

The Midwife.

PRAYER FOR THE USE OF MIDWIVES.

Lord, grant that in this child I see
Image of Immortality.
That I may find in every place
The little confines of Thy Grace.
Grant me to know that Father here
To Whom the smallest child is dear ;
And this Thou hast begun to-day
Make beautiful and free, I pray.
Guard him in childhood so that he
Shall ever shine courageously ;
And let his unspoilt being hold
In fettered freedom to Thy Fold.
Make strong his arm and true his tongue
O Lord from Whom all Truth is sprung.
In joyous service let him find
The treasures of Thy lovely Mind.
Make glad all mothers for this day
In all sweet babes for whom I pray.

HILARY H. RIGGALL.

ITALY'S NATIONAL INSTITUTION FOR MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

MUSSOLINI ADVOCATES HEALTHIER CHILDREN.

Among the many Fascist enterprises which have radically changed Italy's physiognomy of late, foremost, in importance, ranks the National Institution for Maternity and Child Welfare—*Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia*—otherwise known as the "O.N.M.I."

In this field, also, Mussolini sets an example to the world. He considers the promotion of healthier generations, both physically and morally, a political problem, as well as an eugenic and demographic one. And, owing to his rare insight, he realises that the State cannot and should not disinterest itself in activities that aim at increasing the prestige of the nation.

Hence, the law issued December 10th, 1925, enforcing better methods and co-ordinating Maternity and Child welfare initiatives under State control, represents one of the Regime's greatest achievements, most modern in its conception and with a distinct Fascist imprint.

In many countries, the Maternity and Child Welfare problem represents, merely, a normal problem of public charity. In the Fascist State, instead, the conception arose of the individual as a part of the collectivity, not as an end to himself, but as a normal, intellectual and active part of a homogeneous whole. Hence, the need of assisting each single part of this whole, from the initial stages of life, became rather than a normal problem of philanthropic assistance a right of the citizen and a duty of the State.

In this, as in all other Fascist initiatives, the interests of the State result from the sum total of the interests of individuals.

In fact, it is on the physical and moral welfare of the new generations that depends the physical and moral strength of the entire nation.

A great difference is to be found between the methods adopted by the Soviet and Fascist governments in dealing with these problems. In Russia, the State actually rears the offspring of the nation, while in Italy, the State gives

only temporary assistance. Hence, it has a highly educative purpose, for it aims at helping individuals to help themselves, and thus develops among the poorer classes a sense of personal dignity to face the struggle for existence, emphasising the duty of parents to care for their children.

Charity, while ennobling the giver, yet often wounds the sensibility and tends to crush all personal dignity in those who are the object of it. Therefore, Fascism does not readily encourage charities nor grant doles, but strives to awaken in individuals all possible latent energies, to bring about individual contributions in the building up of the nation.

Poverty, in itself, does not necessarily entitle one to assistance, except when accompanied by a state of abandonment, viz., when deprived of anyone who could or ought to furnish means for maintenance. Hence, each case is most carefully looked into, not to encourage shiftless irresponsibility.

Now how does this National Institution help millions of Mothers and children ?

Throughout Italy to-day it has established any number of "*Consultori Ostetrici*," obstetrical consulting-rooms, where expectant mothers can get advice and counsel, free of charge, from specialised medical staffs. Alongside of these are lunch-rooms for them, where is served not merely ordinary food, but dietetic nourishment, following individual medical prescriptions, thus favouring the growth and development of the child.

Then there are also the "*Consultori Pediatrici*," children's consulting-rooms, not along the lines of a first-aid ambulatory, but rather of a prophylactic character and with the distinct aim of assisting infants in the first period of their life.

This vast organisation is under the supervision of the 93 Provincial Federations, as well as of Committees of Patronage, of which there is at least one in every county, the latter largely made up of women volunteer workers. To them falls the delicate task of choosing the really needy cases, which after being duly authenticated, are granted help and assistance.

Special attention is given, also, to abnormal as well as depraved children, and the laws and regulations, inherent to Minors, in the new Penal Code of Italy greatly aid all endeavours to this end.

While bringing specific improvements to all Maternity and Child Welfare concerns, this National Institution points very clearly to the fact that the first to be assisted in the light of these new ideals and methods, is the expectant Mother. For the Mother, in the Fascist legislation, is considered a most important factor in the life of the nation.

Mussolini said : "The mother and child must be honoured for it means honouring the greatest values of the nation." And by so doing, he has strengthened those fundamental institutions—the family, the home—and exalted women in the light of motherhood. He fully approves of the poet's words—"The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." In fact, in few countries are maternity laws concerning women labourers more protective than in Italy, where factory nurseries also leave nothing to be desired.

On May 8th, 1927, another law was passed for compulsory assistance to illegitimate children, when recognised and nursed by the mother. It is thanks to this law that some 83,000 mothers have been assisted and their children kept by them when otherwise they would have been abandoned. This measure has been adopted to encourage

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