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**THE**  
**LIFE OF COUNT CAVOUR.**

THE  
LIFE OF COUNT CAVOUR.

FROM THE FRENCH  
OF  
M. CHARLES DE MAZADE.

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CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,  
CRYSTAL PALACE THEATRE.

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## PREFACE.

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THIS book is composed of the public records of a memorable history, together with less known documents, which I owe to treasured private communications and some personal knowledge of the facts. It is devoted to a man who will ever be ranked as one of the rarest of human kind ; for in him there was the union of strength, suavity, passion, suppleness, boldness, and prudence, and he succeeded in all that he undertook.

It may be said with truth that Count Cavour was among the most illustrious of the favourites of fortune in our century. He was not one of those chance favourites whom a happy accident, interest at court, or the winning of popularity, launches to a fleeting renown ; but he was of the few that, being privileged to deserve success by the exercise of a consummate skill, leave their names inscribed upon imperishable works.

His mission was fulfilled within the space of ten years—less than the cycle of Tacitus. These ten years sufficed for

him to realise a dream of nationality that seemed beyond realisation, and more particularly at the beginning of his parliamentary life; to raise up his country, and to become himself the greatest of Italians, among the foremost of the political men of all time, European in influence, glory, and genius.

It would be writing with levity to say that he was happy, even in his premature end, in escaping, as he did, through an opportune and sudden death, the perplexities of his task. If ever there was a man who needed not to fear to live, and who knew how to precombine and prearrange all for the attainment of a special object, and then to assure his success by guarding himself against the reverses of fortune and the risk of unforeseen events, it was he. Better than any other he knew the right moment when to adventure and to stop, so as always to remain master of the crisis he brought to a head or unwound so daringly, in which none but he was able to preserve a perfect serenity of mind.

Those who knew him, who were mixed up with his labours—and there is one among them, M. Nigra, whose name friendship permits me to write beside that of his first instructor in public affairs—have not forgotten the ready resource, the simple ease, the correctness of judgment in midst of the gravest situations and the keenest contests, displayed by Cavour. He overcame everything. He had arrived at that point when he no longer feared to be unequal to the final trials; he felt

sure of completing that which he had begun, and more ; for since his death Italy has been sustained by his breath, and whatever has been done, has only been the completion of projects left behind by him, and animating his mind up to his last moments.

There is in the life of such a man a profound attraction for those who love the spectacle of a nature marvellously gifted to grapple with events. It has, moreover, at the present time, almost a direct and practical interest ; for, apart from the lively remembrance I have retained of Count Cavour, I must confess that one of my objects, when I wrote this book in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, arose from a desire to bring before those who may stand in need of the example, this striking image of a man who knew how to be a great Liberal as well as a downright head of the Government. It is what I would term the moral lesson of this work. If the aforesaid moral is made sufficiently prominent, it may not perhaps be inopportune at a time when, if care be not taken, party spirit will disturb and confound everything, from the simplest ideas of Liberalism to the most elementary conditions of Government.

The signal superiority of Count Cavour consists in his having been a real Liberal, in the strongest and fullest acceptation of the word. The liberty in which he believed, both from instinct and reason, was to him no empty formula, nor was it an engine of destruction, or an implement of war against the Church or the State ; it

was a regular system of public guarantees, impartially applied and patiently worked out, as free from subterfuge as from violence. In the working of institutions, even in the boldest undertakings, he carried a mind free alike from revolutionary prejudice and timid scruples. Confidence was a part of his nature, and, granting whatsoever was due to liberty, he was still, and above all, the man made to govern. Let me explain.

Premier of a parliamentary State, he was compelled to secure to himself a majority; he required it, for he understood that, to use his own expression, "there is no governing on needles' points;" but the majority he needed was of his creating; he knew how to direct and guide it; he did not abandon it to its own inexperience, its doubts and phantasies; he thought for it, and at the right moment; he did not shrink from the responsibility of taking a desperate initiative. When he debated within himself on the advisability of an alliance with France and England in the Crimea; when he ventured to propose to his little Piedmont such works as economical reform, or the boring of a tunnel through Mont Cenis, he proved that he had no intention of allowing the reins of Government to slacken and grow weak in his grasp. However deferential his attitude before public opinion and the Chambers, he knew how to outshoot and make a way for them.

I admit that he leaned upon a solid and popular monarchy, and in this he gathered strength; he was



supported by a king who was a pattern of patriotic and constitutional sovereignty; he was assisted by fellow-workers, such as La Marmora, in the reconstruction of an army. But it was Cavour who obtained the money wherewith to do it, as well as the opportunities of making use of it; adding to the fecundity of his contrivances and the certainty of his combinations an indomitable power in willing and executing. Had he awaited the good pleasure of parties in all his resolutions, he would have waited long; and on more than one occasion he ran great risks, in concert with La Marmora, to carry out military undertakings which have subsequently been the saving of Piedmont in the hour of danger. He did not hesitate to pledge himself, convinced that the affairs of a nation were only placed in his hands for guidance and judicious direction, even under a parliamentary *régime*; and thus he knew how to unite in the fullest measure the spirit of government with the spirit of Liberalism; thus it was that he was more than an eminent man in power, he was a living and working policy, and, after having recast a little country, he created a new nation.

Another name, that of one who may take rank as a competitor in the arena of political conflicts, naturally rises to the mind at the present time. It is now difficult to speak of Count Cavour without being reminded of the Prussian minister who has been enabled to perform in Germany what the Piedmontese minister

achieved in Italy. Events are interlinked ; men follow but do not always resemble one another. I have no desire to undervalue the German chancellor ; coming from a Frenchman this would be childish and unworthy. In Prince Bismarck we have good reason to see an enemy ; and we do not combat him with idle disparagements. All we can say is, that if Count Cavour and Prince Bismarck appear to have a similar fortune, at least till now, in analogous undertakings, they differ in genius, character, and mode of proceeding, as widely as Italy differs from Germany.

Several private letters written by Prince Bismarck in the course of his career have been published within the last few years ; and they unveil a strangely complex nature ; they reveal the whole man. A man assuredly of powerful originality, impetuous, crabbed, abrupt, and familiar ; of feudal stamp, a Teuton by temperament and education ; mixing confidential communications as to his capacities as a drinker, and the effects of moonlight on the banks of the Rhine, with visions of grandeur and power ; a Mephistophelean politician and diplomatist, despising diplomatic and parliamentary formulas ; impatient for action at all cost, *ferro et igne*, and defining himself with the air of a ruffled giant, from a heap of violent contradictions, in his disturbing and discomposed figure of conqueror.

That is not the portrait of Count Cavour, whom his contemporaries knew and saw at his work. Doubtless,

Prince Bismarck is a great German. Count Cavour was rather, and in the broad humane sense, a great man. He, too, had strength of will and genius, but with perfect cordiality and a very taking charm. Prince Bismarck began by showing himself independent of his parliament, and even in some degree ridiculing it; he provoked the conflict and defied "rebellious" majorities; and if he ended in overruling the Chambers, it was by making his power and success a necessity to his country. Count Cavour worked always with the aid of public opinion and of parliament on his side. What he had been aided by liberty in accomplishing, he leaned on liberty to consolidate, with no despotic impatience, no persecution of beliefs.

And, furthermore, if Prince Bismarck has been a German Cavour, it cannot be said that Cavour was ever an Italian Bismarck. The Piedmontese minister copied no model; he was the first on this field; and what makes his greatness is, that in an unprecedented enterprise, even in success, he has left behind him an example of forethought, judgment, and moderation worthy to be studied universally where politics is still a business.

Had Cavour been solely a great Italian, he would by right have belonged to his fellow-countrymen; and who has better revived his image than my excellent friend Massari, writing with tender fidelity and veneration his volume of recollections, *Il conte di Cavour, Ricordi*

*biografici?*\* Such as he was, Cavour belongs not only to Italy, but to the world; and it has struck me that in writing this great life, in showing how a man was able to raise up a fallen nation by genius and policy, it would be a work of service to the conquered, and not without a lesson for the conquerors.

March 2, 1877. .

\* Count Cavour has been the subject of much literary work, both in and out of Italy. It is my duty to mention, besides the substantial literary study by S. Masari, the attractive work by M. de la Rive: *Le Comte de Cavour, récits et souvenirs*, and a very interesting preface, with which S. Arton has headed a collection of Cavour's principal speeches, translated into French. It is, however, only an abridgment of the large collection of *Cavour's Speeches* (12 vols.), published by order of the Chamber of Deputies. I should also mention the *Historia documentata della diplomazia europea in Italia*, by S. Nicomede Bianchi, now in the Record Office at Turin, as being instructive as to contemporaneous history. Many other works might be cited.

# CONTENTS.

PREFACE . . . . .	PAGE v—xii
-------------------	---------------

## CHAPTER I

### THE YOUTH OF CAVOUR—PIEDMONT AND ITALY AFTER THE DEFEAT.

A Liberal Conservative—Origin and Antecedents of Cavour—His Family—His Education and Military Life—A young Piedmontese <i>Citoyen</i> —Agricultor's Life at Leri—Journeys in Switzerland, in France, and in England—Piedmont and Italy under Charles Albert—Cavour's first Political Ideas—Events preliminary to 1848—Cavour a Journalist—The Constitutional Order of Things at Turin—First War in Lombardy—Revolutionary Agitations—Battle of Novara—Piedmont after the Defeat—Communism at Genoa—D'Azeglio's Ministry and the Conclusion of Peace—The Standard and Liberal Institutions—The Beginning of Retribution—Cavour in Parliament and in the Ministry—Piedmont and the 2nd of December—The Two Policies—The <i>Concubio</i> —Political Development of Cavour . . . . .	1
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

## CHAPTER II

### THE POLICY OF CAVOUR—THE FIRST ACT OF THE NATIONAL DRAMA.

Cavour President of the Council—The National and Liberal Idea—Financial Policy—Commercial Policy—Religious Policy—Party Opposition—Letter from Cavour on his Policy—Beginning of Operations—The Eastern Question and the Crimean War of 1856—Alliance with France and England—The Piedmontese Corps in the Crimea—Peace, and its
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	PAGE
Effects upon Piedmont—Victor Emmanuel in France—Cavour at the Congress of Paris—First Interviews with the Emperor—The Italian Question as regards Europe—The Session of the 8th of April—Cavour's Illusions—Piedmont and Italy after the Peace . . . . .	58

### CHAPTER III.

#### PARLIAMENTARY REIGN OF CAVOUR—PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.

A Pause after 1856—New Situation of Piedmont—Moral Headship of Cavour—Portrait of the Man—His Character—His Speeches—A Parliamentary Reign—Watchword of the New Phase— <i>Alors flamman!</i> —Activity in Turin—The Fortifications of Alessandria—Maritime Arsenal of Spezzia—Boring of the Mont Cenis—Piedmontese Policy in Italy—Cavour and Daniel Manin—Piedmont before Europe—Relations with Russia, with England, and with France—Crisis in Piedmontese Policy—Elections of 1857—The Crime of Orsini in Paris—Effects in Turin—Official and Secret Diplomacy—Speech of Cavour on the Alliances—Private Communications of the Emperor—Negotiations—Interview at Plombières—Secret Treaty—Scene on the 1st of January, 1859, at the Tuileries—Speech of King Victor Emmanuel before Parliament—Prologus of the War . . . . .	111
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE WAR OF 1859—CAVOUR AND THE PEACE OF VILLAGRANCA.

Prologus of the War of Italian Independence—The Situation at the Beginning of 1859—Napoleon III. and Cavour—Marriage of Princess Clotilde and Prince Napoleon—The Pamphlet "Napoleon III. and Italy"—Position of Affairs—Diplomatic Phase—English Negotiations—Diplomacy of the Emperor—Proposed Congress—Cavour during the Winter of 1859—Italy in a Ferment—The Volunteers at Turin—Preparations moral and military—Cavour and Diplomacy—Trip to Paris—Two French Politicians—Napoleon III. and Count Walewski— <i>Mot</i> of Cavour to M. de Rothschild—The knotty Point—Crisis in April—Dramatic Situation, <i>Coup de Théâtre</i> —The Austrian Ultimatum at Turin—War is declared—French Troops at Turin—Military Operations—Napoleon III. and his Proclamations—March of the Franco-Piedmontese Army—Movements at Modena, Parma, Florence, and Bologna—Cavour during the War—Solferino and the Preliminaries of Villafranca—Cavour in the Camp—Scene at Desenzano—Victor Emmanuel—Despair and Retirement of Cavour—Departure for Switzerland—Uncertainty after Villafranca—Mental Condition of Cavour—Departure of the Emperor for France . . . . .	168
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER V.

THE ITALIAN CRISIS AFTER VILLAFRANCA—CAVOUR AND THE  
CESSION OF SAVOY.

	PAGE
Speech of Napoleon III. at St. Cloud—Character and first Consequences of the Peace of Villafranca—France and Austria—Piedmont and the New Ministry—Italian Phase—The Annexation Movement in Central Italy—Farina at Modena and at Bologna—Ricasoli at Florence—Portrait of Ricasoli—The Military League of Central Italy—The Tuscan Envoys in Paris—Official Policy of France—Personal Policy of the Emperor—Contradictions of French Diplomacy—Negotiations with England—The Emperor's Tactics to disengage himself—New <i>Coup de Théâtre</i> —Change in the French Ministry—M. Thouvenel takes the Place of Count Walewski—The Pamphlet "The Pope and the Congress"—Change of Ministry at Turin—Cavour recalled to Office—Negotiations with Central Italy and with Paris—Preparations for the <i>Dénouement</i> —The Annexations—Cession of Savoy and Nice to France—Opinion in Italy—Opinion in Europe—The External and Internal Situation—The Treaty of March 24, 1860, before Parliament—Speech of Cavour on Italian Policy and the French Alliance—Cavour at Pisa and at Florence—Results of the Annexations and the Cession of Savoy—The Policy of Action—Revolution in Sicily. . . . .	211

CHAPTER VI.

CAVOUR AND THE UNITY OF ITALY—ROME AND NAPLES.

The Idea of Unity in the Mind of Cavour—Insurrection of Sicily and the Expedition of Garibaldi—Attitude of Cavour at Turin—Relations with Naples and with Rome—Negotiations with Europe—Cavour and the Dictatorship of Garibaldi in Sicily—Matters touching his Policy—Advance of the Insurrection in the South—The Revolution in Naples—Projects of Garibaldi—Threats of an Attempt on Rome and on Venice—Private Discussions between Cavour and Garibaldi—Necessity for a Resolution—The Chambéry Mission—Words of Napoleon III.—Invasion of Umbria and the Marches—The Piedmontese Army in the Kingdom of Naples—Assembly of the Chambers in Turin—The Policy of Cavour before Parliament—Triumph of that Policy—Annexation of Sicily and Naples—Programme of Cavour as to Venice and Rome—Letters and Speeches—Rome the Capital—The Free Church in the Free State—Views of Cavour concerning the Papacy . . . . .	260
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VII.

THE FINAL VICTORY OF A POLICY—DEATH AND LEGACY OF CAVOUR

Italian Unity and Europe—Austria and the Annexations—La Marmora's<sup>PA</sup>  
 Mission to Berlin—Last Negotiation with Napoleon III.—Unity at  
 Naples—Baron Ricasoli's Discourse and Interpellation—Cavour and  
 Garibaldi before Parliament—The Sitting of April 18, 1861—A  
 Minister's last Victory—Sudden Illness of Cavour—His last Moments  
 —His Death—Fra Giacomo—Legacy of Cavour—His Work and his  
 Policy—Conclusion . . . . . 3