

cal and idolatrous naturalism."* The upper classes are in a somewhat different state; certainly not a happier one. "There is a fatal indifference consuming us," says Signore Bonghi, one of Italy's most distinguished sons. There seems a general lack of earnestness; the mental fibre is terribly relaxed. These unhappy men can neither believe nor disbelieve. They fall under Dante's tremendous denunciation of

Questi sciaurati che mai non fur vivi—
(More miscreants who never were alive.)

They attack the priests, but send their children to Jesuit schools; and when death approaches they accept the rites of the Church, partly because of the solicitation of their families, and partly because they feel they must have something to cling to as they enter the dark unseen.

The general tone of morality in Italian society is low. We do not assert that, in the relations of the sexes, it falls below the usual continental standard. We are disposed to set it higher than it is in France. We refer rather to truthfulness and integrity. Recently the Prime Minister, Signore Giolitti, affirmed that dishonesty is the great cause of Italy's financial troubles. In the Chamber of Deputies he declared that, "as compared with an Italian exchange, Monte Carlo itself is an honest place." Poor Italy! how is national wealth to be built up on so rotten a foundation?

The marvel is that, in a community

* As we write this our eye lights on a paragraph in a Paris newspaper, *La Croix*, of May 5th, 1893, which we translate literally: "THEY HAVE PRAYED SO WELL. They write to us from Sora, in Italy, as follows: For a fortnight this part of the country has been in prayer the whole day. The workpeople made processions barefooted, with crowns of thorns on their heads and carrying the relics of the holy patrons of the churches. Never was there a more moving spectacle. They prayed so well that, for the last three days, we have had much rain. The country is saved. So does God show favor to simple, heartfelt prayer." Assuredly, we do not quote this to laugh at it. Call it credulity, if you choose; it is infinitely better than atheism or agnosticism.

so devoid of faith, true mental energy of any kind can survive; for doubt is not only chilling, but killing. Take, for example, Leopardi, one of the most distinguished poets of recent days. His unbelief is absolute. He speaks of

L'infinita vanità di tutto
(the infinite vanity of all things),

and yet this man was even passionate in his patriotism. It would seem that, in the nobler few, "the genial current of the soul" is not frozen into a mass of ice; and when the avenues to another and better world are closed against it, it moves with the greater strength in the direction of the temporal and earthly; but the mind of the great mass must stagnate into apathy and death, where faith is extinct. Let it be observed that these remarks hold good of the men of Italy; it would be unjust to apply them without qualification to the women. Religiously and morally the women stand higher than the men; and very decidedly so in the important matter of temperance.

The subject of this paper is religion in Italy. We can touch but slightly on education. It is rather singular that there are too many universities and too few schools. The former, seventeen in number, are irregularly scattered over the country. Many of them are small, inadequate institutions, two or three of which should be combined into one—a reform, however, which local prejudice resists.

Before the kingdom of Italy was formed in 1870 education was in a very unsatisfactory state all over the country, with the exception of Piedmont. A few were fairly well trained; the masses were almost entirely illiterate. The Italian Government deserves no small credit for its efforts to extend popular instruction. Elementary education is gratuitous. Every commune of four thousand inhabitants and upward is bound to send the children to a primary school. Still, a very large proportion of the population cannot read, chiefly among the women. This is the case specially in the south.