FRANCESCO CRISPI.

RANCESCO CRISPI, the last of the great makers of Italy, was born at Ribera, a little Sicilian town which looks off on the African sea from the hills near Selinunte. His family was one of those which migrated from Albania after the defeat by the Ottoman hordes of the hero of his race, the legendary Scanderbeg, and went to lands where, like our Pilgrim Fathers, they could keep their Christian religion in tranquillity. Thousands of that proverbially brave race, the Skipetar, crossed the narrow seas, and settled in southern Italy and Sicily, where a district is still known as "Piano dei Greci," Greek being equivalent to a believer in the orthodox doctrines, or what is generally known as the Greek religion, to which the Crispi family adhered down to the time of Francesco's birth, his grandfather being a parish priest in that church, in which the priest must be a married man. Four hundred years of Italian life have not in him affected the temper of the race, and Crispi possesses all the Skipetar traits — tenacity, courage, their curious reticence, and patriotic devotion, in this case only transferred to Italy. He was born on October 4, 1819, and was educated at Palermo, his father deciding his profession as the magistracy, there being under the Sicilian system a separate school for the bench, in which the training was different from that for the bar. His inflexible independence determined his life otherwise, and the adoption of the profession of advocate was due to one of the most characteristic acts of his life. In those days Sicilian liberty was still a tradition with a lingering vitality, and the abolition of the parliament by the king, which blotted out constitutionalism in the island, was opposed in silent protest by the liberals. In 1842 young Crispi had passed his examination for the magistracy, and entered on the primary stage of practical study under Filippo Craxi, procureur-general to the Court of Cassation at Palermo. There came up before his chief a case of appeal against a tax imposed by the king after the abolition of the parliament, in which the procureur-general took the side of the crown and Crispi that of the appellant, the Prince of Castelnuovo, the former maintaining the divine right of the king to tax, the latter denying the legality of the tax, which implied the denial of the legality of the abolition of the parliament. The dispute was ended by Crispi's renouncing the bench, and ultimately led to his going to Naples and demanding admission to the bar. This was opposed by various intrigues, and appeals to formalities, against which his tenacity finally prevailed, and he was admitted to practice in the capital. Thus the first professional decision of his life was a declaration of adherence to constitutional government.

Another incident of a more romantic nature shows the same inflexibility and disregard of consequences, and also throws a side-light on all Crispi's subsequent life. In the course of his attendance at the University of Palermo he had contracted a very strong attachment for the daughter of a widow with whom he lodged during the second year of his course. The feeling was reciprocated, but the parents on both sides refused consent, and Crispi's father called him home from Palermo. During the period of this compulsory separation it happened that the cholera broke out in Sicily. Young Crispi learned at Sciacca, where he had been sent under guard to live at a farm belonging to his father, that Palermo was being ravaged by the epidemic, and, taking a horse belonging to the farmer, he set out for the city, where he found his Rosina still living, her mother and two sisters having died, as well as her only brother, leaving her with a younger sister alone of all the family. Having no money, he sold the horse, and devoted the proceeds and himself to the care and sustenance of the sisters. His father yielded to this demonstration of the young lover's determination, and two months later he blessed the union. The wife died two years later in childbirth, followed by her little daughter. Her sister had in this romantic existence contracted an attachment for Francesco, and but for the opposition of her guardian he would later have married her; but the opposition being inflexible, and marriage without the guardian's consent impossible, the girl entered a convent.

While still in Palermo he founded a journal, the "Oreteo," so called from a river which falls into the sea not far from Palermo; and as politics was then forbidden to the press and the education of the day was purely classical, the "Oreteo" was devoted to literature and the praise of classic liberalism and resistance to Greek and Roman tyrants. Crispi wrote poetry, odes to civic virtues in far-off times and places excluded from those nearer; and as the great struggle between the Grand Turk and Greece was then going on, he became, as he has always remained, a Philhellene, and the war in Greece became the *cheval de bataille* of the "Oreteo." Crispi attacked

the Bourbons through the Grand Turk, and defended Italy through the Greek insurrection.

The politics of Naples and Sicily became troubled by the revolutionary propaganda about 1843, and at once drew Crispi into its complications. Sicily, where there was a stronger constitutional tendency than in Naples, was in a state of latent insurrection, soon to become active and disastrous; but the signal was given at Cosenza, on the mainland, and the insurrection there, in 1844, though repressed speedily, was followed by that of Reggio di Calabria in 1847, and that immediately by the rising of Messina and others in different parts of Sicily, all of which, being premature and without previous organization and preparation, were also put down. The arrest of liberals followed, and all the most prominent in Naples and Sicily were thrown into prison. Crispi was warned by his printer, who had official relations, that his arrest was ordered, and he had time to destroy all compromising papers and to countermand the meetings at his rooms, which were to be made the occasion of a raid by the police, so that the police report, not justifying the suspicions of his complicity, left him free even from surveillance. The conspiracy went on undaunted by the rigors of the Bourbon government, and at the end of 1847 Crispi went to Palermo and completed the arrangements for the rising, which he fixed for January 12, 1848; returned to Naples to coördinate the movement in Sicily with that on the continent, and to inform the Neapolitan confederates of the state of the island; and then sailed by the first craft that left for Palermo, to be in at the rising. But accidents delayed the starting, and prolonged the voyage, so that he landed in Palermo only on the 14th, in the midst of the carnage; but from that moment he was the chief figure in the organization of the insurrectionary government, and during its brief existence the most uncompromising opponent of concession or surrender. The royal commander-in-chief, General Filangieri, pronounced him "the most dangerous of the enemies of the king." In spite of incomplete preparations and dissensions, the insurrection held out till April, 1849, when the royal troops reoccupied Palermo. Crispi remained in concealment till May 7, when he escaped on a vessel bound for Marseilles, and reached Turin at the end of the month, to begin his long and miserable exile.

In Turin he supported himself by writing for the journals. Always a republican in principle, he considered the unity of Italy to be the first object of the struggle; and in the means to that end he held to his own views, opposed at all times to those of Cavour — an opposition which proved disastrous to him at a later period of his political career, but from which, as his way was, he never receded. Cavour offered him liberal terms to contribute to the "Risorgimento," a journal started by him; but Crispi replied, "Do they think that a publicist is like a shoemaker who makes shoes for all feet?" Later he saw that the unity of Italy was not merely to be attained, but for a long time to be maintained, only by union around the house of Savoy; and this conclusion he expressed in the well-known sentence, "It is the monarchy which unites us, and the republic would divide us"; and he has always considered the unity the end, and either monarchy or republic only the means. He did not agree with Mazzini's hopeless attempt to raise Lombardy in 1853, the terrible suppression of which in Milan so alarmed the Piedmontese authorities that it was followed by a general expulsion of the exiles. Among them Crispi was again a wanderer. He went to Malta, where he gained a scanty living by a journal which he founded and called "La Valigia," and afterward "La Staffetta." His revolutionary activity, and his relation to the party of Italian unity, made him unwelcome even to the Maltese authorities, and at the end of 1854 he was expelled, this time taking refuge in England. Here he made the personal acquaintance of Mazzini, whom he had hitherto known only through the propaganda in which both were workers. English journalism gave him no occupation, and he obtained a miserably paid clerkship, eking out his income as he could by giving lessons in Italian, French, Greek, and Latin (for, like Gladstone, he has always kept up with warmth his classics); but after a struggle of a year he gave up English life, and went to Paris, on the invitation of a comrade of the insurrection of Palermo, who published the "Courrier Franco-Italien." By this he maintained himself hardly better than he had done in London. But he knew the language, and finally made himself an endurable position.

The Orsini plot again came in to renew his unrest, and with the other Italians in Paris he was arrested; but as after a careful investigation he was exculpated from any knowledge of that affair, he was released, and allowed to remain for a time. In August, 1858, however, he received the order to leave France, for reasons not given and by him never understood. Without a word or a protest he went back to London. The conclusion of peace between Napoleon III. and Austria, the death of Bomba, and the resignation of Cavour, decided the Italian exiles in London to renew the attempt at revolution, and Crispi was designated to revisit Sicily and prepare the Sicilians for another attempt, and at the same time to go on to the Balkan peninsula and see if the nationalities there were in a condition to join in a general movement. The results of his journey were such that he saw

the possibilities of success, and he set to work to organize the "Expedition of the Thousand," "of Garibaldi," or "of Marsala," the history of which is complicated. The organization of it, as well as its conception, was entirely the work of Crispi.

Opposed by Cavour with all the appliances of the court and his immense personal influence, thwarted as far as it was possible under the state of public opinion by the official world, Crispi laid his plans and information before Garibaldi, and finally succeeded in inducing him to take command of the expedition; but so opposed was the royal government to the whole movement that the expedition was at last obliged to employ stratagem to evade the watch set to prevent its sailing; and it was indebted to the English minister, Sir James Hudson, for the aid and encouragement which Cavour refused it. The forces landed at Marsala, practically under the protection of the guns of the British fleet. Once on Sicilian soil, Crispi became the factotum of the expedition, and head of the intelligence department; for he had that intimate knowledge of the ground which Garibaldi lacked, having in his recent visit to the island traversed it and prepared the spirit of the population for the ready seconding of the military operations, and having, as well, studied the royal positions. From Marsala to Palermo he became not only chief of Garibaldi's cabinet, but sub-chief of staff. He took an active part in all the operations, and at Calatafimi, one of the most desperate battles of the great commander's career, he was made colonel. The immediate object of the movement was Palermo, and when the army reached Monreale, where the enemy had taken up a strong defensive position at the gates of the capital, Garibaldi, with his usual leonine audacity, decided, against the opinion of Crispi, to carry it by direct attack. The attack was repulsed, and Crispi's plan of turning the defenses of Palermo and attacking from the opposite side was successfully adopted.

Government was organized, Garibaldi being dictator and Crispi secretary of state, and from that time until the kingdom of the Two Sicilies was merged in that of Italy, Crispi was the organizer and director of affairs. The implacable hostility of Cavour followed the revolutionary movement, and especially assailed Crispi, whose influence on Garibaldi was obnoxious to the Piedmontese; and every effort was made to separate the general from his chief adviser, but without avail. The intrigues which accompanied and made premature the annexation were indefatigable, and when annexation was proclaimed, and Crispi returned to Palermo, the first step of the royal administrator was to put him under arrest; but the attempt raised such a storm of popular indignation that the administrator had to escape on board a man-of-war. When the elections took place which were to mark the absorption of Sicily by Italy, the heaviest official pressure was applied to prevent Crispi from being elected; and but for the forethought of a friend, who took the precaution to give him a second nomination at Castelvetrano, unnoticed by the authorities, he would have been excluded from the parliament he had been the chief instrument in making possible: for he was defeated at Palermo, and took his seat as deputy from Castelvetrano, sitting with the radical Left. His declaration of adherence to the monarchy, though a republican in principle, as recognizing the necessity of the house of Savoy to the completion of Italy, did not avail to conciliate the Cavourians, who, from the very first down to the present day, have attacked Crispi with a malignity and persistence that are an exception in Italian political history — diminished in volume in these last days, it is true, but not in intensity. The old Right, in the persons of its remaining adherents, still carries on the war of misrepresentation and obloquy which was begun by Cavour after the liberation of Sicily. But the acceptance of the monarchy, while in no wise conciliating the monarchists, alienated Mazzini and the rigid republicans, and left Crispi in almost complete isolation in national politics.

But isolation is Crispi's natural condition. He is a lonely man, silent and reticent to an unusual degree; sits alone in the chamber, and takes no part in the combinations of the deputies; has no group, and accedes to none. He has, perhaps more than any other of his colleagues, strong, devoted friends with whom personal admiration, confidence, and even veneration are intense, but he forms no party of his own. When he entered the Chamber of Deputies he had a program in which the unity of Italy was the chief article, and the maintenance of the house of Savoy the second, and from this he has never varied. The court and its influences have always been hostile to him; he was always regarded as a dangerous man, his silence and seclusion being mistaken for signs of ambition, and his unflinching adherence to his ideas of government suiting ill the invertebrate nature of Italian politics. A distinguished ambassador to the Italian government told me that when Crispi was first charged with the direction of affairs, he asked the king if he did not regard Crispi as a danger; and the king replied, "It is better to have him with us than against us" — a reply which showed the general feeling in court and conservative circles.

Crispi's first entry into ministerial functions had been under Depretis, and, as he has later confessed, in violation of his resolution never

to enter into a ministry with men of other principles than his own. Depretis, though personally honest, was the inaugurator of the system of legislative corruption to keep a majority, and the author of "transformism," or fusion of parties for the same end; and the consequence to Crispi was that he has been made responsible for transactions with which he had nothing to do. He has been accused of dishonesty and violation of the law to keep himself in office — accusations which are the common weapon of Italian political warfare; but I have never yet been able to obtain from his enemies a single authentic statement of an act of official or personal dishonesty. His divorce was the cause of his being obliged to resign his first portfolio, owing to the attacks of the court, the queen especially showing her hostility to the divorcing minister.[1] He had been warned, and recognized all the consequences of the act; but he made the sacrifice deliberately, and never has offered any defense of it. Neither for this nor for any other act of his life has he attempted to justify himself. The attacks of the press he never notices, and for personal hostility he has no recognition: he meets his bitterest opponents in the chamber the day after their most outrageous attacks with the same smile and friendly manner that he has for his friends. At rare intervals, and under strong provocation, he breaks out in a brief volcanic explosion; but if in it he does any one injustice he is prompt to apologize. Long and intimately as I have known him, in and out of office, I have never heard him speak one spiteful or malicious word of any man; and no matter what may have been his personal relations with men, if their views on public matters agree, coöperation is certain. The rancor and personality which form so discouraging an element in Italian politics have no place in Crispi's nature.

Of course the career of a man of such intense individuality, and so inflexible in his view of the conduct of affairs, must be, in the complete demoralization of Italian parliamentary government, a series of partial collisions and partial compromises. His great aspiration, to reorganize parliamentary parties, is beyond all horizons of practical politics, and I do not believe that he has now any hope of attaining it, parliamentary discipline being apparently beyond the hope of any future restoration. He remained prime minister three years, and in the crisis of 1890 fell before a combination of disappointed ambitions, a medieval conspiracy in which the bitter root of the old Right, the most corrupt element of the historic Left, to which he belonged, the clericals, and all the men who had local and personal interests to protect against the consequences of his plans of reform, united in opposition to him. To the demand of the conspirators that he should take into the ministry two of the leaders of the conspiracy as a condition of support, which was really a manœuver for his own expulsion, he replied: "I am not a dictator, and have no power to order out of the cabinet ministers whose policy the chamber has not disapproved. It would be unconstitutional." That afternoon the conspiracy broke out, and though three months before he had swept the country in the general elections with an enthusiasm never known before, the leaders of the combination being elected as his supporters, he was defeated on a measure which the succeeding cabinet made haste to pass into law.

In the three years intervening before his return to office in 1894, he took little part in politics, appearing in the chamber only to vote on important laws, and taking no part in the combinations and intrigues which make and destroy ministries in Italy; his following in the chamber was not above half a dozen, and the former conspirators had their personal reasons for dreading his return to office. His formation of the present ministry became difficult in spite of the public unanimity, and when he presented the measures he considered necessary to check disorder and reëstablish public credit, the committees elected by the chamber to report on his laws were almost unanimously hostile to them. With a small minority he had to outmanœuver the hostile majority supported by court intrigues, and purely by the demonstration of the wisdom and necessity of his measures convert his minority into a majority. He needed not only to be right, but to have a marvelous tact and knowledge of

[1] As the only attack on the conduct of Crispi that had the semblance of a foundation was based on this incident in his conjugal relations, maliciously exaggerated, though not by any means free from reproach, and which at one time proved to be a political disaster, I will say in this place what may be said without offense to any woman, and with no extenuation to the man, that Crispi had lived in informal marital relations with more than one woman, to one of whom he was married by a priest at Malta. Years after, for reasons I need not recount, the continuation of his conjugal relations with her became impossible, and they separated. As divorce does not exist in Italy, Crispi subsequently availed himself of a legal flaw in the contract to dissolve the relation publicly. His motive in this was one which shows as much as some of his heroic acts the courage and readiness for self-sacrifice of the man. It was simply the determination to legitimatize a daughter to whom he is most devotedly attached, by marrying her mother. For the moment it caused his expulsion from his place among the advisers of the king. Whatever one may think of this act, when we see it as the acceptance of the gravest social disabilities to protect an innocent girl from the consequences of the parent's error, all one can say of it is that it was very like Crispi, who never shrunk from anything he believed to be right, as in the years of his life as a conspirator he never shrunk from any danger.

men; and he has so well made his position that his last measures have been carried by sweeping majorities, involving though they did interference to an unprecedented extent with personal liberty and taxation which had been declared unendurable.

I have known in my lifetime not a few public men recognized as great, but I have never known one who had such insight into human nature, or one who had a more inflexible rule of public conduct. In speaking of him one day with Cardinal X——, one of the liberals of the Sacred College, I referred to Crispi's intimacy with things at the Vatican, and he replied: "His knowledge of our affairs excites the astonishment of all of us: it is like intuition. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and the black anarchy as well as the red." The irreconcilables in the Vatican, like the radical republicans in the Italian chamber, have a detestation of him which recognizes no limits in language, while the obstinate conservatives, in the north especially, have an invincible antipathy to him, and all agree in their motive, which is mainly his extreme inflexibility in his views of public policy. I have never known a political personage of any party who knew Crispi's life and work, and who was moderately free from prejudice, who did not recognize his entire honesty and patriotism.

His three years' tenure of the premiership was the most fruitful period in effective legislation during many years, and developed strongly his antagonism to the disintegrating radicalism which he considered the chief danger to Italy; and in the general elections which followed he exercised his full legal influence against it, largely reducing the number of radical deputies. The three years following his fall saw two ministries, hardly to be distinguished from each other for inefficiency. Credit, order, and general prosperity steadily decreased until the outbreak last winter of what was intended as and threatened to become a social revolution found the then ministry utterly incompetent for the position. After a futile attempt on the part of the crown to escape calling Crispi, which lasted two weeks, he was called in, to the universal relief and the rapid restoration of order. At this moment, and largely on account of the energy he has shown in meeting the social dangers, he enjoys a popularity which no Italian statesman has had since I have known Italy; and probably his reflections on the adversity of his former official experience have somewhat softened his asperity and induced him to conciliate more than he was then willing to do. He used to seem to take pleasure in showing his contempt for the press, and he had no friend in it except his own journal; he is wiser now, but still refuses to subsidize the papers, and the greater part of them are in the opposition. In his former term of office, attaining his position, as he had, by his own energy, almost without a following, he had developed a measure of self-confidence which was dangerous in a state where the tendency to an exaggerated individualism is one of the gravest defects and motives of instability; but this is in a large degree now corrected.

Crispi's sense of independence is morbid, and his self-reliance phenomenal. Some one asked him, in the time when the question of the division of parties was agitated, if he was a Garibaldian. "No," he replied. "A Mazzinian?" "No." "What, then?" "I am Crispi." Some one of his adversaries having sneeringly referred to his past unsuccess, he replied calmly, "*Io mi chiamo Domani* (I call myself To-morrow)"; and his to-morrow has not failed him. This overwhelming sentiment of his mission is one of the elements of his strength; he is never disheartened or despondent. Without being in the least what is known as a religious man, he has no sympathy with movements hostile to religion of any creed, and he has a profound conviction of the dominance of a divine intelligence in human affairs. I went to see him just after the recent attempt on his life,— an incident which did not disturb his equanimity a moment,— and when I remarked that it was like a providential protection that a man should be uninjured by a pistol fired so near as to have burned his hair off if the weapon had been aimed well, he replied gravely, "I believe it was providential." And Crispi never makes a jest. It is one of the defects of his character that he has no sense of humor; he takes everything seriously. He is not a social being, as would be judged from what I have said; his taciturnity is such as to make him seem morose, which he is very far from being; but there must be some sympathy to call him out. When he first became prime minister, being also minister of foreign affairs, I had occasion, by order, to ascertain a certain point in the policy of the Italian government, and obtained an audience, which he always gave with difficulty to a correspondent. Having told my mission, I waited for him to speak. He looked me coldly and contemptuously in the eyes, but said nothing. The silence was embarrassing, and I said: "I beg your Excellency to understand that I am not asking from curiosity, but am charged by my chief to ask the question, that the 'Times' may, if possible, support your government." He replied, "The government has no need of the support of the press." "If that is the case," I responded, "I have the honor to bid your Excellency good morning," and walked out with my back to him. We were afterward on terms of indirect intercourse, as I refused to go to see him. Some

time later, in the course of some negotiations between England and Italy, my personal relations with the English ambassador enabled me to remove some trifling misunderstanding between the negotiators, and threw me into contact with Crispi in a way that convinced him that I was a true friend of Italy; and he at once took me into his confidence, and from that day to this nothing has interfered with a perfect understanding between us. As the correspondent of the most powerful of journals[1] I was of no importance to him, but as soon as he became convinced that I was a friend of Italy, I became also his at once. Italy and his daughter entirely absorb his devotion.

The close friendship between Crispi and Bismarck, which is of twenty years' standing, is one of the most remarkable relations I know, and is sufficient proof of Crispi's value. Crispi is accused, but only by people who do not know him, of aping Bismarck; but a glance at the portrait of him which accompanies this article will show that Nature had provided the similitude before either knew of the other. The type of character is the same; the strongly marked jaw, the spacious brain, the eye that looks you through like a lance and yet is full of affectionate welcome at need, and the expression of inflexibility in pursuit, are common to both, as is also the high appreciation of authority and discipline; but beyond this there is little resemblance, and their political ideas differ entirely. Crispi has been accused of being dictatorial: in his official relations he is peremptory and exacting, and his ideas of government are imperative; but no Italian minister has ever done so much to put power out of the hands of the ministry as he, or has shown so scrupulous an adherence to the letter of the constitutional law. In the laxity of law and the decay of authority which have obtained in Italy, there is only here and there an Italian who insists on the necessity of civic discipline, and Crispi is the first of them. He is a republican of the old Roman type, ready to be the dictator at need, and to drop back to his law papers and the bar as quickly. He is a democrat of the strongest dye, but the king has never had a minister more absolutely deferential to him as head of the state, rarely one so profoundly respectful to him as the symbol of law and the seat of authority. The conception of a dissension between him and the crown is impossible to any one who knows him, and this his Majesty recognizes. Crispi has the fidelity and the individuality belonging to his Skipetar blood, and all its wild independence; Bismarck, the overweening masterliness of his Prussian stock. They are alike in their patriotism, but as unlike as possible in their way of understanding it, as in their relation to the sovereign.

Crispi has been accused, by those who had to gain by depreciating him, of being the origin of the megalomania which has afflicted Italy, and the author of the heavy military expenses which are supposed to be the ruin of her finances; in point of fact, Quintino Sella was the father of megalomania, and Crispi never introduced a bill to increase the military expenses, but made economies of over 140,000,000 lire in the state expenses while he was prime minister. He is accused of having alienated Italy from France by the Triple Alliance, but the Triple Alliance was made by his opponents, and he has never had anything to do with it; of having plunged the country into debt, but the debt was as great before he came into office as when he left it, his part being to pay the bills that his predecessors had incurred. When he resigned, gold was at par, while when he came back it was at fifteen per cent. premium. I might go through the list of accusations brought against him to frighten Italy, as the bogie-man to frighten children, but to us these things have no other than a pathetic interest, the contemplation of a heroic character left, like old Warwick the last of his kind, to be the mark for all the trivial insolence of radicalism and the grave malignity of conservative hatred. I do not believe that his devotion will save Italy from the civic decay and corruption into which she is sliding, but he will stand in history as a study of what Italian statesmanship might have been, and in fact has once been, when the state is swept by the social revolution which its politicians are all playing with. When Crispi pronounced for the monarchy as the union of Italy, Mazzini wrote him that the king would never listen to his plans for reform until it was too late, and then would call him to an impossible task, and he would be the last minister of the house of Savoy. He will not, I believe, be the last; but I fear he will be the immediate predecessor of the last.

W. J. Stillman.

[1] The London "Times."

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