mere *pied-à-terre* on the sea-border. Their missionaries, their envoys or *legates*, their traders, ventured inland, on the track of the Tartar caravans. They were the guests of Mogul Emperors; they revealed the wonders of Cathay, Cambalu, Cipango; they found their way to Novgorod the Great; attended the fairs of Nijni Novgorod, and awakened an emulous spirit in the cities of the Baltic and the North Sea.[1]

The first thought of those enterprising Italian

[1] Cesare Balbo ('Storia d'Italia,' p. 230; Lausanne, 1848) gives the following names of enterprising Italian mediæval travellers.

Giovanni da Pian Garpino, an Italian (as early as 1246), Andrea di Longimello (1249), Rubruquis, a Dutchman, and Bartolomeo of Cremona (1253), monks and missionaries, went forth and preached to the Moguls; Anzelino, a Dominican, was the Pope's ambassador to the Shah of Persia (1254). These were followed (1270—1295) by that Polo family, and especially by that Marco Polo, who visited, resided in, and described Mongolia, Tartary, China, India, and all Asia under the first descendants of Gengis Khan. Next came, also as explorers of Asia, Oderico of Pordenone, a Franciscan (1314—1350), Marco Cornaro, a Venetian (1319), Pegoletti (1335), and Maria Sanuto (1325).

merchants, wherever they settled, was to place their merchandise in a state of defence. Round their shops, on the landing-place, they invariably reared a fortress. From their first settlement at Galata the Genoese sailed out into the Black Sea; they struck up an acquaintance with the Crimean Tartars, and obtained from them, in 1266, a little strip of land along shore near the spot of ancient Theodosia, where they built their ware and dwelling-houses, surrounding them with trenches, which at first awakened no suspicions among the simple people they had to deal with. From such humble beginnings, we are told,[1] "they proceeded with such adroit management, that the place which was intended for a factory or bazaar soon grew into a stronghold. They called it Caffa, and it became a city of 80,000 inhabitants, rivalling the splendours of Galata and of Genoa itself." And Caffa threw out new colonies along the Crim coast, at Balaclava, Sudak, Yalta, and farther on the Strait of Tenicale or Kertch (*Cerchio*), as well as along the coast of the Sea of Azoff at *La Tana*, near the mouth of the Don (*Tanais*), where their establishments have now grown into the Russian

[1] Sauli, Lodovico, 'Della Colonia Genovese di Galata, Libri Sei,' Turin, 1831, Vol. I. p. 219.

ports of Taganrog, Rostok, and Berdiansk, and whence the Genoese supplied Europe with the timber, tar, tallow, hemp, flax, and other produce of the interior of Russia.

As the first-comers were few in number, seafaring traders rather than warriors, and more apt to handle the yard measure than the sword, their instinct when out of their element was to fight their battles behind stone walls. We need no better proofs of their constructive genius than the massive ruins still strewing the shores of those Eastern seas—the Genoese walls at Galata, their cathedral at Kertch, the Venetian fortress at Chalkis, closing the canal of Evripos (*Negroponte*). Wherever a steep headland, a narrow channel, or small inlet gave them the command of the sea, at Tenedos, Gallipoli, or on the coasts of Metelin, Scio, Cyprus, etc., their naval stations were laid. They little cared who the house belonged to, so they secured the door for themselves; they showed little eagerness to rule, though they put up with no interference with their own self-government. Though Venice could easily have won her titles to Cyprus in 1204, she was satisfied with the monopoly of its trade, and gladly allowed the House of Lusignan to wear its crown; the Republic only

claiming its sovereignty as heiress of Caterina Cornaro, widow of the last of that dynasty in 1473. Unfortunately this wise policy of moderation did not endure to the last. Ambition kept pace with commercial prosperity; conquest was imposed by the exigencies of trade. And as there were two, or at first three, of a trade, they could hardly be expected to agree. The Pisans were eventually driven from the field in 1299; but the Genoese and Venetians carried on their internecine wars to a later date (1257—1382), and were by them utterly exhausted, when all their joint efforts might perhaps have saved them; but when single-handed they were sure to succumb.

As the feuds of her inland cities made Italy an easy prey to French, Spaniards, and Germans, so the quarrels of her maritime Republics brought about their defeat by the Turks. Italian traders had found it easy enough to outwit the Tartars and to bully the Greeks; but the Osmanlis proved to be tougher customers, and dealing with them was for a long time a task above the most valiant nations of the West. Following the policy which had so well succeeded with the Greeks and Tartars, the Italians were often tempted to make common cause with the

Ottoman. It was with the help of the Genoese that Mahomet II. made his way into Constantinople in 1453; but it was not long afterwards, in 1474, that Genoa was driven by the same Ottomans from her colonies of Caffa and Tana, and Venice from the mainland of Greece, in 1479.

Ere Genoa and Venice had leisure to recover from those long and disastrous Turkish conflicts, the supreme hour of Italy was at hand. On the very plains where the natives of that "ill-fated land"[1] had shed their blood in fratricidal feuds, three foreign nations suddenly rising to the rank of great compact Powers—France, Spain, and Germany—chose their battle-fields. It took all the cruel experience of more than half a century (1492—1559) to cure the Italians of their fond delusion that one of their free cities or one of their princes might be a match for all the strength of an empire. All alone Venice withstood the simultaneous onset of two of those Powers, France and Germany, backed as they were by the Pope and several other Italian States, all

[1] "Tu che angusta a' tuoi figli parevi,
Tu che in pace nutrirli non sai,
Fatal Terra, gli estrani ricevi,
Tal giudizio comincia per te!"
Manzoni, *Carmagnola*, Act II., Chorus.

members of the League of Cambray (1508—1512). Never did Italian valour and genius, never did earnest, ardent, though narrow municipal patriotism, shine forth more conspicuously than at that terrible juncture; never was Italian blood shed more lavishly; but it was rather to hasten and complete than to avert a fate which had then become inevitable. Had the Italians fought for themselves with half the bravery which they displayed against one another, often in the cause of a foreign foe, no force of destiny could have hurled them from the place they so long filled at the head of the civilized world.

Italy had ceased to exist, but there remained the Italians. The energies which all that era of life and strife had roused into action could not all at once subside. They looked for employment in any capacity in which they could be turned to good account. A strong self-reliant individualism had always been characteristic of the Italian race. Driven from home, or disgusted with it, they went forth as adventurers—soldiers, sailors, and statesmen—and were heard of as leading men far and near. It was not only Columbus and Vespucci with the Spaniards, but Cadamosto with the Portuguese, Verrazzano with the French, the Cabots with the English, the Zeni, and others,

who overthrew the Pillars of Hercules, steered along the coast of Africa, and showed the way across the ocean. And even their achievements as navigators conspired to the ruin of their country by diverting the world's trade from its ancient channels across the Mediterranean, doing away with the importance of their settlements in the Levant.

To those settlements, however, the old gate to the Far East, the Italians clung as to their peculiar sphere of activity. Venice, which was all of Italy that stood up for independence, bleeding as she was from every vein after that struggle of the Cambray League, based her safety on a policy of absolute neutrality in all the quarrels of her neighbours of *Terra Ferma*, and turned all attention to the Levant, where for centuries she engaged in a life and death struggle with her old Mohammedan foe. It was the same policy that England resorted to after 1815, when, worn out by her gigantic struggle with the France of Napoleon, she withdrew from all interference in the affairs of the Continent, all absorbed by her vital interest in her Transmarine possessions.

Long after the fall of Constantinople, Venice was the bulwark of Christendom in the Adriatic and the Egean, waging against the Turk those wars of Cyprus,

of Candia, of the Morea, which lasted some of them for fifteen, some for five-and-twenty years; losing wars in the long run and for the most part, but fought with sustained heroism and occasional success; —in one instance, at Lepanto, in 1571, with a glorious victory.

In that encounter, which closed the era of the Crusades, Venice rallied round the banner of St. Mark the sea forces of all the Italian States but one. It was the last battle fought by the Italians as a nation; for though Spain, with the Genoese, Neapolitans, and Sicilians, was present, and Don John of Austria had the supreme command, the brunt of the fight was borne by the Italians,—the Venetians,—who mustered the largest forces and the ablest commanders, who were assigned the post of honour, and suffered the heaviest losses.[1]

That battle, one of the most memorable episodes of maritime warfare, was barren of results; because Spain, jealous of Venice, and dreading a revival of the half-crushed energies of her Italian subjects, looked upon that triumph as an "untoward event," and refused to follow up an advantage which might

[1] Botta, 'Storia d'Italia,' *dal* 1492, *al* 1789. Turin, 1852, Vol. III. p. 62.

have broken the naval power of the Ottoman Empire for ever.

Spain acted at that juncture as France did at the close of the Crimean campaign in 1856, when she forced on a peace, lest a continuation of the war should prove a greater gain to her English ally than a loss to her Russian foe.

It is by the light of these mediæval traditions that one should interpret the aspirations of Italy at the present time. Her thoughts on her first consciousness of reawakening existence were instinctively turned to the Levant, to that region where Ferdinand de Lesseps, undoing the work of Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco de Gama, was just then reopening the gate to the Far East. If the Mediterranean was again to become the main route of the world's trade, the Italians reasoned, what country in Europe should benefit by it more than the one that was twice the Queen of that sea ; which lies athwart that sea like a great pier pointing eastwards, and which, by the achievements of those Alpine tunnels to which she so powerfully contributed, best serves as the short cut from the whole north-west to the whole south-east ?

And the Italians were fully justified in their estimate of the advantageous position of their peninsula ;

but they should not have forgotten that "unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." They should not overlook the fact that, although they have now risen to the rank of a nation, they have still to run a race with other nations having a three centuries' start of them. The Italians have been already once in too great a hurry to take the field, in 1866; and they did so with the odds considerably on their side both by land and sea; yet the results were Custozza and Lissa. It may be allowed that their combatants behaved with great gallantry in both those encounters; the ill-success may be laid to the charge of their leaders. But, as we have hinted, to take her place among nations Italy must show, not only that she can fight well, but that she can fight victoriously. She must supply, not only the soldiers and sailors, but also the generals and admirals. Nothing can be more natural than that the Italians should wish to blot out the remembrance of those two ominous battles; but their wishes must alternate between the hope that by venturing into future contests their country may redeem its military credit, and the fear lest they might further compromise it.

Those who call out to the Italians, "*Armatevi! Difendetevi!*" should also add, "*Agguerritevi!*" Not merely "Make yourself *soldiers*," but "first be *men*." And how can they be men till their whole race is re-generated and re-tempered by a general physical, mental, and moral discipline? How can they hope in little more than a score of years to have cast off the habits of sloth and indolence contracted during the calamitous times elapsing between Lepanto and Lissa? Have they forgotten

"*Quantæ* molis erat Romanam condere gentem"?

We have already seen how, with land forces exceeding two millions of men, Italy is numerically unequal to a trial of strength with either of her two immediate neighbours, France and Austria, to say nothing of the still greater German and Russian Empires. We have seen how, in the event of a war, her army would have work enough to guard her Alpine frontier, and would have to depend on her maritime power for the defence of her line of coasts, a line extending to 6340 kilometres, including the islands. Though Genoa, Spezia, and other naval stations have now been carefully fortified, and Rome, like Paris, relies on a whole system of detached forts to screen her from a *coup de main*, Italy would still

require a very strong naval armament for the protection of her numerous sea-ports, some of them more or less exposed to the outrage of an enemy.

And it cannot be said that her rulers have been remiss in their attention to this part of her duty. The number of their men-of-war of the first, second, and third class is as yet inferior to that of the five great European powers, England, France, Russia, Germany, and Austria Hungary. But she makes up for such deficiency by her muster of some of the largest and mightiest ironclads of the first class ever constructed. These are those sea-monsters, *Duilio*, *Dandolo*, *Italia*, *Lepanto*, *Lauria*, *Morosini*, *Doria*, now all ready, or in an advanced stage of construction, to which others, *Re Umberto*, *Sicilia*, etc., are added year by year; vessels 103,50 to 122,54 metres in length, and 19,76 to 22,80 in width; of 11,138 to 13,898 displacement tonnage; with 45 to 55 centimetres thickness of armour-plate, with double engines of 7710 to 18,000 horse-power, and armed with cannon of 100 tons weight; originally intended as floating fortresses for coast defence, but equally fitted for long cruises, some of them running at the rate of eighteen knots an hour; vessels manned by crews of 421 men, and the construction of each of which

cost 20,000,000 to 21,000,000, and even 25,000,000 Italian lire, one million sterling!

Besides these there are fourteen second-class and fifteen third-class vessels, transports, training-ships, torpedo-boats, gun-boats, etc., etc., built or building, which will give the Italian Royal Navy a force of 130 vessels, with 35,000 men and officers, including the men of the Reserve or "Second Contingent."

It is, nevertheless, very doubtful whether Italy by sea, any more than by land, is now or ever will be able to take her standing among the nations of the very first order. There is fortunately, or unfortunately, very little work these formidable leviathans of the sea may be put to, besides that of conveying one of the princes of the blood to a royal wedding or to some other auspicious ceremony, or of escorting a Consul-General, or Envoy Extraordinary to insure a friendly reception to the representative of Italy on the part of some petty semi-civilized African or South American potentate. Very rare, however, are even such occasions of flaunting the Italian tricolor in remote seas, or of awakening half-inhabited and inhospitable coasts by the roar of Italian artillery. The home of Italy's fleet is her inland sea: her sailors lack frequent opportunities of inuring them-

selves to the inclemencies of tropical climates, or to the violence of oceanic storms. Like the Sultan's fleet, that of Italy may rot in harbour for scores of years, only to be called out in the end under circumstances in which even all the zeal and dash of a Hobart Pasha can find no chance of useful employment, or, like that of King George of Greece, to be blockaded in its own waters, treated with scorn and contumely by the squadrons of the overbearing foreign Powers.

The real strength and importance of a nation, be it repeated, cannot be gauged by the mere muster of its land and sea forces. It must rest on the economical and financial conditions out of which the means for the maintenance of the Army and Navy are raised. A great royal or national fleet is only an encumbrance unless it is supported by a very active and thriving mercantile marine. War, even successful, is the most expensive luxury a State can indulge in, and in its scale gold weighs fully as much as iron.

The Italians need no better proof of these truisms than that which flows from the history of their own country. Ancient Rome ravaged the world by arms; Mediæval Italy civilized it by arts. The Romans went

forth as bandits; the Genoese and Venetians as merchants. Yet the factories of those two cities, had there been peace between them, might have reared beyond seas a more durable edifice than ever was achieved by the legions of the Cæsars. And it was in their capacity of trading communities that Holland and England ruled the waves and extended their sway over the remotest regions. If the Italians are desirous to know what place after a quarter of a century's existence their country now holds, or is likely hereafter to hold, among European nations, they must look to the conditions of their husbandry, trade, and navigation at the present moment, and at the capabilities of their further development from year to year.

This is no longer the age in which a country can achieve greatness merely by fighting. In our civilized days a nation may, of course, in any emergency be prepared to fight. But it must at all times, and above all things, be willing to work.

CHAPTER III.

DIPLOMACY.

France and Italy—French Hostility to Italy—The Triple Alliance—Germany, Austria, and Italy—*Nos amis, les ennemis*—Bismarck's Policy—France in Tunis—Her Object—Her Gain—Her *Modus operandi*—Modern Diplomacy and Warfare—Colonizing Mania—Europe in Africa—Italy at Assab—England and Italy—Italy at Massowah—Object of the Expedition—Its Results.

WHATEVER considerations of sound policy may incline the Italians to wish for the continuation of European peace, there is at all events one of their neighbours with whom it will task all their forbearance and discretion to avoid incessant disputes.

France, the Italians think, hates them with the intense, undying hatred, not of him who has received, but of him who has inflicted an injury. She fought for them at Magenta and Solferino, but she has never concealed her desire to undo the work that those two battles initiated—a work which in its ultimate results

went too far beyond her calculations or intentions; and she has lost no opportunity of humbling and working mischief to those whom she had so improvidently benefited.

There never was a case of any man at the head of public affairs in France who, finding himself more than commonly harassed and embarrassed by the difficulties of his home policy, was not tempted to seek his safety in some desperate shift of foreign adventure. That phrase, "*Il me faut déborder*," with which that gambler of gamblers, Napoleon III., addressed Cavour at Plombières, in August 1858, describes the state of mind by which the conduct, not only of that Emperor, but also of all his predecessors and successors, has been and must needs be at all times determined. It is a necessity for that turbid and impetuous river, France, to overflow its banks, and since the days of Charles VIII., in 1494, the softest ground at which the dike was most frequently broken was poor divided and distracted Italy.

Were it not for Germany! It is true: it was Bismarck's Germany which enabled Italy to accomplish the work of her unification in the very teeth of France's emphatic "Never!" and it is Germany

alone which now prevents new attempts of France to carry on her old work of devastation across the land of united but not yet fully armed Italy. Bismarck is well aware that a French invasion of North Italy, and the disruption of the Italian kingdom, would, if successful, be the prelude to a war, the ultimate object of which would be the disintegration of the German Empire. There were causes at work which compelled the very nations which had been the most inveterate foes to become the fastest friends. This necessity which brought about the reconciliation of Prussia with Austria, and of Austria with Italy, is still and may long be at work. There is little love and no reciprocal trust between them; but they cannot help obeying that instinct of self-preservation which prompts them to keep together and form a compact bulwark against fretful French *chauvinism* on the one side, and towering Russian ambition on the other. It is not on a compact of defensive alliance stipulated at Berlin, or upon the cordiality of a yearly interview of the three Emperors and their Ministers at Gastein or Ischl, that the peace of Europe depends. Nations in our days count for something more than monarchs or statesmen. Out of the 83,000,000 constituting the joint

population of Germany and Austria-Hungary, more than 41,500,000 — very nearly half — are Roman Catholics, and Baretti taught us what the difference is between *Cattolici all' Italiana* and *Cattolici all' Inglese;* and he might have said, between all Teutonic and all Latin Catholics. Of those of Germany and Austria-Hungary we can easily judge from the fact, that at the Vatican Council of 1869 their Archbishops and Bishops almost unanimously spoke and voted against the dogma of Papal Infallibility, and all of them, one by one, on their return to their sees, accepted and enforced that same dogma, their zeal for the unity of the Church and Papal supremacy outweighing all their convictions and their sense of duty to God and their people. It is with this mass of earnest believers that Bismarck well knew he had to reckon when he declared that "he would not go to Canossa." But he has since gone far on his way to that ancient stronghold of priestly arrogance, and no one can say at what price he or his successors may in the long run have to purchase their peace with Hildebrand's representative. In any contest between France and Italy affecting the present arrangement in Europe, Bismarck could certainly not be inactive. But his

policy goes no further than that. In matters concerning Italy's interest beyond seas, his conduct would be limited to a "benevolent neutrality." Like the keeper of a gambling-house, his business would be to watch the game, little caring how desperate might be the stakes of the players engaged in it, so only the result may be a great demand and consumption of the packs of cards himself deals in.

It is thus that Bismarck contemplated with a quiet grin the ill-blood arising between France and Italy in that sorrowful affair of Tunis. Nothing that can involve France in remote and expensive, bootless and wasteful expeditions comes amiss to the German Chancellor; and it is indeed astounding that the men at the head of the French Republic should so blindly play into his hands; that they should not perceive how much it is for the interest of all France's neighbours that she should exhaust her forces in such unprofitable undertakings. But Bismarck sees it, and there is no new scheme of French annexation in Africa or Asia, in Madagascar or Tong-Kin, or the New Hebrides, in which he has not humoured, set on, and applauded his unwary Western dupe.

Unfortunately French stolidity could not so blindly be hoodwinked by all that contrivance of German

subtlety without wounding Italian susceptibilities. But perhaps Bismarck was not sorry that, whilst France lavished money and shed blood to add to the burden of her Algerian possession by the annexation of the Tunisian territory, Italy should be taught how utterly powerless was her position, and how idle it would be for her to aspire to an independence of action which would simply reduce her to isolation.

The lesson was bitter though salutary. Of course Italy fancied she had vital interests in Tunis, and the occupation of that Regency by France could not fail to be to her an intolerable grievance. Before even she existed as a nation, there was already an Italian colony, indeed a cluster of Italian colonies, near the site of old Carthage. Four of the former petty States of the Italian Peninsula — Piedmont, Naples, Rome, and Tuscany—had their Consuls accredited to the Tunisian Bey. At the time of the first French onset upon Algeria in 1830, it had seemed natural to political speculators in the two peninsulas of Southern Europe, that the French, apprehensive of a joint effort of all the Moorish Powers against them, should wish for the co-operation of their brethren of the Latin race in their foolhardy African enterprise. It was suggested as

plausible, that while the French assailed Algiers, the Spaniards should extend their settlements in Morocco (where they had already a *pied-à-terre* in Ceuta, Melilla, etc.), while the Sardinians should endeavour to seize upon Tunis, and the Sicilians upon Tripoli. But France would hear of no such proposals; she withstood all the brunt of the battle, and insisted on securing the whole prey.

When the Italians rose to the rank of a nation in 1860, they found themselves already quite at home in Tunis. They had there, in 1871, a population of 5899 subjects, which in 1881 had become 11,106, while the English (chiefly Maltese) were about 10,000, and the French did not exceed 1000. These numbers, and the proximity of Tunis to the Italian shores (barely eighty miles from Sicily), naturally gave Italy the benefit of the most frequent intercourse between the two Continents. The Italians had for a long time an open field for their activity in Tunis; for France had her hands sufficiently full in Algeria, and since 1870 she had only been anxious to "efface herself" and let others live. Still the progress of Italian influence over the Bey's Government and over all the affairs of the Regency was wormwood to her, not so much perhaps from any dog-in-the-

manger feeling (for she was not, for the nonce, bent on *victoires et conquêtes*), as owing to the old rancour with which her heart had been filled by that triumph of Italian unity which had paved the way for German supremacy.

That in the mind of some, perhaps of many Italian politicians, the idea had sprung up that Tunis might at no distant time become an Italian possession, is not at all unlikely; and France at all events took that view of these supposed Italian designs, and bent on thwarting them at any price, she came to the determination that, rather than to allow Italy to have Tunis, she would take it for herself. Conquest of a new territory or anxiety to strengthen and round off the old one was not by any means France's main object, probably not her object at all. Her intent was merely to spite Italy, to pick a quarrel with that country, a quarrel in which she, France herself, might seem to be in the right, or in which nobody had an interest to declare that she was in the wrong; a quarrel in which Italy would be sure to be worsted if she ventured to fight, or in which she would be deeply humbled if she shirked the encounter.

The field was perfectly clear, the prey was within

reach of France's grasp; for the Russo-Turkish war of 1876, and the Berlin Congress or Conference following, had rid the horizon of the clouds of the Eastern question. England, who might be supposed to have interests in Tunis analogous to those of Italy, had about that time compassed that secret negotiation which gave her Cyprus as her own share of the spoils of Turkey, and had engaged to suffer France to do the same in Tunis; so that when the subject was mooted in England in the House of Lords, the head of the Opposition, Lord Salisbury, was ready to agree with Lord Granville, the Foreign Minister, that "the least said about it would be soonest mended."

France could, therefore, have carried Tunis with a high hand, sure that no one would be able or willing to call her to account except that poor helpless Italy, whose objection would have been most welcome, and whose protest was eagerly expected. But even under such propitious circumstances France chose to go to work by round-about ways, by false declarations which no one believed, by underhand manœuvres which imposed on no man's good faith, by a sudden resolution which took no one by surprise —by the same ultra-Machiavellian tactics which she

subsequently adopted in her dealings with Madagascar, in China, in Western Africa and elsewhere, and in which she set an example which other nations, hitherto somewhat more scrupulous, did not disdain to emulate.

For it seems to have become a rule of modern diplomacy, refining on the old-world maxims of the school of Talleyrand and Metternich, that a "crooked path is *always* preferable, even where the direct road is wide open and safe;" that "a lie, or even a pack of lies, is *always* useful, even when truth can do no harm;" that "one should cheat—*always* cheat—not necessarily for what one gains, but for the mere pleasure of cheating." The system consists in massing large forces on your neighbour's border, under a loud declaration of pacific intentions and most emphatic disclaimers of any thought of conquest or annexation on your part. There is some murder or outrage (of your own provoking) to be avenged, some Khroumir or other savage tribe to be chastised, some vital interest of your own to be safe-guarded, some great general object of civilization to be pursued, some inexorable law of manifest destiny to be obeyed —some iron necessity that urges you on, leaving you no mastery over your actions. Upon the strength of

some such pretext you bombard open cities, you overrun defenceless provinces, you occupy a capital, you drive out a Government, proclaiming that you are acting in its name and for its interest. As its ally, its champion, its protector, you hunt down, you massacre, you rob, you starve the population of a country with which you have never been at war, shooting or hanging any of its subjects that dare stand up in its defence, and compelling a peace on terms which, in the perfectly helpless conditions both of the country itself and of its natural supporters, you could have imposed by a mere frank intimation of your inflexible will and irresistible force, and even without striking a blow, without a drop of bloodshed.

This system of "civilized and civilizing" warfare, more ruthless than any brigandage, helped France to the annexation of Tunis. That Regency was coveted not for its material worth, but for the "glory," such as it was, accruing to the victor from the achievement of her conquest. It was taken as a (meagre) compensation for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, as a (sorry) consolation for the untoward "mishap" of Sédan.

On this upshot of the affair of Tunis, Italian diplomacy received a first bitter lesson from French

statesmanship. Success was easy enough to France, for the alternative for the Italians was between submitting and fighting; and, hasty as they may be in speech, they are sufficiently cautious in action, when the odds are too evidently against them. Italy had to "grin and bear," not only the loss of her position in the Regency, but even the harsh treatment to which both her subjects and agents were exposed under the newly-installed French "Protectorate." The result of that easy conquest, it is true, was fatal to France, as it inspired her with a mad longing for equally bootless and improvident, more distant, more expensive and disastrous enterprises; doing away with that financial and economical well-being for which she was indebted to ten years of retirement and self-effacement—a well-being on which she relied for her recovery of the strength necessary for any attempt at "revenge for Sédan."

But Italy learnt as little from her disappointment about Tunis as France did from the success of her policy. For the central position of the French Republic, and the traditions of her long-maintained supremacy in all branches of modern refinement, seldom fail to incline her neighbours, especially those of Latin blood, to an almost slavish imitation of all

her fashions and innovations, to a blind adoption of all her opinions and notions. The mania for remote possessions, for trans-oceanic settlements and dependencies, spread like a pestilence from France to all European States. "Nations," was the cry, "can only enrich themselves by trade. Trade can only thrive by colonies, and colonies depend for safety on the mother country's armament, especially on its maritime establishment." Hence every State, large or small, began to look abroad, speculating on what it might safely take for itself. If, in her undertakings beyond seas, France stepped forward as the rival of England, men reasoned, Why should not other countries follow suit as emulous of France? This was especially the case with such States as Germany, Italy, and little Belgium, new communities, like Schiller's Poet, coming into existence when "the world was given away,"[1] long after all that was deemed habitable and profitable land had been disposed of. Such a rage as sprang up at the end of the fifteenth century for the discovery and colonization of America, is in these our days stirring up all Europe for the appropriation of Africa. The dark

[1] "Was thun?" spricht Zeus; "die Welt ist weggegeben."
Schiller, *Die Theilung der Erde.*

old continent is being shared, carved, and parcelled out amongst strangers, as if it were a desert or barren island. Every nation, one might say, has claims to a slice of Africa, except the Africans themselves. And it would at least be natural to hope, that by opening in those tropical lands a new field for the employment of Europe's superfluous energies, the movement might bode some good to the world's peace; were it not, on the contrary, that the apportionment of the new territories among so many competitors is extremely likely to stir up new dissensions on even a larger scale.

It is evident, for instance, that Bismarck, who winked at France's progress in those regions, could never mean that his own Germany should remain empty-handed. Germany is now the lion in Europe, and must have the lion's share of whatever comes to hand. Bismarck is the wisest statesman, not only because he is the strongest, but because he is the one that best knows his own mind; and what he wants he must have, had he even to use the very Pope as an instrument for the attainment of his ends. Bismarck's mind is made up that Germany shall have her colonies, and he goes to work in the only way in which such settlements can be made to

flourish, by allowing private enterprise to take the initiative, and following it up with the unfailing but unobtrusive support and encouragement of the Government whenever circumstances absolutely call for its interference. It is the system which gave the best development to the English and Dutch West India colonies, the system also, as we have seen, of which the Genoese and Venetian mediæval factories in the Levant laid the earliest basis, and by which Italy, of all countries, ought most constantly to be ruled. The first impulse of the Italians, on seeing themselves forestalled by France in their designs upon Tunis, was to recoup themselves for the downfall of their hopes in that quarter by the annexation of Tripoli. But, to say nothing of the comparative worthlessness of that Regency, any step in that direction might have brought on a quarrel with Turkey, involving also, in all probability, the risk of a rupture with France—a rupture which, Italy well knows, cannot ultimately be averted, but which it is her good policy indefinitely to adjourn. For in her colonizing schemes Italy is well aware that it would be idle to put her trust in Bismarck's Germany; in the first place, because Germany herself is on the look out for colonies, and her Chancellor cannot see what need

Italy may have of Transmarine any more than of Transalpine possessions; in the second place, because Bismarck, since the affairs of 1866, and his pamphlet duel with Lamarmora, looks upon Italy as a shifty and tricksy ally, by no means to be trusted; and in his German antipathy to all that is *Wälsch* he is never sorry for an opportunity of taking a Latin country down a peg, and administering a more or less friendly snub. He would be ready enough to back Italy in any matter in which his own country's interests might be in the least concerned; but in any attempt at aggrandisement he would be sure to leave her to cut open her oyster with her own knife, whatever consequences the operation might have for her fingers. Neither Germany nor France wish Italy to be greater than they have both helped to make her.

Could Italy, her diplomatists might ask, in her ambition find warmer sympathy and hope for more active co-operation in a good understanding with England? And could Egypt and the Red Sea offer better chances for her enterprising spirit than either Tripoli or any other port on the Mediterranean coast?

The question is soon answered. Italy had already a footing on the Red Sea coast. As early as in 1869, before Rome had become her capital, and while France

seemed still all powerful, the Genoese Steam-Navigation Company Rubattino had acquired by private contract the Bay of Assab, or Saba Bay. The opening of the Suez Canal, in November of that year, was expected to give a new impulse to the Italian trade in those Eastern seas, and the Genoese Company, anxious to secure a coaling station in those passages for their steamers, found it easy to come to terms with one of the native tribes on the coast, the Danaquil, and bought Assab.

This first Italian settlement consisted of a mere strip of territory on the African coast, about thirty kilometres in length, and five in width, with an area of two hundred square kilometres; the whole lying round a bay stretching about twenty-four kilometres from north-west to south-east, and enclosed between two headlands, one facing the island Sennabiar, the other not far from the other island, Darmakieh. The shore there is from four to five metres above the water-mark, with an anchorage of eighteen metres at the lowest depth. The locality lies between 12°, 30′, and 13° north latitude, and towards the southern end of the Red Sea, only fifty-five kilometres from the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb.

It is a dreary, God-forsaken spot, with only two

springs of brackish water, barely drinkable. Along-shore rise here and there clusters of the doom-palm, with here and there the crests of a few date trees. Further inland stretch thin groves of the prickly acacia. Outside the bay, on the eastern side, are a few coral islets and bare sand-banks. The whole territory, including two of the adjoining islands belonging to it, has a population of about one thousand inhabitants.

On the 9th of January, 1881, this property came into the hands of the Italian Government, to which it was made over by the Rubattino Company.

The object of the Government in this purchase seemed sufficiently obvious. By this time the political and financial conditions of Egypt, which had long been unsettled, had become altogether desperate, and in September of this same year, 1881, a military insurrection broke out which placed the Khedive's Government at the discretion of a gang of Arab fanatics, and called for the prompt intervention of the European Powers. The Powers most immediately interested in the maintenance of order in the Nile valley (since its rulers had shaken off their connection with the Porte, of which Egypt was now merely a nominal dependency) were France and

England, who had set Tewfik on the vice-regal throne, and established a dual control over the public expenditure in the interest of all the European creditors of that more than half-bankrupt State. In this emergency England, having vainly solicited the co-operation of France, went to work single-handed, bombarded Alexandria, July 11th, 1882, fought the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, September 11th, and occupied Cairo towards the middle of that month.

There had been at first unwise hesitation, and then rash precipitation in the conduct of England; but all was amply justified by its rapid and splendid results. It had long been a maxim understood in England, and universally admitted abroad, that on her ascendancy over Egypt depended England's sovereignty of her East-Indian possessions, and that the loss of those possessions would involve the dissolution of the Empire and the ruin of Great Britain herself. The victory of Tel-el-Kebir had laid all parties in Egypt at England's feet, and rid her of all rivalry on the part of France and the other European Powers.

In spite of this signal success, the Radical English Government, with the crotchety but obstinate old man, Gladstone, at their head, seemed, however, over-

whelmed by the magnitude of their own achievement. They did not feel equal to the exertions and expenses necessary for the conquest of Upper Egypt, and the subjugation of the hostile tribes of the Soudan; nor were they sure that if they engaged in too vast and remote an enterprise, the envy and ill-will of their European neighbours might not rouse them from the observant but not indifferent attitude with which they had hitherto been satisfied.

In their perplexity the Gladstone Government, after a vain application for the joint action of France and Turkey, turned to Italy, tendering to her an opportunity for the gratification of that ambition for which the whole world gave her too much credit. They reminded the Italian Government how the little kingdom of Piedmont, by her participation in the Crimean War, had placed herself at the head of Italy, suggesting that by lending a hand to England at the present juncture, the kingdom of Italy would henceforth associate its destinies to those of the British Empire.

The temptation was great, but it was made before the victory of Tel-el-Kebir had shown that England could place herself above all need of extraneous aid. It was a moment which should have called for the

resolution of men of some daring; and Italy, just as England, had at this crisis mere *old women* at her head. The Prime Minister, Depretis, and his Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mancini, hesitated, and in diplomacy he who hesitates is lost. They were not sure that war in Egypt might not lead to European complications; they did not know what their allies of Germany and Austria might be disposed to say or do. They wished for time to look about themselves, to consult supposed friends, to sound possible enemies. But being pressed for an immediate answer, they simply *declined* England's offer.

England made her bow to her unwilling auxiliary, and broke off the negotiation with a polite sneer, parodying poor Charles Albert's proud but futile boast of 1848, and saying, "*Inghilterra farà da sè.*"

But England at that juncture was not up to her old standard. Her Radical Government felt that their land forces, valiant as they were, would not be sufficient to subdue the wild and fanatic Arab tribes; and they were weak enough not only to harbour, but also to give vent to their misgivings by a gratuitous declaration that they contemplated no prolonged occupation of Egypt; that all they aimed at in that

country was the re-establishment of order, and that, upon the attainment of that only object, they would immediately withdraw their troops, leave Egypt to the Egyptians, in the enjoyment of self-government, subject only to some control over their finances, and some regulations respecting the navigation of the Suez Canal, to be settled by a good understanding of the Khedival Government with the European Powers.

The campaigns of the English forces following upon the victory of Tel-el-Kebir were undertaken with inadequate English and unavailing Egyptian troops, across an inhospitable country and under a formidable climate, and intrusted to generals apparently ill-suited to desert warfare. They led to repeated disasters, adding perplexities to the English Government, and forcing from them fresh disclaimers of any designs on their part of a permanent occupation of the Nile Valley; and new statements of their readiness to enter into agreements with the Powers for any solution of the Egyptian question which might best prove the disinterestedness of England's proceedings.

All that remained for England to do in Egypt, previous to her washing her hands of the whole

matter, it was understood, was simply to rescue some Egyptian garrisons in the Soudan—Khartoom, Berber, Kassala, and others—which the Soudan tribes were storming or starving into surrender. After several of these had fallen, and after Gordon, who had ventured alone into Khartoom on a pacific mission, had perished, the English Government lowered their tone, and limited their further operations to "revenging Gordon," "smashing the Mahdi," "smashing Osman Digma," but in the end falling back from place to place without accomplishing any of those self-imposed tasks, and even contemplating a final retreat from Suakim.

It was while the English were in these straits that the Italians showed some disposition to come to their aid. Whether they acted on England's new solicitation, or upon their own spontaneous impulse, is not clear. The many questions put to the Ministers both in the English and the Italian Parliaments failed to elicit any categoric replies. But what is known is that the Italians landed some troops in Assab Bay, at Beilul, and other points on that coast, and more lately seized on the old Abyssinian sea-port of Massowah, and there concentrated their forces, which soon exceeded 10,000 combatants. It was very naturally

surmised that the object of their movement was to act in concert with the English, so long as Gordon and Khartoom held out, or so long as England seemed bent on avenging their fall; the plan being, that while the English came up from Suakim upon Berber, their auxiliaries should march from Massowah to Kassala, when the allies might join their forces at Berber. But as the English gave up all their schemes of rescuing, avenging, or smashing anybody, and were even on the eve of withdrawing from Suakim, it was supposed that the duty of holding that place would devolve upon the Italians, who should bring up their forces from Massowah, with all the required reinforcements from home. And as the English, pressed by their difficulties with Russia in Afghanistan, were rapidly embarking their forces, the chances were that Italy might be left alone in the field, in a country where, independently of the terrible heat and unhealthiness of the climate, they would find themselves exposed to the hostilities both of the Soudanese and Abyssinians, as well as to the remonstrances, protests, and even threats of Turkey and France, all bent on driving them from their position at Massowah.

The Italian statesmen at the head of affairs did not consider that the England which proposed to *smash*

the Mahdi was no longer the power which crushed Napoleon seventy years before. They could not foresee that England in this instance would not smash even a fly. They could not perceive that this country, though still without a rival in what has so long been her own element, can no longer rank on the Continent as a military power of the very first order; that the mere roar of the British Lion cannot now make up for the big battalions with which, it is said, "Providence always takes part"; that England is no longer a match for such empires as Russia and Germany, any more than Venice, after the Cambray League, was equal to a hand-to-hand conflict with the kingdoms of France and Spain; for in both cases the maritime State found itself confronted by Powers which had suddenly assumed twice and three times their former dimensions. It is not on any man, and not on any party, Whig or Tory, but on Fate, that the blame of all this should be laid—on that Fate which prescribes the decline and fall, as well as it promotes the rise and progress, of all human things. All Palmerston's bluster about "Civis Romanus," all Beaconsfield's vapouring about "Peace with honour," cannot do away with stubborn facts. With all the heroism of her troops, with all the devotion of her colonies, and

her admirable management of her dependencies, England's real strength can only lie in such troops as she can raise in the British Islands on the principle of volunteer enlistment. In great emergencies her Transmarine possessions would be apt to become only an element of weakness.

England is aware of it, and since the fall of Napoleon (let me repeat, like Venice after Cambray) she has never ventured single-handed into a full trial of strength with any of the huge armies of the Continent. It was not often, indeed, that she gave in to such puny antagonists as the Boers of South Africa or the Arabs of Upper Egypt. But the world is now so constituted that one knows with what enemy a war begins, but no one can foresee with what other enemies it may have to end. What if behind the Boers were Holland and Germany; behind the Arabs, Turkey and France; behind the Afghans, Russia?

And yet it was with a *cœur léger*, with little or no consideration of possible consequences, that the Italian statesmen undertook their expedition to Massowah. It was precisely when the imminence of war in Central Asia compelled the withdrawal of English troops from Eastern Africa, that they

apparently chose to make common cause with Great Britain. These were the very same ministers who had refused England's offer at the time of the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, when England's star was in the ascendant, when the suddenness of her action and the rapidity of her success had paralyzed the Arab tribes and bewildered the European Powers; and yet now those same men waited till time and the helpless hesitations and silly declarations and disclaimers of the Gladstone Ministry had aroused the fanatic energies of the Soudan tribes, awakened the dog-in-the-manger jealousies of France, and made England's distress Russia's opportunity, to commit themselves to a course from which no safe and honourable retreat seemed to be open. *C'était beau, c'était généreux, magnifique, mais ce n'était pas la Diplomatie.* And after all what could or what did Italy do at Massowah? Why, it could only help England to do nothing—not a very arduous task. It was policy or diplomacy that would have raised a laugh at Italy's expense, had not Europe's attention at the time been engrossed by England's blunders; had not Gladstone's policy been the object of men's never-ending wonderment.

The lapse of nearly two years has brought no

improvement in the condition of affairs. The English have fallen back, not exactly inch by inch, from Upper Egypt, and are satisfied with a somewhat precarious position, involving the necessity of incessant desultory fighting. The Italians are still at Massowah, where they have as yet no other enemy to contend with than a murderous climate, and where all their operations have been limited to unprofitable diplomatizing with Turkey and Abyssinia. But in both countries the inconsistent and pusillanimous conduct of the Government aroused the irrepressible indignation of the people. In England, Egypt was the main if not the only cause of the ignominious fall of the Gladstone Government in 1885, from which, it is true, it soon recovered, but, as was foreseen, only to suffer a still more disgraceful and final overthrow in 1886. In Italy, Massowah only determined the resignation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mancini, of whom the head of the Cabinet, Depretis, with a flagrant disregard of the rules of political solidarity, made his scape-goat, never hesitating to sacrifice his colleague, without, however, disavowing or modifying his policy. Fortunately, Mancini's successor was General Count Robilant, a man of high rank and still higher character, for many

years Italy's Ambassador at Vienna, the only one perhaps who, it is generally hoped, may be able to bring his country out of the *impasse* into which the haphazard policy of his predecesssor brought it; and who may, perhaps, also and at the same time establish in Italy the maxim that statesmen should not grow up like mushrooms at every field corner; that the rulers of a country, and especially the manager of its Foreign Department, should be chosen not merely in consideration of a man's party politics, or even of his abilities as a forensic or parliamentary orator, but also with regard to his character, to his high feelings and principles as a gentleman, to his experience as a man of business, and his knowledge of men and things, based on many years' practice at home and abroad.

It is, in the meanwhile, not a little remarkable that in the Crown speech by which King Humbert opened the sixteenth Legislature of the Italian Parliament, June 10th, 1886, and in which he congratulated his country on the influence exercised by Italian diplomacy in the settlement of the Eastern (Bulgarian) question, and on the maintenance of European peace, no mention should occur of Massowah and of the part assumed by Italy in the affairs of Egypt.

Evidently that hare-brained expedition to the east coast of Africa, and the consequences hitherto attendant upon it, and the possibilities of bringing it to a satisfactory, or even plausible termination, are among the subjects upon which neither the Ministers nor the members of the Italian Houses of Parliament are inclined to bestow many words. In this respect the Italians seem bent on parodying a celebrated motto of their late King, the bluff Victor Emmanuel: "*A Massaua ci siamo e ci resteremo.*"

Much good may it do them!

CHAPTER IV.

WEALTH.

The Wealth of Nations—The Wealth of Italy—Her Territory—Agricultural Wealth—Mineral Wealth—Industry—Art *v.* Industry—Agricultural Industry—Oil, Wine, Silk, Cattle, etc.—Italy and France—Italy and Belgium—North and South Italy—Symptoms of Progress—Drawbacks and Hindrances—Over-taxation—Unhealthiness—Insecurity.

In order to be a great nation, we have seen that it behoves Italy to be strong. To be strong as a Continental Power she must have a large army. As a country more than half upon the sea she requires an efficient naval force. To breed and feed and train able crews for a Royal or National fleet, she ought to rely on an active and enterprising mercantile marine; and a commercial fleet can only subsist on a brisk, extensive trade.

But the activity of a country's trade depends upon what the community has to buy and sell; on the skill with which it manages to buy in the lowest and to sell in the highest market; either on its capacity to

bring into the market the largest amount of its own superabundant produce, or on the dexterity with which it can promote the barter or exchange either of its own or of other people's commodities, acting as a fetcher and carrier, an agent or broker.

In one word, to be great, Italy, or any other nation, ought to be either territorially or industrially and commercially rich. With respect to territory Italy cannot be considered poor. The Italian kingdom has an area of about 286,588 square kilometres; little more than half that of France, since the instalment of the Republic of Thiers had to put up with the losses of 1870. But the Italian population is now bordering on 30,000,000, *i. e.* it musters about four-fifths of that of France. Add to this that the French population has been for a long time almost stationary, while that of Italy has proceeded at the rate of one million and a half in ten years; so that, all circumstances continuing the same, within an easily calculable period the smaller nation may at the same rate be expected to equal, and ultimately to exceed, that of the larger.[1]

[1] In an Essay by Professor E. E. Kummer, in the journal 'Statistique Suisse,' 1880, page 102, it is calculated that France should have in the year 2000 a population of sixty millions, and Italy of fifty-eight millions.

With respect to density of population relatively to the extent of territory, Italy comes fourth among the nations of Europe, that is, after Belgium, Great Britain, and Holland. In most of her northern provinces Italy is as thickly populated as the most flourishing districts in England. In the province of Milan there are 373 inhabitants to the square kilometre; while, again, in some of the most backward parts of the Italian islands, as, for example, in that of Sassari, in Sardinia, the rate is barely 24 for each square kilometre. In France the average is 71 inhabitants in the square kilometre. In other respects the two countries bordering on the Western Alps have not a little in their nature that is common to them. The soil is equally fertile in both. In wine, oil, and silk, Providence has done as much for the one as for the other. To be a successful rival to France in almost every respect, Italy need only make as much of her natural gifts and resources as France has done and is doing.

That there has been considerable material progress in Italy during these first six-and-thirty years of independent existence no man would deny. She has balanced her yearly accounts. She has abolished her obnoxious *Macinato*, or grist-tax. She has rid herself

of her ruinous *Corso Forzoso*, or forced paper currency, and has sent up her national *Rente* so steadily that it has for some time been standing at par, and even above par.

But all this leaves her still a long, very long way behind France in almost every branch of material well-being. Italy's revenue, for instance, is not more than half that of her neighbour; the imports and exports barely one-fourth; the railways, highways, and telegraphs not quite one-third of those of France—of that Western rival to which in point of natural resources Italy bears the closest resemblance, to which she is apt to look up with the most intense admiration and deference, yet from which she receives the most frequent proofs of jealousy and ill-will, and in which she may soonest expect to be brought into hostile collision.

Even in that branch of expenditure about which all European States are equally reckless—that relating to military and naval establishments — Italy, madly as she has been straining every nerve in the construction of huge ironclads and ponderous cannon, is still far from able to compete with her neighbour's extravagance. Her war and marine budgets are less than half the sums that France devotes to the same branches of the service.

The Italians make the most of these facts, not unnaturally pleading that, however enormous their military and naval departments may be, their expenditure still falls considerably short of the war and marine budgets of France, England, and other States, even bearing in mind the different ratio of their respective area and population. But they seem to forget that the land and sea forces of a nation should be proportionate, not to the number of its people, but to the extent of its financial resources. They should not load a mere stripling with such a panoply as might befit a grown-up warrior. They should learn that as the strength of a State lies in its wealth, so its wealth depends on its work.

There is, no doubt, work done in Italy. That country is above all things agricultural. Eighty-five per cent of her surface is under cultivation, and at least fifty-two per cent of the population are employed in field labour. Though Italy has not year by year bread enough for her people, she ranks very nearly on a par with the United Kingdom of England and Ireland, and with the Empire of Austria-Hungary, as a producer of wheat. She comes immediately after France as a wine-growing country, leaving Spain and Portugal as well as Austria-Hungary in the rear; and

in the export of oil and silk she takes absolutely the first rank. But in almost every branch of agricultural wealth (maize, rice, hemp, oil, and silk excepted), in the production of grain, potatoes, tobacco, wine, and brandy, as well as in the breeding and rearing of flocks and herds (asses, mules, and goats excepted), Italy is vastly outdone by France, both as to quantity and quality, even all possible allowance being made for the difference in the respective extent and population of the two countries.

Nor are the statistical returns of the mineral produce by any means more favourable to Italy. For although gold and silver, iron, copper, and other ores are found here and there in more or less considerable quantities in the Subalpine Peninsula, that country labours under the almost total absence of coal, an absence which is equally felt as a hindrance to the development of all those branches of trade to which steam is applied, and which makes Italy (who is almost destitute of any other combustible, having used up nearly all her fire-wood) tributary to and dependent on other countries for the working of her railways, steamers, and factory engines, and for the blessings of heat and light in her domestic arrangements. The lignites and anthracites which

have hitherto been discovered in some parts of the country, and which repeatedly awakened the hopes of eager speculators, have too often led to disappointment and loss. And we have the authority of Quintino Sella (who was as clever a geologist and mineralogist as an able statesman and financier) to the effect that subterranean fires have laid waste all combustible strata underneath the Italian soil, thus decisively dispelling any illusion on the score of any possible turning up of real coals in Italy. Good Newcastle or Cardiff coal, in inland towns like those of Lombardy and Emilia, not unfrequently costs two and three guineas a ton; and what the price would be, were the importation to suffer any hindrance by war, is not difficult to imagine; for the forces of the country would be instantly crippled by land and sea.

Although Italy almost enjoys in Europe the monopoly of sulphur and fine marbles, it is very questionable whether the revenue arising from her mineral wealth equals, or even comes near, that which is, or might be, drawn out of the same produce in the two other southern peninsulas, that of the Pyrenees and that of the Balkans. The mineral activity in Italy, it is true, has more than doubled

during the period elapsing between 1861 and 1883. The number of workmen has risen from 26,727 to 52,408, and the value of the produce, in round numbers, from £1,103,000 to £2,820,000. All that, however, is no great item in the general amount of the Italian revenue, in comparison with the wealth accruing to the country from agriculture, the average yield of which during the six years between 1876 and 1881 (according to official statements) exceeded £204,863,000; while the population engaged in agriculture, male and female (excluding children of less than eight years of age), exceeded 8,400,000.

Not much less scanty and precarious than the sources of wealth arising in Italy from her mineral produce are those springing from her various branches of industry. Hardly any of the manufactures to which the world is indebted for the necessaries of life can be said to flourish on a large scale south of the Alps. Whatever is done in the way of woollen and cotton tissues at Intra, at Schio, at Biella, and other Sub-alpine localities where water-power is largely applied; or in linen, leather, gloves, etc., etc., is either not more than sufficient for home consumption, or not good enough for trading purposes, as the exportation is on the whole rather declining than increasing.

Italy seems unable to dissociate industry from art; she either knows not or disdains to learn how to work for the million. She excels in coral and mosaic work, in cabinet furniture, in finest straw hats, in wax lucifer matches, in a variety of nick-nacks and trinkets which rely on the caprice of fashion and the fluctuation of taste. Even in most of these luxuries, however, she can hardly rival the quaintness, variety, and mere prettiness of the so-called "*Articles de Paris.*" With respect to glass and china, in every kind of which in olden times she achieved so high a distinction, it is not without a severe struggle, and yet with doubtful success, that Murano and Doccia can hold their own against Sèvres or Dresden, or other French, German, or Bohemian competitors at the various international shows of the present day.

An Italian artisan, it appears, is by nature always too much of an artist: too loath to leave his work-shop for the factory. His individualism sets him against all association and division of labour. He thinks much of design; sometimes too much, sometimes too little of execution and finish. His work is nothing if not a labour of love. He is rather anxious to hit the fancy of a rare connoisseur, than to suit

the taste of the many possible purchasers, or consult the exigencies of the market. "*L'artista si paga d'onore.*" Praise is more to him than gain. All very much to his credit, but not conducive to the general profit of his country.

But Italy is especially unfortunate in those lines of business in which industry is wedded to agriculture. With respect to silk, it may be said that Italy sows and France reaps; inasmuch as this latter weaves what the former merely spins. Till lately, though Como and Genoa were not idle, their silks and velvets had little chance against Lyons, whose looms absorbed at least four-fifths of the produce of the Lombard mills, and sold their wrought silk at ten and even a hundred times the price paid to Italy for the raw material.

Of late, it is true, the silk factories of Lyons, harassed principally by the incessant rise in the price of labour, and hardly keeping up with the exorbitant demands and the frequent strikes of their workmen, have given signs of distress, and those of Como and other parts of Lombardy have gained ground in proportion. But the most formidable competition to France in this branch of industry seems likely, now-a-days unexpectedly, to rise rather from

Germany than from Italy; Italian silks apparently still lacking the softness and fineness of texture, and the depth and constancy of dye attained by the workmanship of their Transalpine competitors.

In the same manner, though the production of wine was at all times very large in Italy, it has greatly increased since its recovery from the ravages of the grape-disease of 1848. Although excellent Italian wines of every variety could in former years be drunk everywhere at the tables of wealthy persons throughout the country, and although laudable efforts have recently been made by the "*Società vinicole*," or "*enofile*" (trading or *amateur* companies), bent on the improvement of *Barolo* in Piedmont, of *Chianti* in Tuscany, of *Falerno* in Rome, of *Capri* in Naples, etc.; still the wine-trade south of the Alps is very far from having the importance as a source of national wealth which it might aspire to attain. Italian wine was not till very lately intended for exportation, and the difficulties of fitting it for land and sea journeys are still very considerable. In the first place, the grapes, like all other field, orchard, or garden fruit, is gathered unripe to save it from wholesale depredation; in the second place, it is hastily, clumsily, unscientifically made, and it is not allowed

to ripen by age; all that chiefly because the land-owner or wine-grower insists on quick returns for his money. He has not, or he grudges, the capital required for the construction of large cellars, for the accumulation of his vintage from year to year, and is often too absurdly proud of the absolute purity of his liquor, to stoop to those contrivances, however harmless, however perfectly wholesome, and indeed beneficial, and at all events indispensable, by which the wine-growers of other lands manipulate their own produce till it is "made to sell" in foreign, chiefly in English, markets.

The Italians, like the Spaniards, make their wine industry subservient to the interests of the French trade. Bordeaux and Dijon import the strong wines of the two peninsulas, and retail them all over the world, selling as choice Clarets and Burgundies, at five to twenty francs a bottle, the *vin ordinaire* which they purchased at the rate of five to ten centimes per litre. Since the prevalence of the phylloxera this branch of French industry has risen to enormous proportions. It is not merely wine ready made, but the grape all raw and green, and currants and other fruit, that is imported to supply the Gironde wine-grower with the stuff which he manages to palm off

on his customers, all *doctored* and *hocus-pocussed*, as genuine juice of the grape.

Again, while Italy is trying, as yet with doubtful success, the plantation of the sugar-cane on her Apulian and Calabrian sea-coasts, she allows France, Holland, and Germany, and even Sweden and Russia, to bring forth 23,000,000 cwt. of beet-root sugar, as if her own soil and climate were not proved to be much more favourable to the growth of that root than those of any part of Central or Northern Europe.

What more? Even the income Italy used to draw from the purses of foreign visitors is no longer in proportion with the astounding increase in the motley crowds of tourists of the present day. For the attractions of better accommodation or social pleasures of the hotels of Cannes, Nice, or Monaco in the winter season, or those of St. Moritz, Interlaken, Beaurivage, Thun, Meyringen, Lucerne, or Vevey in the summer months, have power to wean many, and the best, of those gay birds of passage from their old Subalpine and Subapennine haunts, in spite of the artistic and antiquarian interest of Rome and Venice, and the incomparable charms of scenery of the Lombard lakes and of the Neapolitan bay.

By the annexation of Nice and of the mainland

of Monaco, France seems to have robbed Italy of the whole Riviera. One would say that San Remo, Riva di Taggia, Bordighera, Sestri, Pegli, Nervi, and the whole coast up to and beyond Genoa and Spezia, have nothing to compare to the delights of Mentone, Roccabruna, Monaco, and Villafranca, since these latter spots have passed from Italian or Sardinian into French hands. It may be suggested that the popularity of the past or present domains of the monarchic vassal of the French Republic, Prince Charles III., Matignon-Grimaldi, is owing to the fascinations of the *roulette* and *trente et quarante;* but it would be idle to deny that the superior management of the hotels, the comfort and cleanliness, the attendance of proper housemaids and other female waiters, the respect for common internal and external decency, all contributes, in as great a degree as the chinking gold on the tables of Monte Carlo, and the "pretty horsebreakers" on its green sward, to detain on the threshold of that fragrant Ligurian shore those crowds of visitors whom personal experience or common report has taught that they would "not fare as well by going farther."

But it is not easy to understand why Italians should not be as good silk-weavers, wine-growers,

sugar-boilers, or even at least inn-keepers, as the natives of foreign lands. Or why, if it is only capital they want, as we so constantly are told, they do not find a way to win it from their more favourably-placed neighbours. That the Italians have excellent workmen in their lower classes, and no deficiency of intelligence in the upper ones, cannot be gainsaid, and we have sufficient evidence of their success in every branch of business in foreign countries. Why they should not seem able to work or willing to enrich themselves at home as much as they do abroad, is a phenomenon owing to a variety of circumstances which I shall attempt to explain in the sequel.

For the present I need only insist on the fact that Italy, with all her natural wealth, is by no means as rich a country as France ; indeed, in many respects not so rich as little Belgium, a country which has not much more than one-tenth of the territory, and somewhat less than one-fifth of the population of Italy, yet whose trade, both import and export, exceeds by several millions that of the whole Italian kingdom.

When, however, we speak of the Italian kingdom, of its cultivation and civilization, it should be understood that our statements are applicable only to

one-half of it. Were the Tuscan and Pontine Marshes, the Neapolitan provinces, the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, and still more the Roman Campagna and the lower valley of the Tiber, brought up to the standard of Piedmont and Lombardy, of parts of Tuscany, Emilia, Umbria, and the Marches, statistics would have a different tale to tell. But the north and centre of the Peninsula come to the race hampered with all the dead-weight of the south, where the ravages of remote, and the neglect of recent, times have utterly wasted the land, and crushed the body, heart, and soul of the people. To bring back health and security, a higher tone of morality, and, at any rate, population, into those forlorn southern districts, such as Puglia, the Calabrias, and the Basilicata, would call forth all the energies of a heroic nation. And it is by no means sure that the Italy of the present day is equal to the task. But the thing is to some extent being done; and the work can hardly fail to be remunerative, and thereby encouraging; for we find both the soil and the brain of the inhabitants of those old Greco-Latin regions naturally of a better quality, and capable of a better culture, the nearer we get to the sun's path.

That the Italians, as it is thought, should be

smitten with that fever of restlessness which possesses our age, that they should wish to extend their trade and to found colonies, must appear perfectly natural. The wonder is that they should not see what ample sphere of activity they have still near home; that they should not perceive that their country is in that respect in the same condition as the United States, and the other communities in all parts of the New World; inasmuch as they, the Italians, like the Americans or the Australians, have large lots, if not of virgin, at least of forsaken lands, lying fallow for centuries, and ready to be brought into cultivation. For the employment of labour and capital, and for the disposal of their surplus population, and thus for the welfare of the whole country, the Italians need not look beyond the boundaries of their own territory. They have but to make themselves at home in their own home. The Italians of the north have only to look to the conditions of a great part of the south. They have only to wage war to those two great scourges of old Italy, *malaria* and brigandage, which have for so long a time been changing the very face of the country, and to encourage a gradual movement of men and money from the upper to the lower end of the Peninsula.

The work had begun in the first heat of victorious patriotism after the unification of the country. Schemes for the drainage of marshes, for the tillage of wild heaths, for the colonization of waste regions sprang up on all sides; and the results may be seen in the draining of the so-called Valli Ferraresi, of Lake Fucino, etc.; or in the conditions of the eastern coast along the provinces of Foggia and Brindisi, Lecce and Taranto. There, twenty years ago, one travelled through large estates rapidly passing into the hands of Lombard, Tuscan, and other owners—individuals or joint-stock companies (among them men like Ricasoli, Peruzzi, Sir George Hudson, Sir James Lacaita, Count Maffei, and other gentlemen well known in England)—either themselves busy with their improvements, or intrusting them to the management of able stewards or bailiffs of their own, who paid them a clear yearly dividend of six per cent of their purchase-money, and contrived, besides, to make out a decent subsistence for themselves and their families.

The results of this movement, so far as it extended, may be argued from the fact that the increase of the population in those southern districts since the annexation has kept pace with that of the northern and

central parts of the country, in spite of the emigration which, as we shall see, has set in during the same period.

This recuperative process, unfortunately, seems to have suffered considerable abatement (let us hope only for a while), owing to the oppressive burden of the taxes on landed property, which, indeed, hardly allow the husbandman a chance of making the two ends meet. But Italy, even in spite of all burdens, is making her utmost efforts to double not only her productiveness, but also the means for the conveyance and sale of her produce. Thus we hear of large quantities of grape from Puglia (Apulia) travelling by rail all the way from Bari to Asti, to eke out the vintage of the Piedmontese districts in bad seasons; the same grape making also its way beyond the Alps to the half-empty vats of Bordeaux and Burgundy. Thus we learn from the official reports of the Finance Minister, of years not otherwise favourable to the Italian trade, in which there has been an increase of above a million sterling in the exportation of mere animal produce (beef, poultry, and eggs), the consumption of such articles in England so draining the resources of the countries lying immediately across the Channel, that their supply would soon fall short of the demand, were

they not subsidized by other regions lying at a greater distance from the omnivorous centre. It is thus, for instance, that we hear of Milan butter finding its way into the London markets by the side of the produce of Norman, Belgian, and Devonshire dairies.

It would be impossible to foresee what development may be given to the land trade of Italy by the opening of those great Alpine railway lines, and especially of the Brenner and the St. Gothard, which have levelled down the barrier reared by nature between the North seas and the Mediterranean, for all commercial purposes turning Genoa, Venice, and Brindisi into German ports. Already we may see M. Cirio's long trains being sent across the mountains to Berlin, Warsaw, and St. Petersburg, as well as to London, laden with fresh fruits and vegetables, intended to cheapen for the million the price of those luxuries with which art in those Northern climates only hitherto furnished a few of the most sumptuous tables at the cost almost of their weight in gold.

To justify her title to the appellation of the "Garden of Europe," Italy has only to muster skilful and painstaking gardeners, making up for any deficiency on that score by hiring a few masters of the craft from France, Holland, or Germany, or from that

canny land where men like Paxtons rise to fame. It is what has been done by Senator Rossi of Schio, the benevolent founder of the great woollen factories near Venice, who has called two Belgians to the direction and management of his model orchards and fruit gardens at Sant' Orso; and similar establishments are being tried by the Government, both at the Cascine of Florence, and at Signa, at the agricultural school of Castelletti, whence for the last twenty years first-rate farmers and gardeners have been sent out; the same being done in the south at Portici.

It seems thus that Italy is really taking upon herself in good earnest the work for which she was obviously intended by nature. Historians number the figs and grapes of the sweet South among the attractions which determined the inroads of the Northern hordes into the southern provinces of Imperial Rome. Surely, it would be a great triumph for our commercial age, if the fear of disturbing that peaceful intercourse which places those coveted exotics within their easy reach should wean the civilized descendants of those invading Northerners from their nomadic habits, and inspire them to keep the peace—that peace which thus enables the luscious produce of the sunny lands to sweeten their wintry homes.

By doing full justice to her soil, by an equal distribution of her means and her population over her poorer and more thinly-inhabited districts; by the application to each district of the cultivation best suited to its productiveness; by the extension of her system of irrigation (especially throughout those Subalpine provinces, where the canals of her mediæval people still call forth the world's admiration), and, finally, by the introduction of those methods, implements, and improvements which yield such splendid results among her neighbours, Italy may, by the time she is numerically as great a nation as France, manage to become also France's equal in agricultural wealth.

But far more important than any drainage or tillage should be the preliminary work which is to restore to the land the most perfect security. The very first task must be the establishment of an efficient rural police, which may enable the peasantry of Abruzzo and Calabria, of Sardinia and Sicily, to come forth from the squalid and unwholesome towns and villages where the dread of the brigands huddles them up, and to live in well-fenced, isolated farms, scattered all over the land, every man on the field of his daily labour—an arrangement without which there can be no really profitable husbandry. This has been hitherto,

and will be to the end, the most arduous undertaking, taxing all the resources and straining all the energies of the Italian people and of their Government, who with all their 23,096 *Carabinieri Reali*, or gendarmes, have not yet been able to organize a *Guardia Campestre*, or rural force, able to clear the land both of great and petty thieves. Yet this is a work which may and must be accomplished by the country's own capacity for self-government, and without any hope of extraneous aid.

In all other practical matters it were well if Italy would abate a little of the pride and conceit befitting the days in which she was ruler and teacher, but not equally becoming this present time, when she ought to be only too glad in her turn to learn from her neighbours.

The patriotic boast with which, in 1848, she took the field with the cry, "*Italia farà da sè*," did not prevent the country in 1859 from accepting that aid without which her right to independent existence might never have been asserted. She may now learn from experience to accept with the same good grace the lessons she may need in every branch of economy, without which political emancipation would be of little practical and material avail.

CHAPTER V.

TRADE.

Italy's Geographical Position—Its fitness for Land and Sea Traffic—In olden times—Before and after the opening of the Suez Canal—Italian Navigation—Steam and Sailing Vessels—Five Italies and one Italy—Levantine Consular life—Movement of the Italian Mercantile Marine—New Steam-Navigation Companies—State Subventions *v.* Private Enterprise—Italian Adventurers by Sea—Nino Bixio—The Duke of Genoa—Italian Land Travellers and Explorers—Antinori—Porro.

But although agriculture ought to be with Italy most decidedly a primary object, there is no reason why trade and industry should not go hand in hand with it. Italy, it has already been stated, has no coals, nor any other hitherto discovered combustible available for manufactures. But those perennial Alpine streams which freshen and fertilize her plains may also be made to turn mill-wheels on a considerably larger scale than they are now doing and have done for centuries before steam was applied to the same purposes. The geographical position of Italy,

it must also be acknowledged, is not so central, consequently not so favourable to land trade with Europe, as that of France or Germany, especially if this latter were joined with Austria-Hungary by a customs union. But, on the other hand, neither of the two great adjoining Powers can boast the extent of coast, nor the number of available sea-ports, which in former ages gave Italy the sceptre of the Midland sea. All things considered, the very best situated of all countries of the Continent, and even of the islands of Europe, is the Iberian Peninsula; yet that advantage did not prevent Spain and Portugal falling from the highest to the lowest level among civilized communities. It did not prevent England from depriving Spain of that key of Gibraltar which opened to her the door of the Mediterranean, or availing herself of that Suez Canal which France hoped to have cut for her own purposes. So surely are all the gifts of nature thrown away on a people which do not know how to turn them to the proper uses, while for a nation able to make the best of the very worst, "wherever there is a will there is a way." *Volere è Potere*, was the cry raised throughout Italy on her first reawakening. It is the title of a book by Professor Lessona, based on Smiles'

'Self-Help,' and as popular south of the Alps as the original work ever was in Great Britain. And neither for Italy nor for any other nation can there be a prouder or happier watchword.

Very reasonable doubts are entertained in this country as to the real advantage accruing to any European State from the opening of the Suez Canal. The Canal, it seems, has not done much good to Great Britain herself, notwithstanding the monopoly of the traffic through M. de Lesseps's water-way which she has hitherto virtually enjoyed. The recent reports of the Board of Trade, showing what proportion of the trade of the United Kingdom with the East goes through the Canal, and comparing it with what still follows the old route round the Cape, conclude that "it is *quite possible to over-rate the importance of the Canal.*" But the same doubts cannot be raised with respect to the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, and least of all with respect to Italy, which *is everything to that sea*, as that sea *is everything to her.*

"The Canal," said a writer in the 'Times,'[1] "obviously places on the direct route to the East all the Mediterranean ports, and especially those of Italy,

[1] 'Times,' February 21, 1883.

which were formerly at a disadvantage as compared to ourselves. Yet of the entire number of vessels going through the Suez Canal yearly, three out of four are English; and next follow the French, but with barely one-tenth of the English. The Italians come only fifth in the race, the Dutch and Germans considerably outstripping them."

If the Mediterranean ports, and in the first place the Italian ports, have as yet made so little out of the Suez Canal; if Brindisi (which had risen to so high an importance in Roman times, and about the revival of whose activity such sanguine expectations had sprung up in Italian patriotic hearts) is still the same lonely, sleepy, unwholesome spot as it was suffered to become in the Middle Ages, the Italians can be at no loss to know where the fault lies. It was pointed out to them in 1830, *i. e.* more than a score of years before M. de Lesseps's scheme came to maturity, in 1854, by the old patriot, historian, and statesman, Cesare Balbo (a man whose character, like his name and countenance, reminded one of all that was noble in ancient Rome), who told his countryman that "the trade of Italy was lost, not because the discovery of America and the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope had diverted the world's trade from the

Mediterranean, but because Italy had not energy enough to follow the world's trade in its new channels." And he added, prophetically, that "were even the world's trade to go back to its ancient routes, and the Mediterranean to regain its former importance, that route and that sea would little profit Italy, unless Italy were up to the level of the energies of other nations." [1]

"The direct trade between the Mediterranean and the East," the above-quoted writer in the 'Times' observes, "has increased since the opening of the Canal, but the amount is very small, and of that trade a good deal" (nine-tenths, as we have seen) "is carried in *British* ships."

We do not know whether it will ever come to pass that the trade of Italy, either in the Mediterranean or across the isthmus and the ocean, will attain such proportions as to give England cause of uneasiness about her maritime supremacy. But the present state of things is not such as to incline the English to depart from those principles of free and fair competition on which their trade and navigation laws and their whole commercial policy are based. With respect to Italy, the instinct of Great Britain has always been

[1] Balbo, 'Storia d'Italia,' p. 271.

rather to favour and to associate that country to her own high fortunes, than to look upon it as a dangerous rival or possible enemy. The unity of Italy was no sooner accomplished, and the tunnel through Mont Cenis opened, than England did her best to hasten the development of the traffic from one end of the Peninsula to the other, by sending her over-land Royal Indian Mail *viâ* Brindisi, and lending a hand towards the completion of the railway line to that port, and the improvement of its very defective harbour and hotel accommodation. Any delay that occurred in that momentous arrangement may be attributed, partly to the natural but unrelenting as well as unavailing opposition of France, anxious for the trade of her southern railway lines (Lyons and the Mediterranean) and the trade of Marseilles, partly to the helplessness and remissness of the Italian administration, but by no means to want of good-will on the part of sympathizing England.

The mercantile marine of Italy has all the elements which might encourage her to aspire to at least the third rank among the commercial States in Europe, coming immediately after England and Germany. Her *Inscrizione Marittima*, or register of the sea-faring population, has risen from 176,335 in 1881, to 189,162

in 1884,[1] a number about 20,000 less than England requires for all her merchant vessels afloat. The Italian Inscription, or Register, however, includes, besides able seamen, also fishermen, boatmen, boat-builders, clerks, engineers, etc. With respect to sailing vessels, Italy musters a number of about one-third of those of England, with about one-sixth of their tonnage; and in this branch of the service she can freely compete with her neighbours of France or Austria-Hungary, or with any other Continental State, the German Empire alone excepted. But unfortunately it is otherwise for what concerns merchant steamers, Italy being in that respect considerably less provided, not only than England, France, and Germany, but even than Sweden and Denmark.

Various causes conspired to place the Italians in the rear in this particular branch of maritime enterprise. In the first place, as we have seen, the Italians have no coals of their own, and have to procure it at high price from Cardiff or Newcastle, fetching it in boats which often come to those ports in ballast, because Italy has but little to sell to England in exchange for her precious "black

[1] See the official report of the 'Direzione Generale della Marina Mercantile,' Rome, 1884.

diamonds"; Italian imports into these islands being about one-half of the English exports into Italy. Italian sailing vessels did a reasonably thriving business in various countries previous to the application of the steam-engine to navigation. The custom of Italian ship-owners in olden times was to crowd their vessels with very numerous crews, paying them, both men and officers, rather poorly, or not at all, but interesting them in their speculation by allowing them a share in the capital or produce of the cargo, or suffering them to take with them on board their little *pacotille*, or venture, on which they traded on their own account. The low freights that they by this primitive arrangement could afford to charge, were a recommendation for the carriage of heavy goods with respect to which it was supposed that "speed could be no object." It was thus, for instance, that for many years the Italians managed almost to monopolize or to share with the Greeks the grain trade between Odessa and the English markets, till experience and the rivalry between Russia and the United States proved that *time* was an object even in the corn trade, when British steamers drove the slow Italian sailing boats, not only from the Russian Black Sea ports, but very nearly from the whole of the Levant.

For any traveller visiting either the eastern shores of the Mediterranean or those of North Africa, nothing can be more striking than the change in the social aspect of those countries arising from the decline of Italian ascendancy almost throughout those regions—a change in a great measure brought about by those auspicious political events which made of Italy one kingdom out of several separate States. Up to the year 1859 there were afloat in the Mediterranean five banners bearing the colours of five different States all belonging to the Italian nationality, and represented by five consuls in every sea-port of the Ottoman Empire and its North-African dependencies. The Christian settlements in those Mohammedan communities, with their consuls at their head, constituted so many States within the State.

The consul, half a commercial, half a diplomatic agent, was necessarily an important personage. He had a little court about him, and even a body-guard, in some cases consisting of not the very best characters among the stray adventurers and rough customers who sought in those provinces or regencies an asylum where not too many questions were asked. The consul himself was often a Levantine by birth or descent, belonging to a race of men about whom it

would not, perhaps, be fair to indulge in invidious generalizations; among whom, owing to the necessity of a practical familiarity with Oriental languages, those consular offices are, or were, frequently hereditary, the members of their families monopolizing the same employment from generation to generation, sometimes rooted to the same spot, sometimes shifting from place to place, but managing to "gather moss" whether rolling or stationary. Owing to distance from the mother-country, and unfrequency of official intercourse, the consul's authority was unshackled by any constitutional control, and placed above all responsibility. Invested with all legislative, executive, and judicial power in countries where there was for aliens no other law than his, with an armed force, a tribunal and a jail within his very premises, the consul reigned over his sovereign's subjects as a satrap, and could doom to a very dog's life any of them who should presume to dispute his will or thwart his pleasure. With his colleagues of other nationalities he was generally on intimate, if not always on friendly terms, the families visiting at each other's houses, joining in picnic, garden, and other friendly parties, in riding or boating excursions —all of which gave rise to a state of society which

was not without its peculiar charm of variety and freedom from restraint. But in spite of his manifold avocations, a consul had not much to do; for a considerable part of office drudgery devolved on the vice-consul, the chancellor, and a whole host of clerks, dragomans, cavasses, with other subordinate and supernumerary assistants. Such leisure as the consul had he employed in what he called "diplomatizing," *i. e.* in bullying Mussulman authorities, bearding the Pasha or Vizier, the Khedive, Bey, or Dey, in the tone of Granville Murray's "Sir Hector Stubble"; and intriguing against any of his colleagues whom he suspected of a design to undermine his personal ascendancy, or to challenge the importance of the Power whose flag waved above his chimney-tops.

Of these redoubted functionaries before the year 1860, no less than five belonged to Italy; for, besides the Sardinian, Sicilian, the Tuscan and Roman, there was also the Austrian, reckoned as an Italian, inasmuch as Austria, heiress of Venetian greatness, only carried on in the East the traditions of the old Republic of St. Mark, and had no other official language than the Italian.

The prestige lingering in those regions about the

power of that and other Italian maritime States, the very ruins of their monuments, their early attempts to establish maritime codes of international law, diplomatic relations, treaties, or, as they were there called, "capitulations," with the invading Mussulman, —everything combined to give the name of Italy an ascendancy which had long ceased to stand upon solid ground, and of which little more remained than the *Lingua Franca*, a mere medley of corrupt Italian dialects with the native idioms.

Steam is now doing away with all that. French at Constantinople, English at Alexandria, and, of course, Russian at Odessa, are rapidly superseding Italian, both as a means of official and commercial and social intercourse, not merely in Government and Consular offices, but also in clubs, hotels, divans, and bazaars; the change affecting even the names at the street corners. Italy, that new Italy which rose out of the wreck of the five Italies, is now almost nowhere. She is one of the European Powers, no doubt, but by no means the one doing the largest business, by no means the one advancing with the widest strides on the path of civilization. In the matter of steam navigation she is little better than what the Americans are wont to call a "one-horse coach."

And, indeed, in everything connected with steam the Italians had at first neither the instruction, nor the capital, nor the instincts and habits of association which might enable them to form large joint-stock companies. They had been for many centuries accustomed to leave to their rulers the initiative in all important undertakings. It was thus that Cavour, when he took the reins of a Liberal Government in Piedmont after 1852, planned and wrought out lines of railway as State property and speculation, and on the same principle he subsidized the first steam-navigation companies, which were organized in Genoa at his suggestion. These companies, however, like many other economical schemes of that great statesman, turned out failures at the outset, and even all the ascendancy his voice exercised in the Chamber was powerless to enforce a vote from his Subalpine Parliament for fresh subventions to those enterprises—subventions which the Opposition denounced as "the folly of throwing good money after bad."

There ensued the war of emancipation of 1859, the preparation for the final struggle with Austria in 1866, and the necessity of providing against the ill-will of France after the occupation of Rome in

1870. The land and sea armaments engrossed all the thoughts of Italy, and her mercantile marine had to shift for itself as it best could.

There was no lack of politicians in Italy who rejoiced at this state of things. As men wedded to strict free-trade principles, they objected to subsidized navigation companies, as they disapproved of guaranteed railway interest. They argued that similar undertakings should be left to private speculation and competition, and contended that the endowment of one company not only disheartened and crushed all unendowed enterprises of the same nature, but also damaged the real interests of the favoured company itself, by accustoming it to lean on Government support rather than to rely on its own exertions and resources.

It was not long, however, before the Italians perceived that theory cannot always stand the test of practice, and that the maxims of political economy may be carried too far. They endeavoured to repair what now they considered a mistake, and to regain lost time, and did it with such eagerness, that within a few years, besides the names of the old "Peninsular," or home-coasting line, and the Rubattino-Florio, other names of new companies,—the

Lavarello, Piaggio, Sivori, Schiaffino, etc. were heard of,—all of them going to work with so good a will, that in one year, 1881, they built and fitted out thirty new steamers, an achievement by which they believe "they outdid the activity of all other Continental States within the same twelvemonth." Out of some of these establishments a joint-stock enterprise is now flourishing under the name of *Società della Navigazione Generale Italiana*, the movements of whose vessels are daily recorded by 'Fanfulla' in its "*Cronaca del Mare*."

In their altered frame of mind the Italians went so far as to overcome their repugnance to subsidized companies; and proceeding from one extreme to the opposite, they carried their extravagance so far as to surpass the liberality of all other nations, France alone excepted: inasmuch as they allowed the Peninsular, or coasting-line, and the Rubattino-Florio Company, a subsidy of 17 francs, 86 centimes per league, or 8,635,000 fr. for a run of 483,252 leagues, while England with only 15,000,000 fr. subsidizes ten of her companies.[1]

The Italians, however, ought to be aware of the difference between England and most Continental

[1] 'Inchiesta sulla Marina Mercantile,' 1881, 1882. Vol. V. page ccix.

countries in these matters. England allows her navigation companies, not subventions to keep them alive, but merely compensation or remuneration for postal service. England, as well as France, Holland, Denmark, and other States, have possessions and dependencies beyond seas with which a regular intercourse must be kept up as a political necessity, whether the trade with them pays or not. The English Government, for instance, would have to take charge of Indian, Australian, and other mails with vessels of its own, unless their conveyance could be intrusted to the Peninsular and Oriental or other private companies on easier terms; preference, of course, being given to the company which offers the most advantageous terms, on the principle of free and open competition.

It is clear that such a system cannot be applied to Italy, a country which has as yet very few or no affairs beyond sea involving very extensive national interests. Such correspondence as occurs between her people at home and her subjects in remote regions abroad can, in time of peace, as easily and as safely find its way through foreign channels by sea, as it must needs usually do by land, trade being sure to provide the means for its own intercourse when its

interests are of sufficient magnitude to justify and to repay expense.

With all the subventions lately extended to it by Government, Italian steam-navigation enterprise will have for a long time to be very up-hill work, if it wishes to establish and keep up a profitable competition with the companies of those nations which have had for many years the start of them. Even with respect to the coasting trade of their own inland seas, the Italian seamen, who had in former epochs so very large a share of it, have now to struggle hard, and not always successfully, to run their steamers, not only against those of the English Peninsular and Oriental line, but even against those of the French *Messageries Maritimes*, and of the Austro-Hungarian *Lloyd*. But the odds must be more decidedly against them if they push their enterprise beyond the Straits into distant shores with which their acquaintance is still comparatively limited, and where they will have all Europe and America to contend with.

The Genoese, undoubtedly, had at all times and have still very high renown as mariners. And both themselves and the Sicilians, Greeks, and Catalans are at least no worse than those whom France recruits in the Mediterranean. But the question is not merely

of seamanship. No man who, on undertaking a sea-voyage, has his choice of a ship, and considers the chance of coming quickly and safely to the end of it the greatest advantage, will hesitate about taking his passage on board an English vessel. Britannia, unquestionably, rules the waves, and no one can better be trusted than John Bull (when sober) in what is justly called his own element. But the hankering after a French *cuisine*, or the hope of greater attention, civility, and punctuality in the service of the cabins and state-rooms, will win over many, even of the British passengers, to the rival boats of the *Lloyd* and *Messageries*. But the Italians have to take their place among all such rivals without having as yet asserted their superiority in any of those qualities which bring passengers to the other lines. They are not better sailors than the English, not better cooks than the French, not better waiters than the Austrians or Germans. They may certainly be more courteous and obliging than any of the others, but there is still in their boats, as in their hotels, the same complaint of too much noise and hubbub, too great a want of *order*, and above all things of *cleanliness*, to suit travellers of refined manners and fastidious tastes. Even many of the Italians them-

selves are often tempted to give their preference to a foreign flag when safety or comfort is their object. A steward on board an Italian steamer seems to know his business as little as a landlord in an Italian country inn.

But in this, as in other matters, the Italians aspire to better things. Their ambition is to be at home in far-off seas, and their good-will alone will, if sustained, deserve sympathy and command success. Their maritime attempts have hitherto been sorely tried by adversity, and this ought to have the effect of giving them nerve and temper. It was in his hope of showing his countrymen the way into distant regions, that one of the most valiant of Garibaldi's heroes, Nino Bixio, lost his life. Like Garibaldi himself, a born sailor, Bixio, renouncing all the honours and dignities that a grateful country had heaped upon him, put himself at the head of a company in Genoa, his native city, and set out in 1873, in the *Maddaloni*, to trade in the Dutch colonies; and there was in him, not only more than enough brave spirit and perseverance, but also sufficient talent for business, to lead him to fortune, had not his life (a life which had been spared in so many encounters, in almost all of which he had been wounded) been cut

off by cholera at Acheen, almost at the outset of his first cruise.

With the same object of familiarizing the nations of the Far East with the sight of the tricolour of the new kingdom, the Italian Government, in 1879, fitted out the royal corvette *Vettor Pisani*, giving the command to the Duke of Genoa, and sending her off on a long cruise to the coasts of China, Japan, and Asiatic Russia; a successful expedition, a very lively and clever account of which was published in a fine illustrated edition by Colonel Count Luchino dal Verme, aide-de-camp to the Duke, and one of the most distinguished officers of the Italian army.[1]

Symptoms of the old Italian adventurous spirit reveal themselves in the attempts by land travellers seeking new paths as explorers of remote or uncivilized continents, and especially of the interior of Africa, in emulation of the valiant men of other nations, chiefly German and English, who have lately achieved so much distinction. Several expeditions have been planned and carried out, both by the Royal

[1] 'Giappone e Siberia, Note d'un Viaggio nell' estremo Oriente al seguito di S. A. R. il Duca di Genova,' del Conte Luchino Dal Verme, Colonnello di Stato Maggiore, with 299 illustrations and 12 Maps. Milan, 1885. Treves.

Geographical Society, of which Prince Teano, Duke of Sermoneta, is the President, by a Commercial Exploring Society (founded at Milan), and other private associations. The first attempts have had no very important results, and in some instances they have been attended with tragic catastrophes. The Marquis Antinori, for a long time a very active member of the Milanese Society, his companions Chiarini, Gustavo Bianchi, and others fell victims to their zeal for the advancement of knowledge and for the honour of their country. The latest and most appalling disaster was the massacre of Count Porro, with all his numerous followers, at El Harrar, in the month of March of this year, 1886. These unfortunates, led by a man whose courage was somewhat too much of the Hotspur kind, and who seemed haunted by a terror of dying quietly in his bed like most other mortals, ventured too far inland at haphazard, heedless of the warning of the English on the coast, and were fallen upon and slain to a man, in some barbarous manner of which an authentic account has not as yet been and will probably never be published.

A cry of horror rose throughout Italy on the first mournful announcement, and a clamour for vengeance was raised by the Italian press, by the students of

the Roman University in general council assembled, appealing to the youth of all the other universities of the kingdom to join them in their "resolutions"; and the King's Government has been at endless pains in Parliament, first to clear itself of all blame of having prompted, or in any manner abetted and encouraged Porro's rash and apparently aimless expedition, then to prove the futility of an attempt to punish the perpetrators of the slaughter, or to effect a new unprofitable settlement on a coast on which Italy already occupies so many points from which she knows not how safely and creditably to withdraw. These, the Italian Government might well have argued, are no longer the times when a chivalrous nation was supposed to go to war for the slit ears of an obscure or perhaps vagabond seaman. Noble England herself in our time vowed vengeance for Khartoom and Gordon, but was satisfied with a declaration that "smashed" nobody.

There is, however, no probability that the untoward fate of these first pioneers of Italian discovery may to any extent damp the spirits of other adventurers eager for renown. As often happened in the later Middle Ages, so in our day also we hear the names of Italians whose achievements in the service of other

nations are attended by better fortune than those of the men engaged in the promotion of their own country's interests: names like that of Count Brazza de Savorgnan, born in Rome, and of old Italian descent, travelling for the French on the Congo; that of Count Palma di Cesnola, a native of Turin, but an American citizen and consul, working for the benefit of the United States in Africa and Cyprus. And in the same manner, early in the present century, while Italy was still only a "geographical expression," Belzoni held the candle to the English in their researches in Egypt and Nubia, and Botta, son of the historian, showed the way to the French on the Tigris and the Euphrates, where he would have given them the glory of the discovery of Nineveh, had not the niggardliness of Louis Philippe's Government abandoned that field of enterprise to Layard and the more liberal English.

"Laissez à l'Enfant gagner ses éperons." Give the young Italian nation, give the children of Marco Polo and Columbus, a chance of doing some good in the world, no matter if it be for the benefit of their country or of the whole human race, and they will do it.

CHAPTER VI.

COLONIES.

Colonial Aspirations of Italy—The Italians in the East—Tendencies and Conditions of Italian Emigrants—Their Number and Wealth in Europe—In the New World—In South America—Colonies under a National or a Foreign Flag—What good are Colonies to parent States—To England and France—To Russia, Denmark, and the United States—To Spain and Portugal—To Holland—Colonial Prospects of Italy—Italian Organ-Boys.

We have noticed how heavy a grievance it seems to be to the Italians that their country should have no possessions or dependencies beyond the seas. To this circumstance they deem it natural to refer the slow development of their navigation and trade. Italy has no colonies, they contend, and yet where is there a nation which has in former times shown itself more specially endowed with colonizing instincts and capabilities than their own? "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests," but the descendant of the heroic Venetian or of the adventurous Genoese, when wandering abroad, they say, "has

not where to rest his head" under the national flag that he has chosen for his own.

But their neighbours will not very readily sympathize with these complaints. It has now-a-days become very doubtful whether the possession of colonial settlements abroad may for a State be considered more of an advantage or a burden. Italy's own mediæval history is there to show that it was trade that founded colonies; though, no doubt, in their turn the colonies gave new impulse to trade. There would be nothing to prevent Italy reopening her factories where those of Genoa and Venice once throve; nothing to deny Italian merchants the *hospitium arenæ*, a free admission as traders into any part of the Levant, or of the remotest East (and, at any rate, into Egypt, and through the Suez Canal), into all British possessions, on the most generous terms; on terms of far greater liberty or equality than the Genoese and Venetians ever obtained from the Greeks or Turks.

In all those old *Scali di Levante* we still hear of Italian colonies. They are, as we have seen, the old settlements of the former five or six separate Italian States, now bound together under the flag of a common fatherland. How is it that these so-called

colonies, though as a rule not less numerous, are not more flourishing, and that their wealth and importance, even where not actually dwindling, are not very considerably increasing? How is it that even their Lingua Franca is rapidly falling off? The reason is very obvious; it is simply because Italian trade has lost ground in those regions; because Italy has little to sell, and that little can ill bear competition, either in quantity or in quality, and sometimes even in price, with the commodities supplied by other nations. Her neighbours have been before her for many years, and have considerably distanced her in almost every branch of commercial and industrial enterprise.

Italy has a population of 17,890 of her subjects scattered all over Turkey in Europe and Asia; yet her trade with the whole Ottoman Empire is barely one-fifth of that of Great Britain. There are also 16,302 Italians in Egypt; but there, again, English commerce is six times as large as the Italian trade. And the same proportions are also observable in the regencies of Tunis and Tripoli, in Algeria and Morocco. Almost everywhere you find the English engaged in the large and wholesale trade; the Italians for the most part being satisfied with the petty, peddling, retail business.

Notwithstanding the considerable and still increasing numbers of the Italian Levantine colonies, and especially of those of Tunis and Tripoli, Alexandria and Cairo (the result of proximity, and traditional connection and intercourse), it is by no means likely that those Mussulman communities will ever again become the main field of activity for future Italian trade or enterprise, or that the tide of emigration will set in in that direction; not at least unless the relative situation of the European and African world should go through unforeseen and very momentous alterations. Nor can it be supposed that, had even the Italians been beforehand with the French in Tunis, or could they even yet forestall them in Tripoli, those two North African regencies would flourish in the hands of Italy to any greater extent than Algeria has been doing for this last half century as a French dependency, much as the Italians justly consider themselves apter colonists than their Gallic neighbours.

The fact seems to be, that the sphere of Italian ideas, even in the lowest classes, has lately expanded far beyond the limits of their inland seas; that in Italy, as elsewhere, the grandsons of the men who thought with boding fears for half their life, and at last

deemed it prudent to make their wills, before they undertook a journey to Paris or Vienna, or a voyage to Smyrna or Alexandria, think now nothing of a trip to Siberia, or a cruise to Japan or Van Diemen's Land; and it is consequently no longer to those Levantine regions, but much further off, that the swarms of Italian wanderers will go in quest of new homes. There are, it is stated, 1,032,402 Italian subjects abroad, and to these emigration adds year by year a complement which, from 96,268 in 1878, had reached 169,101 in 1883, and fell to 157,193 in 1885, the average being at least double what it was before the formation of the Italian kingdom in 1860.[1]

This Italian emigration is divided into temporary and permanent; by far the greatest number of Italians of the lower classes being driven abroad in quest of employment, but seldom contemplating a longer residence than what may enable them to return to their country with a few five-franc pieces in their travelling-belt, and to live at home in better circumstances than when they left it. Of those that cross the Alps into the neighbouring European lands,

[1] See 'Censimento degli Italiani all' Estero,' December, 1881; in the official 'Notizie Statistiche sull' Emigrazione Italiana,' and 'Notizie di Statistica Generale,' 1886.

especially into France, Switzerland, and Austro-Germany, by far the majority are mere journeymen, *navvies*, or factory-hands, who, like *coolies*, are in great demand, because they are often better workmen, and always put up with harder labour and lower wages, thereby being the object of the contempt, and, especially in France, of the savage attacks and ill-treatment on the part of their native competitors. At the time of the Tunis disturbance, political international animosity led to sanguinary excesses between these Italian industrials and the Marseilles populace, the real cause of which should undoubtedly be sought in the long-smothered feeling of trade jealousy and rancour.

On the other hand, in America, chiefly in the Republics of the Plate, the Italians are received with open arms, and there many of them are builders or boatmen, a good number of them petty traders and artisans, ready to take to any kind of business, and marvellously likely to succeed in any of them.

The particulars we can gather with respect to the number and destination of Italian emigrants, to their collective capital, and to their commercial relations with the mother country, may be found in the publications of the Statistical Department of the Ministry of Agriculture in Rome, an institution directed with

great activity by the Commendatore Luigi Bodio.[1] But these informations depend for the most part on the reports of the Italian consuls abroad, and these can only know with certainty the numbers and conditions of the Italian residents who need their protection, and place themselves under their jurisdiction. But there is among the Italians really desirous to settle abroad, a strong propensity to renounce their allegiance, not by any means from a want of patriotism, but owing to a variety of causes; till very lately to the hostile feeling they harboured against their former despotic Governments, and to their wish to rid themselves of their liability to military service, and even now to the ambition of many of them to become citizens of a so-called "Democratic community," even if they can get no better than one of those wretchedly-governed Spanish-American Republics. The emigrants, therefore, greatly exceed the numbers appearing in official statements.

The progress these Italian colonies in South America have made is a great phenomenon, the magnitude of which has hardly as yet been fully estimated in

[1] "*L'Italia all' estero nell' ultimo decennio*," in the volume of the 'Inchiesta Parlamentare sulla Marina Mercantile,' Vol. V. p. clxxxviii.

Europe, and least of all in Italy itself.[1] Of the 1,032,402 Italians residing in foreign countries, only 7625 are domiciled in Asia, 62,203 in Africa, and 2887 in Oceania. Of the real bulk of emigrants, 380,352 are in Europe, and 579,335 in America.

In America itself, the United States and the Canadian Dominion harbour no more than 171,849; the remainder are settlers in the various parts of Spanish America, and more than a quarter of a million (254,388) in the Argentine Republic. And it is chiefly to that confederacy that the greatest number of Italian emigrants (37,710 in 1885) are regularly flocking.

Although the Italians, like their brethren of Latin stock, French or Spanish, are no bad husbandmen in their own country, and will whistle at the plough to good purpose when it is made worth their while, they do not take so kindly to field labour as the men of Teutonic, Scandinavian, or Anglo-Saxon blood. Thus, although in the regions of the Plate, in Brazil, in the broad flats of the Matto Grosso or the Gran Chaco, we hear of Italian as well as of Swiss, German,

[1] Some light will perhaps be thrown on the subject by a work of Edmondo de Amicis on the Italian colonies of Montevideo and Buenos Ayres, visited by him in 1884. The work was in the press this last April, 1886.

and other agricultural settlements (the embryos of as many wealthy, and possibly happy and pacific nations of the future), still it is not in those scattered districts that the majority of Italian fortune-seekers do congregate.

The Italians in the Argentine Republic exceed, as we have seen, a quarter of a million, and the States of the River Plate trade with Italy to the amount of £1,600,000 imports and exports; but more than half these immigrants are established in the cities,—103,595 at Buenos Ayres, where they muster more than one-third of the population of the city, and about 100,000 at Rosario, Santa Fè, etc.,—only the remaining few thousands resigning themselves to the drudgery of field labour in the rural settlements.

The Italian colonies in Uruguay (Montevideo), in Brazil, as well as in Peru and Chili, are, or were before the war, also numerous, their wealth important, and their trade with their fatherland considerable. In Lima, and most other cities of Peru, their *Pulperias*, or general shops, are thriving almost at every corner of the streets. In Peru, Chili, and the whole coast the Italians have introduced the cultivation of the vine; and their strong liquor *Italia*, at Pisco,

Arica, etc., has become a very extensive article of trade.

Still it is chiefly on the Plate, it is in the vast regions of the Argentine Republic, that of late, owing especially to their comparative quiet and the genial climate, the Italians have made themselves most thoroughly at home. Both at Buenos Ayres and Montevideo, where they began to have some weight on public affairs in the days of Garibaldi's exploits during the civil and international wars (from 1836 to 1848), many of them have risen to wealth. They own a vast quantity of property in those growing cities; monopolize the navigation of the great rivers; their colonies forming, as it were, a State within the State, influential, and almost formidable, for good or evil; their consciousness of superior intelligence, energy, and spirit of association giving them an ascendancy with which the more indolent Spanish Creoles by their feebler nature, and the settlers from other countries by their smaller numbers and their scattered position, are little able to contend. It is in the cities that the Italian colonists lie in a compact mass, that their trade-unions and savings-banks, their co-operative stores, their schools, clubs, libraries, and all their social and charitable

institutions, are best organized. There it is that Italian immigration is most rapidly becoming an element of order, prosperity, and civilization.

At Buenos Ayres the Italians have raised the statues of Garibaldi and Mazzini at the landing-place and before the most conspicuous buildings in the main square of the city; these mere aliens bringing in the household gods of their country, and enforcing, as it were, their hero-worship upon the natives of their land of adoption. Their processions and demonstrations, their very sports and frolics, are objects of wonder and interest, by turns edifying and amusing, at times even somewhat alarming, the less lively native population.

An important fact connected with the development of these Italian colonies of the Plate begins to be brought to light in the columns of the local press.

"The European settlers," says the Buenos Ayres 'Nacion,'[1] "especially the Italians, are for the most part robust people; and the same thing must occur here as in every part of the world—the Argentine native race giving way before the stronger immigrant nature. The statistics of deaths from consumption show too plainly that the greatest ravages caused by

[1] See the 'South American Journal,' June 12, 1886, page 279.

this disease are among the native born Argentines. But the worst feature, as regards the native population, is its low ratio of births, which must arise, either from social habits contrary to marriage, or from constitutional defects. The birth-rate, according to the last census of the various nationalities at Buenos Ayres, was as follows, per annum :—

Italians	60	per 1,000
French	40	„ „
Spanish	39	„ „
Argentine	19	„ „

At this rate," the writer observes, "the pure Argentine will soon be as extinct as the Dodo."

The phenomenon occurring in the United States, where the native population could not exist without the constant accession of immigrant blood, equally reproduces itself in those old Spanish-American communities ; with this difference, however, that in the northern continent the new elements are in a great majority from the British Islands, and will to a great extent contribute to keep up the English character and language among the Yankee race which absorbs them ; while in Buenos Ayres the more numerous immigrants are of alien though kindred blood, and will tread out the rapidly dwindling natives, at the

same time that they seem to amalgamate with and to be apparently lost among them.

"There are very short-sighted people among us," continues the same writer, "who view with jealousy this great increase of the Italians, and this transfusion of blood, a circumstance of happiest results for the country, giving it strength and vigour to attain greater ends than could otherwise be expected. The Argentine nation of 1986 will be as patriotic, as strongly attached to their adopted land, as its natives of to-day, though the names will for the most part end in vowels," *i. e.* will be Italian names.

The race will be changed, of course, but not the language: in the first place, because the infiltration of alien blood will be gradual; in the second place, because the new-comers are from different Italian provinces, most of them belong to the uneducated classes, and are at a loss to understand each other's dialects. Being in need of a common language, they find Spanish an easier and more convenient means of communication between themselves and with the natives, and the Italian which they never knew, though kept up as a literary language in their schools, dies off among them as a means of social or even domestic intercourse. A similar process takes place

at Cincinnati, Chicago, etc. among the Germans who constitute so large a part of the population of the Western States.

We shall not here enter into the manifold questions which this new phase of Italian life plainly suggests; we shall not inquire into the causes, dolorous or auspicious, which drive from their homes a multitude of Italians averaging 150,000 yearly, according to the very narrowest calculation 70,000 at least of them belonging to the permanent emigration (the numbers probably being fifty per cent. below the mark); we shall not discuss whether this exodus should be deemed a bane or a boon for their old or for the new country, or for the emigrants themselves; whether Italy is over-crowded, or whether she could not, with better management, be made to yield bread and contentment for at least one additional third of her present twenty-nine or thirty millions of people. Suffice it to say, that Italy has on the broad flats along the banks of the Parana, the Uruguay, and the Paraguay a New Italy as vast, and certainly as rich and fertile, and blessed with at least as good a climate, as any of the New Englands springing up in the American or Australian continents. Indeed she has the whole world before her

where to choose. For these are no longer the times in which the immigration of strangers was resented and resisted as intrusion. Men come in and go out now-a-days, throughout Europe, no passports needed, no questions asked, except in Russia. They buy lands, they build houses, open shops, make fortunes; no fault found with them, with any number of them, especially if they bring capital or brains or good stout arms wherewith to stir up competition, and put native talent and energy on their mettle.

There are exceptions, of course. I have named Russia. I might mention Republican France, and her antipathy to German and Italian working men. I might point to Republican America, and her jealousy and ill-treatment of the inoffensive and indispensable Chinamen. But the world is large, and away from Europe, beyond the Isthmuses and the Straits, or across the oceans, not only are not new-comers dreaded or repulsed, but they are, on the contrary, received with open arms, invited and solicited, and in some regions even tempted with grants of land, with seeds and implements, and whatever else may insure them a fair start. A man worth his salt has only to go far enough, and to know where to go, to find boundless districts where land is to be had for an old song, or

for nothing at all, at the rate of a square league per head, to settle among effete races doomed to be trodden and stamped out, to make his way into benighted communities, lands of the blind where the one-eyed is king.

Such, it is true, is not the colonization Italy aspires to; she wishes for settlements and possessions of her own, and she has not one inch of ground beyond her boundaries where her emigrants may exist under the empire of her own laws, and under shelter of her national standard—not one inch of ground, unless it be in Eastern Africa, where at Massowah, and other spots on the Red Sea coast, she has still only garrisons, or unless it be the famous colony at Assab, a possession which her neighbours still grudge her, and where, as we have seen, in 1881 she had only five of her own European colonists among one thousand of the native races, the colonists boasting a joint capital of 10,000 lire (£250).

But is that really a great hardship? Is the condition of Italy in that respect so singular? The States which, like Italy, have no dependencies, are indeed fretting; they are roaming over land and sea, seeking what there still may remain for them to lay hold of; sending out their Stanleys and Brazzas and other indefatigable pioneers; they are holding councils in

Brussels to share among them the wilds of Africa, to found a brotherhood of European colonies in climates where the air is fatal to the white man's energies if not to his life, and coming to a compact for a fair distribution and definition of territorial boundaries on which there is hope, and there might be reason, to establish a perpetual peace; a reasonable hope so long as what is parcelled out is merely no man's land, but which is likely to be attended by fresh causes of jealousy and strife, the moment the want of elbow-room begins to be felt among nations which have already too many old subjects of mutual ill-will and contention.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, what is the experience of the States which are already burdened with colonial dependencies? Do we not see Russia only too happy to have ridden herself of Alaska? Would not Denmark gladly sell St. Thomas and her other islands in the Gulf of Mexico if she could find a purchaser? And has not the great North-American Republican Union, which so intensely coveted Cuba, which was bidding so high for Samana Bay in San Domingo, which would have been so glad of a pretext to rob Turkey of Candia, and Spain of Port Mahon, and which daily trod farther and farther on

Mexican lands—has she not lately altered her policy, putting limits to her acquisitiveness, withdrawing from her bargains, discountenancing her filibustering adventurers, and putting her veto upon recent Mexican encroachments? America, like Italy, has land enough for her people. She leaves all her schemes for territorial extension or for Transmarine acquisitions to the natural restlessness of her hunters, squatters, and gold-diggers, and to the private speculation of her traders and rovers.

There are, even in England, politicians who ask what direct and solid gain to their country accrue from her vast colonial dependencies; what profit is to John Bull the empire which he extends over one-fifth of the human race? What does he get from these encumbrances, they argue, beyond the mere luxury of defending them in the hour of danger, or feeding them in the season of famine? what maze of inconsistent and even crooked policy has he not to thread to keep the breath in sick Turkey's body, or in backing the Afghans and other wild tribes against Russia? Such are the arguments of the Gladstone school, of that blind, improvident school which advised the cession to Greece of the Ionian islands and of the strong place of Corfu; and

would equally, if it had its own way, deliver up Gibraltar, Malta, and the Channel Islands, and Egypt, and all the Indies to any who may covet them, as it is now abandoning Ireland to the tender mercies of Parnell's band of murderers.

But the Gladstone school has not yet won the day; between England and the "Grand Old Man" there is a question of life and death; and it is for the new Parliament issuing from the election of July 1886 to settle whether it was the country, or the aged statesman now fallen from power, that had reached that stage of madness which, for men as well as for nations, is the forerunner of ruin and self-destruction.

The British Empire, be it granted, may bring no actual direct and material gain to Great Britain; it may even involve heavy loss. But the English nation can only be great at that price. Only by constant heroic exertion and expense can it keep its head above water and maintain its place in the world. Only on that condition can it procure employment for its enormous surplus population, and open a field for the exuberant energies of the most manly of all human races. England did not look out for empire; it grew upon her hands; it was thrust upon her. It was not policy, but trade; not a Government, but

a Company, that gave her India. And it was only when the Company had done its work that the Government stepped in, probably to undo it; it was then that the difficulties and dangers of India began. It was not the cannon but the plough that colonized the American and Australian continents; indeed it was by the cannon that the very best of England's colonies, the United States, was wrested from her. And notwithstanding the pleasing instances of filial devotion by bands of Canadians and Tasmanian volunteers in some recent straits of the mother country, it is very questionable whether England's youngest daughters, like the eldest, may not outgrow the old mother; whether they may not have interests of their own, separate and antagonistic interests, and become in their turn rather a source of weakness than an element of strength to the land which bore and fostered them.

But such as England's position is, it is now her fate; she has made her bed, and must lie in it. The fulness of the times has come, and events must take their course; and the task of the new Parliament must be to mature and hasten a decision. By falling back from the Soudan England would run the risk of losing Egypt. By abandoning Egypt she

would imperil India. Without India, without Canada, without Australia, England, Mr. Gladstone contends, would be happier; but she would cease to be the queen of two hemispheres, she would no longer "rule the waves." But without Ireland, with Ireland divided, anarchic, in the hands of American rowdies, what would become of England?

But Italy's conditions are not in any manner like those which partly allowed, partly forced Great Britain on her world-embracing career. The population of Italy is not out of proportion with her territory; a large extent of her most fertile soil is, on the contrary, as we have seen,[1] running waste for the lack of available cultivators. Under a firm and provident rule Italy could feed at least ten millions of stalwart new husbandmen, and at the same time greatly better the conditions of the eighteen millions who are now so very nearly starving on the fat of her fattest lands.

It is to little purpose that Italy reads the records of her mediæval Republics, unless she learns that in the settlement of new colonies trade can achieve more than conquest, and influence be felt more than actual power. All that a nation requires in foreign

[1] See above, ch. iv. p. 113.

lands is unlimited freedom of trade and navigation; and all that is already vouchsafed and guaranteed by England, with or without reciprocity, wherever her dominion extends. It is otherwise in other countries, it is true. Elsewhere commerce has to struggle with protective and virtually prohibitive tariffs. But when was brave enterprising trade ever thwarted by such artificial obstacles? Did not English energy break through and ultimately batter down all the barriers of the first Napoleon's continental system?

It was natural, perhaps, that Italy should covet Tunis, and it was a very questionabel policy on the part of France to take it, especially if her object was rather to spite her Latin sister than to benefit herself. But has Italy good reason to envy France the extension of her North-African territory? Algeria has been a stone round France's neck for more than half a century, and as late as 1880 the French population in that country only amounted to 144,071—little more than half the number the Italians attained in ten years in the Argentine Confederation;[1] while the trade between the French Republic and her North-African dependency in that same year only yielded a clear gain to France of 3,800,000 francs (£152,000)

[1] See above, page 152

against the enormous charges entailed by the administration and subjugation of that perpetually unquiet regency.

After all, any chance a country may have of wisely and profitably managing its foreign dependencies may be gauged by the ability it displays in the conduct of its domestic affairs. Before Italy distresses herself about France's conquest of Tunis, she should look to the causes which determined that hare-brained enterprise; for they were the same which now urge on France to her expeditions to the Congo, to Madagascar, Tong-Kin, and the New Hebrides. What drives France to such bootless, senseless, hopeless undertakings abroad is simply disappointment, humiliation, utter disgust with matters as they are at home. It is but the instinct of the *mauvais coucheur*, who after tossing and turning in his bed for the whole night long, must in the end start up and go forth with his gun in the morning and "kill something," lest in his frenzy he should kill himself.

Is it, forsooth, to spread Christianity or to carry civilization among benighted heathens that France bombards open towns and slaughters naked savages? Is it to procure sounder slumbers to Prince Bismarck, or "*pour faire plaisir au Roi de Prusse*," that she

sends her soldiers to die of home-sickness on the African sands, or of swamp-fevers in the deltas of Chinese rivers? Every act of her Government betrays this tendency to national suicide. Almost on the eve of that war of 1870, which led to Sédan, M. Thiers, summing up all the charges which, in a five hours' speech, he had brought against the Imperial Government, concluded with a never-to-be-forgotten phrase: "*Il ne reste plus une seule faute à commettre.*" Since then, to which of the succeeding rulers of France, from Thiers himself to Freycinet, has not that phrase been equally applicable? From Thiers' proclamation of the Republic, to Freycinet's banishment of the princes of the families formerly reigning in France, what else has French policy been but a series of blunders?—blunders of home and foreign policy, all equally unpardonable and irreparable, all equally fatal.

Neither has Italy, consistently with her boasted liberal principles, any reason to envy Spain, Portugal, or Holland the revenues which those unscrupulous nations draw from their Transmarine possessions. Such prosperity as those distant settlements enjoyed in past times, or may still be said to enjoy at the present date, had their basis in a system of enslave-

ment and brutalization of inferior races, native or imported, which is everywhere breaking down in obedience to the principles of justice and humanity prevailing all over the world; or upon fiscal duties which grind and harass the colonists in a vain attempt to promote the commercial and industrial interests of the ruling nation—a protectionism which has also to struggle against the liberal spirit of the age. Whether slavery and protectionism were or were not equally expedient to the white and the coloured man, and whether protectionism did or did not equally benefit the producer and the consumer, are hardly now-a-days any longer debatable questions. Abolition and Free Trade are England's doings; hardly to be undone by England herself, whatever qualms of regret and almost remorse she may now and then feel on these subjects.

Even with such unfair advantages, it is merely from a sheer gratification of insane national pride that Spain has been for a score of years exhausting all her resources in men and money to impose her yoke on the disaffected Cubans; while Portugal, on the contrary, finds in emancipated Brazil, and on the equal terms of friendly intercourse established with that country, such sources of wealth as had never

been open to her during the centuries in which that vast empire was her slave-holding dependency; a very clear case, proving how far more profitable it may be to lose than to keep a colony.

With respect to Holland, and her possessions of Java, Madura, and the other spots on the coasts of Sumatra, Borneo, and the rest of the Dutch East Indies, it would be difficult to say what real permanent good the Dutch have derived from that "culture system," which was only another name for Malay slavery, and which for many years yielded many millions of guilders to the Netherland Government. That system had to give way before the outcry of European and American abolitionists, who contended that the natives of a country, be they black, red, or yellow, are not to be forced to work for the whites of another country, even if these natives are half savages, even if their labour supplies them with the means of comfortable living for themselves, at the same time that it enables them to pay a handsome tribute to their European rulers. The feeling of justice, the notions of liberty and equality, prevail over all considerations of expediency. The Malays must not work more than they like, however easy it may be on experience to prove that freedom will

unfit them for any good either to their masters or to themselves. The system, as morally untenable, has for several years been limited to the culture of coffee and sugar, and is expected to come altogether to an end in 1890. And meanwhile the Java budget, which for many years allowed the Government a handsome surplus over the enormous expenses of administration, has been, on the contrary, since 1881, showing a deficit which in 1885 amounted to 1,257,101 guilders.

Clearly, therefore, those new countries, like Italy, Belgium, and Germany, which have no colonies of their own, can hardly find anywhere an inch of available ground that they would not have to dispute with their actual possessors. Bismarck, at the head of a nation strong enough to tread on other people's rights with impunity, was, indeed, tempted to play the part of

"A snapper-up of unconsidered trifles,"

by hoisting his flag on those Caroline Islands which Spain had never been able to turn to any useful purposes. But even that mighty Chancellor had to cry "Back again!" to get out of that scrape with the best grace he could, and to agree to terms which, whatever advantages he may have obtained, have not borne out his pretensions to sovereign power

over those islands. A *coup de main*, or the strain of an overwhelming force at the close of a successful war, might well place not only the Dutch colonies, but Holland itself at Bismarck's discretion. But the question would still be whether "the game would be worth the candle;" whether Germany would not profit more by *trading with* than by *robbing* her Batavian neighbours.

With respect to Italy, it is not likely that that country will at any time aspire to the rank of a conquering nation; not likely that her trade, even within the shores of the Mediterranean (to say nothing of what lies beyond the boundaries of that sea), may ever regain the importance it had in the Middle Ages, or carry on a successful rivalry with that of England, France, Germany, and other nations bordering on the open ocean; not likely that Italy may anywhere found new colonies, or acquire old ones by victory or purchase. The sooner she wakes from ambitious dreams of that nature will be the better for her. She comes too late into the market. She has too little to buy or sell. And as to her emigrant tide, even if it were for ever flowing (which is scarcely to be desired), it would not easily be made to set to the Levant, to Asia, or Africa, or diverted from that

decided tendency it has evinced towards South America, where, whatever influence Italy may gain, she never will either be able to assert her direct sway, or to hoist her flag, without first settling accounts with those Yankee champions of the Monroe doctrine who will soon be strong enough to claim all America for the Americans.

I have put off to the end of the chapter any mention of a class of Italian emigrants whose wanderings throughout Europe, and even to the remotest regions of the civilized world, has been for many years, not only a grievous calamity to emancipated Italy, but also a flagrant reproach and shame to her rulers. I allude to the exportation of itinerant organ-grinders and plaster-cast sellers, which constitutes a thoroughly organized trade in white slaves, and sends mere children abroad to carry on with impunity the profession of sturdy beggars in the most orderly communities, in defiance of stringent laws, and of the opposition of an omnipresent and in other respects most efficient police.

It would not be easy to trace this notable nuisance to its original source. Italy has for centuries monopolized music and the fine arts. Some of these vagrants may at first have been welcomed abroad

as real minstrels and skilled instrumental performers, or *bonâ fide* retail dealers in articles of artistic value, just as other countrymen of theirs, probably since Galileo, earned their bread as itinerant opticians.

But in process of time, and certainly from the beginning of the present century, their real business has become sheer mendicancy; and that instrument of torture, the barrel-organ, which they call their *mestiere*, or trade, is a mere pretext to extort copper coins; just as flimsy a pretext as the box of matches by which other vagabonds obtain the same intent with equal importunity, though with less unbearable, ear-excruciating noise.

That such imposture should be tolerated and even encouraged in a well-regulated society would be bad and sad enough, were even the evil of spontaneous growth; but the well-known fact is, that the vagrancy of these Italian tramps is not matter of choice with most of them, for in most cases they are mere children kidnapped or decoyed from their homes under false pretences by thorough rogues, who hold them in their power by the title and on the terms of apprenticeship, and compel them to go forth and grind and beg for their master's benefit under the penalty

of starvation and ruthless ill-treatment if they fail to bring back the sum exacted from them.

These wretched organ-grinders came in the early part of the century from the Apennine districts which separate the territories of Parma and Modena from the seaboard of Genoa and Tuscany, while the vendors of plaster statuary belonged for the most part to Lucca; but more lately the traffic extended to other parts of the Peninsula, and especially to Naples, that hot-bed of all corruption, where it acquired a more outrageous character by the draught of girls under age, and mere children, taken abroad for infamous purposes.

These criminal practices were exposed and loudly denounced by most Italians resident in foreign countries, and especially in England, where political exiles took up the cause of the organ-boys against the scoundrels their masters, pulled them before the magistrates, and, unable to devise any better remedy to the evil, endeavoured at least to mitigate it by gathering as many of the young mendicants as could escape their masters' vigilance in a sort of ragged school in Hatton Garden, where they hoped to make them into civilized beings; a scheme, like many others, which foundered against the jealousy, avarice,

and malice of the black-hearted slave-drivers, their owners.[1]

The Italian patriots of thirty or forty years ago, not without reason, laid the blame of this grave disorder on the weakness or wickedness of the despotic Governments of that epoch, whose duty in their opinion it should have been, as it certainly was in their power, to put an end to it by closing their passport-guarded frontier against the spurious emigration. But at present those very patriots, or their successors and partizans, are themselves the men in power in the Peninsula, and hitherto the evil, far from abating, has assumed more alarming proportions and a more heinous character; yet little, if anything, has been done towards its cure, on the plea that the Government has no right to interfere with the free movements of the subject—a shallow and hollow argument in a country like Italy, where (as in Germany, France, and elsewhere) the law of military or maritime conscription fetters down every man to the soil of his country from his birth to the age of twenty to twenty-one years, and all the additional years of the service.

[1] See "*Morello, or the Organ-boy's Progress*," in Mariotti's 'Blackgown Papers,' London, 1846, Wiley and Putnam. 2 Vols. Vol. II. p. 1.

The question, however, has been again and again brought before the Italian Parliament, and very lately, especially with reference to the sore matter of the traffic of young girls taken from the southern provinces.

It is devoutly to be hoped that the affair may not be suffered to drop, and that King Humbert's Government will earnestly and thoroughly deal with it; relying, if need be, not only on its own exertions, but also on the co-operation of friendly States, especially of the adjoining territories of France, Switzerland, and Austria-Hungary, through whose borders the land-transit of this objectionable human merchandise is mainly effected. That the aid of England, of her Custom-House and police authorities, would at all events not be withheld, need not be doubted; for here, as in America, the expediency of closing all ports and barriers against the intrusion of beggars and vagrants begins to be as sorely felt as it is in Prussia or Austria; and it will be acted upon regardless of the individual rights of *bonâ fide* but destitute and idle travellers. For no country can be looked upon as bound to make itself the resort and receptacle of the mere riff-raff and outscouring of other nations; no country can allow its neighbours to act as if

"Rubbish to be shot here" were written at the entrance of its frontier. The Italian Government ought to be made to feel that this disgraceful trade is no matter of politics, but simply of common morality; that it affects not merely the interests, but the very honour of their country; and that they cannot in this case, as they do in that of the public lottery, plead in its exculpation the inexorable exigencies of their shattered finances.

CHAPTER VII.

GOVERNMENT.

Political Instincts of the Italians—England and Italy—English and French Representative Institutions — The Italian Constitutional Charter—The Electoral Law—The *Right* or Cavour, Conservative Party—The *Left* or Rattazzi, Progressist Party—Home and Foreign Policy—Progress towards Manhood Suffrage—Recent Political Events—The Depretis Law of 1882—The *Scrutin de Liste*—Democracy and Demagogy—The Indispensable Man in Italy—Italian Administration.

Is Italy the youngest or the oldest of European communities? The question must be settled ere we can hope to come to a fair estimate of the present conditions, or to a plausible forecast of the future capabilities, of that country.

The Italian kingdom is the newest State made out of the shreds and patches of the most ancient European country. It is an attempt to set a juvenile head on decrepit shoulders, an experiment to send a living soul to reanimate a worn-out and almost lifeless body.

It would be silly conceit on the part of the Italians to look upon themselves as the offspring of the Romans who demolished Carthage, or of the Milanese who routed the Swabian Emperor. But it was hardly generous to describe them (as a crabbed German did) as "the maggots claiming descent from the lion merely because they swarmed out of the corruption of his dead carcase."

There is no instance in history of a people going through a second or third stage of existence. The land may remain the same, but the new generations must be in some sense better, in other respects, perhaps, worse than those which preceded them. The Italians of the Present, the Italians of the Future, have a great deal to learn, a great deal more to un-learn, of what comes to them from the Past. They must, above all things, consider themselves as mere tyros in the science and art of government.

It has always been half a boast, half a reproach to them, to be called the countrymen of Macchiavello. But between the age of Macchiavello and the present time three and a half centuries elapsed, during which the Italians have been by turns ruled by Spanish, French, or Austrian, by mere alien bunglers of the Macchiavellian school. In taking upon themselves

the task of governing themselves, the Italians of the present day, destitute of all precedents of their own, have in their turn been mere borrowers of alien institutions, mere bungling pupils of English, French, and other Macchiavellian bunglers.

No doubt the Italians are politicians by nature. I have already alluded to some points of resemblance they bear in that respect to the English. And, not unlikely, these instincts of true statesmanship, characteristic of both countries, may, as has been suggested, be the result of their old intimate connection at various times. The Romans, it is argued, were at home in Great Britain for half a millennium. During those five hundred years Roman ideas cast deeper roots in British soil than anywhere else north of the Alps. Nowhere did the ruling race leave behind deeper traces of the civilization they had brought with them than in this island, where they found hardly any native institutions to resist its influence or to oppose its spread. Nowhere, perhaps, out of Italy have Roman habits of thought (especially in what concerns State matters or social organization) come down so far and given so deep and peculiar a tone and colour to the national mind as they have in England. The further archæological researches are

carried on in this country, the stronger will grow the conviction that Rome was more thoroughly domesticated, more permanently, as it were, *naturalized* here than in Gaul itself.

The intellectual affinity of the two nations continued throughout the mediæval period down to the age of Elizabeth, the influence of Macchiavello and the Florentine historians being as easily traceable in the writings of Bacon, as the fancy of Boccaccio and the Lombard story-tellers in the plots of Shakespeare, or the manner of Tasso in the blank verse of Milton.

And the remote consequences of this mental kinsmanship are also discernible in the mutual regard between the two nations; in that sympathy which makes high-minded Italians, like Alfieri, "love England above all countries next to their own;" and which insures them here a warmer and more durable welcome than is accorded to other aliens. Witness the deep affections won in English hearts by Italians of all parties and all characters: by Baretti or Foscolo, by Pecchio or Panizzi, by Poerio or Mazzini, by Ruffini or Aurelio Saffi, by Sir James Lacaita or (for one day) by Garibaldi.

Unfortunately, for what concerns matters of Government, the Italians had to study English institutions

not in their original, but in very bad French translations, imitations, or *adaptations*. For one hundred thousand persons in Italy who read French, there is, or at least there was barely one, in 1848, who had even a smattering of English. And even now an Italian understands very little of England, even though he lives in this country half his lifetime; but he makes nothing whatever of it if he only depends on French teachers for his knowledge.

English institutions in their origin simply admitted the people's right to be well governed; they never established the absolute right of the people to govern themselves. That right was granted, but grudgingly, partially, and by instalments. It was only France that attempted at once to graft her own democratic ideas on English aristocratic notions; not by giving, but by allowing the people to take, more than their full share of self-government. England laboured at the gradual extension of her governing classes. France waged a war of class against class, and overthrew all barriers between them. England aimed at freedom through pacific and rational reform. France ushered in what she called liberty by sudden and violent revolution.

The Italians, for their own part, often attempted,

but never achieved revolutions. The emancipation of the country, though equally the object of the aspirations of all classes, was the result, not of insurrections (which always ended in defeat), but of wars; wars, so far as they were fought by Italians, won not by a people, and not finally by volunteers, but by a royal army and a royal dynasty. There is nothing democratic in Italy. The lower classes are republican only in manners. They are free and easy with "their betters"; but they know their place and keep to it. In the nature of an Italian labourer or artisan there is nothing of the *morgue* of the French *citoyen*.

The Italian cause from the beginning was not political, but national. Its champions, from Dante to Alfieri, were all aristocrats. It was Mazzini who in his impatience and self-conceit raised the senseless cry "Dio e Popolo!" But Mazzini was not a Democrat; he was an Autocrat. Had he ever had his way, the cry, like Mahomet's, would have been, "God is God, and Mazzini is His Prophet." Mazzini's genius, at the utmost, fitted him for a Precursor's task, not a Messiah's mission.

Unfortunately, in Italy, the upper ranks, those that really won their country's battle, knew as little about government as the lower orders. They might dabble

with political theories, but they had no chance of working them out into practice. Despots in that country, native or foreign, never ruled by their most respectable subjects, for the very good reason that but few of these latter, if they respected themselves, would make themselves partakers of their rulers' iniquity or imbecility—at all events of their rulers' unpopularity. Italian princes, dukes, or grand-dukes had no ministers, but merely favourites, and these (the Actons, Magawlies, Neippergs, Bombelles, Wards, etc.) were often foreigners, some of them needy adventurers of rank, others low-born menials and minions.

The only national Government in Italy was the Piedmontese, and that was no more Italian than the Prussian was German, and, like the Prussian, it was simply military, and the very reverse of democratic. When, in March 1848, King Charles Albert (who, with all his good intentions, was mistrusted to the last) was driven by events to proclaim himself "the Sword of Italy," he bound himself to endow his Piedmontese with representative institutions; but having no leisure or inclination for mature deliberations, he made them a present of the French Charter of 1830; that very charter which Louis Philippe proclaimed

was to be "*désormais une vérité*," and which had just been torn to tatters and trodden in the mud, together with the throne "*entouré d'Institutions Republicaines*," in the very month of February of that same year, 1848.

That constitution of the French July Monarchy was not the worst of its kind; but it was French, and from its nature pedantic. It was a written document, "a rag of paper." It had grievous faults, and it made no provision for their amendment; it was irrevocable, inviolable, unchangeable, a kind of God Terminus, beyond which it was presumed that neither the country nor the world could or should ever progress, unless, as it was done in France, by a revolution.

Absurd as the clause which debars this or any other written code of laws from all imaginable reform must obviously be, the Italians accepted and revered it as the palladium of their national liberties; and all attempts made by Radical reformers to tinker or cobble at it have been hitherto baffled by the sound political instinct of a people, one of whose wisest maxims, "*Il Meglio è il nemico del Bene*," teaches them to "let well alone."

Unfortunately the electoral law was not an integrant part of the Charles Albert constitution. It

was published at a later period than the "Sacred Charter," and was not equally safe against innovation; it was so often and so rashly modified by a series of Acts of Parliament, as to be at last brought to the very verge of direct universal suffrage.

The same revolution, as we are well aware, has equally been, or is being rapidly effected in most European countries. It is the fatal and the almost irreparable blunder of the age, the cause of all the disorder of the so-called democratic society. It has very nearly achieved its triumph even in England, where only a few months ago (July, 1886) we were witnessing the phenomenon of one man, W. E. Gladstone, very nearly outweighing all the sense and worth that the *élite* of his Liberal partisans, as well as that of his Conservative adversaries, were mustering against him.

What seems most strange in all this, is that the democratization of nearly all Europe should proceed hand in hand with the dissolution of the country which first had for nearly a century to bear the direct consequences of its own infatuation in this respect. The world grows old and learns nothing. Because France has lost her tail, all her neighbours are hastening to cut their own off. It was in France that the first experiment was made to range all social elements

on the footing of perfect equality; there it was that the war of "Masses" against "Classes" was first proclaimed, and the principle that "one man is as good as another, and maybe even better," was first firmly established. But in France the first lesson was taught by force. Equalization was achieved by demolition, by levelling down. The crimes of the Revolution and the fearful punishment attendant on them taught both French and other democrats that the same ends might be obtained by milder means, that it was no longer necessary to string up the aristocrats to the lamp-posts, or to burn their defenceless wives and children in their *châteaux*.

All that was required was simply to bring the Masses to the polls, and there array them against the Classes. On one side you have the *habentes*, the weaker party, if you only count heads; in front of them the *non-habentes*, whose name is legion. The latter must be much more or much less than men if the wish to change places with the former did not naturally spring up in their bosoms; if they did not long for that equalization which must begin by spoliation. Only, spoliation need no longer be brought about by violence; it will be contrived by vote. From the Masses will spring their Parliament.

The Parliament will appoint their Cabinet. The Cabinet will be swayed by some Grand Old Man who will address the multitude with the assurance that all men of education and intelligence, of birth, and wealth, and worth, are wrong, and *they* alone, the Great Untaught and Unwashed, are always sure to be right.

Admit universal suffrage and all will follow; the State will go through every phase of Radicalism, Republicanism, Socialism, and Communism, till reaction sets in under the auspices of a Heaven-sent Saviour of Society. Thus will the history of France be summed up from 1789 to the centenary of that great epoch which is so soon to be celebrated.

For what concerns Italy matters have hitherto not proceeded so far, because one thing it is to invest an ignorant multitude with the power of doing mischief, another thing to bring them to feel and know their power, and to use it. The national movement in the Peninsula, from 1820 to 1860, was mainly aristocratic. The Santa Rosa, Lisio, Collegno, Cesare Alfieri di Sostegno, Balbo, Promis, Sclopis, etc., its leaders in Turin, belonged to the purest nobility of Piedmont. And if D'Azeglio and Cavour, who were also men of high rank, took the initiative of greatly-needed Liberal measures, they did so in full

confidence of their ability to keep democracy within proper limits. Cavour died, June 6, 1861, but the power continued for sixteen years in the hands of men who had been trained in his school, Ricasoli, Farini, Minghetti, Sella, Visconti-Venosta, etc.—men who had a hand with him in the construction of a Monarchic State, and for whom the definition of a Constitutional State as "*Un tróne entouré d'Institutions Républicaines*" was flat heresy and stark nonsense.

But these men of the Right, or, as they were vaguely called, of the moderately Liberal, or Conservative party, after their sixteen years of tolerably wise, and, on the whole, successful rule, in consequence of some petty local and personal matters, were hustled from power (March, 1876), and the Rattazzi party, the Left, stepped into their places. It was Rattazzi by whom the name of Democratic was first given to an Italian Ministry, in 1848. Rattazzi himself, with his immediate following, belonged to the so-called Left Centre. But, whenever they strove for power, or feared to lose it, they did not hesitate to make common cause with the Extreme Left, which was the hot-bed of *Mazzinianism* and *Garibaldism*, and consisted of patriots who had wished to free Italy by a revolution and the republic, and had accepted

monarchy with a more or less openly-avowed reluctance and reserve. The best known and most deserving of them were Cairoli, Crispi, and Nicotera, Nicola Fabrizi, Bertani, Aurelio Saffi, etc.

Before the accession of the Left to power, Rattazzi had died, June 5, 1873, and his mantle had fallen on Depretis, a man of no great capacity or experience, but of uncommon suppleness and astuteness, and not troubled with principles which might unfit him for the leadership of a coalition Ministry. He had long been acting as Rattazzi's lieutenant, and upon that chief's decease, he found himself at the head of the new Administration of March 24, 1876.

The Depretis Administration, however, was not long installed before it began to exhibit the appearance of a house divided against itself. It relied for support on the Extreme Left as well as on the Left Centre, and among the former were men who, when in Opposition, had committed themselves to ultra-Radical principles and strong measures, which, wrong in theory, would have been fatal if insisted on for practical purposes. For several years these men were deeply engrossed with international questions; their ranks swarmed with Mazzinians and Garibaldians, with the men of "Rome and Venice!" "Rome

or Death!"—who, when all that Italy could claim with any chance of success had been won, set up that insane cry for "*Italia Irredenta*," which involved the risk of a loss of all former gains.

As we have seen, however, prudence is the best part of the wisdom of Italian statesmen, as discretion is the best part of their valour. Depretis, who had never been rash or violent, even in Opposition, showed no hesitation about disavowing hot-headed partisans, or calling as many of his former opponents as would make common cause with him into his council, and thus gave rise to a split in the majority, both in the Chamber and Cabinet, which deepened into sullen discontent, and ultimately broke out into open opposition.

Finding from the beginning no man among his partisans to whom he could intrust the management of his foreign affairs, Depretis called from their posts diplomatic agents accredited to foreign courts—Count Corti, Count Maffei, Melegari, and more lately General Count Robilant, all partisans of the fallen Minghetti Cabinet, but who, in any emergency, could be considered "safe men." Under their guidance the uneasiness created at Vienna and Berlin by the Irredentist party was soon dispelled; collision with

France with respect to Tunis, and other snubs administered by Thiers and his successors, was averted; and Italy abided by the principle that her emancipation was to make her, not a jarring note in the European concert, but a new pledge for the security of European peace.

The transfer of government from the Conservative to the Progressist party led thus to no change in Italy's foreign policy, and the reassuring conduct of the new Ministry gave even rise to a sneer about "the change of performers having brought no break in the monotony of the music."[1] The relations of the Italian kingdom to its neighbours were so uniformly friendly that the European world seemed to lose all interest in Italian affairs, and to look upon that country as one of those happy communities whose annals are a blank. Only one double blunder, as we have seen,[2] was committed by the Depretis Government in its intercourse with other Powers, and that was first the refusal of England's solicitation for Italy's co-operation in Egypt, and then the expedition to Massowah, which, if it could be said to

[1] "Si cangia il Mastro di cappella,
Ma la musica è sempre quella."

[2] See above, ch. iii. p. 88.

have any purpose, could only be meant as an offer of Italy's support to England in the Soudan, when the abandonment of that region by England had already been resolved upon by the Gladstone Administration as an irresistible necessity. The foreign policy of Italy had during the whole of that transaction, 1881—1885, been in an evil moment intrusted to Mancini, a very eloquent Neapolitan advocate, but who had been repeatedly tried in other departments of the Administration, and in none had ever shown himself a man of business. That was almost the only instance since 1866 in which Italy was called upon to take an active part in the affairs of the world, and the result was a failure of which we are still to see the ultimate consequences.

But the wisdom of Italian statesmen was even more grievously at fault in matters of home policy. Depretis and his colleagues had, at their accession, pledged themselves to propose and to carry out three measures which popular clamour had vainly been soliciting from their predecessors of the Minghetti party. Two of these were financial, and they concerned the abolition of the grist-tax and of the forced paper currency; but the third was political, and it referred to the extension of the electoral

suffrage. Both Moderates and Radicals in Italy are equally apt to borrow their views from the French. But the men of the Left carried their servile imitation to such extremes as just fell short of arrant French Republicanism. Nothing would satisfy the longings of the men of the Extreme Left for equality but sheer universal suffrage. But the men of the Left Centre, with Depretis at their head, though they professed that that was the end they were aiming at, deemed it expedient to come to it by degrees, by a series of tentative measures. This was a matter on which it was not easy for the Government party to bring about an agreement among the various sections of which it was composed, and it was even more hopeless to overcome the hostility of those small but noisy knots of so-called *Intransigenti*, which were, so to say, the forlorn hopes of the Republican party.

The men of this party—the *Intransigenti* themselves not excepted—were, as a rule, upright and sincere, and well-meaning men, though often deluded fanatics; men, in many instances, who had been heroes and martyrs in their country's cause, and were apt to trust to enthusiasm as to a safer guidance than calm and cool reason. Indeed, one of the great evils of the new kingdom was that for several years every

patriot deemed it his right to look upon himself as a politician. Italian public men were seldom chargeable with insatiate avarice or inordinate ambition. The worst of them was rather narrowness of views and overweening conceit. Hardly any of them were statesmen by education or experience, yet hardly any of them were aware of their deficiencies. Their main faults were want of harmony and understanding, of cohesion and solidarity, of discipline and subordination. The consequence was, that this Government of the Left, in spite of its enormous majority, during the last ten years, 1876—1886, went through nearly as many partial or total crises, and always from dissensions in its own body. The change was ordinarily in the Presidency or Premiership. There was a perpetual see-saw between a Depretis and a Cairoli, as there was so often in Greece between a Tricoupis and a Comundouros, or in Roumania between a Bratiano and a Cogalniccano; the two leaders sometimes fairly ousting each other, but more generally merely exchanging places, and making room for each other in the subaltern offices, as perpetual rivals, but by no means implacable or uncompromising opponents.

This almost chivalrous mutual regard and forbearance could not, however, last for ever, and the

incurable split arose chiefly from the treatment of the question of suffrage. Depretis, on his third accession to the Presidency in 1879, undertook, as Minister of the Interior, the drawing up of a Bill of Electoral Reform, that Bill which, after a discussion which went through two Sessions, at last became law, and received its first application in the General Election of October 12, 1882. The ultimate result was that the number of electors in the whole kingdom, which previous to that date was only 621,896, rose by the new enactment to 2,112,563, out of a population of 29,000,000; while the electoral *colleges*, or districts, which were hitherto 508, were, owing to the newly-adopted practice of *scrutin de liste*, reduced to 135.

An electoral body of ten, or even say eleven per cent of the population, might not seem very alarming in an advanced community like England, especially if the clause which excluded the illiterate were inexorably applied; for, according to the official returns published by the Government, there were still in Italy, in 1882, almost fifty-four per cent of the male population, "*analfabeti*," i. e. more than half of the men above twenty years of age unable to read or write.

Very clearly Depretis and his advisers were driven in this matter much further than their own calm

judgment would have approved. For in Italy, in the opinion of some men, the electoral franchise, far from needing extension, ought, on the contrary, to have been considerably restricted, at least until the electors showed a better consciousness of their public duties, and were cured of that indolence by which honest and reasonable men allowed the rough and desperate to have their way at the polls. Even with a suffrage still grounded, as it was by the old law, on property qualification, or superior education, it not unfrequently happened in Italy that in a *college* or constituency mustering 1500 to 2000 electors, the polls were attended by barely one-tenth of their number; and the proportion will be found to be about the same under the new arrangement; the right of voting, except in cases of extraordinary excitement, being seldom exercised by a fraction of the men who were the loudest to claim it. The new law disposes that no election be valid unless at least one-eighth of the registered voters be present. But what with the ballot, the *scrutin de liste*, and the ascendancy of the Government functionaries, high and low, from the prefect to the gendarme, there is hardly an instance in any of the Continental States in which the people's suffrage is not *hocus-pocussed*, unduly swayed, or boldly falsified at the

pleasure of the polling officials; and it very seldom happens that a majority is returned hostile to the Government by which the election is manipulated.

In Naples, for instance, where similar disorders are always carried to the most scandalous extremes, the counting of votes for the election of the Municipal Council of this last July (1886) was prolonged for eighteen days, the officials engaged in the scrutiny (Camorrists every man of them) squabbling, blackguarding, and denouncing each other's tricks, and ending like gamblers by throwing down their cards; a poll being proclaimed by sheer uproar, at the head of which, as a matter of course, came out the name of the well-known Duca Sambiase di San Donato, a nobleman by birth, but an idol of the Lazzaroni, who, like the London *roughs* in their enthusiasm for "the Claimant," insisted on looking on him as *one of themselves*—as he was, indeed, the most perfect type of their class.

But even apart from all gross tampering with the results of the poll, it is clear that with the *scrutin de liste*, introduced by the Depretis law, there was an end of all local or individual vote. A General Election might just as well be intrusted in the lump to the mob of the capital, or rather to the stump orators, obscure journalists, or other busy-bodies who sway

their passions and draw up the lists of candidates for town and country. Hitherto a free man was often called upon to "buy a pig in a poke," *i. e.* to vote for a candidate about whom he knew but little. But he is now made to "buy the whole litter"; to return a batch of ten or twenty men, about whom he is sure to know nothing at all.

One might perhaps accept the *Vox Populi* as *Vox Dei* if the mass acted on its own unbiassed impulse, and not too often at the suggestion of its worst enemies calling themselves the People's friends. The experience of France is vainly there to warn us that there is no democracy that will not lead to demagogy, no popular sovereignty that will not end in a Rabagas, a Gambetta, a Napoleon dictatorship.

The Italians were not without forebodings of the probable results of rash legislation. They made the experiment of the Depretis law in the election of 1882, and the enlarged franchise, though still a long way from manhood suffrage, yielded, of course, a large majority in favour of the Left; but it also gave thirty to fifty seats to the *Intransigenti*, more or less openly-avowed Republicans. This created a panic, under the pressure of which the men of the Left and Right Centre, *i. e.* the loyal and moderate men of all

colours, came to an understanding which was expected to lead to their coalition under the auspices of Quintino Sella, the ablest of the former Conservative ministers. This combination was, however, frustrated by the death of Sella, which not only relieved Depretis from so formidable an adversary, but also enabled him to step into the inheritance of the dead man's policy. Depretis took upon himself the leadership of the two centres, rid himself of those members of his Cabinet whom he despaired to win over to his new views, filled their places with less known but more obsequious men, and was thus able to carry on the Government, but with his former colleagues, Cairoli, Crispi, Nicotera, Baccarini, and Zanardelli, arrayed in a formidable *Pentarchia* against him, at the head of a large band of the Extreme Left.

On these terms did the situation continue for three years, with Depretis master of it. Depretis, obnoxious to the Conservatives as the author of an electoral law which came too near manhood suffrage, detested by the Progressists for a law that stopped too short of it, scouted by his old supporters as a traitor and deserter, yet mistrusted by his new partisans as a shuffler and trickster, managed, however, to carry on the Government, balancing himself,

not without a certain amount of rope-dancing skill, between the parties; both of them loath to govern with him, yet both unequal to the task of governing without him: the Conservatives, partly because the country had been too far democratized, and too long estranged from them; the Progressists because they did not know how far their leaders, the men of the Pentarchy, might be committed to the views of the *Intransigenti*, or ultra-Radicals and Anarchists. The Conservatives also had been, owing to Sella's death and Minghetti's ill health, without distinctly acknowledged chiefs, while the leaders of the Progressists were too many, and the choice of one out of five was fraught with almost insurmountable difficulties.

In this tangled condition of affairs the ill-defined and worse organized or disciplined parties came into collision in the early months of this year, 1886. There was a distressingly long and dull debate on some financial question of no particular interest, but on which Depretis staked the existence of his Cabinet, and from which he came off victorious, but with so inconsiderable a majority in his favour as compelled him to appeal to the country. The General Election of this spring, 1886, thanks to the support of the Right, with Minghetti, Bonghi, Peruzzi, and other

highly-honoured men among the Conservatives, enabled the Depretis Cabinet to gain the support of a working majority. The Musicians, however, as well as the Music, were still the same, and the hot season most opportunely set in before the solidity of the renewed Ministerial edifice was put to the test of serious parliamentary discussion.

From all I have said it seems natural to infer that representative institutions have not as yet cast very deep root in Italy; as, indeed, how could they in so short a time? The people, on the whole, are not as much in earnest about their rights and duties as their true friends would wish them to be. There is too much remissness and apathy on the part of the electors, too feeble a consciousness of the importance of their mission on the part of the elected. The Deputies' Chamber is too large and noisy, too idle and undignified an assembly, too unamenable to guidance and discipline, too much like a truant boys' school and a rampant bear-garden. There would be no lack of able men in it, were there not too many of them; were they not by their conceit, by their mutual jealousies, suspicions, prejudices, and susceptibilities, too apt to stand in each other's way. The complaint is that there is not among them a

truly great man on either side. Hence does the country fall into the hands of the only possible, the *Indispensable* man; of Depretis, a man over seventy, an old man, though by no means a "Grand Old Man"; not so distinguished, but, thank God! not so mischievous a man as Gladstone; yet in so far objectionable, that he fills a place for which no one can believe that Italy could not, were she in her right senses, produce a worthier occupant. What upholds Depretis is simply the fact that the alternative lies between him and the Pentarchy, between him and the Deluge.

So far as an impartial observer can judge, it seems clear that the Italians are becoming aware of the mistake they committed in adopting representative institutions on too large a scale. Universal suffrage with *scrutin de liste* did evidently not work well among them; it would seem necessary to limit the franchise, to substitute *indirect* to *direct* suffrage, or if "robbing the people of their birthright" is no longer practicable, thin the ranks, if not of the *electors*, then of the *eligible*, by establishing a property qualification, without which no candidate should be admissible. It is absolutely necessary that property as well as intelligence should be more largely represented than it is

in the Chamber, and with that view it would be well to reduce the roll of deputies to less than half their present number, as it was recently done by Tricoupis in the Greek Chamber, so as to have a quiet and respectable assembly, with less talk and more work. Above all things, it is advisable to reform the Senate so as to clothe it with the real ascendancy of an Upper Chamber.

But whatever may be the innate faculties of the Italians as politicians, they almost invariably break down as administrators. The whole governing machinery of the Italian kingdom had almost to be improvised at the out-start in 1860, because the public functionaries of the former despotic States, besides being often corrupt and incapable, were suspected of hostility to the new order of things, and had, on the spur of the moment, to be superseded by new men who, in many cases, had nothing to recommend them besides their alleged patriotism. The only State of Old Italy where something like rule was *ab antiquo* established, was Piedmont. But its rule was too narrowly military, too traditionally aristocratic to be deemed suitable to the democratic instincts of a free community. The cry went forth that Italy was being *Piedmontized;* and upon the removal of the capital

from Turin, new elements were brought in from the annexed southern provinces in such inconsiderate haste, and to such an alarming extent, that the south crowded the seats both of the Chamber and Senate and of the Cabinet, so that the Administration might in a great measure be said to be *Neapolitanized.*

Italian ministers, as a class, are deficient neither in ability nor in good-will. They are, most of them, assiduous in their attendance to their duties, painstaking and hard-working, but they lack the instincts and habits of command. Few of them are born rulers, or have the consciousness of the authority and responsibility with which their office should invest them. They seem unaware that a minister's duty is less to do any work himself, than to assign to all under his orders the work they are to do, and see that they do it; that what the Ministry should take upon itself should be the general direction, not the mere routine of public business. There hardly ever was such a thing as a governing class in Italy, nor could such a thing show itself in the mere lapse of one generation. Italian ministers generally spring up from the parliamentary ranks; they are nothing if not orators, often nothing but that, sometimes not even that. They show great zeal as legislators; they heap

laws upon laws, but seem to forget that laws, were they even those of Lycurgus or Solon, are only good in so far as they are strictly observed. "There is no end of laws," as the Italian poet says, "but who takes charge of their execution?"[1] a saying nowhere more correctly applicable than in Italy, where for so many years of home and foreign tyranny, the evasion and even the open violation of the law was almost looked upon as a patriotic duty; where the smugglers, and not unfrequently the very brigands, were accounted popular heroes.

As the constitutional charter, so likewise the administrative system in Italy is little better than a copy of the French; and, as is the nature of all copies, it exaggerates the faults of the original, and has not even the advantage of long usage, and of fitness to the circumstances of time and place to recommend it. As in France, so in Italy, the whole civil service is organized on a portentously large scale; the functionaries, high and low, in the various departments in the capital, with all their ramifications in town and country, may be reckoned by tens and hundreds of thousands. Every scheme of centralization or decentralization seems to have no other object

[1] "Le leggi son, ma chi pon mano ad esse?"

than the multiplication of places and placemen. The result, of course, is what may be expected; where twenty servants are appointed to do the work for which ten or five would be sufficient, nothing but delay, confusion, mutual hindrance, and obstruction will inevitably ensue. The most common affair is made to go on wheels within wheels, through a whole maze of "circumlocution offices." The rectification of some petty official blunder, an overcharge at the Custom-House or the Inland Revenue, the rescue of a misdirected parcel from the "Dead Letter Office," or of a missing despatch at the Telegraph Department —any trifling transaction of that nature may cause a luckless man an endless loss of time, and what is worse, temper. He may have to go from Herod to Pilate, and back again from Pilate to Herod, up this pair of stairs, across that damp passage, along that draughty corridor, to cool his heels in this or that musty ante-chamber, to hold conference with many wrong officials till he stumbles on the right one; and when at last the blunder is found out, the overcharge or miscarriage acknowledged, the order for repayment or redress swells to a State document, bearing as many signatures of clerks and upper clerks, *chefs de bureaux* and *chefs de division*, as many seals,

stamps, and *visas*, as if it were the protocol of an international treaty.

Apply this admirable contrivance for wasting time to matters of greater importance in every branch of State business, say, to any department in the Ministries of Public Works, Agriculture and Commerce, etc., to roads and railroads, canals, woods and forests, fairs and markets, national and international exhibitions, etc., and one may easily understand how the whole machinery of the Government in a new country like the Italian kingdom must still be, and remain no one knows for how long a time to come, at sixes and sevens.

And nowhere is the evil so glaringly perceptible as in the Ministry of Grace and Justice. In a country like Italy, which boasts five Supreme Courts (*di Cassazione*), 24 Courts of Appeal, 92 ordinary Assize Courts, 162 Civil and Correctional Tribunals, 27 Commercial Courts, and 1815 *Preture* (County Courts of paid Justices of the Peace), it is painful to think to what interminable lengths, and what unconscionable costs, both civil suits and criminal proceedings must be dragged, and with what appalling number of prisoners, innocent or guilty, the gaols must be choked, their trials being put off

from year's end to year's end, owing to the overwhelming encumbrance and pressure of cases long in arrear.

The same complication, accumulation, and procrastination occur in every branch of the public service. The Italians seem bent on adopting French forms and methods in all things, great or small; on emulating the pedantic minuteness, the fastidious accuracy of their Gallic neighbours, though not, I am glad to say, the *brusque* manner, the sharp, bullying tones with which your French Jack-in-office gets through his business with much haste and much fuss, though often with little order or speed.

The Italian functionary, to do him justice, is seldom in a hurry, and he is, as a rule, the most gentle, courteous, patient, and most obliging of human beings—at least till you venture to stroke his hair the wrong way, when his feline nature is likely to reveal itself, the sharp claws suddenly peeping out through the smoothness of the velvet paws.

It requires no very great prophetic spirit to foresee that Italy will not very speedily nor very safely

accomplish her career, till she be able to strike out a path for herself, a path of her own, and not only materially diverging from, but actually opposite to that which Revolutionary France for nearly a century has both by precept and example induced her to follow.

CHAPTER VIII.

FINANCE.

Italian Wealth—Economical and Financial—Enormous Increase of the National Budget—The Italian Debt—Consequences of Taxation on the People's Well-being—French and Italian Budgets—Italian Expenditure—Charge on the Debt—Costs of Army and Navy—Moderate costs of other branches of Administration—Low Wages and excessive number of Italian Public Functionaries—Communal and Provincial Budgets—Democracy at the bottom of Italian Financial Extravagance.

I HAVE had occasion to state that Italy could not as yet be considered a rich country. Her wealth, however, has greatly increased since the achievement of her independence and unity.

During a quarter of a century (1860—1885) the new kingdom has received a momentous impulse in every branch of its agricultural, industrial, and commercial activity; and there has been so rapid and extensive a development of national prosperity, that, while the expenditure has during that period very nearly trebled, the revenue has for several years

been made to keep pace with it, so that in 1881, previous to the redemption of the forced paper currency, the income had risen to 1,518,535,454 lire (£60,741,418), against an outlay of 1,476,648,226 lire (£58,705,929), leaving a surplus of 50,887,238 lire (£2,035,489).

This result, however, could not have been obtained without a dire strain on the blood and substance of the people, from whom complaints incessantly arose that the burdens they had to bear far exceeded their utmost powers of endurance. The money nevertheless, however reluctantly, was pretty regularly forthcoming; for the Italians are still the people of whom an Austrian Grand-Duke used to say, "*Cantano? Pagheranno!*" (They sing; they will be sure to pay.) And they seem now to have survived their worst times, as, owing to the propitious circumstances of a long-continued European peace, and a succession of abundant harvests, the Depretis Government have been enabled to redeem the pledge to which they bound themselves on their accession to power in 1876, proposing and carrying out measures which put an end to the unpopular grist-tax, and to the irksome circulation of forced paper money.

But there is no immediate expectation of a removal of other taxes almost equally objectionable; to wit—improvident and vexatious taxes, falling with ruthless severity on the necessaries of life, and weighing especially on the lower orders, such as the salt monopoly, the *octroi*, or duty on consumption, at the town gates; immoral taxes, tending to encourage the gambling propensities of an ignorant multitude, such as the Public Lottery; exorbitant taxes, absorbing nearly half the income of real property, such as the house-tax, which in some towns (Florence, for instance) amounted to forty-nine per cent of the assessed rent, more lately (1884) reduced to thirty-eight per cent; finally, unjust and obviously absurd taxes, founded on mere contingencies, such as the legacy duties, equally exacted from an heir on actual and immediate succession, and also on the reversion of a legacy which may never fall due, or only after an indefinite lapse of years.

Of course taxes must be paid. That private fortunes should contribute to the requirements of the national treasury, is a well-established theoretic principle. Still, one should not be unmindful of some practical rules of common sense, about the "last feather breaking the camel's back," "the last

drop causing the full cup to overflow;" the inexpediency of "killing the goose that lays the golden eggs," etc. The results of excessive taxation in Italy are perceptible in the cruel sufferings of the lower classes, especially among the rural population.

Nowhere perhaps does the unmatched fertility of the soil offer a more striking contrast with the wretchedness of its cultivators than in the rich plains of North Italy, those of Lombardy and the Emilia. It is from those regions that one hears the most startling accounts of the ravages of the *Pellagra*, a mysterious, horrible complaint affecting both body and mind; bred, it is supposed, by insufficient quantity or bad quality of food, by the squalor of the dwellings, the impurity of air and water,—a complication of evils all springing from the same source of abject poverty; the low wages being equally insufficient to enable the labourer to keep soul and body together in his native land, or to better his condition by quitting it.

It is but justice to inquire whether such miseries did not exist in those same regions in former times, and whether, if we hear more about them now, it is not because greater attention is being paid to the subject, and somewhat more earnest efforts are made

to point out the evil or to devise the remedy. Whether, for instance, the *Pellagra* is on the increase or shows symptoms of abating; whether the migration which has lately set in, in vast proportions, from many of the Italian provinces, is to be accounted gain or loss to the community; and whether much of the undeniable misery of the peasantry is not in a great measure ascribable to the people's own indolent, unclean and vicious habits; to their stolid indifference to what in other countries, and under different climates, constitutes the comforts and decencies of life, and to their grovelling avarice, to their self-stinting and starving, penny-hoarding instincts—all these are matters about which discussion is not easy. But we ought, at all events, to be thankful to the Italian Government for the many huge volumes of statistical information it supplies on the subject; instituting Parliamentary inquiries, and appointing official commissions; trusting to publicity, and to the natural progress of reason and humanity, to force both the Government itself and the wealthier classes to come to the relief and amelioration of the lower orders.

In the Crown speech read by King Humbert on the opening of the sixteenth Italian Parliament, on the

tenth of the month of June, 1886, allusion was made to bills intended to provide "patronage and assistance to the working classes," *tutela ed aiuto delle classi lavoratrici*, expressions quite in harmony with the humanitarian spirit of the age—an age seemingly finding the task of helping the poor much easier than that of teaching them to help themselves, or to be contented with their lot.

The improvement of the condition of the working classes is now-a-days the great problem of all civilized States, and each of them comes forth with a programme for its solution year by year; but the working classes are numerous, they are a stubborn material to work upon, and any measure tending to that scope requires serious considerations of the adequacy of the means to the end. A nation aspiring to self-government, and anxious to realize Henri Quatre's utopia about "the fat hen in every peasant's Sunday pot," must dispose of large funds, and it must not only be willing to produce the money, but also be able to exercise a proper control over the use of it.

The question, therefore, for what concerns Italy, is to what extent she is aware of her responsibility for the management of her own affairs, and of the danger of intrusting it to incompetent or unscrupulous

public servants. It is for the nation to keep its own accounts. Italy has a Parliament, and so has France, and so have many other Continental States; yet it is doubtful whether there be one of them (Prussia, perhaps, alone excepted) in which the Chambers attend to the tightening or loosening of the national purse-strings as to the most sacred of their duties. Two of the sittings of the present session of the Italian Parliament (June 29, 30, 1886) were taken up by the discussion of the Government's motion asking full powers to carry on the "*Esercizio Provvisorio*," or discretional disposal of the public money, as the advanced season prevented the discussion of the Budget for the year. The Ministers asked only for *one* month of this exceptional freedom from Parliamentary control; but the Chamber, in a fit of chivalrous largess, extended the period to the remaining *six* months of the year. Here was a Parliament more Ministerial than the Ministers themselves.

This has been only too frequently the practice of the Italian Chamber. The whole of its time, from October to July, is usually lost in unprofitable debates on idle and almost academical home or foreign questions, interrupted by more or less prolonged Christmas, Carnival, Easter, and other holidays, and

usually settled by frequent and sudden counting-out of the almost empty House; but the transaction of real business, and especially the revision of public accounts, is reserved for the fag-end of the session, when the heat in an Italian city, and especially in Rome, makes anything like serious work an impossibility. The discussion of the Budget under such circumstances is a mere form; the items are voted at full speed by a jaded Chamber, only too ready to rely upon the preparatory conclusions of its Select Committee, which for its own part has scamped its work, and thrown all its responsibility on its reporter. Even this easy way of acquitting itself of its task proves often too irksome to the Chamber, and a short cut through it is found in a special vote of confidence which bestows on the Government a complete mastery over the financial situation.

This too gross and patent dereliction of duty on the part of the Chamber again and again repeated itself in the early years of the Piedmontese Parliament under Cavour, and was in some measure justified by the frequent phases of political change through which the country was successively passing. The example was followed by other Ministers, and especially by the unscrupulous Rattazzi, in warlike times,

or in any other exceptional occurrences, such as Garibaldi's mad escapades of Aspromonte and Mentana, or in the disorder inseparable from the repeated transfer of the Central Administration from place to place. But it is absolutely inexcusable in normal times, and it gives no very favourable idea of a nation's fitness for the exercise of the very first prerogative of its popular sovereignty. One has only to read the report of the debate of last June, to feel that at the close of the second sitting the best men in the Chamber were heartily ashamed of themselves. But Depretis made it a Cabinet question, and the opposition votes were only 153 against 220.

There is something very sad in the history of the Italian finances. So long as the Austrians were quartered in the Quadrilateral, and the French garrisoned Castle St. Angelo, it would have been idle to recommend economy to the Italians. Every consideration as to ways and means yielded to the necessity of preparing for what threatened to be inevitable conflicts abroad, and of forwarding such public works as had been too long neglected at home, especially in the newly-annexed southern provinces, the Papal States, Naples and Sicily.

During the period between 1866 and 1884, the

balance-sheet of the Italian kingdom showed a constant yearly deficit, which in the first of those years very nearly equalled the whole revenue, but which, at the latter date, was reduced to something less than one-tenth of it. In 1875, the year before the Left came into power, the whole country being happily united, the main railway lines accomplished, and the three removals of the seat of Government (from the capitals of the former petty States to Turin, from Turin to Florence, and from Florence to Rome—three removals proverbially equal to a fire) being happily effected, Minghetti announced that the *pareggio*, or balance of accounts, had at last been reached; not only were the two ends made to meet, but the financial year closed with a small surplus.

Those ten years, however, like Pharaoh's lean kine, so utterly ate up the country, that the *Consolidated* Debt rose to 8,172,000,000 of lire (£326,880,000), and the *Redeemable* Debt to about 3,000,000,000 lire (£120,000,000)—of debt not written down in the Great Book, and debt for the forced paper currency.

Enormous as such figures may seem, they fall, however, considerably short of those which appear in the French Budgets, even when allowance be made for the broader territory, the larger population, and

the superiority of the various resources of the great Republic. In France the expenditure which, in 1869, the last year of the Second Empire, amounted in round numbers only to 2,145,000,000 of francs (£85,800,000), rose in 1882 to 3,300,000,000 francs (£132,000,000), and in the estimates of 1885 to 3,500,000,000 francs (£140,000,000), invariably exceeding the revenue, and swelling the Public Debt to 24,000,000,000 francs (£960,000,000), to which must be added a Floating Debt which, in 1885, was no less than 1,500,000,000 francs (£60,000,000), or altogether a Debt exceeding 25,000,000,000 francs (£1,000,000,000), the largest Debt that was ever heard of in the world, to which, nevertheless, fresh and heavy additions had to be made in the present year, 1886.

The disorder in the French finances may, no doubt, be partly ascribed to the disasters of the German War of 1870, the costs of which amounted altogether to £371,000,000; but what are we to think of the recklessness of a nation which, even after so severe a chastisement, far from endeavouring to recover from the consequences of its own rashness, is still adding daily to her burdens by lavishing both gold and blood in such insane ventures as the Madagascar, Tong-Kin, and similar expeditions?

So far as one may make out from official accounts, Italy only allowed her Budgets to swell beyond their ordinary proportions, in the first instance, to accomplish the deliverance of Venice and Rome; in the second place, to shake off the incubus of an inflated paper currency; her extravagance was not till very lately prompted by any tendency to plunge into mad foreign enterprises, or to engage in quarrels of her own seeking. The first departure from her self-imposed rule of moderation and self-denial was that stupid Massowah expedition, the real object of which is not yet clear, and the bill for which has not yet been presented.

Unfortunately, one never knows to what extent financial statements officially published in Continental States may be strictly relied upon. In France, for instance, the public accounts are so complicated, the estimates tally so little with the final balance, there is so bewildering a chaos of *comptes présomptifs* and *comptes définitifs*, of *dépenses ordinaires*, *extraordinaires*, and *imprévues*, that a Finance Minister's statement is little better than a conjuror's trick intended to conceal the card which he most ostentatiously pretends to flourish before your very eyes; and this thimble-rigging has been so constantly

carried on, both throughout the Second Empire and the preceding and succeeding Governments, that "almost uninterruptedly, so as to make it the rule and not the exception, the Budgets voted by the representatives of the nation showed a *small surplus*, while the *comptes définitifs* published a number of years afterwards exhibited a *large deficit*."[1]

Although the Italian Ministers of Finance follow, up to a certain point, and in some particulars, the French method of public book-keeping, one would not suspect them of an attempt at making things pleasant by deliberately presenting a balance which upon a closer observation might require considerable correction. Least of all could such suspicion fall upon Magliani, the present Italian Chancellor of the Exchequer, a man to whose honourable character, as well as to his superior administrative ability, all his countrymen, without distinction of party, are willing to bear ample witness. But it is no disparagement to him to presume that he is at all events unlikely to have represented things worse than they are; that he has over-rated the expenditure, or under-rated the revenue; above all things, that he has exaggerated the amount of the public debt.

[1] J. Scott Keltie's, 'The Statesman's Year-Book,' 1885, p. 70.

Assuming, therefore, that the official statements of the Italian Government are at least approximately truthful, and that the average yearly receipts and expenses of the kingdom may be represented, in round numbers, by a sum of 1,500,000,000 lire (£60,000,000), we must begin by observing that a little more than one-third of that sum, 550,000,000 lire (£22,000,000), is absorbed by the interest of the Consolidated and Floating Debt. Of the remainder, 373,000,000 lire (£14,920,000) are swallowed up, as we have seen,[1] by the land and sea forces, a sum almost contemptible by the side of that 800,000,000 francs (£32,000,000) which France allows for the same object, but which in Italy takes up little less than one-fifth of the revenue; a cost which must have been grievously felt during this last period of uninterrupted peace, when the armament was obviously too large for the mere maintenance of public order, but which, most probably, as we have also seen,[2] would not, in the event of a war, enable Italy to take the

[1] See above, chapter iv., page 101. In the estimates of the Italian Expenditure for the year 1884-5, the Army and Navy were put down for 354,798,915 lire; but recently the huge ironclads and the monster guns have caused a heavy increase of extraordinary expenses.

[2] Chapter i., page 44.

field except in the undesirable capacity of an auxiliary to some of the great Powers.

Less than half the revenue of Italy, that is, less than 750,000,000 lire (£30,000,000), is left for the costs of all the other administrations, and the most formidable is that of Public Works, the Minister of which brings in a bill of more than 175,000,000 lire (£7,000,000). On this item also the outlay in Italy is considerably less than the 275,000,000 francs (£11,000,000) which France assigns to her Department of Public Works, and for Posts and Telegraphs (which in Italy are part of the same administration); but even that outlay must be deemed exorbitant, if we consider that in Italy the really necessary and remunerative, or *paying* railway lines and high roads are very nearly completed, and the remainder should be left to private speculation or local enterprise.

The real truth is, that in Italy soldiers and sailors do not constitute the only multitude that must be kept at the cost of the State. As I hinted in a foregoing chapter,[1] the army that is far more numerous, considerably more expensive, and not much more productive, is that of the *Impiegati*, Government functionaries, of all ranks and every description, to the

[1] Chapter vii., page 206.

mass of which every year's Budget makes no inconsiderable additions.

The tendency of every State based on democratic principles is to work out by legal means that spoliation of the wealthier classes for the benefit of the poorer, which every revolution since 1798 attempts, but in spite of its unscrupulousness, is never able thoroughly to accomplish by violent means. A Government, whether Republican as that of France, or Constitutional as that of Italy, would in our days *scorn* to *rob* the rich. It simply *taxes* them; and it employs almost the bulk of the proceeds of the taxes to relieve the wants of those who, unfit for any useful work, yet, unable to keep themselves without work, can manage to wriggle themselves into those public offices, or into those Government undertakings, where, if the pay is moderate, it is, at all events, in most instances, far more than the work is worth.

Italian Ministers are, as a rule, poor, honest men, not particularly ambitious or covetous for themselves; but tender-hearted and deficient in the skilful use of the negative (*L'arte di dir di No*). They apparently value power mainly for the chances it affords them of dispensing beneficent patronage. Ready as they

are to oblige all needy applicants by bestowing what personally costs them nothing, they would, however, be less lavish of their favours if the honourable gentlemen of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies, whose duty it should be to control the expenditure, instead of objecting to the Ministers' extravagance, did not, on the contrary, countenance and stimulate it, using all the influence of party, and with still better effect of Opposition, to force upon the Ministers their own candidates for employment, about whom they will take no denial.

Ministers and deputies vie thus with one another in turning the State into a vast *phalanstère* of public servants, their policy consisting, not in providing men for the places, but places for the men ; and their heedlessness in adding to the burdens of the tax-payers is all the greater as the legislators, both senators and deputies, are for the most part themselves place-men ;—in the Upper House, Prefects, Supreme Magistrates, General Officers, Bishops, and other functionaries, in active service or retired, and dependent on their salaries or pensions for their subsistence ; in the Lower Chamber, *Avvocati*, Professors, Doctors, and the like, mostly men too poor to feel much uneasiness as to the tax-gatherer's call upon

themselves; all people who, when complaints arise against the crushing public burdens, can rub their hands and say, "Let the galled jade wince, my withers are unwrung."

Even if perfectly disinterested for themselves and their friends, these honourable gentlemen are too often clamorous for the interest of their constituencies. Their policy is apt to be municipal, provincial, regional, anything but national. The Communistic maxim, "*Un pour tous, tous pour un*," is easily construed "*L'Etat pour Tous, Personne pour l'État.*" This is called in Italy "Belfry Policy" (*Politica da Campanile*), and loud and sharp beyond belief is the jangling din that arises from all the steeples of the Peninsula and the islands whenever bills affecting local interests come in for discussion. Witness the session of 1878-9, when a bill was brought in for the construction of 6020 kilometres of additional railways, mostly in remote and hopelessly backward districts, and sure never to repay expenses, and when almost every deputy "spoke for Buncombe," as they say in America, *i. e.* stood up for the claims of his own petty locality, and insisted on his own particular amendment, for his own pet line; all playing into each other's hands, until by sheer tumult the bill was

thrust down the Minister's throat, and the country bound itself to build all the railways within a period of fifteen years, and at an estimated cost of a milliard of lire (£40,000,000), of which the State was to defray £26,000,000, in yearly instalments of £2,000,000, the balance falling on the interested localities.

That the main object of legislation in Italy is less the improvement of the public service than the endless addition to the host of public servants, may be argued from the instance of that Minister of Agriculture who stood up in his place in the Chamber, stating that the much-needed forestal law (a law closing the stable when the steed is stolen; for the forests in most parts of Italy are ruined past recovery) could not be made ready in the course of the session (1878-9), and must needs stand over for the next; but that he, meanwhile, *in order to do something*, would proceed to the appointment of a body of new forest guards, an announcement which was received with loud cheers from all parts of the House, as if the drift of the measure were merely to provide a livelihood for the executors of a law which was adjourned for a twelvemonth, and might chance to be adjourned *sine die*, or be thrown out by the vote of a hostile majority (while the old laws had been for a long time

a dead letter), in which case the new guards would be for months or years lounging about the village dram-shops, playing cards or *la Morra*, and waiting for the work of which they were all the time idly enjoying the wages.

Indeed I have no hesitation in asserting that the number of place-men in Italy is proportionately larger than even in Republican France; for I question whether, in France itself, the Minister of Finance ever needed room in his Central Office in Paris for 4000 *employés*, the number which was deemed necessary, and indeed barely sufficient, for the same purpose in Rome, at the time the Palazzo Sella, Via 20 Settembre, at Porta Pia, was built ten or twelve years ago. At this rate it is no wonder if the Ministry of Finance, with the separate Department of the Treasury, burden the Italian Budget to the amount of 901,000,000 lire (£36,040,000).

The number of Civil servants (*Amministrazione Civile*) is given in official statistics as 170,652. This, however, does not include the teachers, public and private, of whom there are 79,795; nor the provincial and municipal officials, nor the clergy, many of whom receive salaries or pensions from the State. Indeed the *personnel* of Civil servants of all ranks, in town

and country, is not easily numbered, and in all probability exceeds a million. A gentleman deeply acquainted with the subject, while deploring with me this great national calamity of an overgrown but half-starving bureaucracy, endeavoured to console me with the no less dolorous fact that it is both less costly and even less numerous than that of the five or six former Italian States all taken together. He added, a matter even more grievous, that the judges of the Italian courts, from the highest to the lowest, are more wretchedly paid than they were in Lombardy and Venice under Austrian rule; a statement, if correct (as I have no doubt it is), which explains and justifies the complaint one so frequently hears in North Italy, that, however proud the people may be of the independence of their country, they have reason to regret the severe but incorruptible administration of "German" justice (Giustizia Tedesca).

That the multitude of public servants in Italy, however fabulously great, is not as ruinous as might be supposed, seems to me only an aggravation of the evil; but it is an undeniable fact that the Budgets of some of the Italian Ministries cannot be considered extravagant in themselves, and seldom amount to one-half of the sums allowed by France for the

same purposes. The expenses of the Italian Foreign Office, for instance, do not exceed eight and a half million lire (£340,000) yearly, while the same service in France causes an outlay of 14,600,000 francs (£584,000). In Italy the Civil List, including the appanages of the Royal Princes, amounts to 12,350,000 lire (£494,000). In France in Imperial times it exceeded 25,000,000 francs (£1,000,000). It is true that now the President of the Republic only receives 900,000 francs (£36,000). But, on the other hand, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies in Italy only cost 2,125,000 lire (£85,000). In France, where both senators and deputies are paid for their services, the Parliament is maintained at the cost of 11,750,000 francs (£470,000).

The same modest proportions, as compared with the French Budgets, are favourable in all the other accounts of the Ministerial Departments in Italy. In that of Public Instruction the expenses are thirty-two and a half million lire (£1,300,000); Justice and Public Worship, 33,600,000 lire (£1,344,000); Interior or Home Office, 66,400,000 lire (£2,656,000); Agriculture and Commerce, 13,600,000 lire (£544,000). In all these branches of the service France employs sums twice and three times as large.

To meet the liabilities incurred for this expenditure, Italy relies on the following items of revenue.

The direct taxes (land, house, and income tax) yield 392,200,000 lire (£15,688,000). Indirect taxes (customs, excise, *octroi*, tobacco, salt, the lottery, etc.) come in for 652,000,000 lire (£26,080,000). Taxes on transactions (succession duties, registration, stamps, railway tax, etc.) 185,700,000 lire (£7,424,000). Public services (posts, telegraphs, State railways, etc.) contribute 114,500,000 lire (£4,540,000). These sums, with Extraordinary Receipts and some minor items, bring up a total averaging in normal years 1,500,000,000, or £60,000,000.

Among these minor sums we need scarcely mention 12,000,000 lire (£480,000) arising from the income of State property; 7,175,000 lire (£287,000) yielded by the ordinary sale and revenue of Church property; 18,000,000 lire (£720,000) of extraordinary sale both of State and Church property, the whole of which constitutes the mere wreck of the old State and Church domains of the former Italian kingdoms, Duchies and Grand-Duchies of which the new kingdom, in the early stage of its struggle for existence, was compelled to make ducks and drakes.

Italy is now, or soon will be, without even a shred

of State patrimony. She must henceforth live from hand to mouth, depending on the ingenuity with which the Minister of Finance may contrive to grind the king's subjects, or on the authority he may exercise to curtail the extravagance of his colleagues in all other branches of public administration.

That the Italians loudly complain of the enormity of their burdens, one can readily understand. What people ever considered themselves lightly taxed? It is a fact, however, that the Italians only pay 172,900,000 lire (£6,916,000) for their tobacco, less than half what their French neighbours manage to pay; that the customs in Italy yield 180,000,000 lire (£7,200,000), in France 310,000,000 francs (£12,400,000); that the *octroi* takes from the Italians 183,000,000 lire (£7,320,000), while it mulcts the French to the amount of 350,000,000 francs (£14,000,000). And altogether France draws from her indirect taxes 1,200,000,000 francs (£48,000,000), or about twice the income accruing to Italy from the same sources.

But it is far otherwise in what concerns the direct taxes. These, as we have seen,[1] reach the sum of 392,200,000 lire (£15,688,000), *i. e.* only 10,000 lire

[1] See above, page 233.

(£400) less than the same imposts produce in France: property thus paying very nearly the same in the two countries, in spite of the much larger size and undeniably greater wealth of the Gallic Republic.

These heavy burdens laid on real estate in Italy seem to reveal an intention on the part of the legislator to spoil the well-to-do classes for the improvement of the condition of the lower orders, thus bringing about that level which some politicians consider the *summum bonum* of civilized society. Without a revolution, and with no very broad diffusion of socialistic or communistic theories, and simply by the act of legislation, Monarchic Italy is substantially much more democratized than Republican France. The war of the *Masses* against the *Classes* has been financially carried much farther in Italy than perhaps in any other country, the *Masses* conquering without striking a blow!

The results, however, have hitherto been most disastrous. The Italians of the northern provinces, Piedmont, Lombardy, etc., grumbled, it is true, at the burdens on real estate which have been weighing upon them from the very rise of the new kingdom. But they had it in their power to pay, and they did pay. Not so the southerners, and especially the Neapolitans, a people among whom the French laws

on succession, at work for these last three or four generations, had broken up the fortunes of the old feudal families, and parcelled out the country into a large number of petty estates, the owners of which had the utmost difficulty in making both ends meet. The Neapolitans grumbled little, but they paid next to nothing, till the stringent fiscal measures resorted to by the Minister Quintino Sella compelled them. The consequence was that, before the year 1883, as many as 40,000 of the smaller properties were given up by the owners, unable to meet the tax-gatherer's demands—a number which, I was told,[1] has since risen to 65,000; and what is worse, of these estates, abandoned or seized by the Government for non-payment of taxes, and as such put up for sale by auction, no less than 25,000 have found no purchaser; a state of things involving not merely the ruin of the land-owners, but also the dispersion

[1] I have been unwilling to modify these statements because they rest on data supplied by impartial persons whose authority had the greatest weight with me. On referring to some of the highest Government officials in Rome, they showed some surprise, and were sure that such statements must be greatly exaggerated, and that, at all events, the number of estates seized and sold in payment of arrears of taxes was larger in the island of Sardinia than in the southern provinces. Hitherto, however, no precise statements on the subject have appeared, and it is in itself too grave a matter not to deserve the strictest inquiry.

of the land-labourers; for these latter, placed in the alternative of starving or turning brigands, preferred in many instances to leave the country; and this they are doing now by hundreds and thousands, out of a home-loving population among whom emigration was hardly ever heard of before. For it is evidently as much the too minute subdivision, as the too great accumulation of wealth, that turns a flourishing rural community into a wilderness of "Deserted Villages."

I have said that some of the landed proprietors, especially in the south, contrived to evade the property-tax. This was and is still more the case with the income-tax, the imposition of which is a comparatively recent measure, and met with stronger opposition in the Chamber, as it implied greater reliance on common honesty than could be expected of a population accustomed for centuries to look upon Government as a public enemy, whom it was meritorious for the citizen to swindle so long as it could be done with a safe hand.

The income-tax in Italy yields about 200,000,000 lire (£8,000,000). It is laid at the high figure of 13·30 per 100 (32*d.* in the pound) upon all incomes of not less than 500 lire (£20). The income chargeable

in 1883 amounted to a total of about 725,000,000 lire (£29,000,000), of which about 275,000,000 lire (£11,000,000) fell on banks and other public companies, whose accounts could be easily overhauled, and where less deception is practicable. But it was otherwise with private persons, into whose affairs it was more difficult to pry. The average income declared by those employed in trades and professions is only 626 lire (£25). Out of 20,252 lawyers, only 8,745 were, or described themselves, liable to the tax. Of 18,950 medical men, only 7,664; of 10,950 architects, only 2,590, etc. And instances of anonymous worthies for conscience' sake sending cheques to the Chancellor of the Exchequer "for insufficient payment of income-tax," are as yet in Italy very unfrequent occurrences; yet it is impossible that the immense majority of such declarations should be true, for on an income of £25 or even £30 a year it has become very hard indeed for a professional man (especially if burdened with a family) to subsist. "Similar proportions," says the writer from whom I borrow these particulars, "prevail through all classes of employment, and show that there is still a large field for the tax-gatherer in Italy, who would be more successful if the rate of income-tax were not at

a point at which even conscientious people are tempted to defraud the revenue."

The melancholy fact is, that Government in Italy is still at the present day, and after the elevation of the people to the high destinies of a free nation, compelled to act towards its subjects as a fashionable tailor deals with his customers, making those who are ready to pay suffer for those who are either unable or unwilling to do the same.

With respect to the land-tax, which falls upon something visible and tangible, schemes for its *perequazione*, or equitable assessment, have been in contemplation in Italy since the days of Cavour; but it is an operation which requires a previous renewal of the *Cadastre*, or survey, measurement, valuation, and registration of the whole territory; a French contrivance which has been of old applied only to some parts of the country, with various views and methods, and which should now be re-established on a uniform plan, and extended to the provinces where it has hitherto not been introduced. A new *Cadastre* in a country like Italy requires both time and money, and the bills intended to enable the Government to proceed with it have suffered long delays on their way through the Italian Chambers.

But the taxes imposed by the State do not represent the whole of the burdens under which the subjects of King Humbert are staggering. To the National Budget those of the towns and provinces must be added; the principle that provincial and municipal councils are entitled to manage their own affairs, to impose taxes and duties, and contract loans, being universally admitted, subject only to the sanction of the National Parliament, which is, however, seldom if ever withheld.

The accounts of these States within the State are audited and published year by year. The summing-up of their financial statements is, however, a complicate matter, and remains often unavoidably in arrear. In the year 1883 the total revenue of the Italian *Communes*, or town corporations, including Rome, amounted to 528,400,000 lire (£21,136,000), and their united debt was 785,000,000 lire (£31,400,000). The debt of the provinces summed up to 138,300,000 lire (£5,520,000). All these different general and local burdens weigh on the Italian people at the rate of 72 lire (£2 17*s.* 6*d.*) per head of the town population, and 19·50 lire a head (15*s.* 6*d.*) for the rural population. The rate in wealthy England is £4 15*s.* 1*d.* per head.

In France the total receipts of the communes, excluding Paris, in 1883, were only 475,000,000 francs (£19,000,000), but they had debts to the amount of 2,626,000,000 francs (£105,040,000). If to this we add the Paris Budget, which was in 1884 made to balance at 260,900,000 francs (£10,436,000), we shall have 735,900,000 francs (£29,436,000) as the total revenue of all the French communes; the debts in proportion.

Considering the efforts that both Paris and her sister cities had to make to cure the wounds inflicted by the calamities of the German War, and the excesses of the Commune, during these last sixteen years, a period during which Italy enjoyed the most profound peace, we shall come to the conclusion that municipal lavishness has been equally excessive on both sides of the Alps, but less excusable on the east of those mountains. And there can be no doubt that extravagance in Italy is mainly the consequence of the recklessness of the Municipal Councils. These have indeed hitherto been elected on a narrower basis of suffrage than the Deputies' Chamber, but they are already sufficiently democratized to be ready to launch out into expenses and to vote for taxes of which their members are not likely to bear a very considerable

proportion. The only city in Italy which was called upon for very heavy sacrifices, and was thrown out of its balance by unforeseen circumstances, was Florence, which had to pay a very high price for the doubtful honour of being for six years the seat of government of the Italian kingdom. In her case the National Treasury had again and again to come to her assistance, as it has now to be at a considerable proportion of the expenses of the permanent capital —Italy being in that respect in the same condition as most other countries, England itself not excepted.

The same considerations do not apply to Naples, the most madly improvident of all Italian cities, which, so far from taking to heart the terrible lesson of the cholera of 1884, has, as yet, done nothing towards the improvement of its sanitary conditions, and allows its lowest classes to huddle together in those *fondachi* or underground cellars which are the nests of all pestilence; the city being all intent upon using for purposes of mere idle embellishment those 100,000,000 lire (£4,000,000) which the Italian Parliament had voted as a subsidy to enable the city of the Siren to take such hygienic measures as might ward off the chances of a second visitation of the Asiatic scourge.

If there could be any doubt as to a good policy

being the only basis of a good finance, the proof would be found in the long financial discussion which took up the time of the Italian Chamber during the closing days of this last Carnival, 1886, and which very nearly led to the overthrow of the Depretis Administration. In the heat of that discussion it was easy to perceive that in all that concerned public expenses the Ministers were acting under the pressure of the Deputies, and these in their turn gave in to the exigencies of their electors, so that all the responsibility of the financial disorder fell on the nation itself, or rather on that rashly-enlarged suffrage which, since 1882, has invested the multitude with absolute sovereignty. From that moment Italian policy became mere "Belfry Policy." The interests of the whole kingdom were sacrificed to personal or local interests; for both Ministers and Deputies were at the people's discretion, bound to buy their "sweet votes" at the people's own price.

No doubt general interests are based on particular interests, and the promotion of local well-being contributes to the diffusion of national prosperity, but not unless real solid interests are at stake; not if their promotion exceeds the means that the State can prudently consecrate to the end. If, for instance,

too heavy burdens are laid, be it on the whole country, be it on a town or province, for an unremunerative railway line, for the endowment of a theatre, or for the revival of a half-dead Carnival, the damage equally affects local and national interests. It is all money which probably could and should be spent on a better object, for no country has so much money as to afford to throw away any of it. But in Italy it is not the Government or Parliament that judges of the necessity or usefulness of any expense, but the multitude on which both Ministers and Deputies lean for support. When Ministers and Deputies yield to the clamour of the masses; when they join hands to back each other's proposals, and come to mutual concessions on the *do ut des* principles, trusting that the State has so broad a back that it will walk all the easier the more heavily it is laden—then the Government must needs be nothing better than an instrument of corruption. "Let us make the railways!" is the cry. "Let us have a gold and marble theatre! let us have a gorgeous Carnival! let us vote the Budgets, ordinary and extraordinary! let us open new loans! Somebody will pay. Let those who have too much be mulcted to give a chance to those who have too little!

The game would be pleasant if it could only last; but to rob the rich never did any good to the poor; the ruin of capital is not conducive to the development of labour. The poor can best live by the help of the rich; labour can best rely on the support of capital; capital must depend on labour to be turned to any purpose. By a revolution, be it effected by violence or by democratic legislation, wealth may be made to change hands, but you cannot annihilate wealth, nor do away with its inseparable shadow, poverty. "The poor you will always have with you," and it is on the mutual dependence between wealth and want that the best, the only possible social order can be established.

All things considered, it does not seem that democracy has for the present placed the Italian finances in a flourishing condition, or that it holds out brighter prospects for the coming generations. Italy, it is true, is no worse off than France, Spain, or Turkey in that respect. Let her take to her heart such meagre consolation as comparison with her neighbours' troubles may afford her in her own sore afflictions.

CHAPTER IX.

CHURCH.

The Italian Budget of Public Worship—Appalling numbers of the Italian Clergy—Enormity of their Wealth in Olden Times—Frequent Confiscation of Church Property in all Christian States—Moderation of the Italian Government in their dealing with the Church—Wretched Condition of the Italian Lower Clergy—Necessity of Clerical Reform—Indifference of the Italians on Religious subjects—The Reforms really needed in Italy—Alfieri's Panacea for the Evils of Italy.

Among the items of expenditure in the Italian Budget there appears a sum of 33,600,000 lire (£1,344,000) assigned to the Ministry of Grace and Justice and Public Worship. Why these two branches of Administration should be intrusted to the same hand, and why Public Worship should not rather be united with Public Instruction, it would not be easy to explain, unless it be by the fact that the same practice is, or was, followed, and the rule first established, by the French Government—always a potent argument, I am sorry to say, in Italy. In France, also, Justice

and Public Worship are placed under the direction of one and the same Minister, and the two branches of the service, summed up together, cause an outlay of 89,000,000 francs (£3,600,000). But in the French Budget the costs of the two branches are also given separately, and the sum of 51,075,000 francs (£2,043,000) is set down for the expenses of Public Worship alone; the ecclesiastical establishment by itself thus considerably exceeding the sum which Italy devotes to both services.

This difference between the ecclesiastical expenditure of the two countries will appear more striking, if we consider the disproportion between the numbers and conditions of the clergy, both regular and secular, in each of them; for in Italy the priests are in the ratio of seven per thousand of the population; in France, and in all other Roman Catholic States, the rate never exceeds four in a thousand. France is satisfied with 87 between archbishops and bishops. The prelates of the same rank in Italy are 254 in all, *i. e.* 47 archbishops and 207 bishops; somewhat more than one-fourth of the whole Roman Catholic hierarchy, which (reckoning the Pope and his cardinals, the Eastern Patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops both of the Latin and Oriental rite, the bishops *in partibus*,

the bishops *nullius Diœcesecos*, etc.) constitutes a little army of 1081 mitred heads.

The reason why the Church in Italy, though so much larger, appears so much cheaper, lies in the fact that in that country the spoliation of the sanctuary has hitherto not been as thorough as in the adjoining Republic. What in France was achieved by the Revolution, in Italy had to be attempted by legislation, and could not therefore be accomplished without some regard to the claims of humanity and the rules of discretion. The tendency of the Christian, and especially of the Roman Catholic Church, is to accumulate exorbitant wealth. A confiscation of ecclesiastical property has consequently been at some time or other a necessity for every civilized State, the laws by which a limit was put to priestly acquisitiveness having in all cases proved nugatory and of no avail. In Italy, besides the Pope, who held absolute sway over the souls and bodies of the two or three millions of his subjects, the bishops, having borne a hand in the emancipation of the free cities from the power of the dukes and counts, exercised for a long time an almost feudal power (through their lay *Viscounts* or *Avogadri*), putting themselves in the lords' places, assuming feudal

titles, and styling themselves "bishops and counts" of their dioceses, thus identifying the spiritual with the temporal power, even as the Pope did.

But wealthier far than the secular soon became the regular clergy. The monks, in their original institution bound to vows of poverty and seclusion, contrived, nevertheless, to get out of their cloisters, to worm themselves into the privacy of domestic life, and by those two powerful engines of death-bed absolution and prayers for the dead, traded on men's hopes and fears to such an extent as to bring a vast bulk of the landed property of Europe (in some countries, it is stated, two-thirds of it) into their hands.

In Italy, however, Church property was at no time quite safe. Both the mediæval free cities, and the princes who usurped sovereign sway over them, as often took from as they ever gave to the Church. The State very justly looked upon itself as the lawful representative of the laity, and, as such, as essential a part of the Church as the clergy itself; and upon that ground was as ready to stand up for the people's right when it furnished a reason or a pretext to reduce the wealth of the clergy, as it was to avail itself of the priests' ascendancy to curtail the freedom of the people.

In the State of the Church itself the Papal families very frequently contrived to come in for a good share of the Church patrimony, being either invested with large estates by their sovereign head, or simply helping themselves, with or without the Pope's consent, before or after his death. The Church of Italy, notwithstanding the ravages inflicted upon it by the French occupation (1796—1814), was amply indemnified after the Papal restoration in the latter year, and was still in very flourishing conditions at the epoch Cavour first contemplated the renovation of his country's destinies. In the distress into which the furtherance of his daring schemes plunged the Treasury of Little Piedmont, the great statesman conceived that application should be made to the Church for restitution to the people of part of that wealth which had been, so to say, given her in trust by and for the people.

The law of *Incameramento*, or confiscation of Church property, voted by the Sardinian Parliament in 1855, and applied with some modifications to the other parts of the country on their annexation, in 1860, 1870, professed to be not a spoliation of the Church for the benefit of the State, but a provident measure intended for the improvement of the Church itself.

Like an unnatural and partial mother, the legislator argued, the Church allowed the vast majority of the secular clergy, and especially the multitude of the hard-working rural parish priests, to starve on insufficient income, while the bishops and abbots, the canons of cathedral and collegiate churches, and in general the town priests and the monks of various orders, rolled in wealth and wallowed in idleness and debauch. To bring about a wiser and more righteous distribution of the "loaves and fishes" of the ecclesiastical establishment, the law proposed to suppress those orders of monks and nuns whose duties were purely religious; it seized and sold their property, dispersed their brother and sisterhoods, allowing them, as compensation, the means for a decent sustenance, and took from the prelates of all ranks, and from the highly-beneficed clergy, not all their property, but only a good tithe from the sources of their yearly income. The money accruing to the State by this wholesale and arbitrary operation was to be employed in relieving the distress and bettering the condition of the minor parish clergy, and whatever might exceed the requirements of this primary object was to be devoted to the extension and improvement of popular education.

Notwithstanding the sweeping generality and severity of this enactment, it was found that ten years later, in 1865 (*i. e.* before Rome and the Patrimony had been annexed), the Italian kingdom still harboured within its then boundaries 2382 religious houses, 1506 for men, 876 for women, with 28,991 inmates, 14,807 monks and 14,184 nuns. Of the monks, 8229 belonged to the mendicant fraternities; in other words, were licensed sturdy beggars.

Three circumstances conspired to determine this untoward mitigation of the law: the first was financial, almost imposed by necessity, and it lay in the inability of the Government to provide for the multitude of dispossessed monks and nuns such subsistence as might be deemed a handsome compensation for the property taken from them; the second was simply humanitarian, and it allowed some of the brothers and sisters, either to abide in their old claustral homes, or to club together in some of their convents, during their lifetime, though in a limited number, and without power to add to it—all wise and just conditions which were easily evaded, and even openly violated; with such results that the whole country, and especially Tuscany and the Roman provinces, are still swarming with monks, and most

commonly with Capuchin and other Franciscan vagabonds. But the third and most important cause which softened the rigour of the measure was a political one; it was a wish on the part of the Government to avoid too implacable a quarrel with the clergy and their bigoted devotees, and to leave a door open for negotiations with the Papal Court for a pacific solution of the question of Rome for an Italian capital. That question, as we all know, had to be settled not by "moral" but by violent means, five years later (1870). The Italians made themselves at home in the Eternal City. They seized whatever remained of St. Peter's patrimony, and offered to the Pope, as indemnity for the loss of his temporal sovereignty, a civil list of 3,225,000 lire (£129,000), which the late and the present Pope both scorned to accept, and which has been year by year made over to the *Asse Ecclesiastico*, or Church Fund.

Were the Church in Italy established on the same footing as it is in France, it is clear that this allowance, exceeding three million francs, if added to that part of the Budget assigned to the Minister of Grace and Justice for the purposes of Public Worship, and also to such property as the upper classes of the priesthood saved from the decrees of confiscation.

would be sufficient, not only for the Pope himself and his cardinals, but for the whole establishment; for we should bear in mind that the whole number of the secular clergy in France does not exceed 55,065, for a population of 29,201,703 Roman Catholics (the remainder consisting of 692,000 Protestants, 53,406 Jews, and 7,694,906 neutrals, *i. e.* persons who declined to make any declaration of their religious belief), the religious wants of the whole French population being met, as I said, by a sum of 51,075,000 francs (£2,043,000); while in Italy the Protestants are only about 62,000, and the Jews perhaps as many; and with exception of these 124,000, all the population of nearly 29,000,000 souls are described as Roman Catholics. And yet, for their benefit alone, the State has to provide a host of priests which official statistics put down at 131,585, but which, with the inmates of the convents, male and female, and the students in the Episcopal and other ecclesiastical colleges, has been, probably with greater correctness, reckoned at 203,000; and whenever it may please the Curia to come to terms, the same State may have also to cater for one Pope and sixty to seventy cardinals, these latter at the yearly rate of 30,000 lire (£1200) each.

If, therefore, the Italian Church, or more properly her clergy, constituting a host about four times as large as that of France, costs so much less than half what France has to pay for her establishment, it is because the Church in Italy at the present day in a great measure still subsists on endowments of her own. The bishops and a large portion of the secular clergy were left in possession of land and house property on which they managed to exist, though perhaps somewhat less sumptuously than heretofore, and with which, though it might be lawful and expedient, it would hardly be practicable for the State to interfere.

The real evil is that Church and State in Italy are in an exceptional, a false position with regard to their mutual relations; both persevering—it little matters on which side the blame mainly lies—in an attitude of open hostility equally fatal to the interests of both. Till a Pope be elected disposed to bow to accomplished facts, which in other cases he is always ready enough to accept as the will of Providence, till a Pope is found determined to give up the crotchets which made his palace a prison, and to come to terms with the King's Government, the settlement of ecclesiastical matters in Italy will remain the same absolute

impossibility. But with a Pope not unwilling or driven by necessity to accept his own personal salary (a Pope the reverse of Manning, and very much like what Newman would have been before he received the Cardinal's hat), it will become less difficult to come to an understanding; less difficult to discuss the question, whether it be better for a priest to own houses and lands, the management of which involves cares and anxieties interfering with the earnest and dignified exercise of his sacred ministry, or to accept a regular, well-insured, and competent stipend which neither fire nor flood, neither rain nor drought, may have power to affect.

But on whatever terms this matter may eventually be arranged, whether there is to be in Italy a proprietary clergy as in England, or a salaried priesthood as in France, even the most zealous of Pontiffs will have to acknowledge that the ranks of the clerical host in Italy are too exorbitantly, too monstrously out of all proportion with what is considered the fair requirement of the militant Church in other parts of the Roman Catholic world. There can be no reason why Italy should be divided into two hundred and fifty-four dioceses, while France is satisfied with one bishop or archbishop for each of her eighty-seven

departments, and even ultra-bigoted Spain is able to get on with a number of prelates equal to her sixty-nine provinces.

In this latter-named country, besides, not only were "all conventual establishments suppressed and their property confiscated for the benefit of the nation," in 1836, but twenty-three years later, by a concordat with Rome, "the Government was authorized to sell the whole ecclesiastical property (except the churches and parsonages) in return for an equal amount of untransferable public debt certificates bearing interest at the rate of three per cent." So true it is that for all the other daughters of the Church (except the one really entitled to that name of "the Eldest" which France usurps),

"Il y a avec le Pape des accomodements:"

so true it is that in the awards of Pontificial justice "one man may steal a sheep, and another must not venture to look over the fence."

Whatever authority the Pope may in former times have wielded in his own ecclesiastical dominions, he was always perfectly willing to negotiate with the Italian States on terms more or less analogous to those he agreed to in his relations with other Roman

Catholic communities. It is with Italy alone, with the free and united Italy of our day, that the Holy See can or will admit of no compromise, of no plausible *modus vivendi*. It is with the Quirinal that the Vatican will have no openly-acknowledged official or officious communication, though his Holiness is so eager to palm his legates on heretic England or schismatic Russia, on Mohammedan Turkey, on heathen China or Japan. Italy alone must manage to dispense with a Concordat.

Yet the affairs of the Church in Italy will have to be settled with or without the Pope; so vast an army of priests, so enormous a staff of bishops can be no good for any Church or State. The Catholic priests in Italy are not worse than their clerical brethren in other countries; they are perhaps not so black as these latter are too often apt to paint them. They are, taken in the mass, less intolerant, less arrogant, less meddlesome, less hypocritical than their Ultramontane, and especially their Gallic brethren themselves; they are certainly not backward in deeds of charity. In days of famine, war, pestilence, in any public calamity, nothing can equal the assiduous devotion, the heroic courage with which they, even the meanest of them, work in the cause

of humanity. But there are too many of them, they are too large a family not to have numerous black sheep among them. The means of supporting them, even in a barely decent condition, of educating and civilizing, washing and scouring them soul and body, of affording them honest and profitable employment, are not forthcoming, and while recruits for the parish service, especially in poor rural districts, can only be obtained with the utmost difficulty, there is no end in the towns of the loose priests, mere mass-priests (*Preti da Messa*, only fit for the Mass, as they are called), whose duties are limited to their fifteen or twenty minutes' work at the altar in the forenoon, and who during the rest of the day have to battle with all the temptations with which weary idleness and shabby penury may beset them. Two-thirds at least of the priests and the lowest mendicant monks are compelled by sheer necessity to trade on the blind credulity, on the abject superstitions of the Italian lowest classes; for the shepherds are not raised by their training many degrees above the ignorance of their flock, and their sympathies are with the multitude out of which most of them spring. They best know how to appeal to their narrow prejudices, to their grovelling superstitions. For one pure-minded, ascetic,

high-tempered, and zealous friar as Manzoni in his novel paints Fra Cristoforo, one finds hundreds mere greedy buffoons and impostors like his Fra Galdino.

I have no wish to write one word in disparagement of Roman Catholic catholicism; but I contend that what is called Roman Catholic religion in Italy—say in Rome or Naples—is not by any means the same as that which is just now making such a rapid headway in England, in America, in all the countries that were for many years the stronghold of Lutheran or Calvinistic reform. Between *Cattolici all' Inglese* and *Cattolici all' Italiana* there is in our days an even greater difference than that which Baretti observed a hundred years ago. I insist that religion in Italy is Roman Catholicism and a good deal besides. There is beneath the edifice that the primitive Christians reared an under-layer of old paganism, nay, of sheer fetishism, which the apostles themselves were not strong enough to eradicate, and which mediæval priests contrived to foster and hallow, yet which not only degrades the understanding, but corrupts the moral sense of ingenuous and confiding votaries. One could put up with *Roman*, but not with *Neapolitan* Catholicism.

It is true, it may be said, that such is the religion the Italians want and prefer; the religion of their own making, the religion they deserve; and that even St. Januarius' phial of seething blood is better than no religion at all. But the fact is that, even in Naples, whatever intellectual progress there is will no longer acquiesce in that phial, or put up with it. The superstructure is rapidly weighing down and crushing the original building. One may keep up St. Januarius, but it will be at the expense of Christ and God Himself. The alternative lies between belief in St. Januarius and no belief whatsoever.

There must be in Italy a reform, if not of Roman, at least of Neapolitan Catholicism. One pities the poor Pope for the dread he evinces of the spread of heresy in Italy, in Rome, and even at the gates of the Vatican. Surely a man like Leo XIII., the man who enjoys the esteem of Bismarck and the trust of Gladstone, ought to be above such unchristian fears. He ought to know that the reform that may be practicable in Italy will never take the shape of Lutheranism or Calvinism. The so-called "Protestants" in that country were no more than 32,000 in 1861. They had risen to 58,000 in ten years, and

only 4000 more have been added to the number in the next decade. Of the present dissenting flock (62,000), there are 26,000 of the old *Vaudois*, or Valdenses of Piedmont, 30,000 are simply English or other foreign Protestants, and the remaining 6000 alone belong to the so-called Italian evangelical sects, scattered in the various large towns of the Peninsula, and consisting of men the majority of whose conversion springs from any considerations rather than those of real religious conviction.

The reform the Italians need, as Pope Leo best knows, and which may still have good practical results, should not be religious, but only ecclesiastical; not a matter of doctrine, but simply of order, of economy, of discipline. The Italians may *have* a religion, they may *follow* and *observe* it; but they cannot be made to *think of it.* Both believing and unbelieving men in that country, if one presses them closely, are equally at a loss for the ground either of their faith or of their unbelief; both equally shrink from theological or philosophical argument, from spiritual or scientific speculation. The Italian mind is too mathematical, too matter-of-fact for divine studies. What is the use, they argue, of rising to the contemplation of matters infinitely and eternally

removed from the human ken? What have subtle brains like Manning's or aspiring souls like Newman's ever gained by their endeavours to sound the unfathomable, if the upshot has been the bewilderment of all their faculties, a Babel of doubt, safety from which they could only find under the wings of Papal authority? They the free-born Englishmen, they the earnest students, they the upright searchers of truth, could only find it by drowning their reason in the waters of the well where truth lies. Such a fall has human pride when it seeks a midway between what it can know and what it must take on trust. Religion is something that must be accepted *en bloc.* It is all to take or to leave. If you subscribe thirty-nine articles, then wherefore not forty? If you believe in the Trinity, then why not in Lourdes or La Salette? Faith is the knowledge of things unseen. *Credimus quia Impossibile.* A Christian must embrace with the readiest submissiveness whatever his mind finds most incomprehensible. Such is the faith of Cardinal Newman, but it is the conclusion to which the Italians are least apt to come to. It is the faith which most usually drives men from one extreme state of mind to the opposite.

The only reform that can be easily and safely

attempted in Italy is that which France, Spain, and other pure Roman Catholic communities have long since accomplished—a reorganization of the clergy. Let it be understood that there must be in Italy, as in France or Spain, only one bishop or archbishop for each of the sixty-nine provinces of the kingdom, and that the numbers of the clergy are to be reduced in the same proportion of two hundred and fifty-four to sixty-nine, *i. e.* brought down to little more than one-fourth of what they now are; and let it be understood that both the bishops and the parish priests, and even such monks as are still allowed to exist, are sure of a sufficiently decent and even handsome appointment to be able to live without promoting or in any manner countenancing those superstitious practices which have been too long their main stock-in-trade. Let only the cry be, "Down with the *Fra Galdini!* Down with the begging friars!" and the rest will follow.

Such a reform cannot be carried out in the Italy of the present day with the same harshness and precipitancy with which it was done in other countries in revolutionary times. One cannot *kill* the superfluous bishops; it is enough to *let them die off*. The appointment of a bishop requires an agreement be-

tween the Pope and the King. If the King will accept the Pope's nomination only to those sees which it is deemed expedient to maintain, the redistribution of the dioceses will naturally accomplish itself year by year in not many years, and the Pope will either fall in with the new arrangement proposed by the King's Government, he will either consent to the reduction of Italian bishopricks, or he will prepare to see in Italy a Church managing to dispense with bishops altogether.

Negotiations to that effect have been going on between the Italian Government and the Roman Curia, both before and after the entrance of General Cadorna's *Bersaglieri* into Rome, and the Popes, to do them justice, have never been altogether unreasonable on that score. Unfortunately Italian Ministers, in their hope of making the Pope amenable to their views on that other subject on which he will probably yet for many years be deaf, *i. e.* on the question of the temporal power, have, for what concerned the bishops and the monks, volunteered concessions tending to the perpetuation of the obnoxious *statu quo.* But it is still possible, and it is now full time, to show firmness. For no one doubts that a reduction of the clergy to reasonable numbers is as desirable

for the good of the Church as for the intellectual and moral improvement of the people.

With the disappearance of the myriads of idle, unclean, and in many cases irreverent, in some instances even profligate mass-priests, and a strict, absolute rule forbidding Capuchins and other Franciscan friars, bound to vows of poverty, to live on the people's alms, and throwing them on the Government's bounty, many of the most flagrant abuses which disfigure and disgrace the rites of the Roman Catholic worship as it is practised in Italy, especially in Southern Italy, will be, let us hope, gradually corrected.

With a set of better educated and more honourably remunerated priests, the necessity for those gorgeous but meaningless and semi-pagan Church functions and street processions, in which so much more is done to captivate the senses than to reach the worshipper's heart or understanding, will soon cease; together with the means of defraying the expenses, and the difficulty of mustering a sufficient number of priestly *comparse*, or mere dummies, to fill up the pageantry.

It is, indeed, observable that the Popes themselves, after their fall from their earthly throne, have already

been leading the way towards this highly desirable simplification of the rite. On the plea of the alleged curtailment of their personal freedom, and of the *hard times* into which the Church has fallen, they have greatly reduced and sobered down those Christmas and Holy Week festivities the splendour of which constituted the main attraction of strangers to the Holy City. And the discontinuance of those Church spectacles has been lamented, not so much by the poor ignorant mass of the Roman populace, for whom, indeed, in the most solemn days, there was hardly any standing room in St. Peter's or the Sixtine Chapel, as by the foreign tourists, chiefly Protestants, who used to fill the foremost seats, eager to enjoy what was to them a magnificent yet inexpensive scenic performance. And not a little of that kind of pageantry, which should gradually be disappearing from the churches, may with greater propriety be intrusted to the artistic talents of such Passion-Week comedians or tragedians as those of the Valencia *cafés* or Madrid theatres, or of the more popular peasant actors of the Bavarian Ammergau.

Church reform in Italy must needs be a slow and almost imperceptible process. For religion in that country is an affair of habit, of indifference, of

mutual forbearance. It is impossible to excite the people's enthusiasm either for or against the priests. But much of what cannot be obtained from the Curia by fair rational argument or humble entreaty, may, nevertheless, be coaxed or forced from her by the exercise of a gentle but resolute pressure. The Italian Government has already, in more than one instance, stepped forward with sufficient energy to prevent the spread of religious hallucinations which, if not checked in time, might have added to the many, too many, miracles with which, Cardinal Newman declared, "the Church is hung and tapestried all round within and without." Whenever winking Madonnas or nodding crucifixes or any other spiritual phenomena threatened to create a stir among the demented population, there the dark-browed *Carabiniere* or thick-whiskered *poliziotto* invariably stepped in with the well-known profane yet salutary intimation :

"De par le Roi, Defence a Dieu
De faire Miracle en ce lieu."

"Profane," yet also "salutary," if its aim is to unmask a false miracle, than which, in my opinion, certainly no greater outrage can be perpetrated against the Deity. Had it not been for this prompt and

high-handed intervention of the lay authority, we should still have had in Italy such disorders as occurred in several recent instances; miraculous apparitions like that at Monte Amiata in the Tuscan Marshes, and more lately in the mountains near Piacenza, giving rise to such deplorable priestly high-jinks as are still possible in Godless, Republican France at the shrines of Lourdes and La Salette.

The Government in Italy was well aware that the kingdom has holy places of its own of every description, both in town and country, to be reckoned by hundreds and thousands. But it also knew that such things as miraculous images and legendary relics have their own day; that they are matters of fashion and vogue, apt to be set aside and forsaken whenever anything new turns up ("the last sweet new thing") in the supernatural, to which all pilgrims will flock; and with them the five-franc pieces of the rich and the *gros sous* of the poor, which the servants of the sanctuary look upon as their perquisites.

There is no instance of this salutary intervention of the civil power in what ought to be ecclesiastical matters that has called forth the least protest of the Vatican against the doings of the Quirinal. For the

present Pope has probably not forgotten the brave deed of one of his predecessors on the Pontifical throne, that

"Papa Sisto
Che non perdonò nè anche a Cristo,"

who did not hesitate to spurn with his sacred, red-slippered foot a carved wooden image of the Saviour, from whose side by a knavish mechanical contrivance drops of fresh blood were made to trickle. A Church where priestly jugglery ventures to play such clumsy tricks even on the steps of the Pontifical throne, evidently labours under infirmities which threaten her very vital principles, and which must needs be cured, whether with gentle or ungentle treatment. And the High Priest can never be sufficiently thankful to the lay authority which lends him a hand in this redeeming work, saving him the trouble of his direct personal intervention. To bring back the Roman Catholic Church to its respectability, it is desirable to put an end to all false miracles, and that is, to all new miracles, many of the old ones dying a natural death day by day. For that purpose it is good policy to relieve all priests and monks from the cruel necessity of resorting to imposture as their only means of subsistence; and to that effect it is

absolutely indispensable greatly to diminish their numbers, to be content with few priests, and better the conditions of those few.

To be at peace with the Church, the Italians must proceed upon the plan clearly laid out by Alfieri in that pithy doggerel which advises to "let the priests live so they be few and orderly," and "leave the monks also in peace, provided they be *sfratati*," unfrocked, or *sfrattati*, sent to the right about.

On these terms there may be hope of settling the differences of Church and State in the Italy of the future. So far are we, however, from any improvement in the condition of that ill-advised Church, that the very Pope Leo XIII., who came to the throne with the plaudits of the civilized world, is now outraging public opinion by calling the Jesuits around him—the Jesuits, those stormy petrels of Christianity which first came into light in the storms which first undermined the foundation of the edifice, and will perhaps only sink into darkness amidst the tempests that are to bring about its final ruin.

END OF VOLUME I.

RICHARD CLAY & SONS,
BREAD STREET HILL, LONDON,
Bungay, Suffolk.

Reading Room 370