

THE METAPHYSICAL POINT OF VIEW OF ITALY IN THE
TURKISH WAR.

Prof. L. Michelangelo Billia, of Turin, following up his open letter to M. Frederic Passy (published in the December number of *The Open Court*) with another communication in which he emphasizes the justice of Italy's cause especially in relation to the annexation of Tripoli and Cyrene.

"I declare I am no polemic. The Italian war in Turkey is a fact, but it is not an ordinary fact; it can not be subjected to the same judgment as facts of petty chronicles; above all it is a fact of thought, a fact of which thought is the principle and source and not simply a reflection following upon it. True positive science must take into consideration in these facts the real action of thought. I wish to draw attention to a point of view commonly overlooked in considering the Italian war. Even in France and Switzerland where the feeling has not been so unfavorable to Italy as elsewhere in Europe they have been and are still far from considering our undertaking in all its nobility and significance.

"What is really to be deplored is that Italy has lost its opportunities and wasted its time and precious strength in declarations of war and other formalities which have no justification in connection with Turkey. Turkey is not a nation to be fought; it is an assassin to be chastised and overthrown.

"An event has taken place in which our friends have not sufficiently understood us. We have thoroughly approved the wise rashness, the energetic achievement of our king in proclaiming the annexation by Italy of Tripoli and Cyrene. The foreigner does not seem to have shared this enthusiasm. It has been discovered that this act was not in accordance with rule but instead that it was premature. The press of France, Switzerland and the United States, with exceptions too slight to mention, is distinguished from the press of other countries by a very just and sympathetic disposition towards us. Hence it is desirable to state what the Italian point of view in the matter really is. The objections raised against us are serious ones and worthy of all respect, but they are founded upon a hypothesis which is not a settled principle. I do not say that you are wrong and we are right. I only say that it is right for you to know what we think on the subject. This hypothesis is the international law according to which Turkey is looked upon as a power, a state having rights equal to those of civilized nations. According to these principles Italy would not have the right to proclaim its sovereignty over the provinces which are not entirely subjugated, or at least this provisional proclamation would have no value.

"This hypothesis has indeed governed (from my point of view I had rather say misgoverned) international relations long enough. But it cannot be seriously contested that the admission of Turkey to the rank of the powers, and the principle of the integrity of the Ottoman empire, have been merely conventional fictions constructed on account of the jealousies of the European powers and especially from fear of Russia. But this conventionality having only a temporary value cannot last always. The fiction will fall of its own accord when its validity ceases to be recognized and when action is taken without regard for Turkey—a system of law created by one fact and destroyed by another.

"I grant that men may say that we Italians are madmen and should be

sent to an asylum, and indeed that we are brigands and blunderers who spend much money and transact business among the Shylocks of Frankfort and London, but I wish to call attention to only this one fact, that Italy at this time has the effrontery to possess the illusion that it can pass over established law for the reason that it is originating and establishing a new law.

"There are times in history when law becomes bankrupt and philosophy triumphs; when the nation says that the treaty is violated and justice is promoted. But in this case the destruction and establishment of law exceeds the limits of an ordinary affair. Italy is not acting in her own interest but in a higher cosmopolitan interest, in the interest and supreme law of human progress. Mankind ought to form but one family in rank and privilege. Now there still exists on earth an obstacle to order, to law and to progress; to security of the life of many millions of human beings who are delivered over to massacre; to the power of laws and of peace, to the economic and ethical development of many nations who are excluded from the benefits of civilization, among which there is one that in the history of its ancestors has deserved the very best at the hands of Europe; an obstacle to the cultivation of the soil; an obstacle to the respect due to human personality. This obstacle must yield; it must be overcome. Events show that the bigots who give the world to understand that this obstacle may itself become an agent of peace and civilization either do not mean what they say or do not say what they mean.

"Now is indeed the time to put an end to this state of things. Europe will have only too much to atone for in having held out so long. After all it is not Italy that is conquering the two provinces; it is all Europe. It is the civilized world that is snatching them from the barbarian and restoring them to civilized life. Italy is merely performing her duty. It is her share of glory, of peril and fatigue, as France has had hers in Tunis, Algiers and Morocco, and England in Egypt,—and why not also the United States in Asia Minor and Germany in Palestine? We now wish that France would soon follow our example and put an end to the shackles of protectorates and every trace of barbaric dominion.

"The infectious fever now becoming manifest in Tunis demands this remedy. What is the poor Bey doing these days in Tunis? It would be of great interest to know what his public and private conduct has been in the troubles which have stained his city with blood. If he is at fault he should be condemned, punished, and placed where he could do no more harm. But I think the poor fellow is innocent. Still he is in danger; he is the butt of the fury and vengeance of his fellow countrymen and coreligionists who regard him as a traitor. We must then think also of his security and health. He must be removed to a refuge in a rustic spot where the climate is mild but where he will be removed as far as possible from business matters and perplexities.

"Italy would have no right to immolate her youth for purposes of conquest and exploitation. The movement must be understood in its true significance; its purpose is the overthrow of the Ottoman empire, the deliverance of humanity. The annexation of Tripoly by Italy is the first step in solving the Oriental question, and first of all in restoring Crete at last to Greece. This happy result is inevitable and can not be long delayed. Properly to understand these things one must rise to the metaphysical point of view,

to the unity of history. In spite of all hatred and faintheartedness it must be recognized that Italy is not an accidental object like the column in Trafalgar Square. The very life of the Italian nation is law itself, reason in action; its benefits are wide spread, and tend in the direction of the unity of the human family.

"In short permit us to make the experiment. It will not cost so much in soil snatched from cultivation, in victims immolated to the most ferocious and insensate cruelty as does the wise device of an international law which would make Turkey into a state like our own. At least let us think so; because I only wish to tell you what we think, namely that we are departing from a false and superannuated legality in order to establish true order; that we are overthrowing the shadow of right in order to put right itself on the throne."

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

THE GREAT EPIC OF ISRAEL. By *Amos Kidder Fiske*. New York: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1911. Pp. 376. Price \$1.50 net.

The purpose of the author is primarily to make the Hebrew Scriptures contained in the Old Testament attractive to the general reading public, and to revive interest in them. He pretends to no new discovery himself but finds what he has to say upon researches of the many scholars whose labors are known to teachers and preachers, but not sufficiently familiar to the world at large, he thinks. His aim is to keep his work in a form which will be interesting to the popular mind, and so he gives only the results of his studies, and does not cite authorities, making a general reference in the preface to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, to which he directs all readers for details, reasons and conclusions. He treats the sacred writings of the Jews as an epic of the people of Israel in their great days, and presents them in the order of their development rather than in that in which tradition has placed them. With this in view he begins with the myths of Israel and its heroic and historical legends, then come David and Solomon, and a theocratic account of the two kingdoms. One chapter is devoted to the prophets of the kingdoms, and the other to the prophets during and after the Exile. After the prophets come in turn a consideration of the Jewish law, the priestly history, the illustrative tales of Ruth, Jonah and Esther; the lyrical writings, the wisdom and philosophy of the Old Testament, and finally the books of Job and Daniel. The author hopes that this introduction to the study of the Old Testament will serve the end of making it "more read, better understood, and more profitable to the soul of man."

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THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. By *Houston Stewart Chamberlain*. John Lane Company, 114 West 32d Street, New York, 1911. Two volumes. Price \$10 net, postage 50 cents.

The first appearance of this work occurred in Germany 10 years ago and attracted conspicuous attention as one of the classical works of our time. Its author is an Englishman by birth, but German by education and residence from his early days. The present work is a translation into English which will prove to be a notable contribution to English literature, both because of the excellence and dignity of the original work and from the merits of the translation which is worthily introduced by Lord Redesdale.

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