

ITALY.

SIR CHARLES DILKE, continuing his study of the political map of Europe, gives us Italy in the *Fortnightly* for May. He opens his subject by stating that there are no real parties in Italy as regards foreign policy, just as there are no true parties in the Italian Chamber, but only a number of personal groups. Until a great change therefore shall publicly take place in the counsels of the Roman Curia, almost the whole of the Italian electorate will remain united in support of a pro-German policy. So far as they can be said to exist at all, the parties going by the name of the Right and Left may, roughly speaking, be called the successors of the Cavourian and Garibaldian sections of Italian Liberals. The advocates of Italian unity having been divided into two parties, whose adherents were respectively in sympathy with Constitutional Monarchy under the house of Savoy, and with Republican institutions, the old names adopted in former days have been retained, while the distinctions between Right and Left have disappeared, and are now applied to agglomerations of groups which have personal rather than political significance. Signor Minghetti is the leader of the Right; and the present Prime Minister of Italy, Signor Depretis, the leader of the Left, has proved himself a Parliamentary chief possessed of the high degree of tactical art necessary to conduct the affairs of so dissimilar an Assembly.

It cannot be too strongly stated that in Italy nominal adherence to Right or Left does not necessarily imply the holding of any definite set of views. The Right is in general supposed to contain the more Conservative politicians, yet its leaders describe themselves as Liberals, and on a few questions are in fact more Liberal than are many members of the Left. The only section which contains a complete body of adherents to any set of views is the extreme Left, but it is a very small section, and naturally the groups contained in it are smaller still.

Much confusion is caused in foreign countries in the minds of those who attempt to follow Italian politics, by the use of the phrase, the Left, for a body of politicians who form the vast majority of the Chamber, and who are in part supporters and in part opponents of the present and of all recent Ministries, and who contain representatives of every class. Composed as it is of heterogeneous elements, the Left is broken up into personal factions, and it is high time a new division of the Italian Chamber should be attempted. We may conclude at any rate that whatever may be the party names in Italy, the great majority of Italians, or at all events the great majority of their representatives in the Chamber, are really united upon the larger questions that are likely to come up. The personal nature of Italian politics is apparent from the way in which the Prime Minister sheds off his colleagues instead of making cause with them; and the country will never find Ministerial stability until the English and Belgian system of standing and falling together is rigorously enforced.

While the great majority of politicians support the Austro-German alliance, they have to face a minority which, though as small among the electors relatively as it is in Parliament, makes nevertheless a great deal of noise. It is difficult to explain how this alliance, besides working good, may have prevented mischief in the past, and may bring tangible benefit in the future; but besides the Austro-German alliance, there is a feeling in favour of close friendship with England which is also popular with the electorate. No doubt Italian statesmen as a rule are abler men than Italian diplomatists, but some of the latter are clever, and Count Corti, though hardly the equal of Prince Bismarck, is a man of remarkable ability.

The colonial policy of the Government, as well as its foreign policy, is likely to maintain its continuity notwithstanding any changes in the Cabinet. A military disaster of course always involves upon the Ministry in power more or less popular indignation. The disaster in Abyssinia will, however, probably not seriously check colonial enterprise. The Italians have hitherto emigrated to the colonies of other nations rather than colonised for themselves. There are said to be at present two millions of Italian subjects abroad, many of them of course only temporary emigrants who left the country for France or Egypt in the hope of making a fortune with which to live at home. Irish, British, Scandinavian, and German settlers thrive only in temperate latitudes in which there are no new countries to annex; but the Italian can endure hot climates, and it is not therefore impossible that, late as it is in the day, an Italian policy of colonisation may succeed. This is the reason which induces them to persevere in their Red Sea policy. The main motive they have in attempting to open up a portion of the African coast is commerce. But Italian designs on Africa are not confined to the Abyssinian coast. The French protectorate of Tripoli still rankles in Italian breasts, and the desire to obtain Tripoli is only checked by the fear of extending the common frontier of Italy and France in a district where it would be more difficult to defend than it is in the passes of the Alps.

A movement which indicates the same desire for the expansion of the Italian kingdom is called the "Irredentist agitation," and advocates the assimilation of those outlying territories which are Italian by inheritance and association, such as Nice, Corsica, Malta, the Italian Cantons of Switzerland, the Trentino, Trieste, the Dalmatian coast and others of the former possessions of the Republic of Venice; the majority of these, however, do not desire to be Italian, but will give their allegiance to the country to which they are attached by ties of blood. The Italian Cantons, for instance, desire to remain Swiss; Nice never was Italian in its sympathies, but entirely French; Corsica is Corsican rather than either Italian or French. Looking more generally to Italian foreign policy and the

maintenance of her sway in the Mediterranean, she not only hopes to protect herself against any desire to reconstitute the temporal power, but also hopes to hold Russia's ambition in check. Italian public opinion, supported as it believes by that of England, strongly resists the expansion of Russia in South-eastern Europe.

The only section of the nation who are warm in their friendship for France are a remnant of old Garibaldians deeply attached to Republican institutions. That there is bad blood between the two is seen in the disturbances which occur in all great centres of population where French and Italian workmen are brought into contact. The old feeling of irritation towards Austria has almost subsided, or, to speak more accurately, the present electorate of Italy seems very willing to enter into an alliance with its former foe. As to Germany, moderate politicians in Italy decline to be irritated at expressions of gratitude addressed to the Pope by the Imperial Government for his aid in the recent election. The successors of Cavour and of Minghetti declare the Pope's action is a triumph for the Italian Government, and that it is a realisation of what that party always affirmed, that the power of the Papacy would become far more effective if delivered from the trammels of a temporal kingdom.

Italy might, of course, by avoiding an Austro-German alliance, and by keeping her hands free for eventualities, abstain also from maintaining so large an army as she has, at all events nominally, to support at present. The Italian army is very numerous on paper; it is not very large in fact; and the fleet is a cheap one, considering its power. Italy thinks, moreover, that a great European war is inevitable sooner or later, and that, owing to her geographical position, she will be forced to take part in it as the permanent ally of one side, or else to sell herself to the highest bidder. She has in her King a cavalry officer with a strong desire to distinguish himself in the field, but is nervously anxious about her generals, as there is an impression abroad, too, that Italian generalship may have some difficulty in regaining the reputation lost in 1866. King Humbert is an enthusiastic soldier, and may be trusted to see to the efficiency of his troops so far as lies in his power. The Italians are quick in learning their drill, they can subsist on very little, and their Alpine regiments are unequalled for mountain warfare. If Italy has only actually the fifth army, it has the third navy of all the Powers.

Russia indeed spends more upon her navy than does Italy, but Russia does not get her money's worth. Italy, at the present time, in addition to the two splendid ships which she has at sea, is building or equipping eight first-class iron-clads, as against seven being constructed by France and eleven by England.

The recent fall of the War Minister will be productive of as little change in the military policy of Italy as the fall of the late Foreign Minister will produce change in the foreign policy of that country. Power at present is vested in the hands of the Prime Minister, "the old Parliamentary hand" of Italian politics—"the fox," as he is usually called both by his opponents and his friends—the man without a policy, but supreme in Parliamentary management, able to work either with the Right or the Left. Although the fact that Italian politicians of all groups pursue practically the same foreign policy may in one sense tend to the preservation of the peace of Europe, yet the lack of stability in successive Italian Governments must prove a certain weakness to the country itself.

The most interesting and the most difficult of all the problems which Italy presents is that of the future relations of the Italian Government and the Vatican. The Italians now look upon churches and the priesthood as they do upon their blue sky and sunshine—as part of Italian life, but moderate men are throwing out warnings that unless the Vatican will step forward to a solution which will put an end to the political antagonism existing between the Papacy and the Catholic masses of the country, the anti-Papal feeling will develop into an anti-Catholic movement. It is certain that the King has no intention of ever admitting the sovereignty of the Pope over even a particular quarter of the city of Rome. Under no circumstances would any portion of the population consent to the possible withdrawal of absolute liberty of the press, of religion, and of education. The political influence of the Vatican has risen higher lately than the highest point at which it stood since the Reformation, and it will rise yet higher as the temporal power recedes into the mists of the past.

It is not easy to state the view which the Vatican itself takes of the situation, because the cardinals are divided in opinion; and yet on some matters not entirely ecclesiastical the Roman cardinals are no mean authorities. The society of cardinals, however, are not the men who are admitted to the intimate councils of the Pope. They represent His Holiness admirably well in ceremonials of the Church, in which they make an imposing figure, but they have no part in suggesting the policy of the Holy See. The Pope never sets foot beyond the Vatican, his so-called prison, yet the present Roman Pontiff is not only a statesman, well informed as to all that is going on in the capitals of Europe, but also an administrator of the greatest industry. Should peace be made between the Quirinal and the Vatican, it is possible that Italy may become the protecting power of the Church, and may aid the Pope in guarding Catholic interests throughout the world.

There are, of course, causes for anxiety in Italy, as there are in all States at the present day. I think, on the whole, however, that she has fewer dangers to face than any other of the Great Powers. I am convinced that she is making more rapid progress than any of them, with the exception of Russia. A vast advance has been made lately in education and manufactures, and the suppression of brigandage, and while a great deal remains to be accomplished, more has been done in Italy in the last sixteen years than is generally acknowledged or believed.