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W. J. Stillman
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(1815—1895)

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THE
UNION OF ITALY

1815—1895

BY

W. J. STILLMAN
L.H.D. (CONCORDIA)

NEW EDITION, REVISED,
WITH AN EPILOGUE BY G. M. TREVELYAN

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PREFACE.

IF the conclusions respecting the political position and tendencies of the Kingdom of Italy, to which the author of the following pages has been led, differ from those which in the main are held by his English readers, he may adduce in support of a somewhat pessimistic judgment, that it has not been formed under the influence of any prejudice, or in ignorance of any evidence that may be adduced by those who hold opposite opinions. From boyhood a romantic lover of Italy, he went thither in 1861, with the most exalted and confident anticipations of the future of the Italian people, just when unity, so long craved as a panacea for all the troubles of division, was practically attained; and during subsequent years there has been no long interval in which he was not intimately conversant with the course of events. Nor does the author's pessimism extend to the character of the people of the peninsula in general, or affect his opinion of the many sterling qualities of the race, in which are included all those necessary for the realization of the ideals of its most sanguine patriots. If, in his judgment, the present state of Italy is a disappointment to hopes founded on the exalted patriotism of the men who by suffering and self-immolation opened the way to liberty and unity, and whose lives are unsurpassed

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records of devotion to freedom, he is still confident that those virtues exist in the nation, waiting only for an occasion to call them out, and latent perhaps only because the educational course was too soon terminated and because Italy did not realise the lofty ambition of Carlo Alberto—that she should accomplish her destiny unaided.

It is with no unkindly feeling that the author has alluded to failures in the execution of the political programme, but in the confidence that sincere and friendly criticism may strengthen the hands of earnest and patriotic Italians, of whom there are, within his personal knowledge, many who entertain the same apprehensions that have troubled him in these later years, viz. that the rapid formation of the Kingdom has introduced elements of political weakness which retard, and even endanger, the consolidation of national unity. The Italian people will survive its errors and those of its rulers, and those who believe in the inexorable laws of human progress will find comfort therein, against the evident decay of constitutional government in Italy at this moment. When we recall the horrible series of persecutions and oppressions to which the peninsula has been subjected from the days of Charlemagne to our own, it is marvellous that there is still such a thing as a national sentiment and the passion for unity; and we may hope that the present disease of personal and sectional politics, which has brought parliamentary institutions to so futile a condition that saner public opinion has not infrequently desired the abolition of an elective House, will, like other epidemics, work its own cure. Admiration for the attractive qualities of the Italian people must not blind its friends to the fact that it still retains, in some sections at least, the defects which made Italy impossible in the Middle Ages—among others, those rancorous

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personal and local animosities which destroy parliamentary government, and which not only corrupt the legislature, but, through the favouritism and partisanship to which they give rise, undermine justice and sound administration.

No critic can be more fully conscious than is the author himself of his deficiencies as a historian, and he is well aware how difficult it is for one who has lived in the midst of the events he describes and in personal relations with the actors, to keep a perfectly unbiassed mind. But his love for Italy has always been vivid and disinterested, and if the position has its drawbacks, he trusts that his personal experience of Italian political life and the intimate and often confidential relations in which he has lived with some of the best and wisest of Italian public men, may confer on his work some compensating qualities which nothing else would have given it.

To the great Italian archivist and historian, Senator Chiala, the author tenders thanks for advice and direction in the selection of authorities, always judicious and impartial, as befits the custodian of the documents which constitute his country's historical vindication. Amongst the authorities from which he has received most assistance the author places first the compendious history of Tivaroni. This admirable study of the Italian regeneration, based on contemporary and documentary evidence, is unsurpassed as a monument of erudition and research, of historical impartiality and unbiassed perception of the strength and weakness of the great Italian movement. The studies of Tivaroni have, in fact, rendered it almost superfluous to peruse the innumerable experiences of the actors and martyrs in that movement, and have made the inner history of modern Italy comprehensible to all who will approach it in a similar spirit. Unfortunately that part of

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Tivaroni's book which relates to the period subsequent to 1860 was not published when the pages of this work which bear upon it were being written: on this part of the subject the author had to depend on personal knowledge of events, on works such as those of Corsi and Sorin, and on public documents and the files of contemporary journals. To the contemporary records of Signora Jessie White Mario, Italian history owes a debt not to be overestimated. Finally the author has to acknowledge a great indebtedness to the Editor of the series, to whom the arrangement of his subject, and many emendations and additions are due.

W. J. STILLMAN.

ROME, *May* 1898.

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