



ONE MAN AND HIS TOWN

BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



MILE from the town of Bangor, in the Pennsylvania mountains, not far from the famous Wind Gap and but a few miles from the still more famous Water Gap, in a region of slate-quarries and rich, productive farms,—the Moravian country,—lives an Italian priest in a real Italian town. The priest is the Reverend Pasquale de Nisco, and his town is Roseto, named after Roseto in the Italian province of Foggia, from which most of the early settlers came.

It is a prosperous, lively little town, with dwelling-houses of good American clapboards and pale pressed brick, and with stores along its main street—groceries, markets, dry-goods and millinery stores; a druggist's shop, a hotel, a "Banca Italiana," a factory; a church

on top of a hill, with a mast-high flagpole and an American flag that marks out the spot for one miles away; and gardens and gardens, and then more gardens, all with grape-arbors; and, when apparently one has come to the end of everything, a few more gardens tucked under a hillside. It is the garden aspect that first takes hold of one's imagination when one comes to Roseto.

Of this town, which contains to-day more than two thousand inhabitants, Father de Nisco is "the *de facto* mayor, building inspector, health department, and arbiter of all questions relating to social conditions or business undertakings." He is also the chief of the police force, the president of the labor-union, the founder of most of the clubs,—social, literary, musical, theatrical, benevolent,—and the organizer of the famous brass band, pride of

Roseto and envy of the surrounding country, and of the baseball nine, whose husky youths affectionately declare that he can umpire a game better than any one else.

But, in order to understand how Father de Nisco and his town have come to stand in their unique relation, one must look back to the "once on a time" of Roseto and the poor quarrymen who settled it.

The land on which the town stands was originally sold for its lumber. The sawmill left it a rubbish-covered waste of briars, stumps, and stones, bleak with desolation—and cheap. That was what attracted the Italian quarry-workers of Bangor. Land could be bought there for a song, or it could be squatted on without that formality; and so long as the "dagoes" gave Bangor a wide berth, nobody cared where they put up their miserable shanties.

Lorenzo Falcone—now called "King of Roseto"—was the first to buy. He put up a shed. Fourteen people slept in that shed, and the town was started. Like himself, they were poor quarry-workers, most of them hoarding every cent to bring their wives and children over from Italy; a few were young Sicilians, who made things lively with the knife when the day's work was over. But even crimes of violence will not prevent settlement where land can be had without asking, so sheds and shanties were soon straggling about in the underbrush from one brier-patch to the next, and Roseto became part of the landscape before any one realized it was there at all. Only, it wasn't Roseto in those days. Bangor called it "Eyetalian Town." Easton, where the county court sat, called it "that place up there back of Bangor." For the Italians were living up to their reputation and making recorded history, and were doing it so thoroughly that for years a large part of the court proceedings was carried on through an interpreter.

Still, the poor little town grew and flourished, after its own fashion. In spite of lawlessness, there was community of language and religion, and a great deal of blood kinship dating back to the Italian Roseto. Able-bodied peasant women soon added color to the scene and incentive to the work and the frays; babies, tottering over the door-yard refuse-heaps, added more color and life; and shanties began to be homes when washing flapped from the clothes-lines. Paths were widened to lanes, lots were fenced in, and many who had not dreamed of buying when they built hastened to secure the land on which their shacks stood. There were no stores, for the quarry-workers were compelled to trade at the company stores; no factories, no shops; there was no druggist or doctor nearer

than Bangor; no anything, in fact, but their waste land and their shacks—not even a church.

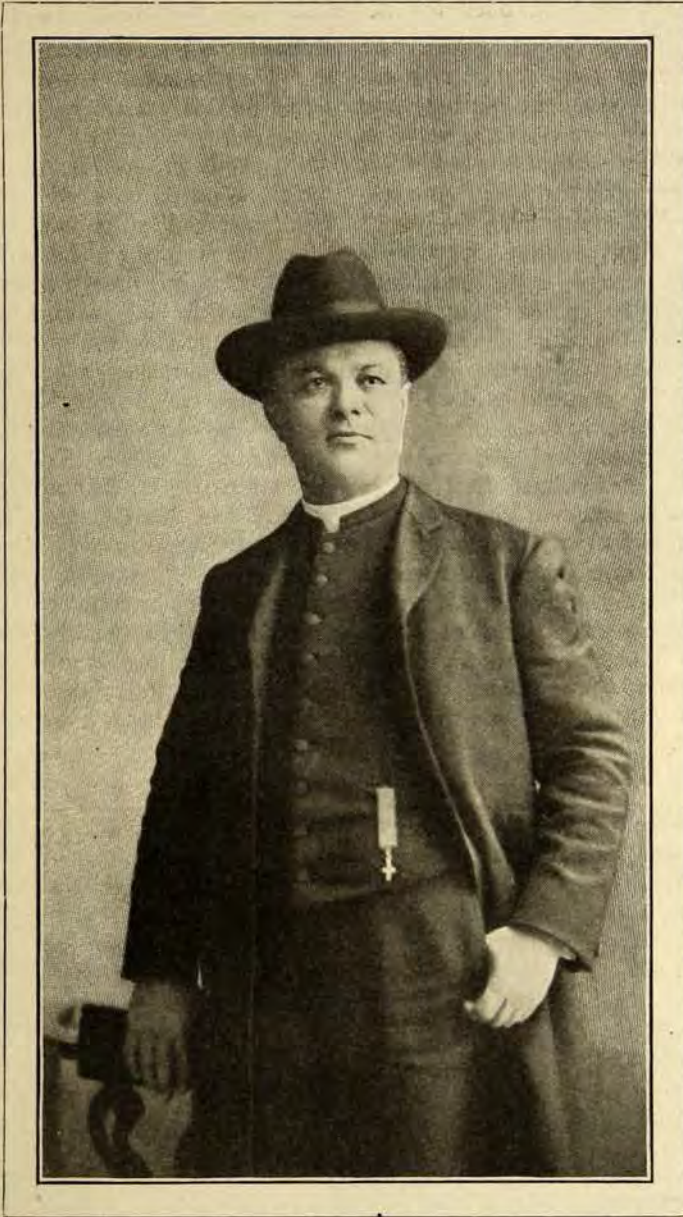
But Italians are religious by nature, and the poor squatters were finding their way down the hill to Bangor and occupying rear pews in the various churches while waiting for the time when they might have a Catholic church of their own. They particularly patronized the Presbyterian church, partly because it was near, partly because it was badly in need of repair in those days and seemed suited to their own estate. They soon attracted attention there, and in 1893 the Lehigh Presbytery decided to erect a mission church for them in their own settlement.

Now, it is about as easy to convert a bred-in-the-bone Italian Catholic to Presbyterianism as it is to convert a Presbyterian to Mormonism or induce him to burn incense to a Chinese joss; nevertheless, a Presbyterian church was built in the midst of the little community, at a cost of fourteen hundred dollars; a pastor was installed; and a small congregation of sixty-five persons gathered. The pastor presently left and another took his place. The pulpit became vacant, was refilled, became vacant again, and so it went on. Conversions were proceeding at the rate of four a year, but the lawlessness of the town continued; so did the stabbing affairs for which the inhabitants were now famous in the county court; so did the poverty and dirt. The Lehigh Presbytery finally admitted that its experiment was not altogether a success. Bangor said that Roseto ought to be wiped off the face of the map—for Bangor was coming to a sense of the seriousness of the situation. Fifty or sixty Italians scattered within her limits had been bad enough; two or three hundred, now including quarrymen from Pen Argyl, South Bangor, Wind Gap, and Flicksville, segregated in a ramshackle village a mile away, ready to break out at any time with an epidemic of typhoid or the long knife, were a menace to the health and the peace of the community. Those were the days when Bangor mothers used to warn unruly children by saying, "If you don't mind, the Eyetalians'll get you and carry you off."

Meanwhile a small Catholic church had been built, which struggled along and made shift to live for a few years and then went into the sheriff's hands.

Such was the situation, such the town,—nameless, lawless, filthy, poverty-pinched,—when Father de Nisco was appointed parish priest in 1897. He immediately bought in the church and the surrounding land on the hilltop, and began a comprehensive scheme of public improvement. Twenty-eight lots in front of

the church were reserved for a park, or "plaza" and have their graves rooted up by the pigs. (the plaza is still in a rather primitive condition); But, once fenced, it had in it the making of a beautiful park. No one in Roseto except school that is to come in the future; others back Father de Nisco saw this, and he saw it



FATHER DE NISCO

The temporal and spiritual ruler of Roseto. Father de Nisco came to Roseto as a parish priest in 1897, and in ten years practically built a town out of a rubbish-heap. He is the *de facto* mayor, building inspector, and health department, the chief of police, the president of the labor-union, and the arbiter of all questions relating to social conditions and business enterprises.

of the church were fenced in for a cemetery. The cemetery had been a rubbishy brier-patch, open to the road, where only the poorest Rosetans had been laid. The inhabitants said they did not care to be buried with dead cats through the pick and the shovel. Taking those implements into his own hands, he went into the brier-patch, and one day Bangor discovered that there was a park back of the Catholic church on Brown's Hill—a park

which was half lawn, while the other half was laid out in plots with crosses and stone monuments. There were flowers everywhere, and rows of healthy young Lombardy poplars pricking the blue above.

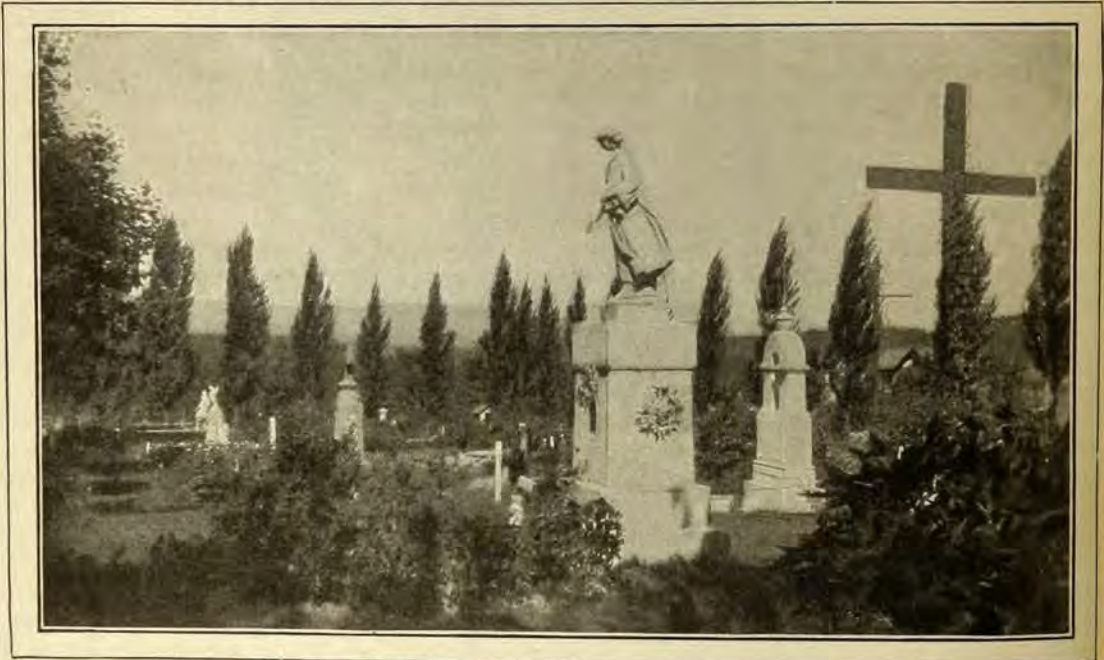
The idea of the priest with the hoe was new, but one may imagine how it took with the simple-hearted, hard-working quarrymen. "He made-a da gard'n for da peopl'," one man explained to me, with an eloquent gesture; and with gestures even more expressive, a wave in the direction of his home and a closing of his hands on an imaginary pick-handle, "I, me *myself*, made-a da gard'n — me *myself* — yes!" And when Father de Nisco gave away seeds and bulbs, offering prizes — five, three, and two dollars — for the best flowers, gardening became the fashion, the rage almost, and men who drilled at huge, cold masses of slate-rock all day long were soon spending the rest of the daylight hours emulating their priest. But to the women belongs most of the credit of making Roseto the garden-spot that it is. While their men were away at the quarries, they cleared lot after lot with ax and pick, carrying off on their heads stones that would have crushed American women, spading the hard soil, and planting onions, beans, potatoes, and melons — enough to supply them for the summer and part of the winter. Every foot of land is now utilized, and you may see

patches the size of a bath-mat set with neat rows of radishes or polka-dotted with lettuce. Fruit-trees followed, and the grape-arbors. To-day almost every house in Roseto, even the temporary shack, has its arbor, and sometimes the arbor covers more ground than the house.

I asked Father de Nisco where he had broken in for betterment,— what was the very first thing he had tried to accomplish,— and he answered, "*Everything!* I tried to improve all their conditions — homes, labor, the church, social conditions — everything. . . . I tried to start it all growing at once," he added, "for I knew it would be slow, slow."

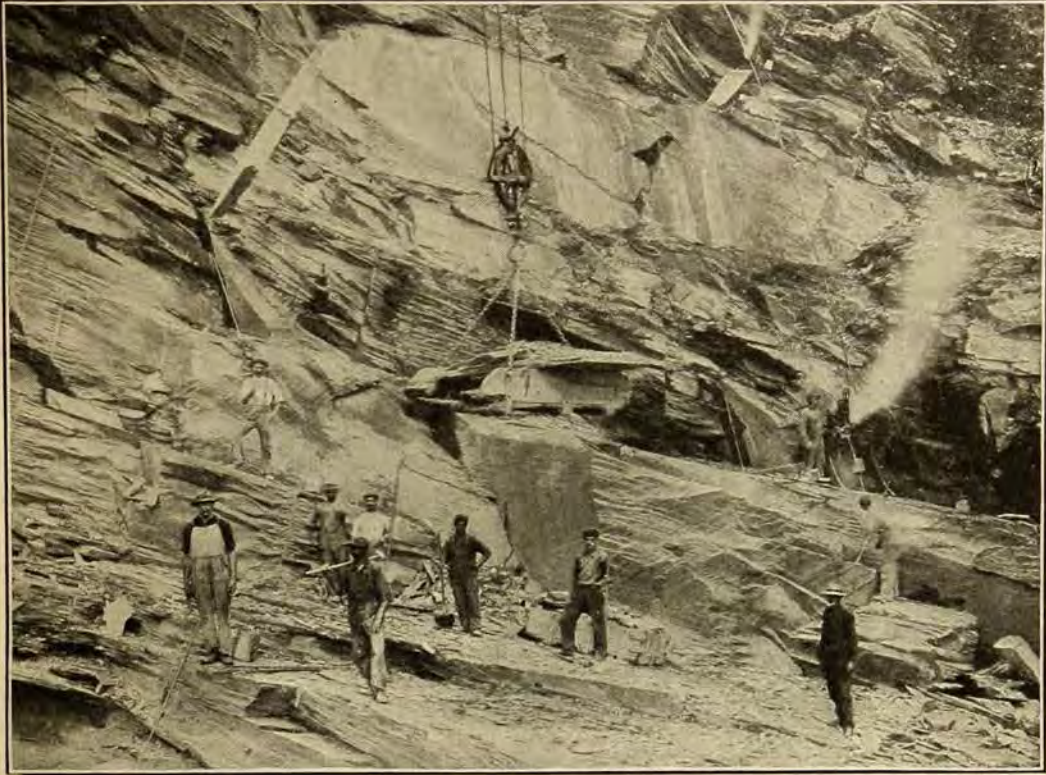
But the first thing Bangor noticed — this was before it had noticed his flower-garden — was the stand he took on "Sicilianism." Ordinarily it is considered impossible to separate the Italian and his long knife, but this is what Father de Nisco undertook to do. He began his campaign in the pulpit, and carried it into the homes; later, he followed it to the court. He advised, he pleaded, he commanded, he argued the case in all its bearings: his people were amenable to the laws of the country; minor difficulties could be brought to him, the others taken to the civil court. He warned them that the next stabbing would be followed by exemplary punishment.

He did not have long to wait for his case.



THE ROSETO CEMETERY

With his own hands, Father de Nisco fenced in the land, planted it with Lombardy poplars, and transformed it from a brier-patch into a park



THE BANGOR SLATE-QUARRIES

The Italians of Roseto worked in these quarries in ten-hour shifts, at about eight cents an hour, until Father de Nisco organized a strike and compelled the company to raise their wages to a dollar and a half for a nine-hour day

The two principals in a knife affair were arrested — and smiled: Father de Nisco would “get them off, all right, all right.” Father de Nisco smiled, too, when they sent for him. It was their turn, now, to do the pleading, the arguing, the urging, but they smiled and hoped till the eleventh hour. When they got nine years apiece in the penitentiary, they understood that their priest had meant what he said.

That “example” ended “Sicilianism.” Roseto had discovered that the priest with the hoe was bigger than the man with the knife. “Oh, they still carry their knives,” a man in Bangor told me, “but they find it a lot safer to use them to cut cheese with — while *he’s* ’round, anyway.” The two hundred genuine Sicilians now in Roseto are among its best citizens. There are three Italian policemen, but there is no lawlessness, no Mafia, no Black Hand — because of that other hand that is guiding the community.

As another illustration, Father de Nisco told me of how an article in a Philadelphia paper had attracted some undesirable citizens to Ro-

seto. He maintained a quiet, coercive course toward petty lawlessness, with the intention of making the undesirables reform or leave. “But when one of those men wanted to start a bad house here, then, I tell you, *I — keeched — like — the — dev-il!*”

I suggested that such was not the devil’s usual policy, under the circumstances, and he threw back his head in a ringing laugh. “That is a good one! But when *I* keeched like the devil, that bad man left for once and all. *He went to the jail.*”

The man had exhibited and given to young men and women lewd drawings made by himself. Father de Nisco collected these, had him arrested, and Judge Scott sentenced him to two years’ imprisonment.

And — here is the interesting economic point — when Sicilianism went down, everything else went up! Land went up, houses went up, industry went up. Roseto seemed to awake to civic consciousness. Father de Nisco, at work on his “everything,” preaching cleanliness as part of godliness, often personally superin-

tending the removal of rubbish-heaps, and urging the people to improve their wretched shanties, now had an unanswerable argument: "You are law-abiding, self-respecting American citizens; build comfortable, substantial American homes fit for American citizens."

Lorenzo Falcone, the "King," had built the first shack, and all these years he had been

enough to buy in the early days made little fortunes; but for the rest the average capital to begin with was four hundred dollars. The Bangor banks or the loan associations lent the rest on Father de Nisco's recommendation, allowing ten years in which to pay up. Usually it was less than a thousand dollars, but it was often more where the case warranted it—



THE CIGAR FACTORY

Originally the quarry-workers were compelled to trade at company stores for all their supplies. This abuse has been abolished and the town now supports its own stores and factories.

ceaselessly working in the quarry, ceaselessly saving, nickel on nickel, dollar on dollar. The quarry had injured his back, but he worked. The quarry had broken his ribs; still he worked. Not till it had broken his leg did he give up. That was at the end of twenty-five years, and then he said he "thought it time to retire while he had a few bones left." Incidentally, Falcone had been the father of nine children, six of whom came to maturity. It was fitting, then, that Falcone should build the first American house. Finished in neat clapboards and attached to the shack of the first day, towering above it in a blaze of fresh paint, it looked like a palace. Roseto went wild between envy and ambition, and suddenly took thought that if Falcone could do it others could do it. And they did it.

It meant four or five years of saving to get money enough to start an American house—buy a lot and lay the foundation; though the owner himself generally dug his cellar and laid the foundation after his day's work at the quarry. Land values were doubling nearly every two years,—lots that had sold for thirty or forty dollars were soon commanding two and three hundred,—and those who had been wise

where Father de Nisco felt that the man was "good" for a larger amount.

Some years later, by the way, Falcone built a third house—an edifice with stained glass in the windows. All the town went in for stained glass! Then another man outdid him with a porcelain-lined tub in his house: the whole town is now saving for porcelain-lined baths. As to the furnishings, they may be left to the imagination; they are worthy of the houses. Father de Nisco took me into many of the dwellings, each more comfortable than the last. In one, a gay-kerchiefed woman hurried me into her parlor, with its plush furniture, lace curtains, and crayon portraits, and snapped on three electric lights—red, white, and blue! She could not speak English, but she knew what *they* meant.

And yet, during all those early years, even after Father de Nisco had his work well under way, the people were miserably poor, and, in spite of their incredible industry and frugality, they were unable to get ahead. Some idea of the economies they still practise is suggested by the fact that they buy their flour in cotton sacks,—they won't take it in paper,—and

when the sacks are empty they wash them and save them until they have six; then they *sew them into a sheet*. The men in the quarries, who, the greater part of the year, walk miles before daybreak to their work, were earning only about eighty cents a day, and were at the same time compelled to trade at the company stores between pay-days *three months apart*,

he posted off to Philadelphia, got Archbishop Ryan to bring about his introduction to the president of the company, and laid the case before him.

"Look at this book — and this — and this!" he cried, showing the accounts in black and white. "These poor, hard-working men, with four, five, six little children and the wife to sup-



THE "BANCA ITALIANA"

Starting from waste land and a few shacks, Roseto in ten years has become a town of more than 2,000 inhabitants, with an assessment of \$175,000

with the usual result: at pay-day there was little or nothing coming to them.

Father de Nisco saw that he must take the matter up. He began this campaign with moral suasion. Going to the different quarry superintendents, he laid the men's case before them, gently pointing out that to force their workers to trade at the company stores was illegal; that the men should be given their money in envelopes and allowed to trade where they pleased; that pay-day ought to come round at least once a month.

Several agreed to "look into the matter and see what could be done"; but the superintendent of the works employing the greater number of Rosetans replied to him thus: "You needn't come here, you damned old priest, trying to run these works — not while I'm here, anyway."

"John," said Father de Nisco, even more gently than before, "I'm sorry to hear you speak that way; I think you'll regret it."

"You go!" shouted John. And Father de Nisco went — and executed the first coup of the campaign.

Collecting a number of the men's pass-books,

port! Look at this. This man has worked for three months, every day and all day, and there is just *two cents* coming to him — two cents to take home to the wife and six little children." (This was at the eighty-cent wage.)

The astonished president could only assure him that there had been some mistake. "Why, we pay our men a dollar, a dollar ten, a dollar and a quarter a day; we pay all that anybody pays."

"Then *who* gets the difference?" asked Father de Nisco, knowing that the superintendent was pocketing it — which investigation revealed to a much more astonished president!

"And John felt sorry," remarked Father de Nisco meditatively. "He got fired."

But moral suasion failed, on the whole: failed to increase wages; failed to lessen the ten hours of work. Ten hours was a terrible shift, even for Italians, who "can work anywhere, work at anything, and live." For the quarries are huge, yawning pits from one to two hundred feet deep, with sheer walls from ledge to ledge, shelterless and rain-soaked, with masses of treacherous sliding slate wherever a

foot may be placed. So, failing here, Father de Nisco executed his second coup — organized a labor-union, with himself as president, and called the whole town out on strike. A priest shut down the works!

The owners sat back, smiling, and waited for new men to apply. None came. They waited some time longer, without smiling, for their losses were piling up. Then they, in their turn, executed a coup: they imported a hundred Simon-pure, all-wool, dyed-in-the-piece South-ern negroes as strike-breakers.

"And those neegars came," said Father de



THE LIQUOR-STORE

The wholesale liquor license was issued on the recommendation of Father de Nisco himself, who believed in giving his people the light wines to which they were accustomed

Nisco, "and they climbed that hill, and they looked down that hole, and they thought of their *bones* — and they skeeped as fast as they could skeep!"

But if the owners' case was serious, think of the men! The pinch of their desperate necessity took them, and they planned to break ranks, creeping away in the dawn to the quarries and begging to be taken back. Everything hung on their holding out — on their standing together to the end. And their money was gone.

Then came the real crisis for the priest. And he met it — let me tell it in his own words:

"I borrowed three hundred dollars, planted

myself early in the road leading to the works, with my pockets bulging with three hundred dollar-bills. I stopped every strike-breaker, saying, 'Where are you going?'

"Oh, father — please — I cannot be idle! Please — I have got so many little children, and nothing to eat in the house,' answered the first man.

"How much do you get?'

"Sixty cents.'

"There is a dollar for you — and get back home as fast as your legs can carry you.'"

Day after day he stood there in the road — their priest and their union's president — and sent his men back to the ranks, till the bosses gave in. The union won. The men went back to the quarries to work nine hours for a living wage — a dollar and a half a day. And that dollar and a half was the beginning of Roseto's prosperity, the foundation of Roseto's wealth.

Once again the priest shut down the works — when smallpox broke out in Roseto. Knowing that the quarry-workers would spread the disease to all the surrounding villages, Bangor, Flicksville, Pen Argyl, and Wind Gap, he urged that every one be vaccinated immediately and that the men give up work till the danger was over. He appealed in vain. So he himself warned the owners to close the quarries, then had the town quarantined. There were five cases and three deaths. The excitement was intense. During the height of it, some one shouted out in the crowded street, "It wasn't smallpox at all — only a bluff of the priest's to make us lose our wages!" In the riot that followed, Father de Nisco barely escaped with his life.

Father de Nisco visits the quarries frequently to see how the men are getting on, stopping for a friendly chat with one or another of them; but more often he is seen hastening there to administer the last rites of the church to some poor fellow whose foot has slipped on one of the treacherous ledges.

Another serious problem was now confronting him — what to do for the girls who must be wage-earners. Most of them went into Bangor and worked in the shirt factory; but the storms and blizzards made the trip a greater hardship than young girls should be exposed to. Besides that, it was the priest's policy to keep all the interests of his people centered in their town and their church. He therefore appealed to the wealthier residents, and among them they organized a stock company, with shares at ten dollars each, and built a shirt factory right in the heart of Roseto — a large, airy place with plenty of windows and plenty of room. The superintendent is a Jew — the only Jew in Roseto.

When I visited it, it seemed more like a girls' club than a factory. Everything is done by piece-work, and the girls may come and go as they please, or stop to chat among themselves whenever they feel inclined. The machines are all run by power; nevertheless, when one pretty girl, a daughter of the "King," told me she got three cents a dozen for sewing in sleeves, I experienced a shock — till I saw her do five shirts in five minutes, and learned that she made from six to eight dollars a week at it — which was all she needed in Roseto — "and didn't get a bit tired." A married sister sat next her at the long table, putting on collars with lightning rapidity; and another sister was doing cuffs. The "King" came in presently, bringing his daughter's two-months-old baby, to be nursed; and, as its father had accompanied me from the rectory to show me round, there was a family gathering in the corner, and they all talked at me at once while young Lorenzo had lunch.

Seventy dozen shirts a day the factory was turning out,—they come from New York ready cut,—but the forewoman complained that seventy dozen was not nearly what they ought to do with their plant; they were short-handed all the time because the girls *would* go and get married so fast! But, even if they do, the shirt factory remains a stand-by in case of hard times; and if a young bride finds it lonesome while her husband is away at the quarries — and a good many of them do — she goes back to the factory for a little social relaxation.

It seemed to me that all the girls there had very sweet and gentle manners, and, though they were a lively crowd when they were all together, I saw none who could be called vulgar or bold. The factory-girl whose walk in life did not correspond to Father de Nisco's ideas would walk out in short order. And those ideas are such that there is another thing you may look for in vain in Roseto — young couples parading the streets after dark. When a young fellow likes a girl, he must ask permission of her parents to pay court to her; if they consent, he calls regularly and makes himself agreeable to the entire family — or, if he doesn't, that ends it!

Father de Nisco believes in early marriages. Hardly a Sunday passes that a young couple does not "stand up" after mass, and there are sometimes as many as four at once. One and a half marriages a week is the accurate statistical average, so the course of true love appears to be different from what it is in other communities of the same size. And there are no divorces. Even if the church permitted them, the people are so busy meeting their difficulties that they

have little time to think of their differences. One may guess it from the fact that the priest is baptizing the rising generation at the rate of two a week.

Another thing for which one may look in vain is a drunken man; not that Roseto is a "soft-drink town," by any means. The wholesale liquor license was issued on the recommendation of Father de Nisco himself, who thought it better that his people should have the light wines and beer to which they were accustomed, and have them with their own families "under their own vine and fig-tree," than that those



"SAY, SAY! HOW MUCH YOU CHARGE-A TAKE-A DA PIC'? YOU TAKE-A MY PIC' FOR ONE CENT?'"

who wanted a drink should wander off to Bangor — and not come home till morning.

Donatelli holds the liquor license, and Donatelli is the blacksmith of the Bangor quarry and "the-e lead'r of the-e band." He never let me forget that — added it whenever I mentioned either shop or forge: it was the eclipsing honor. After Donatelli had shown me the factory, he accompanied me by the "short cut" to Bangor when I came away. He told me all about "the-e band," and how he brought his wife to New York every winter while grand opera was on, and he walked along the railroad track regaling me with his plans for the future of his little American son, who is to "go to the-e

college and be the-e lead'r of the-e band—some day"; and betweenwhiles he sang me long passages from "Cavalleria Rusticana." His one regret at parting appeared to be that I had not seen him in his glory as "the-e lead'r of the-e band" on their great day—the festi-val of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

For on that day Roseto entertains the world and his wife and all their children: ice-cream by the gallon to be had for the asking; pink lemon-ade in endless flow; every one in his best and at his best—the little girls in white, the brass band in gold-trimmed blue; fireworks and more ice-cream and band in the evening. And the glory of that day lasts one whole year.

And now, do you wonder that the church has had to be enlarged four times since Father de Nisco came, and still can't seat its congrega-tion?

But his Sunday-school—his "four hundred"—is his greatest pride and hope. I visited it in May. I walked up from Bangor nearly two hours early, meaning to go about and take some snap-shots; yet already the plaza was swarming with boys of all ages, and in all stages of base-ball, waiting for Sunday-school. Twenty or thirty girls had gathered on the church steps, and all along the streets I met young men and little tots hurrying churchward, not to be late. One small person, spying the camera, piped at me, "Say, say! How much you charge-a take-a da pic'? You take-a my pic' for one cent?" I "took-a da pic'" on the spot, and was nearly mobbed by boys trying to get in "da pic'" afterward.

Long before service the women and girls were in their places, rows of young mothers in the rear pews with their babies. A bell called the boys from their base-ball, and the church was filled. One little tot came in trying to get his bat down his trousers-leg and up his sleeve at the same time. After catechism the children were let out for recess in the plaza and the cemetery. Recess is often an hour and a half long in summer. The priest's flowers were coming to bloom and the place was bright. He warned the children to keep on—not off!—the grass, "But if you pick any of my flowers that are for all to look at and enjoy, I shall be *mad!*" and he followed as they trooped out, carrying with him a couple of balls, which he threw for the littlest ones to catch, besieged at every step by scores begging him to throw for them. Nearly three hundred played on the grass, but not a flower was touched. Father de Nisco disappeared presently. I found him out on the plaza umpiring a base-ball match for the ten-year-olds. But he was soon dragged off by a dozen brawny men who wished to discuss a

town matter; then by a mother whose baby was teething—she positively *must* see him about that.

It was the same when he was showing me the town. Everywhere children shouted, "Hello, hello!" and ran to him; and he answered, "Hello, Tony—Pasquale—Laura," when he could remember their names; when he couldn't, he said, "Hello, dear." Kerchiefed women darted at him out of doorways; Pasquale had been naughty—Tony would not weed the garden; please speak to them. The young people ran over the rectory and rummaged his stores of seeds and bulbs, even his papers and books, as though the whole place be-longed to them.

But, in spite of the order and the prosperity that seemed firmly established in Roseto, the priest was sometimes called to face unlooked-for issues that threatened to sweep away his work. An instance of this was the political crisis through which the town passed some two years ago.

Though its population numbered in 1905 nearly two thousand souls, Roseto had but ninety-six genuine, imported voters. Hun-dreds more were ripening on the stem, dangling from the public-school tree, not ready to pluck. Yet Roseto—one little town which, with Bangor and others, made up Washington township—Roseto with her ninety-six voters held the balance of political power, and Roseto could elect any ticket in Washington township.

And it is to be borne in mind, too, that Roseto was not incorporated; that she was taxed out-rageously for what she got. Her schools, with over two hundred children, had the poorest teachers in the township; her streets were not lighted; and roads and streets were in a shame-ful condition, often impassable to man or beast.

It was on the road question that Roseto dis-covered herself politically. One morning the town waked up to find itself covered over with placards—the handiwork of Father de Nisco:

IF OUR ROADS ARE ABOMINABLE IT IS
NOT OUR FAULT
WE PAY OUR TAXES

The people saw and wondered. The road supervisor saw and pondered. Now, the road supervisor had just been elected "by accident"; but his second election, coming round in a year, he meant should be by intention. Roseto, with her ninety-six voters, could do it. And Roseto did do it. Roseto got a road—of a sort. To be sure, it wasn't the macadamized boulevard of the people's dreams, but then, it



THE FESTIVAL OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

The town of Roseto, headed by the brass band, on its way to Sunday-school

wasn't a buffalo wallow; that was something. Father de Nisco packed up his signs, and Roseto talked politics in vivid Italian; Roseto had seen and Roseto had understood: if ninety-six voters could vote a road in the place of a buffalo wallow, an incorporated town could vote a trolley for that road, electric lights at the street-corners, a fire department, police department, a board of health, fat jobs for the voters and fat jobs for their friends and a parlor-organ in every kitchen to go with the job — if they wanted it. As they already had the brass band, they needed only ninety-six political places for the ninety-six voters to be a truly American town. So Roseto went wild with enthusiasm and prepared to incorporate.

But Father de Nisco remained cold — he "knew a little too much about the candidates for the new political offices." He had prepared most of the ninety-six in his class in American citizenship, which he holds for three months twice each year, teaching English, expounding the Constitution and such laws as he thinks his people ought to understand. But the priest's hope lay less with the ninety-six voters — though he had recommended most of them for naturalization — than with the hundreds more of the rising generation, born and reared under American institutions. Father de Nisco said, "Wait," but Roseto was not to be stayed —

remembering the road they had got for the voting. The voters repaired to Easton and asked for a charter. Father de Nisco went with them, accompanied by his attorney.

The first of the incorporators — an ex-barber, and a man slated for burgess in the new town — went on the stand. His record was investigated: so many years, Roseto; before that, New York; before that, Italy — all very clear and respectable.

Then Father de Nisco's attorney arose. "But after you left New York did you not spend three years in Sing Sing?"

"Not three years — not *three*; only *two*; the other was in Elmira," stammered the intending burgess.

Thus it went down the list — prison terms for almost everything under the sun (twenty-one years for manslaughter in one case). And these were the candidates for office in the borough that it was proposed to incorporate!

Judge Scott suddenly turned to Father de Nisco and asked: "Do *you* wish this town incorporated?"

"Your Honor, I am opposed to it in our present condition," began Father de Nisco, and in a straightforward speech he showed that the people were not ready for American municipal responsibilities; that there were not enough competent men among the ninety-six voters to

carry the offices; and that those then offering themselves had literally promised to vote for improvements that would throw the town into bankruptcy within six months.

When he sat down there was "nothing doing" in charters before Judge Scott; nor has there ever been anything since. With one hundred and fifty voters, Father de Nisco is still waiting for the rising generation.

Perhaps the hardest blow the priest ever had to meet came to him from his own church. Incidentally it brought out the character of the man. Archbishop Ryan sent for Father de Nisco and offered him one of Philadelphia's finest churches—a rectory with every comfort, a position with every honor, and a long-needed rest from the incessant labors that were breaking his health. The archbishop painted a glowing picture. The priest waited till he had finished, and said: "You are my superior and I must obey if you command. But before you say the irrevocable word I have one favor to ask. I may not have many years to live; let me spend those years in Roseto, working for my people."

"As you say in your America," he explained to me, in his quaint, careful English, "I want to die weeth my boots on."

I understood. It was the man ready to die in his boots who had tried himself against lawlessness, poverty, confusion, and plague, against close-fisted quarry-owners and corrupt politics, and had won.

And yet, as he showed me the actual, everyday Roseto, I kept asking, "How did you do it? How did they do it?"—for Roseto is assessed to-day at \$175,000 for its three hundred and fifty houses, stores, clubs, and gardens; and \$175,000 is a pretty large increase in ten years from nothing in particular, when one considers that there are no gold-mines lying round loose; no land booms to set things humming; no fat fields to draw from; no summer resort within twenty miles; no inflated values of any kind. The town does not even own the quarries its men have worked so many years with such profit to the owners.

To get an idea of the thing these people and their priest have accomplished *just by living in their town*, one must remember that the heads of families are earning now, in the day of their prosperity, only about four hundred dollars a

year, with no other resources than their tiny gardens, their ceaseless industry, the strength of their two hands, and the courage of their hearts; to see the true perspective, one must picture to himself the subway-digger of New York or the poor shanty-"dago" of the railroad tracks. *Then* it comes home to one what this man has done for his town. For he took just these people, and took them just as they were, right in their natural human interests and industries, and out of those developed their prosperity. He did the great thing first, without which the day-laborer is cousin to the tramp—planted them on their own soil and cellars. Work was the key-note, even of religion: he made them show their faith in their church by their homes. There was never any attempt to graft on these people ideas of "higher education" and "culture" which they couldn't live up to in their struggle for existence; which would drive them to the cities on the free-lecture hunt, or in search of "outlets for unappreciated talent." All the talent Roseto has to spare from its day's work finds appreciation in Roseto.

Yet Father de Nisco is not a man who impresses you as having any unusual force—as a strong executive, a brilliant strategist, a resourceful organizer, or even as a great leader. Rather, he is the man with the happy combination of balanced powers in whom are no contradictions to reduce to consistency: clear-sighted and faithful, sympathetic and severe, earnest and gay, with an immense foundation, under all, of resolute conscientiousness. The ironed-out look of his photographs is one his people seldom see; for his face is full of expression, ready to be stern or to smile at a second's notice.

Although below medium height and not of commanding presence, he makes himself instantly felt wherever he goes—in the crowded, buzzing Sunday-school, the social gatherings, or in the emergencies where the unobtrusive man takes the burden, with life and death in the balance. He is a man absolutely devoid of pretenses—Lincoln is one of his ideals—a man who might have walked in the wood with Emerson. And it was lines of Emerson's that came oftenest to me as I talked with him:

Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed hath lent.