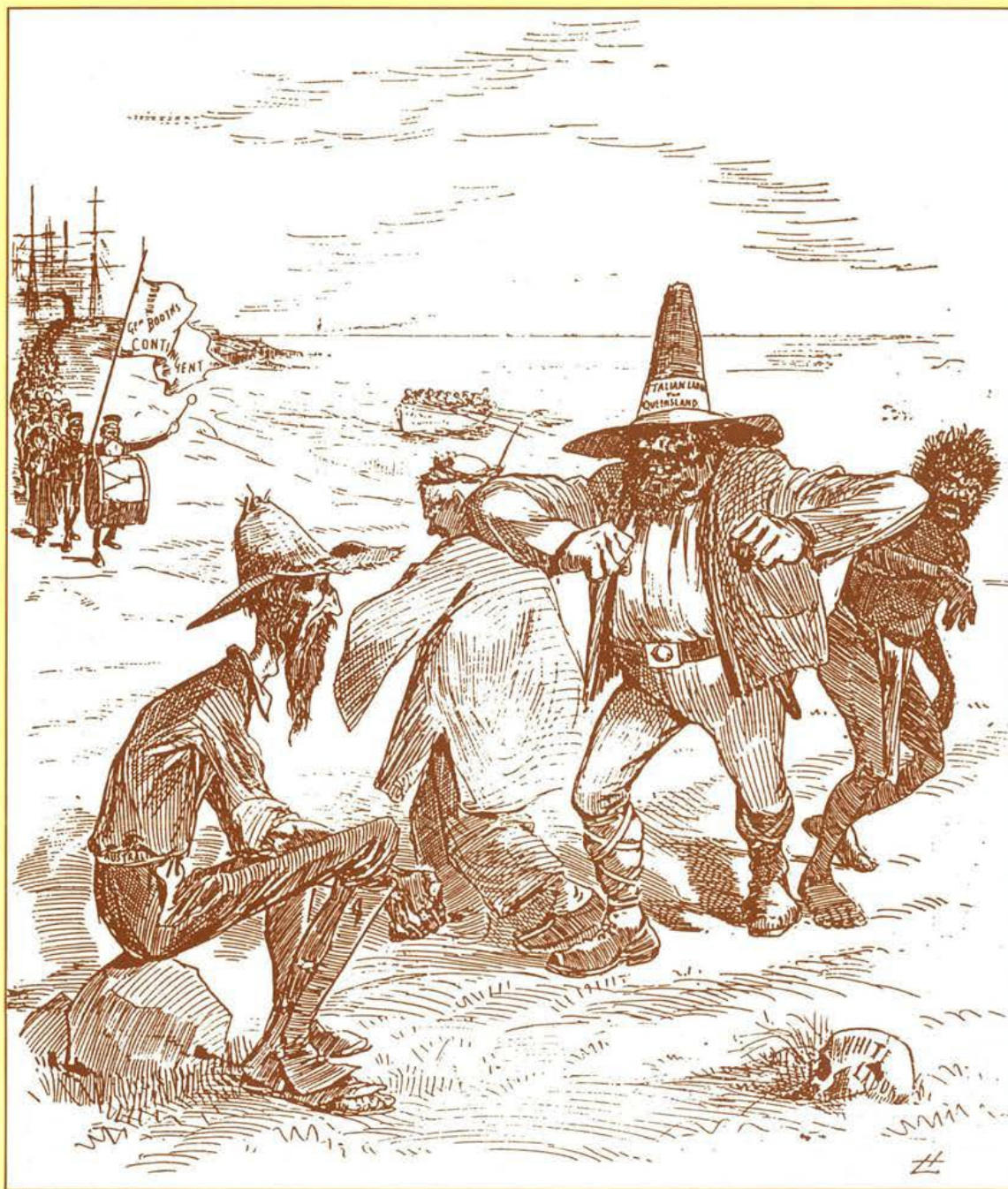


Sotto La Croce del Sud

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS



F. Galassi

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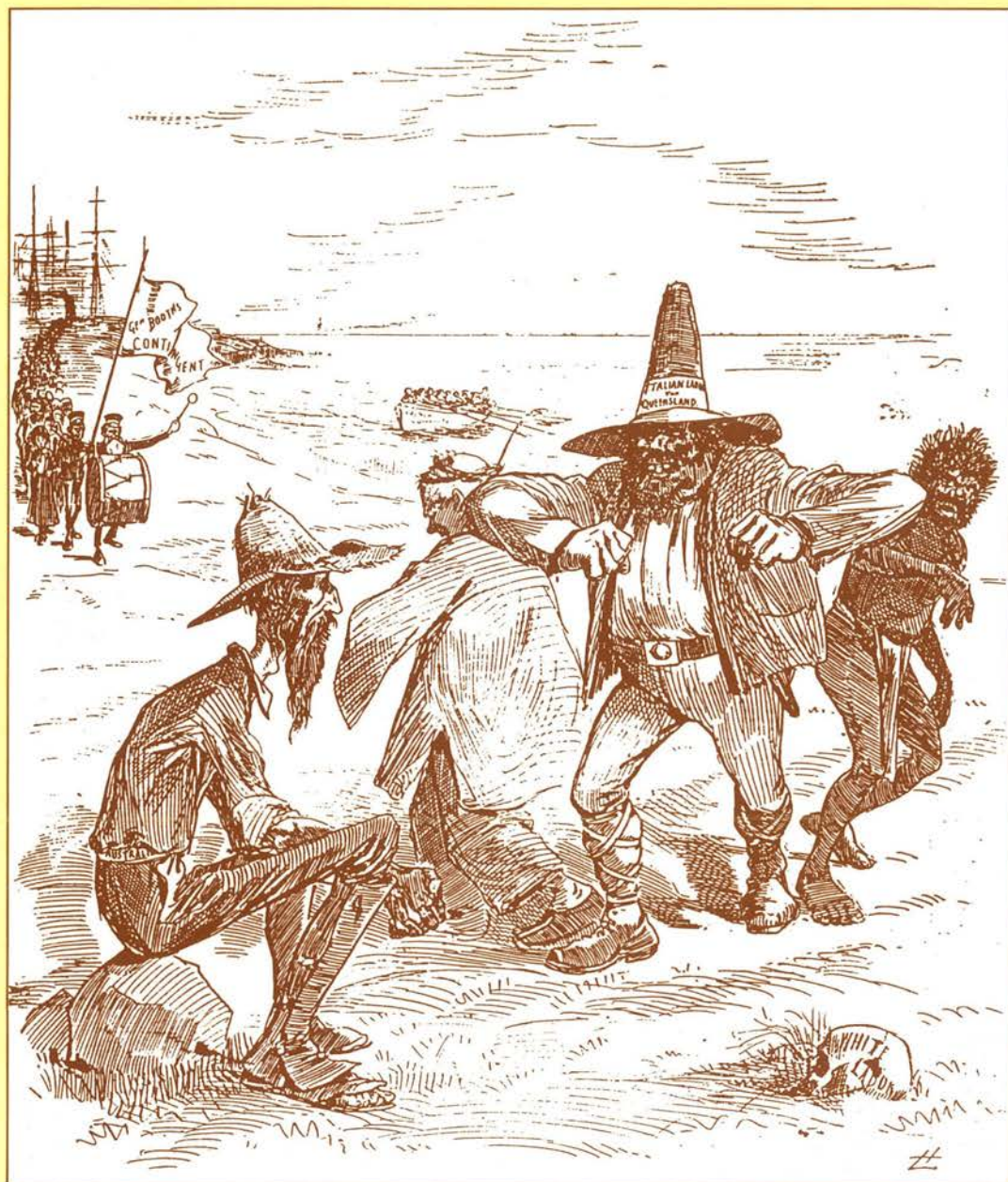
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Sotto La Croce del Sud

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F. Galassi

SOTTO LA CROCE DEL SUD

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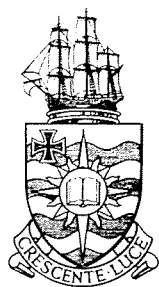
SOTTO LA CROCE DEL SUD

Under the Southern Cross

The *Jumna* Immigrants of 1891

Ferrando (Freddie) Galassi

Foreword by Henry Reynolds



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND POLITICS
JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
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FOREWORD

North Queensland has always been a multi-cultural society. Substantial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities survived the impact of European invasions and began to increase again from the middle years of the 20th Century. Settlers from the British Isles were joined by others from many parts of the world. Proximity to Asia encouraged the influx of Chinese gold-miners, Japanese pearl divers and smaller groups of Malays, Filipinos and Sri Lankans. The sugar industry, with its incessant demand for abundant cheap labour, drew in workers from the Solomons and the New Hebrides until the growing fervour for a white Australia forced the Queensland government to change the focus of the industry which came to depend on small family farms, itinerant gangs of cane cutters and central mills. The perceived need for European labour to replace the Melanesian field workers led to the recruitment of a large party of Italians who arrived in Townsville on the *Jumna* at the end of 1891. Although the experiment was not repeated, the *Jumna* immigrants became the pioneers of the Italian community in north Queensland which was augmented by further immigration in the early 1920s and again after the Second World War.

To uncover and describe the experience of the *Jumna* pioneers we were particularly fortunate in having Ferrando Galassi working in the History Department. His own migration from Italy to Australia mirrored the experience of the pioneers who had embarked from Genoa, his hometown. In moving from Melbourne to Townsville he was able to understand the dramatic impact of the north's physical environment on the newcomers - the heat and humidity, the torrential rain, the lush abundance of the sugar districts, the threatening presence of insects, snakes and crocodiles.

Ferrando was able to make contact and establish rapport with many older members of the Italian community and to record their experiences - in either English or Italian - as well as their recollections of the experiences of their parents and grand-parents. He also showed much of the spirit of the pioneers travelling throughout the north on his bicycle gaining all the while a personal understanding of what distance and poor communications meant for his countrymen and women who arrived in north Queensland on one hot December day just one hundred years ago.

Henry Reynolds
10 October 1991

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like all those who engage in historical research, I owe much to the patience and the knowledge of library and archival staff in the institutions in which I worked: in my case in Townsville, Brisbane, Canberra, Sydney, Ayr, Ingham and Charters Towers. In addition, I am especially indebted to the relatives and acquaintances of Italian pioneer immigrants, both in Australia and in Italy, who allowed me to interview them at length, and thereby to draw upon their unique fund of knowledge of what those Italians endured and achieved in North Queensland. Their frank and generous co-operation is remembered with warm gratitude.

Ferrando (Freddie) Galassi

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword by Henry Reynolds	v
Acknowledgements	vi
1. Rural Italy at the End of the Nineteenth Century	1
2. Some British and Colonial Views of Italy and Italians	34
3. First Impact: the First Six Months	75
4. North Queensland Physical Environment	117
5. Italian Settlement - Economy	140
Appendix I: <i>Jumna</i> Immigrants Naturalised in North Queensland to 1901	186
Appendix II: Italian Landowners in North Queensland, 1919	188
6. Social Life	189
7. Italian Rumblings	256
Appendix III: Nominal Roll of the <i>Jumna</i> Immigrants	285
Sources	298
Index	303

ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>Bulletin</i> Cartoons	Page
1. The Situation in Queensland: 22 August 1891	68
2. Too Much of a Good Thing: 9 January 1892	69
3. Australians in Rome: 19 December 1891	70
4. Italy Explains the Situation: 11 January 1890	71
5. Wanted! An Organist: 12 July 1890	72
6. "Home to our Mountain": 11 April 1891	73
7. A Born Italian: 20 June 1891	74
 The <i>Jumna</i> (John Oxley Library)	 243
 Photographs	
1. Ghiridelli's gang of canecutters	244
2. Frederico Giugui with his family	244
3. Lucy Della Vecchia with her mother	245
4. Angelo Pellizari's house at Macknade	245
5. Carlo Prandolini with canecutters from Rovato	246
6. Mrs Rosina Cocchetti and son Salvatore	246
7. Carlo Prandolini, his son and daughters	247
8. The Prandolini family, 1908	247
9. Jack and Ann Prandolini	248
10. Aventino Borello	248
11.&12. C.V. Fraire and family, 1893 & 1907	249
13. Lorenzo Cocchetti and Angostino Genocchi	250
14. The <i>Australia</i> inn, Rovato, 1933	250
15. Rosina and Annunciata Angostino	251
16. Giuseppe Cocchetti	251
17. Mrs Maria Gurgo and granddaughter	251
18. Luigi Bartolmeo Casalegno, his wife and sons	252
19. Peter Casalegno	252
20. L.B. Casalegno and wedding group	253
21. Bert Casalegno with his bride, 1915	253
22. Tommaso and Giovanna Menso and their son, Jack, 1914	254
23. Joe and Margharita with their son, John, 1945	254
24. Hauling cane on the Casalegno farm, Jarvisfield, Lower Burdekin	255
25. Members of the Casalegno and Saroglia families at Ayr, with Tommaso Menso, second from right	255

CHAPTER ONE

Rural Italy at the End of the Nineteenth Century

On 25 November 1876 a letter written by Italian agriculturalists to the Minister of the Interior was published in the Italian newspaper *La Plebe*. In this letter they explain the reasons why they intend to emigrate, and urge him not to prevent them from doing so:

...we grow wheat and we do not know what white bread looks like; we cultivate the vine and we can't drink wine; we breed cattle and we never taste meat; we wear fustian, live in hovels; in winter we are tormented by cold, and during the long summer days we are tormented by hunger...In emigration you have a safety valve, and we advise you not to stop it in your own interest...Oppressed and overtaxed in every possible way...we emigrate...What else do you want from us?...¹

The following year the Italian Parliament instituted a commission of enquiry into the condition of the agricultural classes with a view to ascertain the physical, moral, intellectual, and economic condition of the proprietors and the tillers of the soil. For the purpose of the enquiry Italy was divided into twelve districts and questions were addressed to the local authorities. From the returns, a deputy or senator for each district compiled a report; all were published in 1884.² The picture painted was extremely gloomy.

This enquiry should have put an end to the proverbial north European view of Italy as a land of wealth: "In Italy macaroni ready cooked rains from the sky, and the vines are festooned with sausages",³ and made people suspicious of Napoleon's speech to his army crossing the Alps:

Soldiers! you are ill-fed and almost naked. The government owes you a great deal, but it can do nothing for you. Your patience and courage do you honor but give you neither worldly goods nor glory. I shall lead you

¹ Zeffiro Ciuffoletti & Maurizio Degl'Innocenti, *L'emigrazione nella storia d'Italia 1868-1975: storia e documenti*, Firenze, Vallecchi, 1978, vol.1, p.78.

² Jacini, Stefano, *I risultati dell'inchiesta agraria (1884)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1976, pp.ix-xxxi; *Edinburgh Review*, 1883, vol.158, pp.90-92.

³ (German ballad), W.N. Beauclerk, *Rural Italy: an account of the present agricultural condition of the Kingdom*, London, Richard Bentley and son, 1888, p.247.

into the most fertile plains on earth. There you shall find great cities and rich provinces. There you shall find honor, glory, riches...⁴ Why the contrast between past myth and present reality? The answer in part is provided by geography. Italy, consisting of a boot-shaped peninsula protruding from southern Europe far into the Mediterranean Sea, is separated from the rest of Europe by the Alps which sweep around in a vast arc, about 500 miles long, highest in Piedmont in the north-west, where Monte Rosa (15,200 feet), the highest peak in Italy, lies on the Swiss frontier. The Alps constitute a formidable barrier to travelling. Italy's other major mountain chain, the Apennines, forms the backbone of the peninsula, about 700 miles in length, and continues westward into Sicily. The Alps in the north and the Apennines occupy two thirds of the peninsula, while the remaining third contains much poor land and barren pastures.⁵ The total area of the Kingdom of Italy, including the large islands of Sardinia and Sicily and the smaller islands, at the end of 1890 was 286,588 square kilometres, and the population was 31,233,220.⁶

In the 19th century the most important sector of the economy in Italy was agriculture, and the prosperity of a country depended upon the fertility of the soil, rainfall, the climate, the state of the arts of husbandry, and the industry of the farmers. While it was affirmed that "There is no more cruel or untrue taunt than that the Italian, be he north or south, is idle",⁷ in other matters Italy was only moderately blessed. Although Italy presents as many different features as may be found among all countries of Europe, from Scotland and Norway to Spain, rainfall is limited in the summertime, and with the exception of the Po Valley, the area around Bologna, and other lesser districts such as those found near Capua and the plain of Volturno, the country is not a "garden of nature", but mountainous, inhospitable and unproductive.⁸ In fact an Italian statesman observed at the beginning of the 20th century that little of the land was fertile except in the

⁴ J.C. Herold, *The Mind of Napoleon: a selection from his written and spoken words*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1965, p.214.

⁵ Jacini, *op.cit.*, pp.17, 93, 97.

⁶ Bodio, Luigi, *Di alcuni indici misuratori del movimento economico in Italia*, Roma, 1891, pp.5, 6.

⁷ *Saturday Review*, 28 September 1901, p.403.

⁸ Jacini, *op.cit.*, pp.8, 17, 87, 91, 92.

quotation from the classics: *magna parens frugum*⁹ (great mother of crops). Apart from the infertility of the soil, the principal evils which explained the backward condition of rural Italy could be thus epitomised. The Italian agricultural techniques in the 19th century tended to lag behind those of the most advanced agricultural economies. Although the sun favoured Italy for the ripening of corn, it was reckoned that:

the average production of corn per hectare is 32 hectol. in England, 25 in Germany, 22 in Holland, 20 in Belgium, 15 in France, and 11 in Italy. One of the chief causes of this inferiority is the want of technical education in agricultural science.¹⁰

To ignorance of the use of artificial fertilisers could be added the lack of mechanical improvements: "the plough is the only implement which has been improved in modern shape, though in some parts, e.g., in the district of Aosta, that described by Virgil is still in use",¹¹ and "the farming operations are substantially the same as those in vogue when Giotto passed his childhood tending sheep".¹² Sowing and threshing machines had been adopted on some large holdings,¹³ but the farm-labourer looked at the introduction of machinery with hostility because "by adopting them, less required is his work".¹⁴

In state aid to agriculture, Italy lagged behind other continental powers; while in France 44,000,000 fr. were yearly spent by the State on behalf of agriculture; in Austria 30,000,000; in Prussia 20,000,000; in Switzerland 10,000,000; in Italy 4,000,000.¹⁵ Agricultural problems were neglected in favour of ambitious military goals:

As long as millions of acres remain unreclaimed and untilled, as long as the majority and the strongest of the men are under arms, as long as huge armies entail excessive expenditure, and agriculture is suffocated by a weight of taxation, which absorbs from one-third to one-half of the

⁹ S. Francesco Nitti, *L'Italia all'alba del secolo XX*, Torino-Roma, Roux e Viarengo, 1901, p.15.

¹⁰ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.118.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.116.

¹² *Chambers's Journal*, December 1903 to November 1904, Sixth Series, vol.vii, p.370.

¹³ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.116.

¹⁴ *Inchiesta Romilli, L'Agricoltura e le Classi Agricole nel Mantovano (1879)*, a cura di Rinaldo Salvadori, Torino, Einaudi, 1979, p.55.

¹⁵ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.116.

returns, and so long as education, credit, and manures are wanting, we cannot strive with a reasonable prospect of success.¹⁶

Another obstacle to progress was the "pulverization" of the land: The land, being cut up into an infinite number of small inheritances, presents almost the aspect of a coloured mosaic. A father leaves 6 hectares of property to his three sons, in equal parts, consisting of meadow, arable, and chestnut plantation; but each must take one-third of each separate kind of land, so that the farm has to be sub-divided into nine shares. The result is that each man passes half his day in going from one division of his land to the other, sometimes no small distance, and the heirs are prevented from making an equitable and convenient exchange by the laws which tax such a transaction as though it were an actual purchase and transfer of property.¹⁷

Other evils included devastation of the forests. It was noticed that in France the forest service cost the State 14,000,000 fr. per annum, whilst Italy spent no more than 150,000. France had laid out 23,000,000 fr. on replanting her forests during the preceding twenty years; Italy in five years had completely denuded of timber 1,500,000 hectares of land.¹⁸ A foreign observer sighed: "In the morning we resumed our journey on the frozen road, and passed through some grand ilex woods - alas! rapidly disappearing before the charcoal-burner".¹⁹

Moreover, insects noxious to agriculture increased with the destruction of birds. Yet from one district to another it was lamented that birds were "ruthlessly slaughtered". There were instances of "wholesale destruction of small birds", "Inordinate destruction of all kinds of birds", and it was remarked that "the Romans look upon any attempt at the preservation of game, which include every winged creature, as an infringement of a sacred privilege".²⁰ The above-mentioned foreign visitor gave particulars of the average annual bag on the Marquis of Laconi's estate, on the island of Sardinia: it comprised 970 game birds, and 590 animals from deer to rabbits.²¹

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.174.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.230.

¹⁹ E.N. Buxton, "Sardinia and its wild sheep", *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, p.905.

²⁰ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.77, 78, 113, 149, 161.

²¹ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, p.915.

Other insects such as the phylloxera, a destructive pest of grapes, had desolated the vineyards; citrus fruit were subject to the *pseudococcus citri* (mealy bug); and silkworms were for years annihilated.²²

To all this it should be added that, through neglect of drainage, once arable land was reverting to marshes. The problems affecting rural Italy, and the fact that Italian labourers went hungry, led a wretched existence, and remained ignorant, were commonly attributed to *malgoverno*,²³ i.e., misgovernment. Indeed one major reason for the agricultural crisis in Italy was the absenteeism of the large owners of the land: "for residents landlords are the foundation, the hope, the future, and everything to the agriculture of their country".²⁴ This accusation against the landlords was reiterated in the Italian press:

We should be ashamed to see that in countries like England and Holland their agricultural production is three times better than ours ...but it should be noted that in England and Holland the landowners are not afraid to live on their farms; they do not think it humiliating to have been born in the country as it is the case in Italy. On the contrary, they contribute to cultivating the fields, they study the most rational systems of agronomy and then apply them. Here instead of learning about rural economy there is a tendency to get degrees in legal studies and mathematics to become useless lawyers or engineers. Instead of living on their estates they prefer to feast and revel, to lead a life of idleness in the cities, cafes, theatres...while the peasant, without any help or control, is still following the methods practised by Cain, who according to the biblical legend was the first agriculturalist.²⁵

Admittedly, brigandage was so endemic in parts of Italy that landlords might be excused for seeking safety in the towns.

The critical state of rural Italy at the end of the 19th century was due to external causes as well. Whereas Europe was once furnished with rice from the fields along the Valley of the Po, Italian rice was unsold in consequence of competition with India and Burma; Sicily and the Neapolitan provinces no longer had a monopoly of dried figs, apricots, almonds, olive oil, and other Mediterranean products, because other countries such as Spain, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and Syria were exporting them. Other competitive countries were America

²² Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.245.

²³ *L'Epoca*, Genova, 1-2 October 1891, p.2; *La Sentinella delle Alpi*, Cuneo, 2-3 February 1891, p.1.

²⁴ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.23.

²⁵ *L'Alpe Retica*, 20 December 1884, p.1.

and Australia. The price of grain had fallen because of America's rivalry, and Europe was inundated with meat from the same country sold at a low price. Australia too was emerging as a continent susceptible to infinite economic development and one of the granaries of the world. Silks from China and Japan undersold Italian silk in England, and other traditional markets.²⁶ Ironically, it was a native son, Cristoforo Colombo, a Genoese, who dealt a heavy blow to the prosperity of the Italian peninsula by his discovery of the New World, which hastened the shift of the major trade routes from the Mediterranean sea to the Atlantic ocean.

Census returns show 8¼ million men and women engaged in agriculture, together with 1¼ million children under 15; fewer than 370,000 were engaged in grazing and horticulture. This represents about one-third of the entire population, a larger proportion than any European country except France. The average number of agriculturalists per square kilometre - 29 - was also higher than in any European country except France, but varied greatly from north to south: from 51 in Lombardy and 49 in Liguria to 19 in Rome, 18 in Sicily, and 7 in Sardinia.²⁷

In Italy could be found all the modes of owning and occupying land: the large landowner, the large farmer, the *coloni* who owned small holdings, the tenant-farmer who paid rent yearly in money and kind and service, the *mezzadri* who cultivated the land they held for proprietors, retaining half the produce or thereabouts as their share, though differences existed, and finally the day-labourer class without any land.²⁸ The system of *mezzadria* which was prevalent all over the peninsula was productive of a better tone of feeling between the owner and the cultivator of the soil than any other. It was nearly the same thing as the *metayer* system in France. In many cases where the soil was poor, the traditional custom was that one-third of the produce went to the landlord. Intercourse between landowner and peasant was strong, mutually advantageous, and there were examples of families who had been on the same land for many generations.²⁹

The study of a family of *metayers* in North Italy can add much to our exact knowledge of peasant life, such as expenses of cultivation,

²⁶ Jacini, *op.cit.*, pp.35, 36, 63; *The Times*, 18 October 1881, p.4.

²⁷ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.157-58.

²⁸ *Fortnightly Review*, 1882, pp.294, 304, 307.

²⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, 1883, vol.158, pp.101, 102.

cost of living, the capital saved, and other particulars about the relations between the family of the *metayer* and that of the proprietor. The condition of this family, which the author of the monograph admits as being better than the average for the region of Emilia, could be so summarised: the farm is about five hectares, and the proprietor is a barrister of Reggio. On the farm are grown in rotation crops of wheat, maize, lucerne, and clover; other crops in small proportions are kidney beans, hemp, and there is a permanent irrigated meadow of about a hectare. Besides this, the farm is planted with rows of elms, to which vines are wedded, trained from tree to tree. The loss which such a system brings to the crops grown beneath the elm is compensated by the grape which, with milk, is the most important product of the farm. There are also four cows which supply both labour and milk. On the farm there is a little cottage for the peasant, a stable and cottage with a garden for the proprietor who passes the summer there with his family. The family of the *metayer* is composed of father and mother of respective ages of sixty and fifty, the son aged thirty-one, one daughter-in-law, Marianna, aged twenty-four, and the baby, aged two. The total expenditure on maintenance of the *metayer's* family was 1,012 lire, the total income 1,139 lire, with a profit at the end of the year 1893 of 127 lire. The author of this study concluded by adding that the relations between landlord and *metayer* were very cordial and friendly, "even effectionate!"³⁰

The position of landlord in its most appealing form, as it might have been seen in parts of Italy at the end of the century, can be imagined from the description of an English woman married to a Piedmontese officer. The following is an account of her reception by tenants:

The women flew at me and embraced me in their stalwart arms, kissing me on both cheeks; one old man also kissed me - that being, as I was informed, his mode of saluting the mother superior of a convent whose tenant he had been. The offerings in the shape of eggs were poured into my lap, and live fowls tied together by the legs were deposited at my feet. Various compliments, of which I did not fully understand the import, were shouted into my ears, it being evidently supposed that the dialect, if spoken loud enough, must be intelligible even to a foreigner. I was then regaled with a plentiful supply of boiled eggs and with *quagliata*, which is precisely our Devonshire junket, made with ewe's

³⁰ Rabbeno, Ugo, "A Family of Metayers of the Commune of Reggio Emilia (Italy)", *Economic Journal*, 1894, vol.4, pp.545-51 (Translated by Caroline A. Foley, M.A.).

instead of cow's milk, and ciambelli (sic) - as cakes in the form of a circle are called - made of flour, sugar, oil, and wine before it has fermented. Her account of the visit of a neighbour of substance can also cast some light on rural Italy:

She arrived on horse-back - or, I should rather say, on donkey-back - and she rode astride. She announced a desire to speak with the signora, but first begged that she and her donkey-boy might be refreshed with food, as they had come a long way. The pair seated themselves at the kitchen table, and were served. I was informed, meantime, that a lady - a very great lady - was waiting in the kitchen to speak to me. Understanding that the great lady preferred the kitchen to any other room, I descended, and found a good-looking woman, well-dressed in the old-fashioned style, with a black lace veil and a fan. Her manner was courteous and dignified, and I felt, when she remounted her donkey and rode away, that I had been the object of much condescension.

If the manners of the better classes in rural Italy were found startling by the English authoress, other scenes concerning the lower ones were just as surprising, and this concludes her view of Italian rustics as she observed them being admitted to the house of the village magnate, in the region of the Marches, central Italy:

Neighbours lower in the social scale are also admitted; these form a sort of court, and are expected to make themselves useful at a pinch - help to cook the dinner, look after the children, help to wait at table, &c. When not otherwise occupied, they keep their benefactor company - listen to his stories, laugh at his jokes, retail or invent gossip - and so earn their dinner or their supper. One day in the week bread is distributed to all who apply for it, and their name is legion. On that day the house is in a state of siege; incessant is the knocking at the door, and loud the clamours for "*pane, pane*"³¹ (bread, bread).

To clarify the position of another segment of the agricultural population, namely the day-labourer class who had no land, and who represented over a third of the total, I propose to take as an example of this type the family of Luigi Poletti living in Romagna, northern Italy. In 1890 their income from every source, including such small sums as the wife and children, one boy, two girls, could add by spinning, gleaning, or weeding, amounted to £22 3s.1d. Of this the mother and children made £3. In the winter the mother made 11s.4d. by knitting at 1d. a day, and the boy of fourteen earned 17s. at basket

³¹ *Edinburgh Review*, 1887, Vol.165, pp.108-11. Reviewing *Our Home by the Adriatic*. By the Hon. Margaret Collier (Madame Galletti di Cadilhac), London, 1886.

making. The father worked for nine months and received his food for twenty-eight days of that time. This last is estimated at £1 16s. The following is their budget of expenditure.

	£	s.	d.
Corn - twelve bushels	5	18	2
Maize	3	4	6
Beechnuts	0	15	0
Bacon and fat for frying	3	4	2
Eggs	0	5	7
Tomatoes	0	3	1
Salt	0	3	6
Fresh Meat	0	9	9
	14	3	9
Rent, firing and light	2	15	0
Clothes	1	18	0
Friendly Society	0	5	0
	19	1	9

The balance of about £3 was added to their savings: "There is something very happy and good-tempered about the little family...they think themselves prosperous".³²

But it was also understood that the existence of the large class of day-labourers was precarious and wretched, for if at harvest-time they got high wages, and during the fine weather they found pretty constant work, in winter when the proprietor could do all that was necessary on the land himself, their lot was a hard one. To be more specific we could take the case of Angelo Tassinari, again in northern Italy. In 1893 Angelo did only seven months' work, his earnings amounting to £14 2s.10d. besides certain perquisites of wood, trimming

³² Evelyn M. Phillips, "Peasants of Romagna", *Fortnightly Review*, vol.62 new series - July to December 1897, pp.412-13.

of pork, etc., computed at £2 15s. 6d. The rest of the family: wife, five children aged from five to fourteen, earned about £2 5s. for a total of £19 3s. 4d. The family spent £16 3s. 8d. on food; the corn was largely replaced by the bran that flies off in the mill as the corn is ground. Lodging, firing, and oil were £3 14s. 2d.; clothes £1 3s. 2d; doctor, chemist, and friendly society £1 2s 6d. with the result that at the end of the year the family had a debt of over £3. "A sordid struggle truly for the bare necessities of existence...yet these people are not brutalized; they are full of bright affection for one another...and they face their troubles with a certain dignity and rectitude which compel one's respect and admiration".³³

As far as relations between employers and labourers were concerned there are diametrically contradictory statements. It was asserted that on the whole the relations between owners and their dependents were good in the Venetian provinces,³⁴ that in Piedmont there were cases of proprietors who did not disdain to work personally on their farms,³⁵ that in the district comprising Liguria and part of Tuscany the employers treated the labourers with kindness and regard, an approach conducive to harmony between them.³⁶ But it was also said that in the same regions where the *metayage* system was in vogue the peasants got "the lion's share of the produce of the land",³⁷ redolent of the saying that "what is divided in the contract of *mezzadria* is the proprietor's share".³⁸ Indeed it was also added that no great goodwill existed between the two classes,³⁹ and that "masters and workmen live[d] together for years without the exchange of a syllable of goodwill".⁴⁰

In Umbria, central Italy, the peasants received "ungrudging assistance from their employers, to whom they [were] always in debt, but whom repay[ed] by honesty and hard work,"⁴¹ and in the

³³ *Ibid.*, p.413-15.

³⁴ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.200.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.110.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.140.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Bassi, Ercole, *La Valtellina, sue condizioni morali, economiche, industriali, agricole, politiche, sanitarie*, Milano, 1890, pp.135-36.

³⁹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.131.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.125.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.95.

neighbouring region known as the Marches, where *metayage* was the prevalent system of farming, it was reported that the relations between owners and labourers were "most cordial", and the former overlooked the depredations committed by the tenants.⁴² A curious case of these thefts was recorded:

After the corn has been threshed on a large farm and stored in the granary, the peasant girls feel a strong impulse to invoke the blessing of Heaven upon it. For this purpose they take the rosary, and walk round the heaps of grain while they recite the prayers. As each bead of the rosary is passed these pious women place a handful of corn in their aprons until their prayers are ended and they can carry no more.⁴³

In southern Italy the relations between landlords and tenants in the province of Avellino were "intimate and cordial", while in the province of Caserta solidarity prevented workers from taking a farm from which the outgoing tenant had been evicted, and the proprietors were "forced to work such farms for themselves for at least a year",⁴⁴ as a form of punishment. In the province of Matera it was reported that landowners treated the peasant well, and in return the peasant was "meek and respectful".⁴⁵ But a peasant from the same province declared that the landlords despised the labourers and called them *serpenti occhinpetto* (cobras?), and the peasants retaliated by calling their masters "usurpers". He went on to explain that the women of the higher classes could only beget children who were then given to peasant women for suckling, and concluded: "That's probably the time when they learn to suck our blood".⁴⁶

In insular Italy, on the island of Sardinia, it was observed that the sons of the owners lived with the servants in the farm-houses, usually ate together, and the servants respected their masters as friends and not as tyrants. In fact, numerous instances of heroic defence of the property and families of the landlords by their employees were recorded, and an offence to the servant was considered an offence to

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.96.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.43,46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁴⁶ Coletti, Francesco, "Dell'emigrazione italiana", *Cinquanta anni di storia italiana 1860-1910*, Milano, Hoepli, 1911, vol.3, p.143.

his superior, and the Latin saying *Tot hostes quot servi* (as many foes as servants) had no application in the island.⁴⁷

By contrast on the other island of Sicily, hostility seems to have characterised the relationship between masters and servants. An old man declared that some landowners did not allow them to eat some herbs: "They want us to leave them for the sheep".⁴⁸ Another peasant said:

When our landlords grant us an advance, they give us bad quality corn mixed with soil, but we have to return corn of the best quality. Some of them have two measures: a small *tumulo* (measure of wheat) to give, and a large *tumulo* to collect.⁴⁹

From another interview it can be deduced that the *tumulo* contained 13 litres of wheat that the landlords gave to the peasants during the winter months, but the peasants had to return 17 litres. When the bewildered journalist asked the peasant: "But they cannot be all thieves", the answer was: "Some are honest...but they are as rare as white flies".⁵⁰ Another example of the insolence of power was related by another peasant: "The baron of Cammarata saw two girls who had picked up some firewood in his estate. He dismounted from his horse, ordered them to place the firewood on the ground, and set fire to it".⁵¹ Cordial relations between them were impossible because the landlords were "proud and rich", while the labourers remained "abstemious as a hermit, patient as Job, and wretched as Lazarus".⁵²

Not only in Sicily, but also in other parts of Italy relations were worst, and exploitation greatest, on large estates managed by agents, without personal contact between landlord and tenant. In northern Italy, for instance, the visitor could see:

in the midst of the richest fields of Italy, amidst cultivation which brings the proprietor a larger profit than that of any other district in the peninsula, a cultivation which, for amount of production, may be compared to the best English or Flemish agriculture; he would see, we say, a population morally reduced to the condition of brutes, and

⁴⁷ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.236, 238-39.

⁴⁸ *L'Alpe Retica*, 21 July 1894, p.2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 July 1894, p.2

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 July 1894, p.2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.18, 21.

physically ruined by the inhuman severity of its labour, by its infamous food, and by the shameful condition of its dwellings.⁵³ It was admitted that also in northern Italy there were good and bad landlords, and the latter thought only of receiving their due, and did nothing for the farmers. They solved their problems by delegating authority to agents to make sure that their share was forthcoming, and they only visited their properties during the summer months.⁵⁴ The agents themselves had no consideration for the welfare of those under their supervision. On the contrary:

The managers of these estates are anxious solely for the increase of their own profits, and therefore when they are able to obtain from the landlord the funds for any amelioration, it is spent exclusively on the barns, the cheese-houses, the haylofts, the stables, which, with a cruel contrast, are often seen admirably well-built and handsome, while the dwellings of the peasants seem, instead of the habitations of reasonable beings, to be the dens of foul animals!⁵⁵

For further understanding of the role played by agents and peasants of Italy at the end of the 19th century we could move to the centre of the peninsula, and refer to the impressions of a foreign visitor who wrote:

Approaching Rome, we traverse the *Agro Romano*, still covered with water from the recent inundations of the Tiber, At the last station, two *mercanti di campagna* get into our carriage. They are the contractors for cultivation, who take on lease the *latifundia* of the *Campagna Romana*, and either sublet them for the pasturage of oxen, horses, and sheep, or cultivate them for corn crops at long intervals of time. They usually inhabit Rome. They command much capital, and grow rich. They are middlemen, like those of Ireland. Their profit is charged on the rent of the proprietor, and on the wages of the workmen. Those who have just taken their seats by us are still young, very vigorous, of intelligent air, with fine energetic features. They speak with fire, and with true eloquence.⁵⁶

In this very same *Campagna Romana* thousands of labourers, coming mainly from the Abruzzi and the Marches⁵⁷ were ill-paid, ill-fed, and worse-housed, and the spectacle they produced when labouring was so described:

⁵³ *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.461.

⁵⁴ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.178-79.

⁵⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.461.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.175.

⁵⁷ *L'Alpe Retica*, 13 October 1892, p.1.

Those who have seen these unhappy persons moving in gangs at early dawn towards the fields where they are at work, conducted by an overseer on horseback, can scarcely have avoided a mental comparison between them and the slave-droves of ancient times. While they work in line from sunrise to sunset, the horseman continually passes up and down to watch that there may be no shirking or neglect of the task set by the employer. Men and women bending to the ground, shivering in the chill mists of morning, toiling in mournful silence, they might be but a herd of human cattle, resembling their fellows, but belonging to a different and degraded race of captive helots.⁵⁸

And many of them were struck down by malarial fever at the most industrious period of their lives.⁵⁹

According to a statistical map prepared by the Italian Ministry of War, Italy was divided into 69 provinces of which only six were completely free from the scourge of malaria, while it was felt with great severity in twenty-one.⁶⁰ Malaria was the great scourge of the provinces of Rome and Grosseto; and the Pontine marshes, south of Rome, were deadly. Nathaniel Hawthorne, the American essayist, when touring central Italy, noted: "We met now and then a flock of sheep, watched by sallow-looking and spiritless men and boys, who, we took it for granted, would soon perish of malaria"⁶¹ and wondered whether animals suffered from the bad qualities of the air.⁶² The author's curiosity could have been satisfied by Bishop Heber who knew that in some parts of India even birds and beasts had to migrate during the unhealthy time of the year, and he left the following striking picture of the influence of malaria:

...not the monkeys only, but everything which has the breath of life instinctively deserts them from the beginning of April to October. The tigers go up to the hills; the antelopes and wild hogs make incursions into the cultivated plain; and those persons, such as dak-bearers, or military officers who are obliged to traverse the forest in the intervening months, agree that not so much as a bird can be heard or seen in the frightful solitude.⁶³

⁵⁸ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.104.

⁵⁹ *L'Alpe Retica*, 13 October 1892, p.1.

⁶⁰ *The Times*, 29 May 1883, p.4.

⁶¹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The French and Italian Notebooks*, Ohio State University Press, c.1980, p.478.

⁶² Malaria is the contraction of *mala aria*, bad air.

⁶³ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, pp.854-55.

It was reported that in 1887 30,000 people affected by malaria had been taken care of in the various hospitals all over the Kingdom of Italy, but this number does not include many chronic cases which did not seek admission because of the cost or because there was no hope of recovery.⁶⁴ In the *Campagna Romana* it was estimated that more than half of the 15,000 labourers were attacked annually by illness⁶⁵ and a quantity of these sick persons were sent to the vast hospital "Spirito Santo" in Rome. A daily contingent was brought there, and a contemporary observer explained that "the victims of malaria become pallid, anaemic, and during recovery often voraciously hungry".⁶⁶ Many attempts had been made to deal with the problem - Roman Emperors, Popes, and others, had tried to drain the Pontine Marshes, but they had little success. It was felt that the most important measure of the day was to drive the malaria from its stronghold, and the reclamation of the Agro Romano could only be achieved by means of drainage and works of irrigation⁶⁷ for, as a contemporary wrote, "where marshes exist man cannot live. If he does not destroy the marsh, the marsh destroys him".⁶⁸ In the meantime fifteen or twenty thousand deaths each year were attributed to malaria.⁶⁹

It was generally imagined by Englishmen that Italians were not hard workers, and this may have been so in the cities where tourists mainly knew them. Naples, for instance, was known to a large number of British and Australian people who never saw anything else of Italy, because it was a regular port of call for liners sailing between England, the East and Australia. What they saw in Naples they tended to believe characteristic of all Italy. As far as the agricultural worker was concerned - whether from the North or South - it was a calumny.⁷⁰ This was true of the North where the farm labourer was said "to contend with every species of privation from the cradle to the grave"⁷¹ and of the South where "the casual labourer lives the life of

⁶⁴ *L'Alpe Retica*, 20 December 1892, p.1.

⁶⁵ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.86.

⁶⁶ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, pp.859-60.

⁶⁷ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.89.

⁶⁸ *Nineteenth Century*, 1886, vol.19, p.235.

⁶⁹ Bodio, *op.cit.*, p.10.

⁷⁰ Jacini, *op.cit.*, pp.17, 93; *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.457.

⁷¹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.124.

an ass, and dies the death of a dog".⁷² The peasant, commissioner wrote, works as long as he can; he is never idle.⁷³ Although the hard season began in May and ended in October, the *contadino*, during winter, gathered leaves, pruned, lopped.⁷⁴ In fact, they aged very quickly on account of excessive toil, and lack of proper food.⁷⁵ The children, in springtime, like swallows, left the class-room, and went to help their parents in the field⁷⁶ and at ten to twelve years of age, as soon as they finished primary school, they began as goatherds, shepherds, and cowherds. Then little by little they were introduced to hoeing, digging, ploughing, and sawing wood.⁷⁷ In some districts the strength of the children was not overtaxed;⁷⁸ in others even children of six years of age worked at tasks far beyond their strength,⁷⁹ and in either case they did not get the right sort of nutriment considering their age, and their physical condition.⁸⁰ In Sicily, for instance, many children were employed in the sulphur mines where

to hasten their movements in carrying the mineral to the surface, they are cruelly beaten and pinched, and their naked legs and ankles are burnt until bare of flesh with candles or lanterns. The most infamous vices are instilled into them, and they become old in depravity before they reach adolescence.⁸¹

An incensed Italian reporter thundered:

In my life as a journalist in Italy, France, Germany, England, Africa, America, I have witnessed horrendous scenes of any kind: executions by shooting, hangings, lynchings, massacres, deaths of any kind in lazarettos and elsewhere. No spectacle, however, struck me so deeply as that of the sulphur mine Virdilio: this barbaric work imposed on

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁷³ *Atti della Giunta per la Inchiesta Agraria e sulle Condizioni della Classe Agricola*. Relazione del Commissario avv. Francesco Meardi. vol.viii, tomo i, fascicolo ii. Roma, Forzani, p.678.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁷⁵ Rogora, Rodolfo, "Condizioni morali ed economiche della popolazione dell'alto milanese negli scritti di Ercole Ferrario", opuscolo 13181, Società storica Lombarda, Milano, p.24.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁷⁷ Bassi, *op.cit.*, p.22.

⁷⁸ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.126.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.197.

⁸⁰ *Atti della Giunta*, p.643.

⁸¹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.19.

children so tender (who in the state in which they live they become also victims of paederasty and other horrors) is something that calls for vengeance, it is the negation of any of the most elementary principles of humanity. One should be ashamed of being born in a country where such barbarity still exists.⁸²

Girls took part in field-work at the age of 14 or 15. At 30 they were mature women, old at 40, decrepit at 50:⁸³

The excessive hard work which the small properties entail upon the women appears at every turn. The wife's position is such in the central provinces that it is said "women are bargained for like Indian squaws". No one indeed who has seen that dreadful human being an Italian peasant old woman - wrinkled, decrepit, squalid, with three hairs on the top of her bare skull as her only head-gear - can doubt the severe life of toil and privation to which she has been condemned.⁸⁴

Although it was stated that the field labor done by women and children was not excessive because they seldom ploughed or dug,⁸⁵ it was also reported that they worked as hard as men, if not harder, carrying burdens of 50 or 60 kilos on the mountains with ease.⁸⁶ The same applied to women and children in the southern regions:

Women's labour is excessive, including the carrying of heavy burdens, and the manipulation of weighty agricultural instruments...Women and children...act as beasts of burden, and carry wood, stones, and weights of all kinds on their heads.⁸⁷

Wages, however, differed. In Piedmont, women largely employed in field-work gained about half the wages of a man,⁸⁸ but the work performed by them was about 2/3; while the boys' work corresponded to about 1/3 of the men's.⁸⁹ In the Venetian provinces wages averaged 1 lira per day for men in summer; 60 centimes in winter; 50 centimes for women in summer, 40 centimes in winter.⁹⁰ Farm workers in northern Italy appear to have received wages of from £6 to £10 a year,

⁸² *L'Alpe Retica*, 7 July 1894, p.1.

⁸³ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.125.

⁸⁴ *Nineteen Century*, 1886, vol.19, pp.235-36.

⁸⁵ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.107.

⁸⁶ Bassi, *op.cit.*, p.22; Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.126, 127.

⁸⁷ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.45, 47.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.120.

⁸⁹ *Atti della Giunta*, p.643.

⁹⁰ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.205.

occasionally up to £12, plus board. A whole family might earn up to £18, or at most £24.⁹¹ It was recognised that labour, especially agricultural labour, was poorly paid, but to go on strike to demonstrate one's dissatisfaction could be dangerous. Strikers and their sympathisers were liable to prosecution for conspiracy. In fact the Council of Workman's Party was indicted as "an Association of malefactors" for having encouraged a strike of agricultural labourers, and prosecuted for exciting hatred of class against class.⁹² Even with amendments to the penal code on 1 January 1890 which were liberal in tendency in the sense that industrial action by workers, including strikes, would be illegal only if violence or threats were employed, there was no express recognition of any right for workers to organise trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, or to strike. Consequently unfriendly courts would have experienced no difficulty in treating as illegal a wide range of ordinary trade union practices, and imposing heavy penalties, including prison terms, especially upon "leaders or promoters".⁹³ In the southern regions a man's wage was four times a woman's or eight times a child's.⁹⁴ In central Italy men received 1s. per day, and the agents made 2d. or 3d. per day out of each individual's wages⁹⁵ with the result that it was impossible for ordinary agricultural labourers to put by any savings.⁹⁶ Similar exploitation was going on in other districts, and the peasants were constrained to borrow from the proprietors, and repay them at harvest-time.⁹⁷ There were also instances of day-labourers who were well-treated with regard to food, and brought home their wages intact.⁹⁸

Figures for wage are not easy to interpret in the absence of reliable data on living costs and non-wage components of income. More objective evidence of the condition of the people can be gathered from housing and diet. When Emilio Morpurgo, one of the commissioners appointed by the Italian Parliament, began his enquiry into the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.120.

⁹² *The Times*, 5 December 1887, p.9.

⁹³ *Economic Journal*, 1893, vol.3, pp.720, 721.

⁹⁴ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.36.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.87.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.54.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.35.

condition of the habitations of the rural labouring population, he wrote:

If it be true that the dwelling is the most infallible index to the condition of the family which inhabits it, truly the state of the labouring population in the districts of Venetia must be painted in very dark colours indeed.⁹⁹

From one commune after another come the phrases: "Intolerable", "Dens of infection", "Hovels unfit for human habitation", "They are very small, badly repaired, badly ventilated, badly built, neither floored nor paved, thatched with straw, and overcrowded; generally damp, low, dark, and with dunghills in immediate contiguity to them".¹⁰⁰

With regard to the houses, the same cry of distress came from every quarter. From the north where euphemistic descriptions such as "the cleanliness of the houses is not exemplary"¹⁰¹ alternated with most lamentable statements: "In the province of Mantua are to be seen huts built and thatched with canes and mud like the dwellings of savages in Africa or Australia".¹⁰² Elegant periphrases such as "[these houses] are the negation of aesthetics and hygiene"¹⁰³ were followed by fearful sentences:

The dwellings are squalid and unwholesome, to a degree which no imagination could paint, and which must affect with horror every human mind. In truth, if any visitor should enter any one of the habitations of our labourers, even of the "salaried" class, we would wager that the impression he would receive would remain with him to the latest day of his life.¹⁰⁴

In southern Italy, generally speaking, the evils most complained of were the poverty, badness, unhealthiness of the peasants' houses, with the addition that "Goats and fowls [were] fraternally admitted to share the dwelling place".¹⁰⁵ This brotherly approach was noticed by an English visitor on the island of Sardinia who protested, "The man

⁹⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, 1883, Vol.158, p.93.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.95.

¹⁰¹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.181.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.190.

¹⁰³ Bassi, *op.cit.*, p.36.

¹⁰⁴ *Edinburgh Review.*, 1881, Vol.153, p.461.

¹⁰⁵ Beauclerk, *op. cit.*, pp.16, 35, 46.

himself, with his wife and progeny, retired at night to an inner room; but the hospitality of the kitchen was extended indifferently to carabinieri, several of whom slept there every night, goats, dogs, and casual wayfarers".¹⁰⁶

In central Italy the peasants' dwellings were "narrow, dark, smoky, and dirty; the floors...damp and unpaved" and the straw bedding was "musty".¹⁰⁷ Even these squalid homes were beyond the means of some, who lived in huts or wigwams, or as it was seen in the *Campagna Romana*, in caves and grottoes, or the ruins of ancient buildings and tombs; many had "no roof but the heavens and no bed but the grass".¹⁰⁸

The question of the habitations of the rural classes was perhaps the most important of all subjects which called for urgent inquiry and energetic action. Although the inhabitants of these hovels were generally the owners, dire poverty prevented them from keeping their cottages in repair; the universal cry was for a reduction of taxation, and decent wages.¹⁰⁹ A married peasant woman who was interviewed in Sicily complained: "I have five children and only one small room, where we are constrained to eat, sleep, and do everything else, whereas many landlords have ten or twelve rooms, complete palaces".¹¹⁰

There were encouraging signs in some areas of Lombardy and Piedmont, where the peasants' houses were "fairly good" or "gradually being rebuilt and improved",¹¹¹ and the houses of small proprietors, *mezzadri*, and *bovari* in the plains and hill-country were "decent and hygienic" while in the region of the Langhe and other areas the houses were not different from those in the cities.¹¹² But the recurring comment was that the habitations of the *contadino* lacked space and light, were destitute of the most elementary domestic conveniences, damp and cold, with the result that in the northern regions, in winter, people met in the stable, an English resident noting:

¹⁰⁶ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, pp.907-08.

¹⁰⁷ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.64.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.72.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.196.

¹¹⁰ *L'Alpe Retica*, 14 July 1894, p.2.

¹¹¹ Beauclerk, *op. cit.*, p.181.

¹¹² *Atti della Giunta*, pp.638, 639.

During winter, meetings of the peasants are held in the barns and cattle-sheds; they commence at dusk and last till 11 p.m. In some instances the owner of the shed exacts a kilogramme of hemp from every woman attending the meeting. The men stand hand in hand telling stories, or they shell maize; the women spin flax and sing, whilst the young ones make love with their sweethearts...The winter evenings are passed, as usual, in the cattle-sheds, which are the great field for courtship. The young woman who aspires to matrimony lets fall her spindle, and the youth who picks it up is thereby constituted her sweetheart.¹¹³

To this idyllic scene could be added the optimistic view of another foreign observer of the mode of life in Piedmont:

In winter the stable is invariably used as a general living-room for the sake of warmth. To English ideas this sounds no doubt repulsive; but the stable in an Italian *cascina* is large, well ventilated, and tolerably clean. In fact, the practice is not considered unhealthy by the medical men. Some, indeed, go further, and recommend living in the stable for consumptive patients! It is actually said that the breath of the cows and oxen has a prophylactic value; and certainly the peasantry believe this.¹¹⁴

It was certainly considered unhealthy by some commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of the rural population; yet it was also justified:

Enrico Paglia would have suggested to go anywhere except spending time in the stables, but we believe his advice is not sound. To stop in the stables is a necessary evil. Unfortunately the peasant is ill-fed, worse-clad, and his dwelling is ill-repaired, and he cannot stand contemplating the snow fall from the sky, or the ice form in the ditches. It is for this reason that during the winter he takes shelter in the stables urged simply by the warmth. During the day the peasants work, and rarely stop in the stables; in the evening and till late at night they find in the stables their only meeting place.¹¹⁵

Some contemporary writer asked indignantly why the contadino himself did nothing about his state, why he remained ignorant, and spent so many hours in the stables, idle and unproductive. He could have learned some trade which he could practise during the time he

¹¹³ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.200, 209.

¹¹⁴ *Chambers's Journal*, December 1903-November 1904, vol.7, p.369.

¹¹⁵ *Inchiesta Romilli*, pp.151-52.

was not required to work in the fields.¹¹⁶ Some did: "The peasants of those hill regions turns their hands to weaving, to blacksmith's work, to lace or toy making, and, if all other resources fail, have recourse to emigration".¹¹⁷ Of others it was said: "all [these] aids and expedients are absolutely unknown to the brutalised and timid inhabitants of these lowlands, who are, in truth, more like working machines than thinking beings".¹¹⁸

Other objective evidence of the condition of the people can be gathered from their diet. General comments such as "the material conditions of the artisans and of the toilers of the soil, in Italy, are not satisfactory enough"¹¹⁹ alternated with statements of eloquent brevity. In the province of Vicenza, Cavaliere Carraro, one of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of the rural population, realised that wine, for the poorest class, was "entirely unknown; the thinnest sort being drunk only by those more able-bodied fellows who work by day on heavy jobs in summer time". In some areas, wine was never attainable.¹²⁰ This statement is borne out by comparative figures for deaths related to abuse of alcohol: in Italy a quarter of those in Sweden, less than a third that of England, and barely half that even of impoverished Ireland.¹²¹ The same could be said if we compare the annual consumption of meat per head of the population in various European nations,¹²² or the average consumption of sugar.¹²³ Italy was at the bottom of the ladder, consuming a very modest proportion of most of the other European states.

Some foreign commentators, while acknowledging the peasants' lot to be a hard one, saw their diet as one of frugal abundance:

The impression received by one who studies them and their ways is one of great admiration for the patience and cheerfulness with which

¹¹⁶ Scotti, Vittorio, *La questione agrarie: osservazioni e proposte*. Opera premiata con medaglia d'oro dal collegio dei Ragionieri di Milano, Concorso Sacchi 1884. Milano, 1885, pp.79, 81.

¹¹⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.458.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Bodio, *op.cit.*, p.14.

¹²⁰ *Quarterly Review*, 1882, vol.154, p.512.

¹²¹ Bodio, *op.cit.*, p.15.

¹²² Beauchlerk, *op.cit.*, p.115.

¹²³ *Mackay Mercury*, 8 December 1891, p.2.

hardships are borne by the Italian peasants and labourers. Their wants are slight; the climate is one of the best; the soil gives them a nourishing and cheap food supply; wine at 3d. a litre, maize-meal at 3d. a kilogramme, chestnuts, beans, cheap vegetables, Italian pastes with a little seasoning of tomato, cheese, and oil are enough for them. They rarely touch meat, and do not seem to want it if the wine is good; and best of all, they have learnt the value of, and rely greatly on, co-operation, of which they make fair and proper use.¹²⁴

From Italian sources an altogether harsher picture emerges. Reading through the contemporary literature one is struck by the frugality, and parsimoniousness of the rural population. From the south where, although wine was not wanting the staple commodities of diet were "bread, oil, and vegetables". The food was neither wholesome nor abundant, being chiefly composed of farinaceous and vegetable substances to the exclusion of meat; indeed, the usual soup of the labourer consisted only of bread, salt water, roasted barley cakes, and carob-beans.¹²⁵ A journalist from the north of Italy who interviewed a Sicilian peasant by the name of Bernardo Sinatra, father of six sons, was told: "For the last week my family has not been able to eat a crumb of bread, and to appease their hunger they eat prickly pears".¹²⁶ Another Sicily man added in dialect: "*Ain cinquant' anni, e un ain manciatre carni mai!*"¹²⁷ (I am fifty, and I have never eaten meat". Indeed, it was feared, at times, that there was a danger of revolt in the island because people were utterly destitute.¹²⁸

In the north food was scanty and of poor quality. An instance was recorded of a farmer, holding 300 fields, serving a duck carved into eighteen portions at the dinner-table of his household.¹²⁹ There were also cases bordering on tragedy. "Even when the labourer is apparently satiated," a contemporary noted, "he suffers from chronic physical hunger, because his food is deficient in nutritive quality".¹³⁰ It was related that a *contadino* who had walked into a butcher's shop on Christmas day to buy some meat, said to the butcher: "If you serve

¹²⁴ *The Times*, 15 June 1892, p.4.

¹²⁵ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.63-64.

¹²⁶ *L'Alpe Retica*, 21 July 1894, p.2.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *North Queensland Herald*, 20 June 1894, p.7.

¹²⁹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.209.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.121.

me well, I'll come back next Christmas".¹³¹ There were also examples of the initiative of some of the rural populations:

One small assistance to their diet - the only one - the peasants find in the frogs, which from April to September furnish a pleasant and wholesome food, of which in this district more than five thousand quintals are consumed annually!¹³²

Exceptions, however, were made in some circumstances. At harvest-time, for instance, "plentiful food is everywhere supplied" or at weddings when "so much food is provided that each guest carries some home with him".¹³³

At the beginning of this chapter it was explained that one of the reasons for the rural problems faced by Italy during the early 1880s was American competition which had lowered the price of grain in Italy. Just before the turn of the century bread riots in Italy were attributed to the millionaires of Chicago and New York for the opposite reason. By forcing up wheat to famine prices in order to make fortunes out of the necessity of Europe in general, they were considered responsible for bloodshed in Italy.¹³⁴ And I would like to recount an episode of dramatic intensity as it was lived during a time of great crisis in southern Italy:

We remember one night ride...wild as the gallop of Wilhem and Leonore...We did not see the shadow of a brigand but we witnessed scenes of heart-rending wretchedness. For it was the year of a famine that made ruthless ravages, and when one snatched a hasty meal in the miserable cafes, the starving natives took the place by storm, and literally scrambled for the bread in one's hands.¹³⁵

If malaria could be considered one cause of poverty, *pellagra*, another disease, common to the northern regions of Italy, excepting Liguria, and to some areas in central Italy, was the consequence of poverty. Pellagra (*pellis agra*) was a skin disease symptomatic of an extremely serious physical condition, which led to insanity. In Italy its headquarters were Lombardy and the Valley of the Po. It mainly

¹³¹ Rogora, *op.cit.*, p.14.

¹³² *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.461.

¹³³ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.95-6, 97.

¹³⁴ *Saturday Review*, 14 May 1898, p.649.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14 September 1901, p.329.

prevailed among those whose only article of food was Indian corn.¹³⁶ It was regularly noticed that pellagra visited only the indigent, the under-fed, those who could not afford any other aliment. A little milk, or vegetables, added to the diet were sufficient to prevent pellagra, but those afflicted by it were too poor to afford them. Even a little wine or spirits could have helped them; the few cases of drunkards among these people did not suffer from pellagra.¹³⁷ The complaints were of poverty and hunger: "The food of the Italian peasant is, at best, miserable".¹³⁸ The diet of the pellagrous labourers was described as "polenta - e poco polenta"¹³⁹, i.e., pudding of maize - a little pudding of maize. These laconic statements were summed up in the words: *Populorum miseria morborum genitrix*, in plain words the specific disease of poverty and wretchedness.¹⁴⁰ It was regretfully added that even the slaves of America were well-fed and well-housed, for they were permanent labourers.¹⁴¹

As the physical condition of the *pellagrosi* declined, strange psychological symptoms were seen: depression, stupidity, morbid development of religious feeling, such as kneeling, praying, crossing; and also, there was an impulse to suicide, chiefly by drowning. Another form of insanity involved violent tendencies.¹⁴² It was reported that in Piedmont a mother had taken her two year old daughter to a kitchen garden, dug a grave, and, after filling the child's mouth with soil, buried her. The woman was suffering from pellagra, and it was thought she had acted in a fit of delirium.¹⁴³

In the district of Lodi there were 4030 cases of pellagra among 173,000 inhabitants; in the Cremona's 4,190 among 175,000; in Verulanuova 3,400 among 57,000.¹⁴⁴ Lombardy, which comprised the greater parts of the districts afflicted by pellagra, had a larger proportion of young men physically unfit for military service than any

¹³⁶ *Westminster Review*, January-April 1881, p.599.

¹³⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, pp.463, 464.

¹³⁸ *Westminster Review*, January-April 1881, p.601.

¹³⁹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.222-23.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.218.

¹⁴¹ Jacini, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.

¹⁴² *Westminster Review*, January-April 1881, p.600.

¹⁴³ *L'Epoca*, 3-4 October 1891, p.3.

¹⁴⁴ *Quarterly Review*, 1882, vol.154, p.513.

other district in the Peninsula,¹⁴⁵ and though it was stated that "native thews are not wanting",¹⁴⁶ a journal published in Rome presented the following dilemma: "What is the policy of building fortifications at enormous cost, when in order to raise the money, you have to tax the people so enormously as to cause the physical degeneration of the race, and make it valueless for manning the fortresses when they are built".¹⁴⁷

Suggestions for the prevention and cure of pellagra were endless: rabbits should be introduced, and reared as food; some favoured praying God to send manna, while others advised that *tridiums* should be sung in the churches to exorcise the plague!¹⁴⁸ At the same time the number of deaths resulting from pellagra were 3,688 in 1887; 3,483 in 1888; 3,113 in 1889; 3,698 in 1890.¹⁴⁹

Poverty and hardship resulted in three phenomena widespread throughout Italy: begging, extensive rural theft, and emigration. Close observers usually agreed that for the most part begging was a last resource, just to keep off starvation. It was stated that the peasants seldom took to begging "even when deprived of nearly all resources",¹⁵⁰ but it was also reported that every time agriculture was in crisis begging resumed: "it is possible to see old men fall on their feet, haggard-faced young men, invalids, forced by hunger to abandon their hovels in the neighbouring communes and flood the major centres in order to beg".¹⁵¹

But there were also professional beggars, especially in the impoverished South, and above all in Naples. Here, beggars, like princes and counts, abounded; there were centres such as Pozzuoli and Sorrento where mendicancy was the main industry. It was affirmed that the monks set the example followed by the work-people, and the tourist, at least in the tourist centres, was considered the father of the beggar.¹⁵² Not all the time, however. This is the perception of an Australian tourist:

¹⁴⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.467.

¹⁴⁶ *Quarterly Review*, 1882, vol.154, p.503.

¹⁴⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, 1883, vol.158, p.115.

¹⁴⁸ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.223, 224.

¹⁴⁹ Bodio, *op.cit.*, p.11.

¹⁵⁰ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.125.

¹⁵¹ *La Valtellina*, 13 June 1891, p.2.

¹⁵² *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.180.

the beggars are a most hideous sight, many of them. I never would give them anything, because I consider it disgraceful to allow such poor wretched creatures to be at large; they ought to be in a hospital, and I would give them no encouragement to come out.¹⁵³

Another visitor from America added:

To beggars - after much experience both in England and Italy - I give very little...Many of them (Italian beggars) have a professional whine, and a certain doleful twist of the neck and turn of the head, which hardens my heart against them at once.¹⁵⁴

But an English resident wrote that,

the little girl of my Neapolitan home used to say to me, in reproach of my hard English heart: "How can you pass without giving them something?"¹⁵⁵

A confirmation that in Naples compassion seems to breed in the atmosphere not just for the criminal but also for the destitute, for, like the old English gentleman, it may be said of the Neapolitan, "he ne'er forgot the poor".¹⁵⁶

Absolute necessity led to an increase of crime, particularly of petty thefts. People robbed and pilfered, in order to keep their family alive. It was officially recorded that "the suffering of the labourers are such that immorality is a necessity of their existence, and many are compelled to steal in order to support their families".¹⁵⁷ It was proverbial that "*Roba di comun, roba di nessun*" (Communal property, nobody's property), a proverb evoking a similar one: "*La roba che é nei campi é di Dio e dei Santi*" (What one finds in the fields belongs to God and to the Saints),¹⁵⁸ and by extension to anybody who could take possession of it.

As far as communal property was concerned it was known that due to the insufficient number of forest-keepers, thousands of peasants lived exclusively by organised depredations on the Montello Forest.¹⁵⁹ It was written that rural theft was frequent, abundant, and extensive. These thefts were committed by fathers in the presence of children,

¹⁵³ Sir J.P. Boucaut, Letters to my boys, Mitchell Library, MSS/914B.

¹⁵⁴ Hawthorne, *op.cit.*, pp.486-87.

¹⁵⁵ *National Review*, 1892, vol.18, p.785.

¹⁵⁶ *The Times*, 3 January 1882, p.7.

¹⁵⁷ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.22.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.171, 129.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.113, 197.

and a judge of Ravenusa said: "It is the parents who teach the children the path to crime".¹⁶⁰ From the Alps where girls stole corn or wood¹⁶¹ to Sicily where "it is almost a proverb that in every peasant you see a man capable of theft";¹⁶² from Sardinia whose inhabitants' appearance was described as "predatory"¹⁶³ to Bologna and neighbouring provinces where "Whole villages practise an organized and extensive system of depredation with incredible audacity and violence".¹⁶⁴

In the centre of Italy thefts were so common as to be an obstacle to cultivation. In the Marches, Latium and Umbria, fruit, olives, corn, vegetables, and cattle were stolen, and flocks were led to pastures upon other people's lands. The robbers spared nothing, and even personal safety could not be said to be fully assured.¹⁶⁵ Rural thefts of wood were frequent. To steal wood was not considered dishonourable in the Marches, and the wood was sold publicly at reduced prices.¹⁶⁶ In some parts of Tuscany no-one was allowed to commence the vintage until the municipal authorities published their permission to do so, but in most parts there were no such restrictions on account of the frequency of rural theft. The grapes had to be picked before they were ripe, greatly to the detriment of their value, or there would not be a bunch left in many provinces, unless the peasant saved himself "by continual, difficult, and fatiguing watch over his property".¹⁶⁷ When the vintage approached, one of the tasks of children was to watch the grapes,¹⁶⁸ and men too might join in, as an American noted:

We passed cottage-doors, and saw groups of *contadini*, and *contadine*, in their festal attire, and they saluted us graciously; but it was observable that one of the men generally lingered on our track to see that no grapes were stolen.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁰ *Nineteenth Century*, January-June 1886, vol.19, p.236.

¹⁶¹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.125.

¹⁶² *Nineteenth Century*, January-June 1886, vol.19, p.236.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, January-June 1889, vol.25, p.906.

¹⁶⁴ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.108.

¹⁶⁵ *Nineteenth Century*, January-June 1886, vol.19, p.236; Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.85, 95.

¹⁶⁶ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.206; *Nineteenth Century*, January-June 1886, vol.19, p.236.

¹⁶⁷ *Nineteenth Century*, January-June 1886, vol.19, p.236.

¹⁶⁸ *Fraser's Magazine*, August 1878, p.240.

¹⁶⁹ Hawthorne, *op.cit.*, p.448.

At the time of vintage large vine-owners employed men "armed with guns and cudgels to patrol the vineyards day and night".¹⁷⁰ To prevent petty spoliation, precautions, however, were taken such as erecting high walls, building strong enclosures, and coal-heaps and the tops of the loaded coal-wagons on the railways were often whitewashed.¹⁷¹

At the same time foreigners might have been surprised at realising that rural theft could be excused and justified; poverty was considered an ample excuse.¹⁷² Tillers of the soil and *bovari* (cowherds) stole from their landlords;¹⁷³ day-labourers thought it an act of justice to defraud their masters,¹⁷⁴ and one of the explanations was that their employers were not needy.¹⁷⁵ Even when the rural labourer was prevented from stealing, he was happy when someone else did,¹⁷⁶ a form of indirect self-gratification. The evangelical injunction that no one should have the superfluities when others lacked the necessities of life was considered an ideal solution to the problems of the poor, but it was also recognised that it might remain wishful thinking.¹⁷⁷ That stealing was part of the existence of some of the rural population could be deduced from the following instructive clarification: "An able-bodied day labourer earns from £18 to £20, which, by extra work, and by rural theft, he may increase to as much as from £32 to £48".¹⁷⁸

Smuggling in tobacco and salt was also carried on to enormous extent from Sicily to the Venetian provinces, and poaching was extensively practised.¹⁷⁹ Rural theft on a large scale coexisted with respect for private property, and open-handed hospitality. What was noted of the Piedmont *contadino* certainly applied more generally: he did not think it dishonourable to steal things growing in the open air under the sun because he felt them to belong to everybody, but he

¹⁷⁰ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.207.

¹⁷¹ *Fortnightly Review*, 1882, p.309.

¹⁷² Scotti, *op.cit.*, p.77; Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.108.

¹⁷³ *Atti della Giunta*, pp.620, 621.

¹⁷⁴ Scotti, *op.cit.*, p.76.

¹⁷⁵ Rogora, *op.cit.*, p.16.

¹⁷⁶ Scotti, *op.cit.*, p.77.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹⁷⁸ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.120.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.15, 215, 152.

would not dream of touching anything in another's house, and there was no stranger, rich or poor, with whom he would not share his meal. In the wine regions the *contadino* would always open his best bottle of wine to share with a visitor.¹⁸⁰

During the last few pages we have seen that among the rural population of Italy at the end of the nineteenth century some were fortunate enough to keep their families in board and lodging. The peasant proprietors, for instance, for whom:

the few square yards of land, or terrace of olive trees, orange grove or vineyard, a small plot of maize, nearly suffice to maintain the family. A few fowls of the prolific Leghorn type, able to forage for themselves, are a great resource, the eggs bringing in a few pennies daily, and sale of a fowl when the larder is empty is handy in moments of difficulty.¹⁸¹

A few, however, were compelled to join professional beggars when agriculture was in a critical state, and many proprietors, labourers, and destitutes resorted to stealing. Rural theft was endemic throughout the peninsula and islands. But a spinster interviewed had this to say: "When the rich steals no one cares, but the poor man who steals a fistful of corn to appease his hunger is immediately imprisoned".¹⁸² The state of the rural population was such, in fact, that a British diplomatic official wrote:

If these facts do not justify the illegal actions, committed by the peasants, they at least explain and, in a great measure, extenuate them.¹⁸³

Some sympathetic observers saw no possibility of any lasting alleviation of these conditions; an ever-increasing population would absorb any growth in production, since the population lacked the spirit as well as the means to emigrate.¹⁸⁴ In reality, emigration was already an annual phenomenon, especially between October and December when peasants could use the proceeds of the wheat harvest for passage money.¹⁸⁵ During the 1880s it was apparent that "from one end to the other of Italy one sees daily our young and robust

¹⁸⁰ *Atti della Giunta*, p.747.

¹⁸¹ *The Times*, 15 June 1892, p.4.

¹⁸² *L'Alpe Retica*, 14 July 1894, p.2.

¹⁸³ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.130.

¹⁸⁴ *Fortnightly Review*, 1882, p.309.

¹⁸⁵ *L'Emigrante*, 15 July 1880, pp.1, 2.

peasantry emigrating by the hundreds to gain their bread in a foreign land".¹⁸⁶ In the north:

It is evident that the peasant is striving not only to liberate himself from the privations which he formerly endured with resignation, but to change his condition entirely. The emigration to America is prompted by the hope of quickly acquiring a fortune. And it is to be observed that it is not only the labourer, or even the farmer, who thus emigrates, but also the proprietor.¹⁸⁷

In the south the majority of those who left headed for South America where "affinity of race and language" lured them.¹⁸⁸ From the Alps:

The hardy mountaineers are abandoning their bits of property, and seeking to better their position by emigration, in increasing numbers. The less sturdy and still more miserable low-landers are swelling from year to year the portentous list of the pellagrosi.¹⁸⁹

In Naples:

The emigration fever is now stronger than ever, and young men especially are leaving this province in the hope of finding an Eldorado in South America. One of these artisans, for to that class many of the emigrants belong, said to me this week: I shall go to Buenos Ayres in June with some other friends, and after I have made my fortune, shall return in three or four years!...Several last year left for Australia and are doing well. "The work was very hard at first, though we are quite prepared to work", they wrote to me; and generally speaking they are as good as their word, despite the bad name they have as idlers.¹⁹⁰

From the Valtellina where "our labourers emigrate with more fury than ever",¹⁹¹ to central Italy, where "without emigration we would have had to knife one another":¹⁹² it was the same story.

At the end of the 1880s a settled pattern was established. Italian emigration was of two types: temporary and permanent. The annual temporary emigration hovered around the 100,000 mark, and affected

¹⁸⁶ *The Times*, 18 October 1881, p.4.

¹⁸⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, 1883, vol.158, p.112.

¹⁸⁸ *The Times*, 25 May 1883, p.8.

¹⁸⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, 1883, vol.158, p.117.

¹⁹⁰ *The Times*, 25 May 1883, p.8.

¹⁹¹ *L'Eco della Provincia di Sondrio*, 2 October 1886, p.3.

¹⁹² Coletti, *op.cit.*, p.140.

mainly the regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, Venetia; the emigrants left in springtime and came back when the snow started covering the ground. Permanent emigration, on the other hand, had increased from about 20,000 in 1876 to 196,000 in 1888, decreasing the following year to 113,000, and to 105,000 in 1890. The regions most affected were Piedmont, Lombardy, Venetia, and Liguria. There was little emigration from Emilia, very little from Tuscany (except from the provinces of Lucca, and Massa Carrara where emigrating was traditional). Emigration was great from Naples and neighbouring provinces (Salerno, Campobasso, Cosenza), and also from Basilicata. Very few people were emigrating from Sicily, and practically none from Sardinia. Statistics released by receiving countries showed that Italians arriving in the U.S.A. amounted to 69,969 in 1890; in the same year 39,122 arrived in Argentina, 19,675 in Brazil, and 12,873 in Uruguay.¹⁹³ Italian sources indicate that there were only 291 Italians emigrating to Australia in 1890,¹⁹⁴ an insignificant number compared with those going to the American continent. This was still true in 1891, despite a 250% increase in those going to Australia.¹⁹⁵ A total of almost 4,000 Italians were resident in Australia; Queensland had the third largest number, but far fewer than Victoria and New South Wales - only 11.2% of the total.¹⁹⁶

The increase in 1891 was one indication of a growing interest in Australia as a destination; enquiries made of the British Vice-Consul were another.¹⁹⁷ How ready was Australia, in particular Queensland, to welcome a larger influx of Italians?

¹⁹³ Bodio, *op.cit.*, pp. 6, 7, 8.

¹⁹⁴ *Annuario Statistico della Emigrazione Italiana dal 1876 al 1925*, Roma, 1926, p.87.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Emigrazione e Colonie - Rapporti RR. Agenti Diplomatici e Consolari pubblicati dal R. Ministero degle Affari Esteri*, Roma, 1893, p.627.

¹⁹⁷ *The Times*, 15 June 1892, p.4.

Distribution of Italians in Australia at the end of 1891

	Male	Female	Total
Victoria	1543	157	1700
New South Wales	1229	248	1477
Queensland	379	59	438
South Australia	163	23	186
Western Australia	32	2	34
Tasmania	53	24	77
Totals	3399	513	3912

CHAPTER TWO

Some British and Colonial Views of Italy and Italians during the Last Decades of the Nineteenth Century

On 30 October 1891 Sir James Garrick, the Agent General in London, informed the Chief Secretary, Sir Samuel Griffith, that the *Jumna* had sailed from Genoa on the 24th with 333 Italians, of whom 267 were classified as single men.¹ The Agent General would have liked to go to Italy himself, but had been unable to leave London.² The Despatching Officer had reported that everything had gone fairly satisfactorily, though there had been some delays and difficulties inseparable from a new undertaking, and from the character of the work itself.³ The new undertaking was the scheme which had been suggested by C.V. Fraire,⁴ and designed by the Queensland Government in the hope of finding a replacement for the gang labour of the South Sea Islanders and the Javanese in the sugar industry, and rescuing the banana-growing industry from the Chinese.⁵

There was considerable opposition to the proposal of introducing Italians, and it is British/Colonial views of Italy and Italians during the last decades of the Nineteenth century that form the subject of this chapter. The present discussion is based on attitudes of the members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly; on the hostility to Italian immigrants fanned by sections of the labour movement and the

¹ AGE/G46, p.164: Queensland State Archives (QSA).

² *Ibid.*, p.165.

³ *Ibid.*, p.177.

⁴ Chiaffredo Venerano Fraire was born at Envie, Piedmont, in 1852. He came to Australia at twenty. Bishop Quinn, of Queensland, returning from a visit to Rome, induced a number of eligible young Italians to accompany him back to Australia. All of high intellectual standard, they included Achille Simonetti (famous sculptor), Canali (astronomer), Benvenuti (musician), Papi, who attained a high position in the Education Department, and Fraire and Armati, who were engaged by J.J. Burns, of Burns Philp Coy., and went to Townsville. Mary K. Neff, *How Theosophy came to Australia and New Zealand*, Australian Section Theosophical Society, Sydney, 1943, p.62).

⁵ *Townsville Herald*, 24 June 1891, p.9; *North Queensland Herald*, 2 December 1891, p.3.

popular press; and also on the perceptions of the supporters of the scheme, which was consistently characterised as a temporary measure devised to meet emergency conditions: "in the case of the Italian it is simply an experiment".⁶

Hostility towards Italian immigration reflects the nationalism, and the accompanying disregard for the rights and interests of other nationalities, that were widespread in the late 19th Century. In America an act which excluded further Chinese immigration was passed through pressure from Californians who feared an influx of cheap labour.⁷ Similar pressure to exclude aliens was experienced in Australia against Chinese and "Polynesians", and not simply for economic reasons; there were others of a cultural, biological, and religious nature. The editor of the Charters Towers paper *Northern Miner*, for instance, attacked Chinese and "Kanakas" at the same time:

The resolution of Queensland, deep-seated and unalterable, is that this colony shall remain a British community in its life and in all that constitutes British civilization. Hence there can be no toleration of any race that cannot fitly and harmoniously amalgamate with our own. The presence of an inferior race - physically inferior - would, by an invariable law of nature, degrade the superior race, and in time absorb and brutalise it...The one safe remedy is their total and absolute exclusion from this colony...Kanakas and Chinese are distinct types of the *genus homo* - some would go so far as to deny that they belong to the human family at all. There is no affinity between them and men of the caucasian race, any miscegenation of races so physically antagonistic must inevitably degrade the higher race. Hence it is not only the right but the duty of the governing power of the supreme race to preserve it from deterioration morally and physically, and to repress by statute the unnatural desires and unholy cupidity of planters and squatters to associate themselves with "human vermin" for the purpose of making money.⁸

This pseudo-scientific theory of Anglo-Saxon superiority intensified the sentiment for restricting immigration, and the Italians were not immune from it. In fact the Italians were referred to as the "Chinese of Europe",⁹ and the principal objections made against them were, as

⁶ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1891, vol.64, p.886.

⁷ *The Times*, 1 May 1882, p.5; 11 November 1885, p.9.

⁸ *Northern Miner*, 26 May 1877.

⁹ *Australian Encyclopaedia*, Sydney, Grolier Society of Australia, 1983, vol.5, p.267.

will become apparent, the same as those made against the Chinese: they worked for wages lower than the locals, spent little of their earnings, lived together in large numbers, and did not learn the English language. Moreover they were Catholic. In short the Italians could not amalgamate with the "superior race".

English newspapers and periodicals circulated widely in Australia, as well as having material abstracted and reprinted in Australian publications, so that their comments form part of the ambience of ideas in which Queensland considered this matter along with the comments of their own newspapers and politicians. Writings on Italy as a whole, especially those non-polemical in character and showing evidence of both knowledge and thoughtfulness, are generally to be found in the English press and periodicals. Here recognition of Italy's contribution to European civilization was routine. Adverse comments, however severe, upon the plight of contemporary Italians are tempered by understanding of the wide regional variations in conditions, and some fellow feeling for Italy hardship. If there is an indication of racial superiority, it is very rare.

Some of the criticism had the purpose to censure the policies of Italy's modern government, sometimes blamed for widespread poverty:

The vast majority of the people desire peace and quiet...They desire to pursue agriculture, commerce, and industry without further increase of taxes already unbearable, and he who lives among them hears at present but one dominant exclamation: "A plague of all parties and all parliaments!"¹⁰

Foreign critics commonly expressed strong disapproval of the Italian bureaucracy in general, which enriched itself at the public cost while the people perished;¹¹ or condemned mayors, syndics, and magistrates for incompetence and dishonesty.¹² References to maladministration, opportunism, and the overpowering weight of taxation were a recurring theme:

Italy is overlaid with Government machinery, both national and municipal, and it has added to its burdens by entering into rivalry with the fleets and armies of France which is very rich, and the German Powers, which...are admirably administered. With the recklessness in money matters which, when the State is concerned (for they are

¹⁰ *Saturday Review*, 26 May 1900, p.641.

¹¹ La Ramee (De) Louisa - pseud. "Ouida" - *A Village Commune*, Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1881, vol.ii, p.226.

¹² *Edinburgh Review*, 1887, vol.165, pp.113, 114.

abundantly prudent in their private affairs), seems to be common to all the southern races.¹³

Analogous information could be elicited through the correspondence columns:

Sir,...In conversation with Italians...I have found the profound conviction, derived no doubt from the bank scandals that the average Deputy is a scoundrel and that his one aim is "to grow rich at the expense of the people" "*vivere sulle spalle del popolo*". The phrase "*i nostri 508 ladri*" (our 508 thieves) is not an uncommon synonym in the popular vocabulary for the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁴

This apparent inability to understand one's social function was not limited to the Deputies: it was understood to apply more generally, and questions - to which foreign commentators would not have given an affirmative answer - were asked: "Will the Italians who are best able to pay do so honestly, and give up their ingrained practice of wriggling out of their obligations by every trick of fraud and every species of intrigues?"¹⁵ Indeed Italians themselves agreed wholeheartedly with the British perceptions of Italy's inappropriate political rule and administration. They saw the bureaucracy as an insatiable octopus.¹⁶ As an example of the thieving of public wealth, and, at the same time, of the efficiency with which private affairs were managed we could refer to a letter published in a Genova newspaper a few months after Crispi resigned the Premiership, and just a week before the Italians left the same city for Queensland:

In 1860, a friend helped him [Crispi] with four *tari*, with which he bought four *guastidduno* [large round loaf of bread], which he devoured with his poor wife. (Then he only had one.) After 1860 a local charity...gave him the means to move to Turin; and my father contributed with six *tari*.

The letter concluded by affirming that Crispi had become a millionaire ten times over: "This is *pappatriotismo*!"¹⁷ The pun implied the confusion Crispi made between serving the country : patriotism, and his tendency to look after his own interest: *pappare* (to gorge oneself).

¹³ *Saturday Review*, 6 January 1894, p.8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 June 1900, p.684.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 February 1894, p.196.

¹⁶ *L'Alpe Retica*, 20 December 1884, p.1.

¹⁷ *L'Eco d'Italia*, 17-18 October 1891, p.2.

It should be added that if some British observers looked with disgust at the political state of Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, others kept expressing their feeling of wonder at Italy's glorious past, declared their gratitude, and reaffirmed their optimism. "The possibilities of Italy are great", one commentator wrote, "and her greatness is essential to the progress of civilization".¹⁸ W.E. Gladstone (1809-1898), the British Prime Minister, expressed his opinion of Italy in a way that sounded like a humanitarian plea:

We are all debtors of Italy in the mental order. She it was who trained us up to modern civilization. We cannot repay the debt. But, if we are conscious of its existence, we can acknowledge it.¹⁹

Indeed one sign in Gladstone's mind, which made him believe in the permanent reconstruction of Italy was "the absolute freedom of speech and writing".²⁰ This optimism was shared by another contemporary: "Italy is Aaron's rod among the peoples: when stripped bare and dry, suddenly she buds again, and puts forth a new generation of efficient, strong, intensively alive children".²¹

After the unification of the country 1859-1870, the desire for independence and freedom was of paramount importance for Italians. As Gladstone noted: "Since the Roman empire (which required conquest by introducing law), she [Italy] has been always the sufferer, never the aggressor".²² Some were persuaded that Italy had natural frontiers perfectly defined, and no enemies to dread,²³ and one of the reasons adduced was: "the strongest defence of Italy consists in its heavy public debts, and its universal poverty",²⁴ but others disagreed: "No doubt the Italian frontier is an unsatisfactory one".²⁵ As a consequence Italy was making efforts to become a strong country in order to remain free, efforts which had loaded the country with taxes, and if foreigners did not like it, the Italians liked it even less, for they, and particularly the agricultural labourers, suffered most.

¹⁸ *Saturday Review*, 13 May 1889, p.582.

¹⁹ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, p.780.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.769.

²¹ *Atlantic Monthly*, 1894, vol.73, p.537.

²² *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, p.779.

²³ *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, pp.181-82; *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, pp.778-79.

²⁴ *Westminster Review*, July-December 1891, p.241.

²⁵ *Quarterly Review*, 1882, vol.154, pp.503-4.

It was not uncommon for a property to be sold to pay the impost, and it was pointed out that the frightful taxation made the peasant of Italy resemble "the fellah of Egypt".²⁶ In the north it was noticed that a census was taken of livestock, trees, vines, by the local authorities, and each addition meant a further small duty.²⁷ In the south in certain communes the shepherds, before being allowed to milk their goats, had to pay a tax based on the volume of the goats' udders.²⁸ Accounts of these local and municipal taxes alternated with reports that inquiries into the administration of Naples and Rome had revealed an extraordinary degree of shamelessness. Moreover, an enormous proportion of what was collected was squandered and embezzled.²⁹

An example of legalised tyranny, of the poor man harassed and fleeced by those set over him who should have protected him, is that of a peasant residing in a commune not far from Milan, who borrowed 2.5 lire from an usurer. After six months during which time he could not repay the obligatory five lire because he had fallen ill, the bailiff went to see him, and presented him with a bill for 39.3 lire, which included all the added expenses of fine, execution, legal dues, and various other costs. This instance of suffering imposed upon the poor people was reported under the title: "The marriage of usury and law".³⁰

Divers mayors of the Valtellina, birthplace of numerous Italians on their way to Queensland, when asked to explain why so many left their villages of Albosaggia, Ardenno, Caiolo, Teglio, Tirano, etc, to emigrate, replied that one of the reasons was: "the exhausted inventory of fiscal knowledge".³¹ An episode of pregnant brevity might convey a better idea: Emperor Francis of Austria, on one occasion, when travelling in Lombardy, asked a village schoolmaster what was the meaning of three letters so frequently inscribed on the facade of the churches: "D.O.M."; and the schoolmaster boldly replied: *dominium omnia manducavit*, taxation has devoured everything.³²

²⁶ La Ramee, *op.cit.*, p.238.

²⁷ *Chambers's Journal*, December 1903-November 1904, vol.7, p.370.

²⁸ *L'Alpe Retica*, 14 July 1894, p.2.

²⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, 1887, vol.165, pp.113, 114; *The Times*, 21 January 1890, p.9.

³⁰ *La Sentinella delle Alpi*, 9-10 November 1891, p.1.

³¹ *L'Eco della Provincia di Sondrio*, 4 November 1886, p.2.

³² *Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.173. "D.O.M.", however, means *Deo Optimo Maximo*, i.e. to God the best and greatest.

The Italians, however, did not remain passive. There were instances of people successful in evading the *dazio di consumo*, a tax on comestibles which was the foundation of municipal revenue. In Sorrento one of the local hotels, being situated in the adjoining commune of Sant'Agnello, could get its supplies duty free from the market by the stratagem of receiving them through the neighbour's garden with a back door on the right side of the frontier.³³ Some ingenious smugglers were occasionally detected, like the lady whose carriage, when stopped at the gate of Rome, was found to have a ham hidden under each of its cushions.³⁴ Such expedients were also the subject of some Italian short novels.³⁵

If the previous paragraph indicates the battle of wits going on between the government and the people, the problem of making Italy strong remained. We have seen that outsiders wrote unfavourably, but also positive and optimistic comments about the precarious state of Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, and in many cases Italians themselves agreed with them. In Australian papers, unfortunately, accounts of Italy and Italians tended to be mere generalisations from popular notions of Naples: "What greater condemnation can you pronounce on any race or class...than to acknowledge that they [the Neapolitans] regard the buffoon with admiration?"³⁶ and the impoverished south in general: "Sicily is essentially barbarous, and is not Italian except in a geographical sense...administered by a locust swarm of quill-driving officials..."³⁷ The most virulent expressions of prejudice against Italians and Italy came from the *Sydney Bulletin* which was in a class of its own in this respect.

To the *Bulletin*, for instance, Italy's quest for an army, navy, highways, railways, fortifications, and colonies was absurd. It was seen as a "frantic desire to make the modern Italian look like the resurrected Roman". Indeed Italy's claims in the councils of Europe were illogical because, before joining the other European nations she should have solved her domestic problems, particularly in relation to taxation, agriculture, poverty. The *Bulletin* saw Italy's efforts doomed to failure because *PROVIDENCE* had designed Italy to remain a very

³³ *Edinburgh Review*, 1887, vol.165, p.116.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ G. Faldella, *Le "Figurine"*, Milano, Bompiani, 1945, pp.89-121.

³⁶ *Saturday Review*, 23 May 1885, p.681.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 January 1894, p.8.

small Power, the implication being the Italians were not among the chosen people:

The tremendous efforts to make Italy a Great Power whereas PROVIDENCE intended her for a very small one, has loaded the country with taxes, until the Italian landholder, in many cases, simply abandons the land which has become a dead loss on his hands, and leaves it to the Crown, or the foxes, or the kites and crows, or to anyone who wants to take a ruinous contract and die over it...and the unshod Italian taxpayer meanwhile roosts in a kennel with the dogs and the goats.³⁸

At the same time the same paper referred sarcastically to the Italian shipload who had left Italy to better their state in Queensland as "The consignments of Romans and Piedmontese who are *en route* for Australia..."³⁹ In fact the Italians were awaited with feelings running from optimism through apprehension and suspicion to invincible hostility.

W. Smyth (Gympie) in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, had stated his confidence in and his unqualified acceptance of the Italians: "They will settle on the soil; and from what I have seen of the Italian race I consider them to be a noble race, a race worth recognizing".⁴⁰ But some feared that the Italian immigrants might not be agriculturalists,⁴¹ and the information that considerable care had been taken by the authorities in selecting only suitable persons,⁴² and that the people who sailed were all *bona fide* agriculturalists from northern Italy,⁴³ drew, once again, some cynical remarks from the *Bulletin*:

1. A certificate of good conduct (from whom?);
2. A certificate declaring him to be a *bona fide* agricultural labourer (probably from a gaoler, or gamekeeper, or wharf-loafer;
3. A police certificate of ignorance as to his character, or a certificate supposed to be from a policeman, more or less;

³⁸ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1891, vol.64, p.87.

⁴¹ *Northern Age and North Queensland Telegraph*, 23 April 1891, p.2.

⁴² *Queenslander*, 5 December 1891, p.1098.

⁴³ AGE/G46, p.165: QSA.

4. A medical certificate (some old guinea deception proving that twenty-four of him ran past a doctor in ten seconds without showing any disease);

5. A passport.

All of which is very comforting indeed.⁴⁴

While some would have preferred to see the sugar industry perish rather than admit Italians,⁴⁵ others argued about the unreliability of the Italians: "I say I believe they will not stay on the land",⁴⁶ and "They will leave the plantations and go to work at other occupations where wages are higher".⁴⁷

It was also feared that among the Italians to be brought to the Queensland sugar plantations there would be organ grinders,⁴⁸ a class of individuals considered prejudicial to the public interest. In 1879 the *Townsville Herald* reported:

Julia Carrol, aged 13, was charged with being beyond the control of her parents. It appeared from the evidence of the father, that...she had become idle, and refused to go to work, whilst she was in the habit of...staying out till midnight, and recently she stayed out all night, and returned home at seven the next morning, and when she was remonstrated with she said she did not care, and should do as she liked. The defendant was a very good girl until she began to frequent the dancing kitchens about Eyer-street-hill, and Summer street, Leather-lane. The girls paid a penny for admission into these kitchens, where they danced with the Italians to the tunes of their organs, and played at kiss-in-the-ring.⁴⁹

The organ-grinding nuisance had been a long-standing grievance in London:

My occupation is chiefly literary; I live partly on that account in a quiet street; and I am subject at all hours of the day, from morning to night, to this "quite unbearable nuisance". Not only one's nerves and brains, but one's time, and all which time represents, is sacrificed to the convenience of these Italian ruffians, who are allowed to make their livelihood out of the torture of their fellow creatures.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ *Bulletin*, 31 October 1891, p.10.

⁴⁵ *Northern Age and N.Q. Telegraph*, 23 April 1891, p.2.

⁴⁶ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1891, vol.64. p.894.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.884.

⁴⁸ *Townsville Herald*, 21 February 1891, p.10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1879, p.3.

⁵⁰ *The Times*, 16 November 1870, p.5.

Italians, however, were not the only ones making a nuisance of themselves. English girls dressed as Italians seemed to enjoy turning the handle of the organ immensely.⁵¹ English couples pursued the same activity;⁵² even members of the nobility did not consider it beneath their dignity: "Viscount Hinton, when informed of Earl Paulett's death, was grinding an organ in the street".⁵³ But there were two differences: "The English girls and women who entered the profession were...suspected of spending a part of their gains...when they had a lucky day, and this, we are told, an Italian very rarely did".⁵⁴ The other difference was a matter of form, of how the so-called influential press described organ grinders. If the name sounded Italian they were referred to as "ruffians" as we have just seen, or "beggars",⁵⁵ if English, they were described as "travelling showmen".⁵⁶

Restrictions on Italian immigration were also advocated on account of ethno-centric pride of the "privileged race" which claimed an exclusive right to the possession of Great Britain, Australia, India,...practically the entire globe:

Where is a Briton's Fatherland?
Is't English land or Scottish land?
Is't Wales, with many a wild ravine?
Is't Erin's groves and meadows green?
No; greater far it seems to me
A Briton's Fatherland must be.

.

Where is a Briton's Fatherland?
Is't far Australia's coral strand?
Is't where they dig the yellow gold?
Is't where they gather flocks untold?
No; honor these as well you may,
My Fatherland is more than they.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 20 October 1879, p.11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 16 March 1908, p.3; 29 April 1912, p.5.

⁵³ *North Queensland Herald*, 30 January 1899, p.9.

⁵⁴ *Saturday Review*, 26 July 1884, p.114.

⁵⁵ *The Times*, 9 March 1908, p.15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 April 1912, p.5.

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Where is a Briton's fatherland?
Is't India bright and sunny strand?
Is't where the hollow bamboo grows?
Is't where the sacred Ganges flows?
Ah, no! They see the sun decline,
A Greater Fatherland is mine.

.

Our glorious Anglo-Saxon race
Shall ever fill the earth's highest place:
The sun shall never more go down
On English temple, tower and town;
And wander where a Briton will,
This Fatherland shall hold him still.⁵⁷

Australians were not alone in thinking their country uniquely blessed. Writing of the colonies an English journalist wrote:

There he [the Englishman] sees an English nation unaltered by the intermixture of races, and unestranged by wars or quarrels ... embracing an area of nearly three million square miles, peopled by his own countrymen, who from one end of the land to the other are as loyal...as if they lived in Kent or Middlesex.⁵⁸

Although fraternization was said to be never more spontaneous between foreigners than when "Englishmen and Italians are brought into contact",⁵⁹ the pride in their own racial group inclined some members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland to prefer the distinctive characteristics of their own "race": "The colony was to be for our fellow-countrymen", but if that were not possible: "it would be better for us to confine our immigration to the British Isles, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden", "men of our own colour".⁶⁰ This preference for British settlers or at least north Europeans (not necessarily showing open hostility to others, but tending to shade into it) alternated with racial prejudice openly expressed. Ethnic, religious,

⁵⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 18 November 1891, p.27.

⁵⁸ *Saturday Review*, 29 May 1886, p.759.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1899, p.582.

⁶⁰ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1891, vol.64, pp.897, 880, 891.

and economic arguments blended with hints of sexual immorality, lawlessness, and the menace of dread diseases.

The hostility against Italians on religious or ethnic grounds could be deduced from letters written by members of the community. One of these written to the editor of a Townsville newspaper, and signed "R.C." aroused the indignation of another reader who, embittered by an *odium theologicum* (theological hate) explained that the letters may have meant Roman Catholic or rotten Chinaman.⁶¹ A reader wrote to the editor of another newspaper asking the reason why certain nationalities were distinguished only when in trouble:

"A German was charged"; "Amico Bruno, an Italian, was found dead"; "A fire occurred on the premises of Abraham Isaacs, a Jew"; "Patrick O'Brien, an Irishman, was charged"...Then he concluded with the question: "Do Englishmen ever commit offences?" "No, never"⁶² was the editor's reply.

Anecdotal evidence of the racial hostility against Italians could be inferred from a report in the *Townsville Herald* in 1891 that: "four hundred Italians who landed in New York by the *Hindoostan*, will be returned, as they are simply the Lazzaroni of Italy. There was not one box of clothing among the party".⁶³ If dwelling on the Italians' adversity, particularly at the very moment when they were suffering from it, can be considered ungracious, the Italians could always console themselves that Chinese suffered worse prejudice. The *Cairns Post* reported the capsize of a Chinese junk "carrying a mixed cargo of corn, bananas and Chinamen" was termed "a laughable sight".⁶⁴ A Chinese being thrown from a horse was an "amusing incident".⁶⁵

Some newspapers expressed working-class objection to indentured Europeans:

⁶¹ *Townsville Herald*, 10 June 1891, pp.18-19.

⁶² *Bulletin*, 19 November 1892, p.13. Think of Trimbole, born in Australia, but of Italian origin; and sarcastically referred to as "Aussie Bob".

⁶³ *Townsville Bulletin*, 14 February 1891, p.7.

⁶⁴ C. May., *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920*, J.C.U., 1984, p.138 - citing *Cairns Post*, 16 April 1890.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 July 1887.

The fiery Italian is as explosive as his native mountains and would overflow lava-like our regions and institutions. He as an "indented labourer" would have everything to gain and nothing to lose.⁶⁶

The Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* predicted that crowds of Italians, Poles, Maltese, and Spaniards would swarm all over the country, permanently downgrading "the moral and material prosperity".⁶⁷ Other commentators objected to the Italians because they were producers and not consumers, the implication being that they made money without spending it: the Italian "consumes nothing except perhaps the Pickwickian banana skins which young Australia rejects".⁶⁸ The cheapness of the Italian was reiterated again and again:

...and the Italian is cheap - there are few cheaper men on earth than the hungry, sunblackened peasant of Naples or Tuscany, or the agriculturalist who lives on brown crusts and fruit among the Apennines.⁶⁹

Here the parallel with anti-Chinese propaganda is very marked.⁷⁰ The need to maintain living and working standards received special emphasis from the labour movement. T.M.B. Gannon (Toombool), a member in the Legislative Assembly, conceded that he knew Italians in Queensland who would be a credit to any country, but he did not want to see plantations worked by "cheap reliable gang labour in the shape of Italians - men, women, and children".⁷¹ A. Ogden, socialist candidate for Townsville, argued that after the introduction of Italians the local workers would not have enough to live on, and could not fulfil the duties of citizenship.⁷²

When the agreement between the Queensland planters and the Italian agriculturists was discussed, it was thought that the terms were "exceedingly fair and liberal",⁷³ and the wages better than men

⁶⁶ Ann McGrath, *Exile into Bondage*, B.A. (Hons), Queensland University, 1976, p.31 - quoting *Boomerang*, 10 January 1891.

⁶⁷ P.M. Mercer, *An Analysis of Racial Attitudes towards Melanesians expressed in the Queensland Legislative Assembly and Newspapers, 1877-92*, B.A. (Hons), J.C.U., 1972, p.169 - quoting *Morning Bulletin*, 22 August 1884.

⁶⁸ *Bulletin*, 12 October 1889, p.4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 December 1891, p.6.

⁷⁰ May, *op.cit.*, p.170.

⁷¹ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1891, vol.64, p.889.

⁷² *Townsville Herald*, 6 May 1891, pp.15-16.

⁷³ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1891, vol.64, p.891.

were offering to work for in Mackay at that time.⁷⁴ On the other hand the terms could not have been so "exceedingly fair and liberal" because one of the planters, Young Bros. and Co., had already written to the Chief Secretary from Kalamia, near Ayr:

We hardly expect the Piedmontese to be a success as "gang" labourers while they work for us, whatever they may be afterwards when working for themselves; but we hope that when they understand plantation work they may be induced to import the cheap and reliable labour necessary to work the mill profitably, and to grow cane at a price per ton that will enable the factory to pay working expenses and interest.⁷⁵

It would probably be more correct to say that the Italians being recruited by Fraire were considered as a means to limit the financial loss incurred by the planters; the Italians were viewed as a source of cheap labour. Some attempted to counter this alarmist line, Robert Philp, the member of Townsville stating:

I have had Italians working for me; they were not cheap men, and I have never had better men working for me. In fact, they earned more money for me than some members of Parliament are earning for their country.⁷⁶

Still the worst fears of labour spokesmen would have been confirmed if they had seen the letter of Young Bros. published in the *Queensland Votes and Proceedings* in 1891:

The wish of the owners of the plantation is to get out of sugar-growing as soon as possible, and with as little loss as possible. To stop operations and close the mill would mean a terrible loss - plantations being almost unsaleable. To get rid of the land to men who will make use of cheap and reliable "gang" labour in the shape of women and children seems to be the best way of getting out of sugar growing with the least possible loss.⁷⁷

On the other hand it was argued that this immigration of Italians authorized by Sir Samuel Griffith in his letter of 13 December 1890 to the Agent General for Queensland⁷⁸ could cause no injury to the artisans and labourers of the colony. On the contrary it would save from extinction the sugar industry, on which the prosperity of

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.885.

⁷⁵ *Queensland Votes & Proceedings*, 1891, vol.4, p.5.

⁷⁶ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, vol.64, p.899.

⁷⁷ *Queensland Votes & Proceedings* 1891, vol.4, p.5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6.

hundreds of hard-working pioneer settlers depended.⁷⁹ General statements indicating that the Italians were a "scientifically horticultural and agricultural race...ever since Virgil sang the pleasure of agriculture,"⁸⁰ were followed by specific reasons why it was advisable to introduce Italian agriculturists:

We know that, to make tropical agriculture pay in this country, we must have irrigation. It must be known to some hon. members of this House that there is no country in Europe where there is so much irrigation as in Italy. There are over 5,000,000 acres of land irrigated there; and if we can get men there who understand irrigation thoroughly, those men will be worth their weight in gold in the Northern part of this colony.⁸¹

It was possible to give added weight to this argument by referring to Italians already settled in Australia in other or similar circumstances:

During the five or six years my father was in this locality [Hartley-Bathurst district], some gangs of Italian emigrants were sent up from Sydney to work on the roads. Piedmontese, from Northern Italy, they were - fine types of men and very industrious, I have heard my parents say...In after years he [the father] met some of these men as prosperous settlers on the Clarence River, and I believe the man who, in the early 'seventies, found and named the Solferino gold diggings near Yulgilbar, was one of them.⁸²

Moreover in 1882 a small group of Italians from the province of Venetia in northern Italy - some of the survivors of the expedition organized by the Marquis de Ray to establish a colony in New Ireland - selected small blocks near Woodburn, and in 1885 the area was known as New Italy. Afterwards they were joined by many of their compatriots, and while the Italian men worked in the sugar-mill, cut sleepers and cane, and gathered couch seed, the women worked on the

⁷⁹ *Townsville Herald*, 6 May 1891, p.5.

⁸⁰ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1891, vol.64, p.78.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.899.

⁸² Robert L. Dawson, "Bowenfels and Kirkconnel in the 'Sixties", *Royal Australian Historical Society*, Sydney 1930, vol.XVI, part II, p.113. Solferino, a village in the province of Mantua, Lombardy, Italy. In June 1859 the allied troops of France and the Kingdom of Sardinia defeated the Austrian army at this village. The very heavy casualties suffered by both sides influenced the Swiss humanitarian Henry Dunant to found the Red Cross. (*Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol.XXX, p.61; *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol.25, p.199.)

farms.⁸³ The Venetians "worked like demons",⁸⁴ and their success was pointed out in the Queensland Legislative Assembly: "These people...have turned a large section of the wilderness in the Richmond River district into a very fruitful garden".⁸⁵ References were also made to other countries which had benefited from Italian immigration: Argentina it was asserted "would have been bankrupt long ago but for the Italians".⁸⁶ In 1899 the *North Queensland Herald* ran a piece on Argentina which had appeared in *The Times*:

To the Italian farmers is due at least nine-tenth of the grain production. It is only in the northern provinces that the natives - half Indian by origin - can be induced to work in the fields, and then only under compulsion and through the influence of the chief of the district, to whom a deference of feudal character is paid. French and German and sometimes Spanish settlers are found in some of the agricultural districts, but only in comparatively small numbers. It is the Italian labourer who is the backbone of Argentine farming, and it is he who ploughs the land and gathers the harvest. The experiment of bringing English and Irish immigrants to Argentina has been tried on more than one occasion, but the enterprise never proved a success.⁸⁷

Italians were also opposed on biological grounds. Concern that the privileged race should be kept pure and uncontaminated was a constant source of anxiety:

Addressing a large open-air meeting in Townsville the local member, Anthony Ogden remarked in 1899 that it had been announced in one of the Brisbane papers that a shipload of Italians were expected to land shortly and this matter affected him very seriously because his four children were girls.⁸⁸

Another element in the campaign against Italians, and redolent of anti-Chinese propaganda, was disease.⁸⁹ Italy, home of that great Dante Alighieri whom Ruskin calls "the central man of all the world as

⁸³ James Jervis, "The Valley of Richmond 1828-1900", *Royal Australian Historical Society*, Sydney, 1959, vol.44, part 3, pp.137-38.

⁸⁴ Louise Tiffany Daley, *Men and a River: A History of the Richmond River District 1828-1895*, Melbourne University Press, 1966, p.158.

⁸⁵ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, vol.64, p.897.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.885.

⁸⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 20 October 1899, pp.44-45 (quoting *The Times*).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 March 1899, p.17.

⁸⁹ May, *op.cit.*, p.136.

representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all in the highest"⁹⁰ was described by the *Sydney Bulletin* as a "foul and rotten land" which had

invented new and horrible diseases born of the strange and loathsome food on which the peasantry eke out a miserable subsistence, and when the Italian leper is in the last stages of his complaint he can always get on the lee side of a pompous cathedral that cost half-a-million pounds to erect, and there die comfortably. There are mysterious plagues always floating about the slums of the southern cities...⁹¹

These views articulated with such disdain were not wholly without substance; cases of typhus, yellow fever and diphtheria had caused alarm in the past,⁹² and especially the two maladies common at the time in Italy, already discussed in the previous chapter, i.e. malaria: ("We do not live", said an inhabitant of the Pontine marshes, to a stranger: "we die"),⁹³ and pellagra. It should be pointed out that only a few years earlier the subject of leprosy had acquired "a new tragic interest in the public mind from the recent death of that heroic martyr Father Damien [from the]...foul and loathsome disease".⁹⁴ The title of

⁹⁰ *Athenaeum*, July to December 1889, p.21.

⁹¹ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.6.

⁹² *The Times*, 2 February 1883, p.5; 28 September 1883, p.3; 3 October 1883, p.5.

⁹³ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, p.853.

⁹⁴ *Saturday Review*, 18 May 1889, p.618. The horror aroused by advanced cases of pellagra, and the readiness with which leprosy was brought to mind, can be understood from this contemporary description:

The earliest sensations of the person attacked consist of an itching, and redness of a somewhat erysipelatous appearance, in the hands and feet. This is rapidly followed by the disappearance of all subcutaneous adipose matter, and the diminution in volume of the entire body of the patient. The angular and protruding parts of the person become markedly prominent. The skin becomes abnormally thin, wrinkled, dark yellow, and often blackish in colour, and covered with scales to a greater or lesser degree. The atrophy and waisting away of the entire body soon become visible also in the muscular tissues, which are rapidly reduced in volume. The pulse becomes continually more and more rapid, thready, and evanescent. The temperature declines, the nails grow into the flesh, all the movements of the body are slow and languid; the sensibility is notably diminished, sometimes to such a degree as to allow of the introduction of a needle without its being perceived by the patient. Finally the patient, dried up, hard to

a book by H.P. Wright, published in London sums it all: *Leprosy: an Imperial Danger*. This tragic aspect of rural Italy was also seen on the stage. A play of 1895 contained the following scene:

Geppino's brother, Carletto, who had left home in search of work...comes back with the terrible hunger-disease - the *Pellagra* -...[Carletto] passes across the stage supported by his mother, pale and sunken-eyed, a picture of living death.⁹⁵

Pellagra, however, is neither contagious nor infectious; like scurvy, and beriberi, it is exclusively the consequence of a dietary deficiency.

Politically, socially, and culturally, Italians were seen as dangerous competitors, a local politician arguing in 1891:

And I still believe it would have been better to have continued the introduction of Polynesian labour, on the system adopted of late years, than to run the risk of importing an alien population who might at some future time endanger the interests of this colony.⁹⁶

Italian immigrants could be seen as being more dangerous than were the Kanakas. Italian immigration was unregulated; it could not be restricted to one industry; no limitation was placed on the kind of work or number of persons. Moreover the Italians could not be shipped home at the end of the term, and they had an effective national government behind them which might interfere to protect their welfare as a writer in the *Bulletin* argued in 1891:

And the Italian cannot be shunted home again against his will merely because his owner [the Queensland planter] is done with him; he is the tattered representative of a nation which commands some 2,000,000 armed men, and a huge ironclad fleet, and behind it is the force and the moral influence of the great Triple Alliance, which is a power that the British Empire cannot disregard. Therefore, if the Italian desires to stay he probably will do so, and the chances are that he will desire to stay, for no poor man in his senses ever wants to go back to Italy.⁹⁷

the touch, inert, apathetic, motionless, insentient, with sunken eyes and deadened look, becomes a mere mummy unconsciously awaiting the opening of his grave. (*Edinburgh Review*, 1881, vol.153, p.449.)

⁹⁵ *Saturday Review*, 15 January 1887, p.84.

⁹⁶ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, vol.64, pp.79, 88, 895, 897, 906.

⁹⁷ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.6. Think of New Zealand/France deal over the release of the two French agents jailed for their part in the sinking of the nuclear protest vessel, the *Rainbow Warrior*. David Lange said: "the New Zealand Government now knew of the impotence of small countries when facing grave issues in conflicting with big powers". *The Australian*, 24 July 1986, p.5.

Politically the presence of the Italians was considered deleterious in shaping the future destinies of Queensland, a writer in *The Bulletin* arguing that they would "be eminently fitted to give a block vote in the interest of Property".⁹⁸ This fear that Italians could influence the outcome of an election by voting "en bloc" was also expressed in relation to the Chinese.⁹⁹ There was fear that the New Italian would not become an Australian because a great Italian community would grow up in the north "with its own language, manners, and customs, its own squalor, ignorance, superstition, and other disadvantages".¹⁰⁰ This state of affairs would not be conducive to the public good. It was an error to introduce alien races that couldn't amalgamate, because "any community, if it is to be strong, should be made up of parts that can unite and form one homogeneous whole".¹⁰¹ This argument to support exclusion on cultural ground was not shared unanimously, Samuel Griffith arguing that

I am not one of those who hold that the English race, great as it is, and to which we are all proud to belong, is the only race in the world that possesses intelligence. I do not think we know so much that we cannot be taught anything by other races...It [English] will be the only language that will be spoken here, but not by prohibiting anybody from coming here who cannot speak the language. It will come about by the natural evolution of things, not by making laws that no man who speaks French or Italian shall be allowed to land on our shores...I protest against the notion of making this country a close corporation, where no language but English is allowed to be spoken.¹⁰²

Opposition to Italians could be justified by what other countries had already experienced. The member for Burrum, Charles Powers, in moving that in the opinion of the House it was "not desirable to

⁹⁸ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.7.

⁹⁹ May, *op.cit.*, p.141.

¹⁰⁰ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.6.

¹⁰¹ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, vol.64, p.902.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.904. These views were expressed by Sir Samuel Griffith. When codifying the criminal law of Queensland, Griffith came to the conclusion that the Italian code was the best in the world, and in order to utilize it to the full studied the Italian language critically, thus acquiring the taste and skill which enabled him to produce a translation of Dante's *Inferno* (Sydney, 1908) and at a later date to complete the translation of the *Divina Commedia* (London, 1912). (*Australian Encyclopaedia*, Sydney, 1927, vol.1, p.586).

introduce immigrants from Italy",¹⁰³ said that the Italians had formed secret societies in the Argentine republic, and referred to the American experience. He related that, in New Orleans, a large employer of labour at the docks, Henry Peters, had complained that "the Italians had been seriously interfering with and menacing the negroes" working for him,¹⁰⁴ and affirmed that the Italian immigration would cause trouble; the colony would "rue the day these Italians are brought in".¹⁰⁵

The murder rate was another reason adduced by Powers, by other members of the Legislative Assembly,¹⁰⁶ and also by the press. A writer in *The Bulletin* asserted:

...the murder-rate [in Italy] is the highest in the world...The Italian immigrant...will doubtless introduce those quaint and curious secret societies which have done so much to help along the rate of mortality in Italy, and which have been transplanted with so much success to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. For wherever a few Italians are gathered together there a secret society will be found which exists for purposes of blackmail, and for the supply of corpses to the local cemetery. It sends out its anonymous ultimatum to everybody who has offended or injured an Italian, and if the ultimatum is of no avail it is followed by prompt assassination.¹⁰⁷

Certainly the Italian homicide rate was the highest in Europe: at 8.05 convictions per 100,000 population, it was 20 times that of England (0.40), and nearly ten times that of Germany (0.85).¹⁰⁸

Considerable opposition to the proposal of Italian immigration arose from the perceived danger that the Italians might organise themselves to attain unlawful ends, and living examples were pointed out, particularly the Sicilian Mafia.

The Mafia has seized, in every department of life, whether public or private, an arbitrary power, which is exercised by every means, legal or illegal, for the benefit of its adherents. It may be said to be a State within the State - a secret conspiracy, having for its object the usurpation of authorities, and the invasion of order: extending over

¹⁰³ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, Vol.64, p.879.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.75, 880, 884.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.881, 883.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.883, 903.

¹⁰⁷ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, pp.6, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Luigi Bodio, *Di alcuni indici misuratori del movimento economico in Italia*, Roma, 1891, pp.36, 37.

every possible field, and rooted so deeply in the hearts of the people as apparently, to be ineradicable. The close relationship of the Mafia with brigandage is, for the time being, in abeyance; but the illicit nature of the association is not diminished thereby.¹⁰⁹

A similar subterranean confraternity existed in the Neapolitan province:

The Camorra was so secret, that to this hour its character is not perfectly known...It was simply a wanton excrescence of evil; the lawlessness of Power towards the subjects, reflected and repeated in another lawlessness, organized by one portion of the sufferers against the rest, and highly efficient at least in the business of taxing them. Evidently the Camorra such as I have described it, indicated that the social disease, due to misgovernment, had reached its extreme phase.¹¹⁰

Some editors tried to explain to their readers that secret societies did not exist in the alpine regions where Fraire was selecting his sugar-cane cultivators, and that the inhabitants of Piedmont and Lombardy were more like southern Frenchmen or Germans.¹¹¹ In vain the plea was that "the industrious, frugal and law-abiding Piedmontese should not be confounded with the Sicilians, Calabrians, and Neapolitans whose treacherous and murderous combinations had outraged the laws of God and man wherever they had been allowed to settle".¹¹² But the Italian's unbridled passions and vindictively cruel propensities remained a recurring theme. The Italians, it was said, had "murder in the blood".¹¹³ Even the humble operators of "loud-tongued instruments" were no exception. *The Times* referred to a threatening letter in which the tortuous grammar contrasted with the straight message:

"The gentelmin

".....

"by fulham road.

¹⁰⁹ *Nineteenth Century*, 1890, vol.28, p.581.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1889, vol.25, p.777.

¹¹¹ *Townsville Herald*, 24 June 1891, p.9.

¹¹² *Cooktown Independent*, 16 December 1891, p.2.

¹¹³ *Northern Age and N.Q. Telegraph*, 17 June 1891, p.2.

"You bad man. You want starve poor organ plays. One will pay you for it. Dark night me watch, no fight, me get one knfe. Look out, me warn you".¹¹⁴

Wicked diversions, brigandage, ignorance, superstition, and cruelty were also traits associated with Italy and the Italians, but amidst the chorus of denunciations there was one exception commonly made: the King. The *Bulletin* might denigrate "that royal family which is just a shade more moral than the PTOLOMIES, inasmuch as it does actually draw the line at the intermarriage of brothers and sisters, though it draws it nowhere else",¹¹⁵ but the general opinion was that expressed by Gladstone:

No writer dealing, as I am now dealing, with the favourable side of the Italian account, can omit to acknowledge the large and invaluable contribution which has been made by the personal conduct of the King and Queen to the great national cause. On this subject, there is not a voice, nor so much a whisper of dissent...The outbreak of the cholera in Naples afforded to the King an opportunity of which he made noble use, and the courage and humanity, with which on that occasion he confronted infection and the risk of death, have left a deep impression on the grateful memory of the people, and have shown the world that the courage of the House of Savoy is not confined to the battlefield, but finds congenial exercise where danger is encountered not to destroy life but to save it.¹¹⁶

The *Townsville Herald* echoed and enlarged this praise:

King Humbert of Italy deserves well of all his people; when the cholera was decimating the population of Naples, as it will, at intervals, till the people give up their filthy habits and their degrading ignorance, the King spent a week with the patients at the Hospital. I noticed that there was a backfire in Rome lately; the King came forth from his palace, and personally superintended the means taken to rescue the people in the houses. There's a King for you! King Humbert is ugly in face, but he is a good monarch to his people.¹¹⁷

By contrast there were no defenders of the Italian brigands, *The Times* reporting the behaviour of the Calamia brothers who

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 15 November 1870, p.6.

¹¹⁵ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.6.

¹¹⁶ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, p.769.

¹¹⁷ *Townsville Herald*, 18 March 1891, p.30.

waylaid an advocate named Jestone, of Sciacca, and demanded a heavy ransom, taking him to a cottage near Marsala. The authorities heard of this, and organized an expedition to surround the place at night and storm it at dawn. The brigands after deep potations, slept soundly, and when the alarm was given, found themselves hemmed in...The brigands kept their prisoner fettered and blindfolded, but gave him a gun and ordered him to fire on his rescuers.¹¹⁸

The Italian immigrant was considered particularly suited to satisfy the interest of the Queensland capitalists on account of his ignorance which *The Bulletin* insisted

is within an ace of that of the camel or the hyenas; and, therefore, he freely signs a contract by which he binds himself to years of servitude, at infinitesimal wages, long hours, the food of a hog, and the privilege of sleeping in any hole or hovel which may come handy.¹¹⁹

If ignorance is equated with illiteracy, it was indeed rife, though declining: 64 per cent of all army recruits were illiterate in 1866; 42% in 1889. Italian expenditure on elementary education was low: half that of Belgium, one third that of other West European countries.¹²⁰

Some regions were worse off than others, an English observer arguing in 1888 that Sicilian peasants were

sunk in antediluvian ignorance; their prevalent crimes...too shocking to be described...and the very priests [kept] concubines without shame or concealment...and all this in the midst of vast superstition, superficial religious faith, and abject saint-worship in every hovel and brothel.¹²¹

At the same time it was affirmed, as if to allay apprehensions, that while the lower clergy of southern Italy were not highly educated, they stood under the control of a hierarchy which could not be accused of a want of either tact or culture, and made impossible such excesses as those of the Salvation Army which was "a scandal to Christianity" peopled by "religious ruffians of both sexes".¹²²

The Sicilian peasant who was as "interesting as children are"¹²³ was also an autocrat, and his word was law. It was related that as soon as he led his bride home, he administered a sound box on the ear

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, 9 September 1881, p.3.

¹¹⁹ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.6.

¹²⁰ Bodio, *op.cit.*, p.25.

¹²¹ Beauclerk, *Rural Italy*, pp.16, 17.

¹²² *Saturday Review*, 4 September 1886, p.323; 29 June 1889, p.781.

¹²³ *Nineteenth Century*, 1890, vol.28, p.587.

of his beloved as an overture to connubial bliss, and if the mortified wife enquired the reason of that acoustic salutation, he replied: "*Perche, prima dei baci, impariate a conoscere l'autorità illimitata del marito*". (Because, before we kiss one another, you must learn the boundless authority of your husband.)¹²⁴

This despotic propensity alternated with ruthless manners prompted by *amour-propre*. In the Neapolitan provinces:

...the sterility of the wife is considered shameful and unfortunate, and when it occurs the husbands beat their wives, covering themselves from the sarcasm of their comrades by imputing to the woman the blame of infecundity.¹²⁵

Cruelty to animals blended with superstition and ignorance, an English writer noting:

When I remonstrated with a *contadina* [peasant woman] for keeping her dog without water, using the only argument I thought likely to have any weight with her - that it might probably go mad - "Oh! there is no fear" she replied: "he has been branded with the *ferro di S. Antonio* [branding-iron of St Anthony], so no harm can come near him"; showing me an ugly scar on the poor brute's forehead. The utter indifference to the sufferings of animals displayed by all classes of Italians seems an anomaly in such kind-hearted race. It does not proceed from any love of cruelty, but from mere thoughtlessness.¹²⁶

At the same time there were signs of the progress of humanitarian principles:

Three members of the *Società Zoofila*, accompanied by a municipal guard, discovered that in a shop blinded birds were sold. An attempt was made to conceal them, but in vain, and 28 of these poor creatures were taken possession of. As the quail season is now approaching, hundreds of thousands will be blinded and sold as decoys. It is a common practice, and cannot be wondered at when even some priests hold a considerable property in them. The interference of the authorities, though it may not destroy the practice, must render it less common.¹²⁷

The image of Italy and Italians varied according to the background of those who expressed their viewpoints. Some members of the

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.577.

¹²⁵ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.49.

¹²⁶ *Cornhill Magazine*, 1881, vol.44, p.686.

¹²⁷ *The Times*, 3 April 1882, p.6.

Queensland Legislative Assembly spoke in eulogistic terms, and their statements embraced all situations. Some were very general: "Anyone reading the history of Italy will find that that country has produced the finest men in existence".¹²⁸ Others were more particular: "What the people of Piedmont or Lombardy may be I do not know, but I have worked with Italians as miners, and I must say that they are some of the finest miners in the world".¹²⁹ Still others were very specific: "A more eminent or a better man than the Bishop of North Queensland, Dr Cani, I do not know, and he is an Italian".¹³⁰ Sections of the press were no less complimentary: "Anybody who is acquainted with Italians, whether in towns or country, is fully aware that the nation in all its sections abounds in shrewd and highly-minded men with the requisite qualities to do excellent work",¹³¹ and "many of her [Italy's] sons show an aptitude for intellectual effort second to none in the world".¹³²

There was, however, a tendency to make a distinction between the north and the south of Italy. When it was proposed to introduce emigrants from Italy, it was made clear that they were not to come from south of Leghorn in Tuscany. The Chief Secretary explained that "the people in the north are different in habits, customs, manners, and everything else from those in the south".¹³³ The Secretary for Mines added:

I must say it is extremely difficult to argue on disputed ground with a gentleman, every word of whose speech displays a perfect ignorance of the subject under discussion. There are gentlemen who spoke to-night who know no more of the difference between north and south Italy...than they have of logarithms or conic sections.¹³⁴

Confirmatory evidence of this opinion could be cited from many sources:

If hon. members will only take the trouble to inquire about the conditions of Italy, they will find that there is no more likeness between the habits and manners of the agricultural population of the North of

¹²⁸ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, vol.64, p.899.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.86.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.884.

¹³¹ *The Times*, 21 January 1890, p.9.

¹³² *Westminster Review*, July-December 1898, p.515.

¹³³ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, vol.64, p.76.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.78.

Italy and the *lazzaroni* of Naples and the people of Sicily than there is between the crofters of Scotland and the thieves of London.¹³⁵ Editorials were written in order to reassure readers that there was much difference in the character of men from northern Italy and the men from southern Italy, and the analogy used to explain the diversity was to mention the lowland Scottish agriculturalists and the denizens of Whitechapel in London.¹³⁶

Writers had expressed their admiration for the Italian workers in the Alps, and the characteristics attributed to them were proclaimed in the Queensland Legislative Assembly:

Life in small Alpine villages is rather slow. In the second-rate inns the young men assemble, drink, sing, howl...they smile sheepishly and drink their wine quietly...a good Italian workman is never sentimental...and though his opinion of human nature is not high, he is never cynical...In the spring they wander up from the plains, and stay wherever they found work to do. Their character for skill, industry, sobriety, and thrift stands very high. They live simply and save almost everything they earn...As Northern Italians they are acute...skilled workmen...speak the language of the district in which they settle...with some difficulty, though they soon learn to understand it well. This, of course, renders them rather clannish wherever two or three are gathered together. But in their lonely walks to and fro...they acquire a reticence as to their own private affairs which is unusual in their nation, and a talent for observing and remembering all that they see or hear which is rare anywhere. The reason of their silence is the inborn dislike of the Italian to show himself in an unfavourable light by endeavouring to speak a language over which he has an imperfect command. But though he is silent, he listens and understands...¹³⁷

In the central part of Italy, another writer had noticed, the Italians were "the most sentimental and tearful people in Europe",¹³⁸ but the industry and frugality of the rural population was still impressive:

They are seldom in bed before midnight, and all through the summer are up again at three. The dinner of our labourers consisted of a hunk of bread and any fruit which might be in season - an apple, a pear, or a

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.904.

¹³⁶ *Townsville Herald*, 24 June 1891, p.9.

¹³⁷ *Saturday Review*, 17 March 1888, pp.316, 317.

¹³⁸ *The Times*, 2 October 1886, p.9.

bunch of grapes - that was all. Wine is a rare luxury with the poorer class of peasants, and meat or eggs rarer still.¹³⁹

Things were very different in the south. Sicilian peasants were thought to be "prone to perjury",¹⁴⁰ the men around Caserta delighted "in carrying arms, and consider a gun as the necessary complement of their holiday costume, so that on feast days the churches appear to be occupied by bands of brigands",¹⁴¹ while Naples was "a paradise peopled by devils, habitual thieves, cut-throats, &c".¹⁴² The Neapolitans were a subject of great interest among the contemporary visitors to Italy, and some writers strained the dictionary to express their opinion. The Neapolitan was accused of being the most cowardly of Europe, with a passion for idling, picking and stealing, knifing and praying, and of being the most immoral and superstitious of Italy. One of the effronteries viewed with great disgust by foreigners was the local fishmongers' common trick of putting the eyes of fresh fish into the orbits of stale fish in order to deceive the townsfolk.¹⁴³ But there were also some appreciative comments. Considering his poor pay and poor food, "a more hard-working man than the Neapolitan is not to be found in Europe", and if he lied it was from an amiable desire to appear "particularly intelligent and wide awake, and, above all, to be agreeable to the company".¹⁴⁴ Regarding the Neapolitan's superstition, their inclination to visit shrines, form procession, turn their prayers now to San Gennaro, patron saint of the city, and now to another, it was sadly remarked: "it is unfortunately much easier to ridicule than to understand it", and a codicil added: "Nor are Englishmen, with the Salvation Army howling in the streets, in a position to ridicule the fanaticism of the Neapolitans".¹⁴⁵ Gladstone himself, during his second visit to Naples during the winter of 1888-89, was favourably impressed by the changes Naples had been going through the preceding forty years, and happily explained:

¹³⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, 1887, vol.165, p.109.

¹⁴⁰ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, p.17.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.45.

¹⁴² *National Review*, 1892, vol.18, p.771.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.778, 787.

¹⁴⁴ *Westminster Review*, 1878, p.204.

¹⁴⁵ *Saturday Review*, 1 November 1884, p.563.

The basking, loitering, lolling, loafing population, so peculiarly Neapolitan, seemed to have become extinct. The filth, which formerly made the city offensive to eye and nostril, had disappeared in great measure. In all the frequented parts of the city, the population was well-clad.¹⁴⁶

The supporters of Italian immigration stressed its desirability on account of the qualities of the Italians. They were described as "sober, frugal, and industrious",¹⁴⁷ "laborious, frugal to parsimony, and law-abiding".¹⁴⁸ Being economical was a necessity for many Italians, and this practice was not limited to food,¹⁴⁹ but it extended to little luxuries. In Piedmont, a foreign visitor, having given a cigar to a *boaro* (herdsman), was greatly surprised when he realized that "the precious weed had lasted the recipient a whole month, a few whiffs only being taken after the evening meal, and then it was carefully laid aside till the next evening".¹⁵⁰ To opponents of Italian immigration, unable or unwilling to distinguish between need and avarice, these same qualities constituted a catalogue of reasons why immigration should be resisted in the interests of the true Australian. These opponents referred to Italian agricultural workers by letting loose a torrent of invective: they were variously "degraded", "dirty", "imported chattel", "duplicate of the Louisiana nigger", "serf", "abject slave": these latter because they had pledged, according to the thinking of these opponents, to work too long for too little, making wages lower and "the struggle for life" harder for the artisans and agriculturists in Australia.¹⁵¹ Indeed, the idea of regarding frugality a virtue was not shared by everybody. On the contrary frugality was considered a fraud:

Wealth, it is asserted by the apologists for the flagrant inequalities of fortune, is simply the fruits of frugality and self-denial...It is not the merely frugal man, or the modestly self-denying man, as in reality all men are, of necessity, except the rich who is able to achieve wealth...It is an intense form...Frugality has to pass into parsimony and self-denial into callous insensibility...They not merely cease to be virtues, but trench upon the domain of actual vice...Instead of the servants and

¹⁴⁶ *Nineteenth Century*, 1889, vol.25, p.763.

¹⁴⁷ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, vol.64, pp.78, 899.

¹⁴⁸ *Townsville Herald*, 24 June 1891, p.9.

¹⁴⁹ Beauclerk, *op.cit.*, pp.10, 13, 21, 22, 250.

¹⁵⁰ *Chambers's Journal*, December 1903-November 1904, vol.7, p.371.

¹⁵¹ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, p.7.

ministers of his will they become masters...The pursuit of gain alone is not an elevating pursuit...It is easier for a coarse nature to accumulate wealth than it is for a fine or delicate one. The delicate-minded man turns disgusted from endless chances which the coarse man gobbles with gusto. As Solomon says, in the Proverbs, "He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent".¹⁵²

When the Italians were seen as lacking thrift, it was asserted they could not become good citizens because they would remain at the mercy of the capitalists, and consequently, slaves.¹⁵³ Similar complaints, in fact, were uttered about Chinese.¹⁵⁴ And, from an economic point of view, the virtue of sobriety could have been perceived as a disaster because diminution in the receipts of the Exchequer from the duties on intoxicating liquors implied the destruction of the greatest source of revenue:

He [the drunkard] labours for the good of his country more than any strictly sober man...To me he is the greatest of patriots, the sublimated product of a system which has been for many generations the chief nourishing agency for our ever-glorious empire.¹⁵⁵

Although John Cabot, a Genoese, and his son, Sebastian, were placed in the very forefront of the contributors to the maritime strength of England: "which [has] rendered the English so great, so eminent, so flourishing a people",¹⁵⁶ the necessity for combined action regarding colonial defence was an argument which could be used, and was used, in the attempts to exclude Italians. Apart from not being patriotic in contributing to the receipts of the Exchequer, the Italians lacked martial prowess. Italy had "a huge army that never won a battle, and a ponderous navy that only once went into action and then ran away": "an armament which always bolts on the day of the battle". As far as the Italian soldier was concerned, his military tendency led him "to go into battle whooping a little in the rear; and to come out of it yelling a little in front".¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 15 November 1890, p.6.

¹⁵³ *Townsville Herald*, 21 February 1891, p.10.

¹⁵⁴ May, *op.cit.*, p.180.

¹⁵⁵ *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1882-1883, vol.47, p.213.

¹⁵⁶ *Saturday Review*, 7 March 1896, pp.255, 256.

¹⁵⁷ *Bulletin*, 12 December 1891, pp.6, 7. It should be noted that the fear of invasion linked with the remoteness from Britain had been raised. "Ever since the French landed troops in the New Hebrides, the position of affairs with regard to those

These expressions of supercilious pity for the Italians' warlike proclivities were tempered by the reflections that: "the Italian officer is serious, well-trained, and well-versed in his profession...the sub-officers seem a steady, and reliable class of men", and while the Italian soldiers might be ignorant, unkempt, regard drill as a necessary evil, quarrel and cuff one another:

so far as rowdism is concerned the thing is wholly unknown, and their bearing and conduct towards the natives is in the most marked contrast to that of British troops, being stamped not only with good humour but with civility.¹⁵⁸

As for the *alpini*, soldiers recruited exclusively among the population of the hillsides, their efficiency was "unsurpassed".¹⁵⁹

It was in these mountainous areas that Fraire had been selecting the agriculturists for the Queensland sugar plantations. He had experienced difficulties and delays due to the Italian Foreign Office which, before authorising emigration, wanted to know whether the economic conditions of Queensland were such as to warrant the Ministry in permitting the workmen to move there with a good hope of success;¹⁶⁰ and to the Italian bureaucracy. Fraire wrote that "everything goes very slowly in this country".¹⁶¹ He also felt that obstacles included the remoteness of Queensland from Italy, Queensland's unfamiliarity as a field for Italian emigration, and the unfavourable influence of the clergy.¹⁶² Another reason for the delay was due to the harvesting work in Italy, a time when the rate of wages was high, and when farmers are all "anxious to save a little money".¹⁶³

However, working through one of the authorized agents of Italy, L. Romero & Co. of Turin and Genoa, and acting with zeal and discretion

islands has been the cause of anxiety and disquiet...we should be obliged if Great Britain was unable to protect us, to take measures to protect ourselves" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 1886, p.6). As far as the comments about the Italian army are concerned see articles about Italian defeat in Abyssinia in *The Times*, 2 February 1887, p.5; 1 September 1888, p.7; 14 August 1888, p.5.

¹⁵⁸ *The Times*, 3 April 1888, p.9.

¹⁵⁹ *Saturday Review*, 4 December 1886, p.753.

¹⁶⁰ *Queensland Votes & Proceedings*, 1891, vol.4, p.3.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁶² AGE/G46, pp.178-79: Queensland State Archives (QSA).

¹⁶³ *Queensland Votes & Proceedings*, 1891, vol.4 p.18.

as the agent of the Queensland planters without forgetting the interest of the colony, Fraire had sailed with the people.¹⁶⁴ The single women on board were either sisters or daughters whose brothers or fathers were travelling with them, and special provision had been made for them in the married people's compartment.¹⁶⁵ The *Jumna* was also bringing six immigrants from England who had embarked in London on 14 October 1891.¹⁶⁶

The following is a description of the voyage as reported by the various Queensland papers. The *Jumna*, left the Royal Albert Docks, London, at 8.30a.m. on the 14 October, embarked her passengers off Gravesend, and immediately afterwards proceeded. The Channel pilot was discharged off the Isle of Wight the following morning. The *Jumna* passed Gibraltar on the 19th, and arrived at Genoa at 6p.m. on the 22nd, where a thorough inspection of the ship was made by the officials of the Italian Government. All the arrangements for the embarkation of the emigrants were superintended by Mr Grant, the despatching officer of the Queensland Government.

Embarkation took place on the afternoon of the 24th, and the *Jumna* proceeded to sea at 5p.m., arriving at Port Said on the 29th at 2.20p.m. After coaling, she entered the Suez Canal at 11p.m.; arrived in Suez roads at 4.45p.m. on the 30th; weighed at 7p.m. the same evening then proceeded down the Red Sea, arriving at Aden at 6.30a.m. on the 4th November.¹⁶⁷ Here, early in the morning, the *India* made her appearance from Queensland, anchoring close to the *Jumna*, "and news was pleasantly exchanged".¹⁶⁸ Having coaled and received the Queensland mails, the *Jumna* proceeded at 2.30p.m., and arrived at Batavia on the 18th November at 6.30a.m. Here Messrs. Abell and Klear's Circus Company was embarked, consisting of 20 persons, 10 ponies, 10 dogs, and 6 monkeys,¹⁶⁹ an aspect of the voyage which suggested a malicious report ostentatiously entitled *On Dit*: "the Italian immigrants have arrived in Queensland with monkeys and organs".¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ AGE/G46, pp.165, 177-78: QSA.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.164.

¹⁶⁶ *Cooktown Courier*, 1 December 1891, p.2.

¹⁶⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1891, p.3.

¹⁶⁸ *Cooktown Courier*, 1 December 1891, p.2.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Cooktown Independent*, 5 December 1891, p.2.

The *Jumna* left Batavia at noon on the 19th, and arrived at Thursday Island on the 27th at 9a.m. After a careful inspection of all on board by Dr Salter pratique was granted. She left Thursday Island at 6a.m. on 28th November, called at Cooktown and Cairns, and arrived in Cleveland Bay at 8.45p.m. on 1 December 1891.¹⁷¹

It was specified that although the six immigrants from England had spent ten days more on the ship the terms to despatch the people were £16 per adult from Genoa, the same as from London. The firm of Messrs Gray Dawes & Co. had found that on estimating the cost of the Italian dietary (see Appendix) as against the English, the former was slightly (2/- a day) in excess of the latter and a reduction was not conceded.¹⁷²

It was explained that in the English Channel very heavy weather was experienced, but during the remainder of the voyage the weather was fine.¹⁷³ Also that everything was done by the Captain, Dr Marshall, the medical officer, and the officers in order to make passengers and emigrants comfortable.¹⁷⁴ The voyage was very much liked by the Italians who thought they had been much better treated than emigrants going from Italy to America,¹⁷⁵ and from the available evidence it appears that the most striking experience for them was the sight of camels and Egyptians along the Suez Canal which caused much amusement among them.¹⁷⁶

Capt. A. Sanders reported that the voyage had been uneventful; the health of all aboard was good, and the conduct of the Italians excellent, with the exception of the usual petty disputes of an emigrant ship.¹⁷⁷ One of these disputes was between an English/Scottish passenger by the name of John Graham, and an Italian, Pietro Zanetto. This brawl was used by the press to discredit the Italian labourers, and Sir Samuel Griffith was asked at Cooktown why he "spent money on Italians who knifed Britishers?"¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1891, p.3.

¹⁷² AGE/G46, pp.185-86: QSA.

¹⁷³ *Brisbane Courier*, 1 December 1891, p.3.

¹⁷⁴ *Cooktown Courier*, 1 December 1891, p.2.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1891, p.3.

¹⁷⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.9.

An inquiry ordered by the Colonial Secretary was held by Mr Wallace, assistant Immigration Agent at Townsville, and from the evidence Graham was entirely at fault as the cause of the quarrel. Graham throughout the voyage had insulted the Italians from the time of their embarkation at Genoa: "he seems to have lost no opportunity of making himself offensive". He stole: "Graham, on two occasions, went to the pantry and took from it provisions belonging to Laleti". He committed wanton assault: "on one occasion he [Graham] struck and kicked an Italian boy 15 years of age without the slightest provocation". Eventually Graham was described as an "overgrown larrikin".¹⁷⁹

The report that a number of Italians "collected and brandished knives about Graham melted, on investigation, into a fiction".¹⁸⁰ While the officers of the ship spoke in high terms of the behaviour of the Italians "throughout the passage",¹⁸¹ the Captain stated that "The Italians proved themselves to be civil, obedient, and anxious to conform to the rules laid down for their safety and comfort".¹⁸² Pietro Zanetto, who had been engaged as assistant in the pantry, had given great satisfaction "throughout the whole voyage".¹⁸³

Good order and harmony
prevailed amongst the Italians and
singing was regularly indulged in each evening.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 December 1891, pp.6, 11.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2 December 1891, p.11.

¹⁸² *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1891, p.3.

¹⁸³ *N.Q. Herald*, 9 December 1891, p.11.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 16 December 1891, p.11.

The Bulletin on Italy and Italians, 1890-91

The Bulletin, published in Sydney every Saturday from 1880 onwards, had established itself before 1890 as the voice of self-conscious Australian nationalism. Its patronage of Australian authors, its scorn for the "cultural cringe" towards Great Britain, its irreverence towards local politicians and the distinction of its black-and-white artists are widely recognised today: there has been less willingness to acknowledge its raucous prejudice on race, colour and religion. The seven drawings from 1890-91 reproduced below illustrate the frequency with which these prejudices were vented upon Italy and Italians.

The first three are of special note. Nos 1 and 2 are front-page political cartoons by the American Lindsay Hopkins ("Hop"), then and for another 20 years, *The Bulletin's* leading cartoonist.¹ The impact is entirely visual - the captions add nothing - depending upon vigorous drawing and sheer size: *The Bulletin* was exceptional in devoting a full page to its main political cartoon.² Both are specific attacks upon the *Jumna* scheme. The robust, brigand-like Italian, dagger in belt, is utterly unlike the merely comic Italian of most other illustrations. In No.1 the displaced Australian worker is ingeniously saddled with the barrel-organ and attendant monkey which are the usual badge of Italians. In No.2 the burly Italian elbows aside his predecessors as cheap labour: the Chinese (with pigtail wound round his head) and the Pacific Islander ("kanaka"). There is an allusion to a recent visit to Australia by the founder of the Salvation Army with a large contingent of followers; in the background a rowboat labelled "French convicts" lands escapees from the penal settlement on New Caledonia.

No.3, characteristically more genial in flavour and more accomplished in draughtsmanship, is by the Londoner Phil May, the most famous *Bulletin* cartoonist before David Low. Though this drawing does not ridicule any adult Italian, the verbal joke depends upon blatant religious prejudice. In No.4 scorn for monarchy, which the *Bulletin* regularly directed at the British royal family, is coupled with mockery of the Italian military. The last three ring the changes on the threadbare theme of organ-grinders and monkeys. In No.7, as in No.3, the joke is entirely verbal; the drawing itself is a rather charming study of an aristocratic-looking lady with a little girl.

¹ Marguerite Mahood, *The Loaded Line: Australian Political Caricature, 1788-1901*, Melbourne University Press, 1973, pp.173-6.

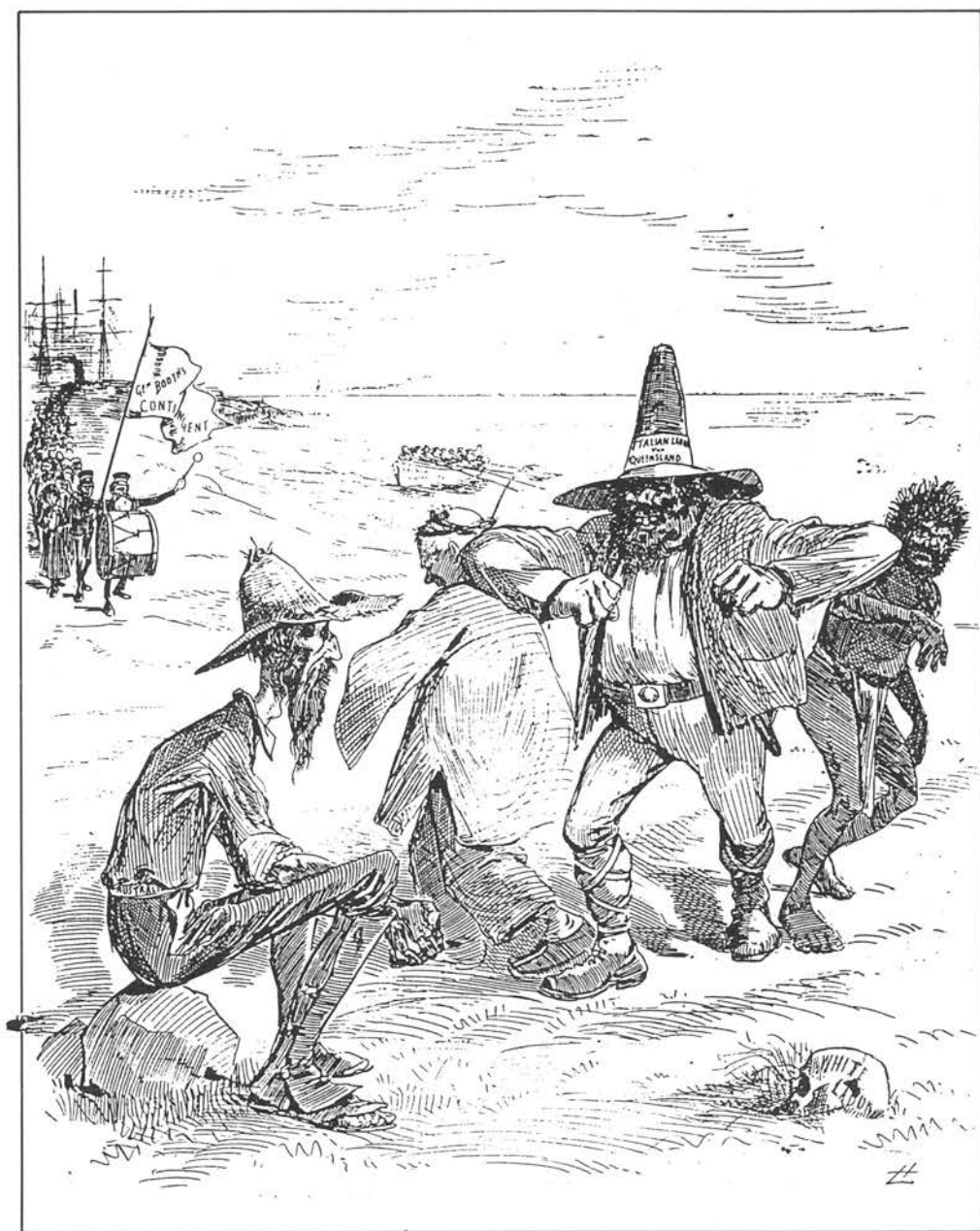
² As David Low later found on leaving *The Bulletin* to work on a London paper. *Low's Autobiography*, New York, 1957, pp.84-8.



THE SITUATION IN QUEENSLAND

Owing to the hot weather up North, the cheap Italian will, if Sam Griffith can arrange it, henceforth work the cane-knife while the expensive Australee man carries round the monkey.

No.1: 22 Aug 1891



TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING
AUSTRALIA FELIX (*loq.*): "I am ruined by desirable immigration!"
No.2: 9 Jan 1892

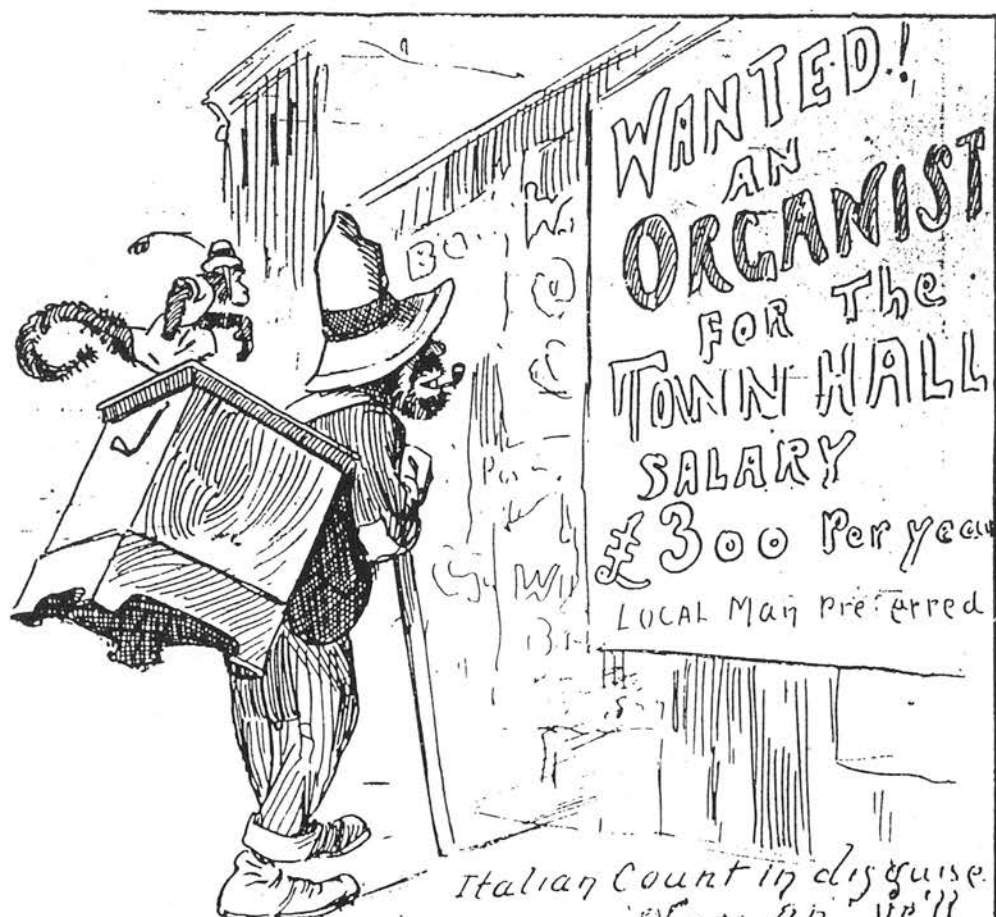




ITALY EXPLAINS THE SITUATION

"King Humbert stated in reply to a deputation that the friendship of Germany, Russia and Italy has secured the peace of Europe. ... During the proceedings a bomb was thrown into the ranks of the deputation, but fortunately it did not explode and consequently no damage was done." *Daily Paper*.

No.4: 11 January 1890



*Italian Count in disguise.
 'Shure an' ye'll
 never git foorst
 class furrin
 talent fur that
 price - at
 laist nat wid
 a monkey!'*



A BORN ITALIAN

AUNT: "Now, Effie, if you're good I'll take you to church on Sunday and you'll see a great big organ."

LITTLE EFFIE: "And how big is the monkey on the organ?"

No.7: 20 June 1891

CHAPTER THREE

First Impact: the First Six Months

This chapter deals with the first six months after the Italians' arrival, namely from early December 1891 to early June 1892. This period coincided with the slack season during which no cane was cut; the Italians did not encounter the most unpleasant and exhausting work in the industry. The weather, on the other hand, was at its most oppressive during the first half of the period.

During these months a continual stream of reports on the Italians reached the Queensland press; the debate over Italian immigration continued in the same terms as before the *Jumna's* arrival. In April 1892 the Queensland Government abruptly reversed policy by throwing open the Pacific Island labour trade for a ten year term, at one stroke destroying the justification for government-assisted immigration of Italians. By the end of the six months the debate had ceased. The stream of news items dried up completely; clearly it had been generated not by concern for the Italians or even interest in their doings: merely by a search for ammunition to be used in the debate.

When the Italians arrived in Townsville they were inspected by Dr Ahern, and later 266 of them were discharged into local steamers. Of these 153 went to Barratta Creek for the Burdekin, and were distributed in almost equal numbers to three plantations: Pioneer (Drysdale Bros), Seaforth (J.M. McKenzie) and Kalamia (Young Bros). The other 113 went to Dungeness for the Herbert River plantations. Of these 45 went to Ripple Creek (Boyd), 42 went to Macknade (F. & R. Neame), and 26 to Hamleigh (Wittingham Bros).¹ The remaining 69 continued in the *Jumna* to Bundaberg, which they reached after being transferred to the steamer *Ranelagh* at Keppel Bay. The immigrants were accompanied by Dr Marshall, surgeon of the *Jumna*, and after

¹ Total figures for each district are taken from the Immigration Agent's Report for 1891; figures for individual plantations from the press. *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1891, p.3; *North Queensland Herald*, 9 December 1891, p.7; 23 December 1891, p.14. A slight discrepancy in the figures results from the Agent's distinction between "souls" and "statutory adults", ignored by the press.

reaching the wharf at Bundaberg at midnight on Saturday, the immigrants proceeded to the immigration barracks.²

It was obvious that the Italians were a source of curiosity for many people, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, had assembled to see "the new chums". On the following day, Sunday, the Italians, again, formed a constant source of attraction. A large number of persons were all day to and from the Immigration Barracks "to have a peep at them". Among the many visitors loitering around the depot, there were many "Kanakas" who wanted to have a look at the Italian labourers who had been recruited to supersede them. They could not have postponed satisfying their curiosity because the Italians were going to be assigned to their employers on the same day. A contemporary deduced the Italians had to be Roman Catholics because they had attended religious functions at the Roman Catholic Church, and contrary to what was imagined, there was no demonstration of any sort.³

From Bundaberg, the comments regarding the Italians' previous occupation, ability, character, and physical aspect, seem to have been very favourable. It was reported from the very beginning that they looked to be what was alleged: "agriculturists from the north of Italy" who seemed as if "they knew nought of town life". It was observed that they did not seem to be afraid of work, and it was evident that they had "done much work in their days".⁴ Other laudatory remarks were made respecting the Italians' ability, versatility, and intelligence. Angus Gibson of Bingera Plantation, near Bundaberg, during a visit to Brisbane gave an interview during which he spoke highly of the 22 Italian labourers employed by him. He spoke of the Italian as being diligent: he was "a willing worker", and showed "much intelligence in his work". Gibson went on to say:

I look upon them as a very suitable class of people on sugar plantations...The advantage of these men is that we can send them with a horse and dray; or to plough or work a scarifier with horses; in fact they are good in every branch in which we use European labor. They are fencing and splitting and doing the work well, though it is all new to them.⁵

² *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1891, p.3; *Mackay Mercury*, 17 December 1891, p.12.

³ *Mackay Mercury*, 17 December 1891, p.2.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 January, p.3.

In this quotation the reference to horses is an implied contrast with "Kanakas" who came from a culture without draft animals, and who would be able to work with them only after quite some experience.

A couple of months later, in March 1892, a special correspondent reported from the same area: "I saw a good many of the Italians at work, and willing, industrious men they seemed. Some were sawing into lengths great trees which had been recently felled, others were splitting posts and rails, morticing, and very well their work was done".⁶ This confirms what had already been written early in January:

In the very hottest days of this very hot summer, with the thermometer standing at 120 deg. in the sun, with their thick underclothing on, they [the Italians] went into the canefields and chipped and ploughed and planted as desired, and worked in a manner that proved them to be willing and faithful labourers. Nor was their attention confined to agricultural work alone, but also to the rougher preparatory work of scrub-cutting, tree-felling, and timber splitting for fencing. They stripped to their work like true men, taking off shoes, coats, and vests, and stuck to their work from early morn till noon, and again resuming after dinner, continued until the bell rang for ceasing work at 6 o'clock.⁷

On the lower Burdekin where the Italians had been assigned to the Pioneer, Seaforth, and Kalamia estates, it appears that their performance was just as good: "The Italians"...it was reported were "working well and giving every satisfaction",⁸ they were "most industrious".⁹ On the Herbert River it was reported that the Italians were "working very amicably and satisfactorily", and it was apparent that they would get on "very well".¹⁰ A.S. Cowley, Minister for Lands, stated: "I saw the recently arrived Italian laborers at work on the Herbert River. They are men of splendid physique, evidently accustomed to hard work, and they are plodding along quietly".¹¹ A few weeks later, a reporter visiting the same Italians wrote:

The men and women themselves are of various types, many (until their tongues betray them) might be taken for North of England men, being fine upstanding specimens; others are dark, stout, broad-chested and

⁶ *Queenslander*, 19 March 1892, pp.549-550.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 January 1892, p.36.

⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 10 February 1892, p.19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 December 1891, p.12.

¹⁰ *Mackay Mercury*, 19 January 1892, p.4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

muscular, with round bullet-heads, and short thick set necks set on massive shoulders...The women vary in great degree, from the most swarthy *contadina*, with earrings and sabots, to one with form and figure which excels any artist's conception. This latter is the sister of one of the immigrants, and only requires a knowledge of English to attract many Saxon suitors.¹²

Other contemporary observers had also acknowledged the Italians' friendly nature. They were "kind and cheerful",¹³ "jovial fellows"¹⁴ who "worked agreeably with their fellow-workers" and after the day's work "they spend their time singing, and seem perfectly cheerful and satisfied".¹⁵ Indeed all these qualities added to those of sobriety, thrift, and adaptability to the new surroundings, were considered "the whole secret of successful colonisation".¹⁶ In another account the Italians appear as "good-looking, intelligent men likely to be as good settlers as the Germans and Scandinavians".¹⁷

Yet the majority of comments appear defensive. The Australian people at the end of the 19th Century were remarkably homogeneous in racial origin, being of British stock, and this homogeneity was to be preserved by the adoption of a deliberate policy of restricting any large immigration of persons of different racial stock. Persons opposed to the introduction of Italians warned that "the wholesale selection of immigrants who may affect the character of our future population cannot safely be delegated to representatives of any portion of the community" and argued that "the danger of permanently introducing a disproportionate foreign element in certain districts" could not be ignored.¹⁸ Others indicated their views on Italian immigration by resorting to metaphorical expressions like "blood is thicker than water".¹⁹

Italian immigration was also considered undesirable at a time of economic difficulties. A writer in the *Queenslander* explained: "We

¹² *N.Q. Herald*, 3 February 1892, p.18.

¹³ *Queenslander*, 2 January 1892, p.36.

¹⁴ *Mackay Mercury*, 17 December 1891, p.2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 January 1892, p.3.

¹⁶ *Queenslander*, 2 January 1892, p.36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 March 1892, pp.549-550.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 January 1892, p.201.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 December 1891, p.1066.

prefer not to have too many people from the South of Europe engaged in work here our Kinsmen will some day perhaps be more willing to undertake".²⁰ At times the hostility against immigration seemed to be not to Italians as such, but to any non-British migrants. A correspondent in the *Cooktown Independent* wrote, "the country does not require immigrants, however good, when so many British and Colonial born men are roaming about the country looking for work".²¹ These references to depression and unemployment might have not convinced the Hon. W.O. Hodgkinson, Minister for Mines and Education, who, during a farewell banquet in Townsville, put the question: "Is there a man in Australia who has devoted so much time, intelligence, and sympathy to what is ironically termed the working classes, as Sir S.W. Griffith?"²² This implied reference to the working classes being work-shy rather than unable to find work had already been admitted explicitly by Griffith a few weeks earlier at Cooktown during his northern tour. Griffith was hooted by some of the labourers on the wharf, and subsequently interviewed by Mr Owen "president of the union, and a labour agitator from Croydon". The Chief Secretary "told them that he fully understood the unemployed outcry, but if the men would not work how could he make them". By the end the interviewers "got decidedly the worst of the argument".²³

Some cautious supporters of Italian immigration tried to assuage the fears of those against it by explaining that, though not good in itself, it was preferable to the coloured labour deprived by legislation, and to the Javanese: "it must be admitted that Italian farmers would be preferable to Javanese labor in gangs, which is the substitute for Kanakas now used by the planters, even if it were likely that the industry would fall altogether into the hands of Italian farmers".²⁴ Another explanation offered to appease those contrary to Italian immigration was the temporary measure of the experiment and the small number of Italians: "There are only 300 of them" and "the addition of a few hundred Europeans tied to the land by agreement will not be perceptible in a colony of about 400,000".²⁵

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Cooktown Independent*, 16 December 1891, p.2.

²² *N.Q. Herald*, 24 February 1892, p.12.

²³ *Queenslander*, 12 December 1891, p.1195.

²⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 2 December 1891, p.5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20.

To the temporary measure of the experiment and the small number involved it was added that there was no probability of any constant stream of immigration from Italy to Australia. This was due to the great distance, and the passage money: "In this respect we gain something by reason of our distance from Europe, for the cost of the voyage deters many from coming or being sent here whom we would very much rather be kept in the old country".²⁶ It was stressed that no more Italians would be permitted to come until the result of the experiment could be shown:

As a great deal of misapprehension exists in labor quarters respecting Italian immigration, it may be as well to state that it is not intended at present to further increase the population of the colony by this means. Mr Fraire, who has from the first taken a prominent part in the introduction of the Italians, has repeatedly stated that it is fully decided no more of them will come to the colony until the "pioneers" have reported favourably upon it as a field for their enterprise.²⁷

This movement for the defence of the Italian experiment could be rounded off by citing D.H. Dalrymple, who while addressing a public meeting of his constituents, explained the Italians would not interfere with anyone,²⁸ and that if the Italian experiment proved to be illusory, an end could easily be put to the importation of Italians under contract by a law prohibiting it.²⁹

Other voices, however, were raised not only in defence of the Italian experiment, but also on the necessity of it, for racial, political, economic, and educational reasons. It was said that by introducing Italians a prosperous European population would settle on the soil, "and enable North Queensland to rid itself of the presence of Chinese, Kanakas, Javanese, and other colored people".³⁰ Furthermore, in an editorial published in the *Queenslander* in January 1891, and referring to labour in the canefields, and the "enormities of blackbirding" it was stated that "under no circumstances can Queensland again permit her name to be associated with scandals in the Pacific such as threatened her reputation in the past".³¹

²⁶ *Queenslander*, 5 December 1891, p.1066.

²⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.11.

²⁸ *Mackay Mercury*, 16 January 1892, p.3.

²⁹ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 December 1891, p.20.

³¹ *Queenslander*, 30 January 1892, p.201.

An economic reason adduced to justify the presence of the Italians was to further the transition from large plantations to small cane farms: "We welcome these few [Italians] because we believe that by their aid the experiment of changing the conditions of sugar-cultivation from the large plantation and gang-labor system to the small farm and Central Mill one can be tried with the best prospects of success".³² Indeed it was felt that the Italians might act as a bait, doing so well that their success would attract men from the southern colonies: "The small area cultivation system is prosperous now in Mackay, and the Italians will make it so prosperous in other places that genuine farmers will be attracted by the sugarcane growing industry from the Southern Colonies".³³

Moreover the Italians would contribute to create jobs for Australians and improve the general economy. A reader, writing to the *N.Q. Herald* three weeks after the arrival of the Italians, advocated their introduction on two grounds: "sugar planting will not pay unless worked with cheap labor", and "without cheap labor to work the plantations this industry must go to the wall, and with it thousands of white men at present employed in the production of sugar".³⁴

The Italians, it was expected, would help to check the threatened decadence of the sugar industry, and could teach something to the Australians themselves. In an article entitled "The Italian influx" and published early in December 1891, it was stated:

it is to be hoped they [Italians] will eventually become useful colonists and not confine their attention to the cultivation of sugar alone, but will initiate new industries as the men of the Marquis de Reay's unfortunate colony are said to have done in New South Wales. Queensland would be none the worse for having a number of foreigners on her hands who would show her how to cultivate the olive, rear silkworms, and carry on other pursuits at a profit; to themselves and to the advantage of the State.³⁵

Dalrymple himself echoed these sentiments the following month, January 1892, when he explained and justified the introduction of Italians on the ground that if the Government sent to America for

³² *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.10.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2 December 1891, p.5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 December 1891, p.16 (letter signed IXION).

³⁵ *Queenslander*, 5 December 1891, p.1066.

professors and experts, it was also possible to learn from Europeans.³⁶ Although it was felt that these reasons for introducing Italians should have won the scheme support from the labour movement, this was not so: "the labor leaders have nothing but condemnation for it. They object to Italians, it appears, just as much as they do the Kanakas, to Javanese, and to Chinese, and they will not listen to reason".³⁷

Not only the Labour leaders; also Francis Sceusa, secretary of the labour protection branch of the New South Wales Italian Workmen's Benefit Society, was against the introduction of the newly-arrived Italian agriculturalists. Sceusa wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council which was read when the second annual meeting resumed its sitting at the Town Hall, Sydney. Sceusa's initial attack was on two grounds. He voiced the regular Labor fear that foreign labour imported under contract would undermine established working conditions: "We must", he said, "impress upon the public mind in Italy that Australia is the land of the free; that her working classes, constituting the great bulk of her population, are not disposed to tolerate the introduction of 'slaves' from abroad, and not likely to look with friendly eye on any man or body of men coming here as ruinous competitors in the labour market". In addition Sceusa argued that the Italian migrants would arouse (or possibly revive) prejudice against Italians already in the country. For this reason he asked the Trades and Labor Council to express as soon as possible and in a solemn and public form its frank opinion on four points:

- Firstly, is it not true that Italians on the whole are undesirable colonists on account of some of them being in the habit of working at low wages, and of others following lazy vocations, such as street music-playing, fruit-vending, etc?
- Secondly, is it not true that the working classes of Australia are against the introduction of labour under contract from abroad?
- Thirdly, is it not true that if Italians will be used here to compete against local labour, or if they indulge any further in itinerant trades and other unproductive occupations, the Italian name will be brought down to the level of the Chinese, and, as in the case of the Mongolians, measure to restrict the Italian immigration may be resorted to?

³⁶ *Mackay Mercury*, 16 January 1892, p.3.

³⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 2 December 1891, p.5.

- Fourthly, that the policy of the Italian Workmen's Mutual Benefit Association of New South Wales in opposing Italian vagrancy and the introduction of their fellow-countrymen into Queensland, under a system of contract slavery, is the only one which can command the respect of Australians, and make their residence possible in this free land?³⁸

It was resolved, on the motion of the Charters Towers representative - "That this General Council heartily endorses the sentiments contained in the foregoing letter, promises the Italian Workmen's Benefit Society its heavy support in their efforts to restrict this undesirable system of immigration, and instructs the general secretary to answer the questions submitted in the affirmative".³⁹

This letter written by Sceusa to the secretary of the Trades and Labor Council was published in the *Sydney Telegraph* of 18 December 1891,⁴⁰ a couple of weeks after the arrival of the *Jumna*, and it was also published in other papers during the month of February 1892.⁴¹ Sceusa's views stimulated many to activity, particularly some of the Italians already in Australia. The first letter refuting Sceusa's opinions seems to have been written by Oscar Meyer, and was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 25 December 1891.

The vivid imagination of that gentleman [Sceusa] had discovered hundreds of little slaves who, as musicians and flower vendors, haunted our streets, working under stern compulsion for cruel masters, starved, ill-clad, and beaten to death. His startling announcement, however, reminded us of Aesop's fabled mountain, which, after many convulsive throes, produced a little mouse; for it is proved that of flower-vendors there were exactly 11, and they were decently clad, well-fed, and well-paid; while of young musicians (seven in numbers) none were working for master, but all were assisting their fathers or otherwise helping to support families.

Meyer went on to express disapproval of Sceusa's lack of patriotism, denied that Italians worked for low wages, and that they engaged in occupations that did not involve hard work. On the contrary, the Italians were industrious, prudent, thrifty and,

were never accustomed to occupy cool and airy lodgings in the Domain; [that] they never exhausted their energies in listening to the oratory

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 December 1891, p.16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 February 1892, p.17.

⁴⁰ Reported in *N.Q. Herald*, 30 December 1891, p.16.

⁴¹ *Queenslander*, 13 February 1892, pp.324-25; *N.Q. Herald*, 3 February 1892, p.17.

that used to flow from the neighbourhood of the Statue; and they did not even tire themselves to death by walking in procession to the Colonial Secretary's Office, and there strenuously idle away their time waiting to hear the result of the "deputation".

These pungent remarks clearly referred to Sceusa himself who was employed in the Lands Department in Sydney, and naturally to those perceived by Meyers as loafers, totally different from the Italians who earned a living by rising early in the morning, going to the market, buying fish or fruit, and then carrying their wares here, there, everywhere, till they were disposed of. The result being that the Italians "earned a living, and earned it by diligence and hard work".

In connection with the newly-arrived immigrants in Queensland, Meyer felt that every man entering the colonies should have had his hands free, and he was not in favour of that particular contract, but admitted that if one took into account their passages to the colony paid, the 12s per week wages, and rations, the Italians did not fare badly when compared with British or colonial labourers who were getting from £30 to £50 per annum. Moreover the Italians' virtues of sobriety, thrift, and frugality, would have put them, at the end of two years, in a position to take up land on their own account, leading to their own prosperity, and to the betterment of the community for

In no regard they will be inferior to settlers of the purest English, Irish, or Scottish blood, and in the matter of thrift they can show a worthy example to all three. For it must not be forgotten that the Italians who are going to Queensland are all Piedmontese - the very flower of the Italian population - people of manly and stern character, energetic, strenuous in coping with difficulties, inured to toil, and therefore, capable of rightly valuing and using the product of their labour.⁴²

Sceusa's allegations were taken with a pinch of salt by the Italian Democratic Club of Brisbane. At their quarterly meeting, Sceusa's attention was drawn to the following points:

It was not, in the opinion of our club, neither wise, prudent, nor patriotic on the part of an Italian society to hold out before the eyes of excited parties the faults, real or imaginary, which, justly or unjustly, are attributed to Italians in these colonies. It would be far more beneficial for our fellow-countrymen to abstain from taking part in the struggles between capital and unionism...we do not approve of labourers coming under contract, but we are just as far from branding such

⁴² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 December 1891, p.6.

contracts as slavery - a term quite absurd in this connection...the experiment of introducing skilled and well-conducted Italian agriculturists to revive a languishing industry which gives employment to hundreds of tradesmen of various classes cannot be looked upon as an attempt to force cheap labour in the market considering the wages now paid to farm labourers from the United Kingdom.⁴³

The calm voice of the members of the Italian Democratic Club of Brisbane, inviting Sceusa to be cautious when making comments about Italians, contrasted with the reaction exhibited by the *N.Q. Herald*. In a short article in the "Topics of the day", Sceusa was accused of establishing "a record for silliness" in the letter which he had addressed to the General Council of the Australian Labor Federation, and the final criticism read:

If these Italians are satisfied with their lot when here, who has the right to object to their presence, and wherein does the term slavery apply to them? If they are satisfied, the Australian public are satisfied, and the "Australian slave-traders" are saved from sin by this substitute for gang-labor, it is difficult to see who has the right to object in a free country to our experiment.⁴⁴

The *Sydney Morning Herald* appeared to have been more acquiescent in Sceusa's judgment, and was prepared to admit that in other parts of the world Italian emigrants had been found undesirable, and "perhaps the population of Australia as a whole [had] more to gain than to lose by the fraternal action of the Italian Workmen's Association", yet the most salient points of Sceusa's letter were, disappointingly, its "tender human sympathy", its "spirit of loving kindness", and its "purest con-fraternal charity".⁴⁵ Sceusa's actions have parallels in America where successfully-assimilated immigrants of various nationalities were seen to be prominent in opposing further admission of their own impoverished compatriots.⁴⁶ And also in a comedy, read many years ago, by the Latin author Plautus, and entitled *Asinaria* or *The Comedy of Asses*. At one stage a merchant says "...*lupus est homo homini, non*

⁴³ *Queenslander*, 30 January 1892, pp.208-08.

⁴⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 3 February 1892, p.5.

⁴⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 1891, p.5.

⁴⁶ This tendency is satirised in a biting cartoon of 1893 reproduced in *The Italian in America: The Progressive View, 1891-1914*, edited by Lydio F. Tomasi, New York, Centre for Migration Studies, 1978, p.22.

homo, quom qualis sit non novit".⁴⁷ ("Man is no man, but a wolf, to a stranger".) - a pessimistic expression, perhaps, better known as the motto of Hobbes: "*Homo homini lupus*".

What were the *Jumna* migrants themselves saying? We know that from the early reports they were satisfied. Fraire had been visiting them at a couple of plantations, and it appeared that the Italians were "highly pleased with their work and treatment", and the employers were pleased with them.⁴⁸ Just a couple of weeks after the Italians' arrival, an article in the *N.Q. Herald* explained that the Italian labourers consigned to the Lower Burdekin were said "to be most industrious and willing to learn all the ins and outs of the cultivation of sugar-cane".⁴⁹ Very early in January, four weeks after their arrival at Townsville, another article in the *Queenslander* indicated that the Italians at Bundaberg had appreciated and understood the better opportunities that lay before them "compared to those in their own land", and were anxious to get that practical experience that would fit them "to go on their own account with every prospect of success after fulfilling their present agreements".⁵⁰ Indeed these statements were complemented by others showing the Italians' determination to become permanent settlers of Queensland. The *Mackay Mercury* wrote about the Bundaberg Italians: "Most of the men are married, and speak of sending for their families and friends",⁵¹ while another contemporary reporter had already noticed that the Italians had announced "their intention of writing home and persuading their relatives and betrothed to come out to this rich and promising country".⁵² The Italians employed by F.A. Neame at Macknade on the Herbert River, however, seemed to have been more cautious, and rather inclined to delay matters. Neame wrote a letter explaining that the Italians could settle on the land as soon as they wished but they "object[ed] to do so until they [had] had longer experience".⁵³

The Italians did not even complain in relation to the food which was quite different from what they were accustomed. The Italians in

⁴⁷ Plautus, *Asinaria* 11, 4, 88.

⁴⁸ *Queenslander*, 26 December 1891, p.1242 (citing the *Bundaberg Star*).

⁴⁹ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.12.

⁵⁰ *Queenslander*, 2 January 1892, p.36.

⁵¹ *Mackay Mercury*, 28 January 1892, p.3.

⁵² *Queenslander*, 2 January 1892, p.36.

⁵³ *N.Q. Herald*, 20 January 1892, p.16.

Bundaberg were provided with the same food as that of the ordinary Australian worker, i.e., bread, meat, potatoes, vegetables, and tea, and they did "not make any bones about the food" because they worked hard and had good appetites. Although they were used to wine, they took to tea like Australians. They had a preference regarding the meat that they preferred boiled up into soup and mixed with vegetables.⁵⁴ On the Lower Burdekin it was noticed that the Italians had found the constant meat eating and tea drinking so ingrained in Queenslanders a novelty, strange, and they were anxious for farinaceous foods which were not easily procurable. At the same time the Italians' appreciation of tea and sugar, which was a new experience to them, was excessive: "A week's rations of tea and sugar (10lb of the former and 70lb of the latter) was served out to 44 last week, but the whole quantity had disappeared in two days, and an urgent demand was made for more".⁵⁵ These accounts were published in the local press and referred to Italians working in Bundaberg, and the Lower Burdekin, and covered the months of December 1891, and January 1892, the first seven, eight weeks after their arrival.

On the Herbert River, however, the music was slightly different. It is true that early reports indicated that the Italians at Macknade, and on the Herbert River in general, had shown "no sign of being dissatisfied with their work" and the employers were "perfectly satisfied with them", yet other unconfirmed stories had given rise to rumours that the Italians were not satisfied with the condition under which they worked. The Italians were not dissatisfied with the hours of labour, indeed they were happy to find out that, though they had been engaged to work ten hours a day, the plantation hours were nine and a half. They did not complain about the rate of wages for which they had agreed to work, nor with the nature of the work itself. The only request they made was to start work earlier in the morning so that they could rest a bit longer in the heat of the day, a variation which was considered reasonable.⁵⁶ Even during the first week in February it was reported that Mr Philp, when being interviewed about the Italians in general, remarked that: "The Italians are doing well, and are spoken of very highly by the Northern planters".⁵⁷ A

⁵⁴ *Mackay Mercury*, 28 January 1892, p.3.

⁵⁵ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 February 1892, p.19.

comment that was qualified when it was added that the Italians on the Herbert gave "on the whole, satisfaction".⁵⁸

What were the conditions, then, that did not satisfy the Italians? It appears that some of the immigrants during the first couple of weeks after their arrival had visited the Ingham Police Magistrate with the object of having some portions of their contract officially interpreted. Their main grievance related to the agreement which was not clearly expressed, and did not state whether they had to work in the rain, and, if not, whether they were to be paid for wet days:

The facts of the case are that these men waited on the Ingham Police Magistrate to learn whether according to his view of their agreements they were entitled to payment for rainy days on which they did not work. They were told by the Police Magistrate that his opinion was that they would be bound by the custom obtaining in plantation work, which is that rainy days on which no work is done are not paid for, but the matter will be laid before the Italian Consul in Brisbane.

The Italians' visit was considered "very proper" by a contemporary observer, and he also added that not paying the Italians for rainy days was "an arrangement, by the way, which seems to us to be not fair in a country where, during certain consecutive months, rainy days are very numerous".⁵⁹

About a month later, in the middle of January 1892, other statements attributed to the Italians were that they had been deceived about the climate, asserting that the climate of North Queensland was "not what it was represented to them to be, it being far hotter",⁶⁰ and also that they seemed "to be easily dissatisfied and to feel the heat and the severity of the labour as much as the average white man".⁶¹ In addition to the complaints regarding heat and work, the Italians' most marked dissatisfaction was that they thought they were not going to receive wages on wet days, while they had to provide themselves with rations immediately.⁶²

Two weeks later, very early in February 1892, Mr Hodgkinson, Minister for Mines, inspected some of the Italians on the Herbert River, and, by following his progress, we may gather more information

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1892, p.5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 December 1891, p.10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13 January 1892, p.12.

⁶¹ *Cairns Argus*, 22 January 1892, p.2.

⁶² *N.Q. Herald*, 13 January 1892, p.12.

about their new environment, and the reason for the Italians' discontent. A contemporary reporter present at the encounter between the Minister and the Macknade Italians, wrote that the Italians' housing was good, consisting of "corrugated iron walls, with thick grass thatched roof, and boilers, ovens, cooking apparatus and dining sheds, far in advance of the average Northern resident's" which could be described as a "tent or bush humpy". But the Italians did not seem to share his opinion: "it was amusing to see the dramatic denunciation of the somewhat barren surroundings by the fair-haired syren who contrasted them with the rose-embroidered *casa* of her native land". The same reporter also noticed that the single and married were separately provided for, and that the houses where the Italians were quartered had "gaily-painted doors", a visually pleasing effect to, perhaps, make the newcomers feel better in their new homes. The only negative aspect of their accommodation was that the floor of the single men's quarter which was "dusty and untidy for want of a few minutes daily wetting and sweeping" contrasting with the quarters where a woman was present.⁶³

Apart from the dissatisfaction caused by the accommodation and the position, other Italians' woes were about food - "no wine, no oil, no fish, no long-drawn preparations of corn" and "salt meat they abominate". Climate was another reason for their discontent, but their chief complain was against Fraire who was responsible for their written agreement, which, the Italians felt, was "drastic, and one-sided, leaving them at the mercy of their employer for two years". The Italians stated that wet days and sickness were grounds for deductions, and after being told that the rain was sometimes continuous for more than a hundred days, they were disturbed to realise that they might find themselves empty-handed after working for two years.⁶⁴ Another complaint was their perceiving that they had been taken advantage of. A writer in the *North Queensland Herald* appreciated the problem, writing that:

To engage men in a foreign country, upon terms sufficiently alluring in that country to tempt acceptance, which, upon arrival at the scene of labor, are found or believed to be inferior to local ruling rates, can have but a disastrous termination.⁶⁵

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3 February 1892, p.18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.19.

What Hodgkinson feared, namely that the Italian experiment was doomed to failure because their natural instinct would rebel against what they thought was a deception, can be explained with the Latin saying: "*Naturam expelles furca, Tamen usque recurret*". "One can chase away nature by force (in this case, by deception), but it'll come back again and again". A reflection indicating there was much wisdom two thousand years ago. Yet Hodgkinson tried to assuage the Italians' apprehension, and presented them with a pep talk:

It was in vain that the Minister told them they were infants launched on a new life; that men now in the highest positions had commenced on a more poorly remunerative occupation than theirs, and that with the acquisition of English and the preservation of industrial and temperate habits, the road to a goal of competence was assured.⁶⁶

At about the same time Hodgkinson was delivering his homily to the hapless Italians, Mr Neame, the Italians' employer at Macknade, arrived to escort the minister to Macknade "charmingly situated on the banks of the Herbert". Neame, after hearing the gist of the Italians' arguments, stated that he had "repeatedly told them he would find work and rations, wet or dry, under shelter in the first instance, and in the air of course, when the weather was suitable".⁶⁷ This assurance was certainly not new, for Neame had already denied the report that the Italians were not going to receive wages on wet days, while having to provide themselves with rations.⁶⁸ During the third week of January 1892, Neame tried to make public his intention to abide by the agreement, and wrote to the editor of the *N.Q. Herald* asking him to contradict the false statement relative to the Italians employed by him at Macknade. He explained:

There has not been a wet day since they [Italians] arrived here, therefore no wages have been stopped, and we have repeatedly informed them that we will find work in wet weather, and pay them, if they work. It is entirely false about their having to pay for rations. Their agreement provides that rations shall be supplied under all circumstances.⁶⁹

Messrs. Wood Bros. & Boyd, the Italians' employers at Ripple Creek, a few miles further up the road from Macknade, were having the same

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 January 1892, p.12.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1892, p.16.

problems experienced by Neame. They wrote to the same paper in January, and the letter was published early in February. In this letter the employers deny the statement that the Italians had been charged for rations. They called it "an unmitigated falsehood". They also disagreed with the assertion that the Italians had been supplied with rations of bad quality, and as far as the weather was concerned they pointed out: "Your contemporary might have known that from the date of their [Italians'] arrival...we were not fortunate enough to have even a decent shower."⁷⁰

During the later part of the same month, February 1892, this argument surfaced again and it was reported that Mr Cowley, the Minister for Lands, had received a letter from Arthur Neame who had called on Mr Barnett, the Italian consul, and told him:

I did not wish to stop wages for wet weather if the men would turn out; and that I had erected a shed alongside of their work, under which they could take shelter when it was raining, and that whilst in their shed their pay will still go on. I have also instructed the overseer not to keep them out in the wet, so it will be entirely their own fault if they don't draw full pay.⁷¹

Although Neame's visit might have calmed the Italian consul's fears, Mr Barnett wrote:

I dare say there are those in the Colony who would be glad to foment the bad feeling that any supposed ill treatment by employers would give rise to, but for my part I am anxious that these immigrants, being foreigners, scarcely, if at all, knowing the language, and capable of being mislead (sic) and made use of - should be protected both in relation to the contracts made under Government supervision and to their apparent helpless state, aimlessly wandering about the country - if it be so.⁷²

The employers' explanations to the press, and those of Barnett the Consul have a ring of truth about them in the sense that it was not their intention to take advantage of the Italians. By contrast, the Consul's reflection shows he had understood by intuition that the Italians had been tampered with, with the result that some of them, and at this stage we don't yet know how many, had left the plantations, and were "aimlessly wandering about the country". Who were those in the Colony who had a vested interest in sowing tares between the Italians and their employers? The Labour Party and its

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 February 1892, p.20.

⁷¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 February 1892, p.5.

⁷² Col/A690-1892: QSA.

supporters was the most prominent as the following pages will demonstrate.

From the pages of newspapers published from December 1891 to early June 1892, it is obvious that the Labour Party's aversion to Italian immigration was a recurring theme, so much so that even before the Italians' departure from Genoa concern had been expressed in Rome by the Italian Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs on the subject of emigration to Queensland. The Italian Under-Secretary writing to the British Chargé D'Affaires at Rome, explained:

I cannot, however, disguise from you that the Royal Consul at Melbourne has recently informed this department that during the last few months there has arisen in Queensland a serious opposition on the part of the labor-unionist party to immigration, no matter from what country, seeing in future emigrants a danger and an obstacle to the triumph of the ideas of their party. And it appears that this opposition has become more strongly accentuated with respect to Italian emigrants, to whom it is reproached beforehand that they will furnish capitalists with a most formidable arm by the offer of cheap labor. Until now the Government of Queensland has succeeded in maintaining order, but will it always be able to calm the minds which are, it appears, very much excited against foreign emigration? On this point the Government of Her Majesty will, perhaps, be able to make counsels of wisdom and prudence heard in Brisbane. Pray accept, etc., A.D'Arco.⁷³

The above explanatory note, tinged with some anxiety, was made public by the *N.Q. Herald* on 2 December 1891, a day after the arrival of the Italians at Townsville. A week later the same newspaper referred to the Queensland labour leaders howling about the arrival of a "horde of Italians".⁷⁴ During the same month other reports indicated that labour organisations had "nothing but condemnation"⁷⁵ for Italian immigration, and resented the Italians brought into Queensland "for the benefit of the planters at the expense of the State".⁷⁶ Indeed even Sicilian-born Sceusa was against the introduction of his own countrymen, as we have already seen, and the Labour Council promised him their support to restrict Italian immigration.

⁷³ *N.Q. Herald*, 2 December 1892, p.11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 December 1891, p.5.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 December 1891, p.5.

⁷⁶ *Cooktown Independent*, 16 December 1891, p.2.

It appears that the first contact between the Italians and representatives of labour organisations took place very early, when the Italians had "hardly set to work under their agreement". It was reported that when some of the Italians visited the Ingham Police Magistrate to have some clauses of their contract explained, their behaviour was "magnified by the mischiefmakers into something like a general revolt against the sugar planters".⁷⁷ The contemporary observer was not the only one to have witnessed this interference with the Italians by labour sympathisers. Neame, one of their employers on the *Herbert*, had noticed that the Italians' alarm about the contract was caused by "external agitators", and in an explanatory letter to the editor of the *N.Q. Herald* concluded that the Italians were "uncommonly well off and more favoured than most people, and would be quite contented if not subject to outside influences".⁷⁸

Indeed the *Mackay Mercury* had already reported on the previous day, the 19th January 1892, the visit of Cowley, Minister for Lands, to the Italians at work on the *Herbert* River. Cowley, who was very favourably impressed by the Italians, admitted that in a new experiment some disagreements were to be expected, but concluded in a resigned tone: "as was to be expected some of the white men are using all the influence they can bring to bear to induce them [the Italians] to break their agreements".⁷⁹ As the weeks and months passed it became apparent that the Italians had been targets of false propaganda when still at sea. It was reported that their worry about their contract was the result of what an Englishman on board the *Jumna* had told them. He, by using French as the means of communication, translated the English meaning to them.⁸⁰ This report, however, is not so credible because the agreement was in English and Italian, and consequently French was not needed. Moreover if this early deceptive propaganda had been spread to deliberately influence the Italians, it would not have escaped Fraire's attention for he was travelling with them. Indeed the Italians themselves would have asked for explanations from Fraire, but I have found no record of any enquiry to that effect.

⁷⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.10.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1892, p.16.

⁷⁹ *Mackay Mercury*, 19 January 1892, p.4.

⁸⁰ *Cairns Post*, 13 February 1892, p.2.

But whether there was an Englishman or not to spread ideas and opinions in order to influence the minds of the Italians on board the *Jumna*, there is ample evidence that the Labour Party and its "missionaries" were propagating bundles of lies by devious methods and irrational appeals. This was not only noticed by Neame, and Cowley, but also by other prominent people, and the press. Sir Samuel Griffith stated that "a body of men claiming to be leaders of thought" had "by speech and action" made impossible the experiment of the employment of Italians, and added "In short these men will neither engage in work themselves nor, so far as they can prevail, allow anyone else to do so".⁸¹ Mr Hodgkinson, the Minister for Mines and Education, during a farewell banquet organised by the citizens of Townsville at the Queen's Hotel, referring to the clandestine and devious propaganda by labour activists, argued that tampering with the sugar industry would cause ill effects because of the innumerable ramifications connected directly and indirectly with it, and compared it to "a drop of poison injected into a vein". During the same speech he foresaw that "sooner or later the folly, and wickedness of their design will be perceived by their dupes".⁸²

The above comments were published during the months of January and February 1892, and later revelations by the press indicate the increasing influence of Labour's propaganda efforts. Indeed from the available evidence it appears that Labour, in order to win the war against the planters, launched a four-pronged offensive, based on organisation, argument, persuasion, and publicity. Labour was active on a large scale because the Italians had been tampered with on the Herbert River just a couple of weeks after their arrival and were tricked and deceived during the following months. If the first approach by Labour's propagandists was to either confuse or demoralise the Italians on the Herbert, later reports indicate that Labour's technique changed, and started playing upon the longings and desires of the Italians. In an article regarding Italian labour published in the *Cairns Argus*, one of the reasons why the Italians had left the Herbert River plantations was due to the representations of Englishmen who had told them that "they could earn so much more money in Charters Towers, and at Townsville, than on the plantations".⁸³ Eventually,

⁸¹ *N.Q. Herald*, 17 February 1892, p.7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 24 February 1892, p.12.

⁸³ *Cairns Argus*, 29 April 1892, p.2.

the writer agreed, the Italians would realise that they were deceived by "evil disposed and malicious people" i.e., the labour agitators who told them that if they left the plantations they could make big money in Townsville,⁸⁴ and pick up gold and silver on "the TOM TIDDLER'S ground of Charters Towers".⁸⁵ Indeed the Italians were not only victims of "false pretences"⁸⁶ or tempted by false reports; they were induced to leave by the promise of material support. When the first batch of Italians left the Herbert River, it was disclosed that they had an order on a hotel for food and accommodation "signed by a prominent labour leader",⁸⁷ a stratagem which had already been noticed by Neame, their employer. Neame was informed that the Italians leaving him had been offered £3 a week at Charters Towers by a publican who promised the Italians "tucker" in case he couldn't give them immediate work.⁸⁸

A number of Italians had also left their employment on Seaforth and Pioneer plantations, Lower Burdekin, because of the reports of the ease and rapidity with which a handsome fortune could be made at Charters Towers. A report was circulated amongst them that other Italians were earning from £3 to £5 per week, and that work was plentiful. This information so excited them that they "knocked off summarily". Indeed, two of them, after "throwing down their tools in the field" started galloping with "as much haste as possible" to Charters Towers "the locality that promised such great things".⁸⁹

This was not true because, as it has already been mentioned, there was an economic depression which affected not only Queensland, but all the eastern colonies, and the Italians who moved from Ayr to Charters Towers could be seen wandering up and down unable to find work,⁹⁰ but what is credible is determined by the audience and not the content of the message. And the Italians, in their simplicity, and also eagerness to make a "fast buck", fell victim to the specialised propagandists of the Labour Party, and followed the advice of these hidden persuaders: "Why should they toil for a master at cultivating

⁸⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 3 February 1892, pp.18-19.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 May 1892, p.26.

⁸⁶ *Cairns Post*, 5 March 1892, p.2.

⁸⁷ *Cairns Argus*, 29 April 1892, p.2.

⁸⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 2 March 1892, p.13.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

cane when they might be on Tom Tiddler's ground, picking up gold and silver".⁹¹

If these tactics were designed to arouse the emotions of the Italian peasants, others had already been used to appeal to their minds. The Labour agitators had not only created fears amongst the Italians of the consequences of their contracts not being clearly specified, as we have already seen, but in their attempts to get the Italians to break the contract completely, must have taken action to inform them that the contract was not valid. This can be deduced from what Wood Bros. & Boyd explained to the press. They stated that some Italians had left the plantations before any dispute over wet days,⁹² and that the Italians might have found, after their first encounter with British law, a flaw to escape the contract:

some of the men made sworn affidavits that the agreement they signed was neither read or explained to them...when we summoned two men out of a large number (as a test case) for being absent from work, the Ingham bench dismissed the charge on the ground that the agreement (drawn up and approved by the Queensland Government) was not under Masters' and Servants' Act, and was consequently valueless.⁹³

A recurring theme is that Wood Bros. & Boyd from Ripple Creek felt, like Neame, from Macknade, that the *N.Q. Herald* did not preserve an impartial stance in reporting the events between Italians and their employers on the Herbert River. In a letter to the editor, Wood Bros. & Boyd expressed their inability to understand how a newspaper could be so partial and inaccurate, but also with the message that they were not prepared to sit back in case similar misleading assertions were published in the future:

We fail to understand why our firm, which gives employment to many whites, and circulates some thousands of pounds annually in Townsville, should be held up to the public reprobation on the unsupported (and possibly, misunderstood) representations of a few Italians. Can it be because we do not subscribe to the journal attacking us? In conclusion, permit us to state that should these gross misstatements be continued we shall take more stringent steps to clear our reputation, when the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 9 March 1892, p.12.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

newspaper referred to will find to its cost how utterly unreliable the utterances of its "special Italian correspondents" are.⁹⁴

Although Wood Bros. & Boyd started their letter saying they could not understand what was going on, the final reference to the special Italian correspondents placed between inverted commas, induces one to intuit that the employers smelled something fishy about the whole business.

The paper's reaction came a month later, early in March, when in a special article the employers' offended feelings were soothed; indeed both employers, Wood Bros. & Boyd, and Neame, were eulogised, and the Italians mortified:

The Herbert River Italians have not been quite so straight forward, advancing, as will be seen in a letter which we publish this morning, alleged unfair treatment by their employers as their reason for abandoning agricultural pursuits. These Italians critical of Mr Neame and Boyd, by the way, will do well to remember that the former has been some twenty years employing Europeans as well as Kanakas in large numbers, and the latter some ten years, and that neither of them have ever had any serious disputes with their employees. It is quite possible, indeed highly probable, that there is a misunderstanding between the planters and the Italians about the conditions of the agreements; but nothing is gained by rough language in such disputes, except a bad reputation for those who use it.⁹⁵

The following is the letter whose prose and content did not command universal assent:

Sir - We were greatly surprised when it was shown and translated to us an extraordinary letter sent to you by Mr F.A. Neame, of Macknade, Ingham purporting to state the truth about the Italian immigrants. He deliberately called false the statements you published on the 13th January. Perhaps Mr Neame, thinking that we would not see or understand his reply, did not hesitate in telling the Queensland public what is perfectly untrue to make us stink in the eyes of the people. We now distinctly state, and on our oath, if necessary, and every one and all of our fellow Italians assigned both for Macknade and Ripple Creek, can confirm our statements, that both Mr Neame and Mr Boyd distinctly declared that they will not pay for wet days; in fact, Mr Neame repeated it in the Police Court, Ingham. It is to us, indeed, very strange to see would-be gentlemen and employers of honest and hard-working men, outrage truth in such a mean and cowardly manner. Moreover, we hope

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 February 1892, p.20.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1892, p.10.

your readers and every good Englishman will notice the way Mr Neame beat about the bush concerning the wet days. He says "he will find work in wet days, and pay them if they work". We were engaged for two years at weekly wages, so our wages should be paid in full, wet or dry. It is Mr Neame's business to find work for us, our duty to work, and Mr Neame's duty to pay us in full. As Mr Neame has taken the course of damaging our good reputation as honest work-men, we will send you more facts to show how "uncommonly well off" we were, as he said, under such kind and Christian employers. - Yours, etc.,

Giuseppe Cerutti
Buratto Pietro, and others.
26 February.⁹⁶

But this letter could not have been written by the Italians for several reasons:

1. When Mr Grant, of the Agent-General's office in London, went to Genoa to see the Italians leave for Queensland, he was accompanied by a private interpreter;⁹⁷
2. Reference has already been made to an Englishman on board the *Jumna* who was able to communicate with the Italians by using French,⁹⁸ but I hold this source suspect;
3. Mr Barnett, the Italian Consul in Brisbane, refers to the Italians as "being foreigners, scarcely, if at all, knowing the language";⁹⁹
4. When Mr Hodgkinson, the Minister, gathered the substance of the Italians' woes, this was possible because "By some good hap a travelling Frenchman of some fourteen years' colonial experience was calling at Macnade (sic) in in (sic) search of employment...With him the Minister forgathered, and as the Frenchman spoke an approach to Italian and one of the Italians an approach to French, some kind of a conversation was possible";¹⁰⁰
5. A contemporary reporter observed that the Italians' distrust and suspicion had developed into hostility because they

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 May 1892, p.27.

⁹⁸ *Cairns Post*, 13 February 1892, p.2.

⁹⁹ Col/A690-1892: QSA.

¹⁰⁰ *N.Q. Herald*, 3 February 1892, p.18.

- were deprived of the "medium of a common language", and this refers to the Macknade Italians;¹⁰¹
6. Fraire who must have known the Italians well because he had recruited them refers to misunderstandings simply caused by "the Italians' little knowledge of the English language".¹⁰²
 7. We know from oral history that lack of English was one of the calamities of the Italian pioneers when dealing outside their community.¹⁰³

Moreover the letter is not that of writers with only recent and imperfect command of English. There are several expressions out of character: "purporting to state", "on our oath", "every one and all", "would-be gentlemen", "outrage truth in such a mean and cowardly manner". Indeed one is struck by the rapidity and vivacity of the prose: "to make us stink in the eyes of the people", and the figurative expression: "beat about the bush" to indicate evasiveness. This letter, in fact, though not necessarily written by a thinker or an erudite person, sparkles for its vivid prose; it's a letter written by someone at ease with the pen, a journalist, a propagandist. If the Italians could write the above letter ascribed to them, they would not have needed anyone to translate anything.

A sentence arousing suspicion is towards the end when the Italians are purported to have written: "We were engaged for two years at weekly wages, so our wages should be paid in full, wet or dry. It is Mr Neame's business to find work for us, our duty to work, and Mr Neame's duty to pay us in full". This is not the Italians' approach to deal with their employers as it had already become apparent when some of the portions related to the agreement generated a difference of interpretation. The Italians were quite satisfied to be treated like other Europeans in similar circumstances.¹⁰⁴ This aggressive demand implies enmity, militancy, inflexibility; not the Italians' approach, they had no reason for it. Indeed there seems to be an intentional attempt to put Neame against the Italians by using such a hostile literary tone.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 13 April 1892, p.12.

¹⁰³ See Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.10.

But the Italians had no reason to suspect Neame because Neame defended them in the letter referred to, the final passage reading:

The Italians as new chums who have come out here to learn the cultivation of sugar cane with the object of acquiring land and becoming farmers on their own account...would be quite contented if not subject to outside influences. They can settle on the land as soon as they wish, but they object to do so until they have had longer experience.¹⁰⁵

And to conclude, the letter's signatories are Giuseppe Cerutti, and Buratto Pietro. In an Italian signature the family name is put first, then the Christian name, an order opposite to the English or the Australian one.¹⁰⁶ While Giuseppe Cerutti is right according to the English mode, Buratto Pietro is right according to the Italian one. Why the discrepancy? It appears obvious to me that the one who signed the names was either an Englishman, or an Australian, and he got it right as far as Cerutti was concerned, but wrong in the case of Buratto. This could be explained if one thinks of how common a Christian name Giuseppe is, while the same could not be said of Pietro. You see even a tiny error can impair the credibility of a source. Also there is no Buratto Pietro in the official list of the Italians who arrived by the *Jumna* in 1891, but there is a Barbatto Pietro, assigned to Kalamia, Lower Burdekin, about 150 miles south of Ingham and Macknade. In the case of Giuseppe Cerutti, name and place of allocation, i.e. Macknade, are correct.¹⁰⁷

If we take into account all the elements examined in the previous couple of pages, i.e. the way signatures were affixed, the wrong spelling of Buratto, the distance between Macknade and Ayr, and above all, the ability of the Italian peasants to write so powerfully after two and a half months in North Queensland, and it can be accepted that the above letter was written by the Italians, I cannot refrain from exclaiming: "Truly a gift of the Holy Ghost!" Yes, the Italians knew about the letter attributed to them as much as the letter knew about the Italians. Consequently, if we may exclude the intervention of the Paraclete, the explanation can be found on what could be described an intrigue, a conspiracy, a sort of "psychological warfare" going on between Labour and Capital.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1892, p.16.

¹⁰⁶ LAN/DF 3559 - 1906/364: QSA.

¹⁰⁷ IMM/145, pp.47-54: QSA.

Psychological warfare is as old as history, and it is one of the forces employed to increase the probabilities of victory and lessen chances of defeat. An example that comes readily to the mind is Machiavelli's political treatise: *Il Principe*, 1513. His advice is pragmatic. The Prince is urged to adopt the ferocity of the lion or the cunning of the fox, depending on the nature of the situation confronting him. In this case the latter was followed, and the means for reaching the audience were personal contact, and the press. Personal contact was necessary because the Italians would not have bought the newspapers for they could not read them, so to overcome the problem, agents had to be sent to use word-of-mouth communication. They were successful enough to undermine the Italians' morale in relation to the contract, and quite successful in their storytelling to arouse enthusiasm, and fire the imagination of the naive Italians. They appealed to the Italians' minds, and to the Italians' emotions. The press was used to direct appeals to the "elite". The writer skilfully trained was an agent of propaganda to discredit the enemy, i.e., the planters, or Italians perceived as rivals. Educated people, i.e., those reading the press, and the governing class were also a target group of psychological warfare operations, the aim being to get them to alter political decisions; and in this instance, as later pages will explain, the Labour Party's missionaries were successful.

But let's leave Labour and Capital to their "battle of wits", and try to shed some light on how many Italian defections occurred. Although the Macknade Italians seem to have been the first ones to express their dissatisfaction, an Italian from Ripple Creek, may have been the first to do something about it. It was reported during the first week of January 1892, i.e., about five weeks after their arrival, that he had paid a visit to Townsville, and complained on behalf of his compatriots that Mr Boyd required the Italians to pay for their rations on those days. The reporter took the Italian's complaint with a pinch of salt for he wrote: "of course this is only one side of the story", indeed he went on to say that if no mention was made of such provision in their agreements, it would have seemed "rough on the Italians". As for the Italians' other complaint that they had been induced to believe that the climate of the Herbert River was similar to that of Italy, the reporter added that, if the statement was true, it would have been "a libel on Italy".¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ *Northern Miner*, 9 January 1892, p.3.

A few days later it was the turn of some of the Macknade Italians. A news story explained that there was "marked dissatisfaction" among them, and, once again, their complaints were about wet days, rations, and climate. Indeed four men had already left the plantation, and were living with compatriots on Ross Island. The reporter added with some apprehension that "there would be wholesale desertions were the means of communications between the Herbert River and Townsville easier and cheaper".¹⁰⁹ This was quite probable if one thinks that only two years later it was estimated that the distance between Townsville and Ingham was eighty miles, and there were exactly ninety creeks between them.¹¹⁰ Yet the Italians were enduring the arduous trek, the insects, exposure, and hunger. It was reported on the 16th of January that "half-a-dozen arrived in Townsville, having walked overland from Ingham".¹¹¹ Four days later, 20 January 1892, under the title "Topics of the Day" the Italians' defections were criticised:

During the past week...there have been proofs that the batch of Italians brought out by Mr Fraire have shown a disposition to "kick over the traces" and to quarrel with their bread and butter. They complain that the weather is not what they expected to find it - it is too hot - and they are fertile in excuses as to their willingness to work in the field on the matter of rations. A small proportion of the first consignment of these so-called agricultural laborers are already absconders from their hired service, and some of them make no secret that they are "looking for Fraire".¹¹²

These reports refer to the first part of January 1892, when it was also stated that "From the Burdekin we hear the Italians are well satisfied with their lot".¹¹³ The following two or three weeks were crucial because the continuous desertions by the Italians discouraged the "elite" i.e., the educated members of the community, and the governing class, with the result that Sir Samuel Griffith abandoned his old principle of eliminating Polynesian labour, but renewed it for a further period of ten years. Very early in February it was reported that an unspecified number of Italians employed by Wood Bros. & Boyd "had

¹⁰⁹ *N.Q. Herald*, 13 January 1892, p.12.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 29 August 1894, p.24.

¹¹¹ *Northern Miner*, 18 January 1892, p.3.

¹¹² *N.Q. Herald*, 20 January 1892, p.5.

¹¹³ *Northern Miner*, 9 January 1892, p.3.

their agreements cancelled at their own particular desire",¹¹⁴ but many others had already been on the move. The *Northern Miner* reported that there were 22 Italians from Ingham in Cairns,¹¹⁵ and several others were expected. The *Queenslander* wrote that on the following day, 18 February 1892, there were about twenty-five Italians from Ingham, and that they "suffered horrible privations in their endeavours to reach Cairns overland".¹¹⁶

From Macknade, Neame writing a letter to Mr Cowley, the Minister for Lands, explained that 14 of his men had left for Charters Towers.¹¹⁷ Indeed four of the Macknade Italians had managed to find their way southward as far as Brisbane.¹¹⁸ From the Lower Burdekin thirteen Italians referred to as "a baker's dozen" had arrived in Charters Towers. They were originally assigned to Ayr, but they had their imagination fired by some letters "received from a countryman at Charters Towers, who asserted that from £3 to £5 per week could be made wood-chopping", and they found themselves, at the end of their adventure, "in an almost penniless condition".¹¹⁹ There is also a reference to their arrival on a day when the weather was "oppressive" and to their "destitute condition".¹²⁰

From the previous couple of pages it can be said that the Italians who had left the plantations during the months of January and February 1892 were about 70. Four from Macknade were on Ross Island; six from Ingham were in Townsville. An unspecified number had left Ripple Creek, while about 25 were in Cairns where Dr Thomatis was endeavouring to find them land on easy terms. This appears to be the largest batch, though they got to Cairns at different times. Another 14 Macknade Italians went to Charters Towers, and four of the same plantation were noticed in Brisbane. Another group, "a baker's dozen", had left the peaceful seclusion of the Burdekin Delta to move to the fabled land of Charters Towers.

We are, however, still in the early stage of this Italian diaspora, and as the weeks and months go by we'll meet other Italians moving to and

¹¹⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 3 February 1892, p.20.

¹¹⁵ *Northern Miner*, 17 February 1892, p.3.

¹¹⁶ *Queenslander*, 20 February 1892, p.384.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 February 1892, p.428.

¹¹⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 24 February 1892, p.6.

¹¹⁹ *Northern Miner*, 23 February 1892, p.3.

¹²⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 February 1892, p.5.

fro in the various districts of North Queensland, and also to the cities of the southern colonies. But what was seen during this time was enough to get people and Government worried about the Italian experiment, and some remedy was thought indispensable. Some press reports referred to the experiment as "a dismal failure"; something that had "completely broken down".¹²¹ Realising that the Herbert River Italians were steadily deserting some felt it was clear that such an experiment would never be repeated. It became obvious that the recently introduced Italians could not save the sugar industry because "the horse would starve to death long before the grass grew thick".¹²² Moreover, it had transpired that some Italians were not labourers, and knew "no more about agriculture than a Digger Indian [did] about the *differential calculus*". This realisation coupled with the possibility that the Italians might have been tradesmen alarmed those who felt the Italians could move into the centres of population in North Queensland, and compete with local white labour. With a feeling of vexation and disappointment, the commentator concluded: "If the Italians are not agriculturists there is no virtue in the experiment".¹²³

There were still favourable comments made about the Italians. Even during the first part of February it was reported that on the Lower Burdekin the Italians were "working well and giving every satisfaction",¹²⁴ while those on the Herbert River were said to give "on the whole, satisfaction".¹²⁵ A far cry from the very early ones which eulogised the Italians for their ability, enthusiasm, discipline, and character. Their possible competing with the local workers had alarmed many, but the most important matter was to keep the sugar industry viable, for without it "the first to be ruined after the planters would be the small farmers...then all workers".¹²⁶ The governing class was not indifferent to these considerations made public through the press, and it could be deduced that change was in the air when Mr Philp, who had been interviewed, replied that the Italians were doing "well", and were spoken of "very highly" by the Northern planters, but

¹²¹ *Northern Miner*, 23 February 1892, p.3.

¹²² *N.Q. Herald*, 17 February 1892, p.10.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1892, p.5.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 February 1892, p.19.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1892, p.5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

added, "It takes a long time, however, to entirely revolutionise the mode of production".¹²⁷

This was reported on 3 February 1892; a week later, a short article entitled "Reconsideration" explained that Griffith had abandoned his old ideas and was looking "with something approximating to favor on the proposal to again fall back on the Kanaka as the saviour of the sugar industry".¹²⁸ Griffith's assertion: "Rather perish the sugar industry than there should be any danger of the white race becoming contaminated"¹²⁹ had been replaced by a new opinion: "If the system now happily inaugurated of small farmers is to be carried on to final success I can see no alternative but to permit - for a time at any rate - the resumption of Polynesian immigration".¹³⁰

At this point, perhaps, a reflection could be made on the tendency of propaganda to beget propaganda. As one organisation, i.e., the Labour Party was successfully making efforts to get the Italians to break the contract, the planters were not idle either, and had organised themselves into a pressure group seeking in one way or another to influence public policy, either by directly influencing legislation or other public officials, or by indirectly influencing them through public opinion. An editorial explained that the planters of Queensland had made "a determined struggle" for the restoration of black labour, and had been able to enlist in their ranks not only the Ministry but also Griffith, "once their bitterest opponent".¹³¹ It was not necessary for the planters to influence Griffith through public opinion because that problem had been solved for them by their enemy: Labour. Labour's machinations to interfere between the Italians and their employers had a boomerang effect:

If the labor leaders can make a mistake in tactics, they invariably make it, but they never made a bigger mistake than when they interfered between the Italians and their employers. They have been playing the planter's game; for many of the employers are by no means sorry to get rid of an experiment in which they had little faith, and to see the

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 February 1892, p.19.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 February 1892, p.9.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 March 1892, p.5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1892, p.7.

¹³¹ *Northern Miner*, 13 February 1892, p.3.

Italians dispersed over the country, pleading by their very presence the doctrine of Polynesian immigration.¹³²

When Griffith's Manifesto regarding the extension of Polynesian labour was published properties were withdrawn from the market, and the owners were "inspired with fresh confidence".¹³³ The *Northern Miner* reported that the Manifesto had been received with great satisfaction in the sugar district.¹³⁴ The *Brisbane Courier* noticed the reception in the country to the retention of the Islanders had been "favourable" and had caused "great jubilation"; the "wisdom of the action" was acknowledged.¹³⁵ Indeed both parties were pleased to have the "Kanakas" back: "the planters because they are more suitable than other aliens or indented labor, and the mechanics and laborers because they see that Polynesians confined to field works create, instead of curtail labor".¹³⁶

Early in March 1892 as Kalamia and Seaforth plantations on the Burdekin Delta, in response to the Manifesto, had arranged to clear and break up 400 acres and 377 acres of new land respectively, and to increase their mills proportionately,¹³⁷ it was reported that 21 Italians had deserted from Pioneer plantation and 8 from Seaforth. They complained that they were not paid their wages at the end of the month, but only on the plantation pay days; also, that their pay was stopped on wet days.¹³⁸ Indeed, the previous day, 1 March 1892, it had been reported that several Italians at Bundaberg had revolted, and it was expected others would follow their example.¹³⁹ It is curious to notice that while the Italians were leaving the plantations or revolting, the Javanese were having the same problems with their employers who were not paying them during wet days, but the Javanese limited themselves to going on strike.¹⁴⁰ This general rise against the planters took place only a few days in the case of the Javanese, and a couple of weeks in the case of the Italians, after the

¹³² *N.Q. Herald*, 24 February 1892, p.5.

¹³³ *Brisbane Courier*, 15 February 1892, p.5.

¹³⁴ *Northern Miner*, 15 February 1892, p.3.

¹³⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 15 February 1892, p.5.

¹³⁶ *Northern Miner*, 23 February 1892, p.3.

¹³⁷ *Queenslander*, 5 March 1892, p.438.

¹³⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 2 March 1892, p.13.

¹³⁹ *Western Champion*, 2 March 1892, p.5.

¹⁴⁰ *N.Q. Herald*, 17 February 1892, p.8.

publication of Griffith's Manifesto in relation to the revival of the sugar industry. The Italian consul, Mr Barnett, became suspicious of the planters' honesty, and ethical approach to the new circumstances, and wrote: "These men [the Italians] should be protected and it is worth while considering whether in view of the continuance of Black labour, the employers are treating them with less consideration, which would foster and magnify petty discontent, and are taking no earnest steps to overcome it".¹⁴¹

The Italian consul's intuition confirms what Griffith had already explained, i.e., if some owners were willing to sell to farmers with the object of assisting in substituting small cane farms for the old system of plantation and gang labor, other owners had set their faces against any change, and wanted the South Sea Islanders.¹⁴² In the space of three months, the Italians found themselves sandwiched between Labour and Capital bent on attaining their own objectives which implied for one reason or another the elimination of the Italians. Labour did not want them because, together with the Javanese, the Chinese, and the Malays they "were objectionable elements in the population as they filtered into other forms of occupation, and swelled the tide of competition".¹⁴³ Capital's aim was to convince observers of the experiment that the Italians were no substitute for the Islanders "the lowest species of the human race capable of performing the duties required on plantations at the lowest remunerative wages".¹⁴⁴ Indeed it was argued that "if the European is unfit for canefield work, even the docile and patient Italian cannot replace the black".¹⁴⁵ It can also be argued that during the first three months after the Italians' arrival, Labour, through their psychological warfare based on purposefully spreading lies, had succeeded in getting many Italians to desert the plantations, leaving them in the lurch; while their employers' conduct, after Griffith's *volte face*, was going to leave other Italians high and dry, or to put it more bluntly, the Italians during the period early December 1891 to early March 1892, were sodomised by the former, and bugged by the latter. *Congratulazioni!* The reader might be reminded of the French aphorism: *La perfide Albion* (perfidious

¹⁴¹ Col/A690-1892: QSA.

¹⁴² *N.Q. Herald*, 17 February 1892, p.7.

¹⁴³ *N.Q. Herald*, 3 February 1892, p.19.

¹⁴⁴ *Western Champion*, 2 March 1892, p.5.

¹⁴⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 January 1892, p.4.

Albion); Albion being a poetic name to indicate England. It certainly reminds me of Ugo Foscolo's pithy saying: *L'Anglia avara*, i.e., avaricious England.

During the month of March 1892, apart from the 21 Italians who had deserted from Pioneer plantation, the eight who had left Seaforth, and the unspecified number of those who had revolted at Bundaberg, others were roaming the country trying to get a job. The *Northern Miner* reported on 1 March 1892 that several were accommodated at the Immigration Depot.¹⁴⁶ Another bit of news published in the *N.Q. Herald* indicates that those Italians had ended their adventure there after trying their luck at Charters Towers, and it can be deduced that they must have been among those who had left the plantation in January or February 1892. At the Immigration Depot, Mr J.A. Wallace, Assistant Immigration Agent, was able to listen to the Italians' ups and downs "with the kind assistance of Mr P.V. Armati",¹⁴⁷ an explanation that should throw further light on the, by now, notorious "Italian letter". Further information about Italian immigrants at the Immigration Depot clarified that out of eleven Italians, there were only six left:

On the 3rd inst, three left for Charters Towers under definite engagement, made prior to their departure from that place, and it is presumed that they had enough spare cash to pay train fare. On Wednesday two more left for the goldfields capital, prepared to tramp the whole distance.¹⁴⁸

On the same day this information was published, readers were told that eight Italians from the Burdekin had arrived at Bowen,¹⁴⁹ probably on their way to the southern capitals. Indeed among the protagonists of this exodus, there were even twelve who were making preparations to go to Melbourne.¹⁵⁰ As these two groups of Italians were trying to solve their problems away from the plantations, a contingent of about 25 who had left the Herbert River were working on land leased to them or procured for them by Dr Thomatis. These must be those who, during the previous month of February, had reached

¹⁴⁶ *Northern Miner*, 1 March 1892, p.3.

¹⁴⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 2 March 1892, p.13.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 March 1892, p.16.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁵⁰ *Cairns Post*, 19 March 1892, p.2.

Cairns overland, and were reported to have "suffered horrible privations". These, it was explained:

have about 40 acres planted with rice, which was sown broadcast after the fashion of Italy, not of Queensland. They are also doing a great deal of work in clearing land, ploughing, and planting with corn, tobacco, etc. Mr Thomatis appears to be perfectly satisfied with his tenants, and they, on the other hand, are apparently satisfied with the terms on which they have settled on the land.¹⁵¹

During the month of April, a further four Italians from Macknade plantation, arrived in Cairns "penniless". These men were willing to work, but there were no offers; and Thomatis was "full up with the Italians already on the land".¹⁵² Eventually they were leased a few acres of ground, rent free, for four years.¹⁵³ Other Italians were able during the same month of April to find work; a few got it in Townsville,¹⁵⁴ others had to go back to the river:

The eight Italians who arrived by the *Burdekin* on Monday night from Townsville start work tomorrow trashing cane for the farmers, having accepted contract work at the rate of 15 s. per acre.¹⁵⁵

These men who had gone back to the Herbert "very destitute" found, somehow, the strength to overcome their vicissitudes, but this could not be said of all Italians. It was reported that from Charters Towers, and by the evening train, Constable Conway had arrived "with a lunatic named Polio [Paolo?], an Italian, who is committed to the Reception House".¹⁵⁶

Even as late as May and early June 1892 some Italians were still moving around the country; then silence falls on them. In May three Italians applied for temporary employment at Toowoomba. They stated they were stonecutters, and on their way to Sydney, where, they had been informed, they could get work in stonecutting and marble

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 23 March 1892, p.2.

¹⁵² *N.Q. Herald*, 13 April 1892, p.6.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 20 April 1892, p.6.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 6 April 1892, p.23.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 April 1892, p.6; *Cairns Post*, 20 April 1892, p.2.

¹⁵⁶ *N.Q. Herald*, 6 April 1892, p.12.

sculpture.¹⁵⁷ Early in June "several" Italians were sighted at Rockhampton.¹⁵⁸

During the painful diaspora of the Italian labourers, some of their compatriots already established in Queensland devoted some of their time and energy to help them settle down. We have already read about Mr Wallace, the Assistant Immigration Agent, who could find more information about the Italians' whereabouts "with the kind assistance of Mr P.V. Armati". Armati was born at Marino near Rome, immigrated to Australia in 1874, and was naturalised in 1876. In Townsville he established a chemist's shop in Flinders Street. At one stage he entered into partnership with Fraire, and they traded as Armati Fraire & Coy, drapers, ironmongers, wine sellers and general merchants until 1889 when the partnership was dissolved. Armati encouraged and promoted Italian immigration.¹⁵⁹

Dr David Thomatis was enterprising and successful, and some pages are devoted to his achievements and contribution to the development of North Queensland in Chapter 5. During the first few months of turmoil after the Italian pioneers' arrival in December 1891, Thomatis, as we have seen, showed his willingness to make arrangements for those Italians who had moved to Cairns. A letter signed by 15 of the newly-arrived Italians, and by 3 old tenants, though not necessarily written by them, indicates the filial respect they had for him:

We know that almost every week Mr Thomatis receives letters and telegrams from the various Italian camps imploring of him to assist and protect them, and this also from the men that come from the very native district of Mr Fraire.¹⁶⁰

Chiaffredo Venerano Fraire was born at Envie, Piedmont, Italy, in 1852, and came to Australia at the age of twenty-two.¹⁶¹ A few pages are devoted to his untiring efforts to favour Italian immigration into North Queensland in Chapter 5. After escorting to Australia the Italian pioneers he had recruited in Italy, Fraire, early in January, met Mrs Fraire in Brisbane where they intended to remain till the

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 May 1892, p.28.

¹⁵⁸ *Queenslander*, 11 June 1892, p.1145.

¹⁵⁹ Town Clerk - The Council of the City of Townsville.

¹⁶⁰ *Cairns Argus*, 6 May 1892, p.3.

¹⁶¹ See birth certificate.

summer was over, but he retained an interest in the Italians.¹⁶² During this period he was being praised by the press.¹⁶³ In February 1892, however, it was reported that several Italians who had left the Herbert River plantations for the gold fields of Charters Towers, spoke "in anything but complimentary terms" of him.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, in Cairns, the Italians' "vials of wrath" were "full to overflowing".¹⁶⁵ In one of the editorials published a few weeks later in the same paper, there is the explicit allusion that Fraire might have felt it was better for him to vanish from the scene altogether:

Possibly it is as well that he has vanished without leaving behind him any address in particular, as his dupes are very bitter against him, and while it is not considered a safe amusement to wrong one Italian, it may be conceded that it would be better to meet a lioness robbed of her whelps than to drop across 450 enraged Piedmontese.¹⁶⁶

Fraire, however, wrote a letter to the editor explaining those accusations were unfounded:

Before leaving the steamer at Townsville, I gave to most of the Italians on board the *Jumna* my address, with a request to write to me for anything they thought I could be of any use. I received since a number of letters from all parts where they went, and answered them from Townsville, when I was there, and from Brisbane since I have been here, giving them what I considered best advice. I have at different times represented their claims and complaints to the Italian consul, in Brisbane. I explained to them in my letters that their grievances have been brought before the ministers, and that redress has been promised through the Consul. I pointed out to them the advisableness of not leaving their work, but let the Consul know their complaints. He would see that they received what is due by agreement, but once they left the plantation they would lose the rights and protection of the agreement. For different reasons some of them preferred to leave their work and try better luck elsewhere. I met some of them in Brisbane, and shall be glad to meet others in Townsville in a week or two, as soon as my business allows me to return there. In Brisbane I have tried to find them work, and will do the same in Townsville.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² *N.Q. Herald*, 6 January 1892, p.12.

¹⁶³ *Queenslander*, 2 January 1892, p.36; *N.Q. Herald*, 4 May 1892, p.36.

¹⁶⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 17 February 1892, p.14.

¹⁶⁵ *Cairns Post*, 13 February 1892, p.2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5 March 1892, p.2.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 March 1892, p.3.

When Fraire returned to Townsville in April, he was cited as saying that the discontent which prompted the Italians to leave the plantations was due to their being told that they would not receive wages on wet days, and that most of the misunderstandings were due to the Italians' little knowledge of the English language.¹⁶⁸ Fraire reiterated that all the men were agriculturalists, and if some of them could be considered as artisans it was due to their leaving home in the winter months for France, where they tried to get any kind of work; this explained their knowledge of French. He concluded:

Mr Grant, of the Agent-General's office, who came to Italy from London with a private interpreter, satisfied himself of the immigrants being the right class, by examining every man and woman as to where they came from, what they had been doing, and if they understood the agreement they were to sign. I met many of the immigrants that have left the plantations, and I find them anxious and willing to go out in the country to do any kind of work.¹⁶⁹

This clarification echoes the report published early in December 1891 in the *Queenslander*:

Mr Grant, the despatching officer, inspected them [the Italians] and saw to their embarkation, and also to the filling up, explanation, and execution of the agreements...the people who sailed being all *bona fide* agriculturists from Northern Italy (Piedmont and Lombardy). Considerable care had been taken in their selection, and only six rejections were made.¹⁷⁰

It can be surmised that Fraire, after coming back from Brisbane, tried to read the Townsville press in order to find out more about the Italian operations, and perhaps, explain, but, *mirabile dictu* (wonderful to relate), the *North Queensland Herald* edition of 27 April 1892 is missing. Three weeks later, it was reported that "Mr Fraire, of Italian immigration fame" had recommenced business at Townsville as draper:¹⁷¹

Mr Fraire will carry on his business in the shop used by Messrs Brodziak and Rodgers for their drapery department, and his great

¹⁶⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 13 April 1892, p.12.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 May 1892, p.27.

¹⁷⁰ *Queenslander*, 12 December 1891, p.1140.

¹⁷¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 17 May 1892, p.5.

experience in the trade, business energy, and careful attention to his customers, are certain to secure for him the patronage of all classes.¹⁷² In Townsville, Armati Street, Melton Hill, and Fraire Street, Hermit Park, are named after the two Italian businessmen, while a few miles north of Cairns, a creek has been named after Thomatis.

When the tumult caused by different interpretations died away, and the available evidence was heard, the press kept on expatiating on the Italian immigration experiment. Although it had not been a great success, the experiment may have resulted in the settling of some two hundred agriculturalists on the soil;¹⁷³ it had been a failure in the sense that a certain proportion of Italians brought out by Fraire were not agriculturists:

Italians resemble Englishmen, and Italy resembles England in so far, it appears, that men of both nations are not above telling untruths about themselves in order to secure a passage to Queensland as agricultural laborers, and that in both countries false certificates to support the fraud are to be obtained.¹⁷⁴

This statement, implying that human nature is much the same everywhere, however, does not seem to be correct in this particular instance because the Italians, as it has already been clarified, were "all *bona fide* agriculturists from Northern Italy". And this had been evident as soon as they arrived in Australia. Numerous comments referring to the Italians indicate this very clearly: "they knew nought of town life", they had "done much work in their days", "a very suitable class of people on sugar plantations", "willing", "industrious", the Italian "shows much intelligence in his work", they were "faithful labourers", "most industrious", men of "splendid physique", "accustomed to hard work", "broad-chested and muscular, with round bulletheads, and short thick set necks set on massive shoulders". Furthermore they were "jovial fellows", "kind and cheerful". A shrewd contemporary understood that if the Italians had not been deceived, none of them, probably, would have left the plantations, and the Italians themselves complained about having been duped. The final judgement was: "it hardly lies in the mouths of men who have secured passages under false pretences to make such an accusation". Eventually it was asserted that the experiment was not a failure

¹⁷² *N.Q. Herald*, 18 May 1892, p.11.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 20 April 1892, p.5.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 May 1892, p.26.

because "a large majority of the Italian immigrants are genuine agriculturists" and it would result in settling on the soil "some two hundred hard-working, thrifty, and experienced cultivators".

It was stated that the failure was in not having foreseen that Italy was not the right place to supply agriculturalists because they cling to the soil, and are not tempted to emigrate, while tradesmen or town labourers are.¹⁷⁵ This interpretation, again, does not dovetail with earlier reports because the Italians' decision to emigrate to Queensland was to buy land after two years; indeed, as soon as they got here some of the Italians' employers had been given to understand that there was a large number of the Italians' friends still in Italy who were anxious to join them on the plantations.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, a letter written and signed by many Italian tenants, old and new, asserted that "If Mr Thomatis could still accommodate more Italians we feel sure most of them would be glad to come to this land as tenants on the co-operative or *metayer* system, and we can even say that he would get hundreds to still come out from Italy to settle on the land by this system".¹⁷⁷

As far as Italy being not the right place to supply agriculturalists, a supplement to the *Government Gazette* reveals some eloquent material on the question of Italian immigration to Queensland:

Referring to the recent visit of Mr Fraire, the agent sent from Queensland to engage Italian laborers, it stated that Mr Fraire had asked the Italian Government whether they wished to discourage immigration to Queensland. The Italian Government assured Lord Salisbury that so far from wishing to check Italian emigration to Queensland the Italian Government considered it very desirable, and were not likely to throw impediments in the way of emigration to so healthy a colony.¹⁷⁸

But the Italian Government was worried about Italians emigrating to Australia in general, and Queensland in particular, because they had received information from the Italian consul at Melbourne that the Trade Unionists had shown great opposition to Italian immigration,¹⁷⁹ as we have already witnessed on several occasions during the early accounts of the reaction to the Italians' arrival.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Mackay Mercury*, 28 January 1892, p.3.

¹⁷⁷ *Cairns Argus*, 6 May 1892, p.3; *N.Q. Herald*, 18 May 1892, p.27.

¹⁷⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 25 November 1891, p.6.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 December 1891, p.11.

Yet even during the tumultuous first few months, it was foreseen that the Italians would be assimilated, and become very good Queenslanders.¹⁸⁰ Indeed there were quite early cases of rapid assimilation. It was related that two Italians and an Englishman, who were supposed to take a bullock to a certain destination, happened to arrive at the Reid River, and while they were in the neighbourhood of the hotel

they met a few friends and the influence of John Barley corn soon becoming paramount, the bullock being quite forgotten. Later in the evening one of the Italians mounted the Englishman's horse and crossed the river, his compatriot and the Englishman following over the railway bridge. The Italian accomplished the passage safely but the Englishman when in the centre of the bridge, forgot all about the opening between the sleepers, and tumbled head first into the riverbed, a drop of about fifteen feet.¹⁸¹

The Italian left him there, a display indicating he had not been completely assimilated, but rather reminiscent of the Italian proverb "Revenge is best eaten cold".¹⁸²

During the first few months after the Italian's arrival, it became clear that they had already been damaged by prejudices, such as those referring to their inability to settle disputes rationally,¹⁸³ or their supposed tendency to allow employers to treat them as cheap labour, one of the recurring complaints of the Labour Party regarding Italian immigration. Early in March, after the Italians had been induced to leave the plantations by Labour and Capital alike, and at the time of their most traumatic experiences, the following observation was published:

No doubt there will be a few "black sheep" among them; but the popular notion of the Italian, as an idle fellow with a knife always handy, and with indistinct ideas as to the heinousness of homicide will be dispelled by this sugar cultivation experiment.¹⁸⁴

And as far as the Italian's approach to employer-employee relationship was concerned, it was made clear from the beginning that the "new chums" were of "a cautious and shrewd character", "which can be trusted to protect them against any ill-advised attempts to depart from

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1892, p.11.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4 May 1892, p.13.

¹⁸² *Cairns Post*, 5 March 1892, p.2.

¹⁸³ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 December 1891, p.10.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1892, p.11.

the letter of their agreements, should such be made".¹⁸⁵ But I would like to conclude with the remarks of some of their employers, expressed during the most critical weeks of the Italian diaspora all over their new country of adoption:

we are, however, open to admit that they are a quiet civil set of men, neither howling, nor quarrelsome, and have probably conducted themselves far better than any equal number of Englishmen of the same standing would have done under similar circumstances.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 December 1891, p.10.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9 March 1892, p.13.

CHAPTER FOUR

North Queensland Physical Environment

From the Alps she came to the tropics; she came to the heat, bush, blacks, snakes, dingoes, mosquitoes, and fever, in the middle of nowhere. Her name: Angelina Giulia Genocchio from Rovato.¹

One of the worries of the Queensland Government, in relation to immigration, was to avoid bringing immigrants to Queensland by way of Melbourne and Sydney, because it was thought that the immigrants bound for Queensland would be pitied and consoled with by their fellow-passengers for their misfortune in having been induced to prefer "a land of burning sun, of drought, floods, hurricanes, naked blacks, Asiatics, alligators, mosquitoes, and fever", while, it was assumed, the southern states of Victoria and New South Wales were "flowing with milk and honey".²

From the recollections of descendants of the original Italian pioneers we can form an idea of the physical environment in North Queensland, of the effect their new-chosen land had on them, and also on other Italian immigrants, at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. The son of Carlo Prandolini, one of those who arrived in 1891 by the *Jumna*, said: "When father came to Australia the first time, he did not like it, and that's why he went back to Italy the first time, within twelve months".³ This remembrance by Jack Prandolini senior is followed by the comment of Mrs Giudice, the daughter of Adamo Giovanello who arrived together with Prandolini: "Oh! yes, there was a lot of land, and much liberty, but there were no people; there was nothing".⁴ Mrs Gagno, the grand-daughter of Basilio Della Vecchia who arrived together with the daughter Maria, and son Carlo, said: "Basilio regretted he left Italy till the day he died; he did not like it, and it was him who pushed the family".⁵ Mrs Giovanna Menso née Seroglia who arrived just before the first world war

¹ Jack Prandolini junior - tape 15 (in English).

² *North Queensland Herald*, 16 May 1908, p.9.

³ Jack Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

⁴ K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

⁵ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

remembered: "My husband Tom (Tommaso) Menso was three years old when they arrived here [Ayr]. It was very, very sad arriving here, there was nothing, only grass huts...The mother of this boy said: 'what a place! to leave the city and come here; only bush and Kanakas.'"⁶ Similar depressing impressions were revealed by Italian immigrants who had been encouraged by their friends or relatives already settled in North Queensland. Mr Albino Accatino, who arrived in 1913 at the age of 18, said that he had left Italy to join some of his relatives at Ingham, and he was *felice come un ganzo* (as happy as a young man in love), but then he added, as he was evoking the memories of his first impact with the new surroundings: "Had there been a road I would have gone back to Italy on foot...There was nothing, I cried like a child. It was hard; I had left my village".⁷

The Italians were unhappy not only because of the sense of isolation: "When we got here we wanted to turn back; we were disappointed. It was all different, there was nothing, we were happier in the old country",⁸ but also because of the realisation that "all they saw was work and dark people...It was a very sad place then". As the years went by the Italians realised that although the Aborigines, the Polynesians, the Chinese, the Japanese, differed in physiognomy, their minds worked just as those of the Europeans. But there is no doubt that some Italians were afraid of the blacks, Mrs Menso recalling "They were afraid of the black people". It is most probable that the Italians from the alpine villages had never seen blacks before, and statements such as "It was terrible to see the black people" alternate with specific reasons why they were so: "The Italians were afraid of the kanakas; when they saw them they were black and strong", and the newcomers thought that the Kanakas "were going to eat them up".⁹ At the time of the Italians' arrival, reported cases of cannibalism believed to have occurred in North Queensland must have been a source of apprehension for them, the *North Queensland Herald* reporting in 1892 that "besides three boys who were killed and eaten during a tribal fight, ... two boys who were half civilised, and in the care of white men, have been waylaid and killed and eaten".¹⁰ Mrs

⁶ G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

⁷ A. Accatino - tape 1 (in Italian).

⁸ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

⁹ G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

¹⁰ *North Queensland Herald*, 26 March 1892, p.3.

Anna Maranesi in Greco, from Rovato, said that her mother, who was born in 1892 and went to school at Ingham, told her that at her school they had to take special precautions because one of the school girls was taken by the blacks, cut to pieces, and then eaten.¹¹ Indeed the Italian women were also afraid of the Chinese wearing their pigtail.¹²

Mrs Angelina Prandolini née Genocchio, besides admitting that she did not like the new environment because of the isolation, explained that she was afraid of the black people, with the consequence that she cried a lot when she arrived in Australia. There were other problems as well. When recounting some of the discomfort experienced at Ingham, early in the century, she exclaimed "Mosquitoes, another problem. It was bad, for God's sake! Terrible, terrible!"¹³ In Ayr they faced the same problems: "Talking about mosquitoes you could not live without a mosquito net. We had to burn cow manure to chase the mosquitoes away; at the time it was the best thing. You put it in a tin in the house all day and night to keep them out".¹⁴ This complaint by Mrs Margherita Casalegno née Seroglia confirmed what the early century press explained with a sense of dissatisfaction: "Mosquitoes and flies are very annoying, and were never known to be so troublesome here [Ayr] before! Not only at night are the tormentors about, but during the daytime they are equally as bad".¹⁵ These simple explanations were followed by scientific clarification, but the common comment was to regard this family of Diptera as "blood-thirsty little creatures", compelling people to drape their bed with nets, and usually proving to be of "most annoyance".¹⁶ In view of the prevalence of mosquito-born diseases, it was suggested that "some steps, legislative or otherwise, should be taken to ensure the complete eradication of the mosquito so far as this state [Queensland] was concerned".¹⁷ They were "unbearable".¹⁸

Apart from the mosquitoes, readers were also reminded that in tropical climates, the drought, the enervating heat, and the sudden

¹¹ A. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

¹² T. Parisi - Herbert River, December 1984 (informal conversation).

¹³ A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

¹⁴ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

¹⁵ *North Queensland Herald*, 11 February 1901, p.47.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 February 1903, p.50.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 November 1909, p.16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 February 1903, p.50.

rains tended to undermine the strength of people, and many in Queensland fell victims to fevers. It appears from the available records that the first Italian to die from dengue fever was Lucia Della Vecchia who joined her husband Basilio in 1894. She died on 27 November 1895, at the age of 47, after one year and six months in North Queensland.¹⁹ Before the end of the century, a second-generation Italian, Luigi Baudino who was born at Ripple Creek, Herbert River, died at the age of three in 1899. His father, Agostino, was one of the *Jumna* immigrants arriving in 1891 at the age of 23, but at the time of the child's death the family lived at Charters Towers where the father worked as a woodcutter.²⁰ A few years later, just at the beginning of the new century, one of the Italian pioneers, Antonio Lorenzetti, who had travelled with Basilio and Agostino from Genoa to Townsville, succumbed to a fatal fever also.

On 19 April 1902 an inquest into the death of Antonio Lorenzetti was held at Mossman in the police district of Douglas. Lorenzetti, farm labourer and selector, had been living by himself on a selection at Saltwater Creek near Mossman for six weeks. His son, John, a labourer, used to go and visit him every Saturday. About three weeks before his death the relatives tried to persuade Lorenzetti to go into Mossman because he had become ill, but he did not do so. On one occasion Lorenzetti walked into the township and asked his son, John, to get him a bottle of rum which he did. On the same day Lorenzetti went back to the selection. On 15 April, John and several others, including the labourers Peter Tametti, Onofrio Favalaro, both residing at Mossman, brought Antonio Lorenzetti in to Mossman on a stretcher. He was very sick and very weak; he tried to talk but he could not be understood. He died as he reached the tent in the township where his wife and family lived. At the inquest Lorenzetti's daughter explained:

My name is Annie Lorenzetti. I am a school girl residing at Mossman. My father died last Tuesday. He was living at Saltwater Creek on his selection for some time before he died. He was sick for about three weeks. I went out to live with him and look after him on the Monday before last. That was on the seventh instant, when I went to my father's camp he was in bed sick. I looked after him and cooked for him, he could eat until the Sunday night before he died. He kept getting worse all the week, Sunday night was about the last time he was able to speak, he

¹⁹ Ingham Court House - Register of Deaths. Also A. Martinuzzi - Innisfail, 31 March 1986 (informal conversation).

²⁰ Charters Towers Court House - Register of Deaths.

told me he was suffering from fever. My father got everything that he asked for. I made some soup for him and he took a little of it. I accompanied my father when he was brought to the township.²¹

As the years pass, other deaths are recorded among the Italians. One of them, Felix Bossi, died in the Port Douglas district hospital towards the end of 1910, heart disease and malarial fever being the cause of his demise. The local press reported:

On Monday afternoon the funeral took place and many Italian sympathisers were present to see the remains of their countryman interred in the Port Douglas cemetery...The deceased, who had only been out in Queensland for about two years, leaves a wife and five children in Piedmont, in Italy, where they are still living.²²

Besides Italian pioneers, their wives, and children, there are also some coming from the same districts which suggests a chain migration from the alpine regions of Italy to North Queensland. There were also examples of deaths of southern Italians who might have come to North Queensland on their own initiative. It was reported that an Italian canecutter named Cordaro had died as a result of malarial fever. He was only 19 years of age, a native of Messina (Sicily), and had no relatives in Queensland.²³

We know from oral history that some of the Italian pioneers were attracted to Queensland by the weather; as it was explained by a grand-daughter: "Basilio blamed the weather in Italy because one of his sons died, he was 19, so he decided to emigrate to Queensland".²⁴ Luigi Revanni felt that the beneficial effects of the Queensland climate could restore his health.²⁵ But numerous Italian pioneers, and those who followed them, complained of the humidity, and the intensity of the tropical heat. References to the North Queensland "fierce heat" were frequent. Early in the century, for instance, Cairns had an evil reputation for its great heat, and it was said that in other parts of Australia it was understood that when wicked people died they went to

²¹ JUS/N305 - 154/1902: QSA.

²² *North Queensland Herald*, 5 November 1910, p.17.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20 August 1910, p.78.

²⁴ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

²⁵ T. Parisi - Herbert River, December 1984 (informal conversation).

North Queensland.²⁶ Towards the end of the nineteenth century it was reported from another North Queensland centre, Charters Towers, that there had been thirty five funerals in three days; this abnormal mortality was attributed to the heat, the thermometer having ranged from 100° to 116° in the shade.²⁷ For a similar reason an Italian pioneer, Pietro Beltramini, who was 45 at the time of his arrival, died, only 13 months later. He had been to Ingham to bank some money, and because of the heat he had stopped at Wickham's Retreat Hotel. He had a few glasses of water, and after cooling himself, took a glass of beer. On the same day when the heat was again "fearful", over 114° in the shade, and accompanied by hot wind, the body of Beltramini was found dead, under a pandanus tree.²⁸

On 27 January 1893 an inquest was held at Ingham, regarding Beltramini, labourer, who had been found on the Ripple Creek road on 4 January 1893, dead. John Mills, a labourer, living on Gairloch, was coming from Cardwell and walking along the road to Ripple Creek. Between Ripple Creek and Gairloch Bridge he saw a dead body alongside the road. The body was lying on the ground drawn up together with one arm stretched out and the hat over the face. He did not identify the body where he found it, but reported the matter to the police. Constable Joseph Byrne, stationed at Ingham, went at about 9 p.m. with Mills down the road to Ripple Creek. He found the body on the side of the road, examined it, and saw no signs of violence. He searched the body and found a Savings Bank Book no.231574 in the name of Beltramini Pietro showing credit of £16. There was also a purse on deceased containing six shillings and sevenpence in silver and coppers. The constable remained in charge of the body all night. The following day the body was recognised by Gettulio Bonini who knew him well for they had come out in the same ship. Beltramini had told Bonini on the 4th he was going to bank some money, and complained of a pain in the stomach, and added he felt a little weak. When William C.C. MacDonald, medical officer, examined the body of Beltramini, he found that he had ruptured an artery in the right lung which filled the cavity with blood; and the left lung was very much

²⁶ *North Queensland Herald*, 12 October 1901, p.37.

²⁷ *Herberton Advertiser and Western Observer*, 5 March 1889, p.2.

²⁸ *North Queensland Herald*, 11 January 1893, p.13.

congested. There was no blood in the heart, and death was caused by sunstroke.²⁹

Another sad case is that of a girl, Bruna Barbi, who was just 5 months 12 days old, who died from "heat apoplexy".³⁰ Mrs Penna née Beccaris, a daughter of two of the Italian pioneers, meditating on the difference of climate between North Queensland and the alpine districts where the original Italians came from, put it succinctly: "here is like an oven, there an ice-box". She went on to say that some of the Italian pioneers got despondent after their first impact with North Queensland and that some of them decided to move to other places on foot, but "not all of them reached their destinations...They were never seen again".³¹ This could probably be a reference to those Italians who dissatisfied with the conduct of Labour and Capital towards them, felt it was better to look for a change of air, an explanation already offered by the Italian press in 1907, nearly sixteen years after the arrival of the *Jumna*, when Italian readers were reminded of the Italian diaspora. Those who had left the plantations to move to other areas crossed: "thousands of miles of wild forest" on foot.³²

Reading the contemporary press one cannot help noticing the extraordinary number of deaths due to getting lost in the bush, becoming demented, and dying from thirst. At times people could get lost for the most unexpected reasons. For instance, an Assyrian hawker, who had arrived with the first camel seen in the district of Georgetown, caused a stampede amongst horses, and an Italian had to break away from him. In following them, he "got bushed". Luck was on his side for he was found after two and a half days.³³ By contrast, another Italian, who appeared to be prospecting, went in search of his horses, but never returned. When Thomas Hawley, senior constable, stationed at Charleston, was informed of the disappearance of the Italian, he went to Oaky Creek, about 18 miles from Charleston, on the Percyville road, and found a tent belonging to the Italian; also a pack saddle, two pack bags, one riding saddle, and some articles of clothing. After getting some information from the local butcher, the constable made a search. On 26 May 1893 he found a pair of moleskins

²⁹ JUS/N209 - 63/1893: QSA.

³⁰ Ingham Court House - Register of Deaths.

³¹ E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

³² *L'Italo-Australiano*, 6 April 1907, p.4.

³³ *North Queensland Herald*, 3 February 1897, p.10.

in the Robinson River, about ten miles from Oaky Creek township. He also found some human bones near a Crimean shirt.

At the inquest it was noticed there were inconsistencies about the Italian's Christian name: Martini, Martin (clearly Martino); while the family name must have been the object of the most typographical curiosities: Traversci, Travers, Travenis, Trevors (probably Traversi). The height of the man was also confusing; from under 5'4" to 5'6", 5'8", and the description of a medium-sized man. As far as the age was concerned, guesses varied from "getting on for 50 years" to "about 52", and also "about 60 years of age". He was also described as "slight build, dark hair, full beard, whiskers and moustache turning gray". It was not known whether Martino had any friends or relatives in Queensland, but there were no doubts about him being a "foreigner", an "Italian" who "walked with a stoop". He was identified by a miner, Charles Wittler, who had known Martino for about six years, and to whom he had given a pocket knife "double-bladed, white-handled, with a crack across the middle". The pocket knife was found by the constable in the left pocket of Martino's trousers, and the conclusion arrived at was: "I am of the opinion that the deceased Martini Traversci died for want of water, while travelling in the bush in search of his horses".³⁴

On another occasion the Cairns press reported that an Italian named Giovanni Serponti was referred to the police as missing. This happened in 1901,³⁵ while in 1903, another Italian by the name of Paolo Scaletti, 26, woodcutter, was found at Dotswood by the bullock paddock, dead. Very little was known about him, apart from being born in Italy, and having lived in Queensland for the previous two years. The records of the Charters Towers Court House indicate that the cause of death was that he had "probably perished from thirst".³⁶

Because of the intense heat in North Queensland, bush fires are not uncommon, and there are records that some Italians suffered from these circumstances. Early in the century, two Italians, Steve Simonelli and Dominic Masnada, the driver of his dray, were caught in a bush fire not far from Charters Towers. They were in open country with a team of 16 horses, drawing a load of wood, when, on reaching the top of a steep ridge, found the grass burning. There was no time to

³⁴ JUS/N216 - 1893/418: QSA.

³⁵ *North Queensland Herald*, 17 August 1901, p.12.

³⁶ Charters Towers Court House - Register of Deaths.

unyoke, and Simonelli's instinct was to seize the leader, and tried to rush the team through the flames:

As the leader felt the heat of the flames, it swung around, maddened with fear carrying Mr Simonelli with it, and the horses, squealing, biting and kicking, were soon inextricably tangled in the harness, while the flames passed over them, 12 being severely burned.

Simonelli, who could not recollect clearly what had happened during those minutes they were in the fire, escaped with few injuries; his forearms were severely scorched, his nose and cheek also bore marks of the flames, and his clothing took fire, but he was able to beat it out. Simonelli could not understand when thinking of those fearful minutes spent in the fire how he could still be alive. The driver, Masnada, also had a lucky escape. The heat was such that the firewood on the wagon took fire, but they put it out with water obtained from a nearby creek. Simonelli had to use his knife to free the horses, and get them out one at a time:

They were in an agony of fear and pain and were badly knocked about.

Four of the horses were in a heap one on top of the other. The horses were burnt mostly on the belly and between the legs, all the hair being burned off. One horse's mouth was in a shocking state.

In fact the condition of the animals was so serious that Simonelli thought he would lose most of them, which would have meant his financial ruin, and quietly explained: "I wouldn't mind so much if I were on my own, but when a man has a wife and family to keep -".³⁷

North Queensland had also a reputation of being, together with the north-western coast of Western Australia, a zone subject to tropical cyclones. These storms, on the north-eastern coast of Queensland, occur most frequently between January and March; they begin generally in the South Seas, and usually strike the coast between 15° and 20°S. latitude, the areas settled by Italians. Mrs Menso, née Seroglia, who came to Ayr just before the first world war, referring either to the cyclone known as "Sigma" which did so much damage to Townsville and other portions of the coast in 1896, or to "Leonta" which repeated the same disastrous performance seven years later, March 1903, recounted an extraordinary incident: "During the cyclone that blew everything at Plantation Creek where the boat used to come in, a child was blown away by the wind, and when he dropped to the ground a goose dragged him home". She was told by her husband and

³⁷ *North Queensland Herald*, 11 June 1910, p.8.

his father, and, reflecting on human nature, she added sadly: "and they cooked it the following day".³⁸

It is said that to be in a cyclone "is like being in the inside of a drum"; a cyclone was described as "hell let loose".³⁹ There are cases of Italians in North Queensland who suffered hardship, economic damage, and, at times, lost their life. One of these cyclones struck Port Douglas in March 1911, and destroyed the township. At Mossman, a few miles distant, where numerous Italians resided, it was reported that one of the locals had "declared that the end of the world was at hand":

The storm raged in all its fury from about 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. The din was terrible...Roofs started to sever their connection with the building to which they were attached...trees began to lose their leaves and branches and eventually uproot themselves..."houses smashed to smithereens"...Sheets of iron were flying in all directions...At about 9 p.m. the lull came and the second blow came from the opposite direction to the first...It was an awful night,⁴⁰

and a "never to be forgotten day".⁴¹ It was explained that these huge revolving storms bring destructive winds, torrential rain, and flooding. Moreover, instead of affecting one spot for a few minutes, the passage of a cyclone can take many hours, a frightening experience indeed.

During the storm great damage was wrought to most of the mill cottages, one of which was smashed to pieces. The occupants were forced "to flee for their lives", and their name was Lematy (Lemati?).⁴² The house of an Italian named Chirio (Ciro?) was unroofed, and the dwelling of another Italian named Rizzo was blown down.⁴³ Worst hit was another Italian named Marinoni. He and his wife and three children were in the house when it was smashed to pieces, and Marinoni was severely injured by portion of his dwelling falling upon him, and he was in a most critical state.⁴⁴ When he was

³⁸ G. Menso - tape 11 (in English). These cyclones are known as "hurricanes" in the Caribbean, and as "typhoons" in Asia.

³⁹ *North Queensland Herald*, 8 April 1911, p.18.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 March 1911, pp.24, 73. A lull in the wind, followed by its renewal from the opposite direction, is experienced only when the "eye" of the storm passes directly over a locality.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.24.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

taken to the hospital by train it was thought he would not last the journey to Port Douglas,⁴⁵ but he did, and six weeks later he was back home,⁴⁶ no doubt full of gratitude for the hospital staff. Another Italian family, the Tamiette (Tamietti?) had their house damaged. They had just made arrangements to let the house as they were leaving for Italy, but after the cyclone they decided to sell the house. The buyer got a bargain,⁴⁷ and the Italians the idea that it may have been better never to experience another cyclone again. A few years later, another cyclone which struck the coast between Townsville and Cooktown, on March 1918, damaged several centres. Gordonvale was half-demolished, and Innisfail practically "wiped out". Among the list of those who lost their lives there was..."An Italian Boy".⁴⁸

The coastal district of North Queensland is intersected by numerous streams, rivers, and other more or less important watercourses which were occasionally brought into prominence by the capture of crocodiles which infested them. From Halifax on the Herbert River, the contemporary press warned readers that crocodiles were becoming "very numerous", and advocated their destruction while young, for it would be "worthy of much praise". This example would probably spur others to do the same, with the result that the waters of North Queensland could be rid of these "dangerous brutes".⁴⁹ Usually the press referred to crocodiles as "alligators" but also used terms such as "leviathan foes", "monsters", "brutes" and others.

But most agreed on the large number of them. It was written that Queensland rivers were "haunted by ferocious alligators".⁵⁰ From the Burdekin which was said to contain "as many saurians to the gallon of water as can comfortably exist",⁵¹ and also that the place was "literally swarming"⁵² with them, to the Herbert where they were

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1911, p.69.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25 March 1911, p.74.

⁴⁸ *Queenslander*, 23 March 1918, p.11.

⁴⁹ *North Queensland Herald*, 22 May 1899, p.14.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7 October 1905, p.29.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1 December 1897, p.21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 18 September 1899, p.15.

"numerous",⁵³ and "plentiful".⁵⁴ In Cardwell there were too many of them, and they were shot,⁵⁵ but they could be found practically everywhere in streams, lagoons, creeks, rivers in North Queensland.

Apart from being pretty common in northern waters, they were also a source of wonder at the same time, because, although large and awkward, they could move very silently: "I have seen an eighteen foot alligator lying on the bank, and disappear into the water without making as much ripple as I would had I dropped a pebble in".⁵⁶ Speed was another trait: "I had a horse taken from under me when swimming the Herbert River, and it was done like a flash of lightning". The swiftness is more than equalled by their primeval violence: "I once saw a fight between two alligators in deep water; it was lashed into foam, and the clawing and snapping of jaws and lashing of tails, with the hissing and bellowing, formed a savage spectacle". And they were "bold".

Readers in North Queensland were reminded that bathing or fishing was a matter of a good deal of risk; "it behoves the local anglers to be extremely careful when indulging in their favorite sport".⁵⁷ Crocodiles lay in wait not only for incautious bathers but also for cattle.⁵⁸ It was reported that a horse went down the Burdekin for a drink, and "got his head taken clean off" by one of them.⁵⁹ Dogs taken off the chain were of frequent occurrence.⁶⁰ Crocodiles searched for human victims too. It was reported, for instance, that a crocodile emerged from the Annan, climbed up the bank, and after seizing "a gin and her piccaniny", dragged them both into the river, and drowned them.⁶¹ The Chinese complained that they had to sleep on the roofs of their humpies in order to avoid being taken out of their bunks at night.⁶²

Indeed there were several cases of people who were taken by crocodiles. Crocodiles did not discriminate; there are cases of adults,

⁵³ R.A. Johnstone, *Spinifex and Wattle*, Brisbane, 1903-1905, p.19.

⁵⁴ *North Queensland Herald*, 14 September 1898, p.9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 November 1910, p.10.

⁵⁶ Johnstone, *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *North Queensland Herald*, 7 October 1905, p.29.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 September 1899, p.15.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 October 1894, p.16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14 February 1903, p.18.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 24 October 1894, p.16.

children, different races, who were taken or believed to be taken by crocodiles in most of the watercourses of North Queensland. Yet I could not find one Italian whose death was attributed with absolute certainty to his being taken by one of them, but there are some references to events where Italians were indirectly or directly involved.

The first one concerns Dr Thomatis who had Chinese working for him in 1894, and he wrote from north of Cairns to the press to explain what had happened to one of them:

The unfortunate man was one of my gardeners, not a fisherman...The recent catastrophe took place at the very head of Thomatis Creek...It was there the unfortunate Celestial became the prey of the saurian. When he was caught he screamed out and his mate at once went to his assistance, but saw no more of him, but, *mirabile dictu*, he for fully ten minutes was hearing screams and groans under water, which became fainter every time, as the saurian was carrying his victim away out of the dam.⁶³

The second refers to Philip Caranzi, a single man, whose tracks were found leading to the water, and though the police had made "careful search" no trace of him was found. It was believed that he had fallen into the creek, and was drowned or taken by a crocodile. This happened in 1911, and it was reported from Innisfail.⁶⁴

The third incident refers to Alessandro Melocco, about 30, married with wife and children in Italy. In this case, however, it is a warning to him who had only lived in Australia for 12 months by two countrymen by the name of Alessandro Gatti and Leandro Catano. These two Italians had rowed him across the river, and when Melocco got off the boat invited the two mates to go bathing, but they replied "No, there are alligators in the river". Melocco was not taken by any crocodile, but eventually lost his life all the same, due most probably to his inability to swim.

An inquest was held at the Ingham Court House on 16 May 1913 where it was revealed that, when Melocco was missed from Allen's farm at Elma Grove, near Ingham, where he had worked for two weeks, search was made for him. Melocco's clothes were found on the bank of the Herbert river but he could not be seen, so the police was informed. Tracks of barefeet going from the clothes to the water were noticed, but none coming back. There the water was shallow for about

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 19 September 1894, p.16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 September 1911, p.5.

five yards, then suddenly dipped to a depth of 12 feet. Some items were found in the trousers' pockets: a sixpence, and a penny, some tobacco and matches, a pipe, a pocket knife, and a small brass cross. There was also a letter from a friend, Annibale Giavitto, dated 15 January 1913. In this letter Annibale, writing from Cessnock, N.S.W., regrets not having been able to find a job for one of Melocco's friends: "I explained it today to my boss, but he told me that at the moment, because of lack of work, he cannot employ anybody". Early in the morning of 20 April 1913, about 36 hours after Melocco's disappearance, his dead body was found in the river at about 35-40 yards below where the clothes were lying. There the water was about 20 feet deep, and deceased was floating in it:

The body was naked and there were no marks of violence. The body appeared quite fresh, the only mark was on the bottom lip and it appeared as if small fish had been nibbling at the lip.⁶⁵

The Herbert River claimed many Italians who most likely did not know how to swim. Indeed it seems that the first Italian pioneers to die were two young men, not even a year after their arrival in 1891. There were four of them crossing the Herbert in a punt that capsized, and the following description is the summary of the magisterial inquiry. The inquest was held at Ingham on 29 August 1892. Giovanni Rosa, 22, and Agostino Moiso, 25, both labourers, were found in the Herbert River, near Halifax, on the 28 August; they had died on Saturday, 27th. The last persons seen in company of the deceased were Luigi Parisi, 22, and Luigi Ponzano, 23, both labourers. These four young men who had travelled together from Genoa to Townsville, by the *Jumna* late in 1891, were returning home, to Macknade from Halifax, at about 10 or 11 p.m., after getting in a small flat-bottomed boat, a punt, about 8ft x 4ft in order to cross the river.

When they got half way across the river the boat struck a snag, turned on one side, and sank; but just before getting to the bottom she turned bottom upwards. Parisi and Ponzano found footing: Parisi, the water up to his chin, was standing near Ponzano who stood on his toes on the bottom and the water up to his mouth. Parisi did not see Rosa or Moiso at the time, but he could hear them struggling in the water. Ponzano was not sure, but he thought Rosa and Moiso could swim, and he did not hear or see anything of them: "I was so frightened".

⁶⁵ JUS/N526 - 1913/305: QSA.

Thomas O'Brien, police constable, stationed at Halifax, heard a voice from the river as if in distress. It was Parisi and Ponzano who were shouting for help. O'Brien got a boat, and accompanied by Fred Robinson, George Dunn, and a man named Taylor, pulled across the river. Parisi and Ponzano, who had been about twelve or fifteen minutes in the water five feet deep or thereabouts, were picked up. Moiso and Rosa were searched for, but could not be found. They had been drinking that night, but they were sober when they got in the boat. O'Brien stated that when he saw the men going to the river, Moiso, Rosa, and Parisi were "pretty sober"; Ponzano was "the worse for drink".

On the morning after, Peter Holme, a sugar planter residing at Macknade, saw two bodies lying on the bottom of the river, called for assistance, and got them out. Holme identified them as Rosa and Moiso. Both of them who had been working for him, were owed 10/- each in wages. The previous night, when the tide was in, there must have been eight or nine feet of water where the bodies were found. There were no marks of violence on the bodies, and on Rosa, who was married with his wife in Italy, the police constable found a watch and chain, and a purse containing a letter but no money. On Moiso the constable found half a crown in his pocket.⁶⁶

Less than two months after Moiso's and Rosa's death, a second-generation Italian, an infant just 11 days old drowned accidentally. His name was Luigi Aurelio Costabeber,⁶⁷ the son of Aurelio Costabeber and his wife Maria who arrived in 1891. Their age is not specified, but from immigration documents we know they were assigned to Ripple Creek where the infant died.⁶⁸ A few years later, Aurelio was again to have the unpleasant task of identifying another Italian pioneer, Pietro Savio, who drowned in the Herbert River.

Pietro Savio was found near Macknade Mill on 24 February 1896, and again the supposed cause of death was accidental drowning. On 22 February a group of Italians together with Savio had left Halifax to go to Macknade where they arrived at 6 p.m. Savio stayed, the others went on. Two days later, a ploughman by the name of John Frinaman, was working at Macknade Plantation near the Herbert River, and went down to the river for a billy of water. It was about 9 a.m. when

⁶⁶ JUS/N203 - 355/1892: QSA.

⁶⁷ Ingham Court House - Register of Deaths.

⁶⁸ IMM/124 - p.404: QSA.

he saw the body of Savio in the water. He reported it to the Macknade Mill, helped pull the body out, and bury it the same afternoon. On the day that the body was found, Richard Fadden, police constable, in charge of Halifax Police Station, and Mr Pears, the Police Magistrate at Ingham, who happened to be at Halifax, went to Macknade to examine the body, could not see any marks of suspicious circumstances, so the Police Magistrate ordered the burial. On 27 February the constable was present when Dr MacDonald made a *post mortem* examination and the constable reported him as saying "there was a bruise in the back of the head, which might have been caused by the head striking something when falling into the water". The doctor had made the following statement:

I found a large contusion on the back of the head and on opening the skull I found streaks of blood in the brain substance which was in a fluid state owing to decomposition - the body was too far advanced in decomposition to draw any inference from the state of the other organs as to cause death. The contusion mentioned must have occurred during life.

The names of the persons who had left Halifax with the deceased on 22 February were all Italian: two, Giacinto Grisello, and Giovanni Beccaris, had travelled from Genoa to Townsville with Savio, and at the time of their arrival in 1891 they were aged 40, 22 and 44 respectively. The other two were Giovanni Beccaris' brother, who arrived some time later, and Lorenzo Pensini,⁶⁹ probably nominated by some of the original immigrants.

There are other Italians, though not members of the *Jumna*, whose death was attributed to drowning. Local Ingham records show that Camillo Poggio, 34, drowned on 29 January 1919;⁷⁰ from the contemporary press we know that another Italian, Francesco Frederici, who came to Ingham from the north coast of New South Wales, was found in the Herbert River near Halifax, in December 1910.⁷¹ The Herbert River was not the only one to claim Italian victims. Further north, at Innisfail, it was reported that the body of an Italian was found in the Johnstone River, that there were no suspicious circumstances connected with the case, and that the body which

⁶⁹ JUS/N242 - 1896/237: QSA.

⁷⁰ Ingham Court House - Register of Deaths.

⁷¹ *North Queensland Herald*, 24 December 1910, p.5.

appeared to have been in the water for several days had been buried.⁷²

Depositions taken at the inquest held at Innisfail on 29 August 1908 indicate that the Italian's name was Joseph (Joe) Belotti, that death was due to drowning, and a *post mortem* examination not considered necessary. Belotti had been staying at Walton's Crown Hotel, Innisfail, for about two and a half weeks when on 31 July 1908 at 8.30 a.m. he left stating he was going to Kerr's for work. Kerr's place was situated near the bank of the Johnstone River, at Sundown. Belotti did not take his swag, saying that if he got work he would come back and get it.

On 3 August, 72 hours later, an Aborigine reported to William Varney, overseer at Barclay's Farm, who was working in the paddock, that a body was floating in the river. Varney, who thought the body had been dead 30 hours, informed Edward Barclay, cane farmer, of Sundown, at about 10 a.m. of the corpse in the river, opposite his farm. Barclay took a boat and some assistants, and found the body of Belotti floating face downwards. He placed a rope around it, towed it ashore, turned it over on its back, covered it with grass, and left it there while he went to town to report to the police at about 2 p.m. He thought the body had been dead for about 48 hours.

Immediately after being informed constable Goodger went to the spot where he found the body fully dressed in a check coat, a brown sweater, a belt, a pair of dark trousers, and common lace-up boots. He examined the body and found no marks of violence or foul play. Then, while on the way to the hospital morgue by boat, stopped on the bank of the river where Dr P.E. Leavy, the Government Medical Officer, examined the body at about 5 p.m. He noticed that *rigor mortis* had not set in, that the face was greatly inflamed, and had marks of "fish bights". After examining very carefully for any suspicious signs, the doctor came to the conclusion that everything appeared normal as far as his clothes were concerned. He believed drowning was the cause of death, and thought death had occurred about 12 hours previous to his examination. Constable Goodger then took the body to the morgue where it was identified by John Malone, hairdresser, who knew Belotti as "Italian Joe", and was almost certain that deceased's name was Joseph Belotti. Constable Goodger knew Belotti but he did not know his name. Belotti was also identified by Edward Walton, licensee of the

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8 August 1908, p.6.

Crown Hotel, with whom Belotti had left a savings bank passbook showing nothing to credit. Belotti had no relatives in the district.⁷³

But I would like to conclude this segment on Italian immigrants who perished in the water with the death of another Italian pioneer by the name of Pietro Corbellaro, who was destroyed by the fury, then redeemed by the majesty, of the ocean. Pietro had arrived at the age of 26, and was assigned to the Kalamia Mill, Ayr.⁷⁴ Nearly ten years later in May 1901, the Police Magistrate at Port Douglas wired the Home Secretary that the body of an Italian was found on the beach near Cooper's Creek, and police had been despatched with a boat to investigate and bury the body.⁷⁵

On 30 May an inquest was held at Port Douglas during which it was disclosed that Pietro and another Italian named Antonino had left their camp at Cooper's Creek in a dinghy, with the intention of carrying some goods to Baily's Creek. Antonino, after they got out a bit from Cooper's Creek Heads, thought it was not safe as the sea was too rough, and was frightened, but Pietro thought it was not as bad as Antonino imagined, and so went on. But when they were at about 100 yards from the shore a rough sea capsized the dinghy. Pietro drowned. Antonino swam to safety; he "must have been an excellent swimmer and it is a pity that he did not try to take deceased ashore when the boat capsized and they were near land".

When Pietro's humpy was searched, there was discovered a Government Savings Book No.281959 and £10 to his credit; also £2.0.7 in cash, some documents and letters. There were some farming tools valued at about £1.

The body was found eight days after the date of death, in an advanced state of decomposition, "face downwards, half the head was buried in the sand, the arms were under the body with the hands crossed under the stomach, the legs slightly drawn up the knees". The dinghy was lying a short distance away from him, about a quarter of a mile from Cooper's Creek Heads. The body of Pietro Corbellaro, 5ft 11½ inches tall, of black hair, was buried on the beach "above high water mark".⁷⁶

⁷³ JUS/N404 - 413/1908: QSA.

⁷⁴ IMM/124 - p.403: QSA.

⁷⁵ *North Queensland Herald*, 3 June 1901, p.6.

⁷⁶ JUS/N296 245/1901: QSA.

During the late part of the 19th and the early 20th century, numerous Italians expressed their dissatisfaction at the first impact with their adopted land, as can be inferred from oral history accounts of their descendants. They understood the positive aspects for it was large, fertile, rich, and free, but they also felt isolated; they had little contact with other people, contrasting so much with their gregarious life in the Italian villages and towns. They missed their piazzas, the churches, the inns, the security offered by being a member of an extended family, or a close-knit community. They were disturbed by the primitive conditions, the bush and the blacks, worried by reported cases of cannibalism, tormented by innumerable noxious insects (mosquitoes, flies), or other animal (locusts, caterpillars, grasshoppers, rats), or vegetable (lantana) pests: "Truly we live in the land of pests, as soon as one is gone another turns up".⁷⁷

Several of them succumbed to the surrounding influences (malarial fevers, heat) or to the unfamiliar, dangerous, treacherous environment. Names of the original Italian pioneers alternate with their offsprings, members of their families, relatives, friends, acquaintances; and also with unrelated or unknown Italians. Fever killed a member of the *Jumna* shipload, Antonio Lorenzetti; the son of another (Baudino) born at Ripple Creek, the wife of a third (Della Vecchia) who had joined him shortly after. It also took the life of Felix Bossi from Piedmont, a fact which suggests his having been nominated by an earlier arrival. Fever also killed a 19 year old Sicilian who had no one in Queensland, and only his surname given, Cordaro. Another pioneer, Pietro Beltramini, and a child, Bruna Bardi, a generation later, died from heat apoplexy.

We also know from oral recollections that some Italian pioneers, when travelling to various areas of Queensland, did not reach their destinations, and some others died anonymously, while a Giovanni Serponti was simply reported to the police as missing. There are also those identified as Italians, though they had not arrived by the *Jumna* in 1891, who perished in North Queensland for want of water (Scaletti, and Traversi). Simonelli, and Masnada, were punished but spared by the grass fire.

When Mossman was struck by the centre of a cyclone immense damage was caused, and numerous Italians had their property practically completely destroyed (Lemati and Tamietti families, Ciro, Rizzo, and the Marinoni family). John Marinoni, the father, was also

⁷⁷ *North Queensland Herald*, 26 February 1896, p.29.

gravely hurt, and to rub salt into the wound, his cottage let for rent was unroofed.⁷⁸ And at Innisfail, a few years later, an Italian boy was killed by another huge storm.

The northern waters claimed many Italians. The death of Caranzi due most probably to a saurian attack is a remarkable example, for most of the deaths occurred by drowning. The Italian pioneers Moiso, Rosa, Savio, and also the later arrivals Melocco, Poggio, Frederici drowned in the Herbert; while an infant son of another pioneer, Costabeber, lost his life at Ripple Creek. Joe Belotti, fully clothed, was found floating by an Aborigine in the Johnstone River; and the sea lapping the coast of the far north slew Corbellaro.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, a topic most frequently dwelt upon by the descendants of the Italian pioneers, their relatives, friends, and acquaintances were snakes. Indeed they loom as the symbol of North Queensland. They could be found anywhere, anytime. A few months after the arrival of the Italian pioneers, some illustrations and information about picturesque North Queensland conveyed the idea of its tropical, fierce vegetation, the fertility of its soil, the exuberance of the crops, and it was added that almost anywhere in the coast district from Townsville to Cooktown "The scrub abound[ed] with palms, ferns, and giant trees, as well as living denizens of the reptile order".⁷⁹

Reports from Ingham indicated that snakes were being captured or killed while feasting on fowls;⁸⁰ others, at Halifax, were found in bedrooms getting into people's bed.⁸¹ Their size varied: from 9ft to 15ft, 17-18ft, and 22ft long 18" wide.⁸² The son of an Italian pioneer recalled nostalgically:

Many snakes...too much bush; good old days! My sister once got bitten. She got on a stump to get on the horse and the snake was there. Snakes everywhere...I have opened the eggs, and out come the little snake...I can't remember what happened to my sister, I was only six; it must have been a tree snake.⁸³

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 March 1911, p.24.

⁷⁹ *Queenslander*, 19 March 1892, p.538.

⁸⁰ *North Queensland Herald*, 28 April 1897, p.16.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 26 February 1896, p.29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2 April 1906, p.34; 26 February 1896, p.29; 28 April 1897, p.16; 13 July 1898, p.13.

⁸³ Jack Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English). He was referring not only to the harmless green tree-snake, but also to the oviparous Australian snakes.

Another Italian, Albino Accatino, after spending many years in the bush had learnt to live with them, and recounted: "I was bitten once by a snake, when I was ploughing. I cut myself and bound tightly above the bite; then I went to the hospital". Yet, he could still relive the scene and the scaring impact: "It was like the peck of a hen. It made such an impression on me!", and, then, gazing meditatively, brought to an end the subject: "I killed many snakes".⁸⁴

Angelina Prandolini found a snake under the pillow at Halifax;⁸⁵ Domenica Rotondo, from Sicily, abhorred them, and found a stratagem to combat the reptiles:

I was afraid of snakes...everytime I walked out the house I could see a snake; I do not want to think of it. I had agreed with my husband that everytime I saw one I would hoist a white cloth outside the house so that he could come back and kill him.⁸⁶

Margherita Casalegno thinking of the first night she spent in the bush at Ayr, just before World War I, could relive the early state of utter desolation: "...the day after our arrival we had to find our own places. We found a place, it was full of snakes. They would not let me sleep; it was my second night, it was frightening".⁸⁷

Pia Vettovali, who came from the same district as one of the original Italian pioneers, Carlo Carnazzola, was terrified: "Snakes disturbed me. I was so much afraid; they frightened me more than anything, I could see them even in the house, and I was so much afraid".⁸⁸ Domenica Rotondo, who arrived in 1921, and resided at Lannercost, could not refrain from recounting what had happened to her sister in law, as it was explained by her husband: "...his sister, on one occasion, climbed a large tree, and a carpet snake coiled round her, and she was screaming 'kill him' 'kill him', but they reassured her 'don't get frightened; he won't harm you, we don't kill him because he eats the rats.' I always remember this".⁸⁹ This passive reaction induced by economic considerations is a reference to the carpet snake and certain other species that are useful in so far as they prey upon rodents, another pest. In fact these carpet snakes were recognized as

⁸⁴ A. Accatino - tape 1 (in Italian).

⁸⁵ A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

⁸⁶ D. Rotondo - tape 18 (in Italian).

⁸⁷ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

⁸⁸ P. Vettovali - tape 20 (in Italian).

⁸⁹ D. Rotondo - tape 18 (in Italian).

being comparatively harmless, except to hen-roosts and nervous human beings.

Jack Prandolini, also went on to explain that, if some species were not dangerous, others were deadly, and graphically described an encounter with one of them:

I am working with the horse scarifying; nothing in my hands, only the reins of the horse; turn around...a black snake come along and stands up that high...I never moved, if I moved I am gone. He looked at me, I never moved. Before he went down the creek he still stood up and have a look at me, and I was still standing like that. If I moved I am gone...That black snake, if I moved I'd be gone. And even the cheek before he went down the creek, he still had another look at me.⁹⁰

Mrs Prandolini who had been listening attentively could not keep herself back from other details:

My cousin was sitting and a snake crawled over, and my mother "For God's a sake Lorraine, do not move!" As soon as the snake got away my cousin burst into laughing "I am dead, I am dead, I am dead". My mother asked her "Are you bitten?" "No, I am not bitten, but I am dead just the same".

And Mrs Prandolini rounded off the argument with a rider: "It is an awful feeling for a snake to crawl across your legs".⁹¹

Mrs Rose Leahy, the daughter of one of the original pioneers, Vincenzo Spelta, however, coped and became insouciant. She was born at Ayr in the bush, and said: "There were a few snakes around at the time: I was not afraid, I killed them with a stick or shovel. They were in the paddock, or in the house; we were not afraid though".⁹²

The same applied to children. Some were afraid, and Mrs Giudice, daughter of one of the original pioneers, Adamo Giovanello, recalled some of these events when living at Aloomba, south of Cairns: "In the evening the children called out for help because of the rats and snakes, and father rushed in with a gun, and shot them dead", but she herself was not afraid, and could still remember after 80 years the fascination that one particular snake exerted on her:

I remember that my father had made a cage where he kept a snake; everybody called him *diamond snake*. One of the most beautiful, of many colours. My father had to kill him because I used to put my fingers in the holes father had made to make him breathe. He was so

⁹⁰ Jack Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² R. Leahy - tape 9 (in English).

beautiful! Everybody called him *diamond snake*. I remember very well...The snake I remember as if it were now. I always put my fingers in the holes: I wanted to touch him.⁹³

On 11 March 1920 local records indicate that a boy, Palmo Pasquarelli, aged 7, born at Halifax, was bitten by a snake, and died nine hours after the bite at the Ingham Hospital. On the same day, Giuseppina Luppi, housewife, from Lombardy, was mortally bitten by a snake after living in Queensland during the preceding seven years; she died after 15 hours at the Ingham Hospital. And both of them are buried at the old Ingham cemetery.⁹⁴ On her headstone the inscription is fading, but one can still read:

Giuseppina Luppi
che morì il giorno 11.3.1920
mordata da una serpe
all'età di anni 54

Giuseppina Luppi
who died on 11.3.1920
bitten by a snake
at the age of 54

This was a reminder of the insecure surroundings they lived in; and the epitaph itself inclines the writer to reflect on the power of words. That obsolete past participle *mordata* (bitten) reveals the influence of the regional dialect, and its onomatopoeic quality conveys very vividly the snake's lightning attack and voracity.

⁹³ K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

⁹⁴ Ingham Court House - Register of Deaths.

CHAPTER FIVE

Italian Settlement - Economy

The evidence available is insufficient to provide a detailed account of the experiences in Australia of every one of the Italian migrants of 1891. But enough evidence survives about members of the group, and of other Italians in North Queensland during the period 1891-1921, to build up a kind of mosaic of the experiences they shared.

It took only a few years for the Italian agriculturalists from the alpine regions of Italy who were brought to North Queensland by Fraire to double their numbers by bringing their families and friends as nominated passengers. By that time they were settled not only in the Burdekin Delta and on the Herbert River where they grew cane, but they had moved further north in the district of Cook, to the Aloomba Estate near Cairns, and as far as Port Douglas.¹

The introduction of relatives and friends was perceived as a very effective way of obtaining the right class of immigrants. People who had prospered themselves in North Queensland could explain the opportunities of improvement for their extended families and friends, and could be trusted to encourage to immigrate only those able to use those opportunities. These people were not going to disrupt established labour relations, nor would they become a burden on the state.² This was an important economic consideration, particularly if compared with previous experiences with immigration in Queensland. It was stated, for instance, that British immigrants brought to the colony at the public expense "were cosseted in immigration barracks until they found work at rates of pay and under conditions equal to their immoderate expectations". Their greed was coupled with other defects such as laziness, subversion, and ingratitude; they had become "the loafers" in the eastern towns of Queensland, the colony's "professional agitators", and "the men who wrote to English provincial newspapers describing Queensland as little better than the hell of Calvinists".³

By the late 1890s the North Queensland press openly welcomed the prospect of the arrival of families from the north of Italy because it

¹ *North Queensland Herald*, 31 July 1899, p.54.

² *Ibid.*, 6 September 1902, p.14.

³ *Ibid.*, 4 April 1894, p.10.

was obvious that the Italians settled in North Queensland had made the land "profitable", thereby increasing the prosperity of the districts in which they had settled.⁴ Italian immigration was urged not only because the Italians were an economic asset, but also because their example could elevate the morality of the nation. J.P. Wilson, Consul for Italy, after a tour in the north of Queensland to enquire about Italian workers who were engaged in sugar plantations, and on mining fields, reported

Wherever Italian immigrants settled they have proved thrifty and industrious. Most of them came from the agricultural districts of North Italy, and as workmen they are steady and reliable. They adapted themselves splendidly to the conditions prevailing in the canefields, and their conduct, judging from official reports, has been exemplary in the highest degree. Many others are engaged in tin mining, and all of them are doing so well that they are likely to become very useful settlers.⁵

Similar views were expressed in a letter written by the Agent-General to the Premier of Western Australia after a tour of Italy: "I am now more impressed than ever with the conviction that Australia cannot acquire a more valuable asset than a body of these industrious and temperate agriculturists".⁶

Italian immigrants from the north of Italy were recommended for their character, knowledge, industry, and thrift: qualities antithetic to those of their British counterpart. It was reported that a farmer, as a rule, did not remonstrate with his British employees for slovenly work, for they would almost invariably leave him; recurring complaints concerned the drinking habits of the men, and also their unreliability. As a case in point it was written: "I have only four immigrants left out of twenty. The others have all broken their agreements for the following reasons:

- (a) one, work not suitable - was a fisherman;
- (b) three, thought they could do better south;
- (c) one, health bad;
- (d) one, left because his mate did;
- (e) two, wanted to try mining;
- (f) one, because he was frightened of the others;
- (g) two, tired of work - weather hot;

⁴ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1899, p.54.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 July 1908, p.18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 September 1906, p.41.

- (h) four, got a month's imprisonment for misconduct, and I cancelled agreements;
- (i) one, stole his father's money and cleared out, heard he went back to England. And to conclude, one of the remaining four was unable to do heavy work.⁷

Some pleaded in favour of Italian immigration for general and specific reasons: "The possibility of adding a desirable element to our present population is one which a country like Queensland cannot afford to overlook",⁸ a reference to the necessity to exclude Asiatics, to avert "the swamping of the European race here".⁹ As a correspondent writing from London to Dr Arthur, the President of the Immigration League of Australasia, indicated:

Australians as a whole do not seem to realise that immigration is the one great question of importance to themselves. The last few years has brought Australia on the chess board of international politics. At present you are the "pawns" protected by England's "knights". But right down in the feelings of many folk over here is the opinion that unless the "pawns" advance, it may pay to lose them,...Australia must fill up or go under.¹⁰

Letters were written in which the greatness of America was attributed to "a continual stream of desirable immigrants, the want of which will prevent the development of our resources".¹¹ Others supported immigration on humanitarian grounds, but at the same time expressed their pessimism:

The Australian politician who will advocate immigration because it will benefit the immigrants, and because to do good is a national duty, neglect of which deteriorates nations just as it does individuals has still to step forward.¹²

Although widely recommended, migration was not universally supported at this time. Unwillingness to open Australia to more European immigrants was, however, justified on the grounds that, as

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9 May 1909, p.49.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 October 1899, p.6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 January 1909, p.5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 May 1908, p.45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8 October 1906, p.6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 20 June 1908, p.9.

McGowen, leader of the Labour party, put it "there was not yet work enough or land enough for the native born".¹³

In the specific case of Italians, a London correspondent wrote that many of them would have been happy to emigrate to Australia "if they were given a moderate amount of encouragement,"¹⁴ and advice was also offered on how to get Italian immigrants.¹⁵ Indeed Professor Herbert Strong of Liverpool University, but formerly of Melbourne University, urged Australia not only to make a bid for the Italians from the alpine regions "who are very strong and inured to roughing it, and can stand heat and cold alike", but even for southern Italians "perhaps some of the hardy Calabrese, who are strong and sober, if hot blooded" for they would serve to fill up some of the blank places of the continent.¹⁶

No one, however, seems to have recommended, supported, urged, and done so much for Italian immigration into Queensland as Fraire. Fraire knew North Queensland and North Italy well and always felt anxious to see a steady flow of Italians from Piedmont and Lombardy because he was convinced that it would be "for the benefit of the two countries".¹⁷ Fraire had several interviews with Philp,¹⁸ negotiated with Dickson, the Premier,¹⁹ convinced Barnett, Consul for Italy in Brisbane, to write a letter to the other members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly introducing him as the man who in 1891 had recruited the original Italian pioneers who had "supplied a want in the north of the Colony in the sugar industry and other agricultural work".²⁰ This was done in 1899.

A few years later, in January 1905, Fraire submitted a scheme for supplying labourers to the sugar industry, who were likely to be required in North Queensland during the following few years as the South Seas Islanders were repatriated. He suggested the selection of peasants from Northern Italy, the emigrant paying four pounds towards his passage money. The balance of the fare would be paid by

¹³ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1908, p.18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 January 1906, p.18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 October 1906, p.18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11 June 1906, p.69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1899, p.54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 July 1899, p.38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1899, p.54.

²⁰ PRE A/242 1907 paper 844: QSA.

the Queensland Government, but refunded by deductions from wages. Immigrants would come to Queensland under contract to work for two or three years for their employers. During this period the labourer would be paid 18-20 shillings per week and found. The employer would deduct two shillings per week to repay the balance of the passage money. Except for the level of money wages, the proposal was similar to the system by which Pacific Islanders were imported, and as such it was bound to be opposed by the Labour movement.

Fraire was prepared to select the labourers in Italy at a remuneration that the Under-Secretary considered "fair", and reaffirmed his belief that if the selection was carefully made the labourers from Northern Italy would "not only prove themselves suitable men for the Sugar Industry, but they [would] in time cultivate in the State the products that they have been accustomed to grow in Italy, and in other ways be desirable colonists". A week later Fraire received a reply regarding the details of his scheme informing him that "it would conflict with legislation passed by the Commonwealth in respect to immigration".

Two years later, in 1907, Fraire offered his services to the Queensland Government again. His wish was to be appointed as a "Commercial and Immigration Agent" for the South of Europe, but he was informed that "it [was] not the intention of the Government to appoint any person in such capacity".²¹

Towards the end of 1911 Fraire made another attempt to be employed as a Commercial Agent for the South of Europe. He explained that it had been for many years his desire to see the peasants of Northern Italy settled in Queensland because they were "industrious and hard-working", while the coastal land of the North offered great natural resources. He was convinced that "no more suitable frugal and industrious emigrants could be settled on these lands". In his letter he stressed "the necessity to populate the north with a suitable class of people" and explained that his object was to work for the benefit of the two countries. Two weeks later a letter by P.J. McDermott, Under-Secretary, informed him that "no appointments of that character are now in contemplation".²²

From this protracted correspondence from 1899 to 1911 it can be inferred that Fraire left no stone unturned to get good Italian

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² PRE A/384 1911, paper 9612: QSA.

agriculturalists from the northern regions to settle in North Queensland. He contacted mills, and wrote to G.H. Pritchard, President of the Townsville Chamber of Commerce, in reference to a letter that he had received from Mr Finucane, Commercial Agent for Southern Europe, that the matter of who selected agriculturists was of small importance: "the principal part is that the men selected are of the right class to do the work they are required for".²³ Indeed during the final stages of this correspondence Fraire refers to his efforts to procure Italian immigrants as his "hobby".²⁴

During the same period Fraire's projects were reported in the North Queensland press, and also in the Italian papers published in Sydney,²⁵ the aim being to advertise the suitability of the Italian agriculturists with a view to facilitate their immigration. As it was explained before the end of the nineteenth century the scheme suggested by Fraire would have been a real benefit to the colony for the following reasons:

- (a) none of the Italians had given up working on the land for shop-keeping;
- (b) there was difference between the farmers from the north of Italy and the Italian labour which had been pouring into America;
- (c) these men were skilled agriculturalists;
- (d) the experience of years had proved the extreme difficulty of importing from the British Isles men who would go to work on the land as soon as they arrived here, and remain at that work.²⁶

Fraire also tried to put at rest any fear or suspicion about Italian immigration by proposing to import a modest number of agriculturalists, and made clear that whenever it seemed desirable their importation could be stopped,²⁷ but there is abundant evidence that for Italians trying to come to Queensland was an uphill battle.

With the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act, Italians were the object of official obstruction whether they travelled in groups or singly. In 1902 it was made public that 30 Italians were refused

²³ PRE A/242 1907, paper 844: *Ibid.*

²⁴ PRE A/384 1911, paper 9612: *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Oceania*, 15 August 1914, p.4.

²⁶ *North Queensland Herald*, 31 July 1899, p.54.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

admission, but subsequently admitted²⁸ and then, in the same year, an Italian travelling solo had similar problems, but was eventually allowed to land.²⁹ The Premier of Queensland, William Kidston, recognised the necessity for an influx of population, but added: "We must have European races. We prefer British people, but if we can't get them we shall recruit our population from North Europe, Scandinavia".³⁰ The difficulties were not all at the Australian end; the Italian Government was also making it difficult for Italians to emigrate. The London correspondent of the *N.Q. Herald* wrote that Italy had passed a new Emigration law, under which only 20 nominated Italians could be sent to Queensland a year; more, the bureaucratic procedure was so time-consuming and complicated that nominators and nominated would probably forget the whole thing altogether. This law was probably due to the distress that large numbers of Italian emigrants had experienced in Argentina.³¹

Another problem for the Italians who had been nominated was that they had to go to London to embark, which meant at best a further expense. Lack of English could have been an insurmountable barrier for people who in many cases could only speak their dialect. Indeed the North Queensland press understood that prospective Italian immigrants were prevented from coming by the cost of travel and all the complications associated with it, and pointed out that if Queensland wanted immigrants of this class, arrangements should have been made to save them that cost.³²

Fraire felt that the experience of having to go to London was so traumatic that most of the Italians already settled in Queensland preferred to pay the full passage of their relatives and friends rather than to nominate them through the Government. A few years after the landing of the first shipload of Italians from Genoa, Fraire had made several applications to the Government, at the request of the immigrants already here, to allow their nominated friends and relatives to embark at an Italian port instead of going to London, but all efforts proved fruitless.³³

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 October 1902, p.24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1902, p.17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 September 1908, p.41.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11 April 1903, p.24.

³² *Ibid.*, 31 July 1899, p.54.

³³ *Oceania*, 15 September 1914, p.4.

Some of the complications that Italians experienced in trying to join their relatives in Queensland were mentioned by Fraire as late as 1914. He explained that a husband had nominated his wife and daughter, and paid the required fee. After waiting some months for the necessary papers from the Agent-General in London, the wife and daughter paid their railway fare to London, about £4, and waited some days in London before being informed that they could not have the passage money. Not until about two years from the day they were first nominated, were they united in Queensland. A farmer on the Burdekin preferred to pay the full passage of his wife and five children, instead of nominating them, although he could not well afford it at the time.³⁴

Fraire was convinced that if the Government enabled Italians who paid the nomination fee to take the steamer at Genoa or Naples, the number of Italians settled in North Queensland "with happy families and comfortable homes" would be thousands instead of a few hundred, with the result that both the immigrants and Queensland would benefit. In a tone of fatalism, but also optimism, he concluded: "For some years I made efforts, but with no satisfactory results. I am now satisfied to let things take their own course, but trust that some day the merits of these people will be recognised, and suitable facilities offered".³⁵

Although the numbers of Italians coming to Queensland were not as large as Fraire wished, there is evidence, particularly from oral history, that a kind of chain migration had been taking place. Dr Giuseppe Capra, a priest, who was specially commissioned by the Italian Government to visit Australia in 1908, noticed that when he left Genoa there were 397 passengers bound for Australia; of these 15 were Italians, but not one of them was going to North Queensland.³⁶ By contrast, the following year, the same visitor found himself travelling from Melbourne to Sydney with 14 Italians from Piedmont who were on their way to work on cane farms in North Queensland.³⁷ During the same year he noticed that the Italian pioneers of 1891 who had done well, had sponsored their relatives and friends creating a

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ G. Capra, *Italica Gens*, June-September 1912, Torino, pp.177-78.

³⁷ G. Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, no.2, Roma, p.69.

chain migration "modest but constant".³⁸ He stated that among the countrymen seen in Queensland, 120 were miners, 200 woodcutters, 80 peasant/farmers, 700 engaged in the cultivation of sugarcane, 50 fishermen, and 150 employed in other occupations.³⁹

The North Queensland press reported that out of 44 nominated passengers who had arrived by the *Kyarra* from London, there were eleven Italians, "who left for the sugar plantations as soon as they could".⁴⁰ On another occasion four Italians arrived by the R.M.S. *Ortona* which had on board about eighty from the British Isles.⁴¹ Three months later five Italians travelled with over a hundred Britons and a dozen Germans.⁴² A group of 14 Italians: "a fine-looking class of young immigrants, all enjoying the qualifications of youth and physical strength" arrived by the *Wodonga*, and they left by the *Mourilyan* for Lucinda Point, where they were going to be employed in the sugar industry on the Herbert River.⁴³ There is also an instance of one Italian who was on his own and travelled by the *Otranto* from London together with over 200 Queensland Government immigrants.⁴⁴ This suggests he probably had some knowledge of the English language, for in the other cases Italians travelled in groups. There are also three Italians who travelled by the *Ormuz*, and were the only ones booked for Lucinda. All the other Queensland Government immigrants were booked to Brisbane.⁴⁵ There were also Italians who came to be engaged as charcoal burners, and who left for Mount Garnet as soon as they arrived. The reporter explained: "They are natives of Northern Italy...and though their knowledge of English

³⁸ G. Capra, *Italica Gens*, February 1911, No.2, Torino, p.70. Also in *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1910, no.8, Roma, pp.43-44.

³⁹ G. Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", 1909, Milano, p.23. In North Queensland, wood was the universal fuel for domestic cooking, and for the stationary steam engines in mines and sugar mills. Large numbers of men, carts and horses were constantly employed in maintaining the supply.

⁴⁰ *North Queensland Herald*, 25 July 1903, p.14.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18 July 1908, p.11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 17 October 1908, p.11.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 27 March 1909, p.31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 July 1910, p.35.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1910, p.42.

'as she is spoke' is small, there is little doubt that they have a comprehensive grasp of their trade".⁴⁶

It appears that these Italians were nominated by relatives or friends, and had the initiative to go to London in order to save some of the passage money. There were also cases of Italians who, as Fraire had explained, preferred to pay the full fare from Italy rather than travel to London. The Brisbane press reported that six Italians who had arrived together with a shipload of Britons, had paid full passage money from Naples, and they were said to be industrious workers, possessed of capital, and intending to proceed to Townsville "to devote themselves to farming in North Queensland".⁴⁷

This was an indulgence, however, that Adamo Giovanello, who arrived in 1891 could not afford; his wife with two children had to go to London first. One of their daughters, Mrs Giudice, shaking her head, could not refrain from showing sorrow and admiration for her mother: "She was a courageous woman, she went to London without being able to speak one single word of English".⁴⁸ Eventually a week or so after leaving from London, the ship reached Naples, where Mrs Giovanello with the two children, were joined by other Italians who had preferred to pay the full fare rather than go to London first. Here she encountered Mrs Baudino who was on her way to join her husband, another of the 1891 pioneers:

She [Mrs Baudino] was crying, so mother asked her the reason. The porters were refusing to carry her luggage because she did not have any money. My mother then told the porter "If you don't carry her suitcases I'll fill your face with slaps". The porter wanted to be paid, but what with the pity and what with the threat, complied.⁴⁹

Most of the Italians who arrived by the *Jumna* in 1891 were classified as single men, but in fact many were married and had left their families behind only temporarily; the idea was to reunite as soon as the possibility arose. Jack Prandolini senior explained that some Italians had to put aside money to get established, and worked six or seven years before they could afford to send for their wives and family. Reflecting on those events, he exclaimed: "Terrible!"⁵⁰ Teresa

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 January 1902, p.12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 March 1906, p.17.

⁴⁸ Mrs K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Mr Jack Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

Maranesi who enumerates Cocchetti, one of the pioneers, as an ancestor, recollected that her grand-mother left from Marsiglia in France by a sailing boat with three children to join her husband at Halifax.⁵¹ From immigration records it is possible to see that Antonio Lorenzetti who arrived in 1891 classified as a single man, was joined in 1899 by his family consisting of the wife Luigia, 47, sons Giovanni and Lorenzo, respectively 17 and 9; and daughter Anna, 11.⁵²

Mrs Penna née Beccaris said that as soon as the pioneers got on their feet they helped relatives, friends, and acquaintances to come to Australia. Her father nominated two brothers to come to Queensland, though only one joined him in the north; the other preferred the more temperate climate of Brisbane.⁵³ The father of Mario Origliasso followed his two brothers, Nicholas and Federico, as late as 1906.⁵⁴ Albino Accatino joined some relatives named Cattana in 1913.⁵⁵

Some Italians were induced to leave Italy by descriptions of Australia. Giovanna Menso née Seroglia said: "We had an uncle here who made things look so nice that we came here...My father said: 'let's try for five years'".⁵⁶ Some left Italy because they understood that war was imminent and preferred a safe place for their family. Thomas Charles Menso born at Ayr explained that his father was nominated by his uncle, and arrived in Townsville just before World War I, and settled at Ayr.⁵⁷ On other occasions it was extreme necessity which compelled Italians to emigrate. Mrs Giudice née Giovanello said: "My husband came from the Valtellina, and arrived here in 1910. My husband had nothing; he came to Australia to pay the debts he had in Italy".⁵⁸

There are cases of Italians who had already emigrated to other countries before trying Queensland. Solotore Augustus Robino, from Lucinda near Ingham, explained he was born in 1897, and arrived in Queensland early in the century when he was nine, adding that his father had emigrated to America first, where he had two brothers. He

⁵¹ Mrs T. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

⁵² IMM/127, p.136: QSA.

⁵³ Mrs E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

⁵⁴ Letter from Mr Mario Origlasso - dated 2 September 1984 - from Ingham.

⁵⁵ Mr A. Accatino - tape 1 (in Italian).

⁵⁶ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

⁵⁷ Informal conversation with Mr T.C. Menso - Ayr, 14 April 1986.

⁵⁸ Mrs K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

worked as a miner and got phthisis, so he went back to Italy, but after a few months he, together with the family, came to Queensland, nominated by Robino's uncle, Vignolio, who was already established at Halifax.⁵⁹

There were instances of Italians who, unhappy with their first experience of Queensland, preferred to experiment with other countries, but eventually settled in Australia. Carlo Prandolini, who was thirty at the time of his arrival in 1891, left because he did not like the place and moved to Argentina. After a few years there he went back to Italy, collected his wife and their five children, and returned to Australia convinced that it was the best land he had visited.⁶⁰

At times the initiative to come back to Australia was taken by the children themselves. Mrs Giudice, née Giovanello, said that when her father died the mother took the children back to Italy. Two of them were born in Italy and three in Australia. The eldest was Francis who did not want to stay in Italy, so she wrote to a lady who sent her the money to come back to Australia. Then Francis called Mary, later the two brothers, and finally the mother and Mrs Giudice came back together.⁶¹

In several instances a visit to Italy on holiday was followed by the migration of relatives or friends. It is easy to understand that the presence of one who had prospered enough to afford such a holiday would be more persuasive than any letter. Giuseppe Menso went to Italy on holiday, and came back with two nephews.⁶² Casalegno took the family to Italy on holiday in 1911, but due to the Tripoli war they shortened their stay and came back. But when in Italy Casalegno met people from the same town who came out in 1911-12: the Saroglia family, Gili, Rubiolo, Prado, and several more. During the following years many came very young, 16 or 17 years of age. Joe Casalegno, a descendant of the original pioneer, and residing at Ayr concluded: "a sort of chain migration".⁶³

Indeed the inhabitants of Rovato, a little town in province of Brescia, Lombardy, seem to have had a predilection for North Queensland. Teresa Maranesi recounted that Cocchetti and Prandolini

⁵⁹ Mr S.A. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

⁶⁰ Mr Jack Prandolini junior - tape 14 (in English).

⁶¹ Mrs K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

⁶² Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

⁶³ Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English); also Mrs M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

were the first ones to go to Queensland, but later many others followed them. Some of the names she mentioned were Pellizzari, Lazzaroni, Maifredi, Betti, Gatti, Zanotti. She used to be told all this by her grand-mother who was always happy to dwell on the subject of emigration. In fact, she stated that at least 30% of the Rovato families had one or more of their members working at one time or another in Australia, and the procedure was the same: first the men, then the women and children.⁶⁴ The result was summarised by Jack Prandolini senior who from his residence on the outskirts of Brisbane remarked: "A terrible lot of Italians from the north of Italy came in those days",⁶⁵ and Mrs Angelina Prandolini, Jack's sister-in-law, stated that "Ingham was called 'little Italy'".⁶⁶

Some of the descendants of the original pioneers, and the protagonists of this chain migration to North Queensland could still remember the few weeks it took them to come to Australia, and could describe particulars related to their ancestors' or their own voyage with minute details and vividness, although 80-90 years had elapsed since then. When I asked Mrs Rose Leahy, née Spelta, if her father and mother ever mentioned their voyage from Genoa to Townsville in 1891, she replied: "They did not talk much about Italy or the *Jumna*".⁶⁷ Others, however, spoke of the uneasiness they experienced during the trip, their worries, their being afraid and wanting to leave with the result that Captain and crew had to take precautionary measures to prevent them from jumping overboard near the ports of call. Giovanna Menso, née Seroglia, said that her father-in-law, Giuseppe Menso, who was travelling with his wife and three children, did not try to escape because of the responsibility towards his family, but others jumped overboard to get away. It appeared to them that it took too long a time to get here, and they got frightened. They did not know where they were going, and not being allowed to touch land because of the possibility of escape, some of the pioneers succeeded in jumping overboard but were brought back.⁶⁸

Mrs Penna, née Beccaris, confirmed this version by explaining that some jumped ship near Colombo, and her father Giovanni, who at the

⁶⁴ Mrs T. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

⁶⁵ Mr J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

⁶⁶ Mrs A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

⁶⁷ Mrs R. Leahy, née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

⁶⁸ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

time was 22, wanted to do the same, but her grand-mother convinced him not to. Mrs Penna also added that there were too many on the boat, one could hardly walk around. The pioneers spent time playing cards and singing. What perhaps struck Mrs Penna most was being told that on one occasion they got one onion for dinner.⁶⁹ Joe Casalegno related that the thing that stuck in his mind most was being told by his uncle that they carried their own livestock on the boat: cattle, sheep and pigs. They used to kill them on deck as they needed them.⁷⁰ As a confirmation of this it could be appropriate to note that four years later, early in 1896, the *Jumna*, the first British-India steamer of the Queensland Royal Line, was being fitted for the carriage of frozen meat and produce.⁷¹

A more frightening experience was that of the grand-mother of the Maranesi sisters. During the voyage the ship was damaged by hitting a rock; grand-mother used to recount to the other members of the family that she was the only Italian, but she was helped and encouraged by the ship's cook. Eventually the boat arrived at Cairns where grand-mother transferred to a smaller one to continue for Lucinda Point, Halifax, and rejoin her husband; but the voyage lasted for three months.⁷²

There are accounts of direct experience very early in the century. S.A. Robino recalled that he arrived at the age of nine in 1906 together with father, mother, and two younger brothers. He said the family went from Strombino near Ivrea in Piedmont to Genoa by train where they stopped one night. From Genoa to Brisbane on a German boat, the *Bombala*, and from Brisbane to Townsville on the *Yongala*. The only thing he could clearly remember on the ship was that one of the officers got mad at his father because he was wasting water: "he got crooked at my father". But his father reacted by calling the officer "all the names under the sun".⁷³

Giovanna Menso, née Seroglia, had little desire to dwell on the voyage: "It was very hot, you could not resist; during the trip I was very sick. It was a German ship; the people came from all over the

⁶⁹ Mrs E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

⁷⁰ Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

⁷¹ *North Queensland Herald*, 26 February 1896, p.38.

⁷² Mrs Anna Maranesi and Mrs Teresa Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

⁷³ Mr S.A. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

places",⁷⁴ but her elder sister Margherita gave more details. She recounted that they reached Genoa from Madonna di Campagna, Piedmont, by a big lorry pulled by horses; it took them two days and two nights or "something like that". There were other Italians from the same region on their way to North Queensland which they reached after transferring from the German boat to the *Grantala* in Sydney. She, too, complained about seasickness.⁷⁵

The following year, 1913, Albino Accatino left Camagna, Monferrato, in Piedmont, by train to board the ship in Genoa. He left Genoa in February by a German ship, and arrived at Lucinda in April after 56 days. On the ship he played cards with other Italians on their way to North Queensland. They too came from Monferrato. Accatino said that the food was o.k. but he was not happy about the sleeping arrangements. There were hammocks in large dormitories, one on top of the other, and they had to sleep like "*bachì da seta*" (silkworms). He could also remember the German soldiers on their way to New Guinea, and the ports of call: Port Said, Colombo, Fremantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, and Brisbane where they were transferred to a smaller ship bound for Townsville. In Townsville he changed again and took the *Mourilyan* that used to do the northern ports.⁷⁶

There is another oral account of Angelina Prandolini who arrived in 1914:

I remember the trip; the ship, the *Orama*, was going really slowly, slowly. There were many people; I left from Naples. In those times there was great poverty, and they used to check whether people had lice or not; they made them take a bath, they disinfected them. I was not examined; I was clean. I was sea-sick; when the ship stopped, then I ate. The food was good, the ship English; the English officers spoke Italian. Beautiful trip apart from my sea-sickness. It took a month to get here; I cannot remember the ports of call: I was on honeymoon.⁷⁷

Angelina's husband was the son of Carlo Prandolini, Salvatore, who had gone to Italy to marry her. As he could speak both Italian and English, she had the satisfaction and the good fortune of being married

⁷⁴ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

⁷⁵ Mrs M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

⁷⁶ Mr A. Accatino - tape 1 (in Italian).

⁷⁷ Mrs A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

to a man at ease in both countries: "My husband knew, explained everything. My husband was 22, I was 20".⁷⁸

This could not be said of most of the other Italian immigrants who had to rely on those already settled to interpret for them, facilitate their arrival, and help them get acquainted with their new environment. There are numerous cases of such solidarity. Regazzoli used to interpret for new arrivals at Halifax.⁷⁹ Della Bosca used to meet the Italians at Townsville and lead them to the Charters Towers and Ravenswood district.⁸⁰ Accatino and his friends were welcomed by Vignolio at Halifax.⁸¹ Margherita Casalegno remembered that when she arrived at Townsville some Italians settled on the Lower Burdekin were there waiting for them with wagons and trucks pulled by horses. They loaded the baggage, put the people on top, and went to Ayr. Leaving Townsville in the morning, they reached Ayr in the evening; there was no road at the time, just a track. Of her group about 20 stopped at Ayr, and about 10 continued for Home Hill. Speaking the same language/dialect, and being welcomed so warmly made Margherita feel much better.⁸²

When S.A. Robino arrived at the age of nine he was walking with his mother in the streets of Townsville looking at the shops to buy something to eat when his uncle who had come to Townsville from Halifax to meet them happened to walk past them, and the planned meeting happened accidentally.⁸³

Jack Prandolini senior said that anybody coming from Italy would go to his father's place at Ripple Creek and also Halifax, and they got help from father and mother. The mother used to go to farmers' sales, and buy whatever might be useful to new immigrants. As an example Jack remembered: "The Italians who had just arrived used to go to mum for a bed, and she sold them the bed". He had to go with the horse and dray to bring home what mother had bought, and also, on his father's instructions, to go to the C.S.R. station to pick up any new arrivals and take them to their place where mother cooked and fed

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Mr and Mrs Parisi (informal conversation) - Herbert River, December 1984.

⁸⁰ Mr J. Downey (informal conversation) - Charters Towers, 9 November 1984.

⁸¹ Mr A. Accatino - tape 1 (in Italian).

⁸² Mrs M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

⁸³ Mr S.A. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

them.⁸⁴ Prandolini was very religious, and he always helped the Italian immigrants who went to his shop. His grandson, Sam, residing at Cardwell was told by Father Sullivan at Charters Towers: "I know Carlo Prandolini; he should have been a saint, the way he used to help the migrants to establish themselves".⁸⁵

These recollections refer to the period 1891-1914; all those mentioned came from the alpine regions of Italy. But there is also the account of Mrs Rotondo residing at Trebonne near Ingham. She came to Australia in 1921 during the period examined in this research, but unlike the previous immigrants she was born at Messina, Sicily. Her husband had arrived in Australia in 1900 as a child, but had gone back to Italy to marry her. Mrs Rotondo explained that she, the children, and her sister-in-law came by first class because there was no room in the third, while the husband travelled third class. The captain had given him permission to stay with the family during the day, but in the evening he had to go back to the third class. During the voyage Mrs Rotondo was sick most of the time because of the rough sea. They left from Naples on 2 November 1921, and arrived in Brisbane on 19 December 1921; then by a smaller boat to Townsville. Here they had planned to catch the train for Ingham, but they had to wait because the train was not running every day. Consequently they looked for a place where to sleep, but found it very hard because the children were crying: "But my husband begged them so much that eventually we were given a place where to sleep". But what seems to have struck the informant most was not the hard-hearted attitude of the Townsville hoteliers, but rather the conduct of the English immigrants on the ship, perceived as improper and undignified.

On the ship when I saw the English women sitting on their husbands' lap I said to my husband "All right that they are married, but aren't they ashamed of doing that during the day?" And my husband said "Look at them when the ship stops if they are their husbands". I could see them leave the ship, and say good-by to one another. I was surprised...I was scandalised on the ship by the behaviour of the English - men and women - who kissed one another before the others. They should do those things in private, not before the others.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Mr J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

⁸⁵ Mr S. Prandolini - tape 16 (in English).

⁸⁶ Mrs D. Rotondo - tape 18 (in Italian).

The Italian immigration which followed, partly as a consequence of, that of the *Jumna* party resulted, then, almost wholly from private initiatives; no encouragement came from the government. The attitudes of some sections of the British-Australian community were favourable on the grounds that Italians could fill the empty spaces in the tropics, and particularly because the Italians were considered an economic asset. The leitmotiv of Fraire, a man of the world, cosmopolitan and polyglot, untrammelled by preconceptions, rings in one's ears:

It is a well-known fact that the peasants of Piedmont and Lombardy are welcomed in all parts of the world. Any observant tourist passing through the north of Italy cannot help noticing the high state of agriculture there. It is well-known that the plains of Lombardy and Piedmont are amongst the best cultivated and productive in Europe. If a fair number of these people settled in the North, they would be likely to cultivate the crops that have been grown in their native land, such as rice, silkworms, grape vines, etc.⁸⁷

The Government and Labour Party, however, were inclined to restrict Italian immigration on ethnic and economic grounds. The British had to be given first option, then the Scandinavians, or other people from Northern Europe because those were the areas where the best men could be got. Only as a last resort could they contemplate going to the south of Europe, and then only if the men were recruited in the alpine regions of Italy whose inhabitants were seen as more Germanic than Latin. The Labour party felt it a duty to oppose immigration of any kind in the interest of the native-born. As a result the obstacles created by the white Australia policy were added to those imposed by the travelling arrangements made for all nominated immigrants.

Yet Italian immigrants were filtering into North Queensland. Some more audacious or more needy travelled first to London in order to save money on the passage fare; others paid the full price and left from Italy. There is an instance of a wife who left, together with three children aged one, two and three, from Marseilles, on a sailing boat to join her husband at Halifax. Some came singly, others with members of the nuclear or extended family; some travelled with friends in groups large or small. The largest group seems to have been that referred to by Mrs Margherita Casalegno in 1912 when about 30

⁸⁷ *Oceania*, 15 August 1914, p.4.

hopefuls landed at Townsville. They all came from the northern regions of Italy, apart from one Sicilian family who arrived in 1921.

Compensating at least in part for the tough beginning of emigration were certain benefits such as freedom and the attraction that sparsely populated areas have for people coming from densely populated regions; or the state of not being constrained, owing to social pressure, to follow certain practices, religious and otherwise; but above all food, the lack of it at home and the hope for it abroad: "They got flour, sugar, meat, bread from the mill".⁸⁸

From the oral history accounts of the descendants and friends of the original Italian pioneers, the overwhelming evidence is that they came to Australia to ameliorate their condition. Joe Casalegno, a grandson, residing at Ayr, stated: "They left Italy to better themselves",⁸⁹ a point of view that was expressed in many similar ways: "They left Italy to improve themselves",⁹⁰ "They came to Australia to improve their life".⁹¹ Later immigrants' explanation of why they left Italy were very similar: "We were poor there";⁹² "In Italy there was nothing".⁹³ Although even in Australia things did not run smoothly all the time, there was always enough to eat, and the family back in Italy could be helped one way or another. Mrs Pia Vettovalli who knew some of the original Italian pioneers said: "We used to send something to Italy. I used to send sugar, and even now my nephew tells me: 'when your packet of sugar arrived, my mother looked at it, cried, and said 'This is auntie in Australia who remembers us''".⁹⁴

For the Italians it must have been wonderful the display of opulence that presented their eyes when they arrived in North Queensland, completely opposite to their experience back home. A few weeks after their arrival in 1891, for instance, the local press reported that the mango crop throughout the Lower Burdekin had been so prolific that it had been impossible to find consumers; tons were rotting under the trees. Though all the employees, European and coloured, on Kalamia plantation, had been given free access to the orchard "the raids do not

⁸⁸ Mrs E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

⁸⁹ Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

⁹⁰ Mr A. Coppi - tape 4 (in English).

⁹¹ Mrs M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

⁹² Mr A. Coppi - tape 4 (in English).

⁹³ Mrs P. Vettovalli - tape 20 (in Italian).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

seem to have made any appreciable effect upon the loaded state of the trees".⁹⁵ At the same time the country in the Ingham district was "teem[ing] with wild fowls".⁹⁶ Years later, the lagoons, a few miles beyond Cardwell, were a "veritable paradise": "Ducks, geese, scrub turkeys, wallabies, and wild pigs are found here in abundance".⁹⁷

Joe Casalegno admitted that when they had a half day to spare the Italian pioneers went fishing or shooting, and in the Burdekin Delta "They practically lived off the land fishing or shooting pigs, ducks, geese, turkeys".⁹⁸ This observation was made also by S. Robino residing at Lucinda and numerous other descendants, relatives, friends of the original pioneers or those who followed them early in the century.⁹⁹ But I would like to conclude with the recollection of S. Robino himself who, arriving early in the century at the age of nine from a protein-starved country, could still remember with relish eighty years later: "From Townsville we got on the *Lassie Gowrie*, a little boat that used to do Townsville and the northern ports. They came out with lots of bread, and big pieces of corned meat and told us 'Cut off what you want and eat it'".¹⁰⁰

* * * * *

Under normal conditions, societies want newcomers to become citizens, and they provide for naturalisation. The Italian pioneers, as it was recounted by some of their descendants and relatives were not happy with their first experience of Queensland because "they had not been told the truth, they knew that, but when here they had to make the best of it, and they did",¹⁰¹ an attitude that confirms their intention to settle permanently, and to become naturalised, because "if you weren't you could not buy property".¹⁰² Corroboration of the Italians' intention to live the rest of their existence in Australia is to

⁹⁵ *North Queensland Herald*, 13 January 1892, p.18.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 March 1892, p.9.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9 May 1908, p.39. Cardwell is a coastal village 52 kilometres north of Ingham.

⁹⁸ Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

⁹⁹ Mr S.A. Robino - tape 17 (in English). Lucinda is the port for Ingham.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Mrs E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

be found in the records of naturalisation housed in Queensland State Archives.¹⁰³ They are most instructive because we get further information, in some cases, of the place of birth, age, profession, and residence: from the date of oath can be inferred those who were more eager to become naturalised.

During my research in the Queensland State Archives in Brisbane I came across 44 names of the original pioneers, and 36 of them were residing in North Queensland (see Appendix). In this list I have placed the family name first, and I have tried to be as accurate as possible in the spelling of the Italian names, though this is not the case when one peruses the records in the Queensland State Archives. From the list it appears that the most anxious to become naturalised were a relatively young man (Basso), and a relatively old one (Della Vecchia), and perhaps what strikes one most is that, contrary to expectation, they did not hail from either Piedmont or Lombardy, but from the provinces of Venetia. The next to become naturalised were Catrastellero from Piedmont, and Toni and Bonini, both from Lombardy. As the years went by other Italians followed their example, and it can be observed that two, Filippi and Davanzo came from the region of Venetia, while another two, Banduco and Balza, came from Piedmont.

The native places of the other 27 Italian pioneers are not specified, but from oral history we know that Baudino, Giovanello, Coniglio and Origliasso came from Piedmont.¹⁰⁴ From the records kept in the Court House at Charters Towers we also know that Rustichelli was a Piedmontese. He hailed from the province of Asti.¹⁰⁵ Again oral history accounts indicate that two, Cocchetti and Cao came from Lombardy, from Rovato¹⁰⁶ and the Valtellina¹⁰⁷ respectively. Out of 36 Italian pioneers residing in North Queensland during the last decade of the nineteenth century there were eight Piedmontese, four from Lombardy, and another four from Venetia who became naturalised. The other twenty's place of birth was given simply as

¹⁰³ A/17813 also 38-9 SCT/CF Z269: QSA.

¹⁰⁴ Informal conversations with Mrs Giudice, Mrs Penna, and Mr Mario Origliasso during the early stages of my research in 1984.

¹⁰⁵ Charters Towers Court House - Register of Marriages solemnized in the District of Kennedy in the Colony of Queensland.

¹⁰⁶ Informal conversation with the Maranesi sisters residing at Rovato, Lombardy, in December 1985.

¹⁰⁷ Informal conversation with Peter Cao at Charters Towers in November 1984.

Italy. Yet the reader might find it curious to know that notwithstanding these official records I can affirm that Casalegno Bartalomeo was born at Marseilles, the capital of the Bouches-du-Rhone department in France.¹⁰⁸

Where were they residing? Out of 36, thirteen were residing on the Herbert River (Macknade, Ripple Creek, Halifax, Ingham), eight on the Lower Burdekin (Seaforth, Kalamia, Ayr), and four in Townsville. Another four were in Charters Towers, three in Innisfail, one at Mulgrave, one at Cairns, one at Port Douglas, and one at Mossman. It can be seen that as the years passed the Italians moved further north as far as Mossman, about 500km north of Townsville.

What were they doing? Nearly half of them (17) were classified as either labourer or farm labourer, and one as a ploughman. About one third (11) appear to have done quite well by the end of the century because they were classified either as farmer, cane farmer or sugar grower. Two were miners in Charters Towers. The other two residing in Charters Towers were working as a woodcutter and as length-man. There was also a gardener, a bricklayer, and a draper.

Another interesting observation is that some Italians did not mind having their Christian names anglicised (Frank, Peter, Nicholas). There is one name (Adolpho) which is neither Italian nor English. The original family name of Origliasso had been tampered with also, and been transformed into Origlasso. Next step was going to be its contraction into Origlass.¹⁰⁹ To conclude these observations on the Italian pioneers who became naturalised during the first ten years after their arrival in 1891, I would like to add that before Federation the colonies were to some extent subject to imperial legislation. An imperial act of 1870 fixed the nationality of the wife by that of the husband. When Federation came about, naturalisation was placed under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth, but the Federal Parliament did not take action in this regard until 1903. By the Naturalisation Act of that year, which came into force on 1 January 1904, it was provided that all persons naturalised under state acts

¹⁰⁸ Letter and photocopy of the birth certificate sent to me by Mr Elliott Casalegno (grandson), and dated Bankstown, N.S.W., 21 February 1985.

¹⁰⁹ Informal conversation with Mario Origlasso at Ingham in December 1985. He told me that one of his relatives residing in Sydney has changed the original Italian name Origliasso into Origlass.

before that date were automatically naturalised under the new Act.¹¹⁰

The records of those immigrants who became naturalised after Federation are kept in the Australian Archives in Canberra, and I was able to trace more Italian pioneers who became naturalised during the first twenty years of the century. This was a time-consuming operation due to the way the material was presented, and particularly to the misspellings which to a researcher are truly a "vermin", but with the patience of Job, the assistance of the staff, and a whole frustrating week of intense work I could make some sort of list of them, albeit not exhaustive at all.

The Mensio family¹¹¹ and the Gurgo family,¹¹² and also Bartolomeo Barbero were naturalised at Ayr;¹¹³ Prella Giuseppe at Townsville,¹¹⁴ while the majority were residing on the Herbert River: Bellotti Giacomo,¹¹⁵ Fenoglio Paolo,¹¹⁶ Masetti Giovanni,¹¹⁷ Milone Carlo,¹¹⁸ Origliasso Federico,¹¹⁹ Ramponi Giuseppe,¹²⁰ Revanni Giovanna,¹²¹ Pavan Ignazio,¹²² and Vascetti Carlo.¹²³ Other Italian pioneers were naturalised when working in the various mining districts of North Queensland: Buffa Marcello,¹²⁴ Contrio Giuseppe,¹²⁵ Cortesi Giuseppe,¹²⁶ Grasso Giovanni,¹²⁷ Molesini

¹¹⁰ See "The Naturalization Act 1870". Also *Australian Encyclopaedia*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson Ltd., 1926, Vol.2, pp.176-77.

¹¹¹ A1-05/6488; 05/6486; 15/17856; 05/6487: Australian Archives (Canberra).

¹¹² A1-08/11056; A1-08/11057; A1-08/11058. *Ibid.*

¹¹³ A1-30/5123: *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ A1-28/2792: *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ A1-07/1024: *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ A1-08/351: *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ A1-11/12689: *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ A1-07/9599: *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ A1-31/8578: *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ A1-36/11654: *Ibid.*

¹²¹ A63 A10/4871: *Ibid.*

¹²² 51/15/6065: *Ibid.*

¹²³ A1-21/20158: *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ A1-12/11391: *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ A1-06/1653: *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ A1-29/3849: *Ibid.*

Carlo,¹²⁸ Tosi Luigi,¹²⁹ and Zanetto Pietro.¹³⁰ It may be of interest for the reader to know that all the above Italians came from either Piedmont, Lombardy or Venetia except two: Masetti who hailed from the ancient university city of Bologna, chief town of the Emilia region in the north of Italy, and Bellotti who was born at Trento which at the time was part of Austria. Indeed the family circumstances of Bellotti who was married with four children, with two sons residing in North America, and two females living in Austria suggests to the writer that Bellotti, depressed by the separation from his family, might be the one who was found fully clothed in the Johnstone River, drowned. In a moment of despair he might have drowned himself intentionally. Bellotti became naturalised in 1907, and, if my guess is right, he is the one whose body was found in August 1908. (See previous chapter).

One of the most frequent themes on which the descendants or friends of the Italian pioneers dwelt was how hard they worked. Pia Vettovalli who knew some of the pioneers was surprised at the way they had aged due to their "hard life" or "tough life".¹³¹ Joe Casalegno explained that the Italians' intention was to work hard, save money, go back to Italy and marry, and either remain there or come back, and a lot of them did that. He said that

They worked hard, every day, that was it: 4.30a.m. they had to feed the horses; one thing was always done, horses always stabled from 11a.m. to 1p.m. The horses had to be home and fed during the hottest part of the day. Horses were very important. They worked all the time.¹³²

Devoting this great care to horses and animals in general is suggestive of how essential they were, and relied upon, to transform a primitive environment into productive soil. Mrs Gagno, the daughter to Carlo Della Vecchia who was 15 when he arrived, said that he went straight to work: "He worked with horses, he was fond of them, he used to feed them early. When young he worked very hard".¹³³

Mrs Penna née Beccaris, reflecting on the life of the pioneers, explained that her father went straight to work, that the Italians had

¹²⁷ A1-05/7024: *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ CRS A1-06/618: *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ CRS A712-1900/M10106: *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ A63A10/4668: *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Mrs. P. Vettovalli - tape 20 (in Italian).

¹³² Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

¹³³ Mrs L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

plans, final commitments, and said loudly "They worked like hell!"¹³⁴ They needed to work to earn some money to help their families in Italy besides getting established in their land of adoption; other human activities seem not to have entered their mind. Mrs Leahy née Spelta, a family who had settled on the Lower Burdekin, said that her parents were not involved or interested in anything, except work: "They worked all the time".¹³⁵ Mrs Giudice residing at Ingham, added: "My father worked till he died";¹³⁶ Mrs Anna Maranesi, a descendant and a relative of two of the Italian pioneers, Lorenzo Cocchetti and Carlo Prandolini, reflecting on the Italian contribution to the development of Australia, summarised curtly: "The English may say whatever they like, but the Italians made Australia".¹³⁷

The children of the pioneers were not exempted from working. Giovanna Menso née Seroglia recounted that her brother-in-law Antonio (Tony) who must have been about ten when he arrived in 1891, used to get a few pennies from the mill at Ayr to look after the lights. His job was to wash the glass of the kerosene lamps, and fill them up. Her husband, Thomas, continued Mrs Menso, who must have been eight or nine, minded two baby girls while the mother was doing the work. Thomas used to get sixpence or a shilling a week for looking after the two babies who were wheeled everywhere: "When the ground was rough he got the babies out, push the pram, put them back, and take them home. It must have been very funny" concluded Mrs Menso with a smile.¹³⁸ Another descendant of Carlo Prandolini, grandson Jack residing in Brisbane, said that his father hardly went to school, because he had to work: "Grandfather expected him being strong to start working at nine, ten years of age. He helped him in the farm at Ripple Creek, just outside Halifax".¹³⁹

Other children who arrived early in the century had similar experiences. S. Robino, the nephew of Vignolio who had the wine shop at Halifax recounted that he started working at ten years of age. He was working for two Italian settlers on the Herbert River, Fracchia and Calligaris, for a couple of years, and his job was to look after the

¹³⁴ Mrs E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

¹³⁵ Mrs R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

¹³⁶ Mrs K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

¹³⁷ Mrs A. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

¹³⁸ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

¹³⁹ Mr J. Prandolini junior - tape 15 (in English).

horses. This boy used to get up at 3 a.m. and with hurricane lamp cut up the "chop-chop" to feed the horses. And as seeming too extraordinary to be possible, Mr Robino added: "for five bob a week". At sixteen Robino was already cutting cane;¹⁴⁰ so was Michael Vaschetti at the age of 17. Michael, one of the sons of Carlo Vaschetti, was born at Ayr in 1897, six years after his father's arrival. He started cutting cane in a gang of seven; getting up at 2.30 a.m., and by 3 a.m. they were in the paddock working. They worked five hours on a cup of coffee, and had breakfast at 8 a.m. They went back to work till 12 o'clock when they had dinner. At 1.30 they resumed work, and, as Michael put it, "till we could see anymore, till dark...I worked, and worked, and worked".¹⁴¹

Another young man, Albino Accatino, when he arrived before World War I, at the age of 18, was taken to Vignolio's shop, presumably for the usual courtesies, but his recollections shed light on various aspects of an immigrant's life at the beginning of the twentieth century. Accatino came on the understanding that he would cut cane. Arriving in the slack season, he accepted what was available, and walked the very first day forty kilometres from Halifax to Long Pocket to cut timber. This determination was prompted by necessity, imposed by Accatino's sense of duty towards his family back in Italy. The father had died; being the eldest Accatino had to take the initiative to earn some money, and help the family: mother, two brothers, four sisters. Saving money for the family in Italy implied frugality for many years. He too started working at dawn, and, apart from breakfast and lunch, kept working till dark. Their only concession was a longer lunch break when it was oppressively hot, and in those circumstances they rested on bags. Accatino confessed in a subdued tone "It was hard at the beginning".¹⁴² Domenica Rotondo, meditating on the Italians' work practices at the beginning of the century said "The Italians worked day and night",¹⁴³ while their patience and determination inspired Anna Maranesi to comment admiringly: "It must be said that many Italians had nothing...but they sacrificed themselves, and one should take his hat off to them".¹⁴⁴ And from the summary of particulars supplied

¹⁴⁰ Mr S.A. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

¹⁴¹ Mr M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

¹⁴² Mr A. Accatino & Mrs M. Accatino - tapes 1-1a (in Italian).

¹⁴³ Mrs D. Rotondo - tape 18 (in Italian).

¹⁴⁴ Mrs A. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

from Queensland mills on the harvesting of cane during 1903 it can be seen that at Macknade the canecutters were "nearly all Italians", and that the tonnage cut and loaded per day was 1.90 by whites, and 1.21 by coloured. Victoria Mill was second with 1.40 by whites. Blacks did best at Goondi with 1.47. Indeed the Macknade Italians towered over blacks and whites, but it was also pointed out that they presented, after the season cutting, "a pitiful sight";¹⁴⁵ a vision recurring in the thoughts of Mrs Rotondo, and reminiscent of her exclamation: "*Poveri, cari uomini*" (Dear, poor men)".¹⁴⁶

Though few in number women also worked hard from an early age. Mrs Giudice, one of the daughters of Giovanello, a pioneer, interviewed at her residence at Trebonne, could not remember one day she did not work: "After coming back from school we had to trash".¹⁴⁷ After leaving school she became a dressmaker, and remembering her working life, that of the other members of her family, and that of her husband, concluded: "We have always worked, always worked".¹⁴⁸ Giovanna Menso née Seroglia arrived with her family before the first world war, at the age of fourteen: "We arrived here [Ayr] on Friday; on Monday I had a job to go to".¹⁴⁹

The economic success of some Italians seems to have been based on the family seen as an economic unit. Margherita Casalegno married to a son of the pioneer explained that her father-in-law worked first for a timber company in Townsville, then he moved with the family to Brandon where they reared some pigs, grew potatoes, and cut cane. Later the family moved to Ayr, where they bought some land from Drysdale, scrubbed it all by hand because there were no machines at all, planted the cane, and built a house right in the middle of their land. Margherita finished her explanation saying "They worked all together".¹⁵⁰ Joe Casalegno, the grandson, added that to build a house implied work, sacrifice, and saving, and as an instance of this economic organisation he pointed out that while planting cane for their employers, they also grew corn and potatoes for themselves at

¹⁴⁵ Archives of Business and Labour - A.N.U. - 142/3437.

¹⁴⁶ Mrs D. Rotondo - tape 18 (in Italian).

¹⁴⁷ Mrs K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

¹⁵⁰ Mrs M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English). John Drysdale was a pioneer of cane-farming in the Burdekin, and founder of the Pioneer Mill.

weekends.¹⁵¹ Margherita herself after marrying became a member of the extended family's economic unit. She left the shop she was working in to join two Casalegno girls and cook for the cane cutters.¹⁵²

Mrs Rose Leahy née Spelta clarified the working day of a farming family:

I worked in the house. My main occupation was to cook, to do the washing, ironing, cleaning. They all worked hard; the boys went out in the fields, the girls at home. I used to get up at 6 a.m. to cook breakfast for the men working...Some went out to work when there wasn't enough to do on the farm. When we had time to spare we used to get out in the paddock, cut the sugar cane, feed the horses...I never went on holiday...I worked hard, I worked every day from dawn till dusk.¹⁵³

Then Rose, fixing her gaze and thoughts on the distant past, said firmly: "Yes, we planted plenty of cane".

The general tendency was for the men to work on the farms, and for the women to look after the household, as it was explained on many occasions by the descendants of the original pioneers. Indeed there is at times the perception that women lured or constrained away from their duties in the home degrade the spirit of woman and the dignity of a mother. Mrs Angelina Prandolini made it clear from her residence on the outskirts of Brisbane when she recalled her years spent on the Herbert River:

I have brought up my children the way I was brought up: well. Not the way they do it now. Mothers go to work and leave their children alone. I am 93 years old, but I remember. I had six children born at Halifax...My husband never sent me to work. I am a home-maker; I have never left a child to be looked after by another woman, I have always looked after the family.¹⁵⁴

This traditional interpretation of the female role acquires more significance if one thinks that Mrs Prandolini was the daughter of a prosperous merchant at Rovato, Lombardy. And Jack senior remembered his mother with nostalgia, and said: "The men working for us who were Italians were fed by mother. She used to make her own bread, Italian soup, corned beef, pasta dishes. She had a machine

¹⁵¹ Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

¹⁵² Mrs M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

¹⁵³ Mrs R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

¹⁵⁴ Mrs A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

too, to make ravioli, spaghetti, macaroni...Once a week she used to make rice soup to please me, once a week".¹⁵⁵

Nevertheless some women worked outside the home. The Maranesi sisters, Anna and Teresa, residing at Rovato, Lombardy, said that their grandmother used to go and fetch water with the horses. She was a cook looking after forty men who worked in the forest. They added that their grandmother got some help from Chinese who cleaned potatoes.¹⁵⁶ Mrs Gagno, the daughter of Carlo Della Vecchia, said that her father was charcoal burning or cutting cane, and, before they had any children, her mother was cooking for the gang. It was a small economic unit, but to them quite successful: "After two, three years they had saved eighty pounds; they thought they were millionaires; she came back in a mill train, he walked all the way to Innisfail".¹⁵⁷

But whether the Italians worked in pairs, as members of the nuclear or extended family, they worked constantly and consistently because of their sense of duty towards one another, regardless of whether they lived in Australia or Italy, and above all to raise the condition of future generations. Giovanna Menso, talking about the original pioneers in general, and her in-laws in particular put it this way: "They worked hard; all they had was their family; they went through everything for the good of the children".¹⁵⁸

The desire to make a better life for their families soon led some Italians to new districts and new centres. Only a few years after the arrival of the *Jumna* in 1891, one of the pioneers, Pietro Corbellaro, together with G. Tamietti and son, also natives of Italy, were pioneering an Italian settlement to be formed at Cooper's Creek, in the district of Port Douglas. Tamietti was convinced, after trying land in Victoria, New South Wales, and various places in Queensland that the local cane was the best he had ever seen. Their aim, however, was to cultivate principally coffee and vanilla, and also vines for wine making. It was noticed that as the trio was moving for the far north they had brought three hives of Italian bees, presumably to experiment with apiculture. The North Queensland press expressed their satisfaction and optimism, and the hope that in a few months a score of "this

¹⁵⁵ Mr J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

¹⁵⁶ Mrs Anna Maranesi & Mrs Teresa Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

¹⁵⁷ Mrs L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

¹⁵⁸ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

enterprising race" would settle in the district and help it "take its proper place in the eyes of the colony".¹⁵⁹

Another Italian, E. Torazzi, drew the attention of the community to the economic advantage of growing coffee on the Russell River, and in a letter to the editor of the *Cairns Argus* explained that in his opinion "it is the best spot in the world for that crop".¹⁶⁰ At about the same time some of the original Italian pioneers, including Carlo Della Vecchia, after farming for the Macknade plantation and also for C.S.R. had entered the Mulgrave Scrub. They were the first. Years later Carlo Della Vecchia suggested North Queensland as an ideal place for the lemon and peanut industries, and also for dairying.¹⁶¹ Other Italians kept their eyes open, and entered into business agreement with the owner of land on Saltwater Creek. They took up the work on shares, a system they were more accustomed to. It was a modest Italian settlement consisting of five men, three married women, and two children, but with experience acquired on the Herbert River, they were hopeful of profitable results; it took them only a few weeks to brush and clear 40 acres, and make great progress in preparing the land for cane.¹⁶²

From the records held at Charters Towers Court House it appears that many Italian pioneers moved to that district from the early years. Before the end of the nineteenth century the names of Adamasio Pelosi, Nicholas Origliasso, Nicodemo Buogo, Agostino Baudino, and Aventino Borello are listed in the local records, and the profession given was labourer, labourer, timber getter, woodcutter, and fireman respectively. As the years passed Baudino was also employed as saw miller, labourer, and miner. Borello also worked as a miner. Other Italian names, pioneers as well, are added: Giovanni Grasso, miner; Michele Rustichelli, miner; Pietro (Peter) Cao, miner; Carlo (Charles) Molesini, woodcutter; and Camillo Giugni, miner.¹⁶³ From oral history we know that Peter Cao also worked as an engine driver at Torrens Creek, 90 miles from Charters Towers; and that he also used

¹⁵⁹ *North Queensland Herald*, 3 February 1897, p.12; also *N.Q. Herald*, 10 March 1897, p.33.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 15 July 1896, p.37.

¹⁶¹ PRE/A849 - Royal Commission - Increase of aliens in N.Q., pp.67-68: QSA.

¹⁶² *North Queensland Herald*, 13 September 1902, p.36, 1 November 1902, p.34.

¹⁶³ Register of Births, Deaths, Marriages: Charters Towers Court House.

to pump water from the creek for the township.¹⁶⁴ And this is the recollection of Camillo Giugni from Ingham, one of two sons:

My father was a very strong man; he had to operate a machine underground. The left lung penetrated with holes, the doctor wondered how father could go on so long with the right lung. Dad was very quiet, good-natured, gentlemanly, with the result he was known as "Rowdy Camillo". He looked after the family, his death was a sad loss, and like many other Italian miners in Charters Towers died of the same complaint: miners' phthisis.¹⁶⁵

Listening to the recollections of some of the children of the Italian pioneers one feels that at times they cannot understand why their parents left Italy, and their reflections are tinged with anger and grief. Mrs Giudice said: "Even now I ask myself why they came to Australia. If life was hard in Italy it was certainly so in Australia". She went on to explain the problems her father, Adamo Giovanello, had to solve from the very beginning. Endowed with a good voice, he resorted to the expedient of going from house to house in Townsville, to sing under the balconies hoping to earn a few pennies. Shaking her head in disbelief, Mrs Giudice sighed: "Poor souls, what a life they have had! Hard times, truly a life of emigrants!"¹⁶⁶

Hard work alone was not always enough to save migrants from economic disaster. A prolonged economic depression throughout Australia which had begun in 1893, coupled with acute drought during the final years of the nineteenth century and the early ones of the twentieth century, contributed to Italian failures. It was reported, for instance, that John Scott Miller, an accountant, had been appointed creditor's trustee at a meeting of creditors held in Townsville, in reference to the Italian farmers Bartolomeo Casalegno, Vincenzo Spelta, Domenico Scarsi, and Carlo Quaranta. These four men had arrived together by the *Jumna* in 1891. About six years later, and residing at Ayr, they were declared insolvent, *in forma pauperis*.¹⁶⁷ A couple of years later, another Italian pioneer, Agostino Bernardara, farmer of Halifax, had to suffer the same fate.¹⁶⁸ At about the same

¹⁶⁴ Mrs R. Willis - informal conversation at Charters Towers on 9 November 1984.

¹⁶⁵ Mr C. Giugni - tape 7 (in English).

¹⁶⁶ Mrs K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

¹⁶⁷ *North Queensland Herald*, 29 September 1897, p.11; *N.Q. Herald*, 26 October 1898, p.27.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 December 1900, p.12 and 10 December 1900, p.13.

time Pietro Corbellaro, who had applied for an agricultural farm in the Port Douglas district in 1897, had to forfeit it for not paying the rent in 1899.¹⁶⁹ And Adamo Giovanello, a farmer of Aloomba near Cairns, was declared bankrupt in 1904.¹⁷⁰ A few years later, in 1908, Gettulio Bonini, a pioneer like the previous ones, farmer of Ripple Creek, followed suit. He was declared insolvent, "a pauper".¹⁷¹

Indeed, Fraire, their patron, experienced the same difficulties and failure. From the local press we know that after coming back from recruiting the Italian agriculturists, Fraire resumed his previous activity. He purchased from the trustee the insolvent stock of Mrs Ferguson at a large reduction, had a clearing sale of the stock which he advertised in these terms: "This is no puff, but a grand opportunity to buy cheap and good drapery".¹⁷² Towards the end of 1893 one of Fraire's advertisement in the Townsville press indicated that Fraire was also importing from China and Italy,¹⁷³ but as the century came to the end the local press reported that "Chiaffredo Venerano Fraire, of Townsville, in the colony of Queensland, draper, filed his petition in liquidation...at the Supreme Court, Townsville. The estimated amount of liabilities [was] £12,666".¹⁷⁴ When the meeting of creditors was held it was explained that the reasons given by Fraire for the insolvency were "depreciation in the value of land, heavy interest paid during the last few years, and inability to pay present liabilities".¹⁷⁵

Among the list of insolvents was James Forno a miner residing at Charters Towers.¹⁷⁶ But what strikes the researcher is not the miner's insolvency but the large numbers of accidents involving Italian miners. During the last decade of the nineteenth century an Italian, unnamed, was admitted in the hospital suffering from injuries sustained by a fall of earth in the Nil Desperandum Mine (Georgetown).¹⁷⁷ A few months later Probate and Administration in

¹⁶⁹ LAN/A B1-161: QSA.

¹⁷⁰ *North Queensland Herald*, 9 January 1904, p.4, 6 February 1904, p.9.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4 July 1908, p.12.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 29 March 1893, p.19.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22 November 1893, p.31.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 April 1899, p.12.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 May 1899, p.12.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 September 1902, p.13.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 May 1894, p.13.

the will of Stepano (Stefano) Madeo, late of Georgetown, miner, had been granted to John Romelli, and Pascal (Pasquale) Turcatti, miners, of the same town.¹⁷⁸ From this bit of news it can be inferred that the anonymous Italian was most probably Madeo. Another Italian miner, Matteo Coccolani, about 60, and described as "an old and respected resident of the goldfield" was found dead in what appears to be the town of Croydon. It was explained that two miners noticed Matteo's dogs scratching about the top of the shaft, and it was surmised that Matteo went back, and arrived at the spot, just as the explosion occurred.¹⁷⁹

Other Italian miners were injured, some slightly, some seriously, and they had to live the rest of their existence with all the complications arising from these accidents. Very early in the century, for instance, an Italian, Albert Bagalini, while working in the Block and Wyndham [Charters Towers] suffered some nasty flesh wounds on his shoulder and back from a fall of ground, but "A few stitches held the severed parts together"; though Bagalini was laid up for a couple of weeks, the injury did not prevent him from walking home.¹⁸⁰ This very narrow escape was preceded by a grave accident which involved several men working at the Brilliant Central in Charters Towers, one of them an Italian, John Chiappini. They were changing shift when the men, both on top and below, were alarmed that the cage was travelling at a terrible speed; "the cage with its living freight dashed into the 1556ft plate with such force as to throw two men out at the feet of those standing there", and Chiappini's legs were broken.¹⁸¹

In the Christmas number of the *N.Q. Herald* just a year after the arrival of the Italian pioneers, another Italian named 'Pazzalie' had both his hands severely mutilated by an explosion of dynamite, in the mining district of Georgetown. It appeared that Pazzalie was fitting a cap to the fuse when the explosion occurred, and the doctor found on examination that it was necessary to amputate the left hand at the base of the second phalanx, and the first and second fingers at the base of the first phalanx. On the right hand the tips of all four fingers were badly shattered.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1894, p.11.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 September 1898, p.12.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 16 September 1905, p.34.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 17 January 1903, p.44.

It must have been a cheerful Christmas present for Pazzalie to be told that the accident was due to carelessness.¹⁸² Yet others might have looked at Pazzalie with little compassion had they known that another Italian, victim of a fatal mining accident, was "fearfully mangled and his brains protruding". His name was Antonio Tonti, aged about forty.¹⁸³ In fact Italians were being injured and dying while performing their duty all over North Queensland. At times they had lucky escapes such as that of Louie Bertini who was working at the Meat Works in Townsville. He narrowly escaped from having his head crushed between a lift and hardwood floor.¹⁸⁴ By contrast the son of Bartolomeo Casalegno was victim of a severe accident in November 1909. Referred to as young Casalegno, about 23 years of age, he was probably Giovanni, aged three at the time of his arrival in 1891. The accident happened on the farm owned by Casalegno senior, a few miles out from Ayr, and young Casalegno sustained fractures in both legs just above the ankles. He was helping a man to fell a tree when suddenly the splitting section fell upon him, crushed his legs, and pinned him to the ground. Casalegno lay there for about ten minutes before the timber which weighed over five hundred-weight could be lifted off him. The Ayr Ambulance rendered first aid, Casalegno was brought to Townsville by train, the local Ambulance conveyed the sufferer to the hospital, and the reporter was happy to report that Casalegno recovered by the end of the second day after the accident and found that the young man was cheerful, and suffering little pain.¹⁸⁵

Another Italian named Carrolti, on the other hand, was killed at the Mulgrave Central Sugar Mill when a sack which was over his shoulders was caught in a shaft of the machinery.¹⁸⁶ A few years later, John Lorenzetti, the young Italian we have already met when he bought the bottle of rum for his father, Antonio, who was dying from fever, was working as a boiler attendant at the Mossman Central Mill, where he was severely scalded. He was brought into Port Douglas hospital by the mill train, and there he died.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 14 December 1892, p.6.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24 September 1904, p.9.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1901, p.59.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1909, p.12.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13 March 1899, p.33.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 September 1906, p.10.

Other Italians were luckier for they were injured but not killed. One of them, Antonio Ferini, fell from a truck, breaking the two bones in his left fore-arm and his nose, as well as receiving a slight injury to the spine.¹⁸⁸ Another Italian, M. Bongiovanni, was injured at Mossman, the cause being the edge of a tank that smashed three of his toes.¹⁸⁹ There is also a report from Innisfail that a man named Antonio, probably an Italian, while working at Mourilyan had his leg fractured and other injuries, through a kick from a horse, and was admitted to the hospital.¹⁹⁰

Italians also died in the forests of North Queensland. Angelo Scattolini, in his early twenties, was found on the verge of a scrub on 16 June 1916 at about 6p.m. killed by a falling tree while felling scrub. During the inquest, Antonio Anzolin, one of the *Jumna* pioneers, and, for the occasion, interpreter, cane farmer at Babinda, who had known Angelo for the previous three years, deposed:

I saw the body under the tree and considered it was the result of an accident. The log lay lengthways on his body. And I could see only his head, a broken right arm, and part of his left hand. His head was towards the stump of the tree and about 15 inches from it.

The body "crushed to a pulp" was buried by his friends whose advice to stop working, for it was 'smoko' time, Angelo would not heed. He wanted to fell the big tree he was working on, first. Angelo was buried about one and a half miles from Babinda "on his mates' ground".¹⁹¹

As dangerous as the place was, the Italians also faced hostility from people. From the time the Italian pioneers arrived it was noticed that they were looked at with suspicion by the local workers, and reaction was strong when the jobs of the natives were in jeopardy. Mrs Penna, née Beccaris, stated that the natives, i.e., British-Australian, did not mind if they had a job themselves, but if unemployed themselves did not like Italians to be employed. She herself was victim of this mentality, though she was born in Queensland. She went to three places in Townsville before getting a job, but as soon as the employer found out she was a 'dago' she got the sack. Eventually she started her own dressmaking business, and had no more worries.¹⁹² Similar

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 October 1908, p.3.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 22 January 1906, p.18.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7 October 1911, p.5.

¹⁹¹ JUS/N612 - 1916-321: QSA.

¹⁹² Mrs E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

comments were made by others who affirmed: "English [people] were always favoured".¹⁹³

Mrs Gagno, née Della Vecchia, recounted that her father, Carlo, who arrived in 1891 at the age of 14-15, used to complain: "I was knocking down scrubs before you buggers were born...now I am still a Dago...These new ones who come out now are New Australian, but me I am still a Dago". Mrs Gagno added that her father was bitter, and she herself was very angry at the way she was discriminated against when looking for a job. Indeed she said that if you had an Italian name you could not get a job. The only jobs available were those that the British-Australian held in contempt, regardless of how educated you were.¹⁹⁴

Thinking of the relationship between those of British origin and the Italian immigrants, Solotore Robino explained:

We had to pay £10 to get a work-ticket, to belong to the Union. Only for Italians. The British-Australian paid 25 bob or 35 bob, I forget. For being an Italian they had to pay £10. The bloke was selling the ticket for making money. That was before the first world war. The Italians complained. The Italians themselves took advantage of their countrymen's ignorance, and worked with the organiser. I was not cheated because I knew English. Italians taken advantage by the natives, but some Italians worked with them. I never was caught.¹⁹⁵

There are also some comments made by Mrs Penna regarding Fraire and Armati. She felt that the two established businessmen in Townsville were not above suspicion in their dealings with their fellow-countrymen. She said "Armati and Fraire were tough on them" and then went on to explain that when the Italians got sick they used to go to Armati, a Townsville chemist, and he gave the Italians a packet of Epsom salt. That, Mrs Penna continued "went for everything, whether it was dying, fever,...he used to charge them ten shillings; it was funny...In those days you could get a packet of Epsom salt for about four or five pence".¹⁹⁶

This rather unco-operative and selfish approach met by Italians from the Australian-born, British immigrants, the Unions, or from

¹⁹³ Mrs A. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

¹⁹⁴ Mrs L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

¹⁹⁵ Mr S.A. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

¹⁹⁶ Mrs E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

other Italians was solved in some cases by the help the Italians received from their employers. Some employers of the original Italian immigrants are remembered with fondness and gratitude by their descendants. A Townsville employer, Mr Rooney, who had Italians working for him at the sawmill, "was very good to Italians".¹⁹⁷ Mrs Giovanna Menso née Seroglia from Ayr said that her father and mother-in-laws "would have gone straight back, but then Drysdale helped them a lot".¹⁹⁸ Joe Casalegno, a grandson of the original pioneer, eulogised Drysdale for his moral qualities, and business acumen: "Drysdale was a terrific man; he opened, made the district".¹⁹⁹ He was also remembered as "a single man" "a mighty man".²⁰⁰

Drysdale was very good. He was the boss of the mill; helped the poor people. If you went there dressed up with a new sulky and asked for a loan, Drysdale would tell him to sell horse, sulky...Drysdale would lend money to those who wore work clothing. It's those who dress simply who make money; the flashy ones spend it. I talked with him the way I talk with you. He was a lovely man.²⁰¹

Whether helped by their employers or hampered by labour organisations, by preference for the British, or economic crises, the Italians plodded on; and there is ample evidence that many of them pursued their activities with determination and diligence. They elicited favourable comments by contemporary observers, and succeeded. Even before the arrival of the *Jumna* in 1891, Italians in the mining district of North Queensland had attracted the attention of the press. In an article published about Irvinebank, Montalbion, and Chillagoe, three important centres in the Walsh and Tinaroo district, the readers were informed that Irvinebank was the most productive tin town in Queensland having wrested that position from Herberton. This was

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* The Rooney brothers, Matthew and John, worked as architects, builders, and contractors. They founded together with James Harvey, another Ulsterman, a timber-milling and building empire which dominated North Queensland from 1882 until the early twentieth century. For further information see Peter Bell, *Timber and Iron: houses in North Queensland mining settlements, 1861-1920*, St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1984.

¹⁹⁸ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

¹⁹⁹ Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

²⁰⁰ Mrs G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

²⁰¹ Mrs M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

due to the discovery of the "Vulcan" which became the most productive tin mine in Queensland, and consequently turning the tide in favour of Irvinebank, the younger place. The "Vulcan" was originally found by "an Italian charcoal burner" identified as Maranta, and Leoni, but fell in the hands of a small company of working men, who bought it a few months later for about £2,500. It was added that during the following eighteen months the "Vulcan" must have turned out £20,000, and it was "looking better than ever".²⁰²

There were Italians doing well at Ravenswood; Joe Cortesi's claim at Mt Wright, "The New Find", was looking well.²⁰³ In the Etheridge the names of Sofia, Romelli, Corsi and party, appear in the press, and they are referred to as "industrious (sic) Italians".²⁰⁴ In the same area Lorenzo Nazzari and party were going to purchase the well-known "Balmoral Mine",²⁰⁵ and John Basini was going to apply at the Warden's Office for two claims.²⁰⁶ From Georgetown it was stated that Louis Bernard and Charles Bassini, who had been prospecting in the Robertson River, went back into town with 83oz of gold, most of which was found in one nugget.²⁰⁷ Other Italian names recur in the press of the mining districts. At Croydon the Warath line of reef was receiving attention from Jack Taddeucci.²⁰⁸ Tomasini Bros. were planning to start crushing from the Duke at the Democrat mill.²⁰⁹ News from Thursday Island indicated that the Italians' claim on Horn Island, Good Luck, had cleaned up 56oz of gold from 63 tons of quartz.²¹⁰ The name of Turcatti, however, seems to be mentioned more often. P.Turcatti is considered "a good miner whose judgment in working can be depended on".²¹¹ The North Queensland press refers

²⁰² *Northern Miner*, 20 February 1892, p.3; also Supplement, p.1.

²⁰³ *North Queensland Herald*, 26 August 1911, p.36.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 12 June 1895, p.12.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 5 May 1897, p.16.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 15 December 1897, p.16.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1896, p.11.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 July 1911, p.32.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 28 May 1910, p.75.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1896, p.11.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9 April 1900, p.28.

to the Turcatti Bros,²¹² the three Turcattis,²¹³ Turcatti and party,²¹⁴ and "the persevering band of Ancient Romans".²¹⁵

The names of the Italians pioneers appear above all in connection with the sugar industry, and from the contemporary press or oral accounts, it can be inferred that many of them were doing very nicely. Early in the century, for instance, a reporter who was visiting the Lower Burdekin District, noticed that leaving Ayr and following up the Clare road, there were a number of farms, nearly all of them freehold. One of them "Come in farm" had been occupied for eighteen months by an Italian, Pol Teneglio; clearly Paolo Fenoglio who was 16 at the time of his arrival in 1891. Fenoglio's farm comprised 50 acres, 12 being under plant cane, and 18 under ratoon, from which he cut 340 tons.²¹⁶

Another prominent Italian farmer in the same district was Bartolomeo Casalegno who held 304 acres freehold along the Jarvisfield Road. Casalegno had been in possession of the farm for about three years, i.e., since 1907. He had 100 acres under crop for the 1910 crushing, equally divided between plant cane and ratoon, while 30 acres were under plant cane for the next season. At the time of the reporter's visit Casalegno had cut 1500 tons, and expected to reap 4000 tons by the end of the season.²¹⁷

Among the Herbert River farmers, another Italian, J. Buffa, owned a considerable acreage of land. A pocket of cleared scrub land at the junction of the Stone River and the Herbert River, was only a small portion of Buffa's available land at the junction. Buffa also had 825 acres there fringing almost on the western edge of Lannercost plain, lying back from the Herbert River some distance and fronting the Government road. This land was heavily timbered with bloodwood, gum, and Moreton Bay ash. Another farm belonging to Buffa at Long Pocket, was 100 acres in extent, and the cane, at the time of the reporter's visit, was eight to ten feet high. It was observed that the soil was of a rich chocolate colour which indicated the prolific nature of it,

²¹² *Ibid.*, 21 July 1897, p.15.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 2 October 1895, p.14.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28 May 1910, p.75.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 October 1895, p.14.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 November 1910, p.47.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.57.

and suitable for other crops such as beans and sweet potatoes.²¹⁸ Indeed this Buffa, his success and wealth, is still remembered by some in the district: "*Buffa, singolo, era ricco*". (Buffa, a bachelor, was rich).²¹⁹

Of all the Italians residing in North Queensland no-one, however, appears to have been as enterprising and as successful as Dr David Thomatis, a scientific agriculturist of exceptional ability. His contribution to the development of North Queensland could be divided into two parts. The first limited to the last decade of the nineteenth century relates to Thomatis' involvement with rice and coffee; the second, spanning the first decade of the twentieth century, is connected with Thomatis' extraordinary success as cotton grower.

At the time of the arrival of the Italian pioneers in 1891, Thomatis was already extolling the qualities of the rice crop on the Barron River.²²⁰ A few years later a contemporary observer noticed that the lease of a garden of twelve acres in Thomatis' property on the north side of the Barron River was transferred at a cash premium, a transaction that should convince sceptics that farming could be made to pay in the neighbourhood of Cairns.²²¹ In 1897, Thomatis, besides rice, had about five acres under coffee.²²² It was thought that rice had not the glamour that surrounds the growth of coffee, sugar, and some other tropical spices, but there was possibly more money in it.²²³ In the case of Dr Thomatis the return of rice was not as good on the Barron River as in Java, not being irrigated,²²⁴ but the following year, 1898, Thomatis succeeded in growing a fine crop of coffee, and received an offer from Europe to take as much coffee as he could grow, "the superior aroma of the variety having apparently impressed continental buyers".²²⁵

At about the same time Dr Thomatis was experimenting with a new variety of cotton, the "Caravonica" a name suggesting Thomatis' birthplace in Liguria, North of Italy. Caravonica was a tree cotton

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21 May 1910, p.51.

²¹⁹ Mrs D. Rotondo - tape 18 (in Italian).

²²⁰ *Queenslander*, 14 May 1892, p.931.

²²¹ *North Queensland Herald*, 23 October 1895, p.36.

²²² *Ibid.*, 19 May 1897, p.32.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 10 November 1897, p.49.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29 June 1898, p.13.

produced by crossing a fine long-stapled Peruvian cotton, and, during the first decade of the twentieth century, the seed from the resulting plants were tried in other districts of Queensland, Australia, and in many parts of the world.²²⁶

In 1903 the leading cotton brokers of Liverpool wrote to Mr Thomatis: "There is certainly a good future in store for Queensland cotton if it can be produced in quantity, and it will give us much pleasure to help the movement in any way that we can",²²⁷ and the *Liverpool Daily Post* of 8 April 1903, under the heading of "Queensland Cotton" described the Caravonica cotton as "very excellent".²²⁸ A few years later, 1906, in France, Dr Thomatis' exhibit of Caravonica cotton was awarded at the International Textile Exhibition a silver medal, the highest distinction obtainable. It was added that the spinners of France and Belgium had secured the standing crop at Dr Thomatis' own price.²²⁹

In 1905 Thomatis despatched 100lb of cotton seed to the Indian Government in fulfilment of an order; the seed was to be distributed gratuitously by the Indian Government.²³⁰ When the following year, 1906, the Caravonica cotton was sold at Liverpool, many people in various parts of the world were interested, and especially so in Ceylon.²³¹ In Cuba, trees of Caravonica cotton from seed sent out by Thomatis grew to the height of 7½ ft.²³²

In Africa, the Durban County Farmers' Association welcomed the introduction of the Caravonica cotton,²³³ and Emperor Menelick of Abyssinia, who had given orders that none of the local coffee seed should go outside of his empire, made an exception in Thomatis' case. Thomatis had sent the Emperor a parcel of his "Caravonica" cotton seed, and Menelik showed his appreciation by sending him three packets of the coffee seed. This was explained by Thomatis himself; in the same letter Thomatis states that he had also orders from planters

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 August 1909, p.49.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 June 1903, p.31.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 September 1906, p.7.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 September 1905, p.17.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 10 September 1906, p.25.

²³² *Ibid.*, 19 January 1907, p.37.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 29 October 1910, p.39.

in Brazil and Mexico, Tonquin, Annam, Congo, Dahomey, Algeria, Tunis, and other places.²³⁴

In Queensland D. Hones, cotton expert, of the Department of Agriculture, said that the Caravonica tree cotton was thriving luxuriantly in Bowen,²³⁵ while from Port Douglas and Mossman readers were informed that about 19 bags of Caravonica cotton grown by Hermann Matzat, and picked by Daintree Aborigines, were forwarded to Thomatis.²³⁶ The agent for the Manchester Cotton Association, Bottomly, stated that at the Palmerston he found the Caravonica cotton "growing splendidly, and yielding abundantly".²³⁷ In Victoria the Ballarat Woollen and Worsted Co. wrote to Thomatis enquiring about the quantity and price of Caravonica cotton for the Company intended to manufacture cotton as well as wool.²³⁸ In 1905 Thomatis received a letter from the Queensland Premier asking him to donate the Caravonica cotton exhibit shown at the Brisbane Exhibition to the Government for the purpose of sending it to the Agent-General in London, a request Thomatis consented to.²³⁹ In 1910 the Baumwolle Aktien Gesellschaft, the cotton company of Berlin, took over Caravonica, the estate of Dr Thomatis; and Herr Kommerzuniah Emil Stark, the head of the great Chemnitz spinnery in Saxony, had no doubt in stating that "the Caravonica cotton is the best in the world".²⁴⁰

Dr Thomatis' achievement is striking and there is no-one who can be compared to him, but there are several other examples of Italians who did well, or at least, felt they had done well enough to justify their work and sacrifice in Queensland. Some of them went back to Italy, as in the case of "Pagganini" who had his wagon and team of twelve horses purchased by the Vulcan Company, because he was "returning to sunny Italy, the land of his birth".²⁴¹ Other Italians, not named were reported to be leaving Queensland, the Herbert River district,

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 26 March 1906, p.26.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1908, p.10.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 March 1908, p.78.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 January 1905, p.6.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 September 1905, p.17.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 June 1910, p.28.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 9 April 1906, p.23.

and returning to Italy after spending four years here.²⁴² This is reminiscent of some oral accounts such as that of Mrs Giudice who explained that the Italians needed to work and sacrifice themselves to help their families,²⁴³ or that of Joe Casalegno who stated that the Italians' intention was to work hard, to buy land either here or in Italy.²⁴⁴

This desire to own land probably prompted the Italians to conduct themselves in a way to satisfy the expectations of their employers as best as they could. Oral history accounts, newspapers reports, official documents from the time the Italian pioneers arrived in 1891 throughout the following thirty years are a hymn to Italian standards of morality, efficiency, and in many instances to their success.

Macknade seems to have been an ideal place for Italians to accomplish, by constant efforts, their ambition to own land. It was pointed out that Australian cutters from Sydney and Brisbane had compared favourably with the local cutters in the cane-growing districts of Queensland, but "they were not equal to the Italian gangs" at Macknade.²⁴⁵ In a letter from Macknade to the General Manager of the Colonial Sugar Refinery Co. in Sydney, it was explained that there were 23 Italian gangs, five British, and three Black, and:

Of these there is no doubt the Italians are by far the best and most reliable and always have been so since we first started Italians cuttings. We very rarely get bad men amongst them, they come from the agricultural districts in Northern Italy with the intention of making money, many of them taking up land here and others returning to Italy with the same object in view, they are well satisfied with the treatment they get here and the money they earn...In my opinion we would be better with all Italian gangs...It is rarely in fact we get British gangs that can compare with the Italians.²⁴⁶

This aspect of the Italian mentality had already been referred to by Morpurgo during the enquiry into the condition of the rural labouring population in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century:

The property possessed by any of them [mountaineers in the Venetian provinces] is but a very small matter in money value, but it represents

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 31 December 1910, p.41.

²⁴³ Mrs K. Giudice, tape 6 (in Italian).

²⁴⁴ Mr J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

²⁴⁵ Archives of Business and Labour - ANU - 142/3438.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 142/3119.

an infinite amount of patient labour. Every man is strongly impressed with the meaning of the word *mine*.²⁴⁷

This characteristic was found difficult to understand by some of their own descendants, and particularly by the British-Australian at the beginning of the century. Mrs Giudice, for instance, could not understand why her father and mother left Italy, because life was hard there; it was just as hard in Australia.²⁴⁸ Probably what prompted Mrs Giudice's father to come to North Queensland was the possibility for him, no doubt explained by Fraire, to buy land. A monologue reported in the Queensland press in 1919, towards the end of the period under examination, can be even more instructive of the way young Australia judged the Italians' keenness for owning land:

Poor ---; the poor blighters never saw any land before they came to this country. Look at them with old ---. You'd think his --- land would run away before they could buy it, as though there wasn't plenty more as good.²⁴⁹

All these efforts by Italians in working hard and constantly sacrificing and saving were directed at buying property:

The Italians' wish was to own land. They got in three, four, pooled their resources, let's say £1,000 for a deposit for a farm, bought a farm for one, and so on.²⁵⁰

Indeed there is a remarkable story of business success along this very line, and at the same time a happy relationship between two from Lombardy, Buffa and Antoni, and one, Rotondo, from Sicily. Buffa arrived in 1891 on the *Jumna*; Antoni a few years later; Rotondo had landed in Sydney in 1898. After living in a tent to save money, they pooled their resources - £400 - and bought their first farm very early in the century, probably in 1903. By 1914 they had three farms. The two Lombards remained in Australia, but the Sicilian went back to Italy in the same year, 1914, after marrying a Baudino, the daughter of one pioneer, and selling his share. In Sicily Rotondo established all his relations: he bought a farm for one member of the family, for another a butcher shop; for a third, a fisherman, a boat; and for his brother-in-law, a *frantoio*, i.e. an olive press. And, as Augustus Rotondo from

²⁴⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, 1883, Vol.158, p.99.

²⁴⁸ Mrs K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

²⁴⁹ *Queenslander*, 8 March 1919, p.32.

²⁵⁰ Mr S.A. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

Taylor's Beach put it, he returned to Australia after the war in 1921 "broke".²⁵¹

The success of North Queensland Italians was related by Giusto Basso to one of the first Italian newspapers published in Sydney early in the century. The following is the dialogue between Basso and the reporter:

How many Italians do you think there are now on the plantations, Mr Basso?

When I left, from 150 to 200, now considerably over 300.

What do you think about the work? Is it suitable for Europeans?

Yes, most decidedly. For agricultural labourers the work is not only endurable but suitable. Any man who works with a will and puts his heart into his work, can, in a few years, save enough money to buy a small farm and become his own master. The soil is magnificent.

You yourself have been fairly successful?

Yes; I have done very well. I had nothing when I went to Macknade (N.Q.), and now I may say I am independent. I soon had two farms, one 114 and the other 125 acres, which I put partially under cane. The first year it was all work and no return; afterwards I cleared from £400 to £500 a year.²⁵²

By the end of the period the success of Italians was apparent in the community. An article in a leading newspaper gave an elaborate explanation of how the Italians went about reaching their objective:

The Italian labourer realises that his body is his capital, as much as a farmer thinks of his farm or his money in a bank as capital. He is a true capitalist. He considers the fruit of his labour and makes a common fund with the other members of his gang, so that his capital and its product will not evaporate. The next step is that one of the members buys a farm. The communal capital may pay the deposit, or maybe the whole purchase money. On the farm go the whole gang - hard workers, efficient, paying heed to the sound advice of the C.S.R. Company's cane inspector. The farm pays its way. Out of the profits another farm is bought for another member of the gang, so that ultimately each Italian becomes a farmer and a small capitalist, because unlike many other labourers he has a proper appreciation of economics and realises that labour is capital. So each member of a gang passes from labourer to

²⁵¹ Mr A. Rotondo. Informal conversation in December 1984.

²⁵² *L'Italo-Australiano*, 30 November 1907, p.2.

capitalist; his place is taken by a recruit from home, and so on, the gang continually changing in personnel, but the communal ownership of labour turning each member into an individualistic capitalist.²⁵³ This detailed exposition had its confirmation a week later when, in the same newspaper, a table of Italians owning land was given. Though the Italians experienced problems, difficulties, and at times failures, their overall success was demonstrated by the large number, over 400, who had fulfilled their ambition.

²⁵³ *Queenslander*, 8 March 1919, p.32.

Appendix I:
Jumna Immigrants Naturalised in North Queensland to 1901*

NAME	RESIDENCE	DATE OF OATH	PLACE OF BIRTH	AGE	PROFESSION
Basso Giusto	Macknade	13.3.1893	Treviso	25	labourer
Della Vecchia Basilio	Macknade	13.3.1893	Vicenza	46	labourer
Catrastellero Giuseppe	Ripple Creek	17.4.1893	Turin	43	farmer
Toni Arcangelo	Ripple Creek	17.4.1893	Ostiglia	44	farmer
Bonini Gettulio	Ripple Creek	17.4.1893	Ostiglia	30	farmer
Scarsi Domenico	Seaforth-Ayr	12.5.1893	Italy	28	farm labourer
Bonini Lorenzo	Seaforth-Ayr	12.5.1893	Italy	23	farm labourer
Foganini Santino	Seaforth-Ayr	12.5.1893	Italy	33	farm labourer
Baudino Agostino	Kalamia-Ayr	15.5.1893	Italy	25	labourer
Giovanello Adamo	Kalamia-Ayr	15.5.1893	Italy	27	labourer
Parisi Luigi	Herbert River	22.5.1893	Italy	23	labourer
Secco Ludovico	Townsville	7.7.1893	Italy	33	draper
Buarino Carlo	Townsville	6.10.1893	Italy	23	labourer
Filippi Giuseppe	Halifax	16.1.1895	Venice	31	labourer
Buffo Frank	Charters Towers	15.6.1895	Italy	24	miner
Rustichelli Michele	Townsville	2.9.1895	Italy	26	bricklayer
Lasagno Adolpho	Ingham	8.1.1896	Italy	33	gardener
Buogo Lino	Charters Towers	27.5.1896	Italy	21	woodcutter
Davanzo Antonio	Ingham	5.6.1896	Treviso	24	cane farmer
Cocchetti Lorenzo	Innisfail	7.9.1896	Italy	25	farmer
Banduco Bernardo	Macknade	21.9.1896	Piedmont	45	farmer
Ruffinengo Angelo	Townsville	2.8.1897	Italy	27	labourer
Corbellaro Pietro	Port Douglas	13.8.1897	Italy	41	labourer
Balza Giuseppe	Mulgrave	Dec.1897	Piedmont	30	labourer

Appendix I (Cont'd)

NAME	RESIDENCE	DATE OF OATH	PLACE OF BIRTH	AGE	PROFESSION
Cao Peter	Charters Towers	17.1.1898	Italy	30	miner
Servalli Ananias	Cairns	21.3.1898	Italy	28	sugar grower
Finsello Maggiorino	Macknade	29.3.1898	Italy	27	labourer
Coniglio Martino	Ripple Creek	26.4.1898	Italy	40	cane grower
Gariglio Michele	Ayr	4.5.1898	Italy	41	labourer
Mostachetti Antonio	Macknade	21.8.1898	Italy	28	farmer
Lorenzetto Antonio	Ayr	16.12.1898	Italy	45	farmer
Casalegno Bartolomeo	Lower Burdekin	17.10.1899	Italy	37	farmer
Origlasso Nicholas	Charters Towers	20.3.1900	Italy	30	length-man
Ferazza Marco	Innisfail	16.1.1901	Italy	35	ploughman
Della Vecchia Carlo	Innisfail	19.1.1901	Italy	23	labourer
Damiano Luigi	Mossman	18.11.1901	Italy	32	labourer

*Source: Queensland State Archives

Appendix II:
Italian Landowners in North Queensland 1919*

	Italian owners (No.)	Areas cultivated (Acres)
MACKAY DISTRICT		
Cattle Creek	7	239
Farleigh	19	617
Homebush	6	112
Marian	4	84
North Eton	2	137
Plane Creek	3	81
Pleystowe	14	352
Racecourse	1	43
	56	1665
BURDEKIN AND BOWEN		
Inkerman	31	1258
Kalamia	3	150
Pioneer	6	486
Proserpine	6	147
	46	2041
HERBERT RIVER		
Macknade	71	3720
Victoria	60	2560
	131	6280
JOHNSTONE RIVER		
South Johnstone	83	3880
Mourilyan	46	3680
Goondi	10	450
	139	8010
FAR NORTHERN		
Babinda	43	1600
Mulgrave	1	68
Hambleton	7	210
Mossman	13	610
	64	2488
Total which makes the average farm 46.94 acres	436	20,484

Source: *Queenslander*, 15 March 1919, p.32.

CHAPTER SIX

Social Life

Early in the twentieth century, an Australian reporter reflecting on the importation of European peoples wrote: "Germans, Scandinavians, and Italians are after very few years' residence here indistinguishable from Australians except by some lack of facility in the use of our language".¹ If this was meant to imply that the language represented only a small, or transitory, difficulty, it is certainly mistaken as regards the Italians. For them it was a major problem which those who arrived as adults seldom overcame entirely. In fact it appears from oral history accounts that the Italians could not acquire a reasonable knowledge of English because of the lack of opportunities at the time, the nature of their work which kept them isolated or in company of other Italian-speaking persons, their low level of education, though exceptions exist, and the fact that the Italian immigrants came to work, save money, help their families, and establish themselves. If some Italian men became reasonably fluent in English it was because their work obliged them to mix with English speakers, but the problem was greater for women who were housebound.

When I asked some descendants of the Italian pioneers how their parents communicated with those who did not know Italian or the dialect they spoke, Joe Casalegno from Ayr replied: "They had to resort to sign language".² Mrs Penna née Beccaris said the same, but added that her father was quite young when he arrived, and was able to acquire a moderate knowledge of spoken English, but he could neither read nor write.³ Similar comments were made by Mrs Gagno née Della Vecchia. In an informal conversation at her residence on the outskirts of Brisbane, she said her father came at the age of fourteen after spending a few years in a seminary where he had been educated, and his knowledge of English was "terrific"; yet, she added, he never learnt to write or read. It was a completely different story with those born in Australia who became more Australian than the Australians themselves. Indeed this occurrence had been noticed by the above-

¹ *North Queensland Herald*, 9 April 1910, p.78.

² Joe Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

³ E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

mentioned reporter who concluded his observations on the heterogeneous population:

Either Australian life is a perfect solvent for racial idiosyncrasies or these are to a very great extent mere figments of an idle imagination, furnished to avoid the trouble of ascertaining the true cause of some noticed facts.⁴

But generally speaking it can be deduced from the interviews that in most cases learning English was an insurmountable obstacle. Mrs Giudice née Giovanello expressed the frustration her mother felt for not being able to have a wider social intercourse with the words: "Mother always complained, regretted not knowing English".⁵ Another daughter of one of the Italian pioneers, Mrs Leahy née Spelta, explained that her father and mother spoke either Italian or their dialect, and the children understood them, but replied in English, and recalled "The little English they knew learnt it from us".⁶ A daughter-in-law of another Italian pioneer, Mrs Giovanna Menso née Seroglia, said much the same. Although her mother and father-in-law had lived many years in North Queensland they spoke their dialect at home with the children, and they could speak only a few words of English. Mrs Menso, fixing her thoughts on those early years, continued: "Mr and Mrs Menso kept to themselves, they could not speak till they passed away; only one word here, one word there, did not mix with anybody, they kept to themselves".⁷

At times listening to these recollections one gets the impression that objectivity is sacrificed to subjectivity induced by affection. Mr Camillo Giugni elder son of Federico who arrived at the age of 21, explained that his father worked most of the times with Italians, and he spoke "broken English", and he, too, talked to his children in Italian or dialect, but the children replied in English.⁸ The younger son, Stephen, said that their father did not write or read English, but "he spoke it". Then he went on to say that after coming back from work father "retired in a corner",⁹ and this implies the sense of isolation he

⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 9 April 1910, p.78.

⁵ K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

⁶ Rose Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

⁷ G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

⁸ C. Giugni - tape 7 (in English).

⁹ S. Giugni - tape 8 (in English).

must have endured; his knowledge of being different from the main stream represented by his two sons who were brought up by their Irish mother who spoke English and to whom they were more attached.

There are similar instances among the members of the Prandolini family. Jack Prandolini, the grandson of Carlo, said that his grandfather "knew only little English",¹⁰ but the answer of Carlo's son, Jack senior, is permeated with a feeling of kindness for a loved one: "Father also spoke English 'not too bad'".¹¹

This was not a problem for the first arrivals only. Later arrivals went through the same difficulty. Mrs Angelina Prandolini who settled at Halifax before the first world war said: "During the first ten years I could not speak English...Many did not understand and cried; not the men, the women".¹² For immigrants from a rural background, confronting a different language and culture is often exceedingly difficult, a truth remarked upon by the same Angelina: "It takes time, the English language is difficult for us Italians arrived from the villages".¹³

But if the Italian pioneers and later arrivals submitted without resistance to the circumstances, some of their descendants' comments are tinged with severity for the English speakers' approach to the plight of the Italians: "Not being able to communicate is a drawback, hard" said Mrs Penna in Townsville, and with a stern face added: "But the Australians did not bother to learn Italian".¹⁴ It appears, however, that in some cases people were obliged to learn to speak Italian. Mr Robino who arrived at the age of nine, and was bilingual by the time he started work, said that he spoke dialect with the other canecutters, the only way he could communicate with them.¹⁵ Indeed this applied to other nationalities. Mrs Teresa Maranesi reflecting on the early years of Italian immigration to North Queensland explained: "Many who lived at Halifax, Germans, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Russians learnt the Rovato dialect".¹⁶

¹⁰ Jack Prandolini junior - tape 15 (in English).

¹¹ Jack Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

¹² A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

¹⁵ S. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

¹⁶ T. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

Apart from the language the Italian pioneers and their followers found themselves in opposition to the main stream for adhering to the Roman Catholic faith. Articles, letters, formal petitions, and various requests published abound in expressions of narrow sectarianism and religious intolerance. Examples of fairmindedness and toleration are not absent, indeed, but they are much less common.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, religious feelings affected the behaviour of Australian politicians. When Mr Dickson took Mr Gray into the Cabinet because he was a Roman Catholic, there being no member of that faith, it was admitted that the generalisation "Religion has nothing to do with politics" represented the ideal, not the real.¹⁷ Very early in the twentieth century, another example of sectarianism was the King's Coronation Oath which prompted Cardinal Logue Primate of all Ireland to advise Irishmen to refuse to serve with the British army until the King's Coronation Oath was amended by the exclusion of passages offensive to Roman Catholics.¹⁸ But, as already stated, there were also signs of reconciliation. When Bishop Frodsham (Church of England) was interviewed about his North Queensland tour at the beginning of the twentieth century, he said: "What struck me was the really good feeling between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics there [Cloncurry] and I hope it will continue, as the feeling is excellent."¹⁹

What was the reaction of the Italian immigrants to these expressions of enmity, frequent altercations, protests, and also compromise? From oral history it can be deduced that the Italians' response to these events varied greatly. There are examples of Italians adhering strictly to Roman Catholicism, instances of people who would have liked to, but were unable, for various reasons, to participate in religious functions. There are cases of disinterest, indifference, victimisation, and disillusionment.

Mr Stephen Giugni, son of an Italian pioneer who married an Irish woman early in the century, recalled that his father "did not have much interest in the Church" and that if he went to Church it was "because probably pushed by mother when in Charters Towers". He explained that Charters Towers was always known as a Catholic centre, where there was a strong religious force, and every religious

¹⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 19 October 1898, p.5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 March 1901, p.8; 1 April 1901, p.39; 15 April 1901, p.40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1906, p.28.

community looked after itself. Of his mother, who was interested in Church work and helping the community, Mr Giugni said: "My mother was a fanatic Catholic; she worked in the Church, it was the focus of her life".²⁰

By contrast the wife of another Italian pioneer, Carlo Prandolini, was remembered by her son, Jack senior, as a mother who, practically never went to church. She was Catholic, of course, and, as Jack added, she might have been more religious than his father, but it was not shown externally. Carlo, however, came from a very religious family and his approach to ceremonial practice was strict. His brother had died just before being ordained, and he himself had gone "half through the priesthood". As a consequence, even from the very early days when there were no churches, Carlo used to recite prayers in the house with the other members of the family. Later he built a church; his son Jack recalled carting the stumps,²¹ and concluded:

He always wanted us to practice religious beliefs...After we received the sacrament of confirmation we got from father two bob each. There were ten, twelve of us. Every Sunday we had to go and say the prayers with my father in the house, otherwise we were belted (laughter).²²

Another person remembered for her religious observance was Mrs Menso who had arrived with her husband and three children in 1891. She and her husband thought a lot about religion, and even at the age of 85, made sure that the children, beautifully dressed, went to Church.²³ Similarly uncompromising was the attitude of Mrs Seroglia. Her daughter Margherita recollected that early in the century, some went to Church, but her mother made the members of her family go to Church every Sunday. She remembered one occasion, however, as a painful but at the same time pleasing change: "One day a big nest of wasps stung me...I was stung a couple of times, my face became swollen; I suffered for a couple of days, that day I did not go to Church".²⁴

Other recollections refer to the lack of time, distance, or weather that made it difficult for people to worship. Mr Casalegno, reflecting on

²⁰ S. Giugni - tape 8 (in English).

²¹ "Stumps" are logs used as piles for foundations.

²² J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

²³ G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

²⁴ M. Casalegno née Seroglia - tape 3 (in English).

the early days of the Italian pioneers, said that they did not have the time to follow religious practices. Only later, as they got settled, could they afford such expressions of religious observance; then they became more strict. He also explained: "The closest Church was 6-7 miles...difficult to get there if you had not a horse...They all stayed Catholic and made an effort to go at Easter or Christmas".²⁵ The problem of distance was also pointed out by Mrs Angelina Prandolini who remembered the Italian immigrants coming to church from the jungle where they had their farms.²⁶ Weather conditions could also prevent Ministers of religion from celebrating Mass, providing religious education, or other Church activities. Remarks written in the Register of Services kept at the Holy Trinity Church at Ingham and relating to the period 1907-1917 are very instructive about the problems experienced by clergymen and preachers: "...raining hard all day, the heat was intense...the roads very heavy, heat most intense, very wet day, roads dreadful, no service: water over Gairlock bridge, showery, very heavy storm, very very stormy, Roads impassable owing to heavy rains".²⁷

When the Italian immigrants came into contact with others belonging to a Protestant denomination they were, at times, subjected to overt hostility as in the case of Michael Vaschetti who stated briefly: "The priest did not like me, the police did not like me because I was a Catholic".²⁸ Anna Maranesi remembered that once she went to an English Club, and after a dance went back to her seat, and realised that someone had opened her bag, and having noticed the rosary said to her: "But you are not one of us". "No, I am a Roman Catholic", she replied, and as a consequence she was not asked to dance again. The same lady also remembered her school teacher trying to convert her to Protestantism.²⁹

It is obvious from oral history that the Italian immigrants suffered from the schism brought about by the great religious movement in the 16th century which led to the establishment of the Protestant Churches. Indeed there is an example of a child who was baptised at Cairns first, and then also in Italy a few years later, in order to make

²⁵ J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

²⁶ A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

²⁷ Register of Services - Holy Trinity Church, Ingham.

²⁸ M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

²⁹ A. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

up for what was perceived as religious deviation. Mrs Giudice was born at Aloomba, and according to the Italian custom she had to be baptised as soon as possible. So her father, Adamo Giovanello, one of the pioneers, put her on the horse, and rode to Cairns where he met Paolo Fenoglio, another pioneer, and invited him to the baptism. They could not speak one word of English; after a few drinks the father saw a cross emerging from a building - a church - and they went in for the religious ceremony. Six months later they realised that it was Anglican, not Catholic. As a result of this mishap, Mrs Giudice continued, when she went back to Italy a few years later, she had to be baptised again according to the Roman Catholic tradition; if not, she was not admitted to school, and if she died in Italy, she would have been buried outside the cemetery. She was baptised again, and though Mrs Giudice considered herself Catholic, she was happy to say that she was baptised twice, in Cairns and at Livorno Piemontese, and concluded proudly: "Now I can enter any Church".³⁰

If Mrs Giudice could remember her days of inconvenience due to the disunion of two religious bodies over some doctrinal difference, and, at the same time, smile tolerantly about it, there is an instance of the immense psychological damage inflicted on a child who felt her trust had been betrayed. Mrs Gagno née Della Vecchia said that her family was not religious, but she spent a long time in a convent, and recollecting those years explained in a tone of anger and resentment:

I had a bad experience, and I swore that none of my children would ever go to Catholic schools. Even among the teachers...the nuns hated the idea that the Pope was an Italian...The nuns were mostly Irish...It was about confession; I did tell something I had done; a childish prank, I told the priest and he told the nuns, and I was punished for that, and I never forgave him, never. I know he told them because I had not told anybody, not even my bosom pal; it was just darling me and that priest, and I was punished. Anything you confess should be kept a secret...It was him, I am sure of it. Who the hell would tell them! I swore none of my children would go to Catholic schools; they all went to State schools, and they did well. They had good teachers, not rubbish from Dublin coming down here teaching like I had. That episode was not in Innisfail...another place when I was at a convent.³¹

³⁰ K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

³¹ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in Italian).

A few years after the arrival of the *Jumna* a reporter travelling in North Queensland wrote that he had always flattered himself at being able at a glance to know from what part of the world a man hailed, but added that "the breeds to be met with in Ingham would puzzle the most careful anthropologist: Irish Kanakas, Italian Aborigines, Scotch Singalese, German Chinamen, and dozens of other breeds".³² This may have been intended as a humorous exaggeration, but it is true that mixed marriages involving Italians began in the first decade after the *Jumna* arrived. In most marriages, however, both parties were Italian; indeed, in many instances both parties came from the same region of Italy. An attitude reminiscent of the Italian proverb: *moglie e buoi dei paesi tuoi*, a warning not to buy a cow or take a wife from another village. Similarly, although some marriages were mixed in the sense of being between parties of different religious affiliations, or being celebrated in a non-Catholic church, the great majority were not.

Indeed the first marriage contracted between two members of the *Jumna* was between Antonio Davanzo and Maria Della Vecchia. They both came from Venetia, and married at Halifax in the "Church of Our Saviour" on 10 September 1893, according to the rites of the Church of England. Antonio was a farmer, aged 22; Maria was 18, her occupation not specified, and both of them lived at Macknade.³³ Their marrying in an Anglican church could be due to a Catholic church not having been built at the time. About three years later, another two Italian pioneers married in the same church: Ignazio Pavan, aged 20, and Maddalena Della Vecchia, just 16 years of age. Ignazio was a farmer, and both of them came from the same region, Venetia; from Treviso and Vicenza respectively.³⁴ At the beginning of the 20th century, on 20 January 1902, the marriage between Giovanni (John) Beccaris, farmer, 31, of Ripple Creek, and Luisa Coniglio, 15, of Ingham, was celebrated at St Joseph's Church on the Strand in Townsville, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church.³⁵ Both had arrived by the *Jumna* in 1891, and their marriage appears to be the third union between two members of the *Jumna* group. There were another two marriages contracted between *Jumna* pioneers at the beginning of the 20th century; these people came from Piedmont,

³² *N.Q. Herald*, 5 September 1894, p.24.

³³ Register of Marriages - Holy Trinity Church, Ingham.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Register of Marriages 1899-1903 - Archives of Townsville Diocese.

married at Ingham in the Church of St Patrick's, and according to the procedure of the Roman Catholic Church. The first was between Federico Origliasso who had arrived in 1891 aged 15, and Margherita Vaschetti who was just four. They married on 22 April 1905, aged 27 and 18 respectively. Federico was a labourer, Margherita's occupation was not specified. One of the witnesses was Giovanni Comba who had arrived with them in 1891, at the age of 16.³⁶ A few months later, Margherita's sister, Delfina, who was aged 2 at the time of their arrival in 1891, married another Italian pioneer, Paolo Fenoglio, who had arrived at the age of 16.³⁷ This marriage could be considered as one between members of the same extended family for Delfina's father, Carlo Vaschetti, before leaving Italy had accepted responsibility for Paolo who was under age.³⁸ At the time of their wedding Paolo was a labourer, aged 30, and Delfina was 17. The marriage was solemnised in the presence of Giovanni Comba who had already witnessed Delfina's sister's marriage in the same church of St Patrick's a few months earlier.

Giovanni Comba himself married Maria Teresa Castellero in the same St Patrick's Church at Ingham. Maria Teresa was not one of the original Italian pioneers, but she, too, came from Piedmont. When they married on 12 August 1905, Giovanni was a labourer. Delfina Vaschetti witnessed the marriage.³⁹ The first marriage between an Italian pioneer and a later arrival appears to have been celebrated in Townsville in the Church of St Joseph's on the Strand between Maggiorino Finsello and Anna Dudominice on 29 January 1899. Both came from Piedmont; both were aged 28.⁴⁰ The previous year, 26 November 1898, the records kept in the Archives of the Townsville Diocese in Stanley Street indicate that another Italian pioneer, Grazia Jasolis, had witnessed the marriage of another two Italians in the same Church of St Joseph's. Although not *Jumna* arrivals they came from the Valtellina in Lombardy, and their names were Martino Tenni and Maddalena Pensini. Martino was a farmer, aged 28, Maddalena was 27, and they were residing at Cairns and Townsville

³⁶ Register of Marriages - St Patrick's Church, Ingham.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

³⁹ Register of Marriages - St Patrick's Church, Ingham.

⁴⁰ Register of Marriages - Archives of Townsville Diocese.

respectively.⁴¹ Before the end of the 19th century another two marriages were celebrated between Italian pioneers and later Italian arrivals. The first was between Michele Rustichelli, a pioneer, aged 29, and Santina Mussinato, one of the youngest brides, aged 15. Michele was born at Asti, Piedmont; Santina came from the contiguous region of Lombardy, and they were married at Charters Towers in the St Columba's Church, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church.⁴² A few months later, on 4 November 1899, another pioneer, Aventino Borello, married Angiolina Ruffinengo, both from Piedmont. Aventino was a fireman, aged 25; Angiolina was 21. One of the witnesses was Giovanni Sestero who had arrived with Michele and Aventino in 1891 at the age of 17.⁴³

There were also marriages between Italians who arrived in 1891 as infants or children, and later Italian arrivals during the second decade of the 20th century. A marriage was celebrated in the Church of St Patrick at Brandon near Ayr, between John Menso and Giulia Ravizza on 27 December 1915. John had arrived in 1891, and when he married, twenty-four years later, at the age of 30, he was a farmer. Giulia was 24, and came from the same region: Piedmont.⁴⁴ Another wedding which took place in the Church of St Francis, Ayr, was between Thomas Joseph Menso, 27, farmer, and Giovanna Margherita Seroglia, 17. Both were born near Turin, but Thomas arrived in Queensland in 1891, while Giovanna came to Queensland about twenty years later, and married in 1914.⁴⁵ Earlier in the same year, 1914, Giovanna's sister, Rosalia, had married Peter Casalegno in the Church of St Joseph's on the Strand in Townsville. Peter was a farmer, aged 22, who had arrived in Queensland in 1891 as an infant, while Rosalia, also 22, had arrived just before the first world war. Both were born in the neighbourhood of Turin, Piedmont, and at the time of their marriage were residing at Jarvisfield near Ayr on the Lower Burdekin.⁴⁶ Another wedding was celebrated between John Menso and Anna Ravizza on 12 June 1915. John was a child in 1891; when he

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Register of Marriages - Court House, Charters Towers.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Register of Marriages - Sacred Heart Church, Ayr.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Register of Marriages - Archives of the Townsville Diocese.

married he was 30, farmer. Anna was 22.⁴⁷ There was also a marriage celebrated between another Italian pioneer, Eugenio Carello, who arrived in 1891 at the age of 16, and Margherita Tamagnone, a widow. At the time of the wedding, 12 January 1914, Eugenio was a labourer, aged 39; Margherita, domestic duties, was 27, and both were residing at Inkerman on the Lower Burdekin.⁴⁸

From the early years intermarriage started blurring the lines of ethnic identification. In 1898, Nicholas Origliasso, a pioneer, married Ellen O'Driscoll, born in Ireland. Nicholas was 29, a labourer; Ellen was a domestic servant, aged 27. The religious ceremony was held in the Catholic Church of St Columba, Charters Towers.⁴⁹ In the same Church, another Italian pioneer, Giovanni Grasso, from Piedmont, married Annie Lynch, a domestic servant, from Ireland on 16 July 1901.⁵⁰ In the same year, another Italian pioneer, John Sestero, a Piedmontese, married Laura Griffin from England. It was another Catholic marriage celebrated at Charters Towers in the Church of St Columba according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. John was a blacksmith of 27; the bride was 19, occupation unspecified. Aventino Borello who had arrived in 1891 together with Sestero witnessed the marriage.⁵¹ Years later another Italian pioneer, Camillo Giugni, married Delia Scanlon, domestic servant, from Ireland. Camillo was a miner, aged 39, Delia, 25, and the wedding took place in the same Catholic Church at Charters Towers.⁵² There was also a wedding between Enrico Spelta, 27, labourer, and Lily Cislowsky, domestic duties, 19. Enrico had arrived in 1891 from Mantua, Lombardy; Lily came from Gympie, Queensland. This wedding was celebrated at Ayr, in the Catholic Church of St Francis.⁵³

Italian women who arrived in 1891 also married outside the Italian community. Romilda Revanni who arrived aged 9 married Michael Carroll, barber, from Maryborough, Queensland; Romilda was 26, Michael 34, and they married on 6 May 1908 in the Church of St

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Register of Marriages - Court House, Charters Towers.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Register of Marriages - Sacred Heart Church, Ayr.

Patrick's Ingham.⁵⁴ Lucy, one of the eight children of Carlo Vaschetti, was born on the Lower Burdekin, and she married Walter Desmond Toovey, a labourer, born on the Herbert River. He was 25, she 15, and they were united in matrimony at Halifax in the residence of Lucy's father, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁵ Another daughter of Carlo Vaschetti, Maria, born at Kalamia near Ayr, married John Francis Smith on 4 June 1911. The marriage was held in the Church of St Patrick, Brandon, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. Maria was 16; the husband 28, was a farmer from Brisbane.⁵⁶ Other marriages with Italian connections were celebrated on 16 December 1908 between Samuel George Kann, saddler, 27, from Maryborough, Queensland, and Josephine Anna Gurgo, born at Kalamia, Lower Burdekin, and aged 16. On 6 January 1911 James Joseph Clive married Caroline Menso, 22 and 18 respectively. These last two marriages were celebrated in the Church of St Joseph's on the Strand, Townsville.⁵⁷ While some of the Australian-born Italian girls married British Australians, there was also a wedding between an Australian born Italian and an Italian girl; Joseph John Casalegno born at Townsville, farmer and 21 years of age, married Margherita Seroglia who was born near Turin in Piedmont, aged 21. The ceremony was held in the Church of St Francis, Ayr, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. It was 14 June 1913, a year after Margherita's arrival in Queensland.⁵⁸

In the 19th century the Catholic Church in Australia did not approve of mixed marriages. A hardening of attitude was signalled by Cardinal Moran's circular of 1908. The reason why mixed marriages were condemned could be briefly stated:

1. The religious education and training of the children to piety was beset with many difficulties.
2. Mixed marriages did not lead to concord in family life.
3. The pretexts of divorce could occasion untold misery to the Catholic party.

The circular went on to explain that mixed marriages already celebrated were condemned but were nevertheless valid, and the

⁵⁴ Register of Marriages - St Patrick's Church, Ingham.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Register of Marriages - Sacred Heart Church, Ayr.

⁵⁷ Register of Marriages - Archives of the Townsville Diocese.

⁵⁸ Register of Marriages - Sacred Heart Church, Ayr.

contracting parties became truly man and wife. But from Easter Sunday 1908 the New Catholic Marriage Law affected Australia in the following manner:

...should the case occur of a Catholic and Protestant attempting marriage in the registry office or in Protestant Church their marriage is null and void, and the contracting parties are no more man and wife than if they had never gone through the marriage ceremony.⁵⁹

Yet there are examples of such mixed marriages between the Catholic Italians and Protestant Australians, and these were celebrated before and after the circular of 1908. One of these unorthodox weddings appears to have been celebrated between Maria Revanni and Charles James Hussey, a native of England. Maria arrived in 1891, and at the time of the marriage she was 21, laundress. Charles was 24, horse driver. The religious function was held on 16 April 1898 in the Holy Trinity Church, Ingham, according to the rites of the Church of England.⁶⁰ Another Italian pioneer, Peter Cao, from Sondrio, Lombardy, married Rebecca Adams, a local girl from Sellheim near Charters Towers. Cao was 39, Rebecca 17, and they married on 2 April 1907 at the Baptist Church in Charters Towers.⁶¹ Another mixed marriage was celebrated in 1912 at Ayr in the All Saints' Church according to the rites of the Anglican Church between Theresa Janet Gurgo and Claude Alfred Dobbin, a labourer from N.S.W. aged 26, and residing at Ayr. Theresa, who had arrived in 1891 with her father and mother, was 22.⁶² It is interesting to notice that the three above marriages were celebrated on the Herbert River, Charters Towers, and the Lower Burdekin, the areas where most of the Italians settled at the end of the 19th century, and at the beginning of the 20th century.

These few examples of Italians who married against the accepted standards of the Roman Catholic faith acquire meaning if we bear in mind that this was a period when manifestations of enmity between Roman Catholics and other denominations were common. As a case in point, for instance, in the Townsville Northern Supreme Court, a female witness belonging to the Church of England stated she would not have been married by a Roman Catholic priest, but had no objection to being married by any clergyman of a protestant

⁵⁹ *N.Q. Herald*, 25 January 1908, p.54.

⁶⁰ Register of Marriages - Holy Trinity Church, Ingham.

⁶¹ Register of Marriages - Court House, Charters Towers.

⁶² Register of Marriages - All Saints' Church, Ayr.

denomination.⁶³ Some might have disagreed with the Italians not conforming to accepted Catholic religious doctrine, but at the same time it could be inferred that their courage in defying established conventions may have contributed to making their adopted country a more tolerant place to live in.

The overwhelming majority of Italians, however, seem to have married in the Church of St Patrick's, Ingham, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. The data indicate that most of them came from Piedmont, Lombardy, and Venetia, the alpine regions where the Italian pioneers came from. The cities most frequently cited are Alessandria, Cuneo (Piedmont); Sondrio, Brescia, Mantova (Lombardy); Vicenza, Treviso (Venetia).

It should be noted that the above information relating to marriages contracted on the Lower Burdekin, the Herbert River, and the Charters Towers districts cannot be exhaustive because registers, at times, are missing or, together with other records, destroyed. Another problem for the researcher is the difficulty of access to records held in the various court houses in North Queensland. Access is often refused on the grounds that it is necessary to protect people's privacy. Registers of births, marriages, and deaths held in the court houses of Townsville and Cairns could not be consulted but permission was received to examine the records held in the court house at Charters Towers; these show that several Italian pioneers fathered children when working in Charters Towers.

The most prolific appears to have been Agostino Baudino. When his third child, Catherine, was born on 10 July 1899 Baudino had one daughter, Maria aged seven, and one son, Agostino, aged two. Rosey Florie was born in 1903, Frederick in 1905, Daisy Theresa in 1908, and Eileen in 1910. To these seven it should be added another two males who died. Following Baudino there was Giovanni Grasso whose sons and daughters were born in the early twentieth century: Edward Gaetano in 1902, Virginia Mary in 1904, Thomas Giovanni in 1907, Josephine Margaret in 1911, and John Joseph in 1913. Nicholas Origliasso had three children: John born in 1900, Frederick in 1901, and Helen in 1903. Peter Cao also fathered three children: Joseph in 1907, Rosina in 1909, and Ivy in 1910. Aventino Borello and Camillo Giugni had two children each: Giuseppe Camillo and Carolina born in 1899 and 1906 respectively to Borello, and Camillo Joseph and

⁶³ *N.Q. Herald*, 27 November 1905, p.27.

Stephen Alberto born in 1912 and 1914 respectively to Giugni. Giovanni Sestero had one son, Natal, born in 1901, and Michele Rustichelli was also the father of one son named Battista Michele who was born on 25 December 1900.⁶⁴

The *Liber Baptizatorum* (Book of Baptisms) held in the Catholic Churches of the Sacred Heart at Ayr, and of St Patrick at Ingham were also useful documents to find out how many of the Italian pioneers, and later arrivals, had children. At Ayr 37 births were counted between 1912 and 1921, and apart from the names of the original pioneers such as Casalegno, Menso, Spelta, Carello there are other familiar ones: Aprato, Gilli, Rubiolo, Gianotti, Novarese, Ravizza.⁶⁵ Even in the Anglican Church of All Saints at Ayr evidence was found of a daughter and son of Antonio Menso who were baptised in 1913 and 1915. The daughter's name was Bertha Caroline, and the son's name: Anthony. Antonio Menso had arrived in 1891 as a child.⁶⁶

From the Book of Baptisms kept in the archives of the Church of St Patrick it appears evident that a large number of children were born to Italians in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Familiar names such as Coniglio, Rustichelli, Basso, Finsello, Prandolini, Beccaris, Comba, Pavan, Fenoglio, Gatti, Borello, Catastrellero, Origliasso, Crivello alternate with less familiar ones: Pensini, Brescianini, Valinoti, Ghenzi, Corneli, Ferraris, Zatti, Manfredi, Zanotti, Pelizari, Armanelli, Valesse, Accatino...The places of births were: Ripple Creek, Halifax, Macknade, Lucinda Point, Seymour, Victoria Estate, Long Pocket, Ingham.⁶⁷ One curious piece of information was noted; Charles James Hussey and Maria Revanni carried their son to St Patrick's Church to be baptised on 26 August 1906. They could not remember the exact date of their son's birth, but "promised to supply it".⁶⁸

The first Italian name to appear in the school roll of Halifax State School is that of Revanni Romilda who was 9 years old when she arrived in 1891. Her name is listed in the roll of 1892 misspelled as Ravani; the date of admission was 4 July 1892. The second Italian to be admitted was Lucia Coniglio who arrived in 1891 and was 5 years

⁶⁴ Register of Births - Court House, Charters Towers.

⁶⁵ Book of Baptisms - Sacred Heart, Ayr.

⁶⁶ Book of Baptisms - All Saints', Ayr.

⁶⁷ Book of Baptisms - St Patrick's, Ingham.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

of age. She was admitted to the same school on 23 January 1894; her name was anglicised as Canelia, Lucy.⁶⁹ These two girls arrived together by the *Jumna*, but before the end of the century another two names appear in the school roll of Halifax S.S.: Mary Giovanelli admitted on 5 February 1896 and a boy named Silverio Dalla Vecchia admitted on 13 July 1897. From oral history we know that Mary was the daughter of Adamo Giovanello,⁷⁰ and Silverio the son of Basilio Della Vecchia,⁷¹ two of the original pioneers. There are other children whose names indicate their Italian origin: John Regazzoli admitted on 7 July 1897, Philippi M. admitted on 5 July 1898, and Santo Regazzoli admitted on 21 May 1900. Indeed there are two more names which appear to be Italian: Tuzzi, Francis admitted on 23 January 1893 and Bacco, Andrea admitted on 27 February 1899.⁷²

From 1901 to 1921 the proportion of Italian names increases considerably, and as the years go by the names of the Italian pioneers alternate with those Italians who followed in their footsteps. Among the descendants of the Italian pioneers Antonetta Rustichelli and Louis Rustichelli were admitted in 1901 and 1905 respectively. Three children of Agostino Baudino were admitted on the same day and year: 30 April 1906: Mary, August, and Katie. Michael Vaschetti and Josephine Vaschetti were also admitted together: 15 June 1908. Rustichelli Dora was admitted in 1910, and three more Rustichelli, Julanda, Mafalda, and Salvador were admitted also at the same time: 16 February 1914. Two daughters of Beccaris Giovanni, Eva and Angelina, and one of his sons, Giovanni, were admitted on 6 July 1914. Their mother was Lucia Coniglio who had walked into the same school twenty years earlier. Beccaris Joe was admitted in 1915 together with Prandolini Lucy. Caniglio Margherita and Prandolini Peter were admitted in 1916, and the following children were all admitted in 1921: Fenoglio Theresa, Fenoglio Josephine, Fenoglio Irene, Fenoglio Frank, Fenoglio Nellie, and Prandolini Bianca.⁷³

Other Italian children were admitted to the same school, and most of the names appear during the second decade of the twentieth

⁶⁹ Halifax State School Centenary 1883-1983.

⁷⁰ K. Giudice - tape 6 (in Italian).

⁷¹ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English); also Alf Martinuzzi (informal conversation at Innisfail, 31 March 1986).

⁷² Halifax State School Centenary 1883-1983.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

century: Vignolio, Ferraris, Robino, Ridolfi, Arnetti, Uyfreddi, Pasquarelli, Fasano, Ferando, Zanotti, Tento, Poggio, Maifreddi, Barbi, Messina, Marbelli, Russo, Degiovanni, Lazzaroni, Accatino, Demartini, Della Bosca, Cabassi, Reitano, Fabbrio, Valse, Bellero, Poppi, Pavetto, Crivello, Oliveri, Guerra, Garutti, Simonelli, Giambelli, Pedrola, Salata.⁷⁴

Mrs Penna née Beccaris recounted that her eldest brother was more attracted to nature than to going to school with the result that, on the way to school, he used to stop to look at nests and birds and to chase lizards. Their mother, Lucy Coniglio married to Giovanni Beccaris, got a letter from the teacher explaining that unless her son went regularly to school he would have to report her to the police. And Mrs Penna concluded: "My mother, being scared stiff, sent me with my brother"⁷⁵ as a deterrent to his going on a frolic of his own. Jane Menso née Seroglia residing on the Lower Burdekin remembered similar episodes indicating the curiosity of children for the material world: "Tom, my husband, went to school but his elder brothers, Gioacchino and Antonio, did not go to school. They chased wallabies".⁷⁶

From the descendants of the original Italian pioneers it can be deduced that the parents' perception of the importance of education varied. Rose Leahy née Spelta, said "Father and mother did not think much of education".⁷⁷ Mick Vaschetti born at Ayr in 1897, six years after the arrival of his father and mother, and the first four children born in Italy, agreed that "A job was considered more important than a good education".⁷⁸ These statements were, however, qualified by Joe Casalegno: "A good, steady job might have been considered better than education; farming was very secure in those days; whatever you grew you were able to sell it, not like today, we are overproducing and we can't sell it".⁷⁹ Modest expectations of one parent contrasted strongly with the other. Stephen Giugni, a retired teacher living at Charters Towers, explained that all his father wanted was that his two sons, Stephen and Camillo, did not have to work as hard as he had to work

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ E.F. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

⁷⁶ G. Menso née Seroglia - tape 11 (in English).

⁷⁷ R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

⁷⁸ M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

⁷⁹ J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

in the mines, but his mother wanted them to become scholars.⁸⁰ For one the ambition of higher education was achieved together with his complete acceptance by young British Australia: "That the winning of the gold medal by Percy Armati gave satisfaction to all his school fellows was evidenced by the rounds of applause which greeted the presentation". Two years later Armati passed with "considerable credit" the entrance examination of Sydney University and qualified for admission to the faculties of Law, Medicine, and Science.⁸¹

For the sons and daughters of the Italian pioneers, however, it was difficult to pursue higher education not only because some parents did not consider it as important as getting established on the land, but also because of distance. Work which had to be combined with education, and the feeling that being Italian was not popular might also have dissuaded them from staying longer at school. Joe Casalegno from Ayr remembered that the children had to walk 6-7 miles to get to school.⁸² Michael Vaschetti left at 12 and went to work on the farm.⁸³ Solotore Robino, having reached the age of nine, went to school for ten months and then to work.⁸⁴ Yet there are examples of Italians who showed predisposition for learning, and if the opportunities were there they might have found a satisfying outlet for their abilities and interests. Jack Prandolini, recalling his father, said: "He used to read a lot, he learnt for himself; I admire him, he was self-educated".⁸⁵ In the contemporary press we can read Italian names in relation to their achievement at school. At the Halifax School F. Tuzzi, class ii, was awarded the highest marks for writing proficiency.⁸⁶ At the Brandon State School among the prize-winners there were the names of Maria Spelta, Chester Spelta, and Bert Casalegno.⁸⁷ Other Italians who distinguished themselves were Joseph Gurgo, and also V. Spelta from the Lower Burdekin,⁸⁸ while Peter Mansine (Mancini?)

⁸⁰ S. Giugni - tape 8 (in English).

⁸¹ *N.Q. Herald*, 6 January 1897, p.11; 15 December 1897, p.16; 18 December 1895.

⁸² J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

⁸³ M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

⁸⁴ S. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

⁸⁵ J. Prandolini junior - tape 15 (in English).

⁸⁶ *N.Q. Herald*, 23 December 1896, p.24.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 May 1906, p.76.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 30 January 1909, p.74.

was one of the State scholarship winners. He was a student at Charters Towers at the local Christian Brothers' School.

Although from oral accounts there were cases of harmony between Italians and children of other nationalities, Italy and Italians were not popular at the time; this hostile attitude might have dissuaded some Italian children from staying longer at school. Rose Leahy née Spelta said she got along well with everybody, and took pleasure in remembering: "We used to play games, have fun at school; we used to go fishing a lot down the creeks; we caught barramundi, cod, and we brought it home and cooked it".⁸⁹ By contrast Jack Prandolini, one of the sons of Carlo, had to put up with the patronising attitude of some of his school fellows, and recounted: "The first school I went to was Ripple Creek; I got teased a bit at first being Italian".⁹⁰ Michael Vanschetti born at Ayr and admitted to the Halifax State School in 1908 remembered that the children used to play "cops and robbers" and on one occasion some of his British-Australian school-mates tried to hang him. And still with terror in his voice explained that a girl ran to inform the teachers, and admitted: "That girl saved me". While deeply grateful to the girl, he could not hide his indignation at the teacher who instead of punishing did nothing to them.⁹¹ Teresa Maranesi remembered she went to school for three days at Aloomba, then remained at home, and she was 12. The reason was because a girl, whose father was a blackman, and her mother a German, called her a dago behind her back. Teresa reacted by calling her a "colonial wallaby", but she felt so resentful that she never went back to school.⁹²

Meditating on the experience of her early days at school, Mrs Penna née Beccaris admitted to the Halifax State School in 1914, commented: "Children can be very cruel, you have no idea! The children when going to school were called all sorts of names...Dago bastards go back where you came from. The kids used to give us a rough spin, to girls and boys. We used to fight; I had long hair and that was the favourite place for them to grab me, but they did not always come out best".⁹³ Indeed from oral recollections it appears that the girls of Italian origin

⁸⁹ R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

⁹⁰ J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

⁹¹ M. Vanschetti - tape 19 (in English).

⁹² T. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

⁹³ E. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

were more inclined to expect respect than the boys. As an instance of this physical and verbal aggression Mrs Gagno, née Della Vecchia, a spirited lady, recalls:

As kids we used to offend one another when fighting. Our biggest accusation was that our ancestors did not come with ball and chain on their legs. They were no better than we were. Descendants of convicts. Also that when Caesar went to Britain found their progenitors walking on all fours, and the Romans used to kick them on their backside to make them walk straight. "What was their reaction?" They were astonished. Our father, although he might have exaggerated, wanted to instil into us that we did not need to feel ashamed, that we should have been proud of being Italian. He always insisted on that.⁹⁴

Mrs Rose Leahy née Spelta who was born at Ayr in 1902 went to school till the age of 15, and remembered that time as a happy one. The school was close, she had just to cross the paddock. She expressed some regret for not being able to learn Italian, but explained that in those days there was no opportunity because there were no teachers; the children spoke English, while hard-working parents had no time or inclination to teach their mother tongue.⁹⁵ By contrast, the daughter of Carlo Della Vecchia, Mrs Gagno, affirmed that her father was keen for his children to learn Italian, and insisted on proper pronunciation.⁹⁶ Mr Stephen Giugni remembered that his father tried to teach him and his elder brother, Camillo, Italian, to get them interested in the musicality of the Italian language, and added that his father felt that praying in Italian sounded better than in English.⁹⁷ Now both sons admit that even from an economic point of view they might have made a mistake. Camillo Giugni said that if he knew Italian he "might have made better headway" because Italian is very popular in the Ingham district where he lives.⁹⁸ Stephen Giugni, the younger brother, residing at Charters Towers, and a retired teacher, was sorry he took light-heartedly the efforts his father made to teach the sons Italian, and concluded: "I am sorry I missed the opportunity;

⁹⁴ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

⁹⁵ R. Leahy - tape 9 (in English).

⁹⁶ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

⁹⁷ S. Giugni - tape 8 (in English).

⁹⁸ C. Giugni- tape 7 (in English).

if you don't learn when you can you make a big mistake; you learn that later in life".⁹⁹

Children of the original Italian pioneers were often embarrassed at learning a language alien to them. Camillo and Stephen Giugni did not see much of their father for he was working in the mines not only in Charters Towers but also in other mining districts in North Queensland, and they grew up more attached to the mother who was Irish and spoke English; they never encouraged their father to teach them Italian.¹⁰⁰ Mrs Gagno, whose father Carlo Della Vecchia was anxious for his children to learn Italian, recalled: "I used to get the giggles. I was sent out of the room. I could never roll the *r* like the Italians. It sounded funny to me; I can speak it not too badly at all. My sister can, but I can't speak that *r*".¹⁰¹ Mr Clarence Gurgo, descendant of Giacinto and Maria Gurgo who arrived and settled on the Lower Burdekin in 1891, remembered: "The children were not interested. When some visitors spoke Italian, they found it funny, and laughed; consequently they were sent to bed or away from the table".¹⁰²

Italian children were also uncomfortable about their Italian names, at a time when it was important for them to be part of the main stream, to feel identified with young Australia. Mrs Penna, née Beccaris, recounted that the first generation of Italians who arrived by the *Jumna* in 1891 kept their Italian names, and explained that "it would have been a futile exercise" to change them, because they would still be considered Italian. But she added that some of the children did, "not many though". Mrs Penna had no hesitation in stating that some Italians were ashamed of their names because "it was Italian, foreign".¹⁰³ This general statement was confirmed at least in one instance by Michael Vaschetti who said that when his brother knew, saw, heard someone speak Italian he walked away because he was ashamed of being Italian, and related the following short altercation between his elder brother, Felice, born in Italy, and himself born at Ayr:

Felice: You change your name!

⁹⁹ S. Giugni - tape 8 (in English).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

¹⁰² Clarence Gurgo - Ayr - informal conversation.

¹⁰³ E. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

Michael: What, you change your name! I will not change my name. And Michael, born in 1897, still feeling angry at his brother's pretension, shook his head, and put a stop to the recollection of the heated argument, recapitulating: "He was my brother born in Italy. Yes Felice [Fred]. He spelled his name differently; he changed a few letters to make it sound more English. I do not know why he was ashamed".¹⁰⁴

There were cases, however, of names slightly changed for phonetic reasons, as it was pointed out by Camillo Giugni from his residence at Ingham. Italian names were, at times, confusing to Australians; his family accepted that *Giugni* was difficult, so they adopted "*June*, pronounced like the town in New South Wales".¹⁰⁵ In the Register of births kept in the Court House at Charters Towers there is the following instruction: "In column 5 for 'Camilo June' read 'Camillo Frederico Giugni' known as Camilo June. And in the Register of Marriages there is a similar explanation: "In column 3 for "Camilo June" read "Camilo Frederico Giugni" known as Camilo June."¹⁰⁶ Some Italians modified their name on the grounds that others had already done it for them. Tommaso Mensio who arrived in 1891 as a child changed his name by deed poll, giving the following reason:

having come to Australia with my parents at an early age, I became known as 'Thomas Joseph Menso', and have for many years been so known, notwithstanding that my true name as I have been informed by my parents was 'Giuseppe Mensio'. **Now therefore** in order to save confusion **I do hereby** absolutely renounce and abandon the use of my said name 'Giuseppe Mensio' and in lieu thereof adopt and adhere to the said name 'Thomas Joseph Menso'.¹⁰⁷

From the recollections of descendants of the original Italian pioneers it is evident that some were anxious to be received favourably by the British-Australian society. We have just seen that some of them even mutilated their names to make them less difficult to pronounce or spell by the English-speaking people. One of them, Carlo Della Vecchia, who arrived in 1891 aged 15, is remembered by his daughter, Mrs Gagno, as one particularly interested in being considered an active member of the new society. For Carlo it was easier because he arrived very young,

¹⁰⁴ M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

¹⁰⁵ C. Giugni - tape 7 (in English).

¹⁰⁶ Register of Births - Court House, Charters Towers; Register of Marriages, *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ CRS-A1, item 30/6043. Australian Archives, Canberra.

he had spent time in a Seminary, and his formal education helped him acquire a knowledge of the English language denied to older and less educated Italians. Although he could not write English properly, Mrs Gagno said his spoken English was "phenomenal"; he would go interpreting, and be involved in the activities of the new land. Indeed Mrs Gagno remembers him as "a jumper" who liked to mix with "archbishops, solicitors, bank managers" while the family took a secondary place. Yet, notwithstanding all these efforts to participate in social and political affairs it seems that he did not consider himself successful. He liked North Queensland very much but he used to say: "I was knocking down scrubs before you buggers were born...Now I am still a Dago...These new ones who come out now are New Australians, but me I am still a Dago". And the daughter concluded meditatively: "He was bitter".¹⁰⁸

From the contemporary press, however, it can be inferred that there was a small group of Italians, namely Armati, Fraire, and Thomatis who had been accepted by the community already, and some of their deeds shed light on how they perceived their social function in relation to education, politics, welfare. Mr P.V. Armati, the chief pharmacist in Townsville, lived with his family on Stanton Hill. When the trustees of the Townsville Grammar School were considering whether to admit girls or not, they sent a circular to the parents of the boys, and Armati who was referred to as a leading citizen had no objection to the admission of girls. Armati was a member of the Townsville Chamber of Commerce, and was among the judges at the 15th Show of the Townsville Pastoral and Agricultural Association for the horticultural section.¹⁰⁹

The name of C.V. Fraire recurs often in the local press during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Only a few years after coming back from Italy in 1891 Fraire, together with other gentlemen of the retiring committee of the Central State School, was re-elected because the schools had been "so well-managed".¹¹⁰ During the same year when a strange boat put into Townsville harbour with suspected escapees it was necessary to enlist the services of Fraire to have the nature of the charge explained to them, because all except one spoke

¹⁰⁸ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

¹⁰⁹ *N.Q. Herald*, 21 December 1901, p.22; 22 March 1893, p.26; 29 September 1897, p.27; *Ibid.*, 9 October 1895, pp.16, 18.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1896, p.10.

Italian.¹¹¹ Fraire also found time to hand the *North Queensland Herald* staff a copy of the Rome *Don Chisciotte*, containing a notice that Mr Finucane, the Queensland commercial agent for southern Europe, had presented the Museum of the College of Rome with an interesting ethnographical collection of native weapons from Australia and the Pacific Islands.¹¹² This obvious pleasure at such a manifestation of generosity from his adopted country to his native one alternated with his own generosity to the local orphanage or schools. It was reported at a meeting of the committee of the Townsville Orphanage that amongst the gifts received for 111 children there was a case of grapes given by Mr Fraire.¹¹³ On the anniversary of *Arbor Day* celebrated at the South Townsville State School, the name of Fraire appears among the donors whose generosity and kindness was sincerely appreciated by the headmaster.¹¹⁴ Fraire was also one of the scrutineers at the Townsville Grammar School¹¹⁵ and for some time also a Justice of the Peace.¹¹⁶ Indeed, just before the end of the 19th century he was a member of a special party that included the Hon. R. Philp, who had been invited to be present at the opening of the Winton Railway.¹¹⁷

Dr David Thomatis was not simply a skilful producer of rice, coffee, and cotton, but also an active member of the community socially, culturally, and politically. He wrote letters urging Australians, and North Queenslanders, in particular, to settle the land in the extreme tropical districts, to undertake practical work such as tropical cultures.¹¹⁸ His paper on cotton culture read at the Melbourne Town Hall on the evening of 21 March 1904, was published in Melbourne and North Queensland papers.¹¹⁹ Other papers written by Thomatis concerned "Freetrade or Protection"¹²⁰ and also the problems

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1896, p.34.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 15 September 1897, p.11.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 15 February 1893, p.11.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 May 1894, p.24.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 March 1897, p.12.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 January 1900, p.2 of the "Supplement".

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1899, p.13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1904, p.22.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 April 1904, p.33.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 May 1900, p.43.

concerning Kanaka labor.¹²¹ In 1899 he stood for election as a Ministerial candidate for Cairns, but withdrew after a few weeks in favour of another candidate, Hoolan.¹²²

Although the road to social acceptance might have been more difficult for other Italians, there are instances that several of them came to play a local role, and the Italian names increase as the years go by. About two years after the arrival of the Italian pioneers in 1891, among the subscriptions and donations presented to the Funds of the Ingham Hospital appear the names of V. Guiseppi (probably Vial Giuseppe), V. Giovanni, C. Giovanni, B. Bernardo, Tom Api. Each of them donated £1.¹²³

Other Italian names appear in relation to other aspects of communal cooperation so that a certain standard of living and quality of life might be attained. Among the members of committees for the State Schools in North Queensland the name of Felice Regazzoli from Halifax is mentioned.¹²⁴ His brother, Eugenio, was also proposed to be on a committee of inspection.¹²⁵ Eugenio was also invited, together with Antonio Anzolin, a *Jumna* member, to attend the White Labor Conference held in Townsville in 1905 as a representative of the Herbert District.¹²⁶ Other Italian pioneers showed their interest in the local well-being. At Ingham "Buffa and Friend" were appointed to the visiting committee of the local hospital.¹²⁷ Buffa was also a local benefactor who gave land to the Hinchinbrook Shire Council for tramway purposes.¹²⁸ Another Italian, A. Lasagno, offered the same Council his services to keep the road clear of weeds provided he could lease the reserve adjoining his property for a period of seven years for agricultural purposes.¹²⁹

Italians also showed their concern for the welfare of the country in general. Italian pioneers D. Scarsi and B. Casalegno welcomed,

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 11 June 1900, p.56.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 6 March 1899, p.14; 20 February 1899, p.20.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 17 January 1894, p.9.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1908, p.9.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1905, p.5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18 February 1905, p.49.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 April 1910, p.8; 24 July 1909, p.82.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11 September 1909, p.70.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 June 1909, p.7.

together with another 50 farmers of Ayr, a federal party to whom they expressed their concern in 1905 about the supply of labor to replace the Kanakas.¹³⁰ Other Italian pioneers, Vincenzo Spelta and W. Gurgo were present at the general meeting of the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association in 1909.¹³¹ Italians even used the Italian press published in Sydney early in the century to make their voices heard. In a letter signed by Francesco Molinari of Mantua, and followed by a long list of signatures, Italians residing at Macknade congratulated the newly-elected Member of Parliament for their district, expressed satisfaction at his victory, and stated they were willing to unite forces in cultivating the land, and did not hide their optimism by adding that those lands would become fountains of national wealth, and a lasting benefit to all classes of the population. This indicated, as it was understood by the editor to whom the letter had been addressed, that the Italians identified themselves with the country of their adoption.¹³²

Another avenue to social acceptance or importance was sport. The name Armati recurs constantly in the sports pages: from playing ping-pong¹³³ to participating in the 100 yards in the athletic games held at the Townsville Grammar School.¹³⁴ As the years go by Armati seemed to devote more time and energy to team games. He was selected to represent Townsville in a match played against the Cairns Cricket team.¹³⁵ Tennis, however, was the sport Armati played most frequently, in singles¹³⁶ and doubles.¹³⁷ He was selected to represent Townsville¹³⁸ and he was also appointed as a member of the committee of the North Queensland Tennis Association.¹³⁹

Rifle shooting attracted many participants, and while the name of Eugenio Regazzoli is listed quite frequently during the last decade of the 19th century, the name of Enrico Spelta, who arrived as a child in

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1905, p.28.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 24 July 1909, p.51.

¹³² *L'Italo-Australiano*, 22 June 1907, p.2.

¹³³ *N.Q. Herald*, 30 August 1902, pp.42, 43.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 October 1896, p.30.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 December 1902, p.18.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18 August 1905, p.47.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 July 1908, p.74.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 July 1908, p.77.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1908, p.23.

1891, appears during the first decade of the 20th century. Regazzoli was selected by the Halifax Club to be a member of the local team, and in a well-advertised match against Cooktown he was in the winning Halifax team.¹⁴⁰ Enrico Spelta was picked to represent the Ayr Rifle Club, and in a match against Townsville Rifle Club held in 1908 at Ayr his team surprised the more experienced Townsville representatives by their ability, and their hospitality:

The Ayr Rifle Club members are good shots and they are a hospitable body as well: indeed it is not easy to decide in which virtue they excel...The form shown by the Ayr riflemen was far beyond expectations and they are to be congratulated on the shaking up they gave the really good team from Townsville. (Townsville won 706 to 696).¹⁴¹

A few weeks later the return match was held at Townsville which won by 16 points, but what strikes the reader is the friendly atmosphere and zest for life in a land of plenty:

The lunch was good - it could not have been better - There was game, beef, tongue, ham, salads, four or five kinds of vegetables, three or four kinds of sweets - soup to start with, fruits or cheese to finish with...¹⁴²

The bicycle played an important role as a means of transport, both urban and rural, but there were also races held in various places in North Queensland. Again a few names related to Italian pioneers or later arrivals appear as competitors at Brandon on the Lower Burdekin (Fenoglio)¹⁴³ and at Ingham on the Herbert River (Vignolio and Fracchia).¹⁴⁴ Other Italian names appear as contestants in athletics and other contests. F. Catrastellero took part in the 75 yards' sprint and also in the 120 yards hurdles at Ingham.¹⁴⁵ In the same town ploughing matches and wood chopping contests were also held. At one of them which attracted spectators from the surrounding districts one of the contestants in the wood chopping competition was C. Innocenti. It took him 3 minutes to chop a log 15 inches in diameter.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16 September 1896, p.30; 30 September 1896, p.28.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12 September 1908, p.23.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 17 October 1908, p.24.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10 April 1909, p.70.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 January 1910, p.79.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 March 1910, p.7.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1908, p.6.

Italians were also active in the world of horses. G. Beccaris and F. Reitano were committee men of the Halifax Trotting and Racing Club.¹⁴⁷ When, at a meeting of the Club, it was proposed to erect a new grandstand at the race course, Reitano was one of those thanked for donations to the building fund.¹⁴⁸ Sports were almost entirely a male preserve, but one woman, Miss Gurgo, took part in a riding contest at the Lower Burdekin Pastoral, Agricultural and Industrial Association Exhibition, and was judged "Best local lady rider over hurdles",¹⁴⁹ but it should be added that she was the only one competing.

Italian names also appear in the sports pages relating to boxing. Prize fights were very popular; contests embraced all weights from heavy to bantam. Italian names appear early in the 20th century. It was reported in 1908 that a fight had been arranged between Andy Mullins, a local lad from Ingham, and a new-comer "enjoying the name of Angelo Ravaschitti",¹⁵⁰ probably Angelo Ravaschietto who arrived in the *Jumna* in 1891 aged 16. The local reporter might have found it difficult to spell or pronounce the name of Ravaschietto but Angelo should not have had problems in dealing with his opponent in a roped-in square where the only weapons are the gloved fists. Pugilism, the sport of fighting with the fists, derives from the Latin *pugnus* (fist).

Among sporting Italians there is one, Ricco Rosetti, who seems to have dominated the boxing world in North Queensland during the first decade of the 20th century. He displayed his skill at Ingham, Innisfail, Charters Towers, and fought against boxers from various districts of North Queensland, and also from other states. It was reported that on one occasion he met Kidd McGovern, both of them scaling 10 stones 8 lbs, in the Ingham Shire Hall which was packed. It was a draw, but the contest was regarded as the best ever seen in Ingham.¹⁵¹ The following year, however, Rosetti knocked McGovern out in the fifth round with "an upper cut on the point".¹⁵²

Rosetti also defeated Munro at Innisfail after only two and a half rounds. Indeed Rosetti declared his opponent was too small, and he

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 November 1910, pp.80, 81.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 August 1910, p.9.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 June 1909, p.80.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 22 August 1908, p.20.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1908, p.24.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 6 November 1909, p.75.

challenged any 10 stone 7lb man in Queensland for £25 a side wager.¹⁵³ On another occasion, again at Innisfail, Rosetti defeated Robinson (Ted) Mitchell, though he had injured his left hand in the fifth round. But the salient point seems to have been Rosetti's donation of ten guineas to the local hospital.¹⁵⁴ Rosetti gave a demonstration of his temperament also at Charters Towers when he fought Dan Hoosian in a 20 round contest, and punished him by "savaging into the game". During the match Hoosian "fell and hopped up to be thrown again". Hoosian was greatly fatigued and his seconds went to his rescue by claiming a foul. Fortunately for Rosetti the crowd yelled "let 'em fight on". Hoosian wisely declined to fight on, but accused Rosetti of having injured him in the last round foully, and to prove his point offered to give the public ocular demonstration, but no one seemed anxious for the inspection.¹⁵⁵

Rosetti, residing at Halifax, also fought against J. Maloney, a boxer from Gympie. Maloney returned there after being "thrown in the third round and counted out".¹⁵⁶ Again in the Shire Hall of Ingham, Rosetti met Geo Craig from Newtown, and knocked him out in the third of the 20 scheduled rounds.¹⁵⁷ Again at the Ingham Shire Hall Rosetti met Bill Tucker who had come all the way from Sydney to box the best of 20 rounds for £25 a side. Bill retraced his steps to the south at the end of the sixth round when he "cried content".¹⁵⁸

Perhaps the most instructive match for the reader to understand the personality of Rosetti, and his boxing style, was the one against Oliver which lasted 20 rounds, when at the end it was obvious that Rosetti had been "punished about the body and Oliver about the face". The reporter's final comment indicates the type of punches delivered by the two men, suggests the areas they consider more vulnerable. For Rosetti are the forehead, temples, chin, while Oliver concentrates on the body between the waist and the rib cage. Italian panache, flair, brio, imagination against dull, stolid, bovine-like persistence of "John Bull". It was a draw.¹⁵⁹ In fact the only way Rosetti could lose was

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1909, p.71.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 19 June 1909, p.29; 3 July 1909, p.77.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1908, p.68.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 August 1908, p.51.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 November 1910, p.74.

¹⁵⁸ 1 August 1908, p.25.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19 September 1908, p.32.

either by rigging the game¹⁶⁰ or fighting against someone endowed with an extra cushion of weight.¹⁶¹

The social life of Italians varied widely, ranging as they did from prominent people into poor labourers. During the last decade of the 19th century and the first of the 20th century the Armati and Fraire families were very active at most of the social functions held in Townsville, particularly Mrs Armati and her daughter Blanche. Mrs Armati seems to have been constantly engaged during the 1890s, and comes across as a protagonist who lived in a whirl of fetes and congratulatory functions. From the Zingari Club Dance, accompanied by her daughter, and wearing black satin and lace, she moves to the School of Arts to be present at the Benevolent Ball. On this occasion she is wearing black merveilleux with black lace. She is also conspicuous at various hospital balls clad in black and cerise, and at innumerable other venues, and black affects one's senses as if it had been her favourite colour. Mrs Armati reminding the writer of Coco Chanel's most obvious trademark, her black dress, concludes her parade by gracing the lawn and grandstand at the Townsville Annual Race Meeting where, among the music, animation, and excitement, she looms in "black hat with feathers".¹⁶²

Miss Blanche Armati, following her mother's example, appears to have become during the first decade of the century the epitome of the society girl leading a charmed life. She was invited to dances and weddings, and spent the evenings at the homes of local prominent citizens. She sings, she plays, and alternates looking "very sweet in a lovely clinging pink dress"¹⁶³ and looking "dainty in a flowing white Indian muslin much befrilled".¹⁶⁴ Indeed she really flutters and flutters about, making life one huge joy. Even as children the Armatis and Fraires were considered to be one of the prettiest sights at their Fancy Dress Balls,¹⁶⁵ and as the years go by Victor Fraire, was

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 November 1909, p.74.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 26 August 1908, p.25; 19 August 1908, p.32.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 2 September 1896, p.28; 24 June 1896, p.27; 29 July 1896, p.13; 5 August 1896, p.13; 14 July 1897, pp.14-16; 28 July 1897, p.29; 11 August 1897, p.31; 7 September 1898, p.22; 2 September 1896, p.28; 25 August 1897, p.32; 15 June 1898, p.46; 15 October 1900, p.38.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6 November 1905, p.46.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 19 October 1901, p.50; 25 October 1902, p.43.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 August 1897, p.32.

noticed playing the piano at the Sacred Heart Church, thus contributing to "enhancing the evenings enjoyment"¹⁶⁶ while at the Townsville Grammar School, a member of the Armati family gave musical items.¹⁶⁷

On one occasion the whole Armati family were invited together with the Mayor of Townsville and other notables to spend an evening at the home of the Japanese Consul in Townsville. They were met by the consul, Mr Tayui, and his wife, and also by the consul's secretary, Mr Sugimura, at the entrance to the verandahs. Mrs and Miss Tayui wore "very handsome kimonos" while the other ladies were "all elegantly frocked". Owing to the crowded state of the rooms, there was little dancing. The supper, however, was "a very sumptuous affair" and during the evening:

The band discoursed sweet music, and at intervals some excellent vocal and instrumental numbers were given. Miss Tayui entertained her guests by rendering an instrumental solo on a "Koto" a peculiar Japanese stringed instrument, she also sang a little Japanese song, accompanying herself on the "Koto".¹⁶⁸

As the years go by other Italian names appear in the columns of the local North Queensland press indicating their participation in social events. At the Halifax Annual Races Miss Vignolio was noticed among those present¹⁶⁹ while the name of Origlasso is listed as that of a participant at the Macknade Annual Ball.¹⁷⁰ Miss Gurgo who had arrived as an infant in 1891 was noticed 15 years later at the Lower Burdekin Show Ball wearing a beautiful frock of "pale blue voile".¹⁷¹ Other Italian names mentioned as either playing or singing at concerts or dances were Regazzoli, Vignolio, and Reitano, all misses¹⁷² while Mr Catastellero distinguished himself at the spinsters' and bachelors' get-together at the Victoria Mill when he sang "Starlight" and "Sunbeam Loo".¹⁷³

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 September 1903, p.41.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 July 1909, p.63.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 November 1902, p.39.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7 August 1909, p.67.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 June 1909, p.85.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 25 June 1906, p.57.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 18 May 1910, p.8.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1911, p.7.

For most Italians social life was less elaborate, but they, too, devoted some of their time to enjoyment. Camillo Giugni, the son of a pioneer, and now residing at Ingham, recalled his early years in Charters Towers where many Italians were working in the local mines, and said: "I recall many Italians; we used to visit them. They had their spaghetti dinners, their wine, even in the early years. Forty Italian families living in York Street and near area. Italian songs always sung".¹⁷⁴ This Italian tendency to visit one another was also pointed out by Margherita Casalegno who said that they had a mouth-organ to the tune of which they danced; the accordion came later. She added that even during the weekdays some Italian, after dinner, went back to their rooms, drank beer and sang, and reliving that time permeated by Italian music and song, she concluded smilingly: "It was lovely".¹⁷⁵

Mrs Penna née Beccaris explained that at first Italians had to organise their own entertainment. This took place at weekends when numerous Italians used to visit her family's place and had fun "eating, drinking, and singing".¹⁷⁶ Friendly relationships were also experienced outside one's home, and not always with Italians. Mrs Leahy née Spelta remembered from Ayr:

On Saturday night I used to go to the pictures (silent), or dancing. I used to go dancing with my brothers and sisters. I met my husband at a dance. On Sunday we went horse riding and meeting friends. We were looking forward to the weekends. On Saturday and Sunday some men went out to dance to meet people. They had gas lights on their bikes for when it got dark.¹⁷⁷

It appears, however, that two families were the focal points for these amicable activities: the Casalegno family on the Lower Burdekin, and the Prandolini family on the Herbert River. Margherita Casalegno née Seroglia explained: "People used to come to Casalegno's from everywhere; we had a big kitchen, twice this room, and that's where we met. On Saturday evening they played the accordion, drank beer, little wine. They used to sing a lot; Italian songs...some very nice!"¹⁷⁸ Joe Casalegno, a grand-son of the original pioneer, confirmed:

¹⁷⁴ C. Giugni - tape 7 (in English).

¹⁷⁵ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

¹⁷⁶ E. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

¹⁷⁷ R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

¹⁷⁸ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

Our place had the biggest kitchen detached from the main house, 50x20 ft. where they cooked for 18-20 people. On Sunday night people came from all around, they cleared the kitchen and dancing took place; that was the big event. Accordion was played. That was our social life...or any other time when someone might have had a bullock to kill, neighbours were invited...Weddings, baptisms, that would be a big day; mostly those 4-5 families, and a few families, and a few neighbours would meet. That was reciprocal.¹⁷⁹

Jack Prandolini senior in his eighties remembered the early years of the century:

Once a month perhaps we bought beer from the pub; dad used to send me on a horse. I was probably seven or eight. Someone came along with the accordion, we danced; we danced outside on the ground, not inside, and the dingoes howling in the backyard. We always celebrated our birthdays and had a party...sing-songs, particularly in the early days; 15-16 came along...accordion...mother picked me up, I was only that high, she made me waltz...I remember (laughter).¹⁸⁰

There were, however, other not so innocent forms of diversions the Italian immigrants could resort to. Townsville, for instance, was situated within 60-90 miles from the centres of Ayr, Ingham and Charters Towers, where the bulk of the Italian pioneers had settled, and it offered various forms of entertainments some Italians might have found irresistible. In the contemporary press Townsville appears a centre of vice; Flinders Lane was described as a "vice-poisoned well" from which some people could and were "nightly drinking draughts of iniquity".¹⁸¹ Indeed it was added that there was "no more vice-centred in an equal area in Queensland than...Flinders Lane".¹⁸² Some of the views considered disgraceful were "the brothels and the gambling dens". These were seen as "glaring scenes of depravity". There appears to be no evidence that any of the Italian pioneers was a compulsive gambler but there is an instance of an Italian pioneer, Santino Foganini, farm labourer from Seaforth, Lower Burdekin, who might have found Flinders Lane which was "reek[ing] with harlotry" an irresistible allurements, and was "ensnared" by their "evils".¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English)

¹⁸⁰ J. Prandolini senior - tape 15 (in English).

¹⁸¹ *N.Q. Herald*, 23 January 1899, p.11.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.48.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* Literally the name "Santino" means "little saint".

Foganini, a married man, went to the house of Mrs Hendy between 8 and 9 o'clock at night. Asked what he wanted, Foganini replied he was looking for "a mater". Told that no mater was there, Foganini caught the plaintiff, Mrs Hendy, by the arm, and said he wanted "the woman". When Mrs Hendy screamed Foganini realised he had mistaken the house and he ran away. The Police Magistrate said he believed the defendant went for an immoral not for an unlawful purpose, and discharged him with a caution.¹⁸⁴

If the escapade of Santino to the bright lights of Townsville from rural Seaforth can be remembered as an attempt at casual copulation that simply misfired, for other Italians truly tragic endings marred their social life. Early in the century, an Italian pioneer, Michele Merloni, who was 17 when he arrived by the *Jumna* in 1891, was killed at Macknade.¹⁸⁵ Merloni, a ploughman, in company with Eugenio Fracchia and Ferdinando Beccaris, was heading for Valinoti's house to meet other friends. Merloni was driving in a sulky, Fracchia and Beccaris were on horseback. After passing through the gate to the house of Valinoti, Merloni was heard to cry out to his horse as if he was trying to stop it, but he fell off his seat and was dragged in front of the wheel. Valinoti saw Merloni hanging from the sulky, and rushed to try to stop the horse but could not. When the horse stopped at a fence, Merloni had been dragged about 750 yards and he was hanging by the left leg with the head down and the wheel was on his chest. Merloni was in an unconscious state, his ankle was broken - the bone was sticking out through the flesh - his back and arms greatly bruised, the neck dislocated, and the young pioneer died during the day. The accident was apparently caused by the sulky coming into contact with a stump of a tree, or another stump that had been burning and could have caused the horse to shy. The property found on his body consisted of a silver chain and watch, a pocket knife, and two £1 notes.¹⁸⁶

On another occasion, two Italian pioneers, Antonio Anzolin and Paolo Vial, together with Pietro Basso who had arrived a few years later to join his elder brother Giusto, had just returned from a shooting expedition between Dungeness and Lucinda Point when tragedy struck again. Pietro, after entering the house of his brother, Giusto, put his gun on the ground and left it leaning against the wall,

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 April 1899, p.18.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 April 1906, p.17.

¹⁸⁶ JUS/N-351 166/1906: QSA.

and then walked into the kitchen for a glass of water. He was also tinkering with a duck and two or three sea shells, and speaking with Anzolin about going shooting the following Sunday, when Giusto arrived. Giusto picked the gun to see whether it was loaded or not because there were children in the house. As he was examining it, the gun went off. The charge from the gun passed through the kitchen wall, and Lorenzo Cocchetti, another pioneer, who was standing outside in front of the kitchen window, saw Pietro fall down, and scream at the same time: "I am a ruined man". He also fainted. Giusto went into the kitchen, thought he had killed Pietro, and shouted: "I shoot my brother". Eventually Pietro regained consciousness, and Giusto asked his brother to forgive him. Pietro said: "I forgive you already; this is only an accident, don't worry yourself", and also was heard to reassure him with the words "Don't you cry, this is nothing, only an accident, it will be all right by and by". Giusto kissed his younger brother who was taken to the Ingham hospital where the doctor explained "he died of shock" on the following morning as his elder brother was sitting at his bedside.¹⁸⁷

Another dreadful episode happened a few years later, and I would like to relate it because there are two points which are worth making:

1. The British-Australian aggressive behaviour toward men whose only offence was to be foreign may help to explain why Italians at that time, usually entertained at home in contrast to usual practice in Italy;
2. This is one of the rare occasions when it is possible to compare an oral history account with contemporary documentary evidence: they match quite well.

One of the first difficulties experienced by Albino Accatino who arrived in 1913 was leaving his native village. On one occasion he felt like indulging in some drinks in the local pub, an environment where it was easier to show antagonism. Accatino was 18, and remembered saying to some of his friends with whom he spent the evenings always at home:

Today is my birthday, let's go to Ingham for a glass of beer. There were three of us at the Belvedere. When I was drinking at about 9 p.m. I saw a young man there who was insulting me, because these people did not like me do you know! (angrily). He was insulting me but I could not

¹⁸⁷ JUS/N310/1902: *Ibid.*

understand. I was young, but I understood that the owner took my side, and started to talk among themselves.

According to the inquest held at Ingham it appears that this young man, Ben Gordon, went into the bar of the hotel. He was talking loudly insulting Accatino and his friend Luigi Cerrina, both from Monferrato, Piedmont. Accatino and Cerrina, who deposed through an interpreter Francesco Catrastellero, said that Gordon was spending most of his energy "shaping up". Eventually Claude John O'Sullivan, the publican, intervened, and ordered Gordon off the premises, but he refused to go. O'Sullivan went towards Gordon, probably with the intention to eject him from the pub, but when he was about two feet off him was struck by a blow by Gordon, just behind the ear. In the fall O'Sullivan struck an enamel spittoon which cut the back of his head. He regained consciousness, but died a few days after, and the cause of death was "injury to the head".¹⁸⁸ This official explanation dovetails with Accatino's recollection: "I saw the owner come out from the bar to push out this man, a young man, quite robust. As he got close to the door, the young man punched him". Accatino's words were tinged with sadness and he was moved at the thought of having indirectly caused the licensee's death, and concluded, after switching from Italian into English: "He went down like a log".¹⁸⁹

From contemporary press, and from oral recollections, it is evident that some Italians took a vacation, a recreational activity that varied according to means or character. Just before the end of the 19th century it was reported in the Townsville press that Fraire, accompanied by his daughter, Ethel, went to Atherton,¹⁹⁰ an area that might have reminded him of his native alpine valleys. The name of Armati recurs quite often, particularly in relation to the Armati brothers, and their sister. In the pages of the local press readers were informed, for instance, that Clive Armati, who had spent a fortnight in Mackay, had returned to Townsville by the *Levuka*, while Percy Armati, who had been visiting his parents on Stanton Hill, Townsville, returned to Mackay by the *Wodonga*.¹⁹¹ Blanche Armati enjoyed the balmy air of Charters Towers¹⁹² and also visited the southern

¹⁸⁸ JUS/N534 503/1913: QSA.

¹⁸⁹ A. Accatino - tape 1 (in Italian).

¹⁹⁰ *N.Q. Herald*, 1 June 1898, p.44.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12 November 1910, p.65.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 16 September 1896, p.25.

colonies. It was reported that Mrs Armati and Miss Armati had left Townsville for Brisbane, Sydney and Hobart, and returned to Townsville five months later.¹⁹³

By contrast the annual holiday of Giovanni Beccaris, as related by his daughter, Mrs Penna, was to travel to Ravenswood and Charters Towers to visit other Italian pioneers.¹⁹⁴ Some of the Italian pioneers, once they got established, were also able to go to Italy on holiday. It was reported that D. Scarie, from Ayr, perhaps Domenico Scarsi who arrived in 1891 at the age of 25, was leaving for the south, on his way to Italy on a nine months' trip.¹⁹⁵ This happened in 1910, and a couple of years later the whole Casalegno family went back to Italy on a long vacation, but due to the dispute between Italy and Turkey over Tripoli, they had to change plans. Margherita Casalegno, a daughter-in-law explained:

Casalegno went back to Italy for six months, then the Tripoli war came, and they came back to Australia again. The two eldest sons, John and Peter, had to go to war according to Italian law, so father Casalegno helped them sneak out of the country. They went through Spain, around Africa...¹⁹⁶

Margherita refers to Casalegno's sons, Giovanni and Pietro, who at the time of their arrival in 1891 were respectively three and one; though they had lived for twenty years in Australia, they were still considered Italian citizens and consequently subject to military service.

By contrast the Prandolini brothers seem to have enjoyed their holidays in Italy very much. Jack from Brisbane who was four when the family went to Italy recalled vividly "the snow and the chestnuts". He also liked the voyage, and said that what impressed him most was seeing the Ceylonese at Colombo who used to dive underneath the keel for a shilling. He was also struck by the roughness of the sea in the Great Australian Bight where he was the only one except his father and an Irish Monsignor not suffering from seasickness. The Monsignor was about 85, and as Jack understood, was going back to Ireland to die.¹⁹⁷ Sam Prandolini from Cardwell remembered staying at Rovato for four months, and was impressed by the square and the market. He

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1896, p.28; 2 December 1896, p.32; 21 April 1897, p.29.

¹⁹⁴ E. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

¹⁹⁵ *N.Q. Herald*, 26 February 1910, p.59.

¹⁹⁶ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

¹⁹⁷ J. Prandolini junior - tape 15 (in English).

was pleased to relate he taught the local Italian boys to play rugby league, while he himself enjoyed watching them play soccer. Another aspect of the Italians' ways which Sam found curious was to see how they bargained for cattle: "They used to slap their hands, that's the deal how it was made. It was just by words of mouth, no written agreement, and a lot of argument too".¹⁹⁸

I would like to conclude this segment on holidays with the one taken by an Italian canecutter, Mario Brigando, and some of his mates, because it is amusing, and it also illustrates the prosperity that could be attained through hard work. Brigando and his friends decided at the end of the canecutting season to have a Christmas holiday vacation in Sydney. They had a considerable amount of money, and when the steamer reached Brisbane they went ashore to buy a bag to hold their sovereigns, which they had been carrying in their pockets:

The shopkeeper showed them a sovereign purse. "Much too small", they said. He showed them another, larger. "Still too small", they said. And so on, till at last, he handed over, with a grin, a good-sized brief bag. "That's more like it", they said, and immediately began ladling sovereigns into the bag. The man stared aghast, and gasped out, "What have you chaps been burgling?"¹⁹⁹

* * * * *

From the North Queensland press, and the remembrances of the relatives of Italian pioneers one forms the idea that North Queensland was inhabited by tribal groups or ethnic enclaves; and references to the British, Kanakas, Aborigines, and other nationalities are frequent. Margherita Casalegno residing on the Lower Burdekin stated that the Italians preferred to live among themselves, and used the expression "Italians stuck together".²⁰⁰ A similar tendency was noticed among the British. Mrs Penna recollected that the parents did not mix; Australians did not associate with Italians, and when the former happened to see the latter, they walked away.²⁰¹

Anna Maranesi interviewed at Rovato, Lombardy, said that the Italians did not get along well with the English because they were

¹⁹⁸ S. Prandolini - tape 16 (in English).

¹⁹⁹ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 18 January 1908, p.2.

²⁰⁰ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

²⁰¹ E. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

treated badly.²⁰² This statement was confirmed by Margherita Casalegno when she explained that if Italians did not mix with the British it was because of the British tendency to being offensive and slanderous, and summarised it:

Sometimes the British did not like Italians; they called them bad names...macaroni...that's why they did not mix. They used to say Italians lived on the smell of an oil rag...They used to say: "Oh" "That's only a Dago; don't go with him".

Indeed Margherita was struck by the parrot-like approach of some of the English who were uttering epithets without knowing their meaning, and commented: "One asked me what Dago meant. They just said it because they had heard it from someone else". Then reflecting on the eating habits of the British Margherita wondered how they could be so ungrateful:

They did not know how or what to eat; they only had corn-beef and potatoes, but Italians brought many fruit and vegetables. Before they only had corn-beef, cabbage, potatoes...They thought Italians were bad, but in fact, if you think, they were the bad ones (laughter).²⁰³

Another reason why British did not like Italians was, as indicated by Mrs Gagno: the Italians' "business acumen".²⁰⁴ Mrs Angelina Prandolini attributed it in large part to the Italians' inability to speak English.²⁰⁵ This latter explanation was agreed on by Margherita "but when they started understanding each other things changed"²⁰⁶ though, Mrs Penna added, "it took a long time for them to change".²⁰⁷

By contrast, Mrs Rose Leahy née Spelta recalled: "I married a local one, an Australian of Irish origin. We got along well with everybody; we had lots of friends, we did not experience any prejudice, we were thought of as Australian".²⁰⁸ Camillo Giugni thinking of the time spent at Charters Towers said: "There was no animosity against Italians; they all assembled to have their beers. Italians were well respected, they worked in a dangerous place, always happy to come up,

²⁰² A. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

²⁰³ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

²⁰⁴ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

²⁰⁵ A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

²⁰⁶ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

²⁰⁷ E. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

²⁰⁸ R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

see the sun";²⁰⁹ and his younger brother, Stephen, added "All the names associated with my father are spoken very highly of, even now. They left an indelible mark; spoken in deference".²¹⁰ Indeed one of the sisters of Margherita Casalegno, Giovanna, remembered the British with gratitude 70-80 years after their first social intercourse, and related:

The family I worked for helped me; every night after tea we had a little lesson. The next day they asked me what I had learnt the day before. I did not care whether they laughed; my sisters were older and were afraid of making mistakes, and even now they cannot speak properly.²¹¹

Although Margherita Casalegno explained that the few British women living on the lower Burdekin kept to themselves: "They did not want foreigners, Italians; looked for Englishmen",²¹² there is evidence that the British males did not disdain contacts with their Italian counterparts.

At the Ayr Police Court Maria Vaschetti proceeded against William Featherstone for maintenance. The defendant, however, was not around, and consequently the bench granted a warrant to be endorsed "If defendant consents to an order being made for him to pay confinement expenses and costs of action £10 and two months after birth of child to pay 7s 6d per week, the warrant need not be executed. Confinement's expenses to be paid at the rate of £2 15s per month".²¹³

A similar situation had already developed between Maria Revanni who was 15 at the time of her arrival in 1891, and John Robinson. A few years after settling on the Herbert River, at the age of 19, Maria made a *faux pas*, and she summoned John in the Townsville Police Court for neglecting to support his illegitimate child. Although the accused denied he was the father, the Bench convicted him and ordered him to enter into a recognisance in £30 and one surety in £30 for the payment of 10s for twelve months for the use, maintenance,

²⁰⁹ C. Giugni - tape 7 (in English).

²¹⁰ S. Giugni - tape 8 (in English).

²¹¹ G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

²¹² M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

²¹³ *N.Q. Herald*, 4 June 1910, p.74.

and support of an illegitimate child, to whom had been given the same name: John.²¹⁴

Conflicts of views or interest were not limited to private matters. At times the Italians found themselves in a position of inferiority for they had to deal with the machinery of the State. Solotore Robino, for instance, recounted that during the First World War soldiers went to Ingham, and took all the Italians able, strong, for military service. Robino remembered seeing the train filled with 300-400 Italians who had been captured at Ingham, and other areas on the Herbert River. They were taken to Lucinda, loaded on the boat to Townsville, and from there transferred to a bigger boat bound for Brisbane. The final destination was Italy so that they could be enlisted in the Italian army. Some Italians, however, were not enthusiastic about what had been organised for them, and, as Robino explained, did not even set foot at Ingham, and lived in mangrove, hidden, the aim being to escape military service. Robino was still too young to be recruited for the army, and concluded: "I used to go to town get tucker for them".²¹⁵

The curious thing is that, while the Casalegno brothers were endeavouring to escape from Italy during their holidays at the time of the Tripoli war in order not to be forced to join the army,²¹⁶ back in Australia, only a few years later, other Italians were trying to evade the Australian soldiers for the same reason. Not all succeeded in their attempts to evade military service, and some went back to Italy willingly, happy to fight for their country. Ignazio Pavan, naturalised in 1907, was on a visit to Italy at the commencement of World War 1; he served for two years in the Italian Forces. Years later in 1921, he asked for a duplicate copy of his naturalisation papers, because, while he was fighting on the Italian frontier the Austrian army invaded the Piave district, ransacked all houses and took Pavan's certificate of naturalisation.²¹⁷ He came back to Australia, but others didn't or returned bearing the scars of war. Robino said that half the Italians sent back or who went back voluntarily got killed²¹⁸ and some, owing to the use of gas, came back "kook kook".²¹⁹

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 November 1896, pp.13,19.

²¹⁵ S. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

²¹⁶ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English).

²¹⁷ CRS - A443 - 51/15/6065, (A.A.).

²¹⁸ S. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

²¹⁹ M. Rotondo talking to me and Mrs Giudice - tape 6 (in English).

One Italian, Felice Vaschetti, who arrived in 1891, fought in the Australian army, and as a result became alienated from his family. His brother, Michael Vaschetti, made it clear:

When Felice came back from the first World War he got a Returned Soldier Farm, and mother wrote a couple of letters. He wrote back saying "If you can't write yourself don't write at all". She got one of the daughters to write. When I saw him, I told him: "Look Fred [i.e. Felice], you were born in Italy; if you are ashamed of your people you ought to be ashamed of me. I was born here, you in Italy; why are you ashamed of Italy, crooked on Italians, ashamed of your people? If you turn father and mother down you turn me down"; and we never spoke to one another since. That's years and years ago. I heard he died in Newcastle. My sisters were all right. Felice was an exception.²²⁰

If the Italians had mixed feelings about the British, they clearly had mental reservations about the Pacific Islanders brought to North Queensland as labourers. This is a subject often raised by descendants of the immigrants who arrived in 1891 by the *Jumna*. At times little distinction is made between them and the Aborigines. Joe Casalegno who had a vague recollection of what he had heard from elder members of his family, and from his residence at Ayr, said: "I cannot remember anything drastic my grandfather told me about the Aborigines or Kanakas; you had to be careful, not to walk around at night. If they were normal they were O.K. but if they drank they could become dangerous". He also explained that the Aborigines did not work, but the Kanakas had to. The Kanakas were also confined to the barracks, and his understanding was that the Italians did not mix with them.²²¹

Rose Leahy née Spelta, the daughter of a pioneer, explained that the Pacific Islanders stayed till about 1910, and affirmed that: "Kanakas were friendly, worked with whites, lived away in the hills, mountains. Some worked, some didn't and the others used to keep them". She also remembered the Aborigines who "lived in a big camp not far from our place; we got along O.K. with them". She also noticed that their attitude to other members of their tribe was similar to the Kanakas: "Those who got a job worked and kept the others who had no jobs", and concluded her recollections of the black people living on the Lower

²²⁰ M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

²²¹ J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

Burdekin admitting "Kanakas and Aborigines used the money to gamble and keep themselves".²²²

If the above comments refer mainly to a superficial impression the Italians had of both Kanakas and Aborigines, most oral accounts indicate that there was social intercourse amongst them, and at times of a violent nature. Sam Prandolini, from Cardwell, related that his father had a couple of unpleasant encounters, one when still a child: "When [father] was a lad a Kanaka went up to him with a knife to frighten him but nothing happened of it", and when an adult: "When [father] got older and had his own farm, once went to Ingham on horseback to get the gang's pay...On the way back when it was dark the darkies tried to get the money but he hit a few, and got away".²²³ This could not be said for another Italian by the name of "Antonia" employed on a cane farm near Conn's Crossing, who, as was reported by the contemporary press, "was savagely attacked by a Kanaka named Bungarraingy, of Molicolo". Indeed the hapless Italian had to be taken to the hospital for "He was terribly hacked about with a tomahawk". The good Samaritan was E.S. Waller, near whose residence the assault happened.²²⁴ This kind action by a Briton for an Italian was returned two months later when a Mr Menzies met with an accident near Conn's Crossing. Apparently he had been thrown from his horse; E. Regazzoli in passing found him lying on the road, unconscious, exposed to the sun, and he took care of him.²²⁵ Another Pacific Islander was arrested for attempted assault on an Italian woman,²²⁶ an action which could have prompted some Italians to take precautionary measures as was indicated by Jack Prandolini senior, when he said: "My auntie used to carry a revolver".²²⁷

On another occasion an Islander was accused of having committed rape on "a Maggie", and Antonio Lorenzetti, a farmer of Plantation Creek, Ayr, for whom he worked, had the unpleasant task of reporting it to the police.²²⁸ Nevertheless most of the oral history accounts are

²²² R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English).

²²³ S. Prandolini - tape 16 (in English).

²²⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 20 November 1895, p.15.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 January 1896, p.30.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 December 1892, p.6.

²²⁷ J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

²²⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 29 February 1908, p.15.

tinged with sympathy for both Kanakas and Aborigines. Mrs Penna née Beccaris felt that the relationship between Italians and Kanakas was "pretty good":

My father was an overseer of 50-60 Kanakas. After breakfast they went to work, and in the evenings would come back. Their quarters were not distant from the stables or the main house. Some Kanakas could be very violent when not treated well. Mother was worried because dad used to go to the mill at night, but dad was not afraid. Kanakas used to take their time, but were good workers. Used to say to my dad: "Yes boss".²²⁹

The South Sea Islanders are also remembered for their quaint ways, easy disposition, sincerity, and trustworthiness. Jane Menso née Seroglia remembers them as "curious" and very friendly as the time went by, and with a smile recounted: "They used to cook goannas and give it to the kids. They thought it was great".²³⁰ Mrs Angelina Prandolini said that generally speaking "the Kanakas were faithful, reliable".²³¹ Her son, Jack, was pleased to relate how the innocent and entertaining tricks devised by the Italians could bewilder or frighten them. His grandfather and father

used to get big large melons and pumpkins, cut the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the imprint of a human face; then cut the bottom and put two of them on a post on either side with a candle inside just before nightfall. The Kanakas used to sneak in through the canefields, and when they saw this image of human face lit up were afraid...They never came back again.²³²

This deception for the sake of entertainment, however, alternated with examples of solidarity arising from a sense of moral responsibility towards people in need. Jack Prandolini senior, from his residence on the outskirts of Brisbane, remembered his childhood on the Herbert river at the beginning of the century:

Mother helped women to have a birth. One night at 10 p.m. "Put a horse in a sulky" she said. I drove her to this Kanaka woman. She had triplets that night. I was there all the time, still going to school, about 12.²³³

²²⁹ E. Penna - tape 12 (in English).

²³⁰ G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

²³¹ A Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

²³² J. Prandolini junior- tape 15 (in English).

²³³ J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

Although Joe Casalegno from Ayr explained that the Italians did not mix with the Aborigines because "they were too wild",²³⁴ a statement which confirms what was written, on some occasions, by contemporary observers,²³⁵ there are also instances of their reliability, and childlike reaction to novel objects. Angelina Prandolini, when residing at Halifax, early in the century was struck by the native's sentiment and honesty, and recounted: "Once my husband lost his bag containing the money to pay the men; and John, a black, very fond of my husband, found it; and said to my husband 'Master, you lost your bag to pay the men'".²³⁶ Angelina's son, Jack junior, thinking of the same episode, concluded "My father was so pleased he had a faithful servant".²³⁷ Jack also related an anecdote revealing the simplicity of the natives whose general surprise and interest for an unfamiliar object lasted only for a limited time:

Mom had some of the black women who helped her washing, cooking. Mother used to take her ring off her finger and put it down when she was washing. The black lads used to try it on, and two, three weeks later returned it when my mother thought she had lost it.²³⁸

The oral account of Lucy Gagno sheds further light on the conduct of black people:

Carlo [her father] had Aborigines working, the second mum had also girls doing the heavy work, she was not very strong. The pure Black is a good, decent, clean-living fellow. It is the one who mix with the trash white who are the troublemakers. They are simple people, they have good ideas the white could learn from; take birth prevention: the young marry old women, the old men marry the young ones, that's why very few aboriginal families have more than two, three children. It is a natural way, nothing wrong with it...Kanakas were good people too...It is the whites who cause all the trouble.²³⁹

But I would like to round off this section with summarising and relating a clash between an Italian and an Aboriginal which followed a fortuitous meeting on 6 November 1907 at about 11 a.m., as it was reported by the contemporary press. Maria Rustichelli testified that she was looking for her cow, when she met William Doyle who was

²³⁴ J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

²³⁵ *N.Q. Herald*, 10 September 1900, p.46.

²³⁶ A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

²³⁷ J. Prandolini junior - tape 15 (in English).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ L. Gagno - tape 5 (in English).

looking for a horse. William offered to help Maria in her search, but when they reached a "bushy place" Maria refused to go any further, and she might have sensed that William had some amorous intention for she was holding her hat in one hand, and her hatpin in the other. When she turned to retrace her steps William caught her by the shoulders from behind, and Maria stuck the hatpin in William's left side. Maria who had been pushed to the ground, and was struggling, called out "Jim, Jim" with the result that William got frightened and ran away, perhaps to seduce her on another day. When the case was heard in Court, Mr Macnaughton, appearing for the accused, explained that William had been supplied with drink, and might have thought that Maria could be persuaded "to gratify his passion", but when he realised that Maria had no such intention, he gave up the attempt. He argued that William's ardent advances were an assault, but not an attempt to commit rape, and concluded with reminding the jury that William was entitled to the same consideration as a white man, and to the benefit of the doubt if there was the slightest uncertainty in their mind on the question. The jury found William guilty. Doyle had already been four months in gaol, and was sentenced to serve nine more months with hard labour. His Honor explained he had made the sentence light "because, fortunately, Mrs Rustichelli had been strong enough to prevent the accused from achieving his purpose".²⁴⁰

About three years later, in 1910, Maria Rustichelli's eldest daughter, Antonietta, 14 years old and working as a cook for a cane-cutting gang, was "properly raped" by a Malaysian.²⁴¹ The external manifestation of this "affirmative action" by a Malay on an Italian was an Australian boy, born the following year, 1911, and now a retired country esquire, residing on the Herbert River.²⁴²

There are also oral history accounts of friendly relations with other ethnic groups. Jack Prandolini senior remembered that at the beginning of the century his father Carlo had bought a little farm at Ripple Creek, an area where numerous Japanese had also settled. Jack explained: "One Japanese told my father 'You have a big family; you can have my large farm, and you give me your small one'". The exchange was made, and Jack justified it by adding: "The Japanese

²⁴⁰ *N.Q. Herald*, 29 February 1908, p.15.

²⁴¹ Letter from Mrs Maureen Rustichelli dated 9 March 1988.

²⁴² Telephone conversation with M. Rustichelli - December 1987.

had wife and one daughter; we had a big family, there were already six, seven of us at that time".²⁴³

Apart from the generous act by the Japanese, Jack Prandolini also remembered nostalgically a Chinese who used to visit the local school: "Once a week a Chinaman would come from Ingham with a little cart and little pony, and lollies; only once a week".²⁴⁴ Lucy Gagno, when aged between three and four, and residing at Innisfail, remembered being told by several people that the first language she spoke was Chinese. As a child she mixed with other children speaking Chinese who were living next door, and once Lucy's mother asked the Chinese woman if she understood Lucy, and the "Celestial" replied: "Definitely".²⁴⁵ To the above demonstrations of happy relationship between Italians and Asian races, I would like to add that related by Solotore Robino in relation to the munificence of a German family. Robino arrived early in the century, 1906, with his father, mother and two younger brothers. His father went back to Italy after 18 months on doctor's instructions, but the other members of the family remained. Robino was working at the age of ten; the mother was also working and looking after Joe, the youngest, while Peter was looked after by a German family, the Offensetz: "They kept him in the family, they treated him like a son".²⁴⁶

Whether the experiences of the Italians with other nationalities can be considered happy and successful ones or not, there is no doubt that one of the positive factors of living in a diversified community was the broadening of their mind. Less tangible than sending money home to their families, but subtly significant were the effects on the psyche of men and women as they saw the world enlarged. Indeed it was noticed that many returned to their homeland after varying periods of living abroad, often reinvigorated and with new ideas.²⁴⁷ One of the sources of new experience was the social life indulged by other nationalities living in North Queensland. The Italians must have wondered at the way the South Sea Islanders spent Christmas at the Kalamia plantation, Lower Burdekin. The local press reported:

²⁴³ J. Prandolini senior - tape 14 (in English).

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ L. Gagno tape 5 (in English).

²⁴⁶ S. Robino - tape 17 (in English).

²⁴⁷ M. Casalegno - tape 3 (in English); various informal conversations.

The day was a complete holiday...the boys dressed themselves in "gorgeous array" and danced...impressive and intricate war dances...savage music...A huge pig...cooked whole in native fashion. A hole was dug in the ground and lined with stone and brick ends. In this the pig was buried and a huge fire was burned on top, the result being roast pork of a very attractive odour, which was eaten by the merry-makers with great gusto.²⁴⁸

Seeing the Japanese using chopsticks at another social encounter just down the road from Kalamia mill might have amused the Italians,²⁴⁹ and one wonders what the Italians residing on the Herbert river might have thought of the unusual quaint ceremonies of the Japanese before each bout.²⁵⁰ Whether they appreciated them or joined in making mocking remarks those were new experiences which broadened their minds. The Chinese might have drawn the curiosity of the Italians too, when the Ayr residents, at midnight "were startled by a terrible outburst of crackers, which proved to be the Chinese proclaiming the appearance of their new year".²⁵¹ Indeed the Italian immigrants might have reflected on the wisdom of one of their proverbs that *tutto il mondo è paese* (it is the same the world over) when indulging a drink at one of the pubs on the Lower Burdekin:

...here [township of Haughton] was discovered also a type which must surely be indigenous to Australia, and which probably is the creation of the dull, monotonous sentiment-strangling Australian bush. The country bar loafer, dirty, unshaved, half-clad, scarred and cut so liberally about the face as to resemble a plum duff with a generous sprinkling of fruit, but supremely happy, was numerous represented.²⁵²

During research for this study access was gained to Court House records in Charters Towers and in Ingham, but not to those in Townsville or Cairns. This is unfortunate, as records for the Burdekin district are in Townsville, and those for a large area of Far North Queensland are in Cairns. A perusal of these records indicate that some of the Italian pioneers during the period 1891-1921 married, had children, worked and socialised, but they also died. And this applies to others who followed or preceded them. We have already seen in

²⁴⁸ *N.Q. Herald*, 2 January 1895, p.13.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7 August 1895, p.13.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1895, p.24.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 25 February 1901, p.47.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 19 November 1900, p.35.

Chapter 3 that numerous Italians were victims of the North Queensland physical environment; others lost their lives because of accidents while working. This section deals with some of the Italians and their descendants who died, some a natural death, some from preventable causes. I'll try not to write anything that might upset their living relatives or acquaintances.

When consulting the records at Charters Towers I was struck by those Italian pioneers who arrived in 1891 and died quite young. It appears that the first to die was Adamasio Pelosi, and he was just 24; the cause of death was pneumonia. A few years later, Nicodemo Buogo, 50, died of "disease of the heart". Carlo Molesini died from "Influenza-Broncho pneumonia", and he was 48. Adamo Giovanello died at 38, and the cause of death was "Phthisis-Exhaustion".²⁵³ The same could be said of those Italians who had settled on the Herbert River. Petruzzi Domenico was 44 when he arrived in 1891, but he died after only 18 months, the cause being pulmonary phthisis.²⁵⁴ Other Italians who died quite young were Giuseppe Castellaro, 45; Bernardo Banducco, 51; Giuseppe Contrio, 52; Alberto Proclivi, 27; Martino Coniglio, 48. There are some who lived to what might have been considered "a good old age", and these are Luigi Revanni, 63; Basilio Della Vecchia, 68; and also Eugenio Regazzoli who died at 67 of "senile decay".²⁵⁵

From official records, and also from oral history, it can be deduced that during the period under investigation, i.e., 1891-1921, life was hazardous, people were ignorant, medical attention was not easily available. Contaminated food, water, and soil are common sources of infectious diseases. Among the descendants of the Italians who arrived in 1891 there is a Charley Filippi who died at Halifax on 12 December 1892, just about six weeks old from "inflammation of bowels". Several years later Carlo Giuseppe Prandolini died at the age of 8 months 7 days, and the cause was "dysentery". Another infant, Lucia Coniglio, 2 years of age died from a burn,²⁵⁶ as did another son of Mr and Mrs Spelta who arrived in 1891. His name was Henry and he died at the

²⁵³ Register of Deaths - Court House, Charters Towers.

²⁵⁴ Register of Deaths - Court House, Ingham.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Eugenio Ragazzoli, however, was not a *Jumna* member.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

age of seven months and a few days. The death, according to the doctor, was due to "pure ignorance on the part of the parents".²⁵⁷

On another occasion, Angelina Prandolini, needed a doctor, and she related the following: "Once I took my child to the doctor; he said to me 'The mother should know more than the doctor.' He was partly right, but one goes to see the doctor to know a little bit more!"²⁵⁸ Further oral recollections shed more light on the knowledge and diligence of doctors, and the state of hospitals. Teresa Maranesi explained that the doctor was "a Jack of all trades", and the hospitals were "barracks". Then she related that the doctor gave the wrong medicine to an uncle with the result he died at the age of 11, and concluded sadly "This unfortunately happened to us".²⁵⁹ Her sister, Anna Maranesi, added that the doctor, the only one in the district, was a "drunkard".²⁶⁰

If some had negative experience of hospitals and doctors during the early stages of Italian immigration, there is also evidence of goodness and professionalism on doctors' part. It was reported, for instance, that "a little Italian girl was badly kicked by a horse" and after being "at once taken to the hospital" it was understood that she was "progressing satisfactorily under Dr Macdonald's care".²⁶¹ Another Italian, Captain Satini, an old resident of Townsville, while fixing the hatches on his vessel missed his footing and fell to the bottom of the hold, and was injured. After being treated by the local doctor he was progressing well.²⁶² Satini's injuries were treated by Dr Bacot, a man about whom a grateful Gulf patient wrote: "Dr Bacot is a wonderful man - young, vigorous, skilful, and self-reliant - Jumps upon a disease with the quickness a panther springs upon his prey".²⁶³

Apart from deaths due to the course of nature, unsafe conditions, lack of knowledge, or the horse-and-buggy age hospitals and staff, there are instances of Italians who can be remembered for their violent deaths. Some were victims of freak accidents such as Maggiorino Finsello, who arrived in 1891 by the *Jumna*, or Giovanni Zatti, a later

²⁵⁷ JUS/N-354 - 239/1906; QSA.

²⁵⁸ A. Prandolini - tape 13 (in Italian).

²⁵⁹ T. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

²⁶⁰ A. Maranesi - tape 10 (in Italian).

²⁶¹ *N.Q. Herald*, 8 September 1897, p.16.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 17 November 1897, p.12.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 20 October 1897, p.11.

arrival. It was reported that an Italian known as "Major" had shot himself with a pea rifle.²⁶⁴ From the local records it can be inferred that "Major" was Maggiorino. Giovanni who was only 17 years old and had spent 12 years in Queensland, died for the same reason. The causes of deaths read: "Gunshot through brain - accidental", and "Fracture of skull - laceration of brain - heart failure - accidental gun shot wound", respectively.²⁶⁵

Other deaths were quite intentional and deliberate, however. We have already met John Chiappini who broke his legs at Charters Towers (see previous chapter). He was not one of the pioneers, but from local records it is obvious he had befriended some of them because he witnessed the wedding of Michele Rustichelli and Aventino Borello.²⁶⁶ Five years after the accident Chiappini, no longer a miner, but a woodcutter, committed suicide:

No one knows when the man actually took his own life...the body was found hanging to the ridge pole of his tent. The act was a determined one, for his legs were on the ground, and the earth floor of the tent had been torn up by his feet, whilst deceased was in his death struggles.²⁶⁷

There is another, even more dramatic, instance of taking one's own life, and this regards an Italian pioneer, Giovanni Battista Robino, who arrived in 1891 at the age of 38. It was reported in 1899 that "an Italian lunatic", while being escorted from Charters Towers to the Townsville reception house, had cut his throat in the railway carriage at Sellheim railway station. It was explained that Robino had a razor in a small bag, and used it to commit suicide when the police were not looking; he expired shortly afterwards and his remains were taken back to Charters Towers.²⁶⁸ There was an inquest to ascertain the cause of Robino's death, but the file is missing.²⁶⁹ Fresh evidence, however, shows that, after cutting his throat "from ear to ear", Robino was taken back to Charters Towers where he died in the hospital

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 28 May 1904, p.4.

²⁶⁵ Register of Deaths - Court House, Ingham.

²⁶⁶ Register of Marriages - Court House, Charters Towers.

²⁶⁷ *N.Q. Herald*, 28 December 1907, p.11.

²⁶⁸ *Queenslander*, 18 March 1899, p.518; *N.Q. Herald*, 20 March 1899, p.12. Not to be confused with Augustus Solatore Robino from Lucinda who arrived in 1906 at the age of nine. There is no connection between them.

²⁶⁹ JUS/N-272 - 140/1899 (file missing): QSA.

owing to the "Reopening of the wound by violence (sic) of the Patient".²⁷⁰

A person who commits suicide is not necessarily mentally ill, or a "lunatic", although he is at least temporarily deeply disturbed. What induced Robino, or for that matter, Chiappini, to take their own life? Loneliness, physical pain, emotional problems, or extreme depression resulting from these and other problems? This is not easy to solve because by the time it is evident that there is a case for analysis the person is dead. Had there been the hospitals and social agencies with their prevention centres and "hot lines" manned 24 hours a day as Australians enjoy today, Robino and Chiappini might have lived longer.

This explanation, however, could not have been satisfactory in the case of another two deaths, a murder and a suicide, affecting an Italian pioneer and a later arrival. Michael Vaschetti from Trebonne, Ingham, recounted reticently that his sister, Margherita, who arrived in 1891 with her family, was murdered: "She got shot at Home Hill; somebody shot her, some Italian shot her, she died. That's years ago". I asked Mick who shot his sister, and he, though more disposed to be silent, continued reservedly: "A bloke called Spinetti. I was a boy then. Spinetti hanged himself on a tree. Funny business, there might have been something. She was married to a Origliasso then".²⁷¹ Margherita Vaschetti was 4 years old when she arrived in Queensland, and her husband, Federico Origliasso, was 15. On the same boat there was also a 23 year old by the name of Andrea Spinetti.²⁷² The Spinetti referred to here is Giuseppe (Joe) Spinetti, perhaps a relative who arrived during the following years.

According to the inquest, held at Ayr, to ascertain the cause of the deaths of Margaret and Joe, some details differ from what was recounted above. On the 7th January 1918, in full summer, in the afternoon, the body of Margaret was found on a tram line, about 3 miles from Home Hill. Police, after being informed, proceeded to the scene, and found:

the dead body of Mrs Origlassy...lying on the back her right hand stretched out above her head, the left along her side, head a little to the

²⁷⁰ Register of Deaths - Court House, Charters Towers.

²⁷¹ M. Vaschetti - tape 19 (in English).

²⁷² See *Jumna* list, Appendix III.

left. The legs bent up and spread wide apart. The dress was up around her waist. Her drawers were torn.

A post-mortem examination by the Government Medical Officer found two gun shot wounds: one "a little to the left of the spine...about the level of the third rib", the second "had penetrated the heart". The doctor also found a stab "about 3½ inches in depth", "in front of the abdomen".

Four days after finding Margaret's dead body, a search party found the dead body of Joe in a scrub about four miles from Home Hill. It was between two Moreton Ash trees in about a foot of water, "fully dressed with dark tweed striped trousers, dark flannel shirt, a belt around the waist and a pair of tan boots, size seven". The same doctor held a post-mortem examination:

I found an incised wound in the upper thorax and reaching into the larger blood vessels of the heart. This wound had evidently been self-inflicted and was quite sufficient to cause death. There was a second wound at the level of the sternum - the breast bone middle line. This too was in my opinion self-inflicted.²⁷³

After reading what was revealed at the inquest, one is left with a bitter taste in the mouth for the atrocity of the crime, but also with some sympathy for Spinetti, "a man of very violent temper",²⁷⁴ for he had some dignity left, and chose to die like a Samurai.

If some Italians experienced problems with people, others had problems without people. Some descendants of the original pioneers said they did not recollect any Italian complaining about living in a womanless society, but added: "It must have been hard on them, because some would have liked to have a family".²⁷⁵ Indeed there are cases of married men who, in reality, lived the life of a single man. The following is how a contemporary writer perceived the solitary existence of a single man:

melancholy creep into his heart as the great brooding night comes upon him sitting over his solitary fire. Then the howls of the dingoes and the cries of the night birds call back the ghosts of other years and make him wish again for the joys of home.²⁷⁶

This recalls the reflection made by Henry Lawson:

Dismal country for the exile, when the shades begin to fall

²⁷³ JUS/N-657 - 115/1918:QSA.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ R. Leahy née Spelta - tape 9 (in English); G. Menso - tape 11 (in English).

²⁷⁶ *N.Q. Herald*, 7 November 1908, p.58.

From the sad heart-breaking sunsets, to the new chum worst of all.²⁷⁷

Stephen Giugni, the younger son of Camillo, a pioneer, thinking of his father, gazed meditatively when I interviewed him, and admitted "My father did not get much out of life". Then he went on to explain:

I think people who came out at this time could be called the pioneers. My father was away from home so much for his work! We could not be where my father was working because the schools were in Charters Towers; and they lived in sheds, in primitive conditions. My father could be away for twelve months at time, he did not expect us to leave our home. We did not have much contact with him at all...Out of 21 years they [mother and father] did not spend much time together.²⁷⁸

By contrast, another Italian pioneer, Agostino Bernardara, was remembered as a man who preferred isolation. Joe Casalegno, from Ayr, recollected:

I remember Bernardara, he used to burn charcoal...He was a loner, always on his own, preferred to live on his own in the bush. I never ever remember him doing anything else but burning charcoal.²⁷⁹

But even for those Italians for whom emigration meant solitude, inconvenience, and discomfort, there was a compensatory factor, as it was understood by a distinguished Italian visitor at the beginning of the century. Dr Capra noticed that the only time Italian woodcutters could relax was in the evening when, sitting outside their tents, they could, in absolute silence, enjoy the fresh air, and admire the Southern Cross²⁸⁰ embracing with her arms part of the firmament, and redolent of Dante's description, when emerging from the antipodean gate of hell:

I saw four stars that never
Were seen excepting by the folk primeval.
The heavens seemed in their flamlets to be
Saying,
O desolate indeed, thou northern region,
Since upon these thou art bereft of gazing!²⁸¹

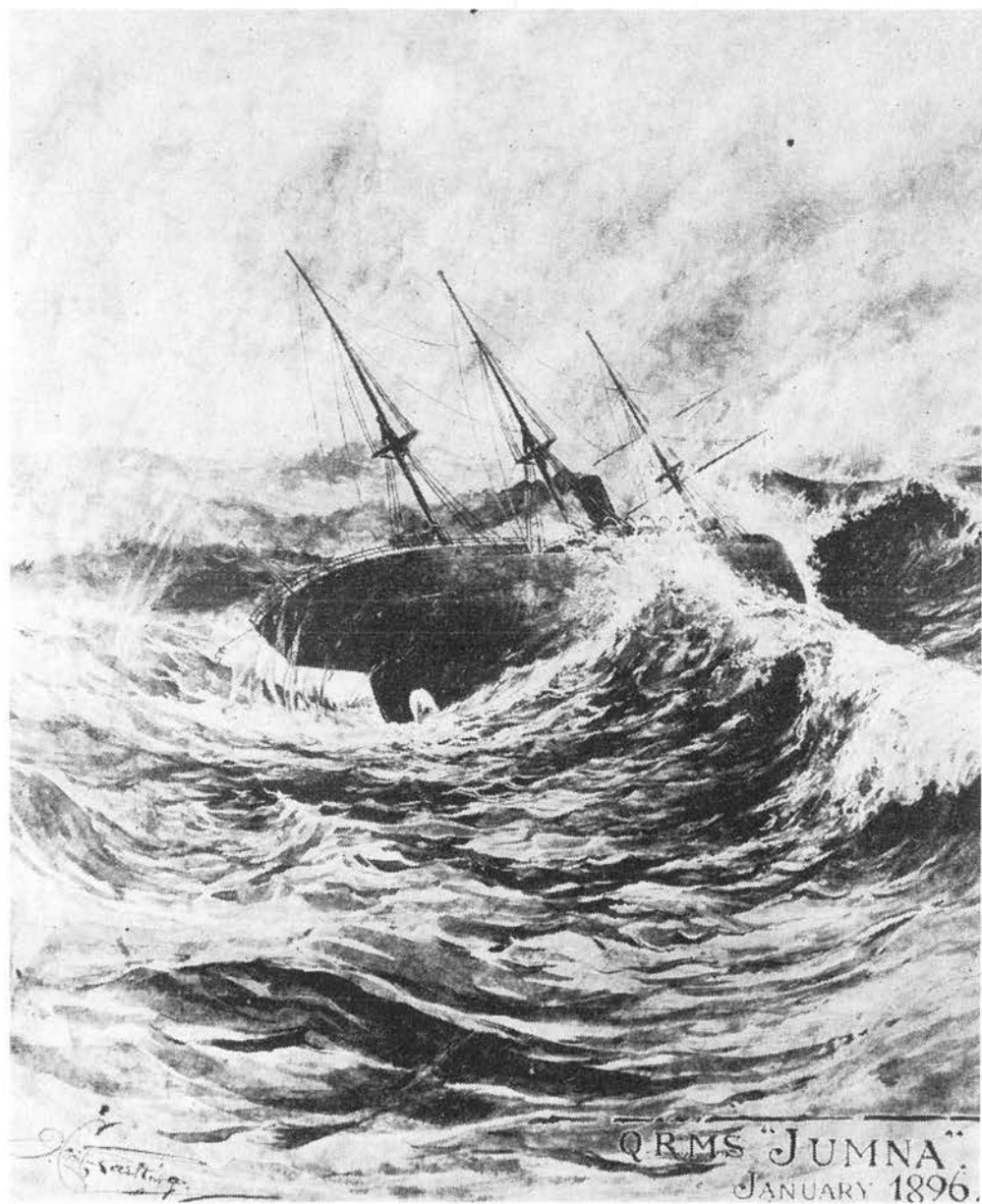
²⁷⁷ From "Up Country".

²⁷⁸ S. Giugni - tape 8 (in English).

²⁷⁹ J. Casalegno - tape 2 (in English).

²⁸⁰ G. Capra, *Italica Gens*, April 1911, pp.75-76.

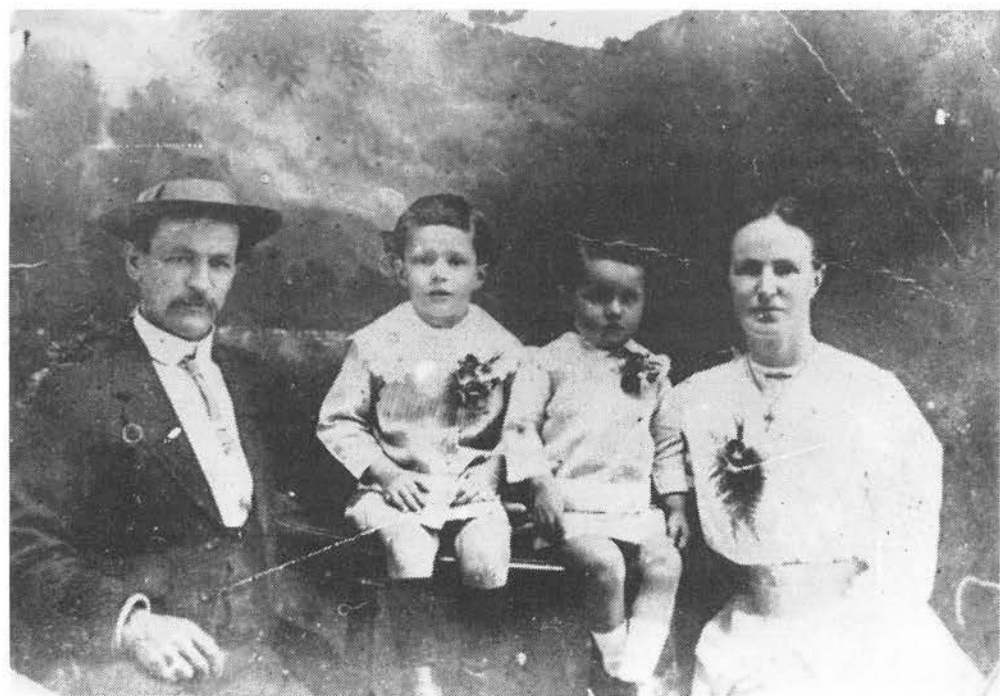
²⁸¹ *Purgatorio*, I, 22-27. Sir S.W. Griffith's translation.



In captions to the illustrations which follow, an asterisk * alongside a name identifies a member of the *Jumna* group



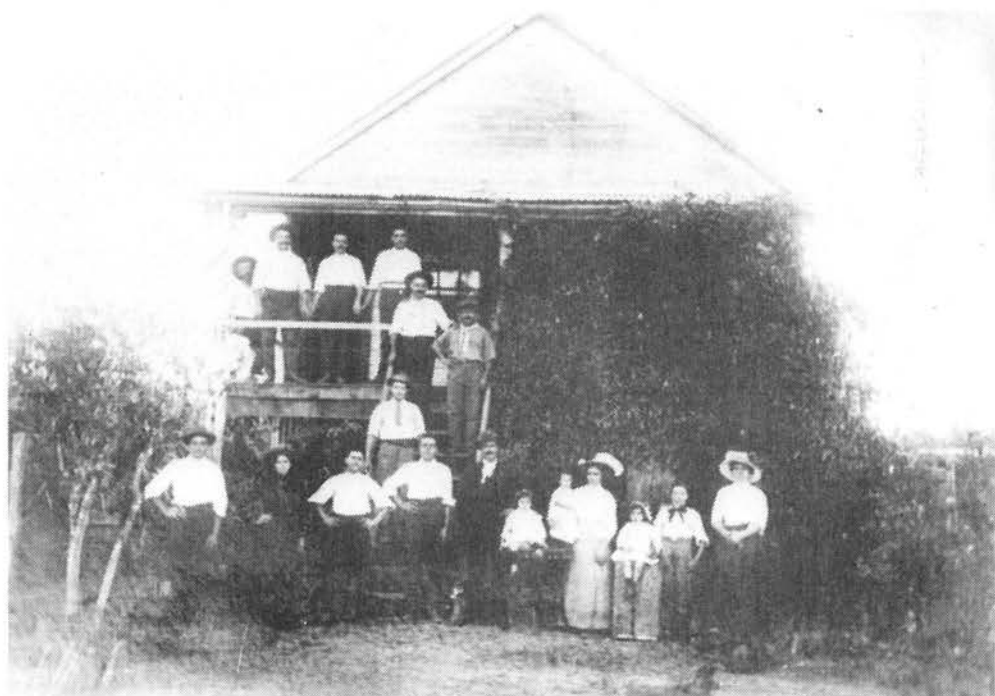
1. Ghiridelli's gang of canecutters from Mantua: Mrs Ghiridelli was cook.



2. Frederico Giugui* with his family.



3. Lucy Della Vecchia with her mother, first wife of Carlo Della Vecchia*, in their prize-winning "decorated sulky": Innisfail, 1914 or 1915.



4. Angelo Pellizari's house at Macknade. He stands in a dark jacket, wife and sons on his right. Other adults are from Rovato: children born at Ingham.



5. Carlo Prandolini*, second adult from right, with canecutters from Rovato, about 1895.



6. Mrs Rosina Cocchetti who married Carlo Prandolini;* the child is their son Salvatore. The canecutters are all from Rovato.



7. Carlo Prandolini* (second from left), his son Salvatore (third from left) and daughters Mary and Amy: Herbert River. Others not identified.



8. The Prandolini family, Halifax, 1908: son Jack holds a dingo pup.



9. Jack Prandolini and his sister Ann, children of Carlo*: about 1917.



10. Aventino Borello.*
Mrs Peggy Borello believes he had to join the Masons to get work at Charters Towers.



11. C.V. Fraire and family, 1893.

(l. to r.) Ethel, Emily, Mrs Sarah Anne Fraire, Florence, CVF, Victor.



12. C.V. Fraire and family, 1907. (l. to r.) Ethel, CVF, Emily, Florence, Dulcie (Emily's first child).



13. Lorenzo Cocchetti* at Ingham with his brother-in-law Angostino Genocchi, who followed him in 1892-3.



14. The *Australia*, a country inn at Rovato run by Anna, sister of Lorenzo Cocchetti*: she stands beneath the tree on the left. (1933)



15. (above l.) Rosina and Annunciata, daughters of Angostino Genocchi and Anna Cocchetti, at Ingham.

16. (above r.) Giuseppe Cocchetti, who joined his son Lorenzo* after a few years; both men eventually returned to Italy.

17. Mrs Maria Gurgo* with her granddaughter at Ayr.





18. Luigi Bartolomeo Casalegno*, his wife Anna and sons: Peter and Giovanni born in Italy, Joe born in Townsville (1892).

19. Peter Casalegno in Bersaglieri uniform: he joined his brother Bartolomeo in 1893.





20. L.B. Casalegno* with son Peter* and daughter-in-law Rosalia (née Saroglia, both sitting. Joe, son of Giacinto* and Maria Gurgo,* stands behind the bridal pair.

21. Bert Casalegno, son of Bartolomeo, with his bride (née Ravizza) in 1915. The Ravizza family from Turin worked for the Casalegnos.





22. Tommaso Menso,* his wife Giovanna (née Sarolgia) and son Jack, aged about 2 (1914).

23. Joe Casalegno, his wife Margharita (née Saroglia) and eldest son John: Ayr, March 1915.





24. Hauling cane on the Casalegno farm, Jarvisfield, Lower Burdekin.



25. Members of the Casalegno and Sarolgia families at Ayr, with Tommaso Menso, second from right.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Italian Rumblings

On 16 August 1908, the Rev. Dr Capra, a Piedmontese, and a doctor of science, lecturing in the University of Milan, left Genoa to visit Australia¹ to collect information on industrial conditions and to encourage further Italian immigration. In an interview he explained:

Well what better way is there of doing that than making the splendid industrial conditions of this Commonwealth known there? There are tracts of beautiful land here for cultivation...vine and fruit growing. The Italians are anxious to learn about Australia. They are desirous of a much nearer relationship being established between the two countries.²

Dr Capra found that Australia was a "grand country", and that everybody had been very kind to him.³ The porters at Fremantle, instead of charging him the normal tariff, wrote on the ticket: "8 shillings - Catholic Priest half fee - 4 shillings" when he arrived. When he left from the same port was simply asked "pray for me, you are an Italian priest".⁴ Australian Governments also had placed every facility for securing information at his disposal.⁵

Capra intended to stay for three months,⁶ but remained for almost a year, returning to Italy on 30 July 1909, feeling that "time" had been his "tyrant". He visited hotels and bars frequented by Italians. He contacted bakers and butchers, and others to find out about Italian immigrants, and by the end of his visit had contacted about 10,000 out of 11,000 living in Australia and New Zealand. At the time one of his cherished memories was being able to shake the Italians' hands which showed "the noble stigmata of labour". He felt sorry for those "martyrs of labour" who looked almost "wild" due to the "enormous fatigue and solitude"⁷ which they were experiencing. In giving an account of his

¹ Giuseppe Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", Milano, 1909, p.9; G. Capra, "Una visita agli emigrati nell'Australia", *Italica Gens*, Giugno-Settembre 1912, Torino, p.261.

² *Barrier Miner*, 31 October 1908.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Capra, *Italica Gens*, pp.190, 278.

⁵ *Barrier Miner*, 31 October 1908.

⁶ Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", p.9.

⁷ Capra, *Italica Gens*, pp.171, 228, 243-4.

travels Capra stated that he found everywhere "the Italian colonists a hardy, industrious, cheerful, and law-abiding race".⁸ Strong praise was also expressed by Premiers, Ministers, officials, employers, and people from all walks of life who had met Dr Capra. When writing his report in Italy he could still remember the very complimentary remarks, and included them as he had heard them:

- I love Italy and the Italians.⁹
- They [Italians] are always welcome.¹⁰
- We feel kindly (sic) with them [Italians].¹¹
- *Ci mandi molti dei suoi bravi contadini* (Send us many of your good agriculturalists).¹²
- This [North Queensland] is the field for Italians.¹³

Indeed the first Under-Secretary of State in Queensland told Capra that his only regret was his fear that the Italians would forget "the beautiful language of Dante".¹⁴ However, despite this warm reception, Capra wrote that there was no great desire to see Italian immigration increased in Australia.¹⁵

Why? There were numerous reasons: aesthetic, ethic, ethnocentric, social, psychological, economic. Indeed they were not different from those factors or ideas examined in Chapter 2. This chapter, however, instead of dealing with the last part of the nineteenth century is based upon the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the essential difference is that by then the Italians were no longer a passive element of the community. The Italians, through their papers published in Sydney from 1903, tried to express their own viewpoint. There was a metamorphosis in their approach to their new circumstances in the sense that they became more active members of the body politic, and if their participation in the social dialogue can be considered cautious and moderate, there are also instances of a strong desire to share more fully in the destiny of the country. The Italians

⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 May 1909, p.4.

⁹ Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", p.25.

¹⁰ Capra, "Gli Italiani in Australia", *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, N.2, Roma 1911, p.93.

¹¹ Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", *op.cit.*, p.17.

¹² Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, *op.cit.*, p.93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.97.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.92.

did not simply defend themselves from what they perceived to be an Australian plot to defame them, but they offered suggestions, and indicated policies to raise the economic, moral, and mental state of the nation.

While discussing their experiences Italian immigrants did not like Australians picking out characteristics common to northern Europeans. In a leader published in *Oceania* in 1914, there was a reference to the tendency to pay compliments to the new arrivals in Australia if "blue-eyed like us", as if it were a sign of nobility for those who had the fortune to be so endowed.¹⁶ The editor of the paper referred to another annoying characteristic of Australians, i.e., the habit of drawing a sharp distinction between northern and southern Italians. As an example the attention of the readers was drawn to a certain Mr Rayment who went to Europe to introduce immigrants to Australia, and when in Piedmont and Lombardy, was most favourably impressed by the regions' wine-growers and irrigationists. Mr Rayment, however, was quick to point out they were not Italians from the south. In response the editor politely suggested that this preference for the tall and blond northern Italian should not be considered a *sine qua non* condition for selecting agriculturalists. He remarked that also in Apulia, southern Italy, Mr Rayment could admire beautiful vineyards, and other cultivated fields not inferior to those of the Monferrato in Piedmont. Yet the Apulia farmers were "short", "thickset", "as strong as bulls", and their eyes and hair were "very black".¹⁷

There were many misconceptions about Italy current in Australia, and ignorance reigned supreme as far as the Italians were concerned. Dr Capra was stunned when a young lady asked him what colour the Italians were: "Yet she could see" he commented "I was whiter than her!"¹⁸ At times Italians were accused of being dirty. Capra admitted that many Italians could have taken more care for their person, but this was not easy for them because of the nature of their hard work.¹⁹ Responding to these remarks about Italians' dirtiness, the editor of *Oceania* commented: "Personally we may say that we know many

¹⁶ *Oceania*, 4 April 1914, p.3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Capra, "L'Australia nei suoi rapporti con l'Italia", *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1910, N.8, Roma 1910, p.98.

¹⁹ Capra, *Italica Gens*, pp.228, 230, 265.

Australians who are less clean than the Italians - much less -", and concluded with a stinging reposte: "Moreover, we ask, how often is an Italian found intoxicated? If intoxication is, as we believe it to be, a form and an offensive form of uncleanness, let the Australian be silent".²⁰

At times the attack against Italians included dirtiness coupled with immorality, but in a leading article published in *Oceania* in August 1913, it was explained that "Italians have no difficulty in procuring in Australia good, hard-working, honest Australian wives".²¹ This defence was coupled with another sentence intended to deride Australians: "Apparently these women are prepared to put up with the dirt and immorality of the Italian in preference to the high morals and scrupulous cleanliness offered by some of their Australian fellow-workers".²² Indeed, another Italian newspaper, *L'Italo-Australiano*, published in 1907 referred to Sicilians as more moral than many Australians or British, because, though rough in their appearance, and ignorant, they remained laborious, honest, and hard-working.²³

Another trait of Australians resented by Italians was their offensive inclination to indicate people by using epithets. In the case of the Italians the most commonly used words were "Chinaman", "dago", "foreigner". Dr Capra noticed this, and saw, in many instances, that there was no distinction made between Italians, Greeks, Syrians. These were considered "low people", races to avoid in order not to lower one's dignity.²⁴ An article in the *L'Italo-Australiano* published in 1905 tried to make these offences milder by explaining that there was nothing derogatory in the name "dago" any more than there was in "John Bull" or "Uncle Sam".²⁵ This conciliatory approach, however, was not shared by *Oceania* published in 1914. The Italians resented being designated as "strangers", "aliens", or "foreigners", because, as the editor explained: "The name sounds badly, very badly to our ears, and although it may not indicate contempt or animosity, it is expressive of the inferiority in which everybody, except the Anglo-

²⁰ *Oceania*, 9 August 1913, p.3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 16 August 1913, p.3.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 13 April 1907, pp.2, 4; Capra, *Italica Gens*, pp.275, 276.

²⁴ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, N.2, pp.53-55.

²⁵ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 11 March 1905, p.2.

Saxon, is held".²⁶ This inclination to regard everybody but the British as "aliens" was very common, even in relation to naturalised Australians, and to their children born in Australia. One Italian immigrant of the upper class was reported by Capra to have said that, even among the cultured class, preference was given to those of British origin,²⁷ a favouring over other nationalities suggestive of injustice. On the other hand, when Maestro of music Signor Hazon, after 21 years in Sydney, decided to go back to Italy, the Italian press reported that "legions" of friends and admirers had organised a public meeting at the Town Hall, presided over by the Lord Mayor, in order to find a way to honour him. Indeed, this manifestation was perceived by the same Italians as a demonstration of how Australians "know how to recognise merits...regardless of nationality".²⁸

Another charge which angered Italians was that they were uncivilised. Comments made by King O'Malley caused deep concern amongst the Italian community, and the editor of *L'Italo-Australiano* remarked in 1907:

A year or two ago a Tasmanian member stated in the Federal Parliament that he did not consider Italians very civilised...the opinion of such self-evident ass is of no moment whatever...Still a great deal of misconception does exist here concerning Italy...such a hideously ignorant chunk of imbecility could not have been uttered by a man occupying a prominent public position.²⁹

A few years later, the editor of *Oceania*, in his anxiety to refute similar allegations, made reference to the contemporary English writer Richard Bagot, who in his article "Gens Italica" had stated that "a cause of the prejudice of the great part of the Anglo-Saxon people against us [Italians] is the complete ignorance that they possess of the enormous progress made in Italy in every field of civilisation".³⁰ Indeed, already very early in the century, the editor of *Uniamoci* had made reference to opinions expressed at the Pan-American Congress in Mexico, namely, that "there was no need of great eloquence to demonstrate that the Latin race had done much, much more, to civilise the world than the English and Yankee races, whose name is

²⁶ *Oceania*, 7 November 1914, p.1.

²⁷ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione* 1911, N.2, pp.51-52.

²⁸ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 27 July 1907, p.2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 September 1907, p.2.

³⁰ *Oceania*, 12 July 1913, p.3.

synonymous with ferocious egoism".³¹ And in a special article published in *L'Italo-Australiano* in 1907, reference was also made to two prominent Americans who said:

We knew, thanks to the sounding victories of your automobiles, that Italy could turn out other things besides stucco images and oleographs, but we never thought to find such actual miracles of activity and intelligence. In regard to agriculture, Sicily, with the exception of a few unproductive parts of the interior, Campania, Umbria, Tuscany, and all the North of Italy are miracles of cultivation. The orchards of Catania and the kitchen-gardens in the environs of Naples are everything that can be effected in the way of cultivation. We have seen your agriculturists at work: they are well worthy of their countrymen who have made a garden of our California, and who are now tilling the prairies of the Southern States. Again, the progress of Italian industries is marvellous. In Milan we rapidly visited some industrial establishments, and we assure you that for plant, machinery, administrative system, and excellence of workmanship they need not envy the greatest workshops of America, of Germany, and of Great Britain. In mechanics especially, Italy has arrived at a perfection worthy of high commendation, and of being studied by others. Our admiration increases when we consider that your country is poor in iron and coal. When you have utilised all the abundant hydroelectric forces the Alps and the Apennines offer you, and when you have industrialised many of your agrarian pursuits, you will have acquired possibly the leading place in European production.³²

While Dr Capra believed that Italians in Australia were more esteemed than those in other countries, he was concerned that the British/American material printed in Australian papers defamed Italians.³³ Capra noted that British and American novels, frequently set in either southern or insular Italy, were the cause of the bad reputation endured by Italians:

English people in general read much. Whether they travel by train, ship, or stay at home, you always see them reading a book. Some fictitious novels about the customs of insular and southern Italy, many English and American magazines...with evocative titles, with tales of

³¹ *Uniamoci*, 18 July 1903, p.3.

³² *L'Italo-Australiano*, 5 October 1907, p.2.

³³ Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", p.11.

adventure and tragic scenes of the said regions...ah! they have really done us harm by showing us as the men of the knife, robbers, etc.³⁴ Capra was told by a middle class acquaintance that Italians were often blamed for incidents in working-class residential areas, and that they used knives in disputes. When Capra pressed his informant to give examples, the gentleman could not do so, although he had lived in Sydney for 18 years. In fact he concluded that perhaps he was mistaking the Italians with some other nationalities.³⁵

The image of the Italians carrying knives was conveyed by words and illustrations with the result that persons who should have known better swallowed such fabrications as if it were *oro colato* (molten gold). The reaction of Italian residents was summed up by a correspondent who wrote: "there is in every country a certain section of the population with a no-brain capacity which believes anything and everything. These people do not count. They are to be pitied. A great number of them read the 'Bulletin' and 'Nat Gould'".³⁶ Others, however, were outraged, and one correspondent referred angrily to King O'Malley: "When one hears a man like King O'Malley...say in Parliament that every Italian walks with a razor in his pocket and a knife in his boots, one can no longer contain his indignation".³⁷ Another reader expressed deep sadness about the slandering of Italians: "I do not know to whom attribute this slanderous campaign against our country. A few days ago in Parliament: now in the newspapers is a sequel of calumnies and insults against our poor country and our emigrants".³⁸ However, others wrote in anger more than in sadness. A correspondent writing to the editor of *Uniamoci* added: "It seems impossible that a class of such cretins, not to say criminals, are allowed to represent a nation of serious and honest people".³⁹ Material in the newspaper at the time suggests Italian immigrants had exhausted their patience, and in an attempt to encourage those at the helm of the country to behave in a sensible manner, *Uniamoci* in 1904 published an angry outburst:

³⁴ Capra, *Italica Gens*, *op.cit.*, p.182.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.181-82.

³⁶ *Oceania*, 26 July 1913, p.4.

³⁷ *Uniamoci*, 2 July 1904, p.3 (letter signed L. Zopegni).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 July 1904, p.3 (letter signed Tuo Zeta).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1904, p.3 (letter signed A.H.R.).

So long as the injuries spring from the trivial mouth of an ignorant and bestial plebs one may not give it great importance; but Mr O'Malley and Co., cannot escape the responsibility of their actions and words, and they should know how insane and dangerous it is for a legislator...to humour the passions and the prejudices of the common people and fan the flame of human discords...How do you dare mention to us razors and knives, when here at daytime the honest and laborious citizen is assaulted, beaten and robbed?⁴⁰

Italians in responding to slanderous attacks made reference to larrikinism and violence prevalent in Australian cities at the time, and widely reported.⁴¹ And the invective concluded with a codicil alluding to the abundant evidence of Anglo-Saxon ruthless cupidity, and violent behaviour:

How do you dare treat us as foreigners, you who are foreigners everywhere? You that by gun diplomacy and greed, have destroyed the freedom, the commonweal and the peaceful existence of so many people?⁴²

If the Italians had directed strong displeasure at some members of Parliament for not realising the consequences of their slanderous remarks, they also tried to defend themselves against the derisive comments made by the *Bulletin* in relation to Italy's military organisation. A letter by F. Villa published in *L'Italo-Australiano* in 1907 referred to what the *Bulletin* had written as "mischievous trash", "discreditable", and "hurtful to Italians". What worried Villa, however, was not the paper's nonsense, but the "thousands of people who, unaccustomed with Italian history, would probably take the paper's dictum for gospel truth", and for this reason, the letter concluded: "the action of the *Bulletin* will stand condemned by all lovers of fair play".⁴³ Respect for Italians was still more violently shaken when the *Bulletin* continued their anti-Italian campaign. In 1907, for instance, the *Bulletin* reported that the unhappy condition of Italy could be traced to the Italians' haunted conscience, since one of their ancestors, Pontius Pilate, washed his hands; and as far as the Italians were concerned, it added that they were undesirable because of their negative record, and could not have been a match against the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1904, p.2, 3.

⁴¹ *North Queensland Herald*, 20 April 1898, p.7; 26 September 1908, p.14.

⁴² *Uniamoci*, 2 July 1904, pp.2, 3.

⁴³ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 27 April 1907, p.3.

Japanese.⁴⁴ A few years later, 1913, on the eve of the first world war, another article published in the *Bulletin* induced the editor of *Oceania* to reply:

...when someone writes without the knowledge of what he is stating, he always terminates in accumulating a lot of stupidities which only succeed in making the feeble-minded people laugh, and the wiser ones smile for the sake of pity...Well, enough, only we shall console ourselves in quoting one verse of Dante, which on such an occasion we will adopt as our motto: "Let us not speak of them, but look and pass".⁴⁵

Other Italian voices were raised to play down the *Bulletin's* charges of the Italians' military weakness. A correspondent wrote to the editor of *L'Italo-Australiano*, and made slighting reference to Britain's victory in Africa: "after all we can afford to extend a little sympathy to the *Bulletin* if it had to scratch its bald plate very hard in the selection of prospective warriors required to defend a country that has a record of military achievements stretching with uninterrupted glory from the Soudan Billy goat (sic) to sundry roosts in Chow Africa".⁴⁶ Other correspondents to Italian press referred to Italian accomplishments in areas of mental capacity. Michele Blunno, in a special article published in *L'Italo-Australiano* in 1907, stated:

Italians have given the greatest number of men possessed with such intellects, which are a link between poor drudging humanity and its creator...Huxley said that the Italian mind is the finest of the human family...Race superiority is a question of mind, not of limbs.⁴⁷

Economic considerations, however, seem to have been the most frequent reason for lack of sympathy in regard to Italian immigration. An Australian reporter interviewing Dr Capra remarked: "There is an impression in Australia that Italian emigrants are undesirable, because they are prone to work for low wages, and thus tend to bring about industrial strife". In reply the doctor said:

In Italy the workers, like Australians, are keen in deriving all the comfort they can get in this life. They not only dislike low wages, but they have fought bitterly to raise the standard of pay whenever necessary. On Sundays and holidays, well-dressed people may be observed everywhere, just as in this glorious country of Australia. In a

⁴⁴ *Bulletin*, 14 March 1907.

⁴⁵ *Oceania*, 12 July 1913, p.4.

⁴⁶ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 27 April 1907, p.3 (letter signed F. Villa).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1907, pp.2-4.

number of ways the condition of workers is better in Italy than in other countries.⁴⁸

Capra had noticed that, generally speaking, the Italians in Australia were more respected than their counterparts in other countries. He attributed this to their behaviour. They were hard-working, intelligent, sober, and the employers were happy with them. A grave and recurring problem, however, was the way the Labour Party reacted to the presence of the immigrants in the mines, canefields, forests, and other areas of activity. The most significant offences the Italians were accused of could be listed as follows:

1. Italians worked more hours than what was legal, at a low rate of pay;
2. Italians were accused of being blacklegs;
3. Italians were blamed for not spending money in Australia.⁴⁹

Indeed the *Bulletin* enumerated them among the "extra cheap foreigners".⁵⁰ Capra noticed that Italians worked overtime, but pointed out that that was not forbidden by the law. Overtime was paid more, and that was the reason why the number of working hours had been limited; it was designed to give labourers the opportunity to work extra hours at a higher rate of pay. As a consequence the Italians who were strong, laborious, and with financial commitments, took advantage of this facility. Capra also saw that Italians, not aware of the Australian legislation, sometimes worked at a rate of pay inferior to the legal one, but this was to be imputed to the employers who exploited the good faith of the Italian workers.⁵¹ An editorial, published in *L'Italo-Australiano* in 1908 at the time of Capra's visit to Australia, urged that immigrants should not come to Australia blindly, and that work should be ready for them on arrival. Further it was stressed that this was the responsibility of both Governments, Australian and Italian.⁵²

Among Italian residents there was a divergence of views as to their countrymen's work practices. A letter from Lorenzo Camusso from Victoria admitted that some of the most needy immigrants might offer

⁴⁸ *Daily Post*, 21 January 1909, p.2.

⁴⁹ Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", p.11; *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, pp.57-58.

⁵⁰ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 30 September 1905, p.2.

⁵¹ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, pp.58, 59.

⁵² *L'Italo-Australiano*, 11 January 1908, p.2.

their services at a low rate of pay, but, he was convinced that Italians contributed to keep wages high because of their ability.⁵³ This view was not shared by P. Vanni who felt that those Italians who worked for a lower rate of pay made other workers hostile, and went on to suggest that some Italian employers were also taking advantage of their employees' inexperience and ignorance, particularly after arrival when they were constrained to accept any offer.⁵⁴ Capra admitted that the instinct of self-preservation could lead anyone to accept low pay, and stated that English and Australian labourers were just as likely to be in that plight as the Italians.⁵⁵ This was only to be expected given the much larger number of Australian workers. The contemporary Australian press, however, highlighted and exaggerated the extent the Italians worked for low wages, but if the Australians were involved only the fact was stated. *L'Italo-Australiano* reported in 1907:

Mr Hughes member of the then Labour Party Government denounced Italian fruit sellers *in extenso* calling their employees "slaves and serfs"...In Sydney there are thousands of girls who take work from shop clothiers working from morning till night average 5/- a week...The "uncivilised" Italian does not work for that. Again in its issue of 18 August 1904 the *Bulletin* stated that...a publican engaged a young lady...88 hours per week while the law only allows 60, salary of 15/- about 2d. an hour...⁵⁶

Contrary to the opinion of the Labour Party, and the *Bulletin*, Capra, when interviewed in relation to Italian workers, declared that he was glad to assure the journalist that the Italians "will not be found cutting down wages". Then he pointed out instances which went to support his statement: "You will no doubt remember the circumstance that the Italian wood-cutters on the Kalgoorlie gold-fields struck not very long ago for higher wages and there are Italian miners working on the Cue fields in West Australia who are receiving the same rate of pay as the Australian miners".⁵⁷ Capra also challenged the *laboristi* to cite one single case to prove their assertions, but they

⁵³ *Uniamoci*, 21 May 1904, p.1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 28 May 1904, p.3.

⁵⁵ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, pp.58, 59.

⁵⁶ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 21 September 1907, p.2.

⁵⁷ *Daily Post*, 21 January 1909, p.2.

could not.⁵⁸ A few years earlier in 1905, a leading article had already appeared in *L'Italo-Australiano* in which the Italians' demands for what they were entitled to were described as "bellicose". Indeed in the same article reference was made to the Italian pioneers who had arrived in 1891, about 14 years earlier, and this is the explanation given for those who had left the plantations:

They were misled, before leaving Italy, as to the prevailing wages, and they accepted eleven shillings a week, and board and lodging. When they found they were being paid less than the other workers they "kicked", and violently. They further discovered that for the days on which labour was impossible in the canebrakes they were to be docked pro rata. Then came the explosion. They left in bands and sought work elsewhere, and they all got it, in mines and other works, and at the same wages as other workers.⁵⁹

The editor added, to put at rest Australian workers' fear and suspicion of Italians, that it would be a good thing if the Australians bore in mind that "Italians are sober, industrious, conscientious, and loyal to their fellow-workers".⁶⁰ But a very recent example was that of Italian timber cutters who had been approached by mine proprietors to see if they would sell at cut-rates. The writer explained that the Italians "had large supplies in the bush but replied that they would rather burn it up than let it go for one farthing less than the regulation price. And they got what they asked".⁶¹

The second accusation commonly levelled against Italian labourers was that they were blacklegs. Capra denied this, and explained that on one occasion the owners of the mines of Broken Hill were unable to come to an agreement with the Australian workers, so they recruited about a hundred Italians who went to Broken Hill. The Italians were not aware of the existing industrial dispute, and when faced by the Australian workers who were armed, the Italians felt the best thing was to go back where they had come from. Capra said: "It was a violence our miners were subjected to, and no one defended them".⁶² He also noticed that Italians, whether miners or not, were not shy about asking for an increase in wages, and very often for the benefit of

⁵⁸ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, p.58.

⁵⁹ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 30 September 1905, p.2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, *op.cit.*, p.59.

other workers. Indeed Capra believed the accusation of being blacklegs should have been directed against the "English-speaking".⁶³ A case in point was that of the Italian wood cutters at Nallan Nallan in Western Australia. The Italians explained the reason why an increase in pay was justified, and they were also disposed to accept less, but instead of being backed by the privileged Australians who had got what they wanted, they were ostracised. Capra wrote:

At the same time biased and slanderous rumours were spread around - and the local press gathered them - in order either to frighten the Italians or to place them in an unfavourable light. It was said: Those who will not be back at work on Monday, will be considered dangerous unemployed, who live without clear means of subsistence and will be ordered to leave. References were made to threats by force of arms, to explosives Italians were provided with, to acts of blood, to their being dangerous, inclined to commit crimes, to their being *strangers* who steal other people's bread.⁶⁴

Capra concluded: "It was a stroke of luck I happened to be on the spot at the most critical moment of the strike".⁶⁵ In fact, the only time the Italians were not showing solidarity with their British counterparts was, according to Capra, on Monday mornings for, though they had drunk over the weekend, they were ready for work. It was a practice the other workers disapproved of.⁶⁶

The third accusation frequently directed against Italians was that they remitted their money to Italy instead of spending it in Australia. There does not seem to have been any denial of that except one. A letter by Lorenzo Camusso who had been angered by the campaign against the Italians was published in *Uniamoci* in 1904. He explained: "And what has also been ascertained is that their [Italians'] money, the fruit of their work don't send it to Italy, but they spend it here and all of it enters your pockets".⁶⁷ It is interesting to notice that Camusso does not include himself among the Italians nor among the Australians; in fact, his intervention seems to have been suggested by sadness and displeasure aroused by this intolerance against Italians. Years later, in 1913, an editorial in *Oceania* conceded: "we admit that the Italian does not spend much; he is by nature a prudent man and

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.58, 59.

⁶⁴ Capra, *Italica Gens*, pp.267, 268, 269.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.269.

⁶⁶ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, p.60.

⁶⁷ *Uniamoci*, 21 May 1904, p.1.

not a prodigal".⁶⁸ Another reader, P. Vanni, had already explained the Italian nature in a letter published in *Uniamoci* in 1904: "As far as their savings are concerned it is no use to deny it...Being us Italians sensitive and kind-hearted, very rarely we forget our country and our dearest ones".⁶⁹ Indeed this tendency for Italians to recognise the value of parental respect had been noted by Richard Bagot, and his views were quoted approvingly by the Italian press:

Many a mountain village exists upon the money that its emigrants rarely fail to send home to their parents and families - for the Italian in nine cases out of ten is a dutiful son and a conscientious father and husband, and the ties of kindred are exceptionally strong, and almost sacred.⁷⁰

This conduct was also defended and advocated by the Reverend Capra who preached: "it is a duty for him [the Italian immigrant] to send money home because his family is there".⁷¹

Other justifications were forthcoming from the Italian press. *L'Italo-Australiano* argued in 1905:

And if sometimes, in their declining years, their hearts yearn towards the beloved land of their birth, who is to blame them? Has not a man who has earned money laboriously and honestly the right to spend it in any lawful manner he may choose? Here in Australia there is a certain class, fortunately, not very numerous, and certainly not very intelligent, ever ready to cry out "They take the money out of the country". But these brilliant intellects never for a moment consider that those whom they decry brought money in the country, and, if they take away what unquestionably belongs to them, they leave behind an equivalent in work accomplished...Should we in Australia, a country which ought to know something of absentee plutocrats, the troop of the unearned increment, living unconcernedly in other countries on the fruits of what, in many cases, they could never have acquired by their own efforts - should we, we say, begin to throw stones? We think not.⁷²

Indeed the Italians took a more militant role in their attempts to defend themselves from these charges of not spending enough, and sending their savings home. In a leading article published in *Oceania*

⁶⁸ *Oceania*, 9 August 1913, p.3.

⁶⁹ *Uniamoci*, 28 May 1904, p.3.

⁷⁰ *Oceania*, 26 July 1913, p.1.

⁷¹ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, p.60.

⁷² *L'Italo-Australiano*, 15 April 1905, p.2.

eight years later, in 1913, the editor presented further reasons for the necessity to save, and follow the Italians' example:

In the final analysis such accusation honours us, no explanation is necessary. With such accusation doesn't the Government of Western Australia realise to indirectly encourage vice; alcoholism. Where do miners spend their money but liquor which little by little brutalise them, degenerate them, and which is a true cause of today's criminality.⁷³

Then the article went on to explain that the real cause for this hostility was the perception that Italians were preferred by the employers because of their "sobriety", "honesty", and "perseverance", the principal characteristics of the Italian labourers.⁷⁴ This conclusion had been reached quite early in the century, in 1905, when *L'Italo-Australiano* wrote: "To paraphrase an utterance of the late Mr Gladstone, it is not their vices, and we are willing to admit that Italians may have vices as have other nationalities, but their virtues that excite the ire of these blatant blatherskites".⁷⁵

The Italians' attempts to defend themselves from the obstinate adversaries of their immigration alternated with a more assertive course of action. While some Italians were far from denying to Australians talent and ability, they had no hesitation in stating that it would have been advantageous to have more Italians, and to that effect they wrote letters, editorials, or reprinted material that confirmed their point of view. Early in the century *L'Italo-Australiano* reprinted an interview with Roosevelt, the President of the U.S.A. in order to show Italian immigrants in a more favourable light than was common in contemporary Australia:

...I admire Italy in its history, in its artistic genius, in its people...You Italians bring here amongst us the Latin temperament, the life of a country where reign supreme the beauty of nature and the ideals most dear to noble souls. You teach us a lesson none more than we have need to learn - we, the men of the West, a nation, ardent, restless, thirsting for riches - a lesson which teaches us that, after the attainment of a material well-being relatively considerable, only the treasures of the mind have real and lasting value in life.⁷⁶

⁷³ *Oceania*, 9 August 1913, p.3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 15 April 1905, p.2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1905, p.2.

A couple of years later the same newspaper eagerly seized on other favourable comments made by a U.S. Commissioner,⁷⁷ and the editor himself explained:

In the most remote parts, where the first rays of civilisation have penetrated, Italian workmen are to be found, erecting edifices, tunnelling through mountains, laying down roads, and railways, and excavating the solid rock in the construction of harbours. In America, North and South, they are everywhere, on the Congo, in Madagascar, in China, in Manchuria, in Sweden, in Upper and Lower Russia, throughout Germany and Austria, and even in the distant Alaska, in all climates, torrid and frigid, in fact, wherever great works are to be carried out, there they take their activity, their assiduity, and sobriety, and work with all their energy with the laudable desire to earn in time a modest competency.⁷⁸

In order to instil into the psyche of the enemies of Italian immigration the wisdom of favouring it rather than impeding it, examples of the success achieved by Italians in Australia were reported.⁷⁹ Indeed a letter by Ricciotti Garibaldi, the surviving son of Giuseppe, the great Italian liberator, was published in 1907. He wrote:

For a long time this splendid continent [Australia] has been closed to European emigration, but at last it seems that my good Australian friends have finished by understanding that it is a natural law that the prosperity of a country is always in direct proportion to its augmentation of population.⁸⁰

This idea was not shared by the Australian politicians. It was reported that Senator Findley denied that population creates prosperity because "If it were so, China and Japan should be the most prosperous nations", but they were not.⁸¹ Sir William Lyne who had visited Naples, and thought it the most horrible place thronged with a large number of immigrants, added: "A nice crowd they were. So far as I am

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 October 1907, p.2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 April 1905, p.2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1905, p.2; 16 June 1906, p.5; *N.Q. Herald*, 19 March 1906, p.17; 2 November 1907, p.52; Capra, *Italica Gens*, *op.cit.*, pp.205-208; *Australian Sugar Journal*, 8 August 1919, p.324.

⁸⁰ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 18 May 1907, p.2.

⁸¹ Capra, "L'Australia nei suoi rapporti con l'Italia", *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1910, N.8, pp.109, 110.

concerned, America may have the whole lot of them. We do not want any such people here".⁸²

The pages of the Italian newspapers published at the beginning of the century are permeated with sadness and anger. They felt that a great deal was being done to alienate them, to discriminate against them, to scorn them in the areas of contacts with the British-Australian population. They realised they were being prevented from being partners with the British, or the Australian-born. They were referred to as "foreigners", relegated to a position of inferiority by the Labour Party,⁸³ offended and ridiculed by journalists described in the Italian press as *italofobi* who amused themselves to write lies about the *Dirty Dagos*.⁸⁴

Some Italians like Ercole Zelamina wrote to the editor of *Uniamoci* very early in the century, in 1904, to express his disgust at the ingratitude shown by the Australian press. He was particularly angry to see that the Australians were using the Roman alphabet, and words derived from Latin to deride the most Latin of all, and exclaimed: "To such a degree can human ingratitude arrive, when racial hatred and ignorance unite!"⁸⁵ He also explained that it would have been useless to write to the offending papers to get them to write objectively, and present the Italian points of view, because the papers would either "mutilate" the Italians' letters in their "most essential parts", or throw them into the waste-paper basket.⁸⁶

Other members of the Italian community, like Zelamina, were not happy at all with the way they were treated, and the more active ones felt it was necessary to meditate on the condition of Italian immigrants in the country, and see what could be done to ameliorate their state. The hostility against Italians led them to question the reason why they immigrated in the first place. The most important reason was *far fortuna*, i.e., to make money, as Dr Capra realised.⁸⁷ Writers in the Italian press had explained that what influenced Italians to emigrate were the factors already described in Chapter 1, i.e., the economic condition of Italy. Agriculture, for instance, did not give a good return,

⁸² *L'Italo-Australiano*, 6 July 1907, p.2.

⁸³ *Oceania*, 7 November 1914, p.1.

⁸⁴ *Uniamoci*, 9 January 1904, p.1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, p.99.

industry and commerce were not sufficiently developed, capitalism was weak, timid, and lacking expertise, and taxation was punitive.⁸⁸ Capra also noticed that some left Italy to avoid military service. While few left Italy for this reason, there were some who did not return to Italy for fear of conscription. Some, no doubt, left because of domestic quarrels; a few on account of the spirit of adventure or desire for liberty. At least some left because of problems with the police, and Capra suggested that Italians from the Alps were attracted to Australia by the prospect of discovering minerals.⁸⁹ There were also a few references to Italians who had left for political reasons, and it was added that in some cases it was due to the nature of the Italians always desirous "to see, learn, study".⁹⁰

As far as Australia was concerned there would have been many more Italians had the country been not so distant and unknown, the Australians' language and customs that differed from those of the Latin races, and above all the Labour Party; the first to proclaim "The White Australia" and "Australia for Australians".⁹¹ Indeed, already in 1903 the Italian press in Australia informed its readers that "ridiculous laws regulate immigration with more formality than those necessary to enter a temple of Buddha".⁹² But among the Italians themselves some favoured immigration because, taking everything into account, Australia was the best place. They wrote in *L'Italo-Australiano* in 1907: "We recognise that Australia is *par excellence* the best country as far as the labourer is concerned".⁹³ Moreover there was no reason to think that Australia should be left to other people apart from Italians.⁹⁴

In the specific case of North Queensland, however, Sceusa raised his voice to oppose Italian immigration, as he had already done at the time of the Italian pioneers in 1891. Sceusa thought that introducing Italians amounted to a "Chinesisation of the Italian labour", and he opposed it on the grounds that:

⁸⁸ *Uniamoci*, 5 September 1903, p.1.

⁸⁹ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, pp.73, 99-100.

⁹⁰ *Uniamoci*, 5 September 1903, p.1.

⁹¹ Capra, *Italica Gens*, February 1911, Torino, p.63.

⁹² *Uniamoci*, 8 August 1903, p.1.

⁹³ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 20 April 1907, p.2.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1907, p.2.

1. work in the canefields was unhealthy, enervating, unsuitable to Europeans, and spurned by Australians and Britishers, and whites in general;
2. low wages, hours of labour too long, and the diet, though plentiful, not fit for a Latin stomach accustomed to vegetables, legumes, olive oil, and wine;
3. in the event that the Italians left the sugarcane plantations they would have been compelled to look for work somewhere else, and cause competition against other toilers;
4. by accepting an occupation looked upon as fit only for Asians, they would substantiate the charge of being the "Chinese of Europe".⁹⁵

These opinions were not shared by other Italians who felt that Sceusa's argument was more based on sentiment than logic or practicability. For them it was incomprehensible that the Italians or anyone else should not have cultivated the land in Queensland just because the Chinese or the South Sea Islanders had done so before them. Furthermore the affirmation that Italians could not work in the tropics was wrong because many Italians had already settled there, and that type of work was not more tiring than working in the southern parts of Italy. And, at any rate, those who advocated Italian immigration could justify it by drawing the attention of readers to those *Jumna* people who did not leave agricultural pursuits, and their conditions were said to be *floride*,⁹⁶ i.e., prosperous.

There was, however, common agreement as to the necessity to join forces, to unite, with a view to improve the condition of Italian immigrants in general. The importance of being associated for some common purpose had already been noticed from the very beginning of the century. One editorial in *Uniamoci* (i.e., Let's get united) warned: "Let us defend ourselves! Our countrymen cannot have failed to notice the nasty way some of these Anglo-Saxons and too often the local press gravely injure and offend us in every way... We think one of the reasons is our deplorable lack of unity".⁹⁷ The following year, 1904, another editorial condemned the Italians' apathy which kept them behind other nationalities, and in the condition of foreigners.⁹⁸ Similar recommendations were published in *L'Italo-Australiano*. In 1905 the

⁹⁵ *N.Q. Herald*, 30 March 1907, p.40; *L'Italo-Australiano*, 6 April 1907, p.4.

⁹⁶ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 13 April 1907, p.2.

⁹⁷ *Uniamoci*, 12 December 1903, p.1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14 May 1904, p.1.

paper urged: "Italians get yourselves organised. If these were the last words we had the pleasure to utter we would once again say: Italians get yourselves organised".⁹⁹ The reason given was: "It is useless to entertain favourable ideas, our country is situated at 13 thousand miles from here, and the Italian Government has no influence whatsoever on these lands. We must defend ourselves".¹⁰⁰ In order to get the message across, a writer even resorted to popular Italian sayings such as: *Chi pecora si fa, lupo se la mangia*,¹⁰¹ i.e., if you behave like a sheep the wolf will eat you.

These exhortations to combat the enmity of the Australians, and their institutions such as the Labour Party and the press, were repeated frequently. Readers wrote to the Italian papers expressing the same concern. P. Vanni, for instance, urged the Italians to unite because it was "absolutely indispensable" in order to oppose the contempt shown not only by the *popolino*, i.e., the rabble, but also "by the entire Australian press, who more especially assail us Italians, who are here without any defence at all".¹⁰² In another letter E. Zelamina advocated an alliance among the Italians for the common good. He referred to "cowardly and loathsome calumnies" being divulged by *oracoli cartacei*, i.e., papery oracles such as the "Evening Snooze, Horsetrailian Star e Sunday Times Waster" (sic).¹⁰³ Indeed Zelamina regretted that Australia "that has a law to hang those who deprive women of their honour, has not got one for those who attempt people's national honour", and concluded "Such a law would be highly desirable".¹⁰⁴ Sceusa, referring to a letter by another Italian, Dr Ercole, who had blamed the Italians for their "indifference", "scepticism", and "discord", wrote resignedly: "I am afraid he'll be wasting his words".¹⁰⁵ Even Antonio Anzolin, one of the *Jumna* pioneers, ardently advocated the same unity in order to improve the conditions of the Italian immigrants, but did not hide his pessimism: "Here [Macknade] among very few Italians, money is being collected to

⁹⁹ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 8 July 1905, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 10 February 1906, p.3.

¹⁰² *Uniamoci*, 14 May 1904, p.3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 9 January 1904, p.1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁰⁵ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 6 May 1905, p.2.

erect a church; for our unity they would probably not give a penny".¹⁰⁶

In 1906, *L'Italo-Australiano* tried to form a league, the "Stella d'Italia" (Star of Italy) whose ideal was unity and brotherhood amongst the Italians in Australia "regardless of political parties, regional diversity, or personal animosities".¹⁰⁷ Amongst the adherents can be seen some Italian names from Queensland: G. Basso, most probably a *Jumna* member, G. Valinoti, S. Valinoti, F.A. Valinoti, E. Ruffinengo, all from the Herbert River; also L. Sertori, and F. Rusconi from Townsville and Irvinebank respectively.¹⁰⁸ The following year, 1907, a few more Italian names appeared in the list of the adherents to the "Stella d'Italia": B. Buffa, G. Quadrio, F. Reitano, E. Stranieri, all from the Herbert river, and A. Giudice from Townsville.¹⁰⁹

Capra himself noticed this absolute indifference amongst Italians, and compared them to "scattered stones in the desert".¹¹⁰ Indeed, as a case in point, Capra reported the following conversation he had heard between two of his countrymen:

"Are you Italian?"

"A hundred per cent Italian, I come from Lombardy".

"But where do you live? I have never had the pleasure to see you!"

"I live here (at such and such place) and I have lived there for ten years".

"Funny! I too have lived there for many years and we did not know one another!"¹¹¹

Capra wrote that a person in charge of 300 woodcutters, of whom more than half were Italian said to him: "Your friends are too alone".¹¹² Capra came to the conclusion that the only times Italians got together was when they were playing cards, or attending funerals,¹¹³ a characteristic also observed by the Halifax butcher. He stated that he was sitting near his shop, when he saw a great number of Italians in

¹⁰⁶ *Uniamoci*, 2 July 1904, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 4 August 1906, p.3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1907, p.2.

¹¹⁰ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, p.66.

¹¹¹ Capra, "Emigrati Italiani in Australasia", 1909, p.12.

¹¹² Capra, *Italica Gens*, 1912, pp.226, 229.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.221.

the street because "There had been a funeral that day. The Italians were talking loudly, which was the usual thing for them".¹¹⁴

Italians felt particularly vulnerable because they were ostracised by the Labour Party, derided by the press, looked down by the community at large, and forgotten by the Italian Government and its representatives. When Capra arrived at Fremantle, for instance, the consular agent was a German who could not speak Italian.¹¹⁵ In Perth the secretary at the consulate, an Italian, knew of Capra's visit, but knew very few Italians because it was not convenient for him to have rapport with them.¹¹⁶ Indeed, when Capra met Italian strikers at the Day Dawn mine in Western Australia, he could not hide his sorrow at seeing them without any guide, any authoritative and intelligent leaders, and without being able to speak English. Capra wrote: "And what about the Consul? The Consul was far away, and then he, I was told, is not interested in these things".¹¹⁷ In fact, it was obvious that if an Italian was respected, appreciated, or liked, it was due to his own efforts only, for everything else was lacking.¹¹⁸

Italian immigrants, early in the century, were not simply neglected by the Italian Government, abused by some Australian institutions such as the Labour Party, and the press; they also felt that the law of the land was not protecting every member of the community in accordance with even-handed principles. British law was regarded as partial, rigid, and harsh. A comment published in *Uniamoci* in 1903, for instance, shows how indignant the Italians were at the "crudezza", i.e., coarseness, severity, rudeness of the much-vaunted "English law".¹¹⁹ It was reported that the wife of Sceusa had been accused of attempted suicide by drowning, and what angered the Italians was the "crudezza" by which she had been dragged before a tribunal, as if she were a common delinquent.¹²⁰ On another occasion, in 1905, the Italian press reported that a fruiterer had been fined, or, in case he would refuse to pay, he would have been sent to jail for a month. The fruiterer's violation of the law consisted in his having sold passion fruit

¹¹⁴ *N.Q. Herald*, 30 July 1906, p.49.

¹¹⁵ Capra, *Italica Gens*, 1912, p.191.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.193.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.269.

¹¹⁸ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, p.65.

¹¹⁹ *Uniamoci*, 19 December 1903, p.3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

worth a halfpenny to a child on a Sunday.¹²¹ This dramatic measure was the result of the influence of the Sabbatarians whom the Italians perceived as individuals distinguished by some peculiar opinion or practice in regard to the observance of the Sabbath or day of rest. A comment made in *L'Italo-Australiano* in 1905, for instance, indicated strong displeasure: "The party of the Sabbatarians would like...people to contemplate their navel throughout Sunday", the only exception to this happy rest being singing some Bible verse from time to time during those holy 24 hours.¹²² This ironical remark followed another observation by the Italians; they could not refrain from reporting that some market-gardeners had been fined for watering their cauliflowers on Sundays, a penalty too queer to understand, or warrant further comment.¹²³ And at the same time the readers' attention was drawn to the different standards applied in the case of hotel keepers of British extraction who managed to evade the law about Sunday trading.¹²⁴ Indeed this double standard was practised by the press also. It was reported a few years later, in 1910, that an Italian fruiterer had yielded to the threat of an armed robber who ordered him: "Up with your hands or I will drive a bullet through you", but while the Italian considered himself lucky to have escaped, the press considered the robber "an experienced adventurer who had been driven to desperation from lack of funds".¹²⁵

Whether English-speaking readers reflected on how instrumental words can be when it comes to gild error and mask lying, the proper function of language remains to be the vehicle of truth. The same could be said of the administration of justice for, as the perception of injustice grows, respect for law and order weakens. Indeed, this was understood by some Australians themselves. In an article published in the Australian newspaper *The People* and reproduced in *Oceania* in 1913, the writer, reflecting on the proposal of the Federal Government to deny to Italians the right to earn their living in the land of their adoption, commented:

A more brutal policy could not be conceived...He [the Italian] is here and must live by fair means or foul. And if the unionists of the West and the

¹²¹ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 11 March 1905, p.3.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 13 May 1905, p.2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 11 March 1905, p.3.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1905, p.2.

¹²⁵ *N.Q. Herald*, 16 July 1910, p.12.

so-called labour Government want "scab" in their midst, they are proceeding in the right way to his manufacture...demanding a statute forbidding man the right to work because of birthplace, it is the height of injustice and folly. Folly in that by thus creating an army of workless outcasts they are making a rod for their own backs.¹²⁶

This is a reference to the West Australian Mines Bill framed to prevent Italians from working in the mines. Numerous voices were raised against this abuse which aroused considerable bitterness. In a letter to *Oceania*, a correspondent calling himself "An English Lover of Fair Play" considered it "a monstrous masterpiece of retrograde legislation", "an imbecility", and concluded: "but the fact such a measure should be proposed by a responsible Government speaks volumes for the superficiality of the veneer of culture and intelligence that hides or attempts to hide, the vulgar barbarism of the average Australian intelligence".¹²⁷ In defence of the proposal of the bill it should be added that the Premier of Western Australia explained: "the presence in mines of foreigners who are unable to speak English would constitute a grave danger should an emergency arise".¹²⁸

Italians, however, were not convinced of that explanation given as the foundation of the bill, and in 1913, *Oceania* asked, "if this is the case, why has not this protection been afforded the Australian miners in the past?"¹²⁹ Then the paper went on to point out the true reason: "the manifest good qualities of the Italian inspire the Australian with jealousy, and this jealousy begets hatred and outrage". This was given as the real origin, the true genesis of "that famous and glorious monument of Humanity, the Western Australian Mine Bill".¹³⁰ In a letter signed "Diggory Bill" in the *Barrier Truth*, and re-published in *Oceania*, this interpretation is affirmed. Diggory Bill, in fact, admitted that he had seen 70 odd men whom he identified as Bulgarians, Austrians, Syrians, Italians, and Maltese who were looking for work, and "40 odd of them were 'Dings' as they are called in the West and the boss always selects the 'Ding'".¹³¹ The editor of *Oceania*,

¹²⁶ *Oceania*, 6 September 1913, p.4 (quoting *The People*, 30 August 1913).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 August 1913, p.3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 August 1913, p.3 (quoting *Evening News*, 12 August 1913).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 August 1913, p.3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1914, p.5.

reflecting on the brotherhood of men, came to the conclusion that to speak of the rights of workers when only the interests of a race of workers were taken into account was "hypocrisy".¹³² Sceusa's feelings were truly inflamed, and in a letter to the *International Socialist*, he thundered: "the latest piece of folly is the West Australian Mines Bill...It is due to ignorance, racial hatred...The Italian worker and the Australian worker belong to the same class - the exploited. They have a common cause and common interests, and race-hatred on their part is sheer idiocy".¹³³ In concluding his comments on the West Australian Mines Bill the editor of *Oceania* quoted the exclamation of a traveller who said: "A good country but the people!"¹³⁴

Italian voices did not simply try to defend Italians; at times they also had advice to offer to Australians which alternated with reprimands. It was reported, for instance, that a Sydney alderman had lamented that the fruit trade was almost entirely in the hands of foreigners,¹³⁵ but this was due to the Italians' work practices which differed from those of the Australian work force at large. In comment the editor of *Uniamoci* impatiently requested an explanation: "What can they do if the fruit trade thrives in their hands, and dies if practised by others?"¹³⁶ Another writer in *L'Italo-Australiano* explained:

These [Italians] are a highly industrious and straightforward body of men, and but for them the City of Sydney at least would be practically without fruit. A quarter of a century ago, before Italian fruiterers embarked in the business, fruit in Sydney was scarce, dear, and nasty, now it is plentiful, cheap, and wholesome.¹³⁷

Unlike the Australian's intolerance of the immigrant fruiterers' success, an Italian visitor wrote to *Uniamoci*

Being away from Sydney for a few years, I wanted to have a quick look at the city, and it has been a nice surprise for me to see the elegance, the neatness, and the art, truly Italian, with which our fruit-shops are displayed.¹³⁸

¹³² *Ibid.*, 23 August 1913, p.5.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 30 August 1913, p.3 (quoting *International Socialist*, 23 August 1913).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1914, p.6.

¹³⁵ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 7 December 1907, p.3.

¹³⁶ *Uniamoci*, 25 July 1903, p.2.

¹³⁷ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 7 December 1907, p.3.

¹³⁸ *Uniamoci*, 10 October 1903, p.3.

This inability to accept the Italians' method of conducting their own occupations based on their characteristics of sobriety, honesty, and perseverance, was not limited to West Australia or Sydney. Italian fishermen were also experiencing problems in South Australia. It was reported that native fishermen had gone to visit the Premier of that State with the aim of having Italians excluded from the industry. In defending the compatriots the editor of *Oceania*, once again, explained that this hostility stemmed from the Australians' inferiority, incapable of competing with Italians who were guilty of economising and saving, though their income was limited and insecure.¹³⁹

Indeed it can be deduced from editorials and letters written by Italians that their perception of Australians was often not very complimentary. The Italian characteristics of courtesy, hospitality, and respect were contrasted with some traits of the Australians. An editorial, published in *Oceania* in 1913, commenting on the Italians' treatment of foreign visitors, and elderly people in general, explained: "We pride ourselves upon the fact that in Italy the foreigner is treated with more respect and courtesy than in perhaps any other country in the world; and how much of the ancient greatness of Sparta was due to the respect which her citizens cherished towards foreigners and the aged?" In the same editorial the different attitudes to the family were commented on, and the Australians were rebuked with the question: "What does the average Australian have to say to this? He who habitually calls his parents 'the old man' and 'the old woman', and refers to the strangers within his gates as 'that...(adjective) Dago'".¹⁴⁰ Another characteristic the Italians frowned upon was that of the professional vagrant or tramp, and this can be inferred from a letter in defence of Italians. A correspondent made pointed reference to vagrancy in Australian society, and made it clear: "In eleven years of my residence in Australia men of many nationalities have begged of me the price of a meal or a bed, but never an Italian".¹⁴¹

Italians did not limit themselves to a defensive stand. They proffered advice, reproved some Australian practices, and also expressed their opinions on how Australia should be run. Referring to the British League which advocated immigration from the British Isles only, an editorial in *Oceania* published in 1914 explained that it was

¹³⁹ *Oceania*, 27 June 1914, p.3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 August 1913, p.3.

¹⁴¹ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 13 April 1907, pp.2, 4.

only natural to prefer one's own kith and kin, because of the same language, religion, ethics, laws, and the way of life in general which tended to confer unity and homogeneity to the national structure. That was interpreted as a form of "racial sentiment" with which it was difficult to reason. But the Italians felt that statesmen should not give their followers what they wanted because leaders are supposed to lead, broaden the horizon, and change direction when the occasion requires it. Great Britain, for instance, could not supply Australia with the necessary number of migrants, and consequently those at the helm of the country should have tried to get them from somewhere else. A rural analogy was used in order to clarify the point. The writer in *Oceania* proposed: "If it is necessary to sow, manure, and irrigate well this year in order to obtain a good harvest the next year" the same process was necessary in order to obtain a strong and rich nation.¹⁴² A reader, F.C. Bentivoglio, had already explained the previous year, 1913, the reason of the Australian leaders' lack of initiative and foresight:

Australia...without history and glorious traditions, has no great ideals to guide her in political struggles, her Parties are happy with a hand to mouth existence...The strength or soundness of a program is not sought in its essence but is judged by the number of electors who support it; deputies, ministers are not there to illustrate, enlighten, direct, but rather to please the largest number of electors in their party.¹⁴³

Other Italian interventions, for instance, were on European immigration to Australia. An Italian editorial published in *L'Italo-Australiano* in 1905 justified the dispossession by the British of the land belonging to the Aborigines for the following reason:

Their very low number and their most primitive state (in a land full of resources like Australia), lucidly demonstrate that the natives were not designated by Providence to be the masters of this continent: consequently Europe has a very good claim to Australia.¹⁴⁴

During the same year, 1905, Italians agreed with the Hon. James Ashton, Minister for Lands, N.S.W., who, in the debate on Italian immigration, was reported to have said:

Of course, I recognise that the population of Australia must be increased in some way. It is, in fact, hardly just that four millions of white people

¹⁴² *Oceania*, 21 February 1914, p.3.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30 August 1913, p.6.

¹⁴⁴ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 14 October 1905, p.2.

should keep to themselves a continent against the countless millions of whites of other nationalities.¹⁴⁵

Two years later, in 1907, another Italian editorial published in the same paper, *L'Italo-Australiano*, urged: "Any strong, healthy, honest, industrious white man should be desirable to Australia, no matter what language he speaks".¹⁴⁶ Years later, in 1914, an article in *Oceania* visualised Australia as belonging to humanity, a political solution corresponding with the great and noble interest of the nation.¹⁴⁷

Italian papers also tried to reform and influence the conduct of Italian residents. In an editorial published in *Uniamoci* in 1903, for instance, it was recommended the nurturing of the Italian language, because it was "necessary to the development of the general culture".¹⁴⁸ Indeed, Capra himself wrote that a second language, Italian, was not only to be retained for its cultural importance, but also for its economic, and social implications.¹⁴⁹ Australian citizenship was warmly recommended. The editor of *L'Italo-Australiano* wrote in 1905 that it was true that the reason why Italians had come to Australia was mainly due to economic circumstances, but he also suggested that it was a duty to participate in the political and social life of those already here. Though Italy had not been forgotten it was right to work with other Australians for the prosperity and greatness of the nation, and it was confidently affirmed that "our children will be grateful to their fathers". It was explained that it was easy to become an Australian citizen; it was only necessary to have resided in the country for two years, and to present a certificate of good repute signed by a Justice of the Peace. The tempting invitation concluded with the explanation that there was nothing to pay for this privilege.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 March 1905, p.2.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 June 1907 (leading article).

¹⁴⁷ *Oceania*, 7 November 1914, p.1. Indeed this interpretation precedes by over 70 years that of Alice Kelly, a 2,500th generation Australian, elder of the Mutti Mutti tribe and the Balranald Aboriginal Land Council, who while visiting the site of Australia's oldest organised society at Lake Mungo in NSW said: "This is the heritage of all Australians,...This is not about any one race but the human race". (*Weekend Australian*, 20-21 February 1988, p.1.)

¹⁴⁸ *Uniamoci*, 7 November 1903, p.1.

¹⁴⁹ Capra, *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1911, *op.cit.*, p.44.

¹⁵⁰ *L'Italo-Australiano*, 17 June 1905, p.2.

Indeed these inducements to retain the Italian language for its cultural, social, and economic importance, and the encouragement to become Australian citizens precede by 80-90 years the persuasive exhortation of the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Ninian Stephen, who advised the immigrants from non-English speaking countries to maintain their idioms for their own good, and for the benefit of their country of adoption.¹⁵¹ This view is shared by the present Australian Government in its campaign to make students learn foreign languages, particularly Asian ones, given Asia's proximity to Australia, and economic ties.¹⁵² The reasons the Italians gave for becoming an Australian citizen are just the same as those embodied in the message to all householders from the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, reasons which became national policy in 1989, the Year of Citizenship:

In a nation in which so many of us are immigrants or descended from immigrants, citizenship is perhaps the most important symbol of our commitment to our nation...That way we can, together, build a strong and prosperous Australia for our children - so as to ensure Australia stays, simply, the best nation on earth.¹⁵³

So it is obvious that what the Italians understood and advocated at the very beginning of the century has become clear to Australians only at the end of it.

¹⁵¹ *La Fiamma*, 30 January 1989, p.1.

¹⁵² A recurring theme in the Australian, and ethnic press in 1989, the "Year of Citizenship".

¹⁵³ See the "Year of Citizenship" message to householders from the Prime Minister, R.J. Hawke.

APPENDIX III

Nominal Roll of the *Jumna* Immigrants.

Three lists of *Jumna* immigrants are preserved in the Queensland State Archives, catalogued as IMM/124 pp.311-324, IMM/124 pp.401-410 and IMM/145 pp.47-54. For convenience, I refer to these in what follows as A, B and C respectively. A and B are almost identical, entered on the same printed double page register form, but by different hands. Neither appears to be a copy of the other; presumably both were copied from the same original. C is a register of those immigrants who disembarked at Townsville; while repeating nearly all the data in A and B, it adds the name of the plantation to which each immigrant was assigned.

The Appendix is in essence List A, with two names added from B, and with the plantations of destination added from List C. Some information is omitted because it is identical in every instance: "Italy" as the country of origin and "RC" as religion. Some is simplified. The great majority are listed as single males; it is sufficient, therefore, to identify only the minority who are married, or female. Married couples, together with any children, are identified by a vertical bar joining their names in the left margin. Females are identified by "F" immediately after the age, where given: in many instances the ages of married couples and children are not listed. The occupation of all adult males is recorded as "FL" in A, "Farm Labourer" in B; this entry is also omitted. A very small number of young single women are listed as "DS" in A, "Domestics" or "Domestic Servant" in B, whether in a family group or not. This information is included. A dash appears under occupation against names of married women and children in A & B; this is omitted in the Appendix. C lists all the Townsville contingent, regardless of age and sex, as "Agricultural Labourers". This has been ignored.

The printed form on which A and B are entered has a column for "read", but no entry against any name. In the column "write" each name has an entry: "Yes" (the great majority); "No"; ditto (""); or dash (-). In the Appendix "Yes" and "No" are replaced by "+" and "-", as are the ditto marks; a blank replaces the dash.

In B some undoubted errors can be detected; several married groups are entered as "single", and one single woman is entered as "male". These errors are ignored. The footnotes record every other instance in which data in B is at variance with that in A, however slight the difference. Most of these discrepancies clearly result from simple mistakes in transcription, but it is not possible to be certain which version is right. Sometimes **both** appear to be wrong.

INDENTED TOWNSVILLE

Astrua, Giovanni	28	+	Macknade
Amfrimo, Felici	21	+	Hamleigh
Antoniol, ¹ Lurcuno	26	-	Hamleigh
Andreoli, Andrea	35	+	Kalamia
Anzolini, Antonio	20 ²	+	Hamleigh
Anessi, Angelo	23	+	Ripple Creek
Buarino, Carlo	21	+	Pioneer
Buffa, Marcello	23	+	Pioneer
Buffo, Francesco	29	+	Pioneer
Bongiovanni, Michele	29	+	Seaforth
Bernarduro, Agostino	27	+	Seaforth
Bricalli, Agostino	23	+	Seaforth
Bernardaro, Pietro	29	+	Seaforth
Bonini, Lorenzo	31	+	Seaforth
Bernardara, Giovanni	30	+	Seaforth
Bricco, Luigi	25	+	Macknade
Bianchi, Enrico	23	+	Macknade
Bargetto, Francesco	38	+ ³	Hamleigh
Barbato, Pietro	30	- ⁴	Kalamia
Balza, Guiseppe	24	+	Kalamia
Beccaris, Giovanni	22	+ ⁵	Macknade
Boschierro, Giovanni	26	- ⁶	Macknade
Bruno, Carlo	32	+	Macknade
Borello, Aventino	17	+	Macknade
Bandino, Agostino	23	+	Ripple Creek
Branducco, Bernardo	40	-	Kalamia
Bouga, Nicodemo	43	-	Ripple Creek
Bouga, Matteo	18	+	Ripple Creek
Bouga, Lino	15	+	Ripple Creek
Belloti, Benvenuto	25	+	Macknade
Basso, Guisto	25	+	Macknade
Belloti, Giacomo	42	+	Ripple Creek
Barilla, ⁷ Guiseppe	38	+	Macknade

¹ Antomol

² 21

³ -

⁴ +

⁵ -

⁶ +

⁷ Barella

Buglio, Ferchnando ⁸	23	+	Macknade
Busato, Pietro ⁹	22	+	Ripple Creek
Borinnelli, Antonio	22	+	Kalamia
Bruni, Pietro	25	+	Kalamia
Briotto, Bartolomew	35	- ¹⁰	Kalamia
Berniga, Domenico	23	-	Kalamia
Berniga, Giovanni	22	-	Kalamia
Baruffi, Agostino	22	-	Seaforth
Botto, Bartolomew	38	+	Kalamia
Bariselli, Pietro	45	+	Pioneer
Bigatti, Luigi	42	+	Seaforth
Beltramo, Giovanni	29	+	Ripple Creek
Beltramini, Pietro ¹¹	41	-	Ripple Creek
Bonini, Gettulio	28	+ ¹²	Ripple Creek
Baron, Bartolomew	34	+	Pioneer
Borelli, Luigi	32	+	Pioneer
Borelli, Anna	35 F	+ ¹³	Pioneer
Borelli, Cattarina ¹⁴	6 F		Pioneer
Borelli, Riced	1 F	+ ¹⁵	Pioneer
Buffa, Guiseppe		+	Pioneer
Contrio, Guiseppe	22	+	Pioneer
Contrio, Luigi	30	+	Pioneer
Cao, Pietro	29	+	Pioneer
Camer, Michele	27	+	Seaforth
Carnazzola, Luigi	33	+	Seaforth
Cerutti, Guiseppe	31	+	Macknade
Carnazzola, Carlo	28	-	Seaforth
Cochetti, Lorenzo	23	+	Seaforth
Cesala, Ros Paolo ¹⁶	21	+	Macknade
Corbellaro, Pietro	26	+	Kalamia
Camarano, Giovanni	22	+	Kalamia
Caldera, Giovanni	30	+	Ripple Creek

⁸ Ferchando

⁹ Not in List B

¹⁰ +

¹¹ Not in List B

¹² -

¹³ +

¹⁴ Catharina +

¹⁵ +

¹⁶ Ros. Caola

Catastellero, Guiseppe	43	+	Ripple Creek
Cugino, Luigi	36	- ¹⁷	Ripple Creek
Campini, Luigi	38	+	Hamleigh
Conte, Angelo	24	+	Pioneer
Camino, Bartolomew	44	+	Hamleigh
Castori, Leone	22	-	Ripple Creek
Carello, Eugenio	16	+	Kalamia
Cartesi, Guiseppe	29	+	Macknade
Cugno, Pietro	34	-	Kalamia
Carello, Carlo	31	+	Kalamia
Chiaretta, Guiseppe	34	+	Kalamia
Contin, Giovanni	24	+	Macknade
Cao, Enrico	23	+	Macknade
Cavazzi, Maurizio	21	+	Kalamia
Chiabo, Guiseppe	26	+	Hamleigh
Constabeber, Guiseppe	17	+	Ripple Creek
Comba, Giovanni	16	+	Seaforth
Coppi, Albino	30	-	Seaforth
Cirio, Zidele	20	+	Hamleigh
Casalegno, Luigi	29	-	Pioneer
Casalegno, Anna	28 F	-	Pioneer
Casalegno, Giovanni	3		Pioneer
Casalegno, Pietro	1		Pioneer
Coniglio, Martino	33	-	Pioneer
Coniglio, Margharita ¹⁸	30 F		Pioneer
Coniglio, Lucia	5		Pioneer
Coniglio, Secondo	1		Pioneer
Constabeler, Aurelio		+ ¹⁹	Ripple Creek
Constabeler, Maria	F	²⁰	Ripple Creek
Coppi, Luigia	F	DS ²¹ +	Seaforth
Costa, Giovanni		-	Seaforth
Deambogi, Battista ²²	29	+	Pioneer
Delmaffeo, Matteo	20	+	Seaforth
Dudominici, Antonio	26	+	Macknade

¹⁷ +¹⁸ Margherita¹⁹ -²⁰ +²¹ Domestic Servant²² Battisla

Damiano, Luigi	23	+	Kalamia
Ducchi, Battista ²³	44	+	Ripple Creek
Demarchis, Michele	21	+	Pioneer
Dittoni, Giovanni	24	+	Kalamia
Dittoni, Guiseppe	22	+	Kalamia
Dametto, Sebastiano	20	-	Ripple Creek
Davanzo, Antonio	22	-	Macknade
Delana, Clementi	23	+	Ripple Creek
Diane, Carlo	40	+	Ripple Creek
Della Valle, Giovanni	21	+	Kalamia
Della Pollina, Andrea	29	-	Kalamia
Dusio, Silvester	25	-	Kalamia
Della Mattea, Guiseppe	34	-	Kalamia
Dolla Vecchis, ²⁴ Carlo	15	+	Macknade
Dolla Vecchis, ²⁵ Basilio	45	+	Macknade
Dolla Vecchis, ²⁶ Maria	19 F	DS ²⁷ +	Macknade
Francesese, Antonio	23	- ²⁸	Seaforth
Filipello, Basilio	22	+	Hamleigh
Finsello, Maggionio ²⁹	21	+	Macknade
Francone, Nicolo	40	+	Hamleigh
Fenaglio, Paolo	16	-	Pioneer
Foscale, Emelio ³⁰	40	+	Kalamia
Ferraza, Marco	25	-	Ripple Creek
Fantino, Pietro	25	+	Kalamia
Fillipo, Guiseppe		+	Ripple Creek
Fillipo, Teresa	F	³¹	Ripple Creek
Foganini, Santino		+	Seaforth
Foganini, Elizabetta ³²	F	³³	Seaforth
Gariglio, Michele	26	+	Seaforth

²³ Battisla
²⁴ Vecchio
²⁵ Vecchio
²⁶ Vecchio
²⁷ Domestic Servant
²⁸ +
²⁹ Maggioni
³⁰ Emilio
³¹ +
³² Elizabeth
³³ +

Guigree, Alexandro ³⁴	22	+	Pioneer
Giugin, ³⁵ Federico	21	+	Pioneer
Georgis, Guiseppe	26	+	Seaforth
Gerrato, Stephano	43	+	Seaforth
Garetto, Ermengilda	22	+	Hamleigh
Gatti, Ougelo ³⁶	20	+	Hamleigh
Grisello, Giacinto ³⁷	40	+	Ripple Creek
Gillio, Guiseppe	18	+	Macknade
Grasso, Giovanni	24	+	Seaforth
Gavone, Candida	20	- ³⁸	Pioneer
Griotto, ³⁹ Giovanni	28	+	Kalamia
Grovanello, Adamo	25	+	Kalamia
Girardi, Angelo	34	+	Seaforth
Gurgo, Giacinto		+	Kalamia
Gurgo, Maria	F	⁴⁰	Kalamia
Gurgo, Teresa	F	⁴¹	Kalamia
Giai-Levra, ⁴² Felici		+	Seaforth
Giai-Levra, ⁴³ Angela	F	⁴⁴	Seaforth
Giai-Levra, ⁴⁵ Guiseppe	Inf		Seaforth
Iconda, Guiseppe	32	+	Hamleigh
Ioris, Battista ⁴⁶	31	+	Kalamia
Innocente, Allexandro ⁴⁷	25	+	Ripple Creek
Indo, Michele	25	+	Pioneer
Jasolio, ⁴⁸ Vincenzo		+	Pioneer
Jasolio, ⁴⁹ Grazia		⁵⁰	Pioneer

³⁴ Allessandro
³⁵ Giugui
³⁶ Oryclo
³⁷ Giacinti
³⁸ +
³⁹ Griotti
⁴⁰ +
⁴¹ +
⁴² Giai Levra
⁴³ Giai Levra
⁴⁴ +
⁴⁵ Giai Levra
⁴⁶ Batisla
⁴⁷ Allessandro
⁴⁸ Iasolio
⁴⁹ Iasolio
⁵⁰ +

Lovenzetti, Antonio	41	-. ⁵¹	Seaforth
Lasagno, Giovanni ⁵²	29	+	Pioneer
Lazzarino, Geacomo ⁵³	28	+	Hamleigh
Messi, Giovanni	22	+	Pioneer
Morassi, Francesco	21	-. ⁵⁴	Pioneer
Moizo, Agostino ⁵⁵	25	+	Pioneer
Michetti, Andrea	25	+. ⁵⁶	Seaforth
Mostachetti, Silvio	24	+	Seaforth
Martini, Guisepppe	42	+	Hamleigh
Maffei, Francesco	26	+	Kalamia
Maina, Teresio	26	-. ⁵⁷	Kalamia
Morando, Giovanni	27 ⁵⁸	+	Macknade
Merlone, Michele	17	+. ⁵⁹	Ripple Creek
Moretti, Pietro	22	-. ⁶⁰	Kalamia
Milone, Carlo ⁶¹ Nicolo	23	+	Macknade
Mattarolo, Luigi	22	-	Hamleigh
Molesini, Carlo	34	+	Ripple Creek
Mistachetti, Antonio	26	+. ⁶²	Pioneer
Masetti, Giovanni	34	+	Pioneer
Mares, Luigi	35	+	Pioneer
Mensio, Guisepppe		+	Seaforth
Mensio, Maria	F	. ⁶³	Seaforth
Mensio, Antonio			Seaforth
Mensio, Jischino			Seaforth
Mensio, Tomaso			Seaforth
Merlo, Pietro		+	Seaforth
Merlo, Maria	F		Seaforth
Neja, Cesare	37	+	Seaforth

⁵¹ +
⁵² Giovani
⁵³ Gracomo
⁵⁴ +
⁵⁵ Agistino
⁵⁶ -
⁵⁷ +
⁵⁸ 17
⁵⁹ -
⁶⁰ +
⁶¹ Curlo
⁶² -
⁶³ +

Origliasso, ⁶⁴ Nicholas	22	+	Macknade
Origliasso, ⁶⁵ Frederico	15	+	Macknade
Pichetto, Giovanni	33	+	Seaforth
Picco, L. Antonio	42	+	Seaforth
Pelosi, Adamasio	27	+	Seaforth
Prandoline, Carlo	30	+	Seaforth
Prella, Guiseppe	22	+	Macknade
Pellizzare, Francesca	26	- ⁶⁶	Seaforth
Pasolini, Guiseppe ⁶⁷	20	+	
Parolo, Giavanne	20	-	Kalamia
Pagano, Antonio	24	+	Kalamia
Paloniato, Marcantonio	35	+	Ripple Creek
Ponzano, Luigi	23	+	Macknade
Proclive, Alberto	23	+	Macknade
Parisi, Luigi	22	- ⁶⁸	Ripple Creek
Pianta, Faustina	34	-	Macknade
Pogliano, Giacomo	25	+ ⁶⁹	Ripple Creek
Penosso, Ignossio	45	+	Ripple Creek
Pavan, Inanzio	15	+	Hamleigh
Petruzzi, Domenico	44	- ⁷⁰	Macknade
Porro, Vero	37	+	Ripple Creek
Pavan, Angelo		+	Hamleigh
Pavan, Luigia	F	⁷¹	Hamleigh
Pavan, Rosa	F	⁷² +	Hamleigh
Pavan, Caroline	F	⁷³ +	Hamleigh
Quaranta, Carlo	26	+	Hamleigh
Rosa, Giovanni	22	+	Pioneer
Roncati, Giovanni	25	+	Pioneer
Rapallino, Giovanni	32	+	Pioneer

⁶⁴ Origliasso

⁶⁵ Origliasso

⁶⁶ +

⁶⁷ List B only

⁶⁸ +

⁶⁹ -

⁷⁰ +

⁷¹ +

⁷² "Domestics"

⁷³ "Domestics"

Rosini, Enrico	24	-	Hamleigh
Robino, Giovanni	38	+	Ripple Creek
Richardi, Giovanni ⁷⁴	36	+	Ripple Creek
Rizzone, Valentine	32	+	Ripple Creek
Rech, Fillipo	30	-	Ripple Creek
Ramponi, Guiseppe	21	+	Kalamia
Refinoli, Giovanni	22	-	Kalamia
Roffinoli, Michele	40	-	Kalamia
Rustichelli, Michele	22	+	Hamleigh
Rufferengo, Angelo	22	-	Hamleigh
Rolla, Pietro	20	+	Pioneer
Ravaschietta, Angelo	16	+	Pioneer
Remondini, Michele ⁷⁵	26	+	
Revanni, Luigi		-	Ripple Creek
Revanni, Giovanna	F		Ripple Creek
Revanni, Romildo	F		Ripple Creek
Revanni, Maria	F	DS ⁷⁶	Ripple Creek
Spinetti, Andrea	23	+	Seaforth
Scarsi, Domenico	25	+	Seaforth
Savio, Pietro	44	+	Hamleigh
Sebastopoli, Domenico	37	+	Hamleigh
Sestero, Giovanni	17	+	Macknade
Senor, Giacomo	27	+	Macknade
Silvestro, Giovanni	37	+	Macknade
Sonson, Angelo	22	+	Pioneer
Servalli, Anonia	22	+	Pioneer
Spetta, Vincenza		-	Kalamia
Spetta, Emiegelda	F		Kalamia
Spetta, Enrico	Inf ⁷⁷		Kalamia
Tossi, Luigi	29	+	Pioneer
Taverna, Francesco	32	+	Pioneer
Tudori, Pietro	22	+	Kalamia
Tempesa, Guiseppe	21	+	Kalamia
Toni, Arcangelo	42	-	Ripple Creek
Toni, Amabilia	17 F	DS	Ripple Creek

⁷⁴ Christian name omitted

⁷⁵ List B only

⁷⁶ Domestic Servant

⁷⁷ Between 1 & 12 years

Verro, Giacomo	25	+	Pioneer
Usseglio, Fillipo	21	-	Seaforth
Vanotti, Martino	34	+	Seaforth
Vair, Giovanni	26	+	Macknade
Visentui, Vettore	30	-	Ripple Creek
Vial, Guiseppe	30	+	Macknade
Vial, Giovanni	30	-	Macknade
Vasolin, Fermo	33	+	Ripple Creek
Vimercati, Guiseppe	45	+	Hamleigh
Vaschetti, Carlo		-	Kalamia
Vaschetti, Teresa	F	-	Kalamia
Vaschetti, Guiseppe			Kalamia
Vaschetti, Felice			Kalamia
Vaschetti, Margharita ⁷⁸	F		Kalamia
Vaschetti, Delphina	F		Kalamia
Valli, Bernardo		-	Kalamia
Valli, Madelina ⁷⁹	F		Kalamia
Vincenzi, Stefano		-	Macknade
Vincenzi, Margharita	F		Macknade
Zapelli, Bortolo	32 ⁸⁰	+	Pioneer
Zanni, Giovanni	23 ⁸¹	-	Seaforth
Zanetto, Pietro	25 ⁸²	+	Pioneer

INDENTED BUNDABERG

Aimar, Giovanni	25	-
Alloatti, Camillo	27	+
Alloatti, Francesco ⁸³	44	+
Alessio, Barnardino ⁸⁴	23	+
Aimeretti, Pietro ⁸⁵	16 ⁸⁶	+

⁷⁸ Margarita

⁷⁹ Madalina

⁸⁰ No age given

⁸¹ No age given

⁸² No age given

⁸³ List B only

⁸⁴ List A only

⁸⁵ Pietro crossed out, Bernardino inserted

Buzzo, Pietro	17 ⁸⁷	+
Brada, Giovanni	26	-. ⁸⁸
Berterollo, Domenico	25	-. ⁸⁹
Bertrandi, Guiseppe	25	+
Bo, Bartolomew	30	+
Barbero, Bartolomoew	27	-
Burdisi, ⁹⁰ Francesca	33	+
Berrone, Giovanni	39	+
Brandracco, Giovanni	29	+
Bonetto, Stefano	28	+
Bonetti, Giovanni	44	+
Brondetta, Domenico	24	+
Benolo, ⁹¹ Giovanni	40	+
Bonino, Michele	26	+
Bandroceo, ⁹² Michele	33	-. ⁹³
Bandroceo, ⁹⁴ Isabella	28 F	
Bertolotto, Sebastino	35	+
Bertolotto, Maria	20	95
Chialvo, Pietro	23	+
Challier, Alessio ⁹⁶	25	+
Cavallero, Giovanni	40	-
Cortasso, Guiseppe	23	-
Costamagna, Francesco ⁹⁷	41	+
Calvetto, Domenico	28	+
Calvetto, Margherita ⁹⁸	18 F	99
Druetta, Francesco	21	+ ¹⁰⁰

⁸⁶ 23
⁸⁷ 16⁸⁸ +⁸⁹ +⁹⁰ Burdisio⁹¹ Bertolo⁹² Bandrocca⁹³ +⁹⁴ Bandrocca⁹⁵ +⁹⁶ Alesio⁹⁷ Franceso⁹⁸ Margaherita⁹⁹ +¹⁰⁰ -

Delcre, Guiseppe	16	+
Etusa, Edordo	35	+
Etusa, Cardina	35 F	¹⁰¹
Etusa, Francesco	8	¹⁰²
Ferruso, Pietro	22	⁻¹⁰³
Fissore, Carlo	20	+
Ferrero, Defendente	26	+
Farando, Guiseppe	21	+
Giordino, Martino	25	-
Guglielmetti, Carlo	20	+
Garino, Francesco ¹⁰⁴	21	+
Giletta, Agostino	29	+
Garrino, Felici	21	+
Gavarini, Guiseppe	41	+
Larda, Giovenale ¹⁰⁵	22	+
Locatti, Guiseppe	45	+
Masetta, Michele	28	+
Moine, Antonio	23	+
Neopolati, ¹⁰⁶ Bonaventura	23	+
Nubbio, Umberto	22	+
Nicola, Antonio	29	+
Novaretta, Andrea	32	-
Perretti, Lorenzo	29	+
Pagliano, Pietro	22	+
Pasquino, Alfonso	26	-
Rubiolo, Bartolomew	27	-
Rainero, ¹⁰⁷ Constanzo	21	+
Ricardi, Vincenzo	20	-
Rubatto, Francesco	25	+

¹⁰¹ +¹⁰² +¹⁰³ +¹⁰⁴ Francescea¹⁰⁵ Grovenale¹⁰⁶ Nepolate¹⁰⁷ Ruinero

Rena, Raimondo	30	-	
Secco, Ludovico	30	+	
Tessio, Tomaso	21	-	
Toja, Francesco	26	+	
Trucco, Luigi	22	-	
Tocco, Stefani	27	-	
Visca, Domenico	26	+	
Zavatteri, ¹⁰⁸ Chaffreda	20	+	
Zavatteri, ¹⁰⁹ Giovanni	26	+	
Crivello, Giovanni ¹¹⁰	26		111
Ulisi, Giovanni ¹¹²			113

¹⁰⁸ Zavattero

¹⁰⁹ Zavattero

¹¹⁰ In List A: "Not on Agent General's List"

¹¹¹ +

¹¹² In list A: "1/- a Month man": "acted as interpreter"

¹¹³ +

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ORAL HISTORY

Taped Interviews

Mr Albino Accatino	tape 1 (in Italian)
Mr Joe Casalegno	tape 2 (in English)
Mrs Margherita Casalegno née Seroglia	tape 3 (in English)
Mr Antonio (Tony) Coppi	tape 4 (in English)
Mrs Lucy Gagno née Della Vechhia	tape 5 (in English)
Mrs Kate Giudice née Giovanello	tape 6 (in Italian)
Mr Camillo Giugni	tape 7 (in English)
Mr Stephen Giugni	tape 8 (in English)
Mrs Rose Leahy née Spelta	tape 9 (in English)
Maranesi sisters (Anna and Teresa)	tape 10 (in Italian)
Mrs Giovanna Menso née Seroglia	tape 11 (in English)
Mrs Eva F. Penna née Beccaris	tape 12 (in English)
Mrs Angelina Prandolini née Genocchio	tape 13 (in Italian)
Mr Jack Prandolini senior	tape 14 (in English)
Mr Jack Prandolini junior	tape 15 (in English)
Mr Sam Prandolini	tape 16 (in English)
Mr Solotore A. Robino	tape 17 (in English)
Mrs Domenica Rotondo	tape 18 (in Italian)
Mr Michele Vaschetti	tape 19 (in English)
Mrs Pia Vettovalli	tape 20 (in Italian)

Interviews not Taped

Mr P. Cao, Charters Towers	November 1984
Mr J. Downey, Charters Towers	November 1984
Mr C. Gurgo, Ayr	April 1986
Mr A. Martinuzzi, Innisfail	March 1986
Mr T. Menso, Ayr	April 1986

Mr M. Origlasso, Ingham	December 1985
Mr & Mrs Parisi, Herbert River	December 1984
Mr A. Rotondo, Taylor's Beach	December 1984
Mrs R. Willis, Charters Towers	November 1984

INDEX

- A**
- Aborigines 118, 181, 226, 230, 233
 - Accatino, Albino 150, 155
 - quoted 118, 137, 154, 165, 223-5
 - Adams, Rebecca 201
 - accidents and injuries 124-5, 171-4
 - Agent-General 98, 112, 141, 147, 181
 - alligators 117, 127-129
 - Aloomba 138, 140, 171, 195, 207
 - Antonino 134
 - Anzolin, Antonio 213, 222-3
 - quoted, 174
 - Argentina 32, 49, 146, 151
 - Armati, P.V. 34, 108, 113, 175, 175, 219
 - biog 110
 - social standing 211
 - Armati family 206, 214, 218, 224-5
 - Australia, Italian migration to 32-3, 48-9, 256-7, 273-4
 - Australian citizenship 283
 - see also Naturalization
 - Ayr 103, 119, 137-8, 150, 155, 164, 166, 173, 176, 178, 213-4, 220
 - B**
 - Babinda 173, 187
 - Bacot, Dr 237
 - Bagalini, Albert 171
 - Barnett, -, Italian Consul in Brisbane 143
 - quoted 91, 107
 - Basso, Giusto 186, 222-3
 - quoted 184
 - Basso, Pietro 222-3
 - Baudino, Agostino 120, 169, 186, 202
 - Beccaris, Giovanni 132, 150, 152-3, 163-4, 196, 216
 - Belotti, Joseph 133-4
 - Beltramini, Pietro 122-3
 - Bentivoglio, F.C., quoted 282
 - Bernardara, Agostino 170, 242
 - Bertini, Louie 173
 - births and baptisms 202-3
 - Bishop Heber, quoted 14
 - Blunno, Michele 262
 - quoted 264
 - Bologna 2, 28, 163
 - Bonini, Getulio 122, 186
 - Borello, Aventino 198, 199, 202, 239
 - Bossi, Felix 121, 135
 - Brigando, Mario 225
 - British immigrants 140, 175
 - British law 277-8
 - British League 281
 - Broken Hill 267
 - Buffa, Marcello 162
 - Buffa, J. 178-9
 - Bulletin* (Sydney) 40-42, 50, 51-2, 53, 55, 56, 67-74, 263-264
 - Bundaberg 75-7, 86-7, 106, 108
 - "Buratto Pietro" 98, 100
 - Burdekin District 75, 77, 86, 87, 95, 100, 102, 104, 106, 140, 147, 155, 158-9, 161, 164, 166, 178, 198-9, 214
 - Burdekin River 127, 128
 - C**
 - Camorra, Neopolitan 54
 - Campagna Romana 13, 15, 20,
 - Camusso, Lorenzo 266
 - quoted 265-6
 - canecutters 165-6, 182, 246
 - Cao, Pietro 160, 169, 186, 201
 - Capra, Dr Giuseppe 147-148, 242, 256-7, 258-9, 261-2, 264-5, 266-7, 267-8, 276-7, 283
 - Caranzi, Philip 129, 136
 - Caravonica cotton 179-181
 - Carello, Eugenio 198, 203
 - Casalegno, Bartolemeo 151, 161, 170, 173, 178, 187, 213-4
 - Casalegno, Giovanni 173
 - Casalegno, Joe 151, 153, 158, 159, 166, 176, 182, 193-4, 200, 230, 241
 - Casalegno, Mrs Margherita 119, 137, 155, 157-8, 166-7, 193, 220, 225, 227, 228
 - Casalegno, Peter 198
 - Casalegno family 225, 252-5
 - Catrastellero, Giuseppe 160, 186
 - Cerrina, Luigi 223
 - Cerutti, Giuseppe 98, 100
 - chain migration 121, 147-8, 151-2
 - Charters Towers 94, 95, 103, 108, 109, 122, 155, 161, 171, 198, 217, 224, 225
 - Chiappini, John 172, 239
 - children's work 164-5, 166
 - Chinese 34-35, 45, 119, 128, 235
 - climate 117, 119-123
 - Cislofsky, Lily 199
 - Cocchetti, Lorenzo 150, 185, 250
 - Cocchetti, Rosina 246
 - coffee 168, 169, 179
 - Comba, Giovanni 197
 - Coniglio, Martino 160, 186
 - Contrio, Giuseppe 162, 237
 - Corbellaro, Pietro 134, 136, 186
 - Costabeber, Aurelio 131, 168, 171
 - Cowley, A.S., quoted 77, 93, 94, 103
 - crocodiles 127-9
 - Croydon 171-2, 177
 - cyclones 125-7

- D**alrymple, D.H. 80, 81
 Dante 49-50, 52n, 242
 Davanzo, Joseph 160, 186, 196
 Della Bosca, -, 155
 Della Vecchia, Basilio 117, 160, 186, 237
 Della Vecchia, Carlo 163, 168, 175, 187, 189, 208, 209
 Della Vecchia, Lucia 120, 245
 diaspora of immigrants 108-110, 123
 from Bundaberg 106
 from the Burdekin 95, 102, 103, 106
 from Herbert River 95, 101-4, 109, 111
 doctors 238
 Doyle, William 233-4
 drownings 129-34, 136
 Drysdale, John 166, 176
Emigration 1, 30-32, 116, 146-7
Family reunion 149-51
 family work-unit 166-7, 168
 Featherstone, William 227
 Fenoglio, Paolo 161, 178, 195, 197
 fever 120-21, 135
 denghue 120
 malaria 121
 Filippi, Giuseppe 160, 186
 Finsello, Maggiorino 187, 197, 238
 First World War 229-230
 fishing 159, 207
 Flinders Lane 221-22
 Foganini, Santino 186, 221-2
 Fraire, C.V. 34, 63, 80, 86, 89, 93, 99, 102, 110-113, 114, 143-4, 146-7, 157, 171, 175, 211-12, 218-19, 224, 249
 Frodsham, Bishop, quoted 192
 fruit trade, Sydney 280
Gagno, Mrs Lucy 210-11
 quoted 208, 209
 Gannon, T.M.B., quoted 46
 Genoa 34, 64, 65, 147, 153, 154
 Genocchio, Angelina 117
 Georgetown 172, 177
 Giovanello, Adamo 117, 138, 149, 170, 186, 195, 237
 Giudice, Mrs K. 117, 138-39, 149, 150, 151, 166, 170, 182, 190, 195
 Giugni, Camillo 169-70, 190-91, 199, 208, 209, 210, 220
 Giungi, Stephen 190-91, 192-3, 205-6, 208-9, 227-8
 Gladstone, W.E. 270
 on Italy 38
 on King Humbert 55
 on Naples 60-61
 Grasso, Giovanni 162, 169, 199, 202
 Griffith, Sir Samuel 34, 47, 65, 79, 94
 quoted 52
 volte-face on Pacific Islanders 102, 105, 106, 107
 his Dante translation 242
 Gurgo, Clarence, quoted 209
 Gurgo, Mrs Maria 251
Hazon, Signor 258
 Herbert River 130-32, 247
 Herbert River District 77, 86, 87-8, 93, 94-5, 96-100, 101-3, 108-9, 111, 140
 Hodgkinson, W.O. 79, 88, 90, 94, 98
 Hopkins, Lindsay ("Hop") 67, 68, 69
 Horn Island 177
 hospitals 238
 Hughes, W.M. 264
Immigration League of Australasia 142
 immigration of Italians
 arguments for 47, 48-9, 52, 140-43
 opposed 34-6, 46-7, 51-2, 53-5, 61-3
 racist opposition to 49-50
 restrictions on 145-6
 support for, in late 1890s 140-43
 Immigration Restriction Act 145
 Ingham 119, 122, 136, 139, 152, 159, 223, 224, 229
 Ingham Police Magistrate 88, 93
 Inkerman 187
 Innisfail 161, 186, 187
 insolvencies 170-71
 Italian consul 88, 91, 98, 107, 111
 Italian Democratic Club 84-85
 Italian fishermen 281
 Italian Workmen's Mutual Benefit Society 83
 Italy, rural conditions in
 agricultural backwardness 3-4
 begging 26-7, 30
 brigandage 5, 54-5, 56, 60
 cruelty to animals 57
 deforestation 4
 diet 22-3
 disease
 malaria 14-15, 50
 pellagra 24-6, 50-51
 leprosy 50-51
 emigration 30-33
 housing 19-22
 land tenure 6-14
 literacy 56
 living conditions 15-17
 smuggling 29-30, 40
 taxation 38-9

- theft 27-9, 30
- wages and earnings 8-10, 17-19
- J**apanese Consul 219
- Japanese settlers 234-5
- Jasolis, Grazia 197
- Javanese 79, 80, 82, 106, 107
- Johnstone River 132, 133, 136, 163, 188
- Jumna* 34, 64-5, 75, 93, 94, 98, 152-3, 170, 196, 243
- K**alamia 75, 77, 100, 106, 158, 161, 186, 188, 236
- Kanakas 35, 51, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 97, 106, 118, 226, 230-33
- King Humbert 55, 71
- L**abour Party 91-96, 101, 105, 115, 157, 265-6, 270, 272, 273, 277
- Land ownership 182-3, 255
- Lasagno, Adolpho 186, 213
- Lazzaroni 45, 59
- Leahy, Mrs Rose 138, 152, 164, 167, 190, 207, 208, 220, 227, 230
- Legislative Assembly 44, 53, 58-59
- "Leonta" 125
- leprosy 50-51
- Liguria 6, 10, 24, 32, 179
- L'Italo-Australiano* 259, 260, 261, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 269, 270, 273, 275, 276, 278, 280, 282, 283
- Lombardy 6, 20, 24, 25, 32, 48, 54, 58, 112, 143, 151, 157, 160, 163, 183, 198, 199, 201, 202, 258
- London 64, 65, 146-7, 157
- Lorenzetti, Annie 120-21
- Lorenzetti, Antonio 120, 135, 150
- Lorenzetti, John 120
- Lucinda 148, 153, 154, 222, 229
- Luppi, Giuseppina 139
- Lyne, Sir William
on Naples 270-71
- M**acknade 75, 86, 87, 89, 90, 96, 97, 99-103, 109, 131-32, 161, 166, 169, 182, 183, 186, 187, 188, 196, 203, 222, 245
- Malays 107
- Maranesi, Mrs Anna 119, 153, 164, 168, 226-7, 238
- Maranesi, Mrs Teresa 149-50, 153, 168, 191, 207, 238
- Marinoni, John 126-7, 135-6
- marriages 196-202
- Masetti, Giovanni 162
- Masnada, Domenic 124-5, 135
- Melocco, Alessandro 129-30, 136
- Menso, Antonio 164
- Menso, Mrs Giovanna 117-8, 125-6, 150, 152, 164, 168, 190
- Menso, Giuseppe 151, 152
- Menso, John 198
- Menso, Jane 205, 232
- Menso, Mrs Maria 193
- Menso, Tommaso 118, 164, 210, 255
- Merloni, Michelle 221-2
- metayage 6, 7, 10, 11, 114
- Meyer, Oscar 83-4
- mixed marriages 196, 199-202, 259
- Moiso, Angostino 130-31, 136
- Molesini, Carlo 163, 237
- Moran, Cardinal, on mixed marriages 200-201
- mosquitoes 117, 119, 135
- Mossman 120, 126, 135, 174, 187
- Mount Garnet 148
- Mourilyan 148, 154
- murder 240-41
- murder rate in Italy 53-4
- Mussinato, Santino 198
- mutual aid 155-6
- N**ame-changing 161, 209-210
- Naples and Neapolitans 15, 26-27, 31, 32, 39, 40, 46, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60-61, 149, 154, 156, 271-2
- Napoleon 1-2
- naturalisation 159-163, 228
- Naturalisation Act 161
- Neame, F. & R. 75, 86, 90-91, 93, 95-8, 103
- New Italy 48-9
- Newspapers and periodicals
 - Barrier Truth* 279
 - Brisbane Courier* 106
 - Cairns Argus* 94, 169
 - Cairns Post* 45
 - Cooktown Independent* 79
 - International Socialist* 85
 - Mackay Mercury* 86, 93, 112
 - Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton) 46
 - North Queensland Herald* 86, 92, 93, 146
 - Northern Miner* 35, 103, 106, 108
 - People, The* 278
 - Queenslander* 78-9, 80, 86, 103, 112
 - Sydney Morning Herald* 85
 - Sydney Telegraph* 83
 - Townsville Herald* 42, 45, 55
- Newspapers and periodicals - Italian language
 - La Plebe* 1
 - Oceania* 258, 259, 260, 262, 278, 279,

- 280, 281, 282, 283
Uniamoci 260, 262-3, 268, 269, 277, 283
- O**Malley, King 260, 262
 Ogden, A. 46, 49
 organ grinders 42-43, 67, 68, 73, 74
 Origliasso, Mario 150, 161
 Origliasso, Nicholas 150, 169, 199
 Origliasso, Frederico 150, 162, 197
 Origliasso, Mrs Margaret 240-41
- P**acific Islanders 144, 231-3
 see also Kanakas
 Pacific Island labour trade 80
 reopened 76, 105, 106
 Parisi, Luigi 130-31, 186
 Pavan, Ignazio 162, 196, 229
 Pazzalie 172-3
 pellagra 24-26, 50-51
 Pellizari, Angelo 245
 Penna, Mrs Eva 123, 150, 152-3, 163-4, 174, 175, 189, 191, 205, 207, 209, 220, 225, 226, 232
 Philp, Robert 143, 212
 quoted 47, 87, 104
 Piedmont 2, 10, 17, 20, 21, 25, 29, 32, 34, 54, 58, 61, 110, 112, 143, 147, 153, 154, 157, 160, 163, 187, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 224, 258
 Pioneer plantation 75, 77, 95, 106, 108, 188
 Plantation Creek 125, 231
 "Pol Teneglio" 177
 Police Magistrate 88, 93, 132, 134, 222
 Pontine Marshes 14, 15, 50
 Ponzano, Luigi 130, 131
 Port Douglas 121, 126, 127, 134, 140, 161, 168, 171, 173, 181, 186
 Prandolini, Mrs Angelina 119, 137, 138, 152, 154, 167, 191, 233, 238
 Prandolini, Carlo 117, 151, 156, 193
 Prandolini, Jack Sr 117, 136, 138, 149, 152, 155-6, 191, 206, 207, 221, 231, 234-5
 Prandolini, Jack Jr 117, 162, 167-8, 191, 193, 206, 225, 237
 Prandolini, Salvatore 154-5
 Prandolini, Sam 225-6, 231
 Prandolini family 246-8
- Q**uaranta, Carlo 170
 Queensland 32, 33
 Queensland Legislative Assembly 41, 46, 58-9
- R**amponi, Giuseppe 161
 Ravaschietto, Angelo 216
 Regazzoli, Eugenio 155, 213, 214, 231, 237
 religious observance 192-5
 Revanni, Luigi 121, 237
 rice 109, 179, 212
 Ripple Creek plantation 75, 90, 96, 97, 101, 103, 120, 122, 131, 135, 136, 155, 161, 164, 171, 186, 187, 207, 234
 Robino, Solatore 150-51, 153, 155, 159, 165, 175, 191, 206, 235
 Robino, Giovanni 239-40
 Robino, Vignolio 151
 Rome 6
 Roosevelt, President Theodore 268
 Rosa, Giovanni 130-31, 136
 Rosetti, Ricco 216-8
 Ross Island 102, 103
 Rotondo, Augustus 183-4
 Rotondo, Domenica 137, 156, 165, 182
 Rustichelli, Antonietta 234
 Rustichelli, Maria 233-4
 Rustichelli, Michele 160, 169, 239
- S**abbatarianism 277-8
 Saltwater Creek 120, 169
 Sardinia 2, 4, 6, 11, 19-20, 28, 32
 Saroglia family 151, 253, 254
 Savio, Pietro 131-2, 136
 Scarsi, Domenico 170, 186, 213, 225
 Scattolini, Angelo 173
 Sceusa, Francis 82-85, 92, 273-4, 277, 280
 schooling 203-8
 Seaforth plantation 75, 77, 95, 106, 108, 161, 186, 221, 222
 Sestero, John 199
 share farming 169
 Sicilian mafia 53-4
 Sicilian backwardness 56-7, 60
 "Sigma" 125
 Smyth, W., quoted 41
 snakes 117, 136-39
 social life 218-21
 Sorrento 26, 40
 Spelta, Enrico 199, 214-5
 Spelta, Vincenzo 138, 152, 164, 170, 190, 205, 214
- sport
 bicycle racing 215
 boxing 216-8
 horse racing 216
 rifle shooting 214-5
 wood chopping 215
- "Stella d'Italia" 276
 Strong, Herbert, quoted 143
 success stories 182-5
 suicide 239-41, 277
 sulphur mines 16-17

- T**amietti, G. 168
 Toni, Arcangelo 160, 185
 Toowoomba 109
 Torazzi, E. 168
 Townsville 101, 102, 110, 155, 170, 187,
 211, 219, 221-2
 Tripoli war 151, 225, 229
 Turcatti brothers 177-8
 Tuscany 10, 28, 32, 46, 58, 261
Umbria 10, 28, 261
 unemployment
 affects attitudes towards immigrants
 78-9
Vacations 224-6
 Valley of the Po 5, 24
 Valtellina 31, 39, 150, 160
 Vanni, P. 266, 269, 275
 Vaschetti, Carlo 162
 Vaschetti, Felice 230
 Vaschetti, Michael 165, 194, 204, 205, 209-
 10, 230, 240
 Venetia and Venetians 10, 17, 19, 29, 32,
 48-9, 160, 163, 196
 Vessels
 Bombala 153
 Burdekin 109
 Grantala 154
 Hindoostan 45
 India 64
 Kyarra 148
 Levuka 224
 Mourilyan 148
 Orama 154
 Ormuz 148
 Otranto 148
 Ranelagh 75
 Wodonga 148
 Yongala 153
 Vettovalli, Mrs Pia 137, 158, 163
 Vicenza 22, 186, 196, 202
West Australian Mines Bill 279, 280
 White Australia 157, 273
 White Labor Conference 213
 women's role 167-8
 Wood Bros. & Boyd 90-91, 96-7, 102
 wood cutters 267
Young Bros. 47
Zanetto, Pietro 65, 66, 163
 Zelamina, Ercole 272, 275



Studies in North Queensland History No 16