

Dreadful Padrone System Here Again

fortunately has returned with neither food nor money. The lash, previously used on the horse, is applied to the back and legs of the youngster, who howls and sheds genuine tears as he scampers off up the street, evolving in his mind some particularly harrowing tale of privation and suffering of imaginary dear ones at home to pour into the ears of the next customer. The driver of the wagon moves from block to block, zigzagging back and forth over a certain territory, gathering up the proceeds of the work of half a dozen youngsters, to whom he administers a few cuts with the whip when he considers it necessary. The stock of matches grows smaller and the load of provisions and money grows correspondingly larger as the day wears on.

But the driver of the wagon is not lord



"PLEASA BUYA DA MATCHA."

"PLEASA buya da matcha." The match "merchant" making this appeal to the lady at the front door of a house in the Western Addition was a diminutive, dark-complexioned chap, very dirty and correspondingly ragged. Over his shoulder was a flour-sack partly filled with cheap lucifer matches. In the grimy little fist was a sample bunch. The lady did not wish any of the boy's stock and said so. The small peddler from Italy began to sniffle and grind his knuckles into his eyes in semblance of crying.

"Oh, please, mam; I musta sell; I hungra; ma motha she hungra; my litta broda, he make da cry for da breada," whined the urchin, who by this time had managed to start some moisture, which streaked the dirt upon his olive face in grotesque lines. The cry of the hungry seldom falls upon deaf ears and the match merchant went away with a liberal package of good things from the pantry and half of his stock sold. Once around the corner and all trace of tears is removed by a wipe of the soiled flour-sack.

Up the street comes a rickety old wagon



A TYPE OF THE STREET MUSICALIAN



Poor Slave Children Taught to Beg or Steal That Their Master May Enjoy Wealth and Luxury.

of San Francisco under the very eyes of the police. It was believed that this shocking form of child slavery had been wiped out of every city in the United States, but it is not. The padrone system of making children earn a living for lazy, able-bodied vagrants originated in Italy among the lower class, where it flourishes to-day. The "father," or padrone, as he is called, hires, borrows or steals little children as serve his purpose best, and by brute force and intimidation compels his slaves to beg in the streets, or from door to door. In many instances he teaches them to steal, or to play some musical instrument, whichever they show the more aptness for. The thieves are the more profitable, but there is less danger to himself in having musicians, as money dropped in a tambourine or cap is safer than that pilfered from pockets or houses. A crust of bread and a curse is the master's reward to his slaves, or a lashing if the day's returns are too small. The earnings of the children invariably go to the wine seller and the card table. A very small portion is offered to the Virgin or one of the saints, for good fortune for the following day.

The padrone system of child slavery was imported into this country with the first Italian immigrants to land at Castle Garden, and for years the cities of the East were overrun with little olive-hued children selling flowers, playing and sing-

this city provided for them in a befitting manner. The padrone was sentenced to the full term for vagrancy by ex-Police Judge Hale Rix. Years after it was learned that the fellow had stolen the little girls from their parents in Italy, to whom they were subsequently restored, but not until the ruffian had been paid a goodly sum for revealing their whereabouts.

Since then there has been no child slavery of this order known of here until the present instance was brought to light. The discovery was made by E. L. Fitzgerald, late Labor Commissioner. He lives in the Western Addition and was a witness to the plea of a little match seller for patronage and the youngster's tears and request for food for the imaginary hungry mother, brothers and sisters. He also witnessed the chastisement administered by the youth who drives the supply wagon and gathers in the provisions. The punishment was stopped and Mr. Fitzgerald made an examination of the contents of the wagon. In it he found over a hundred pounds of all kinds of edibles from a soda cracker to the breast of a turkey, to say nothing of nuts, fruits and other luxuries given by big, kind-hearted patrons to the small match sellers.

These facts have been presented to the California Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Officer McMurray has been making an investigation which will result in the breaking up of the padrone system here. It has proved no easy task to get at the facts, for among this class of people there exists an obligation of secrecy, and even the parents of the little peddlers see no harm in their offspring being utilized in this way so long as the work brings in a few dimes. The padrone at the head of the local institution came from New York a few months ago, accompanied by the lad who now manages the supply wagon.

Among the poorer class of his countrymen the fellow soon found all the material he wanted for his purpose. From what can be learned by the officers of the humane society the little match peddlers are bound over by some sort of contract which gives the padrone unlimited power to do with them as he wishes, and this power is respected and feared by the unfortunate urchins. The right to punish for neglecting to make returns on the matches, in money or food, seems to be delegated to the young fellow who drives the supply wagon.

What becomes of all the food for which the children beg? From all accounts this is sorted over and sold to the poor in the Latin quarter of the city, only so much as is necessary being saved for the little peddlers. Some of the food also goes to the boys' parents, especially those with large families, for the services rendered by the peddler-beggars.

Not only is food asked for, but clothing and shoes as well. A few days ago Officer McMurray was in citizen's clothes on Sansome street when two little urchins of the hand entered a wholesale furnishing store and begged for shoes, exhibiting their feet, which were poorly shod. They stated that their parents were very poor and lived on Twenty-fourth street, near Potrero avenue. The officer, after much persuasion and some threats, induced the lads to confess that they lived on Vallejo and Dupont streets. Also, that the day being stormy the "boss" had sent them out for shoes and clothing, it being too wet to peddle matches to advantage. Sufficient information was obtained to warrant taking the Vallejo-street padrone into custody, and the only reason for delay was the discovery of evidence that



A FAMILY LIKE THIS CANT LIVE ON NOTHING

A BRADSHAW

THE LASH, PREVIOUSLY USED ON THE HORSE, IS APPLIED TO THE BACK AND LEGS OF THE YOUNGSTER



TWO PRETTY LITTLE GIRLS WHOM HE COMPELLED TO BEG FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

the day's work is satisfactory the man grunts again and strolls along. If not, the fact is apparent from the unhappy expression on the face of the youth, who knows what to expect when the day is over and he gets back to the place called

home and when the big man takes possession of the horsewhip. Wee to be the little match peddlers when the "father" is displeased.

Such is the operation of a "padrone" system carried on every day in the streets

*** WHEN AND WHY WE LAUGH ***

Anthropologists say that the ability to laugh comes to the child as it grows older. The first smile is observed when the child is about forty to sixty days old, but it does not begin to laugh until some time after that. According to Mantegazza and others the power of laughing has to be acquired, just as a child learns how to talk or to walk. Laughter at the earliest is observed in infants only after they are three months old.

Children and women laugh more than men, not because the cares of life lie less heavily upon them, but because the former are more excitable and because the moderating power of the cerebral hemispheres is less in them than among men generally.

Profound study makes men serious, and so, foolish people are sometimes noted for laughing immoderately. Yet laughter is not so much an index to intelligence as it is to the condition of health. Healthy, vigorous people are proverbially of good humored, joyous, laughing natures, while the "sallow, gloomy-eyed dyspeptic" is a description scientifically accurate, al-

though it has its origin from the brain of a poet.

The envious, wicked and malevolent rarely laugh because, phonologists say, they are impregnated with bile and are therefore morose. The haughty, the vain, and the awkward also laugh very little, for fear of losing their dignity. The Spanish people, who are proverbially grave are a good example.

People who have lines extending downward from the angle at the mouth toward the chin, well marked rarely laugh, and, moreover, show a tendency to pensiveness in youth and melancholy in after life.

Those who have lines radiating outward from the eyes are, on the contrary, people who laugh a good deal, especially when the upper lip is framed by two deep furrows running down to the mouth.

Lavater, the noted Swiss physiognomist, says that frank, easy, copious laughter indicates "a good soul devoid of vanity." Such people often have a great many wrinkles running obliquely outward and downward from the eyes. They also have full, open lips and a round, large forehead.

dragged by an aged skate of a horse and driven by a swarthy youth of 16 or 17 years. A few words in the Italian tongue are exchanged by the youth and boy and the latter hands over the package of food, while the flour-sack is replenished with matches. The driver of the wagon does not fail to collect the money received by

the child, who starts off up the street again to make the same or a similar plea to those who will answer the ring of the doorbell.

A few blocks away the driver of the dilapidated rig mentioned is holding an animated conversation with another little dark-skinned match peddler who un-

of the situation, as shown by the furtive glances he takes upon turning each corner. He gives a start upon seeing a big, powerful Italian, evidently from Sicily, or Corsica, approach. The latter grunts out an inquiry and the youth hands over the purse of dimes and nickels and points to the provisions stored in the wagon. If

ing on the streets and openly begging. The authorities at last put down the evil and now only isolated cases are reported. A number of years ago a padrone was discovered in this city. He brought from the East two pretty little girls, whom he compelled to beg from house to house. The police took the little ones into custody, and later the well-to-do Italians of another fellow of the same stripe was starting up in a similar line of business. It is barely possible that the laws of the State are not broad enough to cover these cases, especially if the defense should be made that the boys sell matches on commission—and beg of their own volition. However, an effort will be made soon to break up this imported system of child slavery.