

Excerpt from The Project Gutenberg EBook of **The Dangerous Classes of New York**, by Charles Loring Brace [EBook #33431]

Full Title: **The Dangerous Classes of New York And Twenty Years' Work Among Them**

Author: Charles Loring Brace

**NEW YORK, WYNKOOP & HALLENBECK, PUBLISHERS, 1872.**

## **CHAPTER XVII.**

### **THE LITTLE ITALIAN ORGAN-GRINDERS.**

Among the various rounds I was in the habit of making in the poorest quarters, was one through the Italian quarter of the "Five Points." Here, in large tenement-houses, were packed hundreds of poor Italians, mostly engaged in carrying through the city and country "the everlasting hand-organ," or selling statuettes. In the same room I would find monkeys, children, men and women, with organs and plaster-casts, all huddled together; but the women contriving still, in the crowded rooms, to roll their dirty macaroni, and all talking excitedly; a bedlam of sounds, and a combination of odors from garlic, monkeys, and most dirty human persons. They were, without exception, the dirtiest population I had met with. The children I saw every day in the streets, following organs, blackening boots, selling flowers, sweeping walks, or carrying ponderous harps for old ruffians. So degraded was their type, and probably so mingled in North Italy with ancient Celtic blood, that their faces could hardly be distinguished from those of Irish poor children—an occasional liquid dark eye only betraying their nationality.

I felt convinced that something could be done for them. Owing to their ignorance of our language and their street-trades, they never attended school, and seldom any religious service, and seemed growing up only for these wretched occupations. Some of the little ones suffered severely from being indentured by their parents in Italy to a "Bureau" in Paris, which sent them out over the world with their "*padrone*," or master, usually a villainous-looking individual with an enormous harp. The lad would be frequently sent forth by his *padrone*, late at night, to excite the compassion of our citizens, and play the harp. I used to meet these boys sometimes on winter-nights half-frozen and stiff with cold.

The bright eyes among these children showed that there was mind in them; and the true remedy for their low estate seemed to be our old one, a School.

Rev. Dr. Hawks, at this time, brought to my attention a very intelligent Italian gentleman of education, a Protestant and patriot, who had taken refuge here—Signor A. E. Cerqua. I will let him tell his own story of the formation and success of the School:

### **THE ITALIAN SCHOOL—THE FIVE POINTS SETTLEMENT.**

"Coming up Chatham Street and bending your course to the left, you turn into Baxter Street, a dark, damp, muddy street, forming one of the Five Points. On each side of the way are stores of old

clothes and heterogeneous articles, kept by Polish and German Jews. Numerous 'Unredeemed Goods for Sale,' in the shape of coats, vests, and other unmentionable garments, are suspended on wooden stands in front of the doorways. There are also junk-stores, rags, bones, and old metal depots, and two Italian groceries, one opposite the other. Advancing farther, you reach the centre of the Five Points, synonymous of whatever is degraded and degrading, loathsome and criminal. Hero Park Street runs parallel to Chatham Street and crosses Baxter Street at right angles, thus forming four of the Five Points. The fifth point is formed by the junction of Worth Street, leading from this common centre in a northerly direction. This locality is very dimly lighted, and the few lamps scattered around only add to the repulsive nature of the place. The pestiferous exhalations of the filthy streets, and not less filthy shanties, inhabited by the lowest and most disreputable characters, are disgusting beyond any description. Scattered over this neighborhood, densely settled by the most depraved classes of all nationalities, there lived, and still live, some fifteen hundred of the poorest class of Italians, who traditionally cling to that locality. They are generally from the Ligurian coasts, which are over-populated. When the farms require working, the inhabitants usually have something to do; but, at some seasons, want of employment compels them to turn elsewhere. Men, women, and lads went in ordinary times to the largest cities of Northern Italy for temporary occupation, leaving behind their children to the care of relatives or acquaintances, who, owing to their business, inability, or carelessness, neglected in most cases to exercise over them parental duties. When the hand-organ came into vogue, they found it the easiest way to employ their unoccupied time. Seeing, afterward, that they could realize more by the organ than by the shovel, they went grinding all the year, and spread all over Italy at first, then over Europe and America. Some of the children left were sent for, while others were hired out to those who proposed a grinding-tour to America. Those who arrived here first having done well, others followed, and the tide of the organ-grinding emigration set in on a gradual rise. The failure of the Revolutionary movements of 1848 and 1849 having impoverished, to a greater or smaller extent, the several Italian provinces, gave a great impetus to this emigration, and it was not long before the Five Points were crowded to overflowing. Accustomed as they were to agricultural pursuits and out of the reach of better social influences, and totally ignorant of the language, they formed a separate colony, associating only with those of their own country in the Five Points. Had they displayed the vices or criminal inclinations which prevail to a deplorable extent among the low classes of other 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 fell into a privacy that deprived them of the advantages of American benevolence; and there is no instance of any visitor having ever been appointed to explore this fruitful field of operation.

#### **OPENING OF THE SCHOOL.**

"Early in December, 1855, the writer, with Mr. Brace, visited several families. Our reception was not such as to promise success, although, considering their distrustful and suspicious disposition, consequent upon their isolated existence, they did not treat us disrespectfully. Having thus prepared and informed them, on the evening of the tenth of the same month we opened our School in a room kindly furnished by Rev. Mr. Pease, on the north side of the Five Points' square.

"On the first night of our operation we had an attendance of ten boys, six girls, seven young men, four young women, two men, and one woman (thirty in all), attracted, as may be evident by the age of the attendants, more by the novelty of the undertaking than by any definite purpose. Of that number, only two could read a little in Italian—not one in English; hence I formed a single class of the whole in the alphabet.

"By more frequent visiting, the attendance was, after a little while, nearly doubled; but toward spring it dwindled to such an insignificant number, that it was deemed expedient to close the school.

"Instead of being deterred by this discouraging feature, we determined to examine the field more carefully, and endeavor to discover the immediate cause of the unexpected check our hopes had experienced. Proper exertions in visiting, and cautious and timely investigations, soon brought out the fact that some absurd rumors had been circulated among them to the effect that our purpose was to turn them away from their own church, alleging, as conclusive evidence, that our school-room was used for Sunday religious meetings. These mischievous insinuations called for the utmost prudent activity on our part, for, although these people are not fanatics in religion, they, at that time, still clung with tenacity to the infallibility of their priest. I say at that time, because the unnatural and unchristian attitude assumed since by their spiritual guides toward Italy has forced even the uneducated class into a certain use of comparative rational freedom, and, beyond the spiritual, they will not follow their religious leaders. Meeting with only partial success by persuasion, I then promised shoes and clothing to pupils who would attend for three months consecutively; and having thus prepared the way, and without ever failing to visit the most unapproachable, it was deemed advisable to reopen the School in November, 1856. The attendance increased by some thirty, with a minor sprinkling of men and women. Shoes and clothes were distributed in March, but the number soon after commenced diminishing, until June, 1857, when the School, as in the previous year, had to be closed for a second time. Two great advantages had, however, been developed. Their ready acceptance of shoes and clothes given and distributed in our room was a powerful argument in my hands to answer their objection to the room; and among the floating attendance I had noticed a score or so of regular pupils upon whom I concentrated my best attention and every possible encouragement, in the conviction that the result of my efforts in that direction would prove efficacious to attract others. And, in fact, when the improvement of these twenty attendants became known, it was found comparatively easy to persuade others to school.

"It had now become evident to me that, with adequate exertions and inducements, the School could be established on a permanent and working order; and on the following September we recommenced operations with better promise. But a narrow-minded opposition partially marred our success this year. An Italian priest, called Rebiccio, from the confessional and from the pulpit, flung ferocious anathemas at all who permitted their children to attend our School. He even went from house to house to use his influence in the same direction. I sent a deputation of my oldest scholars to remonstrate with him and correct his misapprehensions by assuring him that we had no sectarian teachings. These same boys I took with me in visiting a number of the most superstitious families, and for the same purpose, but in both cases of no avail; only, instead of justifying myself, I found that these boys were equally suspected of complicity, some even assuming that they had already been converted. I felt disheartened, not because I did not hope to overcome all obstacles by patience, prudence, and perseverance, but because I could scarcely realize the actual occurrence of such an unflinching, unprincipled, and unjust persecution, or, what was still worse, of such credulous stupidity as was shown by the very people we intended to elevate.

Prompted by these feelings, I then wrote a letter to that worthy priest, inviting him to assist me in teaching, to take my place, to teach these poor children himself—in short, to do what he pleased, provided they were furnished with proper means to better their condition. The letter was couched in the most unexceptionable terms, and closed by entreating him to desist from his unjust attacks, and not to compel me to appeal to the public through the daily press, the last resort in this free country. Discouraged by the suspicious reception I met with from the majority of these people, and by the fruitless result of my aforesaid letter, I was then preparing a statement for the newspapers, when the whole opposition scheme exploded. Under the false pretext that he was going to hire a building to open a school for these children, in connection with a church, which he proposed also to build for

them, this worthy priest had collected considerable money in the Five Points, when all at once he disappeared, and it was only after months that he was heard of in affluent circumstances in Italy. A natural and desirable reaction then took place among our people, and since then the School has been yearly in operation for eleven months, and with gradual prosperity. In June, 1866, desiring to extend our work and absorb all children exposed to the bad influences and examples of the streets that attended no day-school, we added also successfully a day session, so that now, with two hundred and twenty-eight (228) names on our books since October 1, 1867, we have a daily average of sixty-five (65), and one hundred and eighty-six (186) for day and evening sessions respectively. By these figures it will be seen that, while in other schools the proportion of the average to the names entered is, at the best, seventy-five per cent., nearly all our pupils on the roll-book attend regularly one of the two, and several both sessions. The attendants vary from five to twenty-two years of age, averaging about nine and a half. A little less than one-half of the whole are females.

#### **MENTAL IMPROVEMENT.**

"Whoever has not associated with this class of Italians before our School was opened cannot form an adequate idea of the result attained both in moral and mental improvement. Out of the whole number entered since the commencement of operations, say, in round numbers, eight hundred and fifty (850), not over forty had a little and imperfect knowledge of reading the Italian, and only about ten had a slight acquaintance with the English. My first endeavors were directed to induce them to attend day-schools, and during the first three years over twenty became pupils of Public Schools. Later on, this number received accessions, amounting at one time to about fifty.

"Our course of study comprises the gradual series of English reading, spelling, and writing adopted in most of the Public Schools; geography, arithmetic, history, and grammar. The class in the last two branches this year is very small, as the students thereof, being mostly adults, cannot well attend regularly.

"Some twelve years ago, and for a time after, there were only two among them who had some knowledge of letters, and on them the whole colony had to depend for writing and reading letters in Italian and interpreting in English, on payment of charges varying from twenty-five to fifty cents. On becoming acquainted with this fact, I resolved upon teaching also the Italian to the most advanced in the English, which addition met with general favor, for, a year after, the pupils who could and did gratuitously perform the offices of the two literati increased to such an extent that one was usually found within each family or a circle of relatives. The time being limited, these studies are, of course, taught alternately, and the progress therein is not as speedy as would be desirable; but, everything considered, they show remarkable intelligence, aptitude, and willingness to learn. I might quote from reports of the principal press of this city on our last examination; but, as the School is free and always open to visitors, I will content myself with inviting our friends to look into the subject for themselves.

How gratifying when I enter the School to see the oldest of the attendants, but a few years ago illiterate and totally ignorant of everything around them, reading papers, and quoting, discriminating, and discussing the topics of the day, and forming a more or less correct idea of the state of things in the land of their adoption and in other parts of the world! Gratifying, indeed, to see these children, but a few years ago without any idea of patriotism, without any other principle to guide their judgment and actions than the natural impulses of a degraded selfishness, exchange intelligent views upon the moral standing and tendency of the political parties in this and in their native country! Many times I have been astonished at the extensive information and sound opinions they display in commenting upon contemporaneous events. The

## MORAL IMPROVEMENT.

which has been accomplished is still more extensive and sensible. At first sight the visitor is enabled to draw a line between old and new pupils by noticing the intelligent and clean appearance, quick perception, and admirable behavior of the former, and the dull, downcast, rough, and thoughtless countenances of the latter. It is surprising that all these children were accustomed to wash their faces only on Sundays, and it takes even now some time to induce them to do it daily. Still, it is undeniable that, as a class, they possess an earnest appreciation of good habits, only it is, to say so, an abstract idea as yet with them, and needs development.

"When the School opened, and for some time after, the attendance was generally composed of organ-grinders and beggars, which vocations they indifferently acknowledged to follow, whenever asked, by analogous gestures. To redeem them from those ignoble vocations was, in my opinion, of paramount importance, and to that end I devoted part of my time in visiting their parents, to impress them with a sense of self-respect and human dignity, and talk them into the apprenticing into trades their offspring. As, however, these boys brought home from fifty cents to a dollar per day, it was quite a difficult task to persuade them to give up this source of income for comparatively nominal wages. With guardians and relatives my efforts remained entirely fruitless. I then concluded that if we could show them practically that trades in the end would pay better, it would become easy to accomplish our purpose. I concentrated, therefore, my exertions on three families, the most approachable, and succeeded. One consented to place a boy of fourteen in the Printing Department of the American Tract Society; another soon followed in the same line: the third, a boy of thirteen, entered a machine-shop. All three did very well, and at the end of two years they were earning five and six dollars per week. Their success caused a moral revolution, and had I been able to place all, not one would at this day be blacking boots, which many do for want of better employment. It is a fact that speaks very highly of these Italians, that in every instance, whenever one has been employed, Italians are preferred. I have seen certificates given by manufacturers to some of them, speaking enthusiastically of their honesty, industry, and faithfulness. There are also instances of extraordinary interest taken by employers in their behalf, and in no case has any ever been discharged for any other reason than for want of work. A large number of girls also find occupation in artificial flowers and confectionery. All now look with scorn upon their former vocations, and the term '*pianist*' is ironically applied to newly landed organ-grinders. Now it is a fact that can stand the strictest scrutiny, that *all* those who follow decent vocations or attend day-schools, public or otherwise, either are or have been our regular attendants for years and that *all grinders, beggars, and vagrants*, in general, are not and have not, attended at all, or at most a few weeks, attracted only by the hope of getting shoes or clothes.

"Without mentioning the many present pupils who are engaged in honorable pursuits, I can readily name about fifty old attendants who have left school, now employed in this or other States as printers, confectioners, jewelers, shoemakers, machinists, carpenters, waiters, carvers, and farm-hands. To these must be added two who keep and own a neat confectionery and ice-cream saloon in Grand Street; a shoemaker in business for himself; another, one of the first three above-mentioned, a foreman in the very machine-shop in which he served as an apprentice; one a patented machinist in a steam chocolate manufactory; and, lastly, one who for the last three years has been foreman in a wholesale confectionery. I omit to mention those who have gone back to Italy and are doing well. As a rule, they all remember with gratitude their friends, to whose efforts and liberality they acknowledge they owe their present position. From every State in which they settle we receive now and then encouraging news from some boy; and not long ago we heard, for the second time, from a boy in Italy, who, after having mentioned that he was studying Latin, etc., gives vent to his feelings by conveying his most hearty thanks to all the teachers, mentioning them one by one—to Mr. Brace, to Mr. Macy, and, not remembering the name of our good friend, John C. Havemeyer, Esq.,

he adds, "also to that kind gentleman who has an office at No. 175 Pearl Street." His letter is very touching, and reveals noble feeling and mind.

"Nor are parents less grateful and ready to acknowledge the good of American benevolence. I was conversing one evening with a widow woman, while her boy was writing to her father in Italy, and called her attention to the advantage her son had derived from our School, adding that I still remembered how indifferently she received at first my advices. She felt a little mortified and replied: '*Caro Maestro* (Dear Teacher), having never received any good from anybody, but plenty of harm, we could not believe that all at once we had become worthy of so much kindness. We used to have hard treatment at the hand of everybody, had no friends; even our countrymen in better circumstances despised us, and, to tell you the truth, we had made up our mind that we would find charity only in the other world.'

#### VISITING.

"I will not attempt to give an idea of the difficulty attending visiting in the Five Points, nor can I dwell at length on the extensive suffering and wretchedness that have fallen under my observation. Notwithstanding my comparative familiarity with those places, I cannot dispense yet with a guide and a light, and, in many instances, two of both. The rickety shanties, with crumbling stairs and broken steps, undergo as many changes in the interior as may be suggested by the wants of the successive inmates. The rooms have been partitioned and sub-partitioned a good number of times, and now and then I have found even part of the hall, and the whole thereof on top floors, taken in by new partitions. Small wooden rear buildings are mostly tenanted entirely by Italians, but in large tenement-houses there is generally found a good Irish or Jewish mingling. Visiting, in the latter case, is often attended by most unpleasant occurrences, owing to intoxicated and troublesome persons that are usually found in the stairs and halls. But to relate some of my experience:

"On Christmas-day (1866) a woman with five children—the oldest three our pupils—coming from church, fell, breaking her arm and giving premature birth to a sixth. Hearing of this sad case, I took a few yards of red flannel and went to see her. I found the poor woman in the deepest agony and almost frantic from suffering. Her husband kept a fruit-stand in Nassau Street, but this accident, as she expressed it, had entirely stupified him, and she suffered to a great extent, also, morally, from the hopeless condition of her young family. The stove was as warm (or cold) as every piece of furniture in the room, and the poor patient and the two smallest children had to manage to keep warm by lying on the same bed, with a pile of old clothes and carpets over them. Presently, however, the three elder children came in, half-frozen and barefooted, scarcely able to talk, and discharged near the store the contents of their aprons and bags, the result of their coal-picking tour. Leaving to their father the care of reviving the fire, they, as of a common consent, started for a closet, and drawing out a good-sized tin pan full of boiled corn-meal, commenced a furious onslaught thereon. The outer room measured some twelve by fourteen feet, and had no beds, but its floor afforded sleeping accommodations to the five children. The inner room was scarcely large enough to admit a middle-sized bedstead used by the parents. When I left, the young ones had taken their places for the night, and the man, having made a good fire, proceeded to assort a barrel of apples, and his wife said it was the fourth time '*that stupid man had gone through the same process without having done anything.*'

"Among guardians, especially, the custom was prevalent of fixing the amount the boy or girl had to bring home in the evening. But not seldom fathers were prompted by avarice to act still more cruelly against their own offspring, and while the former punished the shortcomings of their wards by furnishing them with meals of microscopic proportions, the latter, on the presumption, I suppose, of paternal right, went so far as to whip and even expel from home the son or sons who failed to

come up to their greedy expectations. At present, however, such cases are almost unknown, owing to the sense of independence felt by the growing generation and to our influence on the parents. But as late as three years ago I had observed that a boy of twelve, who was very anxious to learn, now and then was absent. One evening I called on him for explanations, and he related that he was *'taxed'* for eighty cents a day, and every cent short of that amount was balanced by a proportionate dose of cowhiding on his bare body. He entreated me most earnestly not to say a word to his father on the subject, otherwise he would fare still worse. Whenever, therefore, he failed to earn the eighty cents by his boot-blackening vocation, he would not go home. This unnatural father did not stop here; he did not care in the least how long his son would remain out sleeping under market-stands and in newspaper rooms, but he insisted on the boy paying over to him, when he would return, at the rate of eighty cents per day for all the time of his absence, without any allowance for food, etc.

"The case was really heart-rending, especially as the boy was developing fine moral and intellectual qualities, and had to be treated with uncommon prudence. At first I told the boy to call on me for whatever he was short, and he did so on two occasions; but somehow or other the transaction was reported to the father, who, rather than desist from his pretension, as any other man would certainly have done, increased the *tax* to one dollar, with the remark that *'it would make no difference to the teacher, twenty cents, more or less.'* The very same night this happened, seeing the impossibility of curing this man in any other way, I paid him a visit, which seemed to have surprised him to a great extent. I spoke to him calmly but determinedly, as I never had occasion to do before, but without eliciting any answer, and I left him with the assurance that if he did not desist at once from the vile abuse of parental authority I would have him arrested. After a few days he moved to Laurens street, and in about six months from this occurrence returned, with the whole family, to Italy. I never could learn anything afterward concerning his interesting son.

"The filth prevalent in some of their abodes is really appalling, and in some cases incredible. In — — Baxter Street there is a bedroom, nine by twelve feet, occupied by four children and their parents. The door, hindered by the bed behind it, opens scarcely enough to give admittance to a person of ordinary size. At the foot of the bed there is, and was, and will be as long as they stay therein, a red-hot stove, between which and the window stands an old chest; opposite the stove a table. The fetid air inside I would have thought to be beyond human endurance. The woman, at my request, opened the window, remarking 'that she did not see the use of burning coal inside, if the freezing air was to be permitted to come in freely.' The children sleep on the floor; that is to say, one nearly under the bed, another under the table, a third by the stove, and the fourth is at liberty to roll over any of her sisters. I could not help noticing an old greasy piece of print, of no distinguishable color, hanging around the bed, and performing, as I learned with satisfaction, the function of a curtain to keep out of view its occupants.

"During the last ten years some fifteen of our girls, and nearly as many boys, married—mostly, I ought to say, intermarried—and as the greater portion of them have children, say from four to eight years of age, in our school, I visit also occasionally among them, the new generation. And how different in their habits of cleanliness! Floors, walls, ceiling, windows, everything faultlessly clean, their persons neat, so that their rooms are really an oasis in that desert called tenement-houses; and the cordial civility they extend to me carries still farther the comparison by making me realize in their apartments, after a visiting tour at the Five Points, all the satisfaction the traveler derives by the fertile spot after a fatiguing journey across the burning sand.

"I will omit many sad scenes witnessed at the death-bed of several of our pupils, it being my aim to dwell only on such facts as may convey an idea of the nature of the difficulties we had to overcome. But the monotonous scenes of suffering under its various forms are, however, succeeded now and then by others peculiarly exciting.

"Often, of my own choice, but sometimes entreated by the pupils' parents, I paid visits to billiard-rooms. Those are placed in the back-room of groceries, of which there are three in that neighborhood, and have, therefore, communication with the yard. Whenever I deemed it necessary to go on such errands, I had to organize previously an expedition of ten or twelve of our oldest scholars, who, in accordance with my instructions, would at a signal prevent all means of egress from windows and doors. I would then go in from the front, and a wild rush for the rear would ensue; but, finding themselves surrounded, all the boys I was looking for, had no other choice but to follow us to school, escorted as deserters. Now, it is more than probable that ninety-nine out of one hundred of billiard-keepers in New York would not allow such proceedings against their interests, for our *descents* did not particularly improve their profits. Still, those Italian grocers not only countenanced and aided my endeavors, but gave me also all the information I previously demanded. Little by little, by repeated expeditions and an occasional *peeping* in these places before going to school, I succeeded in nearly breaking up their vicious habits in this respect, and it is only a rare occurrence that one of our boys on Saturday nights will go in to *look* on a game. In corroboration of which success I may mention that early last winter (1867), one Saturday evening, the police made a regular and truly formidable descent on these billiard-saloons, arresting, among others, in all twenty-seven Italians, I believe, of whom eleven were boys from seven to fifteen. Next evening I had an application to interfere for their release, as it is usual for me to do whenever circumstances warrant it, and in looking into the subject carefully I found that of them only two—namely, the youngest and the oldest—belonged to our school, and that both had gone to buy groceries, and, while the grocer was weighing and wrapping the provisions, they had walked to the door between the store and the saloon to look in, and were under that circumstance arrested. Upon my conviction that such was really the case, I applied for and obtained their discharge. The other boys mostly belonged to families newly arrived from Italy and directed for California, to which State these people generally move if unable to make a living in New York.

"Now I will only add that the Maestro (teacher) at the Five Points has become an indispensable personage among them. He is assumed to be a lawyer, medical doctor, theologian, astronomer, banker—everything as well as a teacher. A boy is arrested for throwing stones in the street; the Maestro is applied to and the boy is released. One has fifty dollars to deposit; the Maestro is consulted as to the soundness of the savings-banks—and so on. But, to better appreciate their feelings on this subject, it must be known that these poor foreigners have for a long while been victimized by the grossest impositions. I have heard of as much as one thousand dollars lost by one family, through the sharp practice of a man (an Italian) who, taking advantage of their ignorance of the English, and of their confidence, deposited and drew in his name the money which was intended as part payment for a farm they had bought in Massachusetts, and gave them to understand that the bank had failed. And this is one of the many cases they had related to me on the subject. Nor less shameful imposition they suffered at the hands of the "shysters" whenever some juvenile delinquent was arrested for trifles. They had to pay from fifty to one hundred dollars, and, what was worse, often without obtaining their release. In order to explain the process by which poor people possess such cash amounts, I must say that in extraordinary circumstances they help each other with the most disinterested and prompt liberality. Some of those who go to California, having borrowed the money here, remit it generally in drafts payable to order of lenders, who, being unknown to the bank, are refused payment. The Maestro then, of course, is applied to, and for the first two or three cases I found it hard to make them understand that I did not do it for money. They would insist on my receiving something for my trouble in procuring payment by the drawees, and one, especially, on having paid a draft of one hundred and sixty dollars gold, followed me for a block, with a coin piece in his hand, insisting that I should take it. 'My dear man, keep your money,' I would say; 'I am very glad to have been able to render you this service.' 'No, Maestro, no. Well, take *at least* these five dollars' (gold). That *at least* struck me that he must have been laboring under the impression that my services were worth considerably more, and I addressed him in that sense. In answer, he

explained that an Italian, who has gone away from New York, charged him and others ten per cent, for cashing drafts to order.

"In conclusion, the Maestro is called upon for every emergency; Questions undecided between two or more dissentient parties are referred to my arbitration. Family quarrels are submitted to my adjustment. It is no exaggeration to say that the good which could be effected by thus visiting among this class is immense—in fact, far beyond the expectation of those who might take as a basis of comparison the result of visiting among the low classes of other nationalities.

#### OUR FRIENDS.

"As the work was done in a most quiet way, our patrons were at first few, and for six years all Americans. After that period, the few distinguished Italians in this city were applied to with favorable result. But it was not until the end of 1868 that their co-operation proved efficient, and relieved considerably the Children's Aid Society of the pecuniary burden. Previous to that time, five or six of them, headed by the Italian Consul-General, Signor Anfora, visited us, to look into the working of the School, and, becoming satisfied that a great good was being accomplished, later on, at the invitation of the Trustees of the Society, organized themselves into a *Co-operative Sub-Committee*, consisting of Prof. V. Botta, President; E. P. Fabbri, Treasurer; G. Albinola and V. Fabbri, Esqs., and Dr. G. Cekarini.

The Treasurer, Signor Fabbri, with that kind and unassuming liberality for which he is distinguished, to his annual subscription has added fifty tons of coal to the most deserving, thus relieving their sufferings to a great extent, and establishing a powerful inducement for indifferent parents. The Committee also reported to the Italian Government what was taking place for the advantage of its destitute and ignorant subjects in this city, and obtained some subsidy and other encouragement from that quarter. At the head of the Ministerial Department for Foreign Affairs was, at that period. Cav. M. Cerruti, a gentleman of learning and most enlightened views, who has done much in Italy to popularize public instruction as the speediest and surest means of promoting the prosperity of the nation. This gentleman having lately been appointed Minister Plenipotentiary from his to this country, visited, last October, our School, and met with the hearty reception he deserves as one of our patrons. His visit elicited the following letter from the distinguished Italian statesman to Rev. C. L. Brace, Secretary of the Children's Aid Society:—

"CLARENDON HOTEL, October 29, 1867.

"DEAR SIR—I beg leave to be allowed to express, in behalf of the Italian Government and nation I have the honor to represent at Washington, the most heartfelt thanks for the Christian and noble undertaking unpretentiously assumed and most successfully prosecuted by the Children's Aid Society for the improvement of the poor class of the Italian population in your city. My visit to the Italian School under your charge, on the 23d instant, was to me a source of high gratification, and convinced me that, by your efficient and humane exertions, hundreds of poor Italian children have been redeemed from vagrancy and turned into industrious and useful members of the community. The cleanliness, mental training, and admirable behavior of the one hundred and fifty pupils assembled on that occasion, impressed me with a deep sense of gratitude toward the friends of the Children's Aid Society, and to you personally, for your unsparing efforts in devising and forwarding such a useful institution. I can only hope that your Society may ever prosper and continue its charitable work in the vast field of its operations with that truly Christian and benevolent spirit which distinguishes this glorious undertaking. "Believe me, dear sir, "Yours respectfully,  
[Signed]"MARCEL CERRUTI, "Minister Plenipotentiary from Italy at Washington."

**GENERAL REMARKS.**

"For brevity's sake I had to omit mentioning incidents which speak very highly of our pupils. Nor have I space to describe the many cases of articles and money found by them and handed to me for investigation as to the rightful owner; and their spontaneous liberality and hearty contributions to the Garibaldi Fund in 1859, to the New York Sanitary Fair in 1864, and to the relief of the orphans and wounded of the late war of Italy and Prussia against Austria. Suffice it to say that our aim is to render them useful, honest, industrious, and intelligent citizens. In that direction we have been laboring, and with what success has been seen."