



BENEDETTO CROCE
Revered but incomprehensible

LEADERS OF THE NEW ITALY?

ONE of the most extraordinary developments in the Italian situation has been the recall of Count Carlo Sforza from America and the appeal to the philosopher Benedetto Croce to assist in the reconstruction of the State. Here is something about these two men whom the world had almost forgotten.

a scholar, and with the comfortable fortune of the family estates to back him, he devoted his life to the pursuit of absolute Truth—he became a philosopher.

It is this man, Benedetto Croce, who has been wrenched by the turn of events from his profound speculations on Logic, Aesthetics, and History, and brought up against the immediate political problems of his broken country. He will not like it, and if he accepts office in a provisional Italian government, it will be only at the compulsion of a stern and patrician sense of duty.

For Croce, by temperament and the circumstances of his life, is remote from the hurly-burly of politics. He is one of the few remaining idealist philosophers and he prefers to contemplate from a standpoint of lofty abstraction, what ought to be the motives and actions of men. He was brought up in the order and discipline of a devoutly Catholic

Neapolitan family. Benedetto's father attended scrupulously to the running of his estate, his mother was an amateur collector of art and antiquities. There was no enthusiasm in his home for the men who were acclaimed in Britain as the saviours of Italy. Cavour, Mazzini and Garibaldi had set the country alight, but "I seldom heard the authors of the Risorgimento named, and never without reservations, expressions of distrust, or even satirical remarks about liberal windbags and self-seeking 'patriots'."

So Croce grew up with what he calls "my contempt for the cant of Liberalism, and my hatred of pompous phrases and all rhetorical ostentation." He lived to see a regime the very opposite of liberal but so pompous and windy that in the end it burst.

The young scholar lost his religious faith, and for a time he was swept along on the tide of Marxism. But soon his fastidious intellect found it just as un-



CARLO SFORZA
Elderly but vigorous

bearable to have the purity of thought sullied with economics as it had been to see it diluted with love and mercy. Croce's life work has been to build up a vast structure of pure thought by means of books austere in their integrity and dry as vintage wine.

His reward has been the attention and respect of the world's scholars. The greatest of modern Italian intellectuals

(continued on next page)



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