

MARCO BESSO COLLECTION

Marco Besso was born in 1843 into a wealthy family of Jewish merchants who came to Trieste from Piraeus. His family background, the schools he attended and the geographical position of the city gave him a cosmopolitan education, and he learned several languages. In 1863, aged 20, he was employed by Assicurazioni Generali in Venice. From then on his career flourished.

The Company asked him to study the possibilities for development of the marine branch and to conduct research into life assurance and the associated actuarial methods, and Besso, with his brilliant intuitions, made a personal contribution to the field.

In Florence he became friendly with famous Dalmatian author Niccolò Tommaseo, whose enthusiasm for Dante was contagious, and Besso collected and studied Dante's works until the end of his days (fig. 1) *.

During that period he furthered his actuarial studies and conducted original research into the possibilities of developing social insurance. This work came to the attention of the government, which appointed him to conduct other studies on mutual aid societies and funds.

Besso became Secretary-General of Assicurazioni Generali in 1877, and was elected its Chairman in 1909.

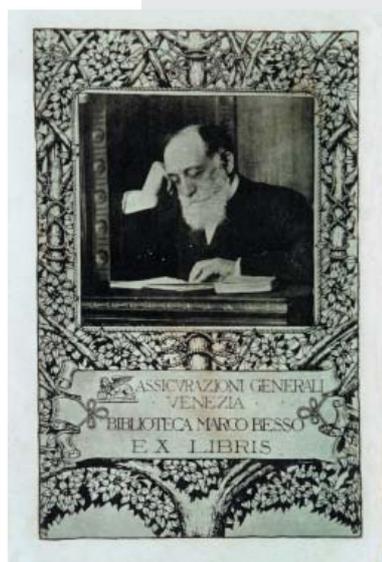
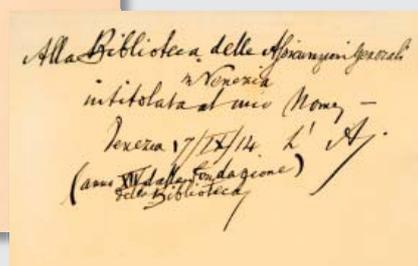
The collection named after him, housed in the Head Office Library, comprises approximately 2000 monographs in Italian, English, French and German on insurance, economics, history and literary subjects collected by Besso during the long period when he worked for Assicurazioni Generali. He himself wrote some books included in the collection. Some of the volumes were transferred from the Venice Library to Trieste, while others were donated to the Central Library by the Marco Besso Foundation in Rome (fig. 2) (fig. 3).

The collection includes numerous works on the development of the various branches of insurance, especially social security, in Germany in the second half of the 19th century, demonstrating the commencement of compulsory social insurance schemes in Germany in the last quarter of the century (fig. 4).



1
La fortuna di Dante fuori d'Italia, Roma, Biblioteca Besso editrice (1912).

Handwritten dedication by Marco Besso on the frontispiece: to the Assicurazioni Generali Library in Venice named after me, Venice 17/IX/14. (14th year since the Library's foundation)



2
Ex libris of Marco Besso



3
Rubber stamp of Marco Besso Library, Venice



4
From *Das Reichs-Versicherungsamt und die deutsche Arbeiterversicherung*, Berlin, Behrend (1910), plates 170 and 171

* All documents reported in the images are property of Assicurazioni Generali Central Library (Trieste) unless otherwise specified