

ITALIANS IMPOSED UPON.

A BRANCH OF THE CAMORRA SAID TO BE ESTABLISHED IN NEW-YORK.

The case of the Castellano brothers and cousins against Giuseppe and Michele Marone for compelling them by threats of assassination to sign papers acknowledging a debt, which has been on trial the past two days in the Court of General Sessions, has thrown some light upon the methods of padrones in this country. It is said that many of these padrones are members of an Italian secret society called the Camorra, with headquarters at Naples. Many of the Camorrista, or members of the Camorra, have been driven out of Italy, and have sought an asylum in this country, where they established a branch of the society, with headquarters in this city, and have also, it is said, succeeded in influencing or obtaining control of one of the Italian newspapers here. These Camorrista have their agents in Italy, who go among the villages, where a dollar a day means a fortune, and engage large numbers of laborers to whom they promise good wages in this country. They pay the laborers' passage, and on their arrival here furnish them with lodgings and board at some Italian boarding houses with which they are connected, and then farm them out to railroad contractors, &c., at so much per day, after first obtaining from such contractors or corporation a bonus of \$1 or more per head for the trouble in finding the men. These padrones or their partners act as foremen to the men whom they bring over, handle their wages, out of which they deduct whatever they may consider is due them. Should the men complain that the padrones cheat them, the latter, it is said, silence them by threats and intimidation, and sometimes it is claimed they go as far as assassination. They tell the men that they, the padrones, have the police in their pay, and that therefore it would be useless for them to ask the authorities for redress. The Camorrista, it is also said, practice blackmail upon the Italians who have resided in this country for some time and have become acquainted with the institutions. They direct their agents in Italy to investigate the antecedents of these Italians, and should it be found that they had ever committed any crime or had ever been implicated in any scandal, such knowledge is made use of to extort money.

From the evidence given in court by the plaintiffs it appeared that last May four or five brothers and cousins by the name of Castellano and 15 other Italians had been sent for by a padrone by the name of Francesco Competello, who lives in this city. His agent in Italy paid their passage money, and gave each \$6 in cash. This altogether represented some \$30, and the Italians were bound over to repay Competello in this country \$66 in cash or work. On their arrival here they were put to work under Giuseppe Marone, who furnished them with food and wretched lodging, but who purposely kept them idle for over two months to get them into his debt, and thus prolong their slavery. He never gave them any money. In November Marone wanted them to go and work in South Carolina, but they refused unless Competello went with them as an interpreter. Marone then ordered them to sign an acknowledgment of debt to him, and when they refused he drew a pistol and knife, while his cousin, Michele, drew two knives, and threatened to kill them. Finally, the Italians, fearing death, signed their names.

The defense called Competello to the stand, and he swore that the cost of the passage and the advance in money made to each man amounted to \$39. A verbal agreement made with the men bound them over to pay him back \$66. He charged such a high commission because of the great risks he took, as the men might get drowned on the way or run away after their arrival in this country. He had borrowed \$580 from Giuseppe Marone for this speculation. Several of the laborers that he had brought over had already liquidated their debts to him, and he had paid Marone \$250 and owed him the balance of the \$580. The evening that the Castellanos complained that they had been compelled to sign obligations under threats of death witness was in the saloon. He had suggested to Marone to collect what he owed him from the Italians, and as those laborers were also indebted to Marone for lodgings and food Marone consented, provided the laborers should assume the responsibility of paying him what they owed to Competello. They were asked and expressed their willingness to sign a paper promising to pay Marone what they owed to Competello, and they did so without any compulsion from any one. No pistols or knives were drawn, and no threats were made.

Giuseppe and Michele Marone were both examined, and corroborated Competello's testimony. They positively denied that they had drawn any weapons against the laborers. Giuseppe Marone said that he had been a labor contractor for seven years and supplied railroads and other works with Italian workmen, and got a bonus for each man furnished. Whenever he sent a gang of men he started a small store, where he retailed provisions to the men, and then paid himself out of their wages.

Michele Christello, the clerk in the Italian Consulate, testified as to the law in Italy with reference to contracts. A contract between Italian subjects made in a foreign country was only binding in Italy when it was certified to by the Italian Consul at the place where it was made. The plaintiff then could sue in the Italian courts and recover just as though the contract had been made in Italy. The case has not been concluded.