

## ITALY'S ADMIRABLE PUBLIC HEALTH ACT.

**L**AST year Italy made a great stride in public health legislation and has now what is probably the most complete sanitary system in the world. A good example for Canada. It has been designated by English sanitarians as a masterpiece of scientific legislation, a "complete code in outline, the details of which can be from time to time filled in without necessitating the repeal of a single clause," strongly contrasting with many clumsy and imperfect efforts in the same direction. Two ideas.

Besides the care of the public health the act provides for the medical relief of the poor, the hygienic aspects of manufacturing and other industries, the health of the army, navy, and mercantile marine, the control of the sale of food, the purity of water supplies, diseases of domestic animals, the pollution of rivers, the practice of medicine and pharmacy, registration of births and deaths, all of which are co-ordinate and inter-dependent branches of one great department of social economy and legislation.

The control of the public health is not to be entrusted to boards elected by popular suffrage or other issues than that of *special fitness*; the boards are to be distinct from the local authorities, be composed of experts in the several branches of the science and art, and be, together with the higher sanitary officials, appointed by an independent authority, viz., the Crown, so as to be uninfluenced by the fear or favour of the rate-payers and the public, over whose interests they have to watch.

Instead of the precarious method of "catching" a dealer in provisions or drugs unawares, or, more often, on the alert, the Italian law enjoins a deliberate inspection of all his wares at uncertain intervals, while the penalties, fines, and imprisonment, are much heavier than in most other countries.

A noteworthy feature of the Act is the judicious balance of the relative claims of central control and of local self-govern-

ment, with a corresponding distribution of the fiscal burdens.

While the administration of the public health in the widest meaning of the word devolves on the Ministry of the Interior, the prefects of the provinces, and the syndics of towns and communes, the minister and the prefects respectively are advised by a superior and provincial councils appointed by the Crown, (somewhat as advocated by this JOURNAL for this Dominion) composed of specially qualified physicians, engineers, chemists, pharmacutists, veterinarians, jurists, and members conversant with administrative business; the medical and engineering members varying in number with the population of the provinces, and each of the other professions having but a single representative. The heads for the time being of the medical services of the army, navy, and mercantile marine, the agricultural department and statistical office, with a principal law officer of the crown, were *ex-officio* members of the superior council. The provincial medical officers of health are appointed by the crown on the recommendation of the superior council, are restricted to such practice as is consistent with their official duties, and are irremovable *dum se bene gesserit*, the members of the provincial councils being appointed by the crown for three years, but eligible for re-appointment. The inferior or communal medical officers of health are appointed for three years, renewably, by the provincial boards, from the most competent in their opinion, of the practitioners in their districts.

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THE Traction Company, of Philadelphia which controls the majority of the street car lines have had cards conspicuously placed in all their cars to the effect that "spitting in cars is positively forbidden." This rule it is said has resulted from the publication of the fact that the expectoration of consumptives contains the seeds of the disease.