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A HISTORY OF  
ITALIAN UNITY



MAP OF ITALY AT BEGINNING OF 1848.

# A HISTORY OF ITALIAN UNITY

BEING  
A POLITICAL HISTORY OF ITALY  
FROM 1814 TO 1871

BY  
BOLTON KING, M.A.

*"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples"*

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*TO*  
*MY MOTHER*  
*AND*  
*MY WIFE*



## P R E F A C E

THIS book is, as its title indicates, a political history only; of social and religious life, of literature and art and science it only treats, when they border on the field of politics. Incomplete as such a work must be, the specialization is necessary, before a wider synthesis can picture the full national life.

A foreigner, writing the history of a country not his own, has his loss and gain. He cannot wholly grasp the subtle essence that makes the spirit of its life and institutions; he cannot penetrate the side-lights, that often mean more than the patent facts, or understand each delicate inflection of the nation's voice. But what he loses in intimacy and colour, he may gain in perspective and impartiality. He is better able to see the problems in their true proportions, and neglect the noisy controversies of the moment for more abiding issues. His detachment from party makes him less likely to be biassed; and though the world is small and its dividing-lines much the same everywhere, it is easier for him than for the native critic to be fair. I have done my best to do justice to all sides, though I have not attempted to conceal my sympathies. I make no apology, if I have said hard things of the Papacy. For Catholicism as a religion I trust I have shown all respect; the Papacy *qua* political institution is subject to political criticism, and I have said less than the truth rather than more.

My object in writing this book has been a twofold one. First, I have endeavoured to give a trustworthy account of a

chapter of modern history which has been most inadequately dealt with both at home and abroad. Outside a few limited studies, there is hardly an English or even a French writer who has treated the Italian history of the century with much pretence to accuracy or research; and bulky as is the material published in Italy, Italian historians have not been successful in weaving the material into any very well-proportioned or readable whole. My second aim has been to make the re-birth of a noble and friendly nation better understood in a country which knows little really of Italy. The Englishman's knowledge of the Italian Revolution is summed, it has been said, in the belief that it had something to do with Garibaldi and a red shirt. A leading London newspaper recently urged the Italians in all seriousness to take some steps in the direction of Cavour's Free Church, forgetting that this was done a quarter of a century ago; and many a lecture on their recent troubles would have been spoilt by a rudimentary knowledge of their history of the last forty years. The tie, that united so closely the English and Italians of the last generation, seems slackening, and it needs more mutual knowledge to cement the sympathy again.

For the materials of the book I have had recourse to almost all the published matter of any importance (nearly 900 works in all), except (*a*) contemporary journals as a rule, and (*b*) some literature out of print and not to be seen in England. I hope that these pages do not suffer seriously from either omission. From such small acquaintance as I have with the Italian press of the Revolution, I have found it of no great value, and it is remarkable how little such a book as Gori's *Storia della rivoluzione italiana*, based on a careful study of the newspapers of the time, adds to our knowledge. The second omission has been due to an inability to consult any library outside England. The splendid collection of modern Italian books at the British Museum has few gaps, but it has some, and it is singularly deficient in the govern-



mental publications of the Kingdom of Italy. Hence I have only been able to study the proceedings of parliament after 1859 in isolated collections of speeches, and I have not seen all the Green Books, which were first published in 1865. It is easy, however, to exaggerate the value of official publications. Foreign Offices have so carefully bowdlerized their "books"—blue, yellow, green,—that they generally conceal what the historian most wants to know. They are, says Signor Bonghi, "only the stuff in the shop-window." "Indiscretions," he adds, "supply the true materials;" and to discover the springs of diplomacy, the writer finds that his safest reliance is in memoirs, letters, reported conversations.

Down to 1860 the Italian historian is choked with the abundance of these. The eagerness of the Italians to publish everything, however trivial, that bears on the Revolution, reaches almost to a literary mania. But the student, who wades through the dismal morasses of correspondence, can pick up gems. Even of "documents," as to whose talismanic virtue I own to something of a heterodox scepticism, there is no small wealth. Historians owe much to the Revolution for publishing the records of the governments, which it upset in 1848 and 1859. Italian statesmen have allowed papers to be published, which by diplomatic canons should have been hidden in the most secret recesses of the Foreign Ministry; culminating of course in that masterpiece of "indiscretion," La Marmora's *Un po' più di luce*. Even the Archives, down at least to 1860, have been to a certain extent opened to a few historians, such as N. Bianchi, Nisco, Sansone. None the less it is true that all recent history must be more or less provisional, till the cupboards of government offices give up their secrets, and letters and memoirs, now withheld, see the light of day. This applies in Italian history especially to the period since 1860. Here, though we have the great collection of Ricasoli papers and many records of considerable though less importance, we wait for the papers of Minghetti

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and Rattazzi, Crispi and Visconti-Venosta, before the historian can tread safe ground. Still, in spite of this caution I doubt whether future research will seriously modify the conclusions that can be drawn from existing material.

Of the defects of this book no one can be more conscious than the author. In spite of every care, it has no doubt its misjudgments and its inaccuracies. I shall value the kindly offices of any whose criticisms may enable me to correct these.

I wish, in conclusion, to acknowledge my indebtedness to my friend Mr. Okey for very valuable assistance; to the authorities at the British Museum; to M. Pierre Arminjon; to M. Claparède; and to Messrs. Dent for their permission to reprint a portion of my Introduction to Mr. Okey's translation of Mazzini.

BOLTON KING.

GAYDON, WARWICK,  
*November 1898.*

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