

the Alps by the eunuch Narses, when the Lombards, under their king Alboni, swept into the unfortunate country, to be in turn conquered and supplanted by Charlemagne and his Franks. Even the Saracens invaded the country and wrested tribute from the pope. Lovely valleys and fertile fields were devastated and reduced to sterility by the fierce incursions of the Northmen and Magyars. The Carolingian kings were succeeded by a line of Italians, whose rule was practically only nominal and gave abundant opportunity for the growth of feudal and civic power. The great nobles in the provinces and the great merchants and bishops in the cities founded parties and factions, and inaugurated that bitter series of civil contentions which for many centuries filled the country with internal strife.

In 962 the crown of Italy was seized by Otto, the German, and two centuries later that foolish burlesque on ancient grandeur the Holy Roman Empire, was born. The twelfth century witnessed the beginning of the bitter struggle between the Guelphs and Ghibellines and the advent of Frederick Barbarossa, to reduce the growing power of the Italian cities. During this and the succeeding century the country was the scene of perpetual strife. When the people were not warring with some foreign power, they were engaged in bitter civil contentions, and suffering from self-inflicted wounds. The rivalries of factions, of princes, of nobles, of cities and of provinces generated unceasing wars. Remnants of the many races that had overrun the country still lingered in localities to breed contention. Perhaps the only persons who gained substantial and enduring advantages for the terrible struggles were the popes. With profound cunning and supreme selfishness they stimulated strife in the country and took advantage of the consequent confusion to add to their territories and rivet the chains of superstition on the weakened limbs of a deluded people. They were always ready to arbitrate the disputes of rival factions, and equally ready to claim a part of the disputed territory as a reward for their services. The tribulation of the people was the triumph of the priests. By the fifteenth century, Italy was divided among five leading powers—the Papacy, Naples, Milan, Florence, and Venice. The last two republics for some time managed, on account chiefly of their commercial advantages, to preserve an isolated greatness, but this was as evanescent as it was glorious, and in the succeeding centuries their power declined. The condition of Italy in the fifteenth century was aggravated by the invasion of the French, and the country became a short time later a battle ground for the rival forces of Francis I and Charles V. In the sixteenth century it became largely subject to Spain, and for the next hundred years was alternately in the possession of several European powers. At the close of the eighteenth century, this unfortunate country, which had lain at the feet of nearly every conqueror in Europe, felt upon its bleeding soil the mighty tread of the greatest of all conquerors and saw the meteoric genius of Napoleon flash like a glittering star across the horizon of its history.

In 1805, Napoleon was crowned King of Italy. After the Congress of Vienna, the country was restored to its original position and practically became subject to Austria. The States were under the control of Austrian

princes, who exercised absolute powers and mercilessly punished all attempts at reform, independence or self-government on the part of the people. A powerful Austrian army was stationed in Lombardo-Venetia, to aid any of the princes who might need its assistance to crush and control the people; the Italians had absolutely no part in the control of their own country and were severely punished if they ventured to demand it, or even to complain of the misery generated by political despotism. The education of the people was placed in the charge of the Jesuits, who knew too well the value of ignorance as a basis of religion to deprive the people of its consolations, and, as a consequence, the Italians remained the most ignorant people in Europe. The discontent of the masses found vent in secret societies of which the greatest was the Carbonari. Several risings took place against Austrian despotism, but were suppressed with great cruelty and the leaders punished by death.

Such was the condition of Italy at the time of the birth and boyhood of Mazzini. We see him first as an enthusiastic student at Genoa, poring over the classics, reading the pages of Tacitus, wandering by the shores of the beautiful sea with Plutarch in his hand, and drinking in with pride and wonder the marvellous story of the rise and glory and achievements of the great Romans of old. One does not need to be an Italian to sympathize with the passionate indignation of the young student when he compared the ancient glory of his country with its modern degradation. Even a stranger, who, unlike himself, could claim no relationship with the immortals, could readily appreciate the deep emotion of the countryman of the Cæsars when he read of the mighty deeds of his ancestors and stood in startled wonder before the pictured glory of those days when old Rome sat enthroned upon her seven hills, crowned queen of the ancient world, and sent forth her Cæsars to conquer and her Ciceros to charm. What vision of vanished glory must have passed before the mind of the dreamer as he sat, Plutarch in hand, on some high cliff by the shores of the happy sea. Visions of the imperial eagles sweeping through distant forests, riding on stormy seas, flashing triumphant in battle, and passing through danger and darkness, conquering and to conquer through the world. Visions of Scipio on the ruins of Carthage, of Titus on the ruins of Jerusalem, of Pompey sweeping the Mediterranean of Cæsar crossing the Rubicon. Visions of the magnificent city in the days of its antique splendor, its mighty streets lined with marble statues of those that had made it glorious, its stately palaces standing in pillared beauty by the way, its mighty Forum where the destinies of innumerable nations were determined. Visions of Cicero pleading with divine eloquence in the Forum. Visions of the mighty Coliseum with its gladiatorial combats and its benches thronged with the figures of the conquerors of the world. Visions of the mighty empire which, extending on all sides of the imperial city, held in supreme subjection Gaul and German, Hun and Vandal, Jew and Egyptian, Grecian and Briton and innumerable other peoples in Europe and Africa and Asia. Visions of those all-conquering cohorts against which the bravest armies of mighty peoples dashed themselves in vain, for the destruction of which the prayers of the Druid to the gnarled god of the forest, of the Jew to the veiled presence of Jehovah, of the Greek to the supreme power of Jove, of the

Egyptian to the might of Osiris, were all offered up in vain. Visions of the imperial mistress of war supreme over all men and all their gods, and holding them all at her feet.

Such were the pictures that rose before the eye of the student Mazzini when his mind dwelt on the past, but sadly different was the scene he saw when, rising from his dreams, he looked around him. He saw his country subject to a foreign power, his countrymen denied freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of action. He saw them bowed down, humiliated and scorned. He saw the armed soldiers of Austria in his city and hardly dared even to whisper the love that filled his heart for Italy, the hatred he felt for her foes. He heard of frequent rebellions of his hot-tempered countrymen against the government, and sometimes saw their dead bodies dragged through the streets or hanging on the scaffold. As the Italians were denied all freedom of speech in public, they naturally were forced to form secret societies for the purpose of meeting together and devising means for the liberation of their country. The bluff, open-minded Briton may sneer at the "under-hand" methods of these patriots, but he should not forget the fact that this method of warfare was forced upon the people by the despotism which forbade and punished every other form of assembly. There was no other alternative open. The patriots must meet in secret or not meet at all.

In the year 1829 Mazzini allied himself with the Carbonari feeling, however distrustful of their methods he might be, that in the ranks of that society alone would he find the opportunity which he desired to assist in the liberation of his country. But the government were too familiar with the methods and too fearful of the purposes of this famous organization to neglect submitting it to a severe and perpetual scrutiny, and Mazzini soon found to his cost that not even the rigid formula of the secret ritual, or the severe rites of initiation, were adequate to protect the society from the intrusion of spies. It is not unlikely that secret agents of the government were present in every lodge of the conspirators and the most guarded and reticent patriot was in perpetual danger of betrayal. A short time after he had joined the Carbonari, Mazzini was betrayed to the police and cast into prison at Savona. His employment here strikingly illustrated the quaint words of the poet:

"Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage."

His body was imprisoned but not his mind. It was while confined to this cell that he formulated his future methods of political procedure. It was there that he saw, as in a vision, the picture of a great united Italy, free from coercion, free from division, and free from the curse of oppression; there he dreamt that beautiful dream, which came also to Dante in his Night, which has for many weary centuries been the inspiration and the joy of the poets and patriots of the stricken land—the dream of a nation awakening from its sleep, casting its fetters from its limbs and rising again to the pride and glory of the world. When we think of how the lonely prisoner filled his cell with golden visions, and how, though his cell was fettered, his mind held the past, the present and the future at its command, and saw all nations, lands and ages, unfolded in a mighty panorama before it, we begin to realize