



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 1864.

No. 36

THE ITALIAN REVOLUTION.

A LECTURE BY THE REV. LEWIS GRIFFA, IN INGERSOLL, C.W.

(From the Ingersoll Inquirer.)

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen—In coming forward to deliver a lecture on so critical a subject as the present Italian Revolution, two opposite feelings prepossess my heart—joy and grief. I rejoice to have to speak of my native land—as a lonely child would rejoice even only to mention its beloved distant mother. I feel proud to bring to the notice of foreigners the noble aspirations of my countrymen, and their glorious efforts towards bettering their political condition. I am delighted to fly for a while, on the wings of my imagination, to brighter scenes than this land of my voluntary exile, which, though already become very dear to me, for the kindness of its inhabitants and for its glorious liberties, yet, compared with old, fair Italy, is like a wilderness, nay, a desert. (Applause.) At the same time, as it will be the question for me, now, to relate one of the saddest pages of Italian history—the most cruel disappointment that was ever met with by a betrayed nation—I feel exceedingly grieved. I am, at this moment, in the position of one who is about to tell his own family troubles. For this reason, I declined many a time heretofore to treat this subject in public. This time, however, I have, of my own accord, chosen this very theme for my lecture; and behold my reasons: I think that, by this time, any thinking mind must have made the following remark: "How is it that a Revolution, commenced with such bright prospects of success, since 1847, has not as yet in 1864, after 17 years, come to its final happy issue, nay, lies now in an inglorious state of prostration, pretty much alike to discomfiture? Might it not perchance be the effect of something very wrong existing in its very bosom?" Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am here to show that such in fact is the case; I intend to point out to you what that wrong thing really is—that deep internal sore, which threatens to cause the Italian Revolution slowly to die, as it were, of consumption. But, my remarks on this subject, some years ago, would have appeared to be dictated by party spirit or by prejudice, and consequently they would have been rejected at once; whereas now that time has wrought in the public mind the above expressed suspicions; now that facts, if attentively studied, already confirm it; now my views will, I think, be better appreciated, perhaps adopted. In this case, my subject would be productive of several good effects. It would make you aware of the danger to which even the best political institutions are exposed, when made to serve party interests. It would bring you to view in its true light the great question of political liberty—a question so vital for every nation—a question now so grossly mistaken by some in Italy. Finally, it would hinder you from misplacing either your sympathies or your prejudices for or against Italy; and would guide you to know, and induce you to have at heart, as it behooves every feeling and grateful American, the true interests of the native land of Christopher Columbus, the first discoverer of these blessed shores—the land of Americo Vespucci, who gave the name to this great continent—the land to which Christians of all denominations owe the primitive knowledge of Christianity, the transmission of Holy Writ, the preservation of the most important, sacred and profane, historical and literary monuments. (Loud applause.) The present Italian Revolution apparently commenced in 1847, but in reality had its origin much earlier, and was brought about by a series of preliminary events, noticeable only to keener observers of history. Such is always the case with every Revolution. A rebellion, a mutiny, a civil quarrel or war, may break out all of a sudden; but a revolution, which is a commotion of one or more nations, tending to effect some radical change, political or religious, is like a wheel, put into motion at first by some startling shock; then going by degrees on, sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly, and finally whirling around furiously and boisterously, until it either precipitates itself at once into a successful result, or it suddenly stops and goes into pieces—smashed. The French Revolution at the latter part of the last century was a striking exemplification of what I say. The present Italian Revolution bears a great resemblance with that Revolution; in fact it is the offspring of it, at least in part, although it was also the issue of more noble aspirations. As it is now, in 1864, the spurious instincts, which it drew from the French element, have got the better of its pure, native blood; and unless this is in good time purified, I fear the whole mass will soon rot, and bring it to one grave, with its illegitimate mother. (Applause.)

Every one knows the famous exploits of the French Revolution of 1789. Every generous heart cannot but be struck with horror and dismay at the simple recollection of the revolting scenes which then took place in the public streets of Paris and Lyons. Well, there were men in Italy who, dizzied with the foul idea of sharing the adventures of the French anarchy, eagerly embraced the opportunity, when it offered itself, of transplanting it in their land. The consequence was that this fair Queen of Nations became a province of Gaul, first under the beathen directory, then under the Napoleonic invasion. However, at the time appointed by the Most High, this scourge passed away; and Italy was disencumbered of those foreign usurpers.—The treaty of 1815 now stepped in and settled, or rather shaped somehow, Europe. This settlement, in so far as Italy is concerned, was like the operation of some unsuccessful surgeon on a wounded body; she was cut into many small pieces, of which some were thrown like morsels of meat to some famished members of the Imperial family of Austria, and one, the best, was swallowed up by that august monarch himself. Yet, even so, Italy breathed again the balmy air of peace; felt herself at home once more; and, devoting herself exclusively to the occupations which are particularly congenial to her—the cultivation of sciences, of the fine arts, of home industry and agriculture—succeeded to create for herself a comparative happiness, which lasted about a quarter of a century. (Cheers.) But now, happy as we Italians were then, for more than one respect, we made ourselves unhappy, fretting after things which we were lacking.—We had no parliament, no free press, scarcely any newspapers; we were the last to have railroads; and so many were the formalities to go through, so many the inspection to submit to, before we could go out, or go freely through any Italian State, that the people, generally, unless compelled by necessity to travel, chose rather to stay at home. The consequence of this was, that commerce was hampered, the intercourse between Italians and their countrymen difficult, and life, in general, although comfortable, was too monotonous, aimless, and wearisome, for want of stimulus to exertion, or scope to laudable ambition, and of space for expansion.—Owing to this, it happened that, with the exception of a few old and timid people, who were not yet entirely out of the fright, with which the French anarchy had, as it were, scared their lives out of them, a large number of generous, intelligent, and good souls were sincerely anxious to see the political condition of Italy some way or the other modified. Their innocent, legitimate murmurs, though generally made in a whisper, were sometimes so loud as to be heard by the rulers of the country, who, just on that account, redoubled their vigilance, and fetters.—But, besides the princes, other men were keenly watching this popular commotion deadly spreading over the country. These, all men imbued with the principles of the Gallic philosophy of the last century, men rallied secretly around the standard of the old French Revolution, lurking in the palaces of the great, in the universities, and in the army, whither they had crept under the disguise of well-meaning patriots, spied the opportunity of exploiting for their own advantage the generous aspirations of the good Italian people towards political reforms. Mazzini was as early as 1820 the soul, or rather the evil genius of this faction. In 1821, they thought they could essay an attempt of Revolution in their sense, as they had at hand quite a list of adepts, mostly all innocent and guileless youths. But the affair was such a puny display, that in a fortnight it was all over, but for the cries of fond mothers, bewailing their sons, the very flower of the nation's youth, driven into exile for having joined the rebellion. Charles Albert, then Prince of Carignano, was on this occasion banished and hanged in effigy; Silvio Pellico, another innocent victim of that heartless Mazzinian experiment, went to Spitzberg, before he could understand of what crime he was guilty. In 1831, at the accession of Gregory the XVI. to the pontifical throne, this same faction, though chiefly composed of French exiles, made another attempt at rebellion in the Romagna. Louis Napoleon, the present Emperor of France, got implicated in that disgraceful affair. *Monsignor Mastai Ferretti, the present Pope IX., then Bishop of Spoleto, hid him in his palace for a few days, then got some kind of passport for him, and sent him safe into Switzerland. (Applause.) Now, it is evident that this revolutionary faction, although bold and adventurous, would never have been able to effect anything but some insignificant rebellion. A true Revolution, as I call it, that is, a general move of a nation towards the attainment of political reforms, requires the union of all the elements forming the strength, the mind, the respectability of the community, having but one design, and working under one head. The faction in discourse, whose standard was and is still to ape the French Revolution of 1789, could not rally around their flag these elements. The majority of the Italian people did not mean a reform like that; they wished for a liberty sin-

cere, impartial, and compatible with their religion; in a word, they wanted something Italian, not French. (Applause.) But who could thus rally them? Where was to be found the man endowed with power, and at the same time a sincere liberal himself, a man of lofty genius, and at the same time enjoying the sympathies of all classes, and consequently able to start such a movement? Well, Almighty God sent such a man to Italy, in 1846. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, start not at what I am going to tell you; it is an historical fact; I cannot betray it to please any person. On the 16th of June, a fortnight after the death of Pope Gregory the XVI., Cardinal Ferretti, above mentioned, came out of the conclave, elected Pope under the name of Pius IX. He was a most popular man; his liberal views were publicly known; his mildness, his love for the people, his charity to the poor, had won him the affections of all classes. Having lived for several years in the East, as a simple missionary, he saw with his own eyes the degrading results of tyranny and despotism under the Mussulman's sway. Having then come to America as a Nuncio, he equally saw with his own eyes the rapid progress in civilization that liberal institutions can effect. Therefore he was a sincere and warm friend of liberty. "Ah!" he used to say, "the land of Catholicity should also be the land of true liberty." (Prolonged cheers.) Ladies and gentlemen, you may remember with what enthusiasm his election to the Papal Throne was welcomed both in and out of Italy. The reason was, because his accession to power foreboded the reign of liberty.—And Italy was not disappointed by Pius IX. On the 16th of July, just one month after his election, he proclaimed an illimited amnesty for all political offenders—the most daring feat that ever a monarch ventured to achieve. After the promulgation of the decree of amnesty, some time was spent by Pius IX. in maturing his designs of political reformation; which caused some delay. Some incident occurred during this interval, which may be mentioned as characteristic of his grateful manner of doing things. A sheet of gilt-edged paper was found by a Prelate one afternoon upon the stair-case that leads to the Pope's apartments in the Vatican, bearing two Italian verses, which, translated into English, sound thus:—

"Mastai, you promised wonders:
Pray, what are they going to be?"

When the Pope came into the apartment, the Prelate presented the curiosity to him. Having read the verses, he smiled; and taking the pen, in his usual calm and happy mood, completed the stanza with this answer:—

"Mastai, you promised wonders:
Pray, what are they going to be?
Have patience yet a little while,
And I will let you see."

(Laughter and great cheering.)

Soon he redeemed his promise. On the 19th of April, 1847, he created a Consulta of State, that is, an Assembly of Representatives of the Provinces, something like a Parliament. On the 5th of July, he created the Civil or National Guard, something like our militia here; thus entrusting the defence of the country to every man's patriotism. Subsequently, he made the press free; and in October, the Consulta of State was changed into a regular Parliament.—Now, remember, ladies and gentlemen, that the Pope granted these privileges to his people of his own perfect accord and out of a sincere desire to do good to his country; whilst, on the contrary, the other Princes of Italy, who, after him, made the same concessions to their respective subjects, did so by force, reluctantly, and because they could no more help themselves.—And how could they, in fact, resist the impulse thus given to the enfranchisement of Italy, by such an authority and such an example as that of the Pope. Accordingly, a liberal Constitution was also granted by the King of Naples, by the Dukes of Tuscany, Modena, and Lucca, and by the King of Sardinia, Charles Albert, who appeared to be the least reluctant of the lot.—When the press was made free, a caricature was published in Turin, by the *Fischietto*, the *Punch* of Italy, thus portraying how those Princes adopted the liberal reforms. They were sitting around the counter of an apothecary. The apothecary was the Pope. (Laughter.) He had poured to each of them in a small glass some bitter medicine, and intimated to them to swallow it.—Charles Albert raised at once the glass to his mouth; and, although not without some grimace, he drank the unpalatable stuff. But the others, with great contortions of their body, and making horrible faces, showed their reluctance even to approach only the glass to their lips; and the Pope was actually taking by the hand one of them—the King of Naples—and forcing him to swallow the drug. (Great laughter and cheers.) Any how, owing to the example, the influence, the authority of Pope Pius IX., Italy was now regenerated to a new political life. She was "seated at the banquet of

free nations," as the phrase ran at those days. A Parliament was sitting in Rome, a Parliament in Naples, a Parliament in Turin. The Press, now made free, was teeming with periodicals, which, issuing forth from every corner of the Peninsula, like the buds of a young poplar tree in the spring, put the Italians into communication with each other and with the rest of the world. The streets of every town and village, at the dusk of the evening, resounded with hymns of gratitude and joy, that the workmen, after their day's work, assembled to chant to Pius IX., the regenerator, as they called him, the saviour, the titular angel of Italy. In a word, the enthusiasm of all classes was roused to its climax. To complete the business, one thing was now required, viz., to see Lombardy and Venice admitted to share the happiness of the other Italian provinces. Alas! they were still in the grasp of Austria; they were still in fetters. And oh how sorely did Pius IX. feel for them! The first hint he gave to Austria of his displeasure on this account was the request to withdraw his troops from Rome and from Ferrara, where they had been for years, under the plea of protecting the Papal States. The Pope said that he did not longer want any other protection beside that of his own people. Austria withdrew her troops from Rome, but refused to leave Ferrara. The Pope, remonstrating against this, took the occasion to make a solemn and touching appeal to the Emperor's humanity and conscience in behalf of poor Lombardy and Venice. Oh would to God that no obstruction had been put to the determined but prudent working of Pius IX. There is no doubt but that, without strife or bloodshed, he would finally have brought about the redemption of that section of Italy too, sooner and more effectually than if an army of a hundred thousand bayonets had stood behind him.

But alas! obstructions were at this very time already in store, and were soon most tracherously thrown in his way. The peace which reigned all over the land for more than a year was but the calm that usually portends a great tempest. The union of all the citizens which seemed to have made of them of them one happy family, was but the sweet dreamy slumber that precedes the nightmare. The old conspirators of whom I have spoken before, unannounced like the rest, at the first din of the startling news from Italy, had hastened hither each from his place of exile.—They were welcomed everywhere, and, either out of pity for their past sufferings, or out of esteem for their talent and ability, they were provided with offices or with pensions. They extolled to the skies the patriotism of their old antagonists; a perfect union seemed to exist between them and the princes, as well as with the people. Yet all this was only an apparent reconciliation. With this pretension of being satisfied and sincerely disposed to work with all classes and with the Government of each State in good harmony, they, first of all, gained the great point of monopolizing for themselves the seats in Parliament, of rising themselves to the first offices in the country—in a word, of seizing the power also. On this account it became quite natural that the Kings and Princes should pick up among them their ministers. The Pope, however, managed, though not without altercation, to have at the head of his Cabinet his faithful Count Rossi. You will hear hereafter the fate of this devoted and conscientious patriot.

Meanwhile, the news that the rest of Italy was about to come to their rescue, turned the head of the poor Lombards, who, with a courage and devotedness worthy of better success, in the memorable three days fight of May, 1854, chased out of Milan Radetzky and his army. Charles Albert and his army, having now hastened up to their aid, Radetzky was driven back to his stronghold of Mantua and Verona, where the Italian army, successively victorious at Palestro, Paschiera, and on the Mincio, surrounded and besieged him so tightly that, had he been left without reinforcements and provisions for two months, he would have had to surrender.

Contemporarily to this success of Charles Albert in Lombardy, Venice, left alone by the Austrians, was proclaimed a Republic. Rome, too, was at that same time made a Republic.—But there the Mazzinians called the dagger into requisition. They stabbed the Pope's premier, Count Rossi, on the very threshold of the House of Parliament. Then they besieged the Pope's residence. Cardinal Palma, who ventured to come to a window to parley with them, was shot dead on the spot, just a few paces from where Pius IX. himself was standing. Pius, seeing no way of bringing matters to any definite arrangement, and being disguised, escaped to Gaeta.

After the flight of Pius IX., the conspirators—now masters of the position—proclaimed the Republic, under the presidency of a Triumvirate composed of Mazzini, Sterbini, and Saffi; with Garibaldi as commander-in-chief of the army. What do you think they did now, those won-

derful regenerators of Italy? Drunk with success, they stopped Charles Albert in the midst of his victorious career, and exacted of him to lay down his crown before the Republic, as soon as he has driven the Austrians from Italian soil. You may imagine how amazed the poor king must have been at such a preposterous proposition. The fact is, that this incident demoralized him exceedingly, and caused him to relent his eagerness in pursuing Radetzky's army. Just at the same time his own army wanted a fresh supply of ammunitions; and these were not coming from Turin, most likely because the Administration, worded by Mazzini, did not want to send him any assistance, unless he accepted their programme. Owing to these two causes, Charles Albert and his army, encamped between Mantua and Verona, remained for about two months in a deadly state of idleness and expectation, during which the Emperor of Austria managed to muster together 200,000 men and send them to reinforce Radetzky. This horde poured down the Northern Alps, when Charles Albert least expected it; and as soon as they effected their junction with Radetzky's army, this, on a sudden and contemporarily, pounced upon Venice and destroyed its infant Republic, and stormed against the Piedmontese, who, terror stricken and overwhelmed by numbers, slrank back in great haste towards Milan, and dispersed. On his flight—oh monstrous ingratitude!—some Mazzinian fired at Charles Albert most treacherously, as if he, and not Mazzini himself, had been the cause of the sad reverse of fortune.—(Groans.)

Radetzky now came down as far as Novara, and destroyed the scattered limbs of the Italian army. Charles Albert totally discomfited, abdicated the crown in favor of his son, Victor Emmanuel, who capitulated with Austria; then, disguised, he made in haste to Oporto, in Portugal, where he soon died broken-hearted.

Previous to this, the King of Naples had already withdrawn the constitution and the Dukes of Tuscany, of Modena, and Lucca, were reinstated; then, strange to say, the just born French Republic sent an army to Rome, with the express mandate to put down the Mazzinian Republic and restore the Pope. Garibaldi, with his guerrilla, could not very long stand the shock. Taken, as it were, between two fires—the French at his heels and the King of Naples at his flank—he had to disband his troops, and sought his safety in an humble flight to Montevideo. Mazzini repaired to his usual den in England.—(Hear, hear.)

O catastrophe! Poor Italy, what a reverse! Where are now those liberal institutions of which thou wert so proud just a few months ago?—Who snatched them from thee? The paternal hand, forsooth, that bestowed them on thee?—Ah, no! Rather the rashness, the violence, the madness of a gang of men unworthy themselves of being free!

Now, in the capitulation made after the disaster of Novara, Austria had the condescension to allow Sardinia the liberty to manage her own internal affairs as she judged best. In force of this arrangement, Victor Emmanuel, now King of Sardinia or Piedmont, kept up the constitution that his father had granted. Thus his kingdom became a happy exception from the rest of Italy—a privileged spot where Liberty could be kept, like the sacred fire hidden by the Jews on going to the Babylonian captivity, to revive and bless again the whole country. And do you not think, ladies and gentlemen, that this providential disposition ought to have been considered by all parties as a good chance to re-examine their respective views, and modify them if imperfect, or correct them if wrong? But, alas! such was not the case! Hence all the subsequent errors.

Victor Emmanuel, my King, is a well meaning, generous, open-hearted man. He is very jolly too, as you would say in English. He is a brave soldier, with the ways of the barrack. He is a gallant sportsman, with all the thoughtlessness of the prodigal gentlemen. He is always ready to fight like a *Coeur de Lion*; but he hates the cares of the State, and swears, and sends to the devil everything that bothers him.—No wonder then if, with such a King, the public affairs remained pretty much in the same state in which they were before the war—the same men in office, the same sort of Representatives in the Parliament, the same spirit in the administration. Owing to this, the original liberal party was now perfectly drowned; those genuine aspirations on which the Revolution started in 1847, were either silenced or stifled; and the French principles of 1789 became now the only programme of the Italian Revolution; the idea that Italy was now to be absolutely made up after that fashion, prevailed altogether, and became the only possible Liberalism—any other policy was no liberalism; was retrogradism, was, as you say in another sense, Popery. Now, God knows how many errors the prevalence of this policy in Piedmont would soon