

## Favors From 'Good Signora'

# Golden Haired Clare Luce Is Vastly Popular in Italy

BY JOHN P. LEACACOS.

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ROME, July 6.—With her hair the soft glow of golden wheat, United States Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce at times looks like a porcelain figure of a fairy godmother. The ironic fact of real life is that apparently many Italians do so consider her.

As a result, Mrs. Luce needs five American aides—diplomatic, social, personal, household and appointments—plus four Italian secretaries to help her through her terrible schedule. The 400-odd personnel of the American embassy are on hand also to assist official performance of her duties.

During the week-end some 400 letters arrive regularly, asking Mrs. Luce everything from the moon on a silver platter down to pleas for money from bankrupts. Dozens of orphanages crave to be adopted by the "good Signora Luce."

Convicts in jail beg her intervention for clemency on sentences imposed by wartime Allied courts. Others wheedle her favor for MSA allocations, say, a little \$80,000 "loan." Begging letters to date add up to \$400,000 in sums requested.

### MOST PICTURESQUE.

As the most picturesque ambassador ever to hit Italy, Mrs. Luce naturally had a tremendous advance buildup. In fact, it was such as seemingly to have convinced the credulous poor that the "lovely great American lady" had the magic touch to put all wrongs to rights.

Peasants from mountain villages, mayors from distant towns, haughty nobles from ancient families drop in to request audiences with the new American ambassador. Many simply hope to obtain visas for the States by thus going over the heads of local officials.

Others just want to shake Mrs. Luce's hand and congratulate her. More than 3,000 Italians have written their felicitations on her new job. Mrs. Luce replies to all.

At least 20 visiting Americans a day ask the Marine guard at the Palazzo Margherita on Via Veneto (which houses the United States embassy) where to find Mrs. Luce. Most have letters from big shots back home. Almost every letter asks Mrs. Luce to set up an audience with Pope Pius XII.

A convert to Catholicism by

Bishop Fulton, Sheen in 1946, Mrs. Luce thus gets put on the spot. Her aides have to explain very firmly that the American embassy to Italy has nothing to do officially with the Holy See, to which the United States has no representative.

If it isn't touring Americans, supplicant Italians or the nearly 30 reporters who've asked for interviews, it's protocol which eats up Mrs. Luce's hours. She's had to call on 60 ranking ambassadors and ministers and in turn receive their calls. Mrs. Luce also gave herself an extra chore—the non-obligatory courtesy of calling on each of the 60 diplomats' wives.

Roman society buzzes constantly about La Luce. Gossip columnists fill reams of copy in the smart weeklies. Here are a few of the topics concerning La Luce (as Italians call her):

And where is dear Henry? This refers to Henry R. Luce, editor in chief and principal owner of the Time, Life and Fortune publications. Henry is Mrs. Luce's husband. He spends half his time in Rome.

Luce looks like an amiable bear as he accompanies his wife, Mrs. Ambassador (her correct title), to various functions. He rates the "assimilated" rank of minister. This means he sits below the salt with the junior diplomats. Mrs. Luce, of course, rates the best seats at table.

Luce's Time and Life gave the Italian election campaign probably the best coverage of any American press organ. This did La Luce no harm with the Italian upper classes at least.



CLARE BOOTHE LUCE  
... she's fairy godmother.

## Farm and Home

