

ARE THE ITALIANS A DANGEROUS CLASS?

ALTHOUGH the existence of dangerous classes in the United States is perhaps undisputed, opinions differ in regard to what elements of our population should be classed as dangerous. Much depends upon who is using the term. The unemployed and the idle rich hurl the epithet at each other. The A. P. A.'s and the Roman Catholics would hardly agree upon its application. In every case, however, the idea meant to be conveyed by "Dangerous Class" is doubtless the same, namely, a class hostile to our institutions or to the best interests of our civilization, and which is, or is sure to become, a disturbing element.

Of our immigrants the most refractory are undoubtedly the Italians. This fact with certain other characteristics makes them in the eyes of many the worst of all our immigrants. Their rapid increase within the last few years has called forth the most dismal forebodings from the American press, and the opinion has become current that individually and collectively they are a very dangerous people. And thus it is that the adjectives lazy, filthy, cruel, ferocious, bloodthirsty, and the like, are supposed to be particularly applicable to this class of immigrants. No epithet is too insulting to apply to the "Dago."*

There is of course a certain justification for this opinion. Blood-curdling stories about the secret society known as the Mafia are circulated. The conspiracy a few years ago in New Orleans resulting in the assassination of the Chief of Police and the bloody retaliation of the Americans, has not been forgotten. Italian laborers occasionally engage in a strike, in which case their excitable disposition is likely to give them more notoriety than their number would seem to warrant. Frequent stabbing affrays among them have led many to think of the Italian and the stiletto as inseparable, a

* This term was originally used in the South to designate a descendant of the Spaniards who settled there. It is probably a corruption of "Diego," a proper name very frequent among them.

thought considerably strengthened by the recent assassination of the French President.

Now it cannot be denied that the Mafia exists, that Italians do sometimes resort to violence, nor that some of them have very inadequate conceptions of law and order. But bad things may be said about some of the representatives of every nationality, and perhaps after all the Italians are not so bad as their reputation. We certainly ought not to judge them by their worst element; and this we are likely to do. When we read, as in the Associated Press dispatches from the scene of the recent mining troubles, of the "enraged and violent Italians," "big ferocious looking Italians," and find them generally designated as Anarchists, we are likely to conclude, unless we are very ignorant of the Italian character, that strict veracity has been sacrificed to the exigencies of newspaper reporting. One thing is certain, the American press gives more space to the vices of Italians than to their virtues. It may be a question with some whether they have any virtues. To such it will appear strange to find anything said in their favor, and especially, that any one thinks it worth while to ask, "Are they a dangerous class?"

It is perhaps appropriate to say here that, being an American, I have no interest in the Italian element of our population other than humanitarian. It is not my purpose therefore to present an *ex parte* argument to prove Italian immigration desirable, or that these immigrants are in no sense a dangerous element. I wish only to present a few statistics and the facts of my own observation, and then leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

When we are told that during the decade 1880-90 Italian immigration increased 312 per cent., we are likely to conclude, especially if we look upon immigration from southern Europe as undesirable, that the number is becoming too large for rapid assimilation. A statement of per cent., however, may be misleading. All depends upon the basis of calculation. In the decade 1850-60 Austrian immigration increased 2549.15 per cent., and Chinese 4591.95 per cent., and yet the country was not over-run by these nationalities. With regard to the Italians, the fact is that in 1890 there were only 182,580 in the United States, less than half the number of Germans in

the city of Chicago. The following table will show the increase by decades since 1850 :

ITALIANS IN UNITED STATES.

1850.....	3,645	1880.....	44,230
1860.....	10,518	1890.....	182,580
1870.....	17,157		

Since 1880, as the table shows, the increase has been comparatively rapid. This is better shown by the following, from the U. S. Statistical Abstract for 1893, giving the yearly immigration from Italy, including Sicily and Sardinia, from 1880 to the present time :

1880.....	12,345	1887.....	47,622
1881.....	15,401	1888.....	51,558
1882.....	32,159	1889.....	25,307
1883.....	31,792	1890.....	52,003
1884.....	16,510	1891.....	76,055
1885.....	13,642	1892.....	62,137
1886.....	21,315	1893.....	72,916

Why this rapid increase? Undoubtedly the enterprise of bureaus of emigration, which are engaged in the philanthropic purpose of enriching themselves by violating our laws against the importation of contract labor, and the rivalry of steamship companies, which has greatly reduced the price of passage, have had something to do with it. And then, too, successful immigrants return to Italy and fire the imagination of the people by displays of their newly gained riches, and by stories of the ease with which they were acquired. But the increase is not entirely due to the discovery that the United States is a good place to come to. Italy is a splendid place for the poor man to leave. A few years ago Dr. Strong (*Our Country*, p. 48) wrote: "The Italians are worse fed than any other people in Europe save the Portuguese. The tax-collector takes 31 per cent. of the people's earnings. Many thousands of small proprietors have been evicted from the crown lands because unable to pay the taxes. The burden of taxation has become intolerable." This describes pretty well the condition to-day. The enormous sum necessary to maintain the large armies, and the consequent economic crisis which weighs so heavily upon all Europe, and especially upon Italy, induces the over-taxed peasantry to leave their native land. I have myself talked to immigrants who have rented

their farms in Italy without other compensation than the payment of taxes.

Taxation being one of the chief causes of immigration it should be expected that a great part of Italian immigration is from the rural districts. This is true. Perhaps nine-tenths are *contadini* or land laborers. Others are brick-masons, plasterers, white-washers, tailors, barbers, etc. There are also a few clerks and a few members of the liberal professions. Here is a summary of the classification of occupations of the arrivals during the year ending June 30th, 1892:

Professional.....	232
Skilled.....	4,948
Miscellaneous.....	32,957
Not stated.....	3
None.....	21,020
Total.....	59,160

Those described as miscellaneous, or as having no occupation, include the large class above referred to. It is a mistake to suppose that Italian immigrants are as a rule the "off-scourings" of their native land.

There is another prevalent misapprehension which should be corrected here. Inhabitants of southern Italy including Sicily, as compared with those of the north, have acquired a bad reputation. Sicily is the home of the Mafia. Now, it is commonly asserted that almost all our Italian population is from southern and insular Italy. How far this is from the truth will appear from the following table, showing the total emigration from the different parts of Italy for the year 1892:

	Permanent.	Temporary.	Total.	
Northern Italy. {	Piedmont.....	13,154	20,709	33,863
	Liguria.....	3,987	264	4,251
	Lombardy.....	13,051	8,851	21,902
	Venetia.....	19,664	63,113	82,777
	Emilia.....	3,309	2,591	5,900
	53,165	95,528	148,693	
Central Italy... {	Tuscany.....	5,806	5,895	11,701
	Marches.....	719	117	836
	Umbria.....	15	1	16
	Latium.....	120	4	124
	6,660	6,017	12,677	

	Permanent.	Temporary.	Total.	
Southern Italy.	Abruzzo and Molise..	6,838	2,207	9,045
	Campania.....	20,531	1,728	22,259
	Apulia.....	1,209	466	1,675
	Basilicata.....	7,024	303	7,327
	Calabria	9,733	290	10,013
		45,335	4,984	50,319
Insular Italy...	Sicily	11,435	477	11,912
	Sardinia.....	47	19	66
		11,482	496	11,978
Grand Total.....	116,642	107,025	223,667	

Total immigration from Northern and Central Italy..... 161,370
 Total immigration from Southern and Insular Italy..... 62,297
 Total permanent immigration from Northern and Central Italy. 59,825
 Total permanent immigration from Southern and Insular Italy. 56,817
 Total temporary immigration from Northern and Central Italy. 101,545
 Total temporary immigration from Southern and Insular Italy. 5,480

The division of emigrants into permanent and temporary is made by the Italian government. Permanent emigrants are those who go away for an indefinite time without intending to return to their native land; temporary, those who go abroad in search of work, intending to return. Now the figures in the third column show that out of the entire number of emigrants 161,370, or 72.15 per cent. were from the northern and central provinces, while 62,297, or 27.84 per cent. were from the south and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Only 62,137 of these emigrants landed in the United States. If we could assume that these were distributed in the same ratio as the total immigration we should have only about 17,000 from Southern and Insular Italy as compared with 45,000 from the center and north. This might not be a fair comparison, however, since so large a portion of emigration from the north was temporary.* But in both forms of emigration the north outranks the south. Popular opinion supposes Naples to furnish us a large and objectionable class. The total Neapolitan immigration however was only 3,236. This idea, then, that all our Italian immigrants are from southern Italy must be dismissed as a delusion.

Having now an idea of the number and character of our

*Notice that the claims that the bulk of our Italian immigration is from southern Italy, and that Italians do not come here to stay, are not consistent.

Italian population, let us inquire how it is distributed. All are agreed that among the Italians there is a strong tendency to concentrate. And many suppose that the entire drift of Italian immigration has lodged in a few of our large cities. On the contrary, Italians are found in every state and territory of the Union. New York contains the largest number, Pennsylvania the next, and California with 15,495 is third. The following from the census of 1890 will give an idea of their distribution by states:

DISTRIBUTION OF ITALIAN POPULATION IN 1890.

North Atlantic States.. .. .	118,621
South Atlantic States.....	4,894
North Central States.....	21,837
South Central States.....	12,314
Western States.....	24,914
	182,580

Turning our attention now to the distribution by cities, we find that in 1890 about fifteen cities had an Italian population of more than 1,200. New York City with 39,951 heads the list. But this is more than four times the number in any other city. In the 124 cities having a population of 25,000 or more there were 107,337, or 58.79 per cent. of the total Italian population. In our 50 largest cities there were 98,148 or 50.37 per cent. This is slightly less than the percentage in the same cities in 1880, which was 51.13. At that time the Italians constituted 1.16 per cent. of their total foreign population. In 1890 the latter percentage had risen to 2.85. These figures show that the tendency to congregate in cities, perhaps the most deplorable feature of Italian immigration, is not on the increase. From this time on for reasons that will appear later, one can safely predict that it will rapidly diminish.

So much for Italian immigration in general. Let us now turn our attention to the Italians themselves. And as they are everywhere pretty much alike, we may confine our observations to the Italians of Chicago.

The Italian element of Chicago is of recent and rapid growth. In 1870 the census report shows only 552 persons born in Italy. In 1880 the number had risen to 1,357, and ten years later to 9,921. Of course these figures based on nativities do not represent the real number present. Children of Italian parents

owing to their mode of life are Italians in every essential but birth. At present the Italian population is variously estimated from 25,000 to 50,000. A conservative estimate, I think, is 30,000. Here is material for the alarmist if he chooses to deal in percentages, for the percentage of increase since 1870 is 18,400. These 30,000 Italians are distributed in nuclei of various dimensions all over the city. At the presidential election in 1892 four wards registered more than 50 votes. These wards were the following:

Twenty-third.....	58
First.....	137
Seventeenth.....	208
Nineteenth.....	278

The nineteenth ward, which contains the largest Italian population, lies on the West Side, and is bounded by Van Buren street on the north, the Chicago River on the east, W. Twelfth street on the south, and on the west by Throop and Sibley streets. It contains an area of .822 square miles, and has 22.7 miles of streets. Its population, according to the school census of 1892, was 54,172. The subsequent increase may be safely estimated at 6,000, making the population of the ward at present about 60,000. This population is a most interesting conglomerate. The total vote cast in the presidential election of 1892 was 9,155. This analyzed, is as follows:

Irish.....1,035	German.....721	Russians....477	Canadians....438
Bohemians. 468	English.....285	Italian.....278	Austrian....187
Scotch..... 99	Swedes..... 39	Poles..... 38	French..... 35
Hollanders.. 35	Norwegians..18	Danes..... 14	All others.... 61

The ward is credited, also, with 56 Mongolians and a few Greeks and Armenians. The section in which the Italians dwell lies east of Halsted street, between that street and the river. It contains about one-third of the area of the ward, and perhaps about two-thirds of the population. There are, then, in this part of Chicago about 120,000 people to the square mile, a dense population for Chicago, but, of course, not to be compared with the most thickly settled parts of New York, where they have over 380,000 to the square mile.

I choose this Italian settlement, not simply because it is typical, but also, because it is the largest in Chicago, and contains chiefly Italians of the lowest class. By general consent

it has received the name "Little Italy." The line of densest concentration lies along Ewing street, running east and west. Here, on a summer evening, one may get an idea of the density of the population, for they are all out; men, women and children, crowding the doorsteps, the sidewalks, and even the streets. On observing the small, tumble-down houses, one asks, "Where in the world did they all come from?" The fastidious eye quickly observes the filth in the streets, the dirty aspect of both houses and people, and the general appearance of squalor on all sides. People with sensitive olfactory nerves are likely to find little pleasure in the spectacle. The sidewalks contain an orderly array of well-filled garbage boxes. In walking from Halsted street to the river, a distance of four blocks, I counted seventy-one boxes, capacious, and most of them well filled, all on the sidewalk. They are placed there by the city. Our Irish authorities seem to think anything is good enough for these "furriners." In spite of their thoughtful provision, much of the garbage remains to defile the streets and to send visitors away with the idea that nothing good can come out of "Little Italy." But after all, there are some elements of poetry in the scene. I doubt whether Goldsmith had anything better upon which to base his beautiful description of

"Sweet Auburn! Loveliest village of the plain."

One may see groups of men in full enjoyment of health and strength engaged in playful banter or intent upon the achievement of some feat of skill,—for the drinks, to be sure, but that would probably be overlooked by the poet. Mothers with unconcealed enjoyment are watching the frolics of children who in spite of their surroundings are having a happy time. Strong men, good looking girls, happy children, parental affection, friendship, love and courtship, are all in the picture along with the disagreeable features. There is plenty of color and, I was about to say music, but that would be too great a stretch of poetic license.

Before making a closer acquaintance with these people let us review briefly their chief characteristics. Their physical appearance is too well known to need elaborate description. In stature they are usually below the average. Wiry is the

term commonly used to describe the Italian physique, but those of the lower class are usually of stout build, dark hair, and swarthy complexion. But on Ewing street you may see now and then fair complexion and auburn hair. Somehow these unusual features never figure in stories of Italian violence. Perhaps they do not lend themselves to the purposes of the reporter. It is always a dark or swarthy "villain." We should never be horrified by an account concerning "a big, ferocious looking, red-headed Italian."

As to the women the older ones usually present a miserable appearance, but the girls with their dark eyes, white teeth and olive complexion are often decidedly pretty. All like a good deal of color in their dress, and are extravagantly fond of cheap jewelry. The little girls dress exactly like their elders, and consequently look like small pocket editions of their mothers.

With all their ignorance the Italians are very bright. They are shrewd, highly imaginative, voluble, and volatile, expansive and explosive. Over a trivial incident they grow excited, all talk at once, and bluster and gesticulate as if it were a matter of great moment. Morally much may be said in their favor. They are sober, industrious and economical. To strangers they are uniformly polite. Their experience with Americans has taught them to be suspicious, but their confidence once gained they are affable and hospitable. All Italians are proud, and high-spirited, and, when ill-treated, are defiant and revengeful. Amongst the women there is very little of the coarser commercial forms of vice. Emphatically, Italians are not lazy and thriftless. I do not forget that they are dirty as well as economical, but I do not allow the dirt to hide their better qualities. On this subject I shall have more to say later on. All I am concerned with at present is to sketch the outline of a picture which we may now proceed to fill in. Let us begin with an account of their family life.

If we walk down Ewing street at a time when the inhabitants are within, and stop to knock at one of the greasy doors, we shall be greeted with an unanimous "Come in!" All Italians have learned to speak that much English. On entering we are likely to find half a dozen men at a table playing cards, a woman busy at some household industry, and three or

four children who take advantage of any unoccupied territory. If it happens to be wash-day, we are likely to find the clothes hung out on lines stretched from wall to wall, making it necessary for us to dodge about as we move toward the chairs offered us. After sitting down and looking about us we find we are in the main room, parlor, sitting-room, dining-room, wash-room and bed-room all in one. Usually there is an extra bed-room, sometimes two. Besides the table and chairs, there are two or three old trunks, a bed, a stove, a decrepit sofa and two or three pieces of carpet. On the walls we may see a few old prints, saints perhaps, or highly colored chromos used to advertise some brand of groceries. A railroad map or a flashy advertisement may also serve for ornamentation. While we have been making this mental inventory, the *padre* has disappeared, and he now returns with a pail of beer, a glass of which each of us is expected to drink. Our refusal is interpreted as an indication of a more highly developed gastronomical taste than this simple beverage is designed to satisfy. Will we have some wine? No? Whisky? No? Well, then, smoke a cigar. Our continued refusal convinces him that we have no desire to be sociable, and he becomes suspicious. If we desire the acquaintance of that family it is probable that we shall have to call again. I have had to refuse hospitalities three or four times before I could make a family understand that I meant to be friendly without taking the preliminary steps which they thought essential.

Who are all these people who constitute an Italian family? Besides the parents and children, and perhaps a daughter-in-law or son-in-law, there are almost sure to be a few boarders, kinsmen or friends whose wives are either not yet selected or have not been brought over from Italy. As a consequence, the rooms being small and few, human beings in the Italian quarter are packed somewhat closely together.

My observations do not lead me to the conclusion that the number in an Italian family is above the average. The same is not true of the average number of people to a dwelling. In Chicago in 1890 the average number to a dwelling was 8.26, and the average family 5.01. In a tenement house containing 48 families and 350 people, or about 7 to the family, I found the real average to be only about 4. In 83 families taken at

random, the average number of children was 2.84. From these figures, it is safe, I think, to say that the rapidity of increase among our Italian population has not a threatening aspect.

A somewhat closer study of the Italian family will repay us. "The family," says Mr. H. B. Adams, "oldest of institutions, perpetually reproduces the ethical history of man, and reconstructs the constitution of society." And continuing, he points out the fact that school and college, town and city, state and nation are after all but modified types of family institutions, and the true method of advancing sociology is to study this element of social life. Let us then inquire as to the relations of the personal elements of a typical Italian family, and the economic, social and educational factors that are visible.

In the first place, the Italian marries for love. No prudential consideration, not even a visible means of support, is a prerequisite to matrimonial alliance. His married life is, therefore, likely to begin with one small room and a banana, but there is pretty sure to be conjugal love and constancy. The infrequency of divorce among Italians is not due entirely to their religion. In the home the wife is treated with consideration and respect. She is expected to be a helpmeet, and there are no nice scruples about the kind of work she shall do. Usually she manufactures macaroni, sausage and other edibles, and spends her spare moments in doing patch-work. But often she is an outdoor laborer, picking rags, selling fruit, or accompanying her husband on his hand-organ excursions. All who are in the slightest degree acquainted with Italian life bear testimony to the virtue of Italian women. It is only a suggestion, of course, but of the 2,439 women reported to have been received in the New York Florence Crittenden Mission for the ten years ending April 19th, 1893, only three were Italian. To the honor of Italian women let it be said they fill neither our police stations nor our brothels. This is due not simply to the jealous guardianship of Italian husbands, but to the discipline of the home. Young girls are trained to habits of obedience, and are not allowed the unprotected freedom of American girls, which is to say the least a questionable good. As a sample of the wild statements made concerning Italians, take an article which recently appeared in

the *Chicago American* in which it is stated that in Italy 21 per cent. are born out of wedlock. The actual percentage as given in our consular reports for May, 1892, is 7.5.

Before passing from this subject I wish to dispel another illusion, and that is in regard to the age at which Italians marry. You will be told that the girls are married before they are 16, and that marriage at 13 and 14 is a common occurrence. The latest Italian census shows that more men marry between the ages of 24 and 26, and more women between 20 and 22 than at any other age. In the Italian quarter of Chicago about one hundred families taken at random showed only one woman married at 14 and but one man at 18. Girls until they are 18, and boys until they are 21, turn their earnings into the family till, and parents therefore discourage their marriage until they have reached their majority.

This leads me to speak of the economic phase of the Italian family. Every member is expected to earn something. The father is a laborer, rag-picker, fruit-vender, peddler. Whatever he is he works hard at his business. Boys sell papers and black boots. Girls manufacture various articles of use and beauty. It is very difficult to estimate the family income and expenses. No account is kept and I have so far found it impossible to have them do so. I thought that in one case I had succeeded, but found that various items had been omitted. There were a good many "little things," they said, which they didn't suppose I cared about. According to the best I could find out here is the way a family of my acquaintance, consisting of nine persons, four adults and five children, managed to make both ends meet in the month of January, 1894.

The family had three small rooms on the second floor of a tenement house. The father was ill with the bronchitis, his brother earned the money, and an old gentleman, the wife's father, was out of work. The two oldest children were in school. I doubt whether the account given me is absolutely correct. I remember now that one day when I was present they had tomatoes for dinner and they do not appear in the bill. It is probable too that there was a small expenditure for beer. Italians have a particularly strong prejudice against Chicago water.

INCOME.

Earnings of one adult (peddler).....	\$ 19 12
Aid from County \$1.50 per week.....	6 00
Total.....	\$ 25 12

EXPENSES.

Rent.....	8 00
Fuel.....	3 00
Doctor.....	1 00
Medicine.....	50
Groceries, etc.--	
Cabbage.....	\$ 60
Macaroni.....	1 60
Soup bones.....	45
Milk.....	60
Bread.....	3 40
Meat.....	1 00
Rice.....	20
Sugar.....	60
Coffee.....	60
Potatoes.....	1 00
Eggs.....	40
Lard.....	25
Kerosene.....	32
Fish.....	60
Beans.....	40
Cheese.....	60— 12 62
	<u>\$25 12</u>

As showing the variety of food I give also the grocery bill for one month of another family of two persons, a man and his wife:

Bread.....	\$ 52	Olives.....	\$ 10
Macaroni.....	1 03	Tobacco.....	09
Beans.....	25	Sugar.....	10
Fish.....	32	Eggs.....	09
Sausage.....	03	Soap.....	10
Kerosene.....	20	Sweet oil.....	10
Candle.....	05	Grapes.....	05
Nuts.....	10	Lamp chimney.....	06
Cake.....	01	Cheese.....	05
Pepper.....	10		
		Total.....	\$3 35

Here again I cannot be sure how much is not included in the bill. The absence of fruit, except grapes, is suspicious. Some will be surprised to find soap among the other items.

The inference likely to be drawn from these two illustrations is a true one. The standard of living in the average Italian family is very low. Many of them, especially those who know anything about the American standard, realize it and long for something better. But it is the exceptional Italian who has

ever seen from the inside an American home. One of the most surprising phenomena to be observed in the Italian quarter is the dense ignorance of everything American, except money getting. Coming from Italy with their tastes and habits fixed, they reproduce in the midst of our civilization the life to which they have been accustomed. By comparison we find that their food here is pretty much the same as in Italy. According to our Consular Report for May, 1892, the kind and amount of food consumed per week by a workman in Italy were as follows :

	Central Italy.	Northern Italy.	Southern Italy.
Meat.....	1.65 lbs.	5 oz.	11 oz.
Bread.....	10.38 lbs.	4.41 lbs.	13.88 lbs.
Macaroni.....	1.98 lbs.	4.41 lbs.	6.61 lbs.
Meal.....	3.09 lbs.	8.82 lbs.	
Cheese,.....	9 oz.	5 oz.	
Rice.....	1.87 lbs.	1.1 lbs.	5 oz.
Salt beef or fish.....	9 oz.	5 oz.	2.21 lbs.
Vegetables.....	4.41 lbs.	4.41 lbs.	8.82 lbs.
Wine.....	4 to 5 qts.	1 qt.	

At first thought it may be surprising that the higher wages in this country do not lead the Italian workman to a higher plane of living. But higher wages are largely offset by increased expenses and by the uncertainty of employment. In Chicago the Italian laborer does not expect work for more than half the year. His yearly earnings are therefore likely to fall within \$150. In many cases it is as low as \$110. During the last winter getting employment was out of the question, consequently income in most families was measured by charity.

When I said income was dependent upon charity I did not mean municipal and other outside charity, for as long as they have anything to share Italians keep their relatives and friends. Sociability is one of their strong characteristics. Formal visiting among them is not frequent, but they are so well acquainted that they are accustomed to walk into each other's home whenever they please, even without the formality of knocking. Such close relationships, although fatal to privacy, necessarily give rise to friendship with its consequent claims. Hence in time of need an Italian family, as a rule, looks first to friends. Last winter it was not uncommon to find two or three families living together in order to save rent, and often the burden of support rested on one family alone. While these

social relations help to knit an Italian community into a compact body, they serve also to make the family a strong unit, and this is not of itself a pathological condition.

As might be expected the educational influence of the family is not what it should be. While parents desire to have their children learn, they are too ignorant to realize their own duty or to appreciate education beyond its money value. It is often said that they have no care for the education of their children. I must assert that I have not found it so. In the poorest hovels I have seen the father painfully trying to collect his meager and scattered knowledge in order to teach his child; and I have learned that the best way to get on favorable terms with an Italian family is to offer to teach the children. As I have said, children are usually trained to habits of obedience and politeness. That they are trained to pilfer and steal, as we are sometimes told, is a mistake. If they get this training at all it is upon the street.

For fear I may draw too favorable a picture I will say again that I am purposely showing the good traits in Italian life, for in order that the picture may be true these traits must be emphasized. If I were inclined to take exceptional cases I could present the Italians in a very unfavorable light. I have seen families in which the degradation was indescribable. I have seen parents who encouraged their children in vice, and Italian children who needed no encouragement. But these, I say, are exceptional cases and if dwelt upon would be misleading. It may be said that, granting all that is claimed for the Italian family, the Italians as a class are a dangerous element in our civilization. It may be so. Let us try to get at the truth.

It must be admitted that ignorance must be classed as a factor which goes to make up a dangerous class. And Italians are ignorant. But how ignorant? Since 1859 Italy has had a compulsory education law. Until 1877, however, it was a dead letter. According to the *Annuario Statistico Italiano* for 1892 illiteracy in Italy since 1861 was as follows:

Census.	All Ages.	18-20 Years of Age.
1861.....	78.06	71.45
1871.....	72.96	62.53
1881.....	67.26	54.30
1891.....	55 to 60 (estimated) 42.00	

This showing is bad enough, but it is much better than their condition is usually represented. I have before me an article in which it is said that 85 per cent. of the Italians are illiterate. Here in Chicago I am inclined to think that the percentage is about 60.

But ignorance is not the worst charge made against the Italians. They are popularly supposed to be responsible for a large share of our drunkenness, pauperism and crime. The facts about this matter will be to some a surprise. In 1888 the deaths from alcoholism in Italy in 1,000,000 of population were 14, Russia 29, Ireland 29, England 50, Belgium 51, Sweden 65. In southern Italy they are only 1 in 100,000.* Here in Chicago one does not often see a drunken Italian. Beer is the favorite drink. It is usually bought by the pail and drunk at home. In prosperous times the average Italian will spend \$3 a month for this drink. As to criminality and pauperism the census of 1890 shows 82,329 prisoners in the United States. Of these only 38 had one or both parents Italian. Of the 73,045 paupers in our almshouses only 12 had one or both parents Italian. To show the condition here in Chicago I have constructed a table showing the standing of the principal nationalities in our penal and charitable institutions. I was unable to get the statistics from the various institutions for the same time, but the percentages are perhaps not greatly affected. It is impossible to get the number of arrests of each nationality. Owing to this fact the information in regard to criminality is not as full as one could wish. Criminals sent to the Bridewell are under 21 years of age. Although the Italians, as shown by table below, are exceeded by the Poles and Hollanders in the percentage of families relieved by the county, it must be admitted that they make a very bad showing. Two things however should be said in explanation: first, the actual Italian population is perhaps three times as great as the figures of the census upon which the computation is based; and second, the hard times of last winter, owing to the fact that so many Italians live just above the line of self-support, drove a great many to apply for aid. Of the 1,072 Italian families reported as receiving help, 727 or more than two-thirds applied during the months of Decem-

*Consular Reports 1892.

ber, January, February and March. The figures here given are in each case taken from the official reports:

NATIONALITY.	Population in 1890.	No. of families receiving aid from county from Jan. 1 1893 to April 30, 1894.	Per cent. of native population.	No. sent to county poor house for year ending Feb. 1, 1893.	No. per 1 000 of native population.	No. adjudged insane February 1, to December 1, 1893.	No. of families aided by Relief and Aid Society for year ending Oct. 31, 1893.	No. sent to Bridewell in 1892.	Children in Chicago orphan asylum 1892.	No. in Washington home for inebriates in 1893.
Germans.....	384,968	10,521	2.7	398	1.02	152	857	614	71	96
Americans.	292,463	6,625	2.2	851	2.90	174	680	6,067	182	823
Irish.....	215,534	8,548	3.9	754	3.49	85	787	1,209	45	310
Bobemians	54,209	5,116	9.4	58	1.09	21	197	59	.....	5
Poles.....	52,756	10,394	19.7	47	.89	21	220	96	.....	11
Scandinavians	45,877	3,365	7.3	218	4.75	75	478	207	23	47
English.....	33,785	1,026	3.0	91	2.69	18	310	251	8	100
French.....	12,963	556	4.2	32	2.46	4	80	33	.....	6
Scotch.....	11,927	298	2.4	50	4.19	5	125	144	12	38
Hollanders	4,912	639	13.0	11	2.24	0	.....	12	.....	6
Italians.....	9,921	1,072	10.8	19	1.91	3	190	43	4	7

Passing over the figures referring to indoor relief, let us notice the ratios of criminality as shown by the Bridewell report. If it is true, as some assert, that Italian children are trained to steal, they are quite successful in escaping detection. The Scotch, for instance, with only 2,000 more population have in that institution more than three times as many criminals; the English, with less than two and one-half times the population, almost six times as many, while the Americans, with about thirty times the population, are responsible for 141 times as many. These figures are immensely significant.

I have already said that Italians are not lazy. Perhaps for this very reason they are a menace to our welfare, for they are more likely to appear as a factor in the labor problem. Their standard of living being low, they are willing to work for low wages. If engaged in business, as fruit selling, they can undersell their American competitors. In spite of this, however, little danger may be apprehended. For Italians finding themselves unable to compete for the higher forms of labor, engage in labor which others, owing to their ideas of self-respect, are likely to shun. They may become rag-pickers, street laborers, scavengers. This will be so as long as the Italians crowd into the cities. Many unthinking persons suppose that Italians choose these ignoble tasks. On the contrary, they are forced into them. The more intelligent

among them are deeply chagrined that they, sons of Italy, which gave to the world a Dante, a Michael Angelo and a Columbus, should be forced to gain their living in such a manner. A few years ago *L'Italia*, one of the two Italian newspapers of Chicago, appealed to the pride of its readers to induce them to let rag-picking and such disgraceful labor alone. A mass meeting was called and a committee of fourteen was appointed to see what could be done. At their own request an ordinance prohibiting such labor was drafted and passed. But the rag-pickers, unwilling to starve, banded together, and by threatening political vengeance, made the ordinance a dead letter. Not a desire for *such* work, but a desire for *work* impelled them to resist its enforcement. Few realize how difficult it is for an Italian to find work, and how they are imposed upon by unscrupulous rascals.

In spite of their disadvantages they manage to find some kind of work, and in ordinary years save money. They run no sweat shops, and under no circumstances do they reinforce our army of tramps. Whatever may be said, then, of the Italians with reference to the labor question, their energy, manifested in the first place by their presence among us, their industry and economy, are encouraging to those of us who hope to see them become a prosperous and desirable element in our country.

"But they are all Catholics," some will say, "and that shows plainly enough that they are a dangerous class." Granting for a moment that Catholicism is a menace to our institutions, it does not follow that on this account Italians are a bad lot, for in the first place they are not all Catholics, many of them belonging to the Evangelical church,* and in the second place, most of them who are Catholics are only nominally so. Even in Italy the priests have lost much of their power. In this country we have nothing to fear from the Italians on account of religious fanaticism. There is more danger from religious indifference.

While I am unwilling to grant that we have anything to

*In Chicago we have an Italian church of the Presbyterian faith. It is often said that in Italy 99 per cent. are Catholics. This was true in 1871. Since that time, however, the census schedules have omitted the question in regard to religion. Hence there are no reliable figures. See *Annuario Statistico Italiano*, 1892, p. 87, note.

fear from Italians as Catholics, I readily concede that they may prove dangerous as voters. Like other ignorant classes, they easily become the tool of demagogues and thus enlarge the baleful influence of the latter. They are not quick like the Irish to see the benefits of citizenship, and do not, therefore, hasten to become naturalized. But the zeal of party workers goes far to supply this deficiency, and their indifference to politics in general, makes the Italians supporters of the highest bidder. Here, I think, is where this element of our population presents itself in the most unfavorable light. Unless they can become interested citizens of our country they are sure to become a dangerous class. And because there is a possibility of their possessing political power without a feeling of responsibility, we owe them a duty. But before describing this duty, let us see what we are already doing for them and what they are doing for themselves.

What we in Chicago are doing for our Italian element is soon told, for it is next to nothing. The Hull House, situated on the edge of the Italian district, gathers in a few of the girls and teaches them how to sew. Beyond this there is no systematic effort to ameliorate their condition. To be sure, the city has licensed in their neighborhood 115 saloons to quench their thirst, and to supply their social demands, but some would question this method of amelioration. There is not a park, bath-house or church in the whole district. The only free bath-house in the city is in this ward, but not in the Italian district: It was opened in January, 1894. In the first three days after opening 1,244 availed themselves of the bath and many were turned away. The Italian quarter seems to be pretty much delivered over to the people who inhabit it and they are not doing much for themselves.

The most potent elevating factors at work among the Italians are the two Italian journals, *L'Italia* and *L'America*, both very respectable weeklies. The former has a circulation of 20,000, the latter 5,000. Of course they reach a much greater number. It is not unusual to see a cluster of Italians gathered to hear what *il editore del giornale* has to say. There are also in Chicago several Italian societies organized for mutual benefit. The wealthier class have a social club, but there is nothing of this kind in "Little Italy."

What I have mentioned are about all the visible efforts put forth to better the condition of Italians in Chicago. More may be in progress in other cities. Here the Italians are not doing a tithe of what they should be doing for themselves with our customs and institutions, and to learn our language. To protect themselves against the schemes of the contractor, the banker, the lottery, the hotel-keeper, and the saloon-keeper, they should form a society to assist Italian immigrants by information and advice; to protect them by moral influence, and if necessary by the laws, against ill-treatment, imposition and swindle, and to provide work for them and to give them necessary assistance in every possible way. The Germans have such societies all over the country. The one in Chicago, during the last year, found work for 2,577 persons, and aided 585 families, 1,653 children and 266 single persons. The Italians need such a society more than the Germans.

While there are many things the Italians can and ought to do for themselves, there is much that must and should come from without. Rightly or wrongly we have permitted them to come to this country. Let immigration be further restricted if you will, we still have them with us and it is our duty to help them to a higher plane of living. To do so we must give them, first, our sympathy. Most of our newspapers heap upon them the most bitter sarcasm, and a large part of population regards them as proper objects of contempt and ridicule. No wonder that Italians sometimes conclude they are in a hostile country and either avoid everything American or return to their native land. "Who would have anything to do with a filthy Italian?" So ask many who seem to misinterpret the passage of scripture which reads, "He that is filthy let him be filthy still." The Italian quarter is filthy because it is neglected by the City. Under our present sanitary system somebody is bound to be neglected, and as the Italians are easily imposed upon they suffer most neglect. Our sanitary officer speaking of our contract system says, "Competition for the work (cleaning the streets and alleys) is sharp, the result is low bids. To thoroughly perform the work is impossible; the contractor devotes his entire attention to working out a plan whereby he can shirk and make both ends meet, the citizen complains of the slovenly way in which the work is performed, and the lack

of regularity of service, the officer is accused of partiality in cleaning certain portions of a ward to the detriment of other portions, and finally he grows discouraged, and hopes for an improvement, an open fall and winter, or a cancellation of the contract."* We should clean up the Italian quarter. The old wooden garbage boxes should be removed from the sidewalk and destroyed. Metal boxes should be used and kept in the yard or set in the fences. Unfortunately in some cases there is neither yard, fence nor alley. In such cases the duty of the city is plain. There should be free bath-houses, and Tee-to-tum clubs should divide the patronage of the saloons. Not to be utopian, however, I insist only on the things first mentioned, namely, sympathy and good sanitary service.

Next in order we should enforce compulsory education. This is earnestly demanded by the more intelligent Italians. When children are old enough to earn money Italian parents are strongly tempted to keep them out of school for that purpose. We owe it not simply to the Italians but to ourselves that every child be kept in school until it has acquired the rudiments of an education. Children left to grow up in ignorance, to become familiar with all the vice of the street, to have no idea of their political duties and responsibilities, these constitute the really dangerous class. Education, sympathy, personal influence, all these should be brought to bear upon elevating the standard of life among the Italians.

Just here is where the church could do a great deal. If the church members of Chicago who are anxious to have missionary work carried on would each select an Italian family and visit it occasionally, not to preach to it but to hold before it an example of a higher standard of life, the results would be immeasurable. Italian families as a rule are never visited by Americans. Now and then a zealous missionary calls and leaves a tract, but Italians need sympathy and a good example far more than tracts. It is a fact, I think, that our benevolent and religious societies pay little attention to Italians. This neglect leads one of their number † to write, "Had they (the Italians) displayed the vices or criminal inclinations which prevail to a deplorable extent among the low classes of other

*Report of the Health Department, 1892, p. 26.

†A. E. Cerqua, quoted in "Dangerous Classes of New York," p. 197.

nationalities they would soon have been brought to public notice and taken care of by our benevolent and religious societies, but they cannot be reproached with intoxication, prostitution, quarreling, stealing, etc., and thus escaping the unenviable notoriety of the criminal they fall into a privacy that deprives them of American benevolence; and there is no instance of any visitor having ever been appointed to explore this fruitful field of operation." This ought not to be true, and would not be true if the Italians were not grossly misrepresented and misunderstood.

As long as Italians concentrate in "quarters," and do not exert themselves to form bonds of union with the outside world they will counteract most of the work that will be done for them by the church and by individuals. The tendency to concentrate, as has been said, is the worst feature of Italian immigration. This is recognized by friends and by the more intelligent of their own number. As soon as an Italian lands in America he hastens to the Italian quarter and there he is likely to stay. He finds men and women who speak his own language. He lodges with an Italian, eats at an Italian restaurant; stores kept by his countrymen supply all his wants. Bankers, employment agents, lawyers, interpreters, physicians, musicians, artisans, laborers, grocers, bakers, butchers, barbers, merchants, all are there, a town within a town. Hence the "Italian quarter" has great cohesive force. Now it seems plain that even if we cannot dissolve the nucleus that is already formed we should keep it from growing larger. There is but one way in which this can be done, and that is by colonization. The remedy for centralization is decentralization.

I have already said that about nine-tenths of the Italians who come to this country are small farmers and fruit raisers. Is it any wonder that when these men find themselves in the heart of a great city, with no work at hand to which they have been accustomed, they take up such work as rag-picking? As has been wittily said, "they have grown so accustomed in their own country to picking fruit that they think they must pick something, hence apply themselves to rags and garbage boxes. Bad as that business is, however, it is not so bad as picking pockets." If, now, Italians are successful farmers and fruit growers the place for them is not in the

city but in the country. But the question arises: "How can they be induced to go there?"

All that is necessary to induce Italians to go to the country is to let them know that they can do better there than in the city. And that is true. In the South especially, land adapted to fruit growing may be had for nothing. The climate there would suit the Italian better than that of our northern cities. The South would welcome them. Railroad companies would furnish cheap transportation. Therefore it would not be a difficult matter to direct the incoming tide of immigration to this part of our country. All that would be necessary would be a society such as that already mentioned as operated by the Germans. When an Italian lands he should be asked about his former occupation and what he now wishes to do. If he has been a farmer he ought to be directed to a place where he can continue that occupation.

There are, of course, objections to colonization. It would cost some trouble and perhaps a little philanthropy. It would be, however, only the ounce of prevention that would save a pound of cure; for to make a useful rural population of our Italian immigrants would be one step toward solving our municipal problems. It is urged, also, that Italians do not come to this country to stay, and therefore they would not settle on a farm. To this it may be replied that, although this used to be the case, it is now more generally true that they come expecting to remain. And if they could be assured of a profitable business, more would come to stay. It will be said too that the poverty of our immigrants would prevent them from engaging in farm work. But it is true, I believe, that on arriving in America Italians usually have a small sum of money. If they could reach a farm before falling into the hands of the various swindlers who make their living by taking advantage of the ignorance and inexperience of their victims, there would probably be capital enough to begin with.

One other objection from men who have given some thought to the question, may be noticed, and that is that Italians are not likely to succeed as farmers. In this country most farming is extensive, whereas Italians are accustomed to intensive farming. Without carrying on the work on a large scale, and after American methods, some doubt their success.

To this objection the answer is, *they have succeeded*. Colonization is already a fact. Seven or eight years ago a settlement of Italians was located near Daphne in Baldwin County, Alabama. It has thrived and prospered. Land has been cleared for cultivation, grape cuttings and fruit trees have been put out and various agricultural products have been raised. According to a recent observer the settlers are "intelligent, industrious, orderly and law-abiding, and they are so polite and cheery in their manners and demeanor that it is a pleasure to meet them. Their hope is soon to sit under their own vine and fig tree in a land truly flowing with milk and honey, and to make their lives bright with the light-hearted gaiety and peaceful content that made existence pleasant even amidst the exactions and privations of sunny, but over-taxed and over-crowded Italy. Already the sounds of music are borne on the evening air as these pioneers in a great movement of their race rest at the close of day from their labors, and rejoice over their freedom from heavy burdens, and in that feeling of independence that the ownership of land gives to foreigners of small or moderate means." Other instances of successful colonization could be mentioned.

Colonization is strongly advocated by intelligent Italians interested in the welfare of their countrymen. The editor of *L'America* has urged it in a series of strong and earnest articles in his Journal. *L'Italia*, is no less enthusiastic in its favor. It seems to be the natural solution of the problem of Italian concentration in the slums. Its reasonableness together with the successful attempts already made, and the quarter from which it is advocated insure the truth of the statement formerly made, that henceforth the tendency of Italians to congregate in large cities will decrease.

Of course colonization cannot do everything. It cannot relieve us of our personal obligations, nor our municipalities of their duties. We may regret the necessity for altruistic effort which embraces our so-called "pauper immigration," but in this case altruism is the most sensible form of egoism. Let us once do our duty toward our Italian immigrants and we shall hear much less about them as a "Dangerous Class."

I. W. HOWERTH.