VALUABLE IMMIGRANTS.

Italians are coming to this country by the hundred thousand, and are proving a most valuable addition to the population. They are hard workers, abstemious, strong, hardy and intelligent. For the greater part they are peasants, thoroughly skilled in tillage. They have succeeded in winning a good living from the hill pastures and abandoned farms of New England. They are crowding to this country at the rate of 8000 a month, and intelligent American observers are glad that they are coming, because there is a place for them in the ranks of our agricultural workers, and our unskilled labor. Fifty years ago our unskilled labor was chiefly represented by the Irish peasant immigration which poured into this country in a flood from 1846 to 1855. There is no more athletic race in the world than the Irish peasantry, and their strong arms built all our railroads and digged all our canals up to about 1860. But the Irish immigration is not nearly as large as it was in the years following the famine of 1845-47, and the Irish are an energetic race who soon get beyond the sphere of unskilled labor. They soon become small farmers, mechanics, tradesmen, and their vacant places have been taken largely in railroad labor by the Italians.

The Italian has not so powerful a physique as the Irishman, and he is handicapped at first by his ignorance of the English language, but he soon "picks up" our tongue; he is hardy, patient, industrious and economical, because he comes from a land where these virtues are necessary to get a living. It is doubtful if any field laborers this side of India and China work so hard for so little pay as the Italian peasant is obliged to do in his native land. Italy is taxed to death to support a very large standing army, and the Italian peasantry of recent years have been taking to flight by thousands. During the last fifteen years the hardy, vigorous Italian immigrant has made all our railroad cuts and embankments. His superior quickness and intelligence will ultimately enable him to leave the field of unskilled manual labor to the Slav, even as the Irishman abandoned it to the Italian.

The capacity of the Italian immigrant for rapid improvement is shown in the Argentine Republic, where climate and social conditions have favored his development, and where he has attained the first rank in the industries of the country. Italians own nearly half the commercial firms in Buenos Ayres, with a capital of $150,000,000, and more than half its workshops. Italian architects have built the greater part of Buenos Ayres; Italians have all the river carrying trade and two-thirds of the coasting trade; Italian peasants and men of business own nearly all the corn farms. The production of corn and artificial grasses has been created by the Italians, who own rural property to the value of $50,000,000, and one in every eight is a proprietor. The bulk of the engineering and milling, the paper and soap industries, almost all the hat and tobacco manufactures, most of the cement and marble works, a large part of the tanning and tinned meat business is in the hands of Italians. In wheat-growing they form the enormous majority of the population. A Piedmontese proprietor plants 67,000 acres in wheat; an Italian firm mows 12,000 acres of temporary grasses; an Italian, the foremost wine producer of South America, has 2500 acres under vines. The Italian vinegrowers of Mendoza and San Juan and Buenos Ayres produce every year 38,000,000 gallons of wine. All this has been done by uneducated, poverty-stricken Italian peasants in a few years. The Italian immigrants who have performed this mighty work in Argentina are identical in quality and capacity with the Italian immigrants that were formerly condemned in the United States as useless or dangerous paupers.

The popular prejudice against Italian immigration rests chiefly upon a confusion of a genuine Italian peasant immigration with the comparatively worthless, homicidal, mongrel, so-called Italian immigration from Sicily and Naples. Sicily has been ruled in succession by Greeks, Romans, Moors, Spaniards and Frenchmen; Calabria and Naples have much of this mongrel population. The difference in quality between these Italian mongrels of Sicily and the extreme south of Italy and the fine peasantry that people Middle and Northern Italy is shown by the fact that while Northern Italy shows no larger per cent of homicides than the most civilized countries of Europe, Southern Italy shows a very high average for homicide. The highest average for homicide is found among the poor, brutalized miners of Sicily, who are absolutely illiterate. Popular education has almost eliminated homicide in the Ticino, the Italian canton of Switzerland, where sixty years ago homicides were frequent and ignorance abounded. The criminal associations, like the Mafia, are confined to Sicily, Calabria and Naples, and it is this quality of so-called "Italian" immigrants that are as prompt to use a knife murderously in a trivial quarrel as an Anglo-Saxon would be to use his fist.