

ITALIAN ANARCHISM.

BY PROF. G. M. FLEMING.

WE might search in vain perhaps for a better definition of anarchism than that just given by a little girl twelve years old. She is the child of one of the men taken a few weeks ago at Alexandria in Egypt, as an accomplice in the plot prepared against the German Emperor's life. Asked by a person who did not know the facts, what her father was doing abroad, the little girl replied:

“He is working for Anarchy.”

“But do you know, little one, what Anarchy means?”

“O yes, it means hating God, the Government and the rich!” It is obvious to a philosophic student of life that the anarchism defined in such terms by its own apostles must be regarded as a purely pathological phenomenon, in lieu of being treated as a simple strange ideal or as a paradoxical social organism. Anarchism rebels against each and every form of authority. Now ere anarchism was heard of there already existed in Italy another social institution which has this same character, and that was brigandage. Carefully scrutinised to their fundamentals, anarchism and brigandage are both the violent expression of certain individual passions, of inherent social tendencies: anarchism, be it clearly understood, as it manifests itself in Italy, where it rarely, almost never, assumes the character of scientific anarchism that can boast in other lands distinguished adherents such as Prince Krapotkin and Elisée Reclus. In Italy anarchists are almost wholly to be sought among the most ill-informed of the populace. They are guided by the spirit animating the proverb that has long been very popular in Southern Italy and which runs: “I would rather be a bull for two years than an ox for a hundred!” In this popular saying we behold in brief a condensation of the philosophy of life that results in brigandage or anarchy as the case may be, or as the

social fashion runs. There was a time, until quite recently, when this brigandage, traditional and almost historic in Italy, presented certain features that could be invested with a cloak of heroism and romance, and brought into existence certain types that assumed in the popular mind, epic and legendary characters, such as the noted chieftains Tiburzi, Fioravanti, Menichino etc., who were almost mourned when captured or killed. By an easy transition, as the spiritual heirs of this movement, anarchy took birth, and under the burning sun of the South were hatched, as by magic, such creatures as Caserio, Angiolillo, Acciarito, Luccheni and others. Such anarchists would some thirty years ago have been dubbed brigands, and in lieu of over-running Europe in search of sovereigns to kill, would have retired into the thick tangles of the woods that crown the mountains of the Basilicata or the Romagna, organising a band of ruffians whom they would lead on to attack and plunder the postal diligence or even some helpless hamlet.

In short, in anarchism, as it exists in Italy, we are face to face with an interesting social phenomenon, that enables us to study the effects of the nineteenth century civilisation upon a secular Italian institution, for as such brigandage must be regarded. The result is a transmutation into anarchism. The outlaw, proud, and of boundless audacity, fiercely individualist, unyielding, and consenting to no matter what form of government except his own, found some pretext, no matter what—a vendetta to carry out, an unhappy love affair, a pretended persecution—in order to betake himself to the woods; and amid the hills, this voluntary exile from society established his reign. No one better than these Italian brigands has reduced to their utmost limits of absurdity, certain modern individualistic doctrines, perversions of the doctrines of Frederick Nietzsche. Now contemporary Italian anarchism is equally unconscious. Almost instinctively, by an imperious excessive expansion of their own individuality, the followers of anarchism have become the ignorant apostles of a misconceived version of the German philosopher's theories.

For their apostolatry cannot be called intelligent, since Caserio, Angiolillo, Lega, Acciarito, Luccheni, and all the rest of these notorious assassins, are absolutely deficient in education, and barely able to read and write their native tongue. Further, until a few weeks ago, not a single one of Nietzsche's works had been translated into Italian, and even educated readers took their views of him at second, third, and fourth hand, resulting in strange misconstructions of his meanings. Yet, so much are the ideas of na-

tions intertwined and mutually affected in these latter days of quick communication and rapid spread of news, that even the most ill-educated and abject are affected by the spirit of the times to such a degree that it is possible that a violent revolutionary movement should unconsciously be formed in Italy, making a species of dis-respectable vanguard to an intelligent movement in favour of unrestricted individuality. Its adherents are much more excessive in their doctrines than those who in France are called the "*libertaires*," for the Italian individualists look to Max Stirner and Nietzsche as their popes, both of which thinkers,—and this fact cannot be too much insisted upon,—they neither know at first hand nor grasp in their real significance. The leading and much gifted contemporary Italian novelist, Gabriele d'Annunzio, has made himself the mouthpiece of theories à la Nietzsche, but a Nietzsche again so ill-understood that D'Annunzio's works might take rank as a perverted caricature of the German philosopher's views.

In D'Annunzio's footsteps follow a long line of romance writers and literary men who ape his style and repeat his crude, indigested social views. A more serious personality, a real thinker, is the greatest living Italian poet Giusué Carducci. He too is an individualist, and one of so pronounced a type that he almost leaves the German Nietzsche behind, and since Carducci is Nietzsche's contemporary in age, he is therefore no follower, but has evolved his own individualism out of his inner consciousness. Carducci's influence too, has been far-reaching over the whole younger generation of students and readers, making them all preachers of the gospel of individualism, a task in which they have been further aided by the Italian sociologists and economists.

It is in this wise that the garden of Europe endeavors to heal the truly deep and terrible evils that have been inflicted upon it by an excessive leaning toward the perverse German philosophic theories of Karl Marx and his followers, i. e., by the method of reverting to another German thinker who stands at the opposite pole of their first leader. Francesco Ferrara, a leading spirit among living Italian political economists, the recognised worthy peer of Frederick Bastiat, as early as 1870 charged Italian University professors with Germanising and corrupting Italian youth. And in very truth, thanks to the philosophic and economic theories of government dear to Prince Bismarck, Italy has plunged herself into a bottomless pit of State-socialism, which has ruined the peninsula and is the real cause of its present sufferings. The functions assumed by the State and the local public institutions to the det-

ment of liberty and individuality, have been constantly increasing, until in this year of 1898 the public expenses of the peninsula amount to twenty-four hundred million (2,400,000,000) francs while the most trustworthy Italian political economists, such as Signor Bodio, the Director General of the office of State Statistics, Professor Pantaleone, Signor Stringher, calculate the average public riches produced annually in Italy at no more than five milliards (5,000,000,000) of francs. Thus the exigencies of the Government in Italy absorb every year the half of that which is produced by its 32,000,000 inhabitants.

In no European country are the ideas of Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lasalle so much to the fore as in Italy, nowhere have their socialistic programmes been so much put into practice. And now, just as the theorists had foreseen, the socialistic and social organisation gives as its immediate result the most violent anarchistic reaction. The most intelligent section of Italian youth has become the standard bearer of the most uncompromising individualist theories, and has adopted as its gospel Frederick Nietzsche's "*Also sprach Zarathustra*" though it can rarely read this book in its original tongue and has to approach it by a French translation. And the cause for this must be sought in nothing more nor less than an instinctive need to react against that State socialism that out of Germany has invaded Italy devastating its length and breadth. As a recoil from this terrible State socialism, that suffocates all individual liberty of action, just as by excessive taxation it has sterilized every economic activity, Gabriele d'Annunzio writes his novels and Giosué Carducci makes his verses, and those men who have intelligence and know how to write or speak imitate their example. But neither Caserio nor Angiolillo nor Lega nor Luccheni knows how to write or speak, so instead, by means of a stiletto or a pistol, they give violent and often unconscious expression to the popular protest against the cruel ills under which Italy groans.

It must not however be inferred for a moment that there exists a moral solidarity between those who write books calculated to react against the corrupt and vexing State-socialism that obtains in modern Italy and those who think they can remedy the evil by committing execrable political crimes more to be deplored even than those ills they hope to heal. Yet it is nevertheless true that the causes that induce these two methods of expression are absolutely identical, causes that have made Frederick Nietzsche to be regarded as an almost popular philosopher in latter day Italy and that have

brought about for the fair peninsula, a sad supremacy in anarchist crime.

Nevertheless, anarchist criminality, like the Nietzschean philosophy, is the last and *fin de siècle* manifestation of phenomena that are not new in Italy, for the mal-government of this land is of long standing. An accurate record of the political crimes committed in Europe in this century places their figure at about one-hundred and fifty in number. Of these purely political crimes more than a third go to the account of Italy alone. Now it is manifest that so many assassins are not born in Italy for the same reason that causes the olive and the orange to flourish on its soil. Italy has had so many assassins because already in 1860 there existed a Government which Mr. Gladstone classified as standing below the Turkish in infamy and justly stigmatised as the "negation of God." In those days, for such as had criminal tendencies, there was not lacking the occasion to become a political criminal, while the intelligent and cultured classes professed liberal doctrines, or formed themselves into Republican or Federalist factions.

All social movements in Italy instantly transform themselves into political factions, into protests and oppositions to the Government, which for centuries had been tyrannous. The aim of the movement in favor of national unity was the suppression of little states. It is noteworthy that the socialism of Karl Marx never found followers in Italy; while ever since 1860 the socialistic revolutionary views of Michel Bakounin spread the length and breadth of the peninsula, and this no doubt, because these doctrines enjoined the overthrow of the new *régime* which had instantly proved that it was of as tyrannous a complexion as that which it had superseded. To throw off the yoke of governmental omnipotence and individual slavery is equally the goal steered for by all the other Italian political parties, be they republican, democratic, federalist or what not.

Hence the anarchism personified by beings like Caserio or Luccheni represents that which forty years ago was simply called political crime, that is, it is the exaggerated expression of a large section of society who hold very opposed political and social views but are all agreed in severely condemning the action of the Italian Government that opposes every form of individual liberty and paralyzes all the activity of the country by forcing everything under a bureaucracy. Political as well as anarchistic crimes are not possible in an essentially liberal government like that of England. In Italy, on the other hand, they are the spontaneous and necessary

product of the reactionary and tyrannical *régime* that pertains in the peninsula. If the saying of Adolphe Quetelet be paradoxical that it is society which puts the knife into the assassin's hand, it is surely not going beyond limits to incriminate the Italian Government as the fomentor of anarchist crime.

Indeed it would be hard to find in Italy a single person who does not hate and despise in words the action of the Government. Taxes have reached such an excessive limit, and are exacted in such a vexatious way, that they almost assume the character of theft. Justice is a myth. Magistrates can be bought and sold with the greatest facility and for a low price. Public security is null and the most treacherous crimes can be committed in the very centres of the largest cities. All governmental action is shamelessly corrupt and partial. Hence the populace detests their rulers and their actions as profoundly as does the *bourgeoisie* and if the present governmental *régime* is not upset, it is due solely and only to the force of social inertia, which is great and traditional in Italy. Now the hatred of the Italian populace against its tyrannous government is increased whenever it is able to draw comparisons. It is not an accidental fact that Caserio, Angiolillo, Lega, Luccheni and the rest have been wandering through Europe for a while, residing, above all in the free Swiss Republic, since they could not return to Italy. Indeed, the Italian laws concerning anarchy are so severe that it might almost be asserted that no Italian anarchist can be found in the peninsula. The Code punishes anarchy by means of the so-called *domicilio coatto* (forced residence) that is by relegating all persons known to hold these views to rocks in the Ionian Sea or to a penitentiary at Assab in Africa, where the malarious climate takes care that the capital punishment clause, erased since some years from the Italian Statute Book, shall nevertheless come into speedy action.

Now the sole aim of the International Anarchist Conference to which Italy has invited all the Powers has been to restore to Italy its anarchists, scattered over the whole of Europe. Thus in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century there have been rehabilitated those ideas of collective responsibility in crime such as are still held by the Bushmen and the Kaffirs. Solely because Lega, Luccheni and the rest commit horrible crimes, for which they are punished with death, or life-long imprisonment, their punishment is extended to hundreds of persons who up to that moment had given no proof of being animated by murderous desires. And even an assassin in Italy has the benefit of a legal trial. For those condemned to *domicilio*

coatto on the other hand, there is lacking even the semblance of judicial equanimity. The police in every town draws up a list of these presumed to be anarchists and sends this list to the central committee for the *domicilio coatto*. The individual thus incriminated has no possible means of exculpating himself against this secret denunciation, and one fine day, when he least expects it, he receives a visit from the *carabinière* who will arrest him and send him off to die on some distant shore. This method is closely related to that of the Inquisition of infamous memory. There is only one difficulty that stands in its way and that is the extraordinarily large number of persons whom they could strike. Thus, for example, a secret report presented by a Governmental Inspector of Schools in the province of Trapani in Sicily, affirmed that in the Lyceum of that city, out of eight professors, four were anarchists and of the thirty-two students at least twenty held the same views. Now if the persons in that Lyceum who held subversive views were to be sent to *domicilio coatto* it would have been needful to close the establishment. And this is only an example of many similar cases.

It is thus that Italy hopes to drag into the most deplorable political reaction all those Powers whom it has invited to its anarchist conference. It is needful to note this fact. The blind and misonicist reaction that to day directs the course of the Italian Government, does not spring from the murderous deed committed by Luccheni on the Empress of Austria, but rather from the revolutionary acts that saddened Italy in the May days of 1898. These revolutionary deeds, above all at Milan, were a serious attempt at overthrowing the actual political order. The populace, famishing, and groaning under the most burdensome and excessive tariff on foreign cereals that exists in all Europe, made a heroic and courageous attempt to shake of their burdens. This cost the lives of two hundred and fifty people and achieved nothing. In that revolution the anarchists practically did not appear. The great mass of the uprising was composed of socialists, republicans and democrats, or simple liberals, all men thoroughly discontented with the present state of things and all animated by the same hatred of the Italian Government, which they regard as the root of their economic misery. The chief leaders of these disorders were all condemned to hard labor for terms varying from twelve to fifteen years, though in some cases it was scarcely possible to establish the precise nature of the responsibility the men had incurred. Indeed the military tribunals themselves had to recognise the lack of a pre-conceived plot.

Since all these persons attempted the life of the Italian Government and rebelled against constituted authority, in the eyes of the Government they were all anarchists. It is to purge the land of this sect, who are its uncompromising enemies, that it has convened the Roman International Conference. And not the land of Italy only but the neighboring lands, whither Italian political culprits fly for refuge and whence they carry on their political propaganda.

It was to please a friendly nation that England gave its adhesion, in the first instance, to this idea, but on mature consideration and with a better understanding of the facts England has not participated. In any case, every clear-sighted politician knows that no practical result can spring from such a conference. Nor is the proposal to legislate internationally against anarchy new, but one that has already failed in several instances. The first project saw the light and then passed into the darkness of State archives at the initiative of Count Benst, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Austria-Hungary. Since thirty years the prospectus slumbers among the portfolios of the various Embassies and Ministers. Then followed a similar project elaborated by the Spanish Government, and after a Russian attempt at the same thing, the work of Gortschakoff. Even Prince Bismarck's proposition met with the same scant favor, elaborated after the great attempt made at Niederwald to blow up the German Emperor and the Princes.

The main difficulty in averting anarchistic attempts springs from the fact that anarchists, besides committing crime, also commit suicide and it is almost impossible to prevent suicide. The men who committed the recent murders, so fresh in all memories, the slayer of Carnot, the Austrian Empress and Castelar did their deeds for causes not dissimilar from those which animated Emanuel Jobard who stabbed a poor lady sitting next him in a theatre. Emanuel Jobard, interrogated concerning the reasons that pushed him to this crime, stated that he wished to die, but being a good Catholic he felt that he could not commit suicide, hence he had killed the first person that came in his way, certain that he would be condemned and killed in his turn, and yet should find time to repent and make his peace with God before appearing at the Throne. In the same way Caserio, Lega, Luccheni have taken strange roads whereby to become suicides. For each of these men did his deed under conditions that made detection certain and escape absolutely impossible. Nor did they attempt to fly. Angiolillo murdered Castelar in a public bathing establishment at San Juan, and his deed done,

stood by to see the result. Caserio struck the President of the French Republic in the most crowded street of Lyons. With the sole exception of the plot hatched against the life of the German Emperor in Alexandria, all the other anarchistic attempts committed by Italians, were the work of isolated individuals.

These anarchists who feel impelled to political crime are perfectly lucid as to what they are doing and the certain consequences of their actions. They are fatalists, led by a principle which they express thus; "Ideas must be watered with blood." From their point of view their own death is absolutely required in order to help on the progress of anarchistic theories; that is, liberty, and the general social welfare imposes on them a mission that costs their life. Nor do they quail or falter in the face of this necessity, acting just like the early martyrs to the Christian faith, who suffered torture and death, looking for their crown of glory in Heaven in return for their fidelity to their creed on Earth. The fact is patent that the Italian anarchists of to day, at least in their youth, made excessive professions of religious devotion and showed a leaning to mysticism. Both Caserio and Angiolillo, as boys, served the mass in their parish churches. But growing up in a sceptical age and environment, their souls, which were made to animate the fanatic apostles of a Divine Law, turned away, by a reversion, from all religious sentiment, and took from the social *milieu* in which they found themselves, an ideal, which they substituted for the God of the elder faith. For love of humanity, these mystic beings of unbalanced intellect became enamoured of the thought that to them was confided a murderous mission. Science has demonstrated that the anarchist assassins are nearly all affected with epilepsy, and beings who would not steal a pin nor break a single law, impulsively do the most atrocious deeds that cause the world to shudder with horror. In nearly every case tried, witnesses have testified to the kind-heartedness of the accused.

It is therefore obvious that we are dealing with persons who have been led into crime by the force, overwhelming in the case of their weakened brains, of that hypnotic suggestion which lies concealed in the social ideas they have accepted. And so sure are they of themselves, so tranquil in their conscience, that they do not even quail when led upon the scaffold, nor suffer from that *delirium tremens* which affects all ordinary criminals when they find themselves face to face with certain death. In short, they are all heroes and martyrs in their own eyes. They have a confused idea concerning the great social and economic evils that afflict their land, and,

impotent to comprehend the mechanism of social order and of a number of most intricate causes that determine the adversity of a land, these men impersonate the ills they deplore in one or several individuals. To their unbalanced brains, filled with a belief that a Messianic mission has fallen on their shoulders, the thought of killing a human being, who to them personifies all the social evils, becomes an act devoid of any criminal character, and they carry it into effect with the calmest conscience. It is no personal interest that has impelled them to the deed. They only aim after the happiness of society as the early martyrs aimed after the happiness of the world. And just the same causes which gave to the East so vast a concourse of saints and martyrs, and now-a-days of brigands, that is to say, the hot climate which makes the people easily prone to enthusiasms, and fervid illusions, these same causes, augmented to day by the general economic and social ill-being with which fair Italy is afflicted, give to the land in this century's end the sad primacy in the production of criminal anarchists.