WAKEMAN'S WANDERINGS

THE POET-TRAVELER LINGERS AMONG THE GIPSIES.

Spirited Picture of the Roadside Return to Camp—Gipsy Songs—Idyllic Days Among the Legends of the East Anglian "Broads."

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THE BROADS, England, May 25.—It was a pleasant reunion, that one given me with gipsy friends, from the accident of crossing Furness Falls from Brooke's house at Beaulieu, and stumbling upon their picturesque camp at the Hillside village of Ringpark, where, in the tent afterward, I found only the old men and women, the scattering gipsy dogs, and the very young gipsy chareres or children in possession of the lively glen which formed their temporary home.

By and by, as the shadows lengthened, the camp gradually began to awaken with returning life. The fires, which had soaked down the day through, were renewed by the now bustling old gipsy women, and the pots and kettles sang merrily of good things to come. Gipsy men and women began coming into camp from all directions, and nearly all came singly or in groups to the tent I had been given, to emphasize my welcome as the "Gorgio sind" (the non-gipsy friend to the gipsy) who was already known for his wanderings with their "brothers and sisters" in that far off wonderland, America.

Nearly all brought trophies of the day's outing. Women who had been among the Unionist "economists" farms were laden with poultry, butter, eggs, cheese, knots of homespun yarn, and large cans of milk representing hours of toil, which had been exchanged for a bit of gilthroth and a "fortune," while those from the villages of Ambleside, Bowness or Windermere, and some who had even journeyed to far off Kendal, charmed gaily over trifling purchases and gewgaws of marvelous hues and color. Now and then a gipsy appeared in the lively condition of spirits indicating that considerable liquor had entered into the day's jubilying among the wise potato of the reunion hamlet, but which some general sport was had with the fellow, it was not difficult to see that his weakness was the subject of general disapproval. Indeed there is a universal unwritten law among gipsies that all men may profit from. The sage turns to the wise, "Only a gipsy fool knows his wits fly away through drink, when he hath angle to do." And there is a world of wisdom in that little sentence, if these rude people did make it.

But soon the camp was everywhere filled with life and activity. Horses unhitched, donkeys frayed, dogs clamped and tumbled over children and between horses' heels, while old men and women seemed to renew their youth, and smiled and nodded upon and with home comers, with oaths taken and as if with the empty air. Bagpipes of songs began by gipsies at one extremity of the camp were taken up and finished with a fourish under cover. Here are single stanzas from two of them:

By-lorlee (day) and rat-night
Or at sun-rise and
Or the long (dark) will pull out his horse
swerve
With a whip through the hedge,
Or from off some rear hedge
He will spring out and throw off your shoes
(to frighten)

The night he comes, the gipsy are out,
The campfires twinkle' the hedges
But stare as I'm a gipsy man,
A "sidrow" crack the same shout;
The stones will rattle from the hedge,
Air heels will scream, my word I pledge—
My word I pledge, my word I pledge.

Mingled with the lusty notes of these English gipsy songs were merry "tally-ho!" ring out on the evening air by returning horsemen to the camp-fire singers. Now and then some dare-devil of a fellow (and often a gipsy woman, who is as much the horse's master as her Hungarian uncle would come pelting, full gallop into camp with whoop and holler, and dashing through the brush to tether, make the few little turtle and circlet in passage, while approving shouts or half serious yells and objurgations followed with the laughing children and outside dogs. Soon came the supper—the really good and virtual home meal of the gipsy day. They were a long time at it, as they always are, and so much fun as food was taken.

Then, with the cheery camp-fires brightly burning, here and there a lantern hung from elevated cart-shaft or swaying cope-wood, and this blessing crowned in honor of the stranger, five camps by own tales of all the wonderous good fortune of their own kind in America, then children's games and old manner campside jollity, followed by singing and dancing after marvelous jigs and reels upon "root of Cromwyn," until at last sleep and silence settled upon the Parkside gipsy camp and the one "Gorgio sind" within it with that simplicity of rest which so comes with loving touch to no other people on earth as to this ancient Romany race.

The out of my visit to my gipsy friends w ding the acquaintance of a cultured entering corner of England, of which I d never heard before, and which must rise to be most American spite an unknown region. It is variously known in Great Britain as the "Norfolk and Suffolk Fens," the "Fen Country of East Anglia" and, provincially and by fowlers and sportsmen, as "The Broads." One of the followers of this gipsy Parkside community specially visits the Broads, does it a point best as a floating camp home, and while the women dicker and dicker among the lowly peasant families, the men, often with the women and children, contrive to make a good deal of money by wearing and selling an manner of rush and osier bags, jackets, crooks and rural trophies by farmers, maximum, oil and mineral exhibers, and the numberless sportsmen and pedding parties that frequent the region.

Our party comprised "Ol' Gran'pop" Wharton, tinker, fiddler and whatever his son Uriah Wharton, a splendid type of the stoggy, lugs, manly, kind hearted English gipsy—a large build of a man, with his to the every manner and frame the wife, little, sharp faced, shrewd eyed and sharp tongued, there as pretty gipsy girls as one could wish to flick for pears, romance or idyllic company—Pauline, Melinda and Rose—and a number of gipsy boys of both sexes and all sizes and ages, as lovelier lusty mixed with the family dogs that accompanied and descriptive are needless.

What with visiting gipsy friends at Keighly, Doncaster and Lincoln, we were three days reaching our destination, the village of Hickling near Hickling Broad, in Norfolk, and a short stoop from Hickling, accompanied by a village cart well laden with gipsy belongings, brought us to the water side. Here, hard by an old thatched-roofed cottage, whose peasant owner routed out an alarming welcome, we found our pitch. The van already in line under for the season, the engine stay had used for it in winter, and got it in readiness against the gipsies' coming, and in an hour were the floating summer home was launched, the evening meal in progression, and song quarters for all the motley crew around for the night.

Consulting the map of England, it will be noticed that the shires of Norfolk and Suffolk peak out boldly from the county north and south English coast line into the German ocean. The shore is here a mass of sand hills and dunes. Nearly the entire surface of the two shires behind it is but a few feet above the level of the sea, and in many respects is similar to Holland, which is but 100 miles distant to the east. The whole eastern portion of the shires is dotted with extensive reedy and marshy shoals of water, of but from three to six feet in depth, with a hard, smooth bottom of marl. These inland waters, or lagoons as Dutch are known to the Boers, Yare and Waveney rivers, all of which form confluences, and flow quite little the sea, as the sea rises city of Yarmouth. These lagoons are provincially called "The Broads." No one knows how or when the term originated. Some fowlers and sportsmen, I found, but very few slightly wonded at the water's edge, getting from a peculiarly picturesque beauty, particularly in summer with the lily pads, or delightful meandering by which they are surrounded.

Altogether there are nearly fifty of these broads, all connected by with each other by inter-connecting rivers, "dykes" or ditches, which they feed, and their total water surface is about 3,000 acres. They teem with fish—the roach, bream, perch and pike—and the variety of resident water fowls, fish and mammals are taken from them by the ton. In their quiet, their unusual diversity, the characteristic fell who live beside them, have almost countless miles of river and dyke water way for small boating and pushing, the quaint and sunny and time of exil floating down and there from shore shore, and for genuine possibilities for scouting fish and game among them, they no doubt possess a interest and exhibit a variety not equaled known recent in England to the naturalist and sportsman.

My merry friends belonged to neither class, but each one quite boat possessed quite as many purposes for necessary comfort as many of the hundreds of aristocratic yachts which haunt the region, and its crew and passengers were quite as care-free and merry. The boat itself was about twenty-four feet in length and perhaps eight in breadth. Properly speaking, there was neither "bow" nor "aft," but the terms were interchangeable as well. At one end was a little compartment, having at its own extreme end a comfortable bed for the gipsy and his wife, with a capacious door, named "locker" beneath. In this all the provisions and valuables were stored. Extending toward the middle of the boat were two benches, two on either side, with sliding windows above.

In these sleptPaulsen, Melinda, Rose, in a couple of the lower pegged. Still in front of this was the most curious compartment of all. In its center, on the top of the pocket where there had been made a solid bed of baked clay, shaped like a gigantic saucer, was the gipsy fire that is never allowed to go out, and above it the real gipsy crooked iron kettle-stick, firmly embedded in the clay. Here is seen our kettle sung, and where the sweet perch and luscious pike were broiled, while the smoke escaped sometimes through a round hole in the roof, but generally and principally where it listed. This was kitchen and parlor in our best home. Necessary utensils hung against the walls, but could not quite hide away other decorative art, from the illustrated papers, pasted solidly in their places, and gilty antique and gaudeous coloring from the scenes of the hundred "horses" of past.

Ambleside was our salon. It was not large, but as "Gran'pop Wharton" remarked, "Hit 'ad good prospects, an' very nice." This was caused by an old soil that had now done duty with the Yarmouth herring fleet. Here our heavy meals were taken, and this place was also the workroom where the nimble fingers of the gipsies wrought the pouches and baskets of flag and osier. Beyond this, and extending to the end of the boat, upon that occupied at night by father, mother and daughters, was a little shelfless space where the gipsy grandfather, the huge lad, rested from a few of the children had comfortable berths for the night, and on top of this, something after the fashion of the "upper deck" of our American willow ware lockers' wagons, was a well covered place where the stores of baskets and pouches were kept until sale—the show room, as it were, for the fairer and kind and of the hamlet.

Then came the nights and days of this strange, quaint life with my gipsy friends among the "Broads." We sailed, we rowed, we sang, we danced long as long. There were sometimes outings of farmers, tourers and sportsmen to the end of the boat, upon