

ITALY AND THE WAR.

BY THE EDITOR.

IT is difficult to understand why Italy entered the war. The Italians are not a warlike people, and it is not likely that they will reap laurels on the battlefield. Italy is the youngest nation of Europe, the union of all the states of the peninsula occurring in 1870. The founder of United Italy was Victor Emmanuel, a Piedmontese prince, and he was supported by the republican Garibaldi who in the name of republican Italians was a fitting hero to champion the ideal of a united Italy.

Even to-day Austria is regarded as the arch-enemy of Italy, though in the past Austria has given up portion after portion of her Italian possessions, not because of any Italian conquest but because other conditions forced Austria to yield. First, Austria gave up large sections of northern Italy to Napoleon III, who won the battle of Magenta, and Napoleon III ceded this stretch of western Lombardy to Italy, but retained for France the most beautiful stretch of the Riviera at Nice. The surrender of Nice was greatly resented by the Italians, but they comforted themselves by the gain of western Lombardy. Eastern Lombardy was surrendered by Austria in spite of Austrian victories over the Italian army, on account of Prussia. Italy had been the ally of Prussia, and Prussian victories forced Austria to make peace, Prussia insisting on rewarding her ally by the eastern portion of Lombardy in 1866.

But Bismarck did not mean to cripple Austria and cut her off entirely from the sea, so this surrender of Italian country did not include Trieste; and we must remember that Trieste was the only harbor in possession of Austria. We can understand how, in the present war, Austria was not willing to give it up to Italy. Italy is not in need of more ports, for the sea touches it on three sides and it is richly endowed with most valuable harbors. A fair consideration ought to allow Austria to keep this port.

In 1883 Italy joined the Triple Alliance and has derived great benefits by being in close touch with Austria and Prussian Germany. In fact it was through Prussia that Italy was able to accomplish its designs of complete unification, for France prevented Rome from falling into the hands of the kingdom. Napoleon favored the Roman Catholic church and protected the pope in his political ambitions as a worldly sovereign and head of the Eternal City. French troops garrisoned Rome, and so King Victor Emmanuel and Garibaldi were prevented from taking the jewel of Italy, the natural capital of the country, by storm. It was during the war of 1870-71 between Prussia and France that the French garrison was withdrawn and that Garibaldi boldly entered Rome and deposed the pope as a temporal sovereign. The Italian government however has been careful to respect the pope as a spiritual authority and has allowed him unreserved and even sovereign rights in the Vatican. At any rate the possession of Rome is due to Prussia's support of Italy, and after the establishment of the alliance between Prussian Germany and Austria-Hungary the Italians found it quite advisable to join the two central powers and so establish the Triple Alliance.

Italy's ambition has been to become again the power of the Mediterranean Sea. The main obstacle to this plan was first of all England, for England has the Mediterranean locked up at both ends, at Gibraltar and Suez, and in addition holds Malta, a strategic central position. France is more powerful than Italy, and so France with the connivance of England has increased her navy and has begun to play a prominent part in the Mediterranean as a kind of protectorate state of Great Britain. When the Triple Entente was formed the Mediterranean was, as it were, promised to France by Great Britain, and this promise involved the condition that Italy's ambition should not be considered. Nevertheless Great Britain was ambitious to isolate Germany and break up the Triple Alliance. Thus the British diplomats, first of all by favoring Italy and not opposing the Italian intention to gain Tripoli, imitated the policy followed by France to gain Algiers and Morocco. Germany was naturally inclined to let Italy gain a foothold in Africa, for Italy belonged to the Triple Alliance, so she exercised sufficient pressure on Turkey to cause the latter to surrender this portion of African territory. It was through peace with Turkey that Italy gained Tripoli. Otherwise she would have found it very difficult to gain a foothold in that country. At any rate the fight was much harder than the Italian military leaders had expected.

Of late the Italians have broken away from the Triple Alliance.

They owe their very existence to the support of Prussian Germany, nevertheless they found what they believed were sufficient reasons for not declaring war on France while still living up to their agreement with the Triple Alliance. I will even go further and say that the terms of the Triple Alliance were not such as to oblige Italy to go to war. Italy regarded the war on Germany's part as offensive and not as a mere defense against her enemies. But not content with remaining neutral, Italy finally joined the enemies of Germany and declared war on Austria-Hungary. In an endeavor to keep Italy peaceful, Austria-Hungary, at the suggestion of Germany, offered to surrender those portions of Austrian territory in which the Italian language is still spoken, with the single exception of Triest, Austria's only harbor, which she therefore could not give up without surrendering her entire navy and all her maritime interests. She offered, however, to make Triest a free city and endow it with an Italian university, which would have been a great advantage for Italian interests in the city. But all these offers were refused and Italy preferred the doubtful issue of a war.

It is difficult to understand why Italy joined the cause of the Allies. In the first place, France and England are her most powerful rivals in the Mediterranean. If the Allies prevail in this war Italy's influence in the Mediterranean will be practically reduced to that of a vassal of England. Moreover, if this state of things should come about, France would still be her direct rival, for France is not likely to tolerate an Italian navy as strong as her own in the Mediterranean, and it is still more unlikely that France will agree to divide her influence in the Mediterranean with any other power.

Italy can accomplish her ambitions only with the assistance of Germany and Austria, the central powers of Europe. As matters stand now, she has broken with the friends who would naturally stand by her and has joined those who are her natural enemies.

How was it possible that Italy should have entered into this war, not only needlessly but also against her own interests, by joining her natural enemies and opposing her natural friends? It almost looks as if some sinister personal interest were at play. The end which the Italians are made to serve in this war is exclusively in the interest of the Allies without any possible result for Italy except perhaps the acquisition of Triest in the event of a victory of the Allies over Germany and Austria.

This is Italy's fifth war against Austria-Hungary, and there is scarcely any battle or combat in the four previous wars, in sixty-seven years, in which the Italians have gained any advantage. The

Italians fought against Austria in 1848 and, after a truce, in 1849; further conflicts occurred in 1859 and 1866; and now, in 1915, the countries are at war for the fifth time.

Field Marshall Radetzky is still mentioned in the book of fame for his great victory at Custoza on July 25, 1849, where, after a hard fight of ten hours, the Sardinian army was utterly routed, as afterwards also at Villafranca. On the 21st of March, 1849, the Austrians beat the Italians at Mortara, and on March 23 Radetzky beat the Italians again at Novara, King Charles Albert of Sardinia abdicating his throne in consequence of the defeat. In 1866 another battle at Custoza was fought on June 24 under the Archduke Albrecht of Austria, where 75,000 Austrians beat 130,000 Italians under King Victor Emmanuel. In the same year, 1866, on July 20, the Austrian navy under Admiral Tegetthoff gained a complete victory over the Italian fleet under Persano. In spite of these decisive victories Austria ceded northern Italy to Italy in the peace made with Prussia at Vienna.

The Italians are not warlike, but that is no fault. Peaceful people too have a right to existence. But it seems to us that nations that lack the necessary manhood for waging war should be distinguished by a love of peace. But among all the nations no one has cared more for war than Italy. The sons of Italy have even shown themselves incompetent to meet savages in battle, and when the Italians sent a goodly number of their army to East African shores it was a sorry day for them, for the whole army was cut off by the Abyssinians, and not one of the poor Italians who were ambushed in the Abyssinian mountains returned to tell the tale. At that time Italy did not dare to send a punitive expedition but allowed the Abyssinians to continue their independence from the Italian crown.

It is a dangerous game that the Italians are playing, and we must wait to see what will come of it. It is a war that certainly cannot serve Italian interests, for if Great Britain and the Allies win, Italy will be reduced to a state of British vassalage; and if they lose, Italy has offended her best friends by having ranged herself with their enemies. Why the government of Italy has taken this course is almost incomprehensible. At any rate we must confess that British diplomacy has here shown its great genius for inducing nations to go to war against their own interests.