

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF ITALY SINCE 1870

FOREIGN policy is, as a rule, a matter of business, not of sentiment, and for no country is this more true than for Italy. Her history has repeatedly impressed upon her the lesson that friends in international politics are only less dangerous than enemies ; and the eternal laws of geography have made her policy, of necessity, opportunist and complicated. It must, again, be remembered that the modern kingdom of Italy is not yet fifty years old : the taxes are heavy, Lombardy in the North and Romagna in the East have economic difficulties to cope with, while the South has been handicapped by illiteracy, crime, and earthquake. A new and anxious colony has just been acquired in Tripoli, and a policy of risk or adventure is the last thing to be expected from Italy for some years to come. One other general consideration offers itself. Italy will pursue her own policy ; the shackles of tutelage are over, and no amount of literary, moral or moral sympathy will deflect her path, or induce her to a policy which does not offer her manifest advantages.

For the present purpose, the modern policy of Italy may conveniently be divided into two epochs : the first runs from 1870 to 1896, the second is from 1896 to the present day. Not that the year 1896 marks an abrupt or sweeping change, but a different trend or atmosphere is certainly associated with Italian policy from that date. From 1848 to 1870 Italy was engaged in the urgent work of achieving her national unity. The stages were