

THE ITALIAN COLONY.

Its Recent Rapid Expansion in This City.

CUSTOMS BROUGHT ACROSS THE SEA.

Poverty and Privation Endured in the Hope of Acquiring Ultimate Competence—Surroundings of the Settlement.

It is estimated that of those engaged in manual labor in this country 50 per cent. are foreigners or the children of foreign parents. Of this number the Italians are now beginning to form a considerable part. The Italian immigrants are mostly small farmers or mechanics from the south of Italy or from Lombardy, who embark at Naples or Genoa in the hope of finding an Eldorado in America. Their numbers in Pennsylvania have been estimated at 30,000, of whom a considerable part live in this city, in the vicinity of Seventh and Balnbridge streets. Here is a reproduction of Italian city life. The love of bright colors and personal adornment, so common to all Latin peoples, is displayed on every side, barefooted women have heavy masses of gold ear-rings hanging from their ears, and the men are clothed in bright-colored shirts and adorned by red handkerchiefs tied around their necks. Small children run about clad in but one article of clothing.

Within the last few years the Italian settlement has spread and the immigrants are no longer men exclusively. The immigrant, after saving a little money, sends for his family to join him, and if thrifty, unites with some of his countrymen, buys a rookery, tears it down and builds a brick house, the members of the building association, if such it can be called, doing the entire work of construction. Many of the adult immigrants cannot speak English, but their children learn to speak and sometimes to read with fluency the language of their adopted country.

Hard Work and Poor Pay.

Travelers in Italy often have the impression that the people are lazy and improvident, but poverty and privation are not always the result of vice. The Italian works hard and is willing to live on the roughest fare. The organ and the monkey are adopted as temporary expedients, and the organ grinder soon takes the broom or pickaxe and sweeps the streets or makes railroads.

The padrone system holds in this city as well as in New York, but not to so great an extent. The Italians are very reticent in regard to it.

Besides the Italians in the southeastern portion of the city, there are many Polish Jews, engaged mostly in making clothing for large retail stores, and Hungarians, between whom and the Italians there exists a national antipathy, which shows itself, when gangs of laborers of the two nationalities meet, in the fight that sometimes ensues.

St. Mary Street.

Directly east of the Italian quarter is perhaps the worst part of Philadelphia, including St. Mary street and the surrounding streets and courts. Formerly grog shops were at nearly all the corners, but since the Brooks High License law went into effect these have all been swept away to the marked improvement of the people in the neighborhood, who formerly were in a chronic state of semi-intoxication. On St. Mary street, between Sixth and Seventh streets, stands an old and weather beaten church, erected in the latter part of the last century by Scotch Covenanters, and now used for a number of charitable and religious purposes. A kindergarten is maintained by the city, and Sunday schools for white and colored children are sustained by religious people.

Within the same square a library is opened and largely patronized by the younger people in the neighborhood. Difficulty exists in keeping harmony between the colored and white readers, the colored people considering the white population to belong to an inferior social grade, and the white inhabitants resenting this as an injustice from an inferior race. Gospel meetings and street preaching are constantly held with gratifying results, and the improved condition of the street gives evidence of what a wise license law vigorously enforced and benevolent and religious efforts persistently maintained, can effect.