

THE BLACK HAND SCOURGE

GERALD A. RODERICK

BIG PROFIT MADE ON LAND

Which Can Be Bought for a Mere Song in the Little Snake River Valley, Routt County, Colo.

A ten per cent profit on a valuation of over \$200 an acre is what is being made now by farmers in the Little Snake River valley in Routt County, Colorado, and lands similar in quality and with gilt edged water rights are now offered by the State of Colorado under the Carey Act at \$35.50 per acre on ten years' time.

This land will grow in abundance oats, potatoes, sugar beets and all other grains, grasses and root crops, and is suitable for all kinds of fruit, except possibly the most delicate of tree fruits.

The land is sold in tracts of 40, 80, 120 and 160 acres to citizens of the United States, or those who have declared their intentions of becoming citizens. There is no drawing in connection with this land; first come, first served being the policy.

If interested, write to the Routt County Colonization Co., 1734 Welton street, Denver, Colorado, for full information as to the land, special excursion rates, etc.

SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.



Gimlet—Fibbs claims to have caught a catfish weighing 50 pounds down in the creek, does he? Well, it's safe to say he's lying to the extent of about 40 pounds.

Hammer—Not if he hears you say it.

WHAT IS PAINT?

The paint on a house is the extreme outside of the house. The wood is simply a structural under layer. That is as it should be. Unprotected wood will not well withstand weather. But paint made of pure white lead and linseed oil is an invulnerable armor against sun and rain, heat and cold. Such paint protects and preserves, fortifying the perishable wood with a complete metallic casing.

And the outside of the house is the looks of the house. A well-constructed building may be greatly depreciated by lack of painting or by poor painting.

National Lead Company have made it possible for every building owner to be absolutely sure of pure white lead paint before applying. They do this by putting upon every package of their white lead their Dutch Boy Painter trademark. That trademark is a complete guarantee.

True Thrift.

"When visiting a certain town in the Midlands," says a medical man, "I was told of an extraordinary incident wherein the main figure, an economical housewife, exhibited, under trying circumstances, a trait quite characteristic of her. It seems that she had by mistake taken a quantity of poison—mercurial poison—the antidote for which, as all should know, comprises the whites of eggs. When this antidote was being administered, the order for which the unfortunate lady had overheard, she managed to murmur, although almost unconscious, 'Mary, Mary! Save the yolks for the puddings!'"—Tit-Bits.

Why We Are Stronger.

The old Greeks and Romans were great admirers of health and strength; their pictures and statuary made the muscles of the men stand out like cords.

As a matter of fact we have athletes and strong men—men fed on fine strength making food such as Quaker Oats—that would win in any contest with the old Roman or Greek champions.

It's a matter of food. The finest food for making strength of bone, muscle and nerve is fine oatmeal. Quaker Oats is the best because it is pure, no husks or stems or black specks. Farmers' wives are finding that by feeding the farm hands plentifully on Quaker Oats they get the best results in work and economy. If you are convenient to the store, buy the regular size packages; if not near the store buy the large size family package.

An Arbitrary Classification.

"So you think every patriot has a more or less clearly defined ambition to hold public office?"

"Yes," answered Senator Sorghum. "As a rule, patriots may be divided into two classes—the appointed and the disappointed."

His Helping Hand.

First Him—When that man fell overboard, why did you throw the cigar I gave you after him?

Second Him—I thought I heard the poor devil call for a rope!

Good for Sore Eyes.

For 100 years PETTIT'S EYE SALVE has positively cured eye diseases everywhere. All druggists or Howard Bros., Buffalo, N. Y.

Bees sometimes fly two miles from the hive and find their way back with out difficulty.

Mrs. Winslow's Nothing Syrup. For children's teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic. The bottle.

A dead beat always gets more credit than he deserves.

THE assassination of Lieut. Joseph Petrosino in the streets of Palermo came very near to establishing the so-called "Black Hand" society in the minds of Americans as a definite organization such as the Sicilian Mafia and the Neapolitan Camorra. It was easy and alluring to argue that Petrosino, cleverest trailer of Italian crime and criminals, had fallen a victim to the international order of La Mano Nera. Writers were not lacking to invent details. His death had been decreed, they said, by one of the New York chapters of the Black Hand and the sentence executed by the home branch at Palermo.

"We almost believe that there is a Black Hand organization in Italy and America," said the editor of one of the big Italian dailies the day after the detective was shot down. "Until the death of Petrosino I never believed that there was head or tail to the bomb-throwing blackmailers, but the shot that struck Petrosino would seem to prove that there is a system behind them."

To one who remembered how violently that same editor had for years protested in Italian and in English that there was no such thing as a Black Hand society, the admission was surprising. Detectives of the Manhattan and Brooklyn Italian police squads, who had always scoffed at an organized Black Hand, wondered if they had been mistaken. They searched the various quarters again for some trace of a central body, for some sign that there were directing officers. This Petrosino tragedy certainly savored of the dread Mafia and Camorra and there



LIEUT. JOSEPH PETROSINO

bottle of cheap red wine. They puff at short-stemmed pipes or draw through straws on stogy-like Italian cigars that retail for half a cent. They are out of work and have been for

the two hundred, perhaps the bulk of the tailor's savings, is speedily divided and the blackmailers are ready for other weeks of idleness. Again the Black Hand!

There is a possibility of big rewards in the game of plunder that has attracted criminals of skill, daring and brains. Many of them are ex-convicts from Italy, who plundered there in the name of the Mafia or the Camorra. Others are equally desperate criminals who got away from Italy before being caught and given the convict brand, which makes entry into America difficult and remaining here uncertain with Petrosino's band continually "fanning" the Italian quarters.

One of these skilled laborers of crime—or perhaps a pair of them—will gather about him four or five dull, unimaginative, lazy fellows—preferably "black sheep" of the town or section in Sicily from which the leader came—and there you have as near an organization as the Black Hand has yet perfected. This leader is known to his followers as a bad man. He has a record for speedy carving with a dagger, perhaps, or a much-to-be-envied knack of using his revolver quickly. He rules the gang by fear of bloody violence and does not even bother to extract oaths from them.

Italian bankers, contractors, wholesale dealers in spaghetti or olive oil or wine, owners of equities in mortgaged tenement houses—these are the victims of the big Black Handers. One thousand dollars is the least they strike for. Failure to pay means that a bomb of crude but deadly construction will be dropped in front of the marked man's bank, store or tenement house. Generally the bomb is so thoroughly overloaded with dynamite that it wrecks much surrounding property, but for that these land pirates care not. Often the innocent are slaughtered, but that brings not even a shrug from these byenas of the tenements.

Every so-called Black Hand outrage helps on the game of plunder and adds to the fear of the mythical society. A lull in Black Hand outrages by no means indicates the inactivity of the plunderers. Generally it spells their continued success.

"You must always keep in mind," said Petrosino, the Palermo sacrifice to this sort of Italian crime, "that the commission of crimes of violence is not the main issue with this scum of the earth. If a man meets their demands, pays over their price, they are well-satisfied to let him alone."

"Have you ever noticed," he continued "that there is more bomb throwing, more kidnaping, more mysterious murders in the winter months than in the spring, summer or early fall? The winter is the hard time of the year with all Italians and naturally the collections with all Italians have given up a few dollars now and then for months suddenly decide that, come what may, they will pay no more. According to the laws of the 'trade' this means punishment and there you have your outrages."

The intense love which a respectable Italian bears for his children has made kidnaping highly lucrative.

The Italian kidnapers about New York have been almost uniformly successful since they began signing their letters "La Mano Nera." In every case the child has been eventually returned to his home or left where the police would be sure to find him. Equally in every case there have been indications that the father, in spite of the most strict instructions to the contrary from the police, quietly paid over the amount demanded by the Black Handers or at least a satisfying portion of it.

Knowledge of kidnaping cases nearly always gets to the police and without delay. An Italian mother whose son fails to return from an errand to the bake shop around the corner or whose daughter disappears between the public school and her home, does not fear even the Black Hand. Her husband may cringe and tremble when she suggests the police, but if he delays, the mother, with many wails of anguish, rushes to the nearest police station and blurts out the whole story. As a rule the police have little or nothing on which to work. They have the Black Hand letter demanding the ransom, but of what good is that when the leader of the gang may be that dapper, swarthy brother-in-law who is even then in the parlor mingling his temperamental tears with those of the family?



BOY, KIDNAPED FOR RANSOM BY BLACK-HANDERS AND HIS PARENTS



BARBER-SHOP WRECKED BY BLACK-HAND BOMB

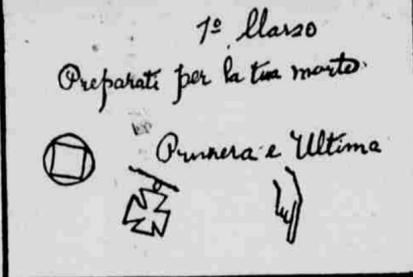
hit. The murder story was again good for columns of space. The inventive reporter's rivals went him several better in succeeding editions. They found meeting places of the Black Hand. They traced other unsolved crimes of the Italian district to the same mythical source. The police said nothing. They had been unable to solve the crime, but if it was the work of a powerful secret organization there was some excuse for them.

To the Italian blackmailers who then, as now, lived off the tribute they could wring from their brothers who worked or who had prospered in business, the appellation was a new and unexpected weapon, a stock in trade beyond value. It was not copyrighted and each and every one of them was free to use it. All "Little Italy" was talking of the Black Hand. Its translation into Italian—La Mano Nera—had an even more sinister sound. The next lot of blackmailing letters sent out bore the usual dagger, the skull and cross-bones, the bloody finger print, perhaps the long, black coffin, and every one was signed "La Mano Nera." The Black Hand was launched and the crimes since committed in its name number tens of thousands, the spoils collected have sent many a criminal back to Italy with a fortune according to the Sicilian rating, and not even the police will venture to estimate its cost in human life.

The Black Hand crimes all follow the same general lines, but that is no argument that there is an organized society. The ruggmen who terrorize country postmasters all work after an identical fashion, but no one has ever intimated that they were organized. Safe-crackers the country over use the same tools and methods, but who has suspected them of holding conventions? The East side gangs—the "Humpty" Jacksons, the Paul Kellys and the like—plunder similarly with more or less success, but the only connection between gang and gang is an occasional feud, the resulting "shooting up" of which gives the police opportunity to send a gangster or two to Sing Sing.

No Italian is too lonely or too poor to embark as a Black Hand. A sheet of paper, pen and ink, and enough knowledge of Italian to scrawl a few lines of demand and the accompanying threat are all that is necessary. Possible victims are on every hand. The barber in the dingy basement half-way down the block; the fat and timid grocery keeper on the corner; Antonio, of the tenement just below, who goes out early each morning all dressed in white to boss his gang of street sweepers—all these are possible victims of the single-handed Black Hand, and all sooner or later pay their tribute. Of course he signs himself "La Mano Nera," and then sits back to wait the working of the spell of temperamental dread.

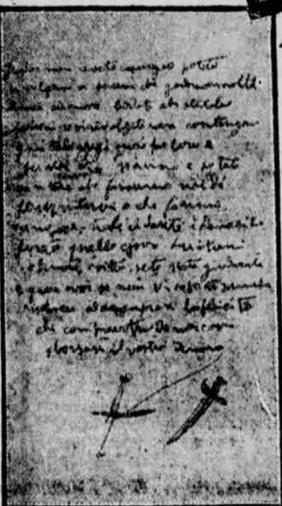
About a table in a dingy, low-ceilinged basement wine shop off Mulberry Bend or over on Bleeker street four or five greasy, low-browed men gather of an afternoon over a



BLACK HAND WARNING

weeks, perhaps, but it is not possible opportunities for labor that they discuss. Their need of money is mentioned quite frankly. In the next breath one of the gang recalls that Giuseppe, the tailor, looked sleek and prosperous standing in front of his shop an hour before. Another cries for pen and paper, which the master of the wine shop brings with never a smile, though he knows only too well the nature of the note that is about to be written. One is silently nominated to scrawl the command, another puts on the decorations and a third signs "La Mano Nera." The tailor is ordered to come three nights later at 7:30 o'clock to the stone arch in Washington square and hand \$200 to a little man with a hump on his back who will be waiting there. He is told further that if he fails or mentions the letter to the police death and destruction will be upon him.

The next morning Giuseppe has hardly opened his shop before the postman comes with the letter. One glance at the clumsily drawn black hand and the daggers scattered about is enough to tell him that the curse has fallen. For a time he is too frightened to read the sum of the extortion. The patrolman on beat passes his door, a broad-shouldered, strong-armed sign or law and order. A great temptation comes to Giuseppe. He will be brave as the American papers advise. He will call the police. He rushes out after the policeman, only to be overcome with a blue funk before he can blurt out his troubles, and ends by asking some foolish question that has no bearing on the terrifying letter. So on the appointed night he goes to Washington square. The hunchback is there, waiting, with a particular eye for possible treachery from plain-clothes policemen. Giuseppe slips the deformed one an envelope and both hurry from the spot in opposite directions. Around the next corner the hunchback becomes a changed man. The hump on his back disappears and the breaking off of a bit of putty straightens a seemingly twisted nose. At the wine-shop



TYPICAL BLACK HAND LETTER

was not one of the lieutenant's squad who would not have gladly risked his life to lay hands on a real Black Hand chief.

Sober second thought and continued investigation, however, return the Black Hand to its proper category. It is not and never has been a society. It knows no chieftain, no scale of spoil division, no sacred oath. It has no meeting places, consequently holds no meetings. It is, in short, but a name for a brand of crime peculiar to Italian crooks, and it is so surprisingly successful because of the temperament of its south Italian victims and their inborn dread of the extortionist.

It is almost ludicrous to realize how the name that is now a world-terror was invented.

Some years ago the story of an Italian murder was running in the New York newspapers. The police made little headway and developments lagged. A space-writer on a certain morning paper needed more money than the story was bringing him. He could get more space only by giving a new twist to the crime, by working up an exclusive angle.

The victim of this murder had received a letter warning him that death would follow his failure to contribute a specified sum by a certain date. At the top of the sheet was a crude drawing of a flat holding a long, wicked-looking dagger. It was drawn with black ink, a somber, sinister emblem. For the reporter it held an idea. The name "Black Hand" leaped from his imagination, and there you are. With great circumstantial detail and flaring heads he introduced his find to the public. The murdered Italian was the victim of a rapacious organization of cut-throats. It was the American edition of the much-feared Mafia, a reincarnation of the deadly Camorra, and in it the reporter combined the worst features of each.

This characterization was an instantaneous