

MISCELLANEOUS.

"ITALY AND THE WAR."—A DISCUSSION.

A LETTER FROM A ROMAN PATRIOT.

(Translated from the Italian original by Percy F. Morley.)

To the Editor of The Open Court:

"It is difficult to understand why Italy entered the war." Thus begins the article which you, esteemed Doctor, published under the title "Italy and the War," in the October (1915) number of the delightful and scholarly periodical so ably edited by you. Permit me, by a substitution of terms, to tell you that I find it really difficult to understand how Dr. Carus, whose rare capacity for penetrating and explaining spiritual events separated from us by hundreds or thousands of years, has not succeeded, nor is succeeding, in diagnosing the facts of a contemporaneous event, even though remote in space, namely, the war into which Italy has now so willingly entered.

The premises upon which you confess your inability to discover the motives which could have induced Italy to take up arms against Austria, are two: first, the notable sense of aversion to war, and the irreducible pacifism of the Italian spirit, which factors, according to you, render our people unfit for the rigors of warfare, and which were responsible for our military reverses in the wars of independence; in the second place, the fact that our real and dangerous rivals in the Mediterranean are the French and the English, not the Germans or the Austrians.

I hope you will not take offense at a clear and frank reply. First of all you fall, involuntarily no doubt, into a serious and unjust perversion of the facts of history, resurrecting, as you do, our military reverses of '49 and '66 and completely forgetting our brilliant campaign of '59 which led directly to the proclamation of the military sovereignty of Italy. And moreover you commit a rather serious piece of psychological injustice when you state that the deeply pacific spirit which imbues our social life renders our people altogether incapable of military prowess. Even if our great and noble traditions and the high state of civilization to which we have attained, make us admire more ardently an epoch, purely fantastic though it be, in which the emulation of the people does not take the form of war, but rather of works of progress and beneficence, there is no justification, it seems to me, for painting us a nation of faint hearts and cowards. If our national rebirth is not an epic of leaders, it is nevertheless an authentic and wonderful epic of the people. And though you may have thought yourself quite justified in launching your

ironical phrase, that "it is not likely that the Italians will reap laurels on the battlefield," here in Italy we hear from those who have returned from the front (among whom I have a brother who has been wounded in an Austrian fusilade on the Isonzo), reports which are more than sufficient to give us a lively sense of pride in the stoical serenity with which Italian soldiers are fighting one of the most extraordinary mountain wars that can well be imagined.

Perhaps the accounts of the dying utterances of our soldiers on the field have not reached *The Open Court*; but in my opinion more than one of our men has given utterance to words of beauty and gentleness without parallel. Let me cite an instance. An officer, Decio Raggo, mortally wounded on the edge of a hostile trench which had been captured by his soldiers, was removed to the hospital, where, though fainting from loss of blood, he writes with his trembling hand which was soon to be stilled in death, these epic words: "O youth of Italy, envy my fortunate end. In the love and for the love of all that is Italian, I die happy. You who wish me well, do not abandon yourselves to useless lamentations. Place flowers on the graves of those who die for their fatherland." If you, esteemed Dr. Carus, would not award laurels to such pure forms of heroism and patriotism, I do not know to whom you would ever award them;—perhaps to the aviator who destroyed the fresco of Tiepolo in Venice, or to the naval officer who only yesterday sank a passenger-boat in the Mediterranean?

But, you observe, the interests of Italy in the Mediterranean stand in clear and striking contrast to those of England and France, whence, ranging herself with the Entente, Italy is really laying the foundation of her own vassalage. Now, esteemed Dr. Carus, I can even agree with you in your contention that causes for Franco-Italian or Anglo-Italian disputes may arise in the future, as they have in the past, in this sea which the Romans used to call "ours" (*nostrum*). But every day brings its task, and we must be prepared to face it the moment it presents itself. To-day a much more serious game is being played in Europe than that for mere dominion in the Mediterranean. Do you not perceive reasons of a purely material nature which would justify the adhesion of Italy to the Entente? If, however, there were none in reality, you would have been driven to the conclusion that Italy was fighting an idealistic war, without any material advantage.

But a war is not unjustified or foolish simply because the object for which the people who have undertaken it are striving is not immediately discernible. History is not a usurer's register, and for us Latins there are conquests and spiritual liberations more precious than the annexation of provinces or improved financial conditions. Milan would not suffer economically under Austria, yet it is taking its part in the war. In reality, whoever wishes to understand our conduct must get away from the narrow materialistic and purely political view of the events which are transpiring in this tragic hour.

It is the spiritual logic of all our history that led to the present conflict, reduced from a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances to their most typical and schematic expression: a struggle of Latins against Teutons for the full settlement of their respective economic and cultural capacities in Europe. And we all feel clearly that the arduous undertaking not only involves the acquisition or loss of territory and wealth; it implies also the solemn affirma-

tion or cowardly renunciation of inestimable spiritual values and sacred social traditions.

From the time when a Saxon sovereign, Otto, summoned by an exiled princess, came down to Italy to assume the imperial crown that a genial pope had taken under his own protection against other barbarians who had poured down from the north, and inaugurated his mission by beheading the district chiefs of Rome, or plucking out their eyes,—the history of Italy was but one unflinching and unceasing effort toward freedom from the power of the Teutonic sovereign who had made of the empire a fief of his own, and in which the duty of protection had been transformed into a license to spoliage and tyrannize. The court and the soldiers of the new emperor had scarcely returned from the solemnities of the consecration when the monk Benedict, discerning them from the slopes of Mount Soracte, foresaw the bitter vicissitudes which were to result from the consecrating act of John XII: "Oh, woe unto thee O Rome; behold, the Saxon king has thee in his power; thy sons have fallen beneath the sword. Thy strength has softened. Thy gold and silver are vanishing into the treasuries of the Germans." Through long centuries, with alternating successes and reverses, Italy and the papacy have struggled against the Teutonic empire to regain the liberty taken from them by a ruler who ought to have been, by definition, a protector. It would seem that the German soul has no conception of treaties which impose duties, and knows only those which assure rights. When the legates of the Roman people appeared before Frederick Barbarossa and invoked their traditions to the safeguarding of their autonomy, the future destroyer of Milan haughtily replied, according to the account of Otto of Freising: "You sing to me the praises of your republic and your senators. But your Rome has inherited only its name from ancient times. It is we who have inherited the power and the glory of the ancient Romans, and the only legitimate government is my imperial authority. The empire was not created by your will. Charles and Otto liberated you from the Greek and the Lombard, and gained the imperial crown by the force of their arms. Their successors are not degenerates. Try to snatch the key from the hands of Hercules! You have no right to impose conditions; you are simply to obey my orders." Against this insolent Teutonic vanity which had made of the imperial government a pretext for every kind of injustice and oppression, the pontificate and the people rose in arms. In the long epic of events the pontificate and the people count two glorious names: Canossa and Legnano.

It may be, and it is, singularly painful to recall to-day old conflicts of peoples and revive dormant race rancors. It would seem that a common culture should now definitely blot out the memory of the struggles of the Italians against Germanic tyranny and reconcile us for ever with the peoples of the Rhine and the Elbe in the joint labor of social progress. The political alliance, the tremendous changes in the methods of science, had revived a certain mutual sympathetic friendship which might even seem the precursor of an historical collaboration destined to a great future. But the shock of reality has shattered appearances and brought again to the surface the irreducible elements of fatal dissension. The Italians to-day have spiritually renewed the pledge which, on August 7, 1167, the Lombards swore to James of Pontida. And in the presence of this unforeseen and instinctive rallying of souls, and of such sudden unrestrainable eruptions of the will of a people—

a people which is not new to political greatness—it is completely superfluous to dwell on political considerations and the calculation of probabilities which might enable us to foresee or invoke success.

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Editorial Reply.

I take pleasure in presenting Prof. Ernesto Buonaiuti's views on the war and making them known to our readers in contrast to my own. I will not try to convert him nor even to refute him. I will be content to say that we would better agree to disagree. Our convictions are diametrically opposed and will remain irreconcilable.

Professor Buonaiuti's argument is ultimately an accusation of the German race as being barbarous and brutal. The Saxons and Swabians were vigorous conquerors, and Kaiser Frederick Barbarossa's answer to the legates of the Roman people appears to be one of the principal reasons, and a most formidable one, why the Italy of to-day should declare war on Austria in the moment when she and her ally, Germany, were attacked on all sides by the dangerous foes, Russia, France and the British empire.

Was not this speech of Barbarossa of the year 1177 known before? I should say that it was, and if it was of such a serious consequence for to-day why was it not taken into consideration at the time when the Triple Alliance was concluded with the two Teutonic powers? Why was the hatred of the Italians roused afterward, when England offered a goodly inducement in cash for joining the Triple Entente against the allies of Italy? In other words, the Italian army was hired to fight her own confederates for the sake of Great Britain.

I will not say that it is a disgrace to enter the military service of a foreign power and receive payment for it, but it seems to me treacherous to change sides at the critical moment and it is hypocritical to bolster up the Italian cause by artificial reasons and generalities that are not even "glittering." Most assuredly the arguments are not genuine; they remind me of the reason which I once saw in an Italian newspaper for the legitimacy of Italy's claim to Tripoli. It consisted of the statement that Tripoli had once belonged to the Roman empire. Why then does Italy not take France as well on the ground that it was ancient Gaul, and England, ancient Britain,—likewise Spain, Egypt, etc.? She has the same right to take all these countries as to take Tripoli. But she lacks the power, and even in this civilized age power is indispensable to the assertion of one's right; yea, more than that, power is sufficient to establish right, for even such barbarians and Huns as the Saxon princes and the Ghibellines can lay down the law if their sword is victorious.

Summing up the gist of Professor Buonaiuti's arguments, Italy must take up arms because the Germans are bad people and must be crushed. Strange that the Italians forget that England is also a German power and that the English are closely related in blood to that Saxon emperor Otto, whose name is mentioned by Professor Buonaiuti with horror!

It strikes me also as strange that a Roman of to-day who is proud of the glorious past of Italy should find fault with the Germans of former centuries on account of their conquests. What is the history of Rome but a

series of conquests in which justice was mostly on the side of the vanquished? The history of ancient Rome reveals to us how violence and wrong triumphed over the destroyed states and devastated the cities of Carthage, Corinth and others. Was conquest by arms the glory of Rome but the shame of Otto and Barbarossa? I will not glorify military prowess nor defend the aspirations of conquest, but I wish to call attention to the inconsistency of a Roman condemning the Germans for having come to Italy as victors, while the Romans did not hesitate to invade *all* the countries round the Mediterranean which they claimed as their own with no more right than that of Great Britain to rule the seas to-day. The Romans subjected the nations to their dominion and extorted their last possessions from the conquered people with unspeakable cruelty. Wholesale crucifixions of the inhabitants of conquered cities, as for instance in Jerusalem, were common occurrences and by no means exceptional. It was not unusual to sell as slaves the inhabitants of states that persevered in their resistance, and that was humane for Roman victors—at least more humane than the treatment of captured Judea.

In their career of conquest the Romans in due course turned toward Germany and began to subject the German tribes; but unfortunately the Germans at that time were—as they are still—barbarians with not the slightest conception of the blessings which Rome was bringing to them, and in their ignorance they expelled the Romans, the carriers of civilization. This was abominable, and I wonder that Professor Buonaiuti does not mention the fact.

The unkindness with which the Cherusci under Armenius treated the legions of Varus in the year 9 B. C. is as good a reason for declaring war on Austria as Frederick Barbarossa's speech of 1177. Perhaps the atrocities of the Teutoburg Forest were not applicable for the present war, because the Cherusci belonged to those northern German tribes whose descendants were later known as Saxons, and some of the ancestors of the English people probably participated in the battle in the Teutoburg Forest. Indeed England would not exist to-day if Armenius had been beaten by Varus and the ancestors of the Saxons had been either exterminated or Romanized at that time.

By the way, I have never thought, nor did I say, that the Italian reverses are due to "their pacific aversion to war." Their inefficiency has other reasons than their pacific tendencies. It is by no means impossible that a man or a whole nation may be extremely bellicose and boisterous and at the same time inefficient in actual fight. The pugnacious man frequently turns out to be a coward when he meets his equal, and the lover of peace is usually a valiant warrior when war becomes unavoidable.

The Italians were induced to join the Triple Entente by the clever operations of English diplomacy, but it is unintelligible how Italy could be induced to fall upon her former ally Austria in Austria's hour of dire need and take the consequences of such a stupid (I will not repeat to say "treacherous") step. Treachery is bad enough but stupidity is worse. I believe that Italy will pay dearly for her folly.

I cannot now prove my contention that Italy's treachery was not (as some Italians think) smart but stupid, nor do I intend here to enter into a discussion of the question but must leave the justification of my view to the future. In a year or two we shall know the result without wasting words or being obliged to prop up our contention with arguments. If Italy should

prosper on account of this war, she will certainly be the only one who will not have sorely to regret having become an ally of England.

I do not wish to harp on historical data, for I believe with Professor Buonaiuti that "a common culture should now definitely blot out the memory of the struggles of former centuries, and that we should become reconciled forever with former foes in the joint labor of social progress." I believe in this principle just as strongly as Professor Buonaiuti, and yet it seems to me that Italy did not act upon it, but did the very reverse. She preferred to draw the dagger of war; and when her ally was attacked in the northeast stabbed her in the back. If that was justified on account of the degraded character of the German race, why had Italy joined the two Teutonic powers, Germany and Austria, in an alliance which was not only not to be kept, but changed into an inexcusable feud, an attack from the rear? I leave it to the Italians to find a term to designate their behavior.

Of course the Italian war is an attack not only on Austria but also on Prussian Germany, and here we must mention that Italy has entirely forgotten the history of recent events. She has forgotten that she owes to Prussia the possession of Venetia and of Rome, and the war which she now wages on Austria and which hits Germany in an indirect way is simply the thanks she offers Prussian Germany for the acquisition of Venetia and Rome! Nevertheless the Italians believe themselves justified in their wrath against the Teutons, because 800 years ago Kaiser Frederick Barbarossa treated some impudent Roman legates with the haughtiness of a victorious conqueror! That is the Italian explanation for giving an ally a stab in the back.

Italians have proposed other reasons why their country ought to join in the present war, and these reasons consist, bluntly speaking, in the demand of the Irredentist party to have all territories in which Italian is spoken incorporated into the modern state of Italy. The principle that the right to possess a country depends upon the language of the people is absolutely untenable and would as a matter of course subject the United States to the sovereignty of England; likewise, some districts of New York and Chicago would have to go to Russia, others to Turkey, still others to Greece and Italy, while large tracts would go to Germany. The argument is positively ridiculous, but even if we granted it the Italians would not be entitled to any portion of the present Austria, because there are no purely Italian-speaking provinces left in Austria's possession.

It is true that some districts in the south of Tyrol are sometimes called Welsch Tyrol, or, inaccurately speaking, Italian Tyrol. It is a country where the population is mixed, but it is certainly not an Italian country. The whole Tyrol numbers, according to the most recent census, 949,000 inhabitants, of which 657,000 live in the larger districts of South Tyrol. Northern Tyrol is purely German, but in the southern part the German language is the mother tongue of 272,000 people, which is a little more than one-third, but less than one-half, of the entire population; of the others, 291,000 speak an Italian patois, and 94,000 a peculiar dialect of their own which is called Ladino. There is no definite border line between the three languages, for they are mixed; and the two Latin dialects, Italian and Ladino, both strongly influenced by the speech of the indigenous Rhaetic inhabitants, are commonly regarded with contempt by Italians.

Since the Roman empire broke down, Tyrol (and here South Tyrol is

included) has never belonged to Italy nor to any Italian state or principality. It belonged successively to the Ostrogoths, the Lombards, and since Charlemagne to the Franks, and from the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire until 1803 formed a part of that empire. For some time it belonged to Bavaria, and temporarily also to Carinthia. Two bishoprics were established by Conrad II in 1027 in Brixen and Trent, but both prelates were recognized as princes of the Holy Roman empire. Since 1363 the Hapsburg family has been established as the sovereign counts of Tyrol and has represented the powers of government even in the districts of Brixen and Trent, attending to the functions of government jointly with the prince-bishops of those places.

It is an indubitable fact that the Tyrolians cling with an intense love to the Hapsburg monarchy, and Andreas Hofer, the leader of the insurgents against Napoleon I, is still revered all through Tyrol as their national hero. The Austrian emperor finds his most faithful subjects in Tyrol, where he is always spoken of as "our Kaiser," and this sentiment is not limited to the north of Tyrol nor to the German portion of the population, but extends to the Welsch Tyrolians, including those of Italian speech. Dr. W. Rohmeder, who has traveled much in Tyrol, says in his report (published in the quarterly *Das Deutschtum im Auslande*, 1915, pp. 332-345) that he has often heard the answer from Welsch Tyrolians: "*Parliamo Italiano, ma siamo Tedeschi,*" or "*Tirolesi noi siamo, ma non Italiani, e vogliamo restarlo.*"

Far from feeling Italian or having a desire to join Italy, they hate the Italians with an intensity which they do not hesitate to express, and while it was under discussion whether the Welsch portions of Tyrol should be surrendered to Italy there prevailed a great anxiety all over Tyrol, mainly in the Italian portions of it, and the relief of the people found vent in outbursts of joy when Italy declared war. The Welsch Tyrolians are said to fight the Italians with almost greater bitterness than the German soldiers of the Austrian army because they were not at all willing to be delivered from what the Italians and their English allies term the "Austrian tyranny."

So far the Italians have not succeeded in conquering even a portion of Welsch Tyrol, and I doubt very much whether their army will make any headway. Let them try. The Tyrolians will do their utmost to defend their homes against *Italia irredenta*.

Just a word about the German migration into Italy. The northern portions of the peninsula possess a strong admixture of Gothic, Lombard, and Frankish blood, and the descendants of these German immigrants have always played the leading parts in Italian history. The farther south you go in Italy the less there is of German admixture; it disappears entirely in the southern provinces, and in exactly the same proportion the population becomes the more inferior.

One instance will suffice. The great Italian poet Dante (originally written Durante) is a scion of an Ostragothic noble family and is known to have been an ardent partisan of the Ghibellines. There have been many great men in Italy, but when we investigate their descent we will probably find few of them to be purely Latin Italians.

This theory of the inferiority of the Italian race where it has not been improved by Germanic or Norse admixture is not borne out in Italy alone; it shows itself also in the United States. Statistics teach us that the Italians head the list of criminals in America; but the northern Italians, that is, the

Italians having a goodly admixture of Germanic blood, cannot be classed among these. One of the typical crimes of Latin Italians, rarely found among other people, is the Black Hand—a modernized brigandage.

The story of the dying Italian officer told by Professor Buonaiuti is beautiful, but it is not new. Some time ago I saw in a German paper the same words attributed to a German *Landwehrmann*, and I fear it will be difficult to decide which of the two reports is original. Perhaps both have been copied from an old story founded on fact, the events of which may have taken place in ancient Greece.

It is a pity, however, that the Italian officer to whom Professor Buonaiuti attributes these sweet words was mistaken on the main point: He did not die for Italy, but for England in whose interest alone Italy joined the Entente. The war was not undertaken for Italy; on the contrary it was an un-Italian war, a war that was against the honor of Italy and also against Italian interests. It served the purpose of helping the Russians in their attacks on Germany and Austria, and of relieving the French and English in their anxiety concerning the outcome of the present war. The heavy sacrifices which the Italians offer now will in no way bring advantage to Italy; on the contrary they involve Italy in great dangers and serve only to impede the success of the Central European powers and afford a temporary advantage to France, Russia and England. But be comforted; to die for Old England is also a consolation. Is not England as good as Italy?

I have been puzzled why the Italians entered upon this war against Austria; now I know they have ancient and sore grievances against the German race, especially the Saxons. Further, I have learned that the Italians are very pacific, in spite of their expedition to Abyssinia and the conquest of Tripoli. But I only wonder whether in a few years they themselves will not adopt my views concerning the present war and criticize those politicians of theirs who have induced them to go to war. *Nous verrons.* EDITOR.

THE SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1453.

In 1453 Constantinople fell a victim to the besieging Turks and it has remained in Turkish possession down to the present time. The reason why this important city could not be saved is not so much because of the weakness of the Greeks—at that time the rulers of the city—as because of the dissensions which prevailed in the Christian world. Greek Christianity had established itself independently of Rome, and the Roman church insisted on the submission of the patriarch of Constantinople as the condition of protection against the Turk. But the patriarch preferred to submit to the Turks rather than to Rome. He capitulated to Mohammed II on the condition that he should be guaranteed the right of exercising his authority within the domain of the Christian population. Emperor John VIII was ready to surrender the autonomy of the Greek church in exchange for assistance against the Turkish invasion. The proclamation of the union with Rome was solemnly read in Florence on July 6, 1439. The leading men of the orthodox Greek clergy were bitterly opposed to the step and only the Syrian sects of Armenians, Roumanians and Ruthenians who were already allied to Rome accepted it, but Christian Byzantium would rather belong to the infidel Turks than to the