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EDITORIAL

THE ITALIAN ELECTIONS.

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WHAT remains to be settled by the few supplementary ballotings yet to be had in Italy will not affect the main results of the elections. The main results are three in number. These stand out clear. Two of them are cause for joy.

The first of the three main results is that the ministry triumphs. This circumstance deserves first mention only because of its general character. The threatening political weather in the Balkans has received from the Italian electorate a response that rather makes for progress. The triumph of the full Socialist program would have been ideal. That, of course, was out of the question. The next best thing has been attained with regard to the Eastern situation. The attitude of the ministry favored the breath of freedom that has gone up from the Balkans. Its anti-Austrian policy triumphed.

The second result, and what with an eye to the future is of prime interest, is the solid gains made by the Socialists. A larger vote and an increased number of seats is cause for applause. So solid are these gains that the European press hears now the tramp of approaching Socialist supremacy in Italy, and acknowledges that the tramp is distinct.

The significance of this second result is considerably heightened by the third—the pitiful showing made by the forces of darkest reaction, the Clericalists.

In 1870 the political center, distinctly the known as the Vatican, issued through its head, the Pope, a decree known as a *non-expedit*. The decree commanded all faithful Catholics to abstain from the ballot. The decree was originally intended as a demonstration against the Italian Government. With time the decree served the purposes of a threat. Under the threat that the *non-expedit* might at any time be revoked, and the Government submerged under an avalanche of hostile votes, the

Vatican sought to wring concessions from the Government. Especially did the Vatican hold out its supposed power as a potential weapon against the Socialists, and in protection of the Government. The paltry electorate—about 8 per cent. of the number supposedly entitled to vote—lent a color to the claim. The claim collapsed at the recent elections. The *non-expedit* was this year revoked in a number of districts. The result, beginning with Rome, was marked Socialist and Radical gains, with the Clericalists cutting a pitiful figure. The figures throw unexpected light upon the reason for the smallness of the electorate, and exposes the Vatican of a profound political blunder.

The election laws of Italy demand, besides a property qualification, a certain degree of elementary education. The Italian voter must be able to read and write, and also possess certain general information. A property qualification cuts, no doubt, into the Socialist ranks; an educational qualification not at all. On the contrary, Socialism enlightens. The increased Socialist and Radical vote, accompanied with a Clericalist vote that is trifling, proves that ignorance is the quarry of the latter—hence it is stripped of the potential power that it had hitherto mystified the public in giving it credit for.

Looked at from this angle of vision the recent elections in Italy greatly clarify the situation there. They prove the number of Italians who can be duped into mistaking policies for religion, and obey the dictates of a political machine in the fatuous notion that they are obeying a divine behest, is small, and that of that smallness the bulk is so primitively uneducated that it has no vote, hence does not count.

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