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General Correspondence

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Notes: Agresti

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Agresti:

Madam Agresti tells me she first went to Italy when she was sixteen and that was in 1886. She went back sometime in the '90's after her marriage. She says that with Lubin she one of the was/founders of the International Agricultural Institute, that she holds no official position there now but that she is first in counsel and follows closely its work. It was in connection with the Agricultural Institute that I think I first met her through Gertrude Shelby.

She has been an interpreter for the Italians at the League of Nations since the beginning, was the interpreter of ^{Stresa} Stresa and tells of going with representatives ^{General Peace} to the Conference soon after the War held I think in Brussels. At all events there were representatives of the leading powers ^{Germany included} - Snowden was there and he made a terrible remark which she said made a terrible impression on her. "We have the corpse of Germany on the table." Mussolini she said would never have made such a remark as that, he understands too well the vitality of people. He has too much sympathy with national ambitions; he is not sympathetic with the German temperment in her opinion, he understands better than certainly Snowden did.

She has been active in the ^{Delegation} Delegation ^{League} for the last three or four years. Andrews tells me that he first knew her at the first labor conference where she was of great value. Her present ~~first~~ official position is that of executive secretary of the Association of Italian Corporations and the Fascist Confederation of Industrialists - the organizations which send out the monthly report of business and financial affairs in Italy.

She tells me that she came over here at the request
 of three groups of Italian women - Business and Professional
 Women - Association of University Women. ~~and~~ ^{Woman's Council} These
 of course are branches of the ~~American~~ ^{International} society. She is
 interesting on women in answer to a question. The point that
 I had never touched was that the women teaching in the
 Universities of which there are several hundred have equal
 positions on faculties with men and lecture to mixed classes.
 She thinks there is a larger degree of ^Equality in the ^{education}
 than in any other country. This I think is true, but you get
 in ^{the} academic circles a special class of scholarly women -
 better early training than our women have. A point which
 impresses me and which she makes well - better than I have ever
 heard it made - is the sense of ^{the} ~~word~~ ^{international} distinction to
 nationalism which is inherited by the Italians. They were
 a world power in their early days, a world power in Europe
 in the days of Caesar. Again when the Church became dominant
 in Italy it was a world church, not an Italian church. Their
 art was something universal, that is, that Italy has it in
 her blood to ~~belong~~ ^{the consciousness of belonging} to the world and not belong to one spot
 in the world, and to consider that the world belongs to them
 rather than one spot in the world as you might say.

This sense is strong in Mussolini. He feels the
 centuries of Italian world power in his veins and always has. I
 think it is one of the means by which he has ~~has~~ ^{arouse} the Italians to
 the sense of their possible international importance, shamed them

from the position into which they had fallen, of a race of
of petty articles,
shop keepers, manufacturers/ the financial tools of great
German financiers, particularly. This is explained in the
Italian venture which is difficult for people of our tradition
to understand. We ~~can~~ ^{an} speak of a people as young as we are with
little experience in government. The Italians have tried all
kinds in their twenty five hundred years; we have tried only
one kind and have been only one hundred and fifty years at it.
And the dangerous point at the moment is that we have lost the
power to stir youth as Mussolini has stirred youth from the
sense of possible greatest of country and their responsibility
to bring Italy back. *How are we stirring youth to see meaning - the
idea is lacking our confidence!*
She emphasizes the sense ~~he~~ ^{she} has of Europe which
she thinks is greater than any other public man. That very
boldness in announcing what he thinks about a thing; his
fearlessness in stating what he believes to be facts, rather
than hiding behind his ideals, ~~that~~ ^{Mussolini} so shocks English people.

Her talk at the Arts Club was highly successful.
She gave an impression of mastery of the subject - her point
of view. It was a clean well argued statement and you knew
she knew what she was talking about. She was particularly
interesting, I thought, in the ~~position~~ ^{explanation} of the corporate state -
the way it is working out. She made such a comment as
that of this morning by Dorothy Thompson on Italy look rather thin.
Her sheer ability impressed me, with a dry humor and quite
unconscious that many of the audience *felt* ^{her} willingness
to stand up there was proof of great courage.

It doesn't take courage to expound a thing of which you are convinced, as she is, and about which you know as much as she does.

Her fighting spirit is aroused and she has a certain scorn I think of the uninformed offices and emotional judgments that she meets here. I rather think what is *with assurance* /she ~~may~~ has to fight/boredom rather than *opinion* It takes courage to fight boredom.