

THE LIBRARY FOR AMERICAN STUDIES IN ITALY

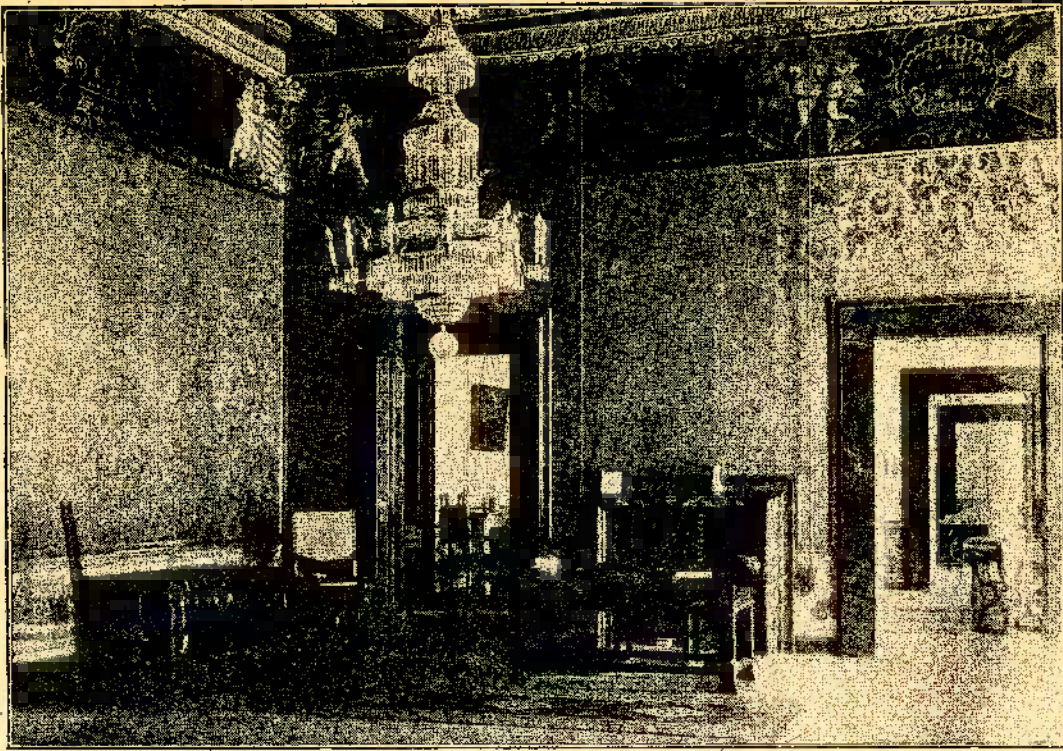
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The large reception hall which gives access to the Library

THE LIBRARY FOR AMERICAN STUDIES IN ITALY

During the Great War when American and Italian troops were fighting on the Western and Austrian fronts for a common cause, when American and Italian aspirations were inter-linked as one, statesmen, writers and poets fittingly sang in two languages the praises of both Italy and America. It should be remembered that these two countries enjoy an enviable distinction in the history of their mutual relations: not only have they never been ranged against each other in open war, but between them there has never arisen any shadow of serious international dispute. They have always been much interested in each other, more particularly because of their community of national ideals. Each achieved independence and entered the sisterhood of nations after a long war of liberation from an overbearing oppressor, neither is guilty of chauvinism, neither is ambitious of military hegemony. In 1861 Abraham Lincoln not

only recognized the superior ability of Italy's great soldier Garibaldi, but staked his own faith in Italian traditions of liberty, when he sent an American diplomatic agent to Caprera to offer the General the command of a Union army.

Yet, notwithstanding this community of interest, augmented by the consideration that there are today from five to six million Italians resident in the United States, it was recognized during the Great War that America, except as being the land of unmeasured opportunity, was not generally known in Italy. America's daily life of practical economic achievement, her marvellous contributions to science, her insuppressible idealism were alike unknown. This was due largely to the fact that Italians desirous of studying American institutions and customs were grievously handicapped by the lack of material. No adequate collection of Americana was to be found in any of the great

Italian libraries so rich in other material, and the scattered American volumes available could not be easily located by the student owing to the want of subject catalogues in most of the libraries. Few American publishers placed their works on sale in Italy, and with the prevailing high rates of exchange Italian institutions found it almost impossible to make foreign purchases for any considerable amount. It was evident that an American library in Italy, and preferably in Rome, would meet an urgent need.

But the foundation of an institution of this character required initiative and energy, and to Comm. H. Nelson Gay goes the credit of conceiving the excellent project and taking the steps necessary for putting it into execution. As a resident of Rome for twenty years and perhaps the most well-informed American on Italian history past and present, he was ideally equipped for the effort, and to this he added an enthusiasm and good will which could not but bring forth positive results. In the summer of 1918, discussing the project with his friends Col. Robert Perkins and Major James Bryne, heads of the American Red Cross in Italy, he secured in them ready and eager collaborators. These three made the initial financial gifts which started the institution. It may be noted here in passing that the Library receives no pecuniary aid from governmental or educational institutions, being maintained entirely by private contributions. Comm. Gay and the other Americans interested in the Library do their work entirely gratuitously.

The first books for the Library were received with a spirited welcome and enthusiasm, crossing the ocean from America, as they did, when the German submarines were playing such havoc with the Allies' ships. The Library officially opened its doors in September 1920, in the beautiful Palazzo Salviati on the historic Corso Umberto. Its shelves now accommodate over 12,000 volumes, made up of works which either distinctly treat of American life and institutions, or have been written by American authors; the latter relate to every imaginable subject.

The section on American history is particularly rich. Here the Italian student may follow the absorbing story of America step by step, from the colonial period, through the first years of national independence, up to the contemporary intensive, industrial epoch. The

student who has an inclination for American literature will find on the shelves the works (in the best editions) of Emerson, Longfellow, Whitman, Whittier, Poe, Irving, Mark Twain and all the other celebrated authors who have given America a native literature of world renown.

The fascinating study of biography can be followed here in the many volumes on Americans whose lives furnish an inspiration for all humanity. The Library is particularly rich in material on Washington, Franklin, Lincoln and Roosevelt, offering the best works on these and other great Americans.

Many enterprises have been carried out in America that merit the attention of the world. For example, the construction of the Panama Canal is one of the greatest engineering feats in history. Its construction and administration are illustrated here in a most exhaustive bibliography. The same can be said of the American railroad system, of industrial enterprise in general, and of the subject of immigration which particularly interests Italians today. The Library, although aiming to specialize in the practical works of modern life, does not neglect the important fields covered by the classics, science, and art. But of special importance to Italian students are the numerous publications on American business and finance.

The collection of books, pamphlets and governmental publications, to which accessions are constantly being made, is accurately and comprehensively catalogued according to author, title and material, following the system of the Congressional Library at Washington, so that in a moment one can have at one's disposal a quite ample bibliography on any given American topic. With this aid it has been possible in the last three or four years for several students of Italian universities to select American subjects in their work for doctorates, a selection which had been impossible in the past, from want of American books. It is to be noted, however, that the books of the American Library are made available to professors, writers and students not only of Rome, but of all the university cities of Italy, to which, through the generous collaboration of the Ministry of Public Instruction and of the University of Rome, they are loaned upon request, free of expense.

In acquisition of books the Library has received generous assistance from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in the form of 1500 volumes. The Harvard Press, the Yale Press and the Chicago University Press have also contributed their own publications liberally, the Universities of Illinois, Minnesota and Michigan and the Wisconsin Historical Society quite munificently, while other universities and learned societies have, in lesser number, also donated many valuable works. The reading room, with its hundred periodicals, has been largely developed by General Edward T. Donnelly, military attaché of the Embassy. Another indefatigable worker has been Mr. Henry Coit MacLean, commercial attaché, who, though a very busy diplomat, has served as secretary and treasurer since the foundation of the institution and has always found time to advance the interests of this, his

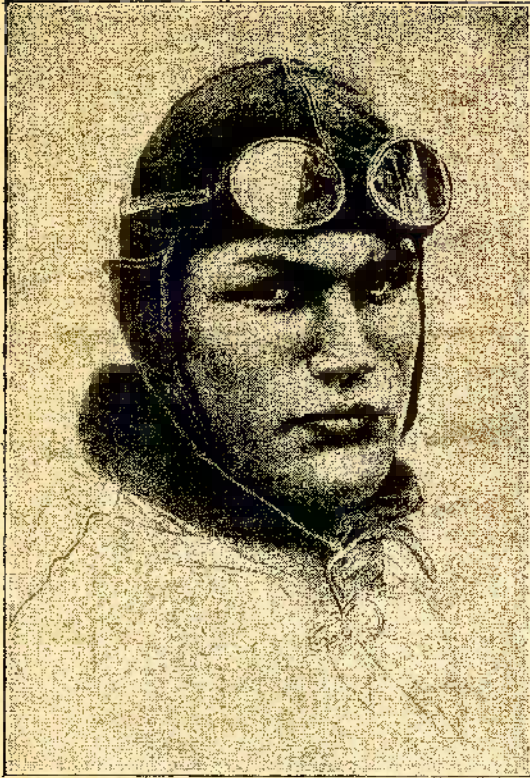
favorite, work undertaken along lines of international understanding and collaboration. Comm. Walter S. Cramp of Philadelphia, well known in Rome as a patron of literature and music, is also an enthusiast of the Library and has been very active in obtaining support for it; the three American Ambassadors who have been accredited to Rome during the four years that have elapsed since the opening of the Library, and who, by virtue of office, have been successively Chairman of the Board of Trustees, have all heartily collaborated in its activities and progress. Progress has been, indeed, notable. Thanks to the broad-minded policy followed by the Trustees, the Library, under Comm. Gay's direction, has won for itself a unique place in Italy's community of letters: attendance which in 1921 was 1,600, rose in 1922 to 3,000, in 1923 to 3,600, and in 1924 to 4,600, so that it has become necessary



Washington offers his musket to Garibaldi who goes forth to *redeem Italy or die.*
 From the photograph of a very rare print in the Library for American Studies in Italy.

this winter to double seating capacity for the students as well as shelf space for the books.

Furthermore the activities of the Library have been extended far beyond its own walls. A committee, named by the Trustees, is working to facilitate the acquisition of leading American scientific and other periodicals by Italian libraries. The committee is acting in this as the agent of the American Library As-



William H. Cheney

sociation which has placed a number of subscriptions at its disposal. At the same time the committee is preparing a list of about two hundred of the leading periodicals of Italy to be circulated among American libraries with the purpose of stimulating the acquisition of Italian reviews on the other side of the Atlantic.

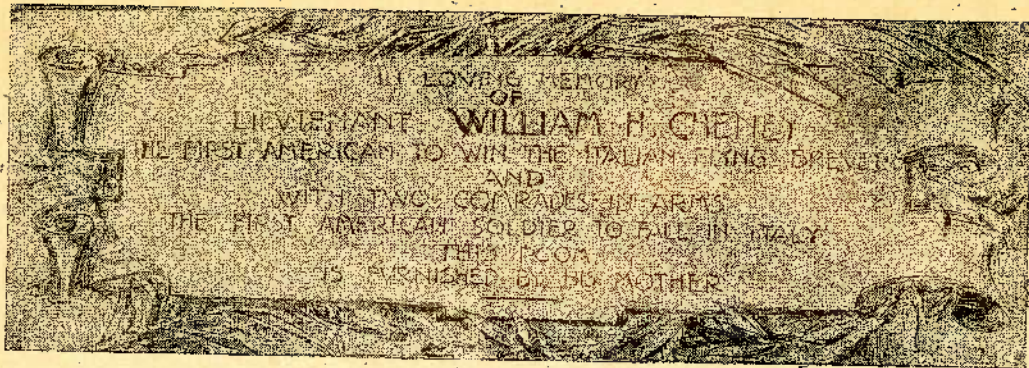
The Trustees have also appointed another committee to facilitate the study of the monumental villas of Italy by Americans. This committee includes among its members Gr. Uff. Arduino Colasanti and Gr. Uff. Luigi

Parpagliolo, director and vice-director respectively of the government Department of Fine Arts. The Department is kindly circularizing nearly five hundred villas for the committee.

As may be judged from the Library's activities already enumerated, the Americans who have founded and developed it are sincere admirers of Modern Italy. Indeed, it is their pride that in establishing their institution they have founded not only a library on America, but also a library in which Americans may study Italy, it being thus in the broadest sense a Library for American Studies in Italy. One entire room is given up to an important collection of books on Italy, particularly books in the English language, which serve to inform Americans who come to Rome with regard to present conditions of the country, both economic and cultural.

No description of the Library for American Studies would be complete without some mention of the striking portrait which adorns the large reading room. It is a portrait of the late Lieut. William H. Cheney, gallant and intrepid aviator of the United States Army, a knight of the air, drawn with his visor up. Lieutenant Cheney was the first American to win the Italian flying brevet and, with two comrades in arms, the first American soldier to give his life for Italy.

Visitors and students who go to the Library find a warm welcome also extended them by the Associazione Italo-Americana in Palazzo Salviati. The Library and the Associazione, while in no way affiliated administratively or financially, have a common membership roll and conduct many activities together, in their common purpose of fostering and augmenting better relations between Italy and the United States. Each organization owes not a little of its success to the collaboration of the other. For instance every year the Associazione conducts, under the auspices of the Roman University, a summer school for Americans. This school embraces courses that are most interesting and practical, including Italian art, history, archaeology, economics, Italian industrial and social development, as well as the cultural and economic relations between Italy and the United States. The Library with its books and publications aids extensively in these courses; in fact, without the cooperation of the Library the summer school would



Memorial Tablet to be placed in Reading Room that was furnished by Mrs. William H. Schofield, mother of the late Lieut. William H. Cheney.

not have come into existence. It is conducted under the able management of Prof. Carlo Formichi of the University of Rome. This is the course planned by Comm. Omero Ranelletti, an Italian educator of rare tact and ability, whose unselfish and untiring efforts in behalf of the Associazione of which he is the honorary manager, have won for him the affectionate esteem of all his collaborators, both American and Italian. It is to him also that the success of the work of the Library committee on Italian villas is largely due; and it was he who conceived and has developed the courses in American business and finance which are held each winter, in part at Palazzo Salviati and in part at the Royal Institute of Commerce; in these courses eighty Italian students were enrolled last year.

On June 23, 1923, the Associazione offered a banquet to the then American ambassador

Richard Washburn Child and to Benito Mussolini, Prime Minister of Italy. In closing this brief outline of the activities of the Library and the Associazione we quote from the speech of Baron Sardi delivered on that occasion:

« The victorious fraternity of arms has already linked Americans and Italians in indissoluble bonds on the field of battle. Our soldiers, now returned to the peaceful spheres of industry and culture, contribute with enthusiasm to the intensification of spiritual communion between our peoples, to the mutual understanding of the virtues and moral values of the two countries, to a clearer vision of just national aspirations. It is our hope and aim that our Associazione may serve to strengthen the ties between our countries, promoting more intimate relations between the most cultured and patriotic spirits of both ».