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The "BLACK HAND" ITS CRIMINAL ORIGIN AND ITS RAPID SPREAD

Blackmail, Extortion and Murder. Agents of this Trust of Terror

BLACK as any that ever darkened the pages of history is a crime-cloud that now casts its lengthening shadow over the United States.

This rampant lawlessness is the work of foreign criminals, banded together, who requite the hospitality of America with bloodshed and nameless evil.

So deep is the terror it inspires that all classes of Americans are demanding—but vainly—its abolition.

Victims, shuddering in the blight of Black Hand intimidation, always refuse to make charges in open court.

1° larso Preparati per la tua morte

Prumera e Ultima

La Morte e giunta e ti dobbiamo ammazzare

Stimato amico

Sei zetta non vi dimen- tuato. Potete la morte se non volete morire.

Some Samples of Black Hand Warnings



Immunity has so increased the Black Hand's audacity that drastic action by the federal authorities is being urged.

Immigrants from other countries than Italy also maintain societies—two such have recently come to light—almost as deadly as the Black Hand.

In the following article the festering sore is exposed fully, and in a manner that invokes the speedy application of the surgeon's knife.

By Henry N. Hall

THE Black Hand, or Mano Nera, is the most odious association that can be imagined. It is a well-organized and powerful trust, whose sole object is the extortion of money under threats of murder, kidnapping and other kindred crimes.

This viperous brood, which the United States harbors in its bosom, has ramifications throughout the Italian colonies in large American cities, from the consular service and financial circles down to the lowest class of day laborers.

Crimes of the Black Hand are often credited to the Mafia and sometimes to the "Reds," with neither of which the Mano Nera has anything in common.

The "Reds" are anarchists—terrorists pure and simple—international in character, and nearly always striking high at the heads or representatives of authority.

Mafia murders are rarely political or mercenary. The members of this Sicilian sect believe that all wrongs should be personally avenged, and almost invariably the reckoning takes the form of a single stiletto thrust given without warning.

Far different are the aims and methods of

the Black Hand, which seeks money and money alone. It warns its victims, and usually plays upon their terror by a series of letters; but occasionally a traitor receives but one notification of his doom.

For one crime committed by the "Reds," a score of real Mafia vengeancees, there are a thousand outrages planned and executed by the Black Hand.

Some idea of how great a menace this criminal trust is to the community may be gath-

ered from the fact that there are more than 10,000 active members of the society in New York and Pennsylvania; that in these two states alone more than 300 recent murders among Italians have gone unpunished, and that the total amount of money extorted by means of threats amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars every month.

So powerfully organized is the Black Hand, and so deep the fear that it strikes into the hearts of Italian witnesses, that out of 600 cases, brought against its members by Giuseppe Petrosini, the head of the New York police foreign detective department, only two convictions were obtained.

No Italian buys real estate, or other property, acquires a business, or makes a haul on the Stock Exchange, that he does not almost immediately receive a letter, ordinarily couched in polite language, saying that the association is in dire need of funds and asking for money.

A wise recipient of such a letter usually pays about half the sum demanded, explaining in a short note that he can afford no more. This generally satisfies the Mano Nera.

Should no attention be paid to the first demand, three and sometimes even five or six more letters are sent, each containing threats. Should the victim have a wife or daughter, letters are also sent to them, explaining the danger the family runs from a refusal to share their worldly riches with their less fortunate brethren.

VARIOUS THREATS USED

The threats vary according to the family circumstances of the victim. If he has a little child, kidnapping will be threatened, and the mother's feeling so wrought upon that for her sake alone the father will pay up.

Threats of the murder of those near and dear are often used in the case of a wealthy banker or prosperous merchant.

Other methods, equally cowardly and heartless, are used to exact tribute from the honest laborer. No contract is given out for public works of any importance; no railroad employs a large gang of men for track work, but that some Black Handers, generally a "garzone de mala vita," applies for and gets employment.

Soon a whispered report is spread amongst the Italian laborers that the Mano Nera wants 50 cents or \$1 a week from each man. On pay day a collector comes around, and in some districts almost openly receives the tribute.

Woe betide the man who refuses to pay. Often his resistance is punished by death, so as to completely overawe the others. The workmen pay tribute as a matter of course, and do not realize the enormity of the injustice.

The Black Hand has not been called into existence by any special conditions in America; it is simply an offshoot of the famous Camorra di Napoli.

Of the million or more Italians who have flocked to the United States within the last ten or twelve years, at least half came from those regions where the Camorra is most strongly entrenched. The majority of this vast influx of aliens is representative of the very classes from which the dreaded criminal association recruits its most dangerous adherents.

Furthermore, the United States has been the Mecca whereto Camorristas driven from their native land by the police invariably turn their footsteps.

The Italian government has determined to crush the Camorra, and little mercy is shown to members, real or suspected.

In Italy the authorities know how dangerous an enemy they have to deal with, and when a Camorrist falls into their hands they conveniently forget such minor matters as "constitutional safeguards of the liberties of the citizen."

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