

The Movement in Italy

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The labor agitation is spreading in town and country. A general laborers' strike is expected in the Varesotto, whither the government have dispatched two companies of soldiers to frighten the peasants into submission. At Bregnano, near Como, the peasants have revolted against the hearth tax (fuocatico) lately increased by the parish authorities: the mayor passed a bad quarter of an hour. The movement has gained the neighboring localities of Lomorro, Belforte, Casa Litta, and others. Here also troops have been hurried to maintain order. But by far the most alarming troubles have broken out at Olgiate in the province of Como, where bands of laborers on strike, 4,000 strong men whose wages were less than 4d. a day--wander through the country singing revolutionary songs to this effect: The whole day the peasant handles the spade, working, sweating, toiling, to live upon water and soup (polenta); whilst the meat and the poultry are for the master's mouth.

The number of unemployed arrested during the last month at Rome as over 1,000; 700 of whom have been sent back to their native places the provinces, whilst 300 undergo imprisonment, charged with the dire offense of conspiracy to overthrow the Government. The inquiry, which in Italy is secret, is conducted by a single magistrate: an unpropitious circumstance promising our comrades a long imprisonment before trial.

In spite of these measures the temper of the workers rises high. At the conclusion of a representative meeting of shoemakers--whose resolutions, not indeed far-reaching but energetic, have been adopted by their comrades in many other towns--a street demonstration was started; which, owing to the interference of the police, almost resulted a revolt. As the king and the queen were passing in their carriage through the streets of Rome, a workman spit in their faces. He was arrested. From the Puglie heartrending descriptions of starving peasants reach the chief bourgeois papers of the peninsula. The misery extends even to the farmer and the small proprietor. The first, buying rented uncultivated soil for a long period, on the understanding that he should fertilize it at his own expense without compensation, is now ruined; because, unable as he is to pay the rent, he is evicted just at the time when he hoped to indemnify himself from the increasing productiveness of the land. The second is victimized by the State! In the year 1887 not less than 67,000 small proprietors were evicted by the State for default in payment of the land tax. The number is now becoming still more alarming.

The economical situation is altogether so bad and critical, that even the bourgeois republicans are moved by it. They propose at this year's Congress to deal with the questions of nationalization of land and property in general--at last! The government, however, dreams but of repressive measures, by which, of course, Anarchists are the chief sufferers. On the occasion of the 18th March, endless searches were made at the clubs of three Anarchist groups in Milan, and at the houses of their members. The police boast of having found material for a big indictment for conspiracy. Three Florence comrades have just been sentenced to two years' imprisonment and one year's police supervision each for the awful crime of having been found in possession of a manifesto commemorating the Chicago martyrs. A pamphlet concerning the same, entitled "Memento," is now the pretext of a prosecution against some Milanese comrades; whilst two more Anarchist publications, one of which appeared at Molfetta (Puglie) under the title "Misery and Revolution," and another at Turin entitled "The Hunger Show" (a satirical exposure of the obscenities of the Beauty Show recently held in that town) have been likewise denounced. This prosecution mania of the government, however, has not deterred the Neapolitan Anarchists from

posting revolutionary manifestos, nor our comrades all over Italy from pushing the propaganda with the utmost zeal and energy.

We must record with special sympathy and honor comrade Gerbi, sentenced at the Florence Assizes to 11 years' penal servitude on suspicion of having put a harmless bomb near the walls of a church at Leghorn. Another martyr, the man who openly attacked the king of Italy nine years ago in Naples, Giovanni Passannante, has been so much broken down by continuous reclusion and systematic cruelties in his five feet cell at Portoferraio, that the government, seeing that his end was near, and fearing the hatred that would accrue to them if he died now, have decided to transfer him to the Penal Asylum of Ambrogiana, near Montelupo, in the Arno Valley.

At Finnicino, near Rome, the laborers of the "Campagna Romana" gathered on the 18th March to the cry: "Hurrah for the Paris Commune, hurrah for the Social Revolution!" Similar demonstrations took place on the same day at Rimini, Leghorn, and other towns, almost every-where attended with conflicts between the population and the troops, followed by arrests. There are unmistakable signs of an approaching rising in Italy, whose extent and results cannot be foretold, especially as they would very likely coincide with similar events in other countries.

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