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An Alien Immigrant

By R. H. BREWER

To Gerard Mascali, as to many of his Italian compatriots who turn their eyes longingly towards these hospitable shores, England was the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey. Gerard had an idea that if he could plant his foot on English soil he would grow rich—rich, that is, in the Italian sense.

And so Gerard one day came to England with his niece Angelina, adopted by him on the death of her parents, and now grown into a comely girl of sixteen, with jet black hair, cheeks burnished and polished by the brilliant suns of Italy, eyes like two violets, and a figure nicely rounded, an industrious, unsophisticated girl, attached to her uncle notwithstanding his meanness.

Gerard made the voyage from Italy to England at the minimum cost. He was acquainted with the master of a small cargo boat, calling regularly at Cardiff for Welsh steam coal, and induced him, for a trifling monetary payment, to allow them to sail to the Welsh port in his coal boat.

Arrived there, they went straight to the house of a former friend of Gerard's, now the keeper of a boarding house for Italian seamen.

Next day Gerard opened a small shop, and began to make and sell bread and confectionery; and to provide refreshments. So he had the joy of seeing his establishment largely patronized by the foreign seamen, who in such large numbers frequent this cosmopolitan port of the Bristol Channel.

The more his business grew the greater was Gerard's exultation. Every week brought him a little nearer to the realization of his great ambition—to retire to his native land and live there the remainder of his days, a man of independent means, envied and looked up to by former friends and acquaintances. That ambition had filled Gerard's mind for years. The thought of it had been a stimulus and support to him during the days of toil and struggle in his own country when he was striving out of his small, hardly won earnings to save a few pounds with which to start in business on his own account in England. Eleven years it had taken him to save £55—his entire capital when he arrived in England. To save that sum he had practiced economies in living that to an Englishman would be incredible; he and his niece together had, in fact, lived on half the sum expended on the rearing of an English middle-class baby.

Angelina was twelve, and earning her own living when she was adopted by Gerard; therefore his adoption of her was not a particularly magnanimous act on his part; as a matter of fact, she not only earned enough to maintain herself in the frugal fashion in which she and her uncle lived, but

she gave up her spare moments to keep clean and comfortable Gerard's little home.

Gerard, in his peculiar way, was attached to his niece. He had two motives in bringing her with him to England—first, he could not easily bear to part from her now, and second, he believed she would be of assistance to him in the business he purposed establishing.

The latter conjecture proved to be well founded; her help was, in fact, almost indispensable in preparing refreshments for customers and waiting on them; for Gerard's time was all required by the other side of the business.

They had been quite six months in England when they were startled one day by the sudden and unexpected appearance of Antonio, a dark skinned, black haired, laughing-eyed youth, an ardent lover of the comely and unsophisticated Angelina.

He explained that he could not support the separation from his innamorata. Every day since her departure for England had been an agony. Italia was no longer Italia with Angelina away from it. He could not have remained there another day; he would have followed his Angelina even to the ends of the earth. Thus speaking he beat his breast dramatically. He had no money, he went on, or he would have come to England sooner. But he did not intend to permit that obstacle to stand in his way for ever; he meant to cross the sea and come to her, even if he had to swim across. That is what he said, but, of course, it was his Italian way of exaggerating his ardor. What he actually did was to await an opportunity of stowing himself on board a Cardiff-bound ship. Twice he managed to board a vessel, but was discovered before it left port, and summarily ejected. The third attempt was more successful; he was not found out till the ship was well at sea. Then he told his story to the captain—told it with such winning simplicity and pathos and made such a manly appeal to be allowed to work for the rest of the passage that he quite won over the skipper, who promised to put him ashore at Cardiff and say nothing to the authorities.

And here he was, once more with his Angelina, offering to do anything for Gerard, to work even till he dropped if necessary, if Gerard would but allow him to stay.

The business had grown rapidly; it had almost become more than the combined powers of uncle and niece could cope with, and there were prospects of still greater expansion, so Gerard agreed readily enough to lodge and feed Antonio in return for the latter's services in the bakehouse.

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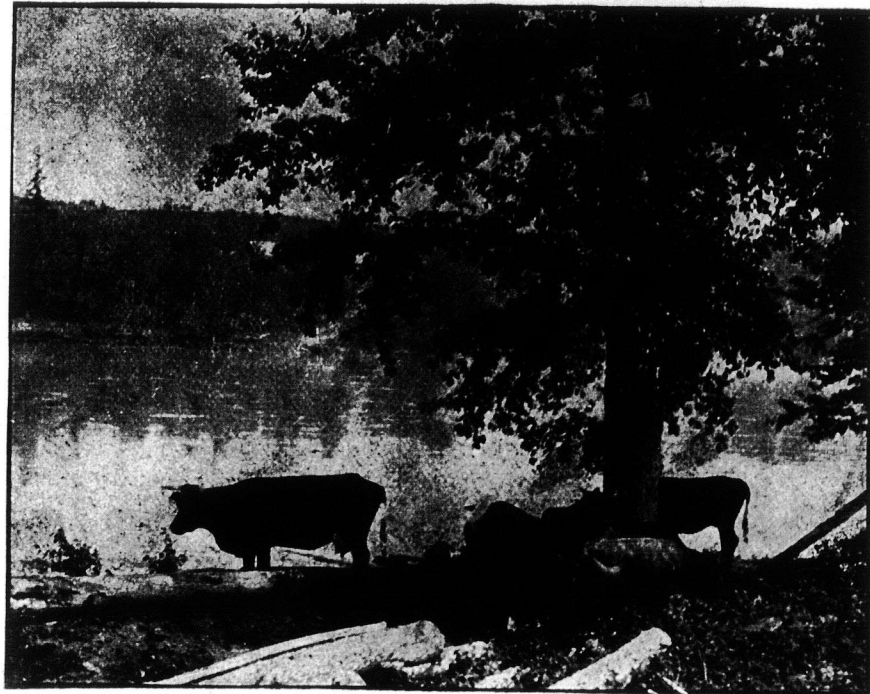
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