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ITALY

A TRIANGLE OF VENETO REDEEMED BY THE ZIGNAGO CONCERN.

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For some years there has been lifted from this concern of VENETO an anxiety about work, by means which have not only completely altered the physiognomy of the countryside and land, but especially the rhythm and living standards of thousands of people.

The authors of the astonishing transformation which has relegated into limbo the memory of the decadent life that once slowed down and desolated this part of the Venetian countryside, are the Counts MARZOTTO, who, with the reclamation of the ZIGNAGO valleys and the creation of thirteen industrial activities connected with it, have realized one of the most extraordinary agricultural-industrial experiments which has been carried out in Italy.

Up to a few years ago the ZIGNAGO Valley was really desolate and poor. There were no industries at all, and only a few farms wrested a few fragile strips of land from the invading marshes which covered hundreds of thousands of square meters of land with unhealthy water. In short, it was a place in which the only activity allowed to man was hunting, and up to a few years ago the only men to be seen about were those armed with guns and with laden bags.

The Hunters' Paradise.

This authentic hunters' paradise hid, however, most fertile land, and if man had cleaned it up and put it in

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order, separated the marsh- and from the ground, constructing canals, dikes, embankments etc., there would have undoubtedly been exceptional crops. Such, at least was the opinion of Gaetano MARZOTTO in 1948, when amidst almost general lack of understanding, he began to work, setting at naught the more or less gratuitous advice which was proffered him. The inhabitants of the surrounding countryside themselves, who are all working for the concern today and are well paid, looked on the arrival of the excavators drags and tractors with that wonder which characterizes those who live in a countryside of carts and horses. Today all the economy of the land revolves around the ZIGNAGO concern, and the sound of motors has substituted those traditional and picturesque, but useless, sounds of hunting, and general opinion is silenced so that no one remembers ever having criticized the MARZOTTI project.

To have at least an approximate idea of the difficulties encountered and overcome in this land reclamation, which is the largest and most important which has been faced in Italy, it is enough to remember that more than 3,500,000 cubic meters of land were excavated and removed, and 86 kilometers of canals were constructed in the swamps.

I went by motor-launch through this vast network of canals with Umberto MARZOTTI, and for three hours we continued to travel uninterruptedly from one canal to another to visit the immense agricultural concern and the valleys where there are the fish culture industries. A modern system of locks and gratings which is put into use according to the movement of the tides, allows the attracting, selecting and fishing of the fish. The utilizing of the marshes has therefore brought about a profitable fishing activity.

It must be said that we are dealing with a really exceptional concern in so far as the co-existence of the two elements, land and water, confer on it an aspect which is out of the ordinary and extraordinarily fascinating. To see hundreds of cows crossing in pantoons and disembarking like marines to graze on the islets in the marshlands while hundreds of wild-geese fly up terrified, is a spectacle which rouses both poetic and picturesque thoughts.

But as we have said, ZIGNAGO is not only this strange halfwater farm. This agricultural concern is in fact a single link in a long production chain of such variety and complexity that one who is incompetent to judge would consider it at least disconcerting. We are dealing with an agricultural-

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industrial activity the realization of which is the most living and indicative testimony of a basic principal which could serve to preside over the organization of any agricultural concern; this principal is the exploitation in loco of the products of the land.

With his clarity and eloquence, Count, MARZOTTO illustrated this conception to the thousands of persons who have gathered at the VILLANOVA DI PORTOAGRUARO in the last few days to take part in the third anniversary festivals of ZIGNAGO. He said, "I am of the opinion that it is necessary to industrialize agriculture with the purpose of abolishing manual labor and assuring new products for the families of the peasants. By creating a mixed source of agricultural and industrial earnings we shall avoid the misery which results, in the agricultural field, from unfavorable seasons. In this way too, we shall eliminate the periodical industrial crisis."

The carrying out of this idea in the MARZOTTO concern at PORTOAGRUARO, is represented in the realization of the other activities accessory to and linked up with that of agriculture. We have spoken of this, now let us turn to the second link in the chain.

The farm TORRESELLA is situated a few kilometers from VILLANOVA, and from a distance it looks like an enormous cement works, so large are its buildings, stalls, silos, and granaries. It is sufficient to say that there are 1,300 bovine animals and 800 hogs to realize the complexity and exceptionality of the activities and the life of such a farm, which is fitted with all the most modern and rational implements and needs. While I observed the interminable row of cows which were quietly chewing the cud, the magnificent bulls, while I walked the between the enormous styes where the hogs were grunting, there passed through my mind the extraordinary fantasy that if one day there were to be an Orwellian revolt, of the animals, TORRESELLA could be the best center for it, so well equipped and rational does it seem, as to be maintained without the need of man!

The Complete Cycle.

But I have wandered. TORESELLA is not a reason to be literary, it is simply the second link in the long

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chain of agricultural-industrial activities of ZIGNAGO. It is in fact, the primary material of the industries and the best intermediary for the linking up of the agricultural cycle of products to those of the transformation. From here, there leave the hogs destined for the ZIGNAGO pork products factory, the milk from the thousand cows goes for homeogenizing and bottling, or to the cheese products section. At the same time, the manure is sent to the farmland from whence the sugar beet, cotton, linen, grapes, oil, oil seeds, and so forth pass to the various special refining plants and so forth. In short, all the products of the land are immediately employed and exploited by the MARZOTTO factories in such a way that in the ZIGNAGO concern there is the entire cycle of production and transformation. This therefore allows the various types of work to be carried forward at the same rhythm, without interruption, and above all to make the greatest use of the various products the cost of which in the long run is low.

The ZIGNAGO concern has achieved a result which many industrialists would like to reach but which few actually do, that is, low production costs and resulting low sales prices. This result has been achieved thanks to the courage shown by MARZOTTO in reclaiming the ZIGNAGO valley and in his faith in the success of his experiment. Is the result of a genial but risky idea, but one which is fundamentally rational. Thus once again it is shown that the richest capital is not that which lies in the bank.

End.