

WRETCHEDNESS IN ITALY.

People Suffering Dire Distress—"The Only Thing Which Prospers," Says Sonnino, "is the Blood-Sucking Octopus of Usury."

LONDON TIMES—NEW YORK TIMES
Special Cablegram.

LONDON, Feb. 5.—The Rome correspondent of The Times says the wretchedness of the southern provinces of Italy is a melancholy contrast to the general prosperity of the country, and suggests a doubt as to whether legislation has not fostered the industrial North at the expense of the agricultural South.

The urgency of the problem has given rise to two competing schemes for reform—one from the Government, the other from Baron Sonnino. Both are being examined by the same Parliamentary committee. Hitherto the efforts to cope with the distress usually have taken the form of public works, but, as Sonnino says, "to construct railways where there is no trade is like giving a spoon to a man who has nothing to eat."

Sonnino, describing the situation, said: "The agriculture is perishing, the country is being depopulated, and prosperity is being crushed. The only thing which swells and prospers is the blood-sucking octopus of usury."

Emigration and education statistics tell the same tale. The emigration from the Neapolitan provinces reached 167,554 in 1902—nearly 20 out of every thousand of the population. In Sicily it was 6¼ per thousand, and in the rest under 3.

In the conscription for 1900 the average number of illiterates in the north was given as between 14 and 15 per cent. In the south it was 44 per cent.; in the Neapolitan provinces 55, in Calabria 51, and in Sardinia 54.

Further evidence of the condition of the country may be found in the fact that the Bank of Naples and the Bank of Italy have held by foreclosure landed property in the Neapolitan provinces valued at over \$10,000,000.

The encouragement of small holders, though by different means, may be described as the main object of both the Government's and Sonnino's schemes.

The New York Times

Published: February 5, 1903

Copyright © The New York Times