

ITALIAN POLITICS.

WHEN I first arrived in Italy, last November, I found politicians in that country anxious, troubled about the future, and fearful of some ill-defined catastrophe. The country was beyond all doubt in a state of agitation and disturbance, and in every direction societies of revolutionary character were multiplying. Passanante's attempt took place shortly afterwards, and Orsini bombs were thrown in the streets of Florence and Pisa. Both of these acts were crimes not only odious, but aimless and unreasonable, and thus betrayed a great though concealed fermentation of anti-social hatred. The unanimous and enthusiastic outburst of affection towards the King, which excited the whole of Italy when it was known that his life had been threatened, cleared the air and dissipated the general apprehension. Nevertheless universal freedom from panic is far from prevailing, even at the present moment.

There are black spots, no doubt, in the future of Italy, as in that of all European countries. But still it does not appear to me that she is threatened with any immediate danger. Let us look first at her foreign relations. Peninsula as she is, her frontiers are so clearly marked by the Alps, on the side where she touches the Continent, that she enjoys something not unlike the advantages of a wholly insular position. Not one of her neighbours now entertains the idea of depriving her of the smallest strip of territory. Neither France nor Austria has any wish to cross the hills for the purpose of conquering what could not be kept except at an immense sacrifice and at the price of continually threatening danger. The achievement of a united and strong Italy is a pledge of peace to the whole south of Europe. As long as she was divided between several States, all of which were weak and in perpetual quest of foreign support, there was an inducement for other powers to engage in struggles for the privilege of interference. This danger has now disappeared; but there remains, it is true, the question of the temporal power, which is a source of alarm to the Italians when they think of the possibility either of a monarchical restoration in France or of the uprising of a theocratic movement throughout Europe. But even in such a case there are certain circumstances which would secure Italy from attack. In the first place, the anti-Papal or non-Catholic powers of Germany, Russia, and England are not exactly those which are of least weight in Europe, and it is not likely that they would leave Italy in the lurch. In the second place, a restored monarchy in France, in whatever manner it might come into being would have so

much to fear from the resistance of the vanquished parties, that it would not be in a condition to undertake foreign war against a friendly nation possessing not merely means of defence but also the general sympathy of Europe. An ecclesiastical State, having for its head a prelate chosen for the purpose of directing souls, is obviously a thing of the past which no longer possesses the conditions necessary to actual existence. There were many such States formerly in Europe, but all have successively disappeared. The same historic law has been everywhere fatal to the temporal power; and no institution against which all the influences of the time are arrayed has any chance of revival. The idea of effecting a temporary restoration of the dominion of the Pope-king by force of arms is an idle dream. Such a restoration would instantly collapse again. Henri V. himself would perceive this, and would refuse to attempt the impossible.

There is therefore no chance of an attack upon Italy from without. But may she not herself molest her neighbours? May not the *Italia Irredenta* agitation constitute a danger? I do not think so. These demonstrations have not been in any way really serious. They were organized by a few individual hotheads, and by a small number of democratic societies. The bulk of the population was either indifferent to them, or decidedly hostile. The claims themselves are indeed too ridiculous. *Italia Irredenta* consists of Nice, Corsica, the Ticino, the Trentino, Trieste, Dalmatia, and perhaps Malta as well. Italian soil has therefore to be reclaimed from France, Switzerland, Austria, and England. Italians are too sensible not to comprehend the real absurdity of this factitious movement. The northern shore of Lake Garda alone may possibly some day or other come back to Italy, and such a rectification of frontier as this is not likely to cause much excitement to anybody. There is therefore no ground of quarrel or difference with other States. Far different from this situation is the case of France, which bears in her side the still bleeding wound of Alsace,—of Germany, which, as Prince Bismarck recently remarked, has to distrust all her neighbours,—of Austria, which is constantly menaced by accidents which would destroy her very existence,—of Russia, deeply engaged in all the entanglements of the Eastern Question,—of England, who, besides her little wars in Asia and Africa, holds herself bound to defend India in the Mediterranean and in Asia Minor. Italy, moreover, has this advantage, that she has no distant colonies to protect, the defence of which requires a great navy, and frequently, as England and Spain know, a heavy expenditure. She might, therefore, without danger greatly reduce her war expenses, and especially the expenses of her fleet.

As for home affairs, Italy possesses a Constitution which is so

administered as to make her one of the freest countries of the continent. No expression of human activity is fettered in Italy. She has liberty of worship, liberty of instruction, liberty of public meeting, and even of association; in short, the full freedom of England or of Belgium. If complaints are made on this score, it is that liberty is too unrestrained. The young King has taken his father for model, and is a pattern constitutional monarch. He is anxious to conform in all points to the wishes of the nation; he accepts with a perfectly good grace the ministries which the votes of Parliament designate; he is entirely devoted to the welfare of the country; he favours and encourages everything which tends to progress. Quite recently he has founded splendid prizes for the encouragement of literature and science. It may be safely said that he has not an enemy even among the Republican party. Passanante, the regicide, himself allowed that he was animated by no sort of personal dislike to the King. Queen Margaret is sensible, cultivated, kindly, earnest, and personally charming to all who come near her. She is the object of something like real worship, and on her last birthday everybody wore daisies in her honour at his buttonhole. There could not be a more popular dynasty. All Italians know that to Victor Emmanuel the making of Italy is due, so that patriotism and attachment to the House of Savoy are identified. The unity of the country is not, as was once feared, endangered by the old enmities of the different districts. Identity of race, language, religion, and traditions has brought about a fusion which has made one nation of the old States more easily and quickly than could possibly have been foreseen. In no European country, not even in England, France, or Spain, are parties more at one in this respect. The differences between French Flanders and Provence are extremely great; Galicia and the Basque Provinces are ethnologically distinct from Andalusia; England includes, besides the Englishman, the Irishman, the Welshman, and the Scot. But in Italy, despite minor shades of difference, there are none but Italians.

What, then, are the dark spots which loom in the future? They are generally said to be three in number—Socialism, Clericalism, and Republican sects. Let us see what dangers are in reality threatened by these. Socialist tendencies exist in Italy, no less than in other civilised countries, as a result and, so to say, a necessary result of prevailing economic conditions. The working classes receiving in return for their labour only a scant wage, reduced still further and sometimes swept away by industrial and commercial crises, ideas of equality and of a repartition of profits naturally spread. Workmen hope to better their lot by altering the laws affecting the distribution of property, and the organization of

society; and this is what Socialism means when reduced to its simplest terms. It is a result of the contrast between the equality professed in theory, and the inequality existing in fact. But if the existence of Socialism is at the present day universal, the forms under which it presents itself are different in different countries. In Russia it pervades all classes of society and ends in Nihilism; that is to say it wishes to destroy utterly the despotism which weighs on every part of that huge empire. In Germany Socialism is scientific and political; it is represented by a powerful party, which has doctrines, manuals, orators, associations, a press, a staff, a propaganda; it is by the road of popular election that it hopes some day to prevail in Parliament and in all representative bodies. In England and in America its efforts have been concentrated upon the wages question. It is by association, by the trades union system, and by strikes that the workmen there strive to obtain an augmented share of profit for their labour.

In Italy Socialism has an entirely different character. It exists actively in the "sects," and in some of the towns; in a dormant condition in the country districts. The sects—secret societies which are a legacy of the past—are still among the scourges of Italy, especially in the Romagna and in the south. The ramifications of these societies spread in every direction, and draw recruits from all classes of society. Under the name of Republican Societies and *Circoli Barsanti* they have recently come into public notice. The name of these clubs was taken from a corporal who, in a trifling military disturbance at Pavia, killed an officer, and was shot in consequence. It was maintained that Barsanti was innocent, and the object of the societies in borrowing his name was to attract the non-commissioned officers and to inflame them against their superiors. It is even said that they have many members in the army, and that this is one of the dangers of the future. All these societies are more or less imbued with Socialist ideas. But their Socialism is not of the scientific kind as in Germany, but consists merely of dreams of revolution and levelling. In the country, where large properties are the rule, Socialist ideas are as naturally born of the extreme misery of the rural population, as was the mediæval Jacquerie. The daily wage never exceeds a franc, and yet living has become nearly as dear in Italy as in Northern Europe. Even this scanty income cannot always be procured. In an excellent book Messrs. Franchetti and Sydney Sonnino have drawn a picture of the condition of the country classes, which is said to be photographically accurate, and which may well make one shudder. Aspirations after equality also make their way into the country by means of soldiers, who have returned home and who have caught them up in the cafés of the towns. Ideas spread much more quickly in the south than in the north; the mind

is more open, the tongue more lively. In former days religion kept down the exasperation of the disinherited classes; it taught resignation to present evils, and as a compensation it opened the prospect of eternal happiness in a better world. But now the religious sentiment is singularly deadened, and enmity towards the priest often replaces the ancient confidence. I have also been informed in various quarters that the lower country clergy, who are nearly as poor as the workmen themselves, are inclining to Socialism. This was recently affirmed in the *Giornale degli Economisti* by Signor G. Boccardo, a distinguished economist, and the assertion is confirmed by a curious fact. In April, 1877, a band of young men, members of secret societies, met at the village of San Lupo, to the eastward of Capua, to prepare a revolutionary movement. A struggle took place with the carbineers who were ordered to keep an eye upon them, and two of these carbineers were killed. The band took possession of the village of Letino, it proclaimed itself the apostle of social revolution, and burnt the register of title-deeds at the foot of a crucifix in the village square. The parish priest then mounted the base of the crucifix and delivered an inflammatory speech, which he ended by saying that the men who had come to establish equality were the true apostles of the Lord, whose laws they wished to put in force. The band then set out for the neighbouring village of Gallo. The incumbent of this parish came out to meet them, and, after embracing the leader, returned joyfully to the village, and told the inhabitants to fear nothing. "They are good fellows," said he, "who will change the government and burn the registers." "Cambiamento di governo ed incendio di carte." Soon the whole band fell into the hands of the troops. They were brought up for trial in the Assize Court at Capua. Their counsel declared that the charge was a political one, and that, in consequence, notwithstanding the death of the two carbineers, it was covered by the amnesty proclaimed at the young King's accession; whereupon the jury acquitted them. The whole thing reads like a chapter in a novel; but the important point as a symptom is, that the priests of the two villages occupied greeted the band enthusiastically, and hailed the social revolution as a deliverance.

In the northern towns where manufactures exist, the prefects assured me that many workmen, even without being members of secret societies, incline to ideas of levelling and of social reorganization. It may therefore be said that Socialism is at this moment spreading in Italy among the industrial classes, among the country labourers in those provinces where their condition is worst, and also among the lower clergy, who are but little removed from beggary. But I do not think that this as yet constitutes a real danger for the existing order of things. Happily for Italy she has no great

industrial centres, where workmen live huddled together in factories, and exposed to the ruinous misfortune of lowered wages and enforced idleness. Disturbances and even open insurrections in the country cannot extend beyond certain localities, nor can they threaten the great centres. The action of the clergy could only be dangerous if the heads of the Church were to enter into the Socialist movement, and they have not yet reached this point. Otherwise the peril would only become great if the contagion of the ideas of social revolution were to penetrate into the army through the non-commissioned officers, who in the cafés are in constant contact with the members of the sects. But though I have heard much said on this subject, it seems to me that the danger is still at a distance. The two chief pillars of social order are the priest and the soldier; and if both were some day to go over to the enemy, a general upset would be inevitable. I should not like to say that this day will never come, but I think that it has not come yet.

There are some Italians who think that if the Republic were to establish itself definitively in France, the example might affect the maintenance of monarchical institutions in Italy. Without doubt, what is going on in France will always exercise a real influence on the two neighbouring countries of the same race, Italy and Spain. But I doubt whether this influence can be of sufficient power to threaten the dynasty of Savoy. In the first place, the main attention of everybody is, nowadays, directed to economic and social questions, and men have become indifferent to all that concerns merely political arrangements. The course of events is responsible for this change in ideas; it is but lately that the Republic was for one party an object of violent repulsion and irrepressible fear, for others of youthful enthusiasm and unlimited hopes. The Republic has been established in two great countries—in the United States for a century, for a decade in France—without justifying either hopes or fears. It has not brought the Eldorado which one side hoped for, nor the general massacre which the other side feared. Civilisation keeps the same course and goes through the same trials in the United States as in England, in France as in Germany. The same economic and religious problems, the same financial crises, the same class enmities, the same struggle between capital and labour, are met with in all civilised countries, whether their constitution be republican or monarchic. The Italians have seen that constitutional monarchy can give to a nation order and liberty both, in the most complete manner possible. In this respect Italy has no reason to envy France. Although in the latter country the defenders of the Republic have shown the height of wisdom and prudence, it will be long before the new institutions will give the feeling of security and confidence which a system of government that has finally taken root is wont to

inspire. Besides, as M. Minghetti recently put it at a dinner given to him by the undergraduates of Bologna, and as I have myself endeavoured to prove in my book on *The Forms of Government*, monarchy with a representative system is a better guarantee of freedom than a republic, because it keeps intact the rights of minorities, a matter of the first importance in every society where the people is master. Even from the point of view of social reform, it does not appear that the Republic presents any decided advantage over constitutional monarchy; for the sovereign, as has been often proved, has a natural tendency to occupy himself with the lower classes, a tendency far less likely to be felt by a majority animated by the usually selfish sentiments of a dominant class. Add to these general considerations the great and widespread popularity enjoyed by the House of Savoy, to which Italy owes its existence as a nation, and it will be easily seen why the Republican party is so weak in Italy. Yet it has enjoyed a complete liberty of proselytism, and what is more, the historical traditions of the great towns, such as Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Bologna, Florence, are before all things republican. In Parliament the Republican group has but eighteen members, and its head, Dr. Bertani, has even committed himself to the acceptance of existing institutions with reservation of his theoretical preferences. The *Dovere*, the chief organ of the Mazzinian party in Rome, has just announced its own dissolution for want of subscribers, though Italian journals are usually cheap enough. At Naples, in the busy University, which has more than 3,000 students, I asked the students themselves whether there were many Republicans among them. I was answered that there were hardly any, but that all were anti-clerical, and that a considerable number were of Socialist and materialist leanings. Everybody knows that the proclamation of the Republic would destroy unity. The north would remain faithful to the house of Savoy, which, thus possessing a citadel and base at the foot of the Alps, would either reduce the insurrection, or would hand over the south to the restoration and to anarchy. Italy will never again be partitioned. The only question which demands an answer is this: Will its preservation, like its first founding, be effected freely, or by the use of armed force?

There remains the third point—Clericalism. This is a real danger to Italy, because it has for its definite object the restoration of the temporal power of the Pope, and consequently the destruction of the kingdom as it now exists. In the second place, because, even short of this, if it should succeed in mustering strongly in the communal and provincial councils or in Parliament, it might, by an alliance with the Radicals, create entanglements indefinitely, and thus make capital out of the popular discontent. At the present

moment there is not in the Chamber a single deputy avowedly of the Clerical party. The word has been passed to all the partisans of the Pope to hold aloof, and neither to be electors nor elected. For the moment, too, the great majority of Italians, even the most conservative of them, being anxious to preserve the unity of Italy, a party whose object, open or concealed, is the partition of the country has no chance of success. It is for this reason that Father Curci advises the Pope and the Catholics to change their tactics. Keep untouched, he says, the rights of the Holy See on which you can listen to no compromise, but do not make them a burning political question. Stand forth simply as a conservative party. You represent the religious sentiment with which no society can dispense. You are thus an essential ingredient, and even the foundation-stone of social order—the only bulwark against the assaults of the atheistic and revolutionary spirit. Sooner or later, when the danger is clearly seen, all conservative forces and partisans will array themselves on your side, and you will recover your rightful influence and authority. The Pope is said to listen not unwillingly to Father Curci; it is certain that, after being proscribed by Pius IX., the father has been summoned to the Vatican by Leo XIII., who has no wish to continue the visionary policy of his predecessor, and is anxious to be reconciled to other governments. In his sketch of the dangers of Socialism, the Pope has pointed out that the only remedy is an alliance between the throne and the altar. He is not blind to the true interests of the clergy. By effecting a reconciliation with the civil power, the Church would be free to pursue her work of proselytism, and a few concessions are nothing to the conquests which the clergy could make if they were not checked by the Government. Leo XIII. was for a long time nuncio at Brussels. There he saw the great profit that the Church can derive from modern free institutions if she learns how to make good use of them; and it would appear that it is in this direction that he would direct the advance of the clerical army all over the world. To gain the control of modern civilisation by the methods of modern liberty, and thus to realise the Hildebrandine dream of the universal supremacy of the Church—not by anathemas and papal fulminations, but by the hustings, the parliaments, the right of association, and the press—this is his plan.

In order to gain this end in Italy everything has yet to be done. In the first place the superior clergy, which is completely devoted to the Pope, is as yet inexperienced in political warfare, and does not possess the indispensable equipment for action. The inferior clergy is in part animated by a certain feeling of patriotism towards Italy, and with few exceptions has no militant desires. The country priest draws his income, not from a State allowance, but from a small

glebe which he often cultivates himself, and sometimes lets. He is thus tied to the soil and filled with considerations of worldly interest. He wishes to sell his corn, his oil, or his wine, and in order that he may get a good price for it, the country must be prosperous and tranquil. He is connected with civil society, not indeed by marriage, which would be better still, but at any rate through the medium of the land. By the fireside at evening, or in the watches of the night, his thoughts are certainly not occupied with dreams of the greatness of the Church, and of her struggle with modern ideas. He thinks of manuring his land, of pruning his trees. His life and his ways of thinking are identical with those of his brother farmers, from whom he is only distinguished by a thin varnish of seminary education. He goes to market, and his talk is of bullocks like his neighbours'. Thus he has nowise the appearance to them of a superior being representing the universal Church. He has not the prestige or the authority which the priest possesses in France or in Belgium. He is listened to readily enough as a counsellor somewhat better educated than others, but if he were to take the high tone and lay down the law, there would be a stout resistance to the pretension. The country priest is poor, humble, and timid, often very ignorant, frequently coarse enough, and in the south at least of very easy morals. He has, therefore, none of the style of a missionary, nor has he the notions of a soldier of the papacy. He lives a prosaic life destitute of ideal. He might have real power as an organ of popular excitement which he could inflame; but if he endeavoured to go against the tendencies of his parishioners, he would not be obeyed. The priest becomes a power in elections when he can say to his flock, "You shall vote for so and so, or I will not absolve you." But in Italy he would not think of taking such a step, nor does he even dare to forbid the reading of anti-clerical journals. If the Liberals pass a bill (which has been already brought in) to substitute a regular stipend for the glebes of the clergy, they will untie the bond which binds the lower clergy to civil society, and will make of them simply a papal militia. This would be the first step. The second would be for the bishops to take the seminaries in hand, to drill their Levites for political strife, and especially to make them understand that by influencing the elections they can become the masters of those whom they now fear. This is beginning already to be done, and some young priests have glimpses of an ideal authority which they may one day enjoy. But before they can attain to this, it will be necessary for them, in their turn, to form the younger generation, to drill them to submission, and to accustom the laity, little by little, to admit their influence. This work of preparation will take a long time. I think, indeed, that a clerical party will before long be regularly constituted in Italy, and that the clergy, better disciplined

by the bishops, will regain in great measure its lost influence; but it will take at least two generations before this party can secure an actual majority in Parliament. Italy, therefore, is in no immediate danger from Clericalism any more than from Socialism or from the Republican party.

She is, however, actually suffering from a serious and remarkable disorder which hinders her progress, and which disturbs her friends. An ex-minister, the eminent economist and publicist, Signor Jocini, said to me not long ago, "Our situation looks well, both at home and abroad, and yet there is some appearance of our being doomed to perish of senile gangrene. Our political disease is the absence of parties. Elsewhere, the complaint is that party feeling runs too high. In Italy, on the other hand, we have mere groups with no watchword, with no plan, with no bond of internal union." If you go to a sitting of the Chamber, you will be told that the Centre counts one hundred and ten members, and the Left four hundred. They will tell you, too, that there is even a Left Centre, and an Extreme Left. They will show you the Cairoli group, most numerous of all, the Crispi group, the Nicotera group, the Depretis group. But these names only designate the places where certain members usually sit, or, at most, certain vague ties of alliance and comradeship. Ask what the distinguishing tenets of these groups are, and nobody will be able to give you an answer; even between Right and Left there is no real difference of opinion. The true right, which would here, as in most other countries, consist of Catholics, that is to say, the Clerical party, is absent, and thus it happens that all the members are at once disciples of Conservatism and of progress. They are Conservative, inasmuch as, except the eighteen Republicans, all desire the maintenance of existing institutions; they are Progressists, because they are all disposed to advance. Of reactionaries, of partisans of the past, there is not a single one. In any other country the two chiefs of the right, Signors Minghetti and Sella, would rank among the Radical section of the Left. Signor Minghetti, for example, who is a partisan of absolute separation of Church and State, would not hesitate to propose the abolition of the vote for religion, a measure at which M. Gambetta himself hesitates. Signor Sella has proposed and voted for the most anti-clerical measures, such even as the imposition of liability to military service upon seminarists. Among the Left, on the other hand, there is to be found a considerable number of members, chiefly Southern, whose election has received the support of the clergy. As for the extension of the franchise, there are several members of the Right who would push it as far as universal suffrage, because they think that the peasants would exercise the right better than the lower townsfolk, who now possess it and who

pay 40 lire—32 shillings—in taxes. All the good patriots have been revolutionists, and among those statesmen who have in turn held office, the majority have been outlawed, exiled, or even sentenced to death. At the Capitol in the Conservative lobby the bust of Mazzini, crowned with laurel, is to be seen. Among the Italian nobility no section is to be found possessing the least resemblance to the Legitimists of France or the Feudalists of Germany. Almost all those of noble birth are imbued with modern ideas, and bear some likeness to English Whigs, or to the philosophic nobles of the eighteenth century.

It is therefore impossible to mention a single question of the first importance which might be used as a party shibboleth. We cannot go further than to say that there exist two opposing tendencies. The Left has more confidence in the people, and is therefore more disposed to adopt what are called democratic measures. Its members are doctrinaires, in the sense of believing in general propositions and abstract principles, and of drawing inspiration from the example of the French Revolution. The Right busies itself rather with the question how the government is to be carried on. It thinks that a form of rule may be suitable to America and yet prejudicial to Italy, and it frequently quotes the example of the English, whose practical spirit it extols. The Left would willingly cry "All for the people and by the people;" the Right "All for the people, but not by them." In order that a country may possess homogeneous parties capable of working the machinery of parliamentary government, there must be a sharp difference of opinion on some subject of importance interesting to the whole nation, and dominating points of merely secondary weight. This difference must excite the public and divide it into two opposing camps, each with its fixed programme, its avowed object, its acknowledged chiefs. There is nothing of this sort in Italy. Elections are for the most part decided on personal grounds, and the candidate who enlists most local sympathy carries the day. The indifference of the electors is so great, that sometimes more than half of them—there are about half a million—abstain from voting. Now the evil consequences of the absence of parties are these. In the first place there is the instability of governments. "An interpellation, a ministerial crisis, a temporary arrangement, and then another temporary arrangement, a ministerial crisis, and an interpellation," such are the terms in which the ordinary course of parliamentary government in Italy has been described. All ministries are extremely short-lived, and even their short life is interrupted by resignations, translations, and reconstitutions. In the eighteen years which form the life of the new kingdom of Italy, there have been twenty-five ministerial crises. In England, where parliamentary government works in a typical manner, the result of the elections

determines the majority, and the majority places in office the men who best represent the ideas of the triumphant party. As long as the majority is not reduced to a minority, the ministers who will remain at the head of affairs, and the general programme to be pursued, can be safely predicted. A party can only take office by means of the majority, and can only lose it when the majority turns against it, either in Parliament or in the constituencies. Government by parties and by the majority is the only one which can give strength and efficiency to parliamentary institutions. But in Italy it is different. Unforeseen ministerial crises are constantly occurring. They come from personal susceptibilities, from the exigences of a group which is dissatisfied and estranged, from many small causes which have nothing to do with the open conflict of debate and the actual strength of opinions in the Chamber. It thus becomes impossible to prophesy the duration of a ministry, except that it will in any case be short. Parliament presents a kind of dissolving view of processions of men with portfolios having their exits and their entrances, of ministries raised and pulled down by the fluctuating support or the fluctuating hostility of certain coalitions, composed in their turn of smaller coteries which are themselves in a constant state of flux. Suppose the question is to form a government. Its members will not be pointed out, and, so to speak, imperatively pointed out, as in England, by the division which has brought about the fall of the preceding Cabinet. One person will be chosen because he has the support of a necessary group; another because he will bring with him the Sicilians or the Venetians; a third because he represents some interest of which account has to be taken. Such combinations, even if they brought together men of the first rank, could never produce a strong government, because there could be between them neither unity of views nor identity of origin. The least accident is sufficient to bring their differences to light, to prove their incompatibility, and to precipitate a crisis. Ministers even of moderate ability, if they have the support of a compact majority, can govern in a regular and consequent manner; but Richelieu, Colbert, Pitt, or Peel would be helpless if they had to busy themselves with the claims of this man, and to soothe the ill-temper of that, and if they had to prolong their constantly menaced existence by a series of negotiations, compromises, and bargains. There results, therefore, from the want of parties, an incurable want of strength in governments. Ministers have no time to familiarise themselves with the details of their departments, or to impress a definite line of conduct on their subordinates. From this arises administrative indolence and disorder. A minister who has taken office in consequence of the victory of a clearly held opinion or a definite programme can insist upon his followers sinking minor differences,

can keep up discipline in the name of the interest of the party, can give effect to his designs, and thus can govern with as much thoroughness as the ministers of absolute power. The members who have pledged themselves to their constituents, and who fear to create a schism in the party, cannot make themselves the instruments of their private ambitions or of merely local interests. If they deserted their chiefs, they would be looked upon as traitors and would altogether lose caste. In Italy, there being no accepted plan and no party discipline, the members can vote as they like on each particular question which presents itself in Parliament. The ministry has therefore to organize its majority on each occasion by satisfying individual claims. The result can only be feebleness and impotence. It cannot be said that men of distinction are wanting in the Italian Parliament, for there are many such of all kinds, as the high tone of the debates and the display of tactical skill has shown. If anything there are too many men of eminence. Each individual of distinction or influence having the control of a group of adherents, it follows that the abundance of leaders involves an equal abundance of small corps d'armée, which manœuvre independently, and which are all the more difficult to combine. The frequent changes of ministry have resulted in this, that some seventy or eighty ex-ministers have seats in the chamber. These are as it were so many dethroned dynasties, with their representative pretenders, who have all to be reckoned with. From the absence of discipline it follows that freelances abound. Incidents and interpellations are constantly interrupting the dispatch of business, and the sessions are interminable; they last for eight or nine months, and the longer they are, the more sterile they seem to be. There is much talking and little doing. The time of the ministers is completely taken up by interpellations which it is necessary to answer, and by the immense work necessary in the lobbies to make up a majority, which is always on the point of melting away.

In short, the most obvious evil from which Italy is suffering is, that the absence of parties weakens the hands of government and renders the parliamentary system unstable. An Italian deputy recently said to me, "Is it not humiliating for our time that such a machine as this, which is always falling out of gear or getting clogged, should be the best form of government yet invented?" What, then, is the cure for this evil? The only effectual one would be that which Prince Bismarck proposed at one of those teas of which Dr. Busch has given us the table-talk, namely, to condemn to bread-and-water every member who opened his lips without due cause. Better still would it be to cut down the length of the sessions to a single month. If the malaria could drive the deputies away from Rome during eleven months of the year, it would be a

great thing for Italy. Signor Jocini thinks that if the kingdom were divided into provinces, with councils possessed of considerable powers, the central Parliament would be lightened and would be better able to do its work. I think so too, but there might be a danger that these provinces would lead to the revival of the ancient States. Others are of opinion that the remedy is to be found in a large extension of the franchise. But in this case enemies of the existing order might be elected—ultra-democrats in the towns, clericals in the country. The wisest heads, however, seem to think that the formation of a true Clerical party in Parliament would give cohesion to the Liberal factions, and would create the indispensable opposition of two great opinions which the mechanism of Parliament demands. This would be the ballast necessary to steady the ship. Nor is there any doubt that this advantage would be gained; but might not the Clerical party, uniting as it necessarily would all other Conservative elements, one day become master?

Notwithstanding the fault of its Parliamentary system, the progress effected in Italy during the last twenty years is certainly extraordinary. Since the creation of the new kingdom the Government has always been in the hands of the Right until the 18th March, 1876, except during the two Rattazzi ministries of 1862 and 1868, the first of which ended at Aspromonte, the second at Mentana. The Right fell from power at the very moment when Signor Minghetti was bringing in the famous *Pareggio*, the budget without a deficit which had been so long desired. Strange to say, the occasion of the party's fall was its advocacy of the resumption of the railways by the State, a Radical measure of an almost Socialist tendency. The Left, on the other hand, achieved its triumph by adopting a principle generally considered Conservative. Meanwhile the financial progress has been almost incredible. In 1862 the expenditure was 921 millions of lire, and the income 471 millions, the deficit being 450 millions, or nearly one-half. A more desperate financial situation has, perhaps, never been witnessed. In 1876 equilibrium was attained, expenditure and income each amounting to 1,398 millions. But in order to reach this result it has been necessary to have recourse to crushing taxation; taxation in some cases odious also, as in the case of the *Macinato*, or grist tax. The taxes on personalty amount to more than 13 per cent. of the income; the various duties on real property to 30 and sometimes 40 per cent of the rent. These weighty imposts the Italian people has borne in order to meet its engagements. But it has taken vengeance in 1876 by driving from power the party which inflicted them upon it. Notwithstanding paper currency, increased debts, and heavy taxes, the general economic progress of the country is undeniable. Here are some figures showing the contrasts between 1862

and 1876. It is necessary, however, to allow for the annexation of Venetia, with a population amounting to about a tenth of the whole. This latter was in 1862, 22,929,000, and in 1876, 27,769,000. In fourteen years the State has spent two and a half milliards in public works. The army and the navy have been reorganized, and supplied with fresh *matériel* of a very perfect and therefore a very costly kind. The troops, both officers and soldiers, work very hard, and the evidence of this is to be found in the precision of their drill, the smartness of their appearance, and their general air of intelligence and enlightenment. The annual value of exports and imports has risen from 1,600 millions to 2,300; the tonnage returns of the ports of issue from 1,600 to 2,300 millions of lire; the revenue of the post-office from 12 millions to 24; that of the telegraphs from $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions to $5\frac{1}{2}$; the deposits in the savings-banks—an excellent sign—from 188 to 553 millions. The mileage of the railways has increased from 2,200 kilometres to 7,850, and their receipts from 50 to 152 millions. At the same time education is spreading. The number of children at school has risen from 1,109,000 to 1,931,000, and new buildings for the purpose are being constructed everywhere. In the higher regions of intellectual culture there has taken place a remarkable scientific and literary revival, amounting to a true renaissance. In natural science, in law, in philology, in political economy, Italian savants are known and esteemed by their transalpine colleagues, and are on equal terms with them. No country in Europe had so much to do, and none has done so much in so short a time. As a great power Italy has also borne a useful part in the European concert. Sprung as she is from the affirmation of the principles of nationality, popular sovereignty, and freedom, she has always declared herself in favour of conclusions most likely to guard at once peace, liberty, and the interest of nationalities. Her future prosperity ought to be the object of the sincerest good wishes of all civilised countries.

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