Italy's Failure in the War

WHILE the friends of the Allies are deploring the comparative futility of Italian effort, the situation holds great interest for the historian and economist. The talk of Italian treachery and duplicity falls wide of the mark; this cannot account for the fact that Italy's only hold in Albania—where Italian Imperialism conceives its interests as being "vital" and "paramount"—is now confined to a precarious occupation of Avlona. The capture by the Austrians of Mt. Lovcen and the disposal of Montenegro threaten Italy's supremacy in the Adriatic.

Italy's futility is not measured by her efforts in the Trentino and along the Isonzo, where the terrain is almost perfect for a triumphant Austrian defense, and where the valiant fighting of the Italian soldiers is admitted even by their enemies. Italy's futility is measured by her failure to exert any influence in the other theatres of the war—the Balkans and the Dardanelles.

The real reason for this futility is neither diplomatic or military, but essentially industrial. Italy is the poorest nation, industrially, of any of the six Great Powers. The social and industrial organization is of the weakest, and seems to have broken down under the strain of meeting the requirements of the war. The country is lacking in the chief requirements of modern warfare,—iron and other metals. It is easy, arithmetically, to figure Italy as able to put two to three million soldiers on the firing line; but it is another problem to equip that number of men, and Italy has been unable to do so because of her industrial backwardness. Strong in the arts of peace, Germany and France are strong in the art of war; weak in the arts of peace, Italy is weak in the art of war.

It is no exaggeration to say that the outcome of the war is being decided at the present time, even though

the fighting is of a desultory character. It is being decided by the social and industrial preparations now being made by the belligerents,—the mobilization of social and industrial resources for the decisive fighting of the coming spring and summer.—*F.*