



THE POOR  
IN  
GREAT CITIES

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## THE POOR IN NAPLES

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HORRIBLE CONDITION OF THE NAPLES POOR A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO—PASQUALE VILLARI'S INVESTIGATIONS—THE DWELLINGS—EFFORTS AT IMPROVEMENT—THE RAMPA DI BRANCACCIO—THE CEMETERY FOR THE POOR—THE CHOLERA OF 1884—VOLUNTEER NURSES—KING HUMBERT'S VISIT AND REFORMS—THE SANITARY CONDITIONS—"NAPLES MUST BE DISEMBOWELLED"—EFFORTS OF THE MUNICIPALITY—THE EVICTED POOR—THE NEW BUILDINGS—NEEDS OF THE CITY—THE HOSPITALS—EMIGRATION.

THE old saying *Vedi Napoli poi morir* may be translated "See misery in Naples to learn what misery means"—to realize what amount of hunger, nakedness, vice, ignorance, superstition, and oppression can be condensed in the caves, dens, and kennels, unfit for beasts, inhabited by the poor of Naples. In 1871 it was affirmed by the "authorities" that, of the entire population of the city, two-thirds had no recognized means of livelihood; no one knew how more than a quarter of a million human beings lived, still less where they passed their lives of privation, pain, and wretchedness; or how, when death ended all, their bodies were flung down to rot together in foul charnel holes, far away and apart from the holy ground where the upper third were laid to rest that—

"From their ashes may be made  
The violets of their native land."

Five years later, in 1876, when misery, gaunt and stark, reared its head for the first time defiantly in every city, town, and village

of Italy—the grinding tax, proving the proverbial feather on the too patient camel's back, “inquiries into distress, its causes and possible remedies,” were proposed by some of the old makers of Italy, who maintained that the aim of the revolution had been to create a country for all the Italians and not for a privileged few. The government sanctioned the proposal, and the agricultural inquiry was set on foot and carried out in every province by special commissioners. It revealed such depths of misery in the rural districts as could never be imagined or believed in by those who still apostrophize :

“Thou Italy, whose ever golden fields,  
Ploughed by the sunbeams only, would suffice  
For the world's granary.”

In Lombardy, Mantua, and Venetia, all fertile wheat-producing provinces, it was found that the patient, toiling, abstemious peasant, fed upon maize exclusively, fasting white bread only at glean-ing time, rarely touching wine, washing down his unsavory *polenta* with impure, fetid water, was affected with *pellagra*. This awful disease—now, alas, become endemic and hereditary—after wasting the body by slow degrees, affects the brain and lands the victims raving maniacs in the male and female mad asylums of Venice and of Milan. It is now being successfully grappled with in the first stages, by the parish doctors who, in many communes, are authorized to administer white bread, wine, and even meat; in the second, by special establishments where patients are received and treated, *i.e.*, well fed until they recover *pro tem.*; while for the poor wretches who have reached the third stage, there is no help but in the grave, no hope save in a speedy release.

But a worse state of things was revealed in Naples by private studies and researches set on foot by Pasquale Villari \* and the re-

The present writer was among the recruits, but for a long time declined to write of misery in Naples for the Italian press, believing that the state of the poor in London was even worse than in Naples. Professor Villari, the well-known author of the lives of Savonarola and Machiavelli, Minister of Public Instruction, undertook

cruits he pressed into the service of his native city. The facts and figures set down in unvarnished prose in his "Southern Letters," convinced the authorities "that something must be done if only to protect the 'upper third' from the possible upheaval of the seething masses below, increasing ever in numbers, terribly disproportioned to the means of accommodation provided for them."

Heart-rending as were the descriptions given of the misery of the masses by Villari, Fucino Renato, Fortunato Sonnino, and others, they by no means prepared me for the actual state of things which I heard, saw, and touched in Naples, accompanied alternately by priests, policemen, and parish doctors, and always by old friends and comrades of the campaigning days when all believed that the overthrow of despots, the ousting of the foreigner, the abolition of the temporal power, when Italy should be one in Rome, would find bread and work for all as the result of liberty and the ballot.

I spent hours and days, later, weeks and months, in the lower quarters of Porto, Pendino, Mercato, and Vicaria, in the *fondaci*, the cellars, caves, grottos, brothels, and *locande* (penny-a-night to go to London and see for himself, and on his return we received a long letter, from which the following is an extract :

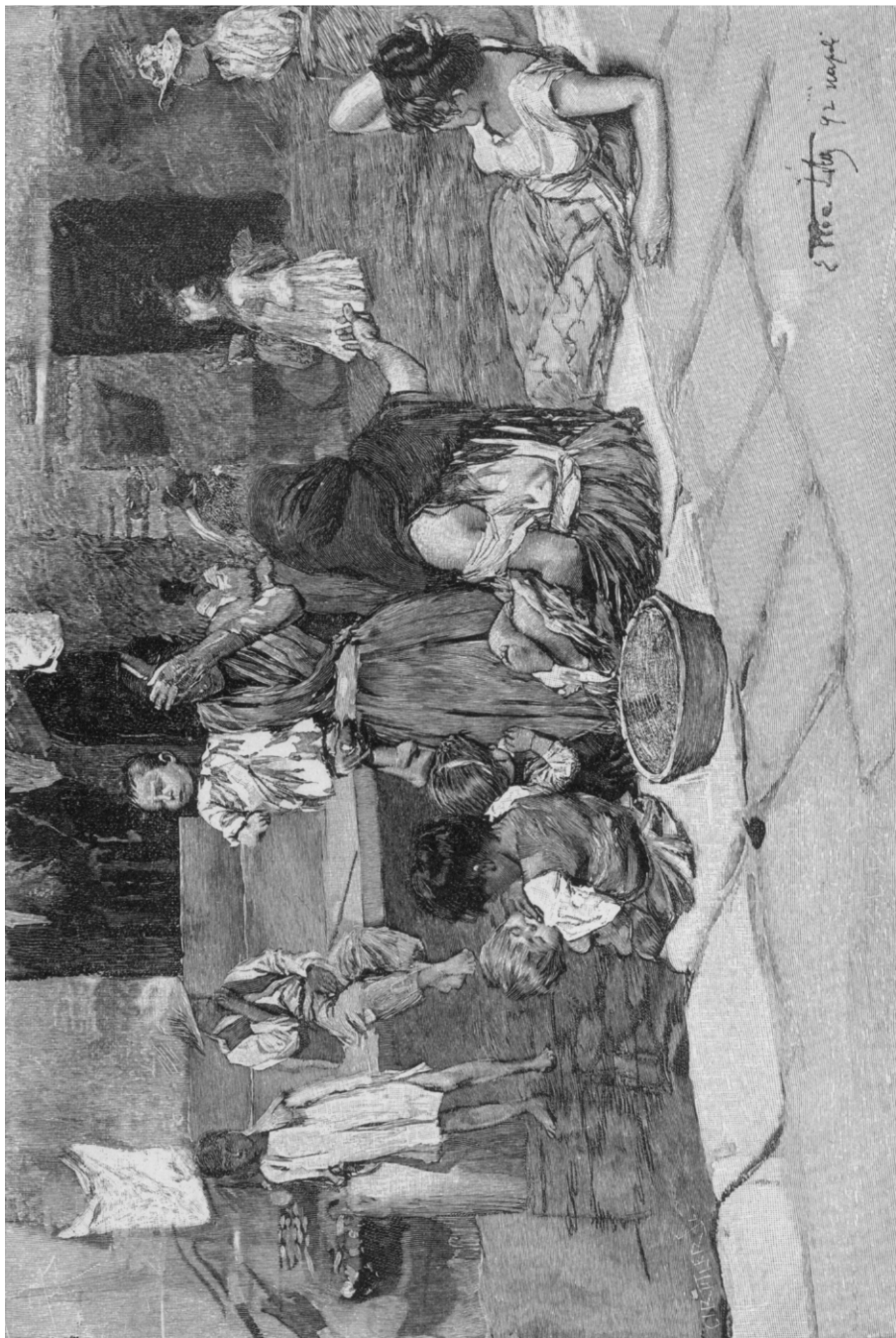
"I assure you, on my honor, that the poor in Naples are infinitely worse off than the poor in London. Furnished with an order from the chief of police in London, I have visited, with detectives in plain clothes, the worst quarters of the city—the Docks, the East End, saying always: 'Show me all that is most horrible in London. I want to see the dwellings of the most wretched and miserable inhabitants.'

"Great and widespread is misery in London; but I do not hesitate to declare, with profound conviction, that those who say that the conditions of the poor in London are worse than those of the poor in Naples, have either never seen the poor in London or have never visited the poor in Naples. If it happens that cases of death from starvation are more frequent in London than in Naples, the cause lies in the climate of London. If in Naples we had the climate of London a very large number of our poor would find peace in the grave and cease to live a life that is worse than death.

"PASQUALE VILLARI.

"FLORENCE, March 30, 1876."

After the receipt of this letter we published, in 1877, a book entitled *La Miseria di Napoli*.



*È poco felice q'è Napoli*

AN EVICTED FAMILY OF NEAPOLITANS.

lodging-houses) where the *miserables* congregate. Sickening were the sights by day, still sadder the scenes by night as you passed church steps, serving as the only bed for hundreds; under porches where you stumbled over, without awakening the sleepers, who also occupied the benches of the vendors of fish and other comestibles in Basso Porto, while in fish-baskets and empty orange-boxes, curled up like cats but without the cat's fur coat, were hundreds of children of both sexes who had never known a father and rarely knew their mother's name or their own. It was a farce to talk of statistics of births and deaths in these quarters. "The existence of the boys is known to the authorities," writes an eminent physician, now (Assessore d'igiene) Sanitary Officer in the Municipality of Naples, "when they are taken up for theft or a *piccola mancanza*; of the girls when they come on the brothel registers" (abolished, humanity be praised! in 1889). Of what use was it to take stock of vice, disease, and crime, save to hold it up as the legitimate outgrowth of the foul dens in which the "masses" herd? In the first report made by the corporation it was shown that 130,000 lived in the *bassi e sotterranei*, in cellars, caves, and grottos. No mention was then made of the *fondaci*, which the Swedish physician, Axel Munthe,\* stigmatizes as "the most ghastly human dwellings on the face of the earth."

Let the American reader take that wonderful book, "How the Other Half Lives," and look at the photograph of Hell's Kitchen and Sebastopol (page 6). Imagine such a building, but with blank walls all round, no windows in any, entered by a dark alley leading to a court where the common cesspool fraternizes with the drinking-water well, where, round the court, are stables for cows, mules, donkeys, and goats—while in the corners of the same court, tripe, liver and lights vendors prepare their edibles, or stale fish-mongers keep their deposits—and they will have the framework and exterior of a *fondaco*. Then let them construct in their mind's eye one single brick or stone staircase leading up to inner balconies—up,

\* See Letters from a Mourning City.

up, three, four, or five stories. Fifteen or twenty rooms are entered from each balcony, which serves for door and window, there being no other aperture; each corner room on each story being absolutely dark even at mid-day, as each balcony is covered with the pavement of the upper one. Put a hole between each two rooms for the public

performance of all private offices; shut out from the top story such light as might gleam from the sky, by dint of poles, strings, ropes, and cords laden with filthy rags — and you have a more or less accurate idea of the interior of the *fondaco* at Naples.



A Girl of the People.

All of these I have visited at intervals during the last seventeen years, finding their numbers diminished at each visit,

but never until lately have I found a new tenement inhabited by the evicted *funnachère* for whom they were ostensibly built.

In 1877 the municipality made a grant of land to a co-operative society for the purpose of building houses for the poor. As soon as these were finished, small shop-keepers, civil servants, etc., secured all the apartments; then irritated by the taunts that they were living in houses built for the poor, inscribed on the front of

the block, "The houses of the Co-operative Society are not poor-houses!" Again, in 1879, a loan was raised for demolishing the worst *fondaci* and grottos, cellars, and caves, and for the erection of airy, healthy tenements for the people, and in 1880 the writer was invited by the mayor to inspect these. Capital houses they were! built on the spot where last I had seen the *fondaci*—Arcella, Castiglione, Conventino, San Camillo, Cento Piatti, Piscavino S. Felice, Miroballo—and after due admiration of the spacious court, wide street, decent ingress, outer balconies, etc., I ventured to ask: "Where are the *funnachère*? These clean, well-dressed people, with their pianos and excellent furniture, are not the poor creatures we used to visit here."

"Of course they are not," said the contractor, "what are they to us?" while a vice-syndic said: "This is my section; I know that my *rione* is redeemed, that we have got rid of the plebs: what care we where they are gone? Let them burst, it would be better for them. *Crepino pure, che sarà meglio!*"\*

As I was turning from the spot in silent despair, an old man came up and said: "I can tell you where some of the poor creatures are gone. They were turned out into the streets, many of them went into the *fondaci* that remain, two families, and even three in a room; the price of these has been raised as the numbers grow less, and many of them are in the grotto at the Rampa di Brancaccio." With a newspaper man, sceptical of "the misery of the poor in Naples," and an English and a German lady, I walked along the splendid Corso Vittorio Emanuele, whence you have the finest view of Naples, of Vesuvius and the sea, and suddenly

"Out of the sunlit glory  
Into the dark we trod—"

literally dropping down into the grotto del Brancaccio, where, at first, absolute darkness seemed to reign.

It was a cavern with mud for pavement, rock for walls, while the

\* I quote from a letter printed in the *Pungolo*, of Naples, on the day of the visit.



water dripped from the ceiling, and one sink in the centre served for the "wants of all." Here were lodged more than two hundred human beings, some forty families; their apartments being divided by a string where they hung their wretched rags. The families who had the "apartments" by the grating that served for window, paid ten, nine, eight, seven lire per month each. These poor creatures subscribed among themselves two lire so that a poor old man should not be turned out, but allowed to sleep on straw by the common sink, and they fed a poor woman who was dying, with scraps from their scant repasts. This grotto yielded its owner a monthly rent, always paid up, far exceeding that paid by the inhabitants of the new tenements and decent houses, and he continued to so "grind the faces of the poor" until 1884, when King Cholera carried off his tenants, and the grotto was closed, as was the charnel-house to which the inmates were carried to their last abode.

In order to convince the sceptic still further that there was no exaggeration in the accounts of the horrors, we invited him to accompany us to what was then the only cemetery for the poor of Naples. It is an immense square with three hundred and sixty-five holes, each covered with a huge stone, with a ring in each for uplifting. On the first of January, hole No. 1 was opened and all the poor who died on that day were brought up in great pomp of funeral car and trappings, with priests and tapers, etc. The first to be thrown in was a corpse with shirt and trousers. "He is a private," said La Raffaella, the poor woman who used to take charge of the child corpses, kiss each of them so that they might take the kiss to "limbo." "He died at home and his people had dressed him." He was placed in the zinc coffin, the crank swung this over the hole, you heard a fall, then the coffin came up *empty*; next were flung down the naked corpses of the inhabitants of the poor-houses and charitable institutions, then the little children. Last came up the car of the Hospital Degli Incurabili, with the scattered members swept from the dissecting-table. Then the hole



An Old Street in the Poor Quarter being Metamorphosed.

No. 1 was closed not to be reopened until next year. On the morrow, over hole No. 2 the same horrors were re-enacted. The victims of King Cholera in 1884 were the last buried in these charnel-

holes; the cemetery was closed when he was dethroned, and a new cemetery for the poor opened just opposite the monumental cemetery of the rich at Foria.

It was in the summer of that year that the cholera reappeared and its swift and sudden ravages compelled attention to the "where" and "how" its numerous victims lived and died. In these same quarters of Porto Pendino, Mercato, and Vicaria, 20,000 died of cholera in 1836-37; an equal number in 1854-65, 1866, and 1873, while the higher quarters of Naples were comparatively free from the scourge. In 1884, from the 17th of August to the 31st, the cases were not more than three every twenty-four hours. On the 1st of September 143 were attacked, 72 succumbed on the 10th of the same month; 966 cases, 474 deaths, are given as the official statistics; the sum total of deaths is variously stated at eight, nine, and ten thousand. But official bulletins are never trustworthy in these cases, the authorities strive to abate panic, and it is a well-known fact that numbers of cases were never reported to the municipality, the dead being carried off in carts and omnibuses to the special cholera cemetery and charnel-house, without any possible register. Dr. Axel Munthe, who lived and worked among the poor during the entire time, gives it as his belief, supported by others, that during "not one but four or five days there were about one thousand cases per diem." So markedly was the disease confined to the poor quarters that for many days it was impossible for the municipal authorities to do anything to alleviate its ravages; the poor, ignorant, superstitious plebs being firmly convinced that the cholera had been introduced among them for the express purpose of diminishing their numbers.

Hence the refusal to go to the hospital, to take the medicines sent, to allow disinfectants to be used, to abstain from fruit, vegetables, and stale fish, even when good soup and meat were offered instead. Then it was that King Humbert went to Naples and visited in person the stricken patients in their *fondaci* and cellars, in the caves and slums, and this, his first experience of actual misery,



GOSSIP IN PENDINO STREET, NAFLES.

save as the result of war or a sudden catastrophe, made such a profound impression on his mind that he promised the poor people there and then that they should have decent houses built expressly for them. Even now they will tell you that *Oo Re* kept his word, but that the *Signori* have taken the *palaces* all for themselves.

The royal example was speedily followed; bands of students and workingmen under the white cross proffered their services, and the Neapolitan citizens who had not all fled, enlisted under the doctors, who are ever brave and devoted in Italy, and worked as nurses, cooks, helpers of the living, even as porters of the dead. The poor people, ever grateful, gentle, docile, yielded to these "kind strangers," and allowed themselves to be taken to the hospitals or tended in their own dens where, by the White Cross band alone, assistance was furnished to 7,015 cases. Of the volunteer nurses, Lombards, Tuscans, Romans, some ninety in all, several were attacked but only three succumbed, all adhering strictly to the rules laid down as to diet and the specifics to be used in case of seizure. The cholera, at its height between the 10th and 18th of September, abated gradually from that day until the 9th of October, when suddenly, on the 10th and 11th, 122 were attacked and 37 succumbed. This 10th of October is the first of the famous *ottobrate*, when the poorest of the poor managed to get a taste of the new wine which is still fermenting, and that year it is very probable that they toasted with unwonted zeal the disappearance of the cholera, which on the 9th had not made a single victim. The luscious blue figs, the bread and watermelons which could in that cholera year be had for a song, were also unusually abundant. The regulations at last enforced by the authorities had been relaxed; the sale of rags recommenced, and to all these causes may doubtless be owing in part the reappearance of the foe supposed to be vanquished.

But fortunately for poor Naples, the cholera found in King Humbert an adversary determined to resist its intrusion for the future; and men of science, doctors, students, were encouraged to

study the causes of the disease even more diligently than the cure for it, when in possession. When the sudden reappearance filled the city with fresh alarm, and the poor, wretched people were soundly abused in the newspapers for their "orgies," more than one professor affirmed that the real cause must be traced to the sudden change of temperature, to the southwest wind, sirocco, which prevents the sewers from discharging their contents into the sea and drives the refuse back to the streets and shores, which, in the quarters of Pendino and Porto, are almost on a level with the sea; and to the condition of the water under ground which, swelled by the tremendous rainfalls, carried more putrid matter than usual into the drinking-wells and streams. Certain it is that as soon as the *tramontana* (north wind) began to blow, and the low tides allowed the impurities to put out to sea, the cholera diminished and for three years returned no more. Then came the narrations in the newspapers of the actual state of the habitations of the poor—how human beings and beasts were crowded together, how the stables were never cleaned, how the sinks filtered into the wells—twelve hundred and fourteen of these being foul but "possibly cleansible," while sixty-three were ordered to be filled up and closed. It was shown that these quarters were more densely populated than any other portion of Europe, London included; while the insalubrious trades were carried on in the most populous portions of the overcrowded quarters, there being no less than two hundred and thirty-five large and small rag and bone stores in the midst, while decayed vegetables, the entrails of beasts, and stale fish were left where flung, scavengers and dustmen confining their labors to the quarters of the "upper third."

All these accounts King Humbert read attentively, and to old Depretis, then prime minister, said: "Italy must redeem Naples at any cost." And the old statesman answered: "Yes, Naples must be disembowelled." *Bisogna sventrare Napoli*. A bill was presented to the Chamber for the gift of fifty millions of lire, and the loan of other fifty millions for the sanitation of the unhealthy

quarters of the city, and for the decent housing of the poor, and the sums were voted without a murmur, so great was the sympathy felt for the victims of the cholera and their survivors, whose misery was portrayed with heart-rending eloquence. The senate approved, and the king set his zeal to the decree on January 15, 1885.

As studies for the amelioration of the poor quarters and the sanitation of Naples had been carried on, and paid for, and the authors of plans decorated during the last ten years, it was supposed that (the financial question solved) the work would be commenced there and then, but two more years were wasted in finding out "how not to do it."

Until 1850 Naples had always been reckoned one of the healthiest cities in Italy. Typhus and diphtheria were rare; no one had ever heard of a Neapolitan fever. True, when the rains were heavy the city in many parts was inundated with flowing streams called *lave*, and wooden bridges were erected over several streets, otherwise traffic would have been impossible. Once the so-called *lava dei vergini* carried away a horse and carriage in its impetuous course. To remedy this state of things the government of King Bomba ordered a system of sewers which, either owing to the ignorance of the engineers or the jobbery of the contractors, rendered the last state of Naples worse than the first.



F. LEBLANC

Begging Hands.

Into these sewers, which had insufficient slope, not only the rain-water, but the water from sinks, all the contents of the cesspools, were supposed to flow. But in seasons of drought nothing flowed; all remained in the sewers. Often the sewers were so badly constructed that instead of carrying off the contents of the cesspools they carried their own contents into the drinking-wells. Hence the stench often noticed in some of the best streets of Naples. Some of the conduits are almost on a level with the street; many of them have burst. One of the best modern engineers of Naples writes: "If you uncover the streets of our city, ditches of putrid matter most baneful to health will reveal themselves to the eye of the indiscreet observer." He quotes one special spot, *Vicolo del Sole*, "where cholera, typhus, every sort of lung disease had reigned supreme." This "Sun alley," where the sun never shines, was closed, and the health of the neighborhood became normal. But when a number of people were ousted from their houses for the excavation of the *corso reale*, the *Vicolo* was again inhabited, and out of seventy-two inhabitants, the cholera carried off sixty. Every time that excavations were made in any part of the low quarters of Naples, typhus, diphtheria, or the newly invented Neapolitan fever broke out—and, to quote official statements, "If one case of fever broke out in a house where the cesspool communicated with the drinking-well, all the families who drew water from that well were laid low with the same fever. Again, these horrible sewers when they succeeded in emptying themselves, did so in the most populous quarters of the city, so that the Riviera became a putrid lake, and in the best quarters of Chiaja the stench at eventide was so horrible that the people used to call it the *malora di Chiaja* (bad hour of). When the southwest wind blew the high tide prevented the sewerage from going out to sea, so all the matter brought down remained strewed along the shore. The best hotels were closed owing to the fever that prevailed, and are now nearly all replaced by others built in the higher quarters, the Rione Amadeo, Corso Vittorio Emanuele, etc.



Hence the first thing to be thought of for the sanitation of Naples was the renovation and purification of the drains. The fewest possible excavations, the greatest possible extent of *colmate* (raising the level), was clearly indicated; and as this "silting up" the lower quarters has to be done, not as in Lincolnshire fens by allowing water to leave its own sediments, but by material imported, it was and is a very costly proceeding.

Alas! that the lessons taught by the former attempts at redeeming the slums should have been forgotten, or rather deliberately neglected. "Don't begin at the end instead of at the beginning," said G. Florenzano, in 1885. "Don't begin by pulling down the old



"Hunger," a Sketch in the Poor Quarter.

houses until you have built new ones for the evicted tenants of the *fondaci*, grottos, etc. If you go on the old system the poor creatures who now have a roof over their heads will have to crowd the remaining *fondaci* even as did those of Porto when you beautified the Via del Duomo, or they will crowd into the cloisters of S. Tom-

maso di Aquino, where the cholera mowed down so many victims. You can pull down houses in a week, but it takes à year to build them, and another year must elapse before they are habitable." The discussions and commissions went on for two years and a half. There was the question of whether the municipality should expropriate, demolish, and rebuild on its own account. The majority were against this, urging that public bodies are the worst of all workers. Then should the whole contract be given to one society or to several? And here the war of the "one lot" or "lot of lots" raged fiercely. "Whoever gets the contract, however few or many be the contractors," said Villari, from his seat in the Senate, and other sentimentalists, "let them be bound over to build healthy houses for the poor who will be evicted from the slums, on a site not so far from their old homes as to prevent them from carrying on their daily employments, and at rents certainly not higher than those they pay at present."

To this, practical people answered that: "No building society would build at a loss, and that healthy houses in healthy sites in the populous quarters of Naples could not be erected for the letting price of five lire per room."

"Then let the municipality first deduct from the hundred millions given for the poor of Naples such sums as *are* necessary for building these houses without profit," retorted the sentimentalists; "in the long run they will be found to pay, but in any case they must be built."

As usual the *vox clamante* resounded in the desert only. In 1888, the municipality entered into a contract with a building society of Milan for the entire work of expropriation, demolition of old houses, the construction of new ones, and the all-important work of laying down the sewers and paving the streets above. The laying down of gas and the canalization of the water of the Serino in the new quarters was alone retained in the hands of the municipality and separately contracted for. The contract itself, to use the words of the minority of the "communal councillors," represented



CHEAP BATHING

a direct violation of the spirit of the law passed by the Italian parliament in the interests of the community and for the sanitation of Naples, while the commission of inquiry delegated by the council to examine and report on the works, affirmed that "Private speculation, substituted for the superintendence of the commune and the State, naturally ignored the philanthropic impulse of the law, allowing industrial calculation and bankers' rings to boss the enterprise especially planned for the benefit of the poorest classes and to sanify the lowest quarters of the city." So much for the spirit of the contract.

Coming to its execution, the municipality neither armed itself with sufficient powers for compelling the contractors to perform their work properly, nor did it put such powers as were reserved into execution. Consequently expropriations which, by the terms of the contract, ought to have allowed three months to elapse between the notice to quit and the actual departure, were often carried out within a week of the notice given. Availing themselves of the law which sanctions expropriations at a fixed price for public benefit, the society bore hard on many small proprietors, whose houses they took without any immediate need, and these, until the time comes for their demolition, are underlet to the worst class of usurers, who have evicted the tenants and doubled the rent. Then the first houses were jerry built. One fell while building and killed several workmen. Again, the contract bound the society to build houses only three stories high, to avoid the overcrowding so complained of in the old quarters. They built them of four stories. The courtyards were to occupy one-sixth of the whole area of each tenement—they were found to occupy barely one-seventh or even one-eighth. Finally (and this raised a popular outcry at last), in no single tenement built by the society could the evicted poor find a room, because they were all about twice the price of their former ones, and so far removed from the scene of their daily labors that it was very doubtful whether they could inhabit them at all. It is neither edifying

nor interesting to seek out who were the chief culprits ; certainly the municipal authorities, who took no thought for the poor for whom the money was voted, were the original sinners. But when the hue and cry was raised the money was spent and it was no use crying over spilt milk. The municipality was bankrupt. Besides inheriting the debts and deficits of its predecessors, it had squandered vast sums on useless works, given three millions to the society which built the King Humbert Gallery—a capital building for the cold and uncertain climate of Milan ; quite a superfluity in sunny Naples, where everybody lives in the open air, and where you can hardly yet get sellers and buyers to use the new covered market-place instead of the street pavements.

So the municipality was dissolved by the government and a Royal Commissioner sent to take the affairs of the commune in hand. When I came here affairs seemed past praying for, the state of overcrowding in the poorest quarters was worse than ever. I found houses condemned as unsafe and propped up with shores, without a window-pane or door on hinges, crowded to excess—the *fondaci* left standing with double their old numbers of inhabitants ; the cellars full, and at night the streets turned into public dormitories. True, the water from the Serino had been brought into Naples, and this is a priceless boon which can only be appreciated by those who remember the bad old days when even at the best hotels you dared not drink a glass of unboiled water ; when the poor people had to purchase water at one or two sous per litre, those who could not do so going athirst. Then the old charnel-house is actually closed, and the new cemetery is as beautiful as a cemetery need be. Though it has only been open five years it is already nearly full. The poor have the graves and a parish coffin gratis, but after eighteen months the “ bones are exhumed to make room for the fresh corpses.” The families who can afford to do so pay for a niche in which to deposit the “ bones,” while the remains of those who have no friends able to do so are placed in a huge *cistern* outside the cemetery. At any rate the poorest have now for a

time a grave to themselves and need not say with envy as they used to do when accompanying some *signore* to the monumental cemetery, "*O Mamma mia, vurria murì pe staccà!*" "Mother mine, I would die to stop here."

Then Naples as a city is undoubtedly renovated and beautified; always *bella*, ever *dolce*, it is now one of the most commodious cities in the world. Trams take you from Posilipo to the royal palace, from the Via Tasso to the *Reclusoria*. New palaces, new houses rise up to the east and west of the city.

Besides the demolitions and reconstructions of the famous Societa di Risanimento, another society has built largely at the *Rione Vasto* at *Capuana*, *case economiche* and *edifizi civili* which we should call workmen's houses and houses for well-to-do people. Even so in the *Rione Arenaccia Orientale*, in the



On the Stairs of Santa Lucia.

*Rione S. Efreem Vecchio Ottocalli Ponti Rossi.* In the *Rione Vomero-Arenella* the Banca Tiberina has built enormously; constructed two *funicolari* (cable railways), and in two years the population of that quarter has increased from 751 to 3,991; but there are no *funna-chère* among them.

In the favorite quarter of foreign artists, Santa Lucia, where the oyster and "fruits of the sea" mongers and their wives, the sulphur-water vendors, fryers of *polipi* and *peperoni*, congregate, these *luciani* also inhabit *fondaci* not quite as filthy as those of Porto and Pendino, nor are they nearly as docile. They strongly objected to the tramway as an invasion of their rights, and laughed to scorn the builders of the new houses on the shore of the Castello Dell' Uovo and of the new *loggie* for the shell-fish vendors. "The first high wind," they say, would carry stalls and fish into the sea, and as for the new houses, they *pizzicano* (are too dear), *non jamme 'n terra* (they shall not demolish our houses), they tell you, and as yet no one has dared to tackle them. The new houses are divided into charming little apartments with a kitchen and convenience in each, but the kitchen and one room cost 15 lire, others 20, 30, even 35 lire.

With a budget of thirty million lire and a huge deficit, little margin was left to the Royal Commissary, who had to cut down estimates, retrench in every department, "economize to the bone," but as winter approached, the cry of the people became audible in high places. It was one thing to camp out in the summer, but quite another to use the streets for bed and the sky for roof in the months of December, January, and February, while the new commission of engineers and medical men pronounced many of the hovels still inhabited to be "dangerous to life and limb," and ordered the society to repair or close them at once. The society chose the latter alternative, thus reducing still further the scant accommodation—but the Royal Commissary was not a "corporation." He had a soul, or at least a heart. "For six months," he writes, in his report to the government at the close of his mission, "a famished mob, *turba fumelica*, have thronged the stairs of the muni-

cipality; children of both sexes, utterly destitute, who must of necessity go to the bad; mothers clasping dying babies to their milkless breasts; widows followed by a tribe of almost naked children; aged and infirm of both sexes, hungry and in tatters—and this spectacle, which has wrung my heart, reveals but a small portion of the prevalent destitution. One can but marvel at the docile nature of the lower orders of Neapolitans, who bear with such resignation and patience their unutterable sufferings. One cannot think without shuddering of this winter, which overtook whole families without a roof over their heads, without a rag to cover them, without the slightest provision for their maintenance.”

To remedy this awful state of things in some degree, this royal extraordinary commissary, in Naples for six months only (Senator Giuseppe Saredo), gave it to be understood that the society *must* find means of lodging the evicted poor in some of the new tenements at the old prices. He even consented to a compromise, by which, leaving all the work of laying down drains and filling up low places intact, he consented to the delay in certain buildings which ought to have been completed in the third *biennio*, on the conditions that the society should cede tenements capable of housing fifteen hundred people, no single room to cost more than five lire per month. The first great exodus took place in December, 1891; unfortunately, the housing schedules were not all given to people who could not afford to pay more than five lire; and when I visited the tenements the brass bedsteads and mahogany chests of drawers told tales of past homes in quite other places than in the slums. But in many rooms we did find our *funacchère*; the thin end of the wedge was inserted, and when the Royal Commissary's term of office came to an end the new Syndic repeated the experiment, and arranged with the society for other tenements capable of housing other two thousand of the poorest. This time the vice-syndics have had a warning that if they give schedules to any but the houseless poor their offices and honors will be transferred. At first the idea of removing the poor costermongers, porters, coal-



heavers, fish, snail, and tripe venders so far from their old slums and haunts seemed unpractical and even cruel; but having revisited those haunts and the slummers in their new homes, seen the shops opened on the ground floors of the new dwellings, turned on the water-tap which is in each room or apartment, inspected the closets which are perfectly scentless, I can only express a feeling of thankfulness that the axe has been laid at the root of the tree at last.



Where Street Arabs Sleep.

It is not only a question of health and longevity—the poor people in the *fondaci* cellars and underground dens were entirely at the mercy of the *camorra* which, however the police and the authorities may flatter themselves, has never been killed and very slightly scotched. These poor creatures, crowded in one spot, are the terrified victims of the *camorrist*, that “unclean beast of dishonest idleness” of yore, who now has cleaned himself up a bit, but is

as bestial, dishonest, and idle as ever. With the dispersion of the slummers and the allotment to each of a room or rooms with doors that lock, and windows that open, the *camorristi's* reign is over, especially as the society, though compelled to charge only five lire per room, has no help from the municipality in collecting rents, and therefore selects for porters (*concierge*) men who attend to their interests and not to those of the *camorra*.

What is now wanted in the new quarters are infant schools, elementary and industrial schools, of all of which Naples possesses some of the most perfect that I have ever seen in Italy or in England. Naples, a city of contrasts in all respects, is especially so in the management of her public and private institutions.

Of charitable institutions belonging to the poor by right, Naples has enough and to spare, with two hundred edifices and over eight or ten millions of annual income. But these edifices and this income serve every interest save that of the poor. Administrators, priests, governors, electors, deputies, councillors and their clients get thus the lion's share. The *Albergo dei Poveri*, with an income of over a million and a half, maintains a family of employees exceeding seven hundred, while the poor, many of whom are merely protégés of the rich, have dwindled down to two thousand. The children have scarcely a shirt to change; the school for deaf and dumb boys has been so neglected for years that only of late has the new director been able to form a class. The girls in charge of the *figlie della carità*, French nuns, are kept so hard at work at embroidery and flower making that their health is ruined, and the agglomeration of old men and women, young boys and girls under one roof is by no means conducive to order, discipline, or morality. One "governor" succeeds another. One sells 5,000 square metres of land to a building society for eleven lire per metre, at a time when in certain portions of the city land is worth three and four hundred lire. His successor brings an action against the purchaser and the costs are enormous. Another has farmed out the rents to some collector at far too low a price; another action is

brought. The chemist is proved to have substituted flour for quinine, Dover's powders without opium, and is suspended. But the *corpo delicto*, i.e., the analyzed medicines, have disappeared; the chemist will come off triumphant and the Albergo dei Poveri will have to pay costs and damages, and possibly to meet an action for libel. Of course there is a deficit in the budget; and this will continue to increase, whoever may be governor, as long as the system remains and as long as places are created for protégés of Senator A, Deputy B, or Counsellor C.

The enormous hospital of the *Incurabili*, where also a royal commissioner presides, was found to be in a most deplorable state. The number of patients reduced from one thousand to seven hundred; the meat of inferior quality to that prescribed. Despite the 25,000 lire which appear in the budget for linen, there were not sufficient sheets to change the beds of the sick, yet there was an accumulated deficit of 869,030 lire, and for last year alone 200,000 lire. As the present special commissioners have really reduced the expenditure, while increasing the number of patients admitted, diminished the enormous number of servants, and by supplying food to those on guard deprived them of the temptation to steal the rations of the sick; as they have thoroughly cleansed the hospital from garret to cellar, constructed water-closets, etc., we hope they will be allowed to remain in office sufficient time to render a return to former abuses impossible.

Some improvement there is, we notice, in the Foundling Hospital, which was in a wretched state, the mortality among infants amounting to ninety-five and even one hundred per cent. The system adopted of giving them out to be nursed by poor families in the city and country round Naples, answers admirably, as the poor people here regard them as the "Virgin's children"—*figlie della Madonna*. Still there are over three hundred big, lazy girls in the establishment who ought to have been put out to earn their living long ago.

The *Casa di Maternita*, added to the establishment, is admirably

conducted, and the secrets of the poor girls or women who demand admission are religiously kept.

The famous convent of the *Sepolte Vive* of Suor Orsola Benincasa, which created such a sensation in the newspapers a year since, is now completely reformed; the few surviving nuns are pensioned off and allotted a residence in some distant portion of the enormous edifice, while the income of 100,000 lire is applied to the education of poor children. There are also classes for the children of parents who can pay, a normal school, and a kindergarten.

As the reformed law of charitable institutions is only two years old, and the government and municipal authorities are

doing their best to apply it in spite of the clergy and the vested interests of innumerable loafers, we may hope that in time to come the poor and the poor alone may profit by this their own and only wealth. How such wealth may be profitably applied is shown by



Interior of a Poor Quarter.

the numerous establishments founded and maintained by private charity. The children's hospital, *Ospitale Lina*, founded and maintained by the well-known philanthropist, Duchessa Ravaschiera, is a perfect gem. There are eighty beds, each occupied by a poor child for whom a surgical operation is necessary. All the first surgeons and doctors of Naples give their services. The Duchess herself, who founded the hospital in memory of her only daughter, Lina, superintends it in person, often living and sleeping there, and the delight of the children when "*Mamma Duchessa*" enters the wards is very touching.

The asylum for girls orphaned during the cholera of 1884 is another example of how much can be done, with comparatively small sums, under personal supervision. Here 285 boarders and 250 day scholars are maintained at a cost of little over 100,000 francs, subscribed by individuals, the Bank of Naples, the Chamber of Commerce, etc. All the children frequent the elementary schools, and are each taught a trade, dressmaking, plain needlework, making and mending—*maglieria* (machine-knitted vests), stockings, petticoats, etc., artificial flowers, embroidery, and lace making. At the Exposition of Palermo there was a beautiful collection of the work done by the girls of this school; we could wish that they were not compelled to toil so many hours a day, but necessity knows no law, and the administration of the superintendent, Baron Tosti, is above all praise. There are two educational and industrial schools for boys in Naples which may serve as models to the other provinces of Italy and to other nations.

The *Instituto Casanovas*,\* for boys who have attended the infant schools, was founded in 1862 by Alfonzo della Valle di Casanova. Elementary schools and workshops were opened under the same roof and carried on privately with great success until 1880; then

\* An American lady, well known in Boston for her work in prison reform, said to us, as we were taking her over these schools: "We have nothing so good as this in America."

recognized as a *Corpo Morale* by the government, which assigned a large building with open spaces for gymnastics and recreation, surrounded by eleven new workshops. Industrial schools generally are a failure, owing to the expense incurred by the payment of directors of workshops, the purchase of machines, tools, instruments, and raw material. In this establishment the workshop alone is given rent free to the master—blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, boot-makers, brass-workers, cameo, lava workers, workers in bronze, sculptors, ebonists, wood-carvers, and printers—with whom a regular contract is signed, for a certain number of years, by which, on “November 1st, directors A, B, and C shall open a workshop, furnishing it with all such machines and instruments as are necessary for carrying on and teaching his trade to a fixed number of pupils.” In case of bankruptcy the master must at once quit the workshop. The boys for the first two years, that is until they are nine, attend the elementary schools exclusively; then they or their parents choose their trade, and as soon as their work becomes profitable, they are paid a certain sum fixed by the master-workman and the director of the establishment, who receives the pay of the boys weekly and gives half to them, half to the establishment. At first the boys were compelled to place all their portion in postal savings banks, but as all are day scholars and are housed and fed by their parents, it was found that these, being too poor to maintain them, removed them from the school before they were proficient in their respective trades. From the report up to March 6, 1892, we find 559 “present,” 104 pupils who had quitted the establishment as skilled workmen, all of whom are eagerly sought by the directors of workshops in this city. The income of the institute does not exceed 72,000 francs, of which 22,000 is paid to school-masters and servants; the remainder goes in buildings, prizes to the pupils, etc. The *Casanova* opera also has a beautiful department at the Exposition at Palermo, where albums and pamphlets show its whole history from the beginning.

A similar institution, much rougher, but even more meritorious,

is the working school in the ex-convent of S. Antonio a Tarsia. The boys collected here are the real waifs and strays taken from the streets—gutter-sparrows, literally. The founder is Giovanni Florenzano, ex-member of parliament and (*assessore*) officer of public instruction in the municipality of Naples. It is conducted on the same principles as that of Casanova, but, alas! not with equal funds.



One of the New Blocks of Tenements in Naples.

There is a workshop for carpenters, ebony-workers, wood-carvers, and gilders, for blacksmiths, workers in bronze, for the manufacture of iron and steel instruments, and a large printing-office. The boys gathered there number from two hundred and fifty to three hundred. Unfortunately the impecuniosity of the municipality has deprived this school of four thousand francs annually.

Signor Florenzano, who has done much for popular instruction in Naples, in 1883 opened a Sunday-school for recreation in a large

hall with a pretty garden in the Vico Cupa a Chiara, where seven hundred children, all under separate patronage of benevolent men and women, were clothed, and on every Sunday taught choral singing, gymnastics, and military exercises. Alas! both the hall and garden have been demolished by the pickaxe of a building society, and the children are dispersed. This idea of placing every boy in the working school under the protection of some well-to-do person is excellent. A few more such industrial schools as these of Casanova and Tarsia would be the making of the next generation of Neapolitan boys. These private institutions also form a striking contrast with the so-called reformatories, penitentiaries, and correctional establishments with which Italy, and especially Naples, abounds. In three of these which we visited we may say, without fear of contradiction, that there are no reforms, and no penitents in any of them. In one of these, where each boy costs three francs per day, *discoli*, merely naughty boys and boys sent by their own parents to be disciplined, are mixed up with culprits who have been condemned once, twice, and thrice, for whom "paternal discipline" is a derision, who break down the doors of their cells, kick the jailors, and yet are fed on coffee and milk in the morning, meat at mid-day, soup at night, and wine three times a week.

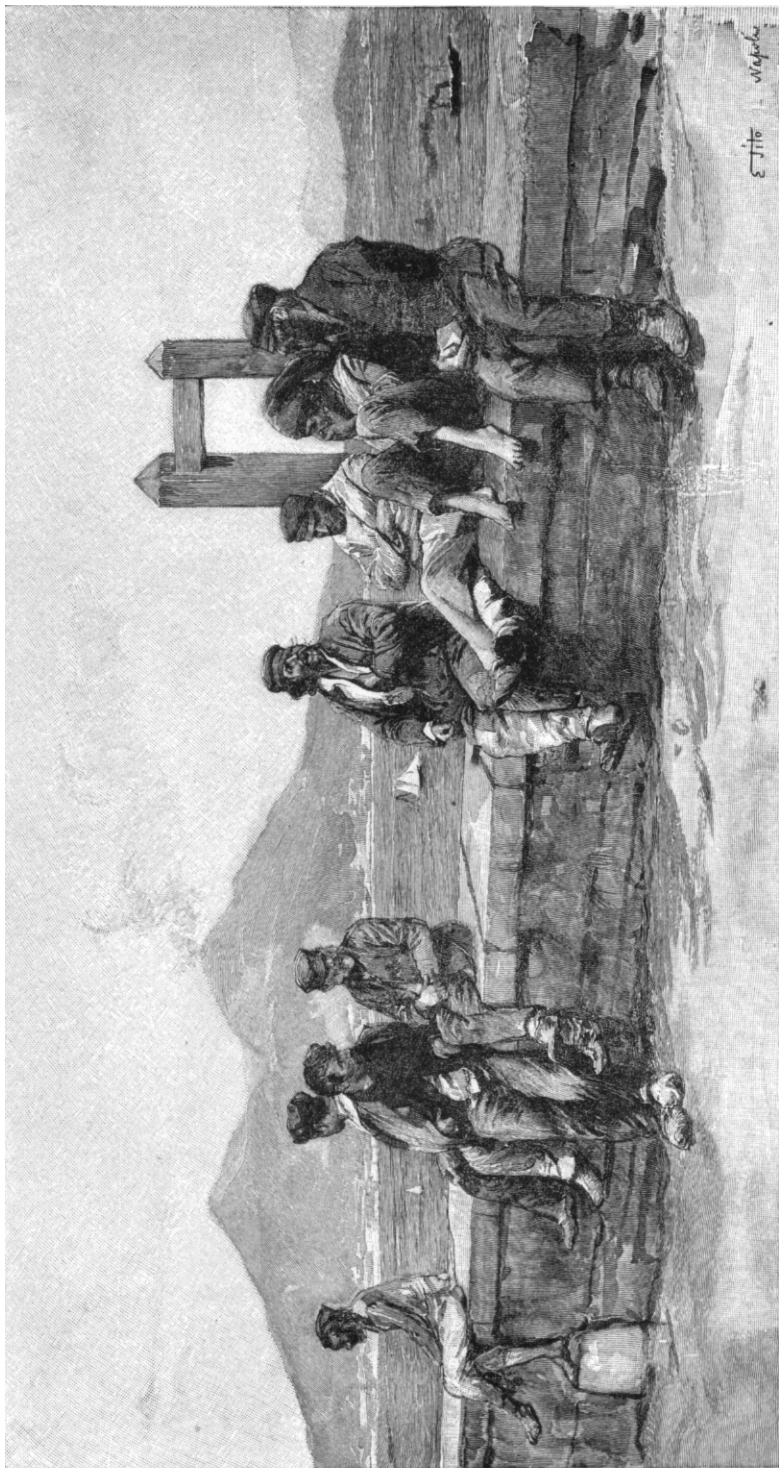
We have not space for even a brief reference to prison discipline in Italy, but we may say as a general rule that delinquents and criminals alone are housed, fed, clothed, and cared for by the State; that the greater the crime, the more hardened the criminal, the better does he lodge, dress, and, till yesterday, fare!

We must not close this story of the poor in Naples without a reference to two other institutions dedicated to the poor alone. The one is the school for the blind at Caravaggio, which, with the boarding-house and school founded by Lady Strachen, offer a pleasant contrast to the blind institute at S. Giuseppe, dependent on the *Albergo dei Poveri*. The blind institute, now called Prince of Naples, founded by the brothers Martucelli, is admirable. The



blind boys and girls read, write, print, and play various instruments, are shoe-makers, carpenters, basket and Venetian blind-makers. The correspondent of the London *Times*, on seeing the department of this school at the Palermo Exhibition, could hardly believe that the work was done by blind children.

The Froebel Institute, now called the Victor Emanuel International Institute, was founded by Julia Salis Schwabe, an enthusiastic admirer of Garibaldi, who, in 1860, appealed to women to open popular schools for the education of the poor in the southern provinces. Professor Villari took it under his especial protection, and the old medical college at S. Aniello was assigned for the purpose, so that poor girls taken from the streets could be housed, fed, and educated. At present the boarding-school has been much reduced, but the day, infant, and elementary schools are simply perfect. Side by side with the classes for poor children, are paying classes for the well-to-do, who are taught to find pleasure in bringing clothes and boots for their poorer companions. The "haves" pay seven lire a month, which suffices to give a capital soup every day to about four hundred children of the "have nots." The establishment serves also as a training-school for teachers of this Froebelian, or as it ought to be called, Pestalozzian system, certainly the most admirable yet invented for keeping children bright, happy, and active, and while placing no undue strain on their intellectual faculties, disciplining and preparing them for the age when these can be exercised. It is a school such as this which I long to see opened in the new quarters where the children taken from the *fondaci* cellars and slums in general are now housed. Very dismal they look, shut up in the respective rooms, seated upon the windowsills, longing for the open street, of *basso porto*, the filthy courtyards, where there were goats and rats to play with, any amount of dirt for the "makin' o' mud pies," and the chance of a stray *pizza* or *frazaglia*, the gift of kindly foodmongers. Now, of course the porters forbid the leaving open the doors of the "apartments," the squatting on staircases, the congregating in the courtyards where



THE PLEASURES OF IDLENESS.

no "washpools" have been erected, "expressly to prevent the slummers from reducing the new tenements to the state of the old *fondaci*." All this is highly proper, but very forlorn for the little ones.

By degrees it is to be hoped that the inhabitants of Naples, rich and poor, will be induced to go and live in the suburbs. At present there is a population which has increased from a little over four hundred thousand to nearly six hundred thousand, crowded over eight square kilometres; deduct the space occupied by churches and public buildings, and there is little more than seven square kilometres. And this is the first greatest misfortune for the poor in Naples. The problem of housing them solved, it will be, after all, but the alpha of the business. There is neither "bread nor work" for the masses, who increase and multiply like rabbits in a warren. On this point they are extremely sensitive. Finding a lad of eighteen, for whom we were trying to get work, just married to a girl of sixteen, we ventured to remonstrate, asking how they were to keep their children? "*Volete anche spegnere la razza dei pezzenti*"—"Do you want even to extinguish the race of misera- bles?" the husband asked, indignantly.

Hitherto the surplus population of the provinces has swarmed off to Brazil and the United States. From the former country many of them return with sad tales of whole families swept away by yellow fever, of hard labor hoeing coffee with insufficient remuneration, and the impossibility of obtaining proper nourishment. And now comes the natural but sad report, from the United States accentuated by Mr. Chandler, in the *Forum*, that republican citizens are tired of the poor, meek, feckless, unclean offshoots of royal courts and aristocratic institutions who extract a livelihood from New York's ash-barrels; who contract for the right to trim the *ash-scows* before they are sent out to sea, whereas a few years ago men were paid a dollar and a half a day for the said "trimming;" who keep the stale beer dives and pig together in the "Bend;" who used at home to receive but five cents per day and "wittals" that dogs

refuse, undersell their labor abroad, and thus lower the wages of the natives.

We cannot wonder that the cry is: "Send them back—here they are encumbrances."

But when this safety-valve is closed some new outlet will have to be found to prevent an explosion, and the "upper third" will do well to devise the ways and means while yet there is time.