

ADOLFO OMODEO

Informative notes on an Italian historian

Adolfo Omodeo, the greatest Italian historian of our time, ranks among ^{the} greatest historians in Europe. His work and fame were stifled in his own country, during the twenty years' tyranny, which he implacably opposed.

The world at large should get acquainted with Omodeo's very original approach to historical problems, all the more so in view of the bewildering opinions that are generally held.

His world-wide vision is enlivened by touches of Mazzini's human warmth and every historical problem, from the plainest to the most complex one, is analyzed with a view to finding a solution universally valid. Omodeo's unshakable faith in the power of truth and freedom, a faith he religiously adhered to, lends a persuasive strength to his dissertations, which are enlightened by a profound cultural preparation and free from empty abstractions.

Every student of history will find it worthwhile to meditate upon the broad vision that inspired the thought of this eminent Italian. His whole life has been lived at the height of his ideals, which he applied to the great problems of his country and to his own personal ones. A very noble life indeed, which proved the validity of his principles and the sincerity of his enthusiasm.

For twenty years he chafed under the oppression that held Italy in its grip, while all his works are the outspoken condemnation of tyranny itself. On its downfall he threw his ceaseless activity into the political struggle, but his strong personality, worn out by overlong suffering, broke down under this last strain. *notoriously endured*

obscure, as can be seen, for instance, in his work on Joseph De Maistre.

Equally versed in ancient history - which he taught early in his career as a University professor - as well as in modern history, Omodeo, as man of our time, felt the need of applying himself also to the study of the more recent and of contemporary events. It was thus possible for him to encompass in his mind the whole field of history and to resort to analogy for the explanation and better understanding of the relation between historical events, a rare ability indeed ~~and~~ possessed ~~by many men~~ only by the very few.

Those who will read his major works and his collection of articles, essays and reviews, will readily bear out the truth of this assertion.

pean cooperation through the testimonials of those who took part in ~~it~~ living again the ideals of the Risorgimento.

VI) A REACTIONARY: ^{the} COUNT J. DE MAISTRE (Bari, Laterza, 1939)

This is ^{based on investigations which were carried out in the archives at Paris,} a study founded upon researches in Paris Archives, on the political and religious thought of De Maistre, ^{as} opposed to the liberal spirit of new historiography.

VII) ALFRED LOISY, A HISTORIAN OF RELIGIONS (Bari, Laterza, 1939)

This is ^A an essay on the historiographic work and religious thought of this modern clergyman.

VIII) THE POLITICAL WORK OF COUNT CAVOUR (Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1942) - 2 volumes

This is ^{political and diplomatic} an original valuation of Cavour's work and ^{action} its relations with Mazzini's; in spite of their different dialectics, ^{both} the two protagonists of the Risorgimento are ~~both~~ considered in the light of their common source of inspiration and eternal ideal function, where ^{an} a mission ^{social} highly regenerative of the social classes is placed at the centre of an obviously liberal civilization. ^{Some} other eminent politicians of the time, besides Cavour and Mazzini, are ^{as well} portrayed in this book.

IX) THE LEGEND OF CARLO ALBERTO IN THE RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY (Torino, Einaudi, 1940)

X) V. GIOBERTI AND HIS POLITICAL EVOLUTION (Torino, Einaudi, 1941)

These books ^a contain vigorous polemics against the slavish apologetic and conventionalism of ^{flatterers.} courtiers. ^{Both} These two personages and the effect of their work are ^{reduced} brought back to their real proportions.

XI) FOR THE RECONQUEST OF FREEDOM (Napoli, Macchiaroli, 1945)

XII) FOR THE DEFENCE OF CULTURE (Napoli, Humus, 1944)

The documents of the fierce battle ^{which was continuously} assiduously fought during and after the ^{Fascism} fascist regime both in the political and cultural field can be found in these books ^{together with} a passionate defence of the liberal principles and traditions of the modern European world.

^{FIGURES}
XIII) ~~PERSONAGES~~ AND PASSIONS OF THE ITALIAN RISORGIMENTO (Roma, Mondadori, 1945)

This book contains: Essays and researches about episodes and char-

acters of the Risorgimento (French ^{prevalence} ~~prevalence~~ and Italian initiative; The crisis of 1848; The ~~ecclesiastic~~ ^{of the Church} policy (after 1860; The policy of Napoleon III; Italy from 1870 to 1915; Mazzini, Pisacane, Settembrini, Manzoni etc.).

XIV) ASPECTS OF THE CATHOLICISM OF THE RESTORATION (Torino, Einaudi, 1946)

clerical The following passage is quoted from the Introduction: "The essays gathered from unpublished writings concur to enlighten the Catholicism of the Restoration ~~both~~ in its noisy praxis and ~~in the~~ ^{in the} ecclesiastic policy of a great cardinal, and in the intimate life of one of the sub-alpine leaders of the Catholic awakening".

XV) FRENCH CULTURE DURING THE RESTORATION (Milano, Mondadori, 1946)

These essays ^{made their first} began to make ^{the anger of} their appearance when conquered France seemed to drag with ^{it} ~~her~~ in ^{her} ~~her~~ ruin the whole of our civilization. The work was continued "with ^a desperate fury, as a protest against a hostile fate and to determine the essential faith of our western civilization, against which the barking guns and the ~~crashing~~ of bombs could do nothing. The generous nobility of early Romanticism, of such men as ^{those who} ~~had~~ taken up once again the thread of civil work after Napoleon's fall, ~~and~~ Madame de Staël's passionate love for liberty, the great dreams of civilization dreamt both by the liberal and catholic followers of Lamennais, the ~~revival~~ revival of poetry and of a greater history, the social mission of human redemption flashed before my mind among the storming of a new Attila". (The above passage is quoted from Introduction).

Here follows a comment by Benedetto Croce on Adolfo Omodeo's work:

end
The revival of philosophical thought which grew in intensity towards the close of the 19th century and took on a reforming and revolutionary character during the first decades of the following century, resulted in history being viewed in quite a different light than was formerly the case, when historians were wont to assert themselves as true and objective narrators of what they drew directly from documents, with absolute political and religious dispassion.

As a result of this revival, historians came to realize that history can neither be thought of nor understood, if the influence of political, ethical, religious, philosophical and artistic factors are not clearly visioned and passionately investigated. Even though history is ~~not~~ in no way at the mercy of human passions and tendencies, it does presuppose them as a necessary antecedent and as its own subject matter.

with
Historiographical problems have thus come to be closely linked to the philosophical ones, the latter being in turn deeply permeated by history, so that their close relatedness calls for a long sustained historical investigation with regard to philosophy, and viceversa, history and philosophy being thoroughly interdependent in inception and development. An interdependence not excluding that personal tendencies and the urge of spiritual values, may lead scholars to emphasize either one or the other of the two inseparable mental attitudes.

was aware of
purely theoretical and methodological questions.
From his early youth, Omodeo had been keenly interested in historical study and research and he clearly sensed the new trend of Italian thought, which he made his own, and in articles, essays and reviews he deliberately and insistently dealt with questions of pure theoretical and methodological import.

make his way into the sources -
trends of things themselves took origin
passionate
have remained
His own true vocation, however, prompted him to focus his endeavours on the concrete drama of history, for which he was eminently endowed. He pursued his studies and researches invariably at first hand and possessed the ability to documents with a highly sensitive and constructive spirit. He rose above the one-sided tendencies of individuals or political parties in order to investigate the tendencies lying under outer events, that is to discover and to understand how events sprang from the joint influence of concurring and of contrasting tendencies. The light of his religious faith - the religion of freedom - his loving nature, and his mental poise, all contributed to give clearness, warmth and strength to his style. His thorough study of religious history, particularly the Christian, enabled him to enter into the spirit and meaning of historical figures and events that would otherwise remain

A list of ADOLFO OMODEO's chief works.

I) A HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY (Messina, Principato, 1913-1925)

- 1) Jesus and the Origins of Christianity
- 2) Prolegomena to the History of the Apostolic Age
- 3) Paul of Tarsus, the Apostle of Peoples
- 4) The Mysticism of John the Apostle (Bari, Laterza)

The above mentioned work is an ample study of the early stages of the history of Christianity with a faithful interpretation of the sources. The endless constructive capacity of the Christian spirit of charity, in a world heading towards political, social and cultural decay, is emphasized by the Author, who eliminates every miraculous transcendentalism.

II) RELIGION AND CIVILIZATION (Messina, Principato, 1924)
(From ancient Greece to the present days)

This is a synthetic history of both classical and Christian religions as seen in the light of progressive European culture.

III) MORAL TRADITIONS AND HISTORIC DISCIPLINE (Bari, Laterza, 1929)

This is a collection of essays on the human value of Christian history, on the historiographic problems of early Christianity, on the Roman religion and such Religions as are founded upon mystery; and on the history of Italian Risorgimento. The religious interpretation of this history confers a deep unity to this collection.

IV) THE AGE OF ITALIAN RISORGIMENTO (5th ed., Naples, E.S.I., 1946)

This is an institutional work which introduces Italian history at the centre of European history, and affirms the universal value of Italian experience in the 19th Century. The following passage is quoted from the Introduction: "The Italian nationality was born out of the whole movement of modern European civilization... It had a universal meaning and under many aspects it was the highest and noblest form of the modern spirit performed by Italians on Italian soil".

V) MOMENTS OF TRENCH LIFE THROUGH THE LETTERS OF DEAD SOLDIERS
(Bari, Laterza, 1934)

This book deals with the World War as seen in the spirit of Euro-