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GEORGE BORROW THE MAN AND HIS BOOKS

BY
EDWARD THOMAS

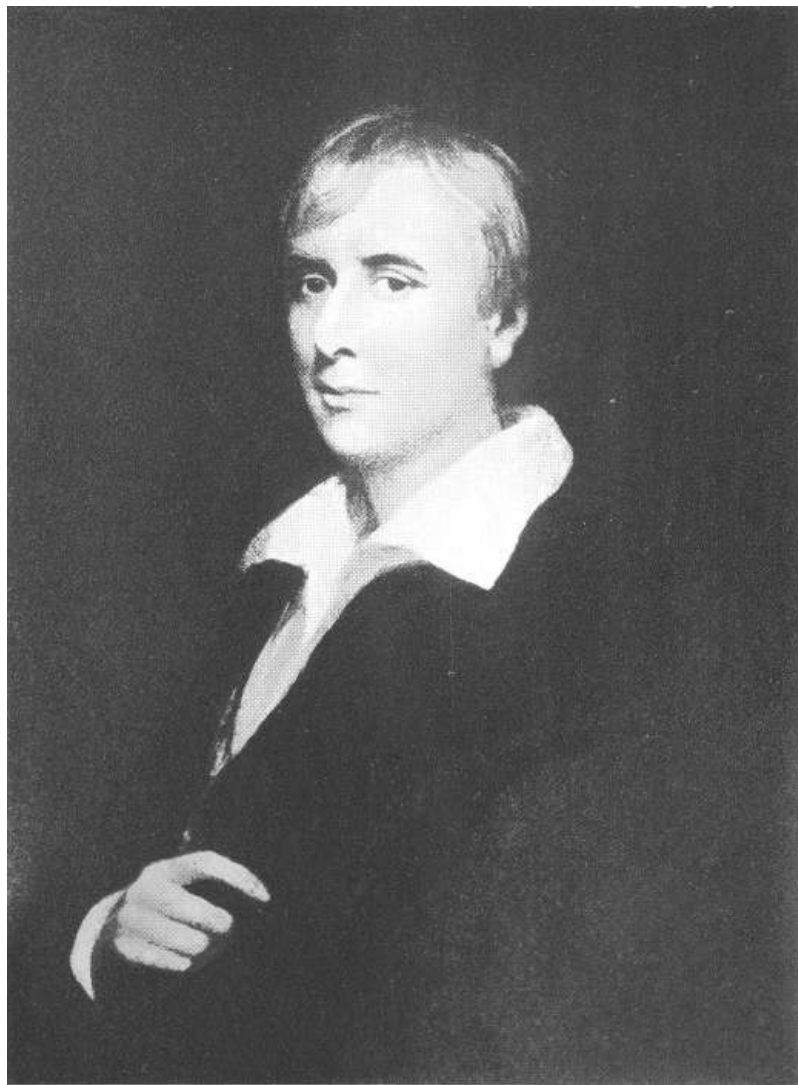
AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF RICHARD JEFFERIES," "LIGHT AND TWILIGHT," "REST AND UNREST,"
"MAURICE MAETERLINCK," ETC.

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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NOTE

The late Dr. W. I. Knapp's *Life* (John Murray) and Mr. Watts-Dunton's prefaces are the fountains of information about Borrow, and I have clearly indicated how much I owe to them. What I owe to my friend, Mr. Thomas Seccombe, cannot be so clearly indicated, but his prefaces have been meat and drink to me. I have also used Mr. R. A. J. Walling's sympathetic and interesting "George Borrow." The British and Foreign Bible Society has given me permission to quote from Borrow's letters to the Society, edited in 1911 by the Rev. T. H. Darlow; and Messrs. T. C. Cantrill and J. Pringle have put at my disposal their publication of Borrow's journal of his second Welsh tour, wonderfully annotated by themselves ("Y Cymmrodor," 1910). These and other sources are mentioned where they are used and in the bibliography.

DEDICATION TO E. S. P. HAYNES

MY DEAR HAYNES,

By dedicating this book to you, I believe it is my privilege to introduce you and Borrow. This were sufficient reason for the dedication. The many better reasons are beyond my eloquence, much though I have remembered them this winter, listening to the storms of Caermarthen Bay, the screams of pigs, and the street tunes of "Fall in and follow me," "Yip-i-addy," and "The first good joy that Mary had."

Yours,
EDWARD THOMAS.

LAUGHARNE,
CAERMARTHENSHIRE,
December, 1911.

The subject of this book was a man who was continually writing about himself, whether openly or in disguise. He was by nature inclined to thinking about himself and when he came to write he naturally wrote about himself; and his inclination was fortified by the obvious impression made upon other men by himself and by his writings. He has been dead thirty years; much has been written about him by those who knew him or knew those that did: yet the impression still made by him, and it is one of the most powerful, is due mainly to his own books. Nor has anything lately come to light to provide another writer on Borrow with an excuse. The impertinence of the task can be tempered only by its apparent hopelessness and by that necessity which Voltaire did not see.

I shall attempt only a re-arrangement of the myriad details accessible to all in the writings of Borrow and about Borrow. Such re-arrangement will sometimes heighten the old effects and sometimes modify them. The total impression will, I hope, not be a smaller one, though it must inevitably be softer, less clear, less isolated, less gigantic. I do not wish, and I shall not try, to deface Borrow's portrait of himself; I can only hope that I shall not do it by accident. There may be a sense in which that portrait can be called inaccurate. It may even be true that "lies—damned lies" {1} helped to make it. But nobody else knows anything like as much about the truth, and a peddling biographer's mouldy fragment of plain fact may be far more dangerous than the manly lying of one who was in possession of all the facts. In most cases the fact—to use an equivocal term—is dead and blown away in dust while Borrow's impression is as green as grass. His "lies" are lies only in the same sense as all clothing is a lie. p. 2

For example, he knew a Gypsy named Ambrose Smith, and had sworn brotherhood with him as a boy. He wrote about this Gypsy, man and boy, and at first called him, as the manuscripts bear witness, by his real name, though Borrow thought of him in 1842 as Petulengro. In print he was given the name Jasper Petulengro—Petulengro being Gypsy for shoemaker—and as Jasper Petulengro he is now one of the most unforgettable of heroes; the name is the man, and for many Englishmen his form and character have probably created quite a new value for the name of Jasper. Well, Jasper Petulengro lives. Ambrose Smith died in 1878, at the age of seventy-four, after being visited by the late Queen Victoria at Knockenhair Park: he was buried in Dunbar Cemetery. {2}

In the matter of his own name Borrow made another creative change of a significant kind. He was christened George Henry Borrow on July 17th (having been born on the 5th), 1803, at East Dereham, in Norfolk. As a boy he signed his name, George Henry Borrow. As a young man of the Byronic age and a translator of Scandinavian literature, he called himself in print, George Olaus Borrow. His biographer, Dr. William Ireland Knapp, says that Borrow's first name "expressed the father's admiration for the reigning monarch," George III.; but there is no reason to believe this, and certainly Borrow himself made of the combination which he finally adopted—George Borrow—something that retains not the slightest flavour of any other George. Such changes are common enough. John Richard Jefferies becomes Richard Jefferies; Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson becomes Robert Louis Stevenson. But Borrow could touch nothing without transmuting it. For example, in his Byronic period, when he was about twenty years of age, he was translating "romantic ballads" from the Danish. In the last verse of one of these, called "Elvir Hill," he takes the liberty of using the Byronic "lay": p. 3

'Tis therefore I counsel each young Danish swain who may ride in the forest so dreary,
Ne'er to lay down upon lone Elvir Hill though he chance to be ever so weary.

Twenty years later he used this ballad romantically in writing about his early childhood. He was travelling with his father's regiment from town to town and from school to school, and they came to Berwick-upon-Tweed: {3}

"And it came to pass that, one morning, I found myself extended on the bank of a river. It was a beautiful morning of early spring; small white clouds were floating in the heaven, occasionally veiling the countenance of the sun, whose light, as they retired, would again burst forth, coursing like a racehorse over the scene—and a goodly scene it was! Before me, across the water, on an eminence, stood a white old city, surrounded with lofty walls, above which rose the tops of tall houses, with here and there a church or steeple. To my right hand was a long and massive bridge, with many arches and of antique architecture, which traversed the river. The river was a noble one; the broadest that I had hitherto seen. Its waters, of a greenish tinge, poured with impetuosity beneath the narrow arches to meet the sea, close at hand, as the boom of the billows breaking distinctly upon a beach declared. There were songs upon the river from the fisher-barks; and occasionally a chorus, plaintive and wild, such as I had never heard before, the words of which I did not understand, but which at the present time, down the long avenue of years, seem in memory's ear to sound like 'Horam, coram, dago.' Several robust fellows were near me, some knee-deep in water, employed in hauling the seine upon the strand. Huge fish were struggling amidst the meshes—princely salmon—their brilliant mail of blue and silver flashing in the morning beam; so goodly and gay a scene, in truth, had never greeted my boyish eye. p. 4

"And, as I gazed upon the prospect, my bosom began to heave, and my tears to trickle. Was it the beauty of the scene which gave rise to these emotions? Possibly; for though a poor ignorant child—a half-wild creature—I was not insensible to the loveliness of nature, and took pleasure in

the happiness and handiworks of my fellow-creatures. Yet, perhaps, in something more deep and mysterious the feeling which then pervaded me might originate. Who can lie down on Elvir Hill without experiencing something of the sorcery of the place? Flee from Elvir Hill, young swain, or the maids of Elle will have power over you, and you will go elf-wild!—so say the Danes. I had unconsciously laid myself down on haunted ground; and I am willing to imagine that what I then experienced was rather connected with the world of spirits and dreams than with what I actually saw and heard around me. Surely the elves and genii of the place were conversing, by some inscrutable means, with the principle of intelligence lurking within the poor uncultivated clod! Perhaps to that ethereal principle the wonders of the past, as connected with that stream, the glories of the present, and even the history of the future, were at that moment being revealed! Of how many feats of chivalry had those old walls been witness, when hostile kings contended for their possession?—how many an army from the south and from the north had trod that old bridge?—what red and noble blood had crimsoned those rushing waters?—what strains had been sung, ay, were yet being sung on its banks?—some soft as Doric reed; some fierce and sharp as those of Norwegian Skaldaglam; some as replete with wild and wizard force as Finland's runes, singing of Kalevale's moors, and the deeds of Woinomoinen! Honour to thee, thou island stream! Onward mayst thou ever roll, fresh and green, rejoicing in thy bright past, thy glorious present, and in vivid hope of a triumphant future! Flow on, beautiful one!—which of the world's streams canst thou envy, with thy beauty and renown? Stately is the Danube, rolling in its might through lands romantic with the wild exploits of Turk, Polak, and Magyar! Lovely is the Rhine! on its shelvy banks grows the racy grape; and strange old keeps of robber-knights of yore are reflected in its waters, from picturesque crags and airy headlands!—yet neither the stately Danube, nor the beauteous Rhine, with all their fame, though abundant, needst thou envy, thou pure island stream!—and far less yon turbid river of old, not modern renown, gurgling beneath the walls of what was once proud Rome, towering Rome, Jupiter's town, but now vile Rome, crumbling Rome, Batuscha's town, far less needst thou envy the turbid Tiber of bygone fame, creeping sadly to the sea, surcharged with the abominations of modern Rome—how unlike to thee, thou pure island stream!”

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In this passage Borrow concentrates upon one scene the feelings of three remote periods of his life. He gives the outward scene as he remembers it forty years after, and together with the thoughts which now come into his mind. He gives the romantic suggestion from one of the favourite ballads of his youth, “Elvir Hill.” He gives the child himself weeping, he knows not why. Yet the passage is one and indivisible.

These, at any rate, are not “lies—damned lies.”

CHAPTER II—HIS OWN HERO

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Borrow's principal study was himself, and in all his best books he is the chief subject and the chief object. Yet when he came to write confessedly and consecutively about himself he found it no easy task. Dr. Knapp gives an interesting account of the stages by which he approached and executed it. His first mature and original books, “The Zincali,” or “The Gypsies of Spain,” and “The Bible in Spain,” had a solid body of subject matter more or less interesting in itself, and anyone with a pen could have made it acceptable to the public which desires information. “The Bible of Spain” was the book of the year 1843, read by everybody in one or other of the six editions published in the first twelve months. These books were also full of himself. Even “The Zincali,” written for the most part in Spain, when he was a man of about thirty and had no reason for expecting the public to be interested in himself, especially in a Gypsy crowd—even that early book prophesied very different things. He said in the “preface” that he bore the Gypsies no ill-will, for he had known them “for upwards of twenty years, in various countries, and they never injured a hair of his head, or deprived him of a shred of his raiment.” The motive for this forbearance, he said, was that they thought him a Gypsy. In his “introduction” he satisfied some curiosity, but raised still more, when speaking of the English Gypsies and especially of their eminence “in those disgraceful and brutalising exhibitions called pugilistic combats.”

“When a boy of fourteen,” he says, “I was present at a prize fight; why should I hide the truth? It took place on a green meadow, beside a running stream, close by the old church of E---, and within a league of the ancient town of N---, the capital of one of the eastern counties. The terrible Thurtell was present, lord of the concourse; for wherever he moved he was master, and whenever he spoke, even when in chains, every other voice was silent. He stood on the mead, grim and pale as usual, with his bruisers around. He it was, indeed, who *got up* the fight, as he had previously done with respect to twenty others; it being his frequent boast that he had first introduced bruising and bloodshed amidst rural scenes, and transformed a quiet slumbering town into a den of Jews and metropolitan thieves. Some time before the commencement of the combat, three men, mounted on wild-looking horses, came dashing down the road in the direction of the meadow, in the midst of which they presently showed themselves, their horses clearing the deep ditches with wonderful alacrity. ‘That's Gypsy Will and his gang,’ lisped a Hebrew pickpocket; ‘we shall have another fight.’ The word Gypsy was always sufficient to excite my curiosity, and I looked attentively at the new comers.

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“I have seen Gypsies of various lands, Russian, Hungarian, and Turkish; and I have also seen the

legitimate children of most countries of the world, but I never saw, upon the whole, three more remarkable individuals, as far as personal appearance was concerned, than the three English Gypsies who now presented themselves to my eyes on that spot. Two of them had dismounted, and were holding their horses by the reins. The tallest, and, at the first glance, the most interesting of the two, was almost a giant, for his height could not have been less than six feet three. It is impossible for the imagination to conceive any thing more perfectly beautiful than were the features of this man, and the most skilful sculptor of Greece might have taken them as his model for a hero and a god. The forehead was exceedingly lofty—a rare thing in a Gypsy; the nose less Roman than Grecian—fine yet delicate; the eyes large, overhung with long drooping lashes, giving them almost a melancholy expression; it was only when they were highly elevated that the Gypsy glance peered out, if that can be called glance which is a strange stare, like nothing else in this world. His complexion—a beautiful olive; and his teeth of a brilliancy uncommon even amongst these people, who have all fine teeth. He was dressed in a coarse waggoner's slop, which, however, was unable to conceal altogether the proportions of his noble and Herculean figure. He might be about twenty-eight. His companion and his captain, Gypsy Will, was, I think, fifty when he was hanged, ten years subsequently (for I never afterwards lost sight of him), in the front of the jail of Bury St. Edmunds. I have still present before me his bushy black hair, his black face, and his big black eyes, full and thoughtful, but fixed and staring. His dress consisted of a loose blue jockey coat, jockey boots and breeches; in his hand a huge jockey whip, and on his head (it struck me at the time for its singularity) a broad-brimmed, high-peaked Andalusian hat, or at least one very much resembling those generally worn in that province. In stature he was shorter than his more youthful companion, yet he must have measured six feet at least, and was stronger built, if possible. What brawn!—what bone!—what legs!—what thighs! The third Gypsy, who remained on horseback, looked more like a phantom than any thing human. His complexion was the colour of pale dust, and of that same colour was all that pertained to him, hat and clothes. His boots were dusty of course, for it was midsummer, and his very horse was of a dusty dun. His features were whimsically ugly, most of his teeth were gone, and as to his age, he might be thirty or sixty. He was somewhat lame and halt, but an unequalled rider when once upon his steed, which he was naturally not very solicitous to quit. I subsequently discovered that he was considered the wizard of the gang.

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JOHN THURTELL
(From an old print)

“I have been already prolix with respect to these Gypsies, but I will not leave them quite yet. The

intended combatants at length arrived; it was necessary to clear the ring—always a troublesome and difficult task. Thurtell went up to the two Gypsies, with whom he seemed to be acquainted, and, with his surly smile, said two or three words, which I, who was standing by, did not understand. The Gypsies smiled in return, and giving the reins of their animals to their mounted companion, immediately set about the task which the king of the flash-men had, as I conjecture, imposed upon them; this they soon accomplished. Who could stand against such fellows and such whips? The fight was soon over—then there was a pause. Once more Thurtell came up to the Gypsies and said something—the Gypsies looked at each other and conversed; but their words had then no meaning for my ears. The tall Gypsy shook his head. ‘Very well,’ said the other, in English, ‘I will—that’s all.’

“Then pushing the people aside, he strode to the ropes, over which he bounded into the ring, flinging his Spanish hat high into the air.

“*Gypsy Will*.—‘The best man in England for twenty pounds!’

“*Thurtell*.—‘I am backer!’

“Twenty pounds is a tempting sum, and there were men that day upon the green meadow who would have shed the blood of their own fathers for the fifth of the price. But the Gypsy was not an unknown man, his prowess and strength were notorious, and no one cared to encounter him. Some of the Jews looked eager for a moment; but their sharp eyes quailed quickly before his savage glances, as he towered in the ring, his huge form dilating, and his black features convulsed with excitement. The Westminster bravos eyed the Gypsy askance; but the comparison, if they made any, seemed by no means favourable to themselves. ‘Gypsy! rum chap.—Ugly customer,—always in training.’ Such were the exclamations which I heard, some of which at that period of my life I did not understand.

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“No man would fight the Gypsy.—Yes! a strong country fellow wished to win the stakes, and was about to fling up his hat in defiance, but he was prevented by his friends, with—‘Fool! he’ll kill you!’

“As the Gypsies were mounting their horses, I heard the dusty phantom exclaim—

“‘Brother, you are an arrant ring-maker and a horse-breaker; you’ll make a hempen ring to break your own neck of a horse one of these days.’

“They pressed their horses’ flanks, again leaped over the ditches, and speedily vanished, amidst the whirlwinds of dust which they raised upon the road.

“The words of the phantom Gypsy were ominous. Gypsy Will was eventually executed for a murder committed in his early youth, in company with two English labourers, one of whom confessed the fact on his death-bed. He was the head of the clan Young, which, with the clan Smith, still haunts two of the eastern counties.”

In spite of this, Borrow said in the same book that this would probably be the last occasion he would have to speak of the Gypsies or anything relating to them. In “*The Bible in Spain*,” written and revised several years later, he changed his mind. He wrote plenty about Gypsies and still more about himself. When he wished to show the height of the Spanish Prime Minister, Mendizabal, he called him “a huge athletic man, somewhat taller than myself, who measure six feet two without my shoes.” He informed the public that when he met an immense dog in strolling round the ruins above Monte Moro, he stooped till his chin nearly touched his knee and looked the animal full in the face, “and, as John Leyden says, in the noblest ballad which the Land of Heather has produced:—

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“The hound he yowled, and back he fled,
As struck with fairy charm.”

When his servant Lopez was imprisoned at Villallos, Borrow had reason to fear that the man would be sacrificed to political opponents in that violent time, so, as he told the English minister at Madrid, he bore off Lopez, single-handed and entirely unarmed, through a crowd of at least one hundred peasants, and furthermore shouted: “Hurrah for Isabella the Second.” And as for mystery, “*The Bible in Spain*” abounds with invitations to admiration and curiosity. Let one example suffice. He had come back to Seville from a walk in the country when a man emerging from an archway looked in his face and started back, “exclaiming in the purest and most melodious French: ‘What do I see? If my eyes do not deceive me—it is himself. Yes, the very same as I saw him first at Bayonne; then long subsequently beneath the brick wall at Novgorod; then beside the Bosphorus; and last at—at—O my respectable and cherished friend, where was it that I had last the felicity of seeing your well-remembered and most remarkable physiognomy?’”

Borrow answers: “It was in the south of Ireland, if I mistake not. Was it not there that I introduced you to the sorcerer who tamed the savage horses by a single whisper into their ear? But tell me, what brings you to Spain and Andalusia, the last place where I should have expected to find you.”

Baron Taylor (Isidore Justin Severin, Baron Taylor, 1789-1879) now introduces him to a friend as “My most cherished and respectable friend, one who is better acquainted with Gypsy ways than the Chef de Bohémiens à Triana, one who is an expert whisperer and horse-sorcerer, and who, to his honour I say it, can wield hammer and tongs, and handle a horse-shoe, with the best of the

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smiths amongst the Alpujarras of Granada.”

Borrow then lightly portrays his accomplished and extraordinary cosmopolitan friend, with the conclusion:

“He has visited most portions of the earth, and it is remarkable enough that we are continually encountering each other in strange places and under singular circumstances. Whenever he descries me, whether in the street or the desert, the brilliant hall or amongst Bedouin haimas, at Novgorod or Stamboul, he flings up his arms and exclaims, ‘O ciel! I have again the felicity of seeing my cherished and most respectable B---.’”

Borrow could not avoid making himself impressive and mysterious. He was impressive and mysterious without an effort; the individual or the public was impressed, and he was naturally tempted to be more impressive. Thus, in December of the year 1832 he had to go to London for his first meeting with the Bible Society, who had been recommended to give him work where he could use his knowledge of languages. As he was at Norwich, the distance was a hundred and twelve miles, and as he was poor he walked. He spent fivepence-halfpenny on a pint of ale, half-pint of milk, a roll of bread and two apples during the journey, which took him twenty-seven hours. He reached the Society’s office early in the morning and waited for the secretary. When the secretary arrived he hoped that Borrow had slept well on his journey. Borrow said that, as far as he knew, he had not slept, because he had walked. The secretary’s surprise can be imagined from this alone, or if not, from what followed. For Borrow went on talking, and told the man, among other things, that he was stolen by Gypsies when he was a boy—had passed several years with them, but had at last been recognised at a fair in Norfolk, and brought home to his family by an uncle. It was not to be expected that Borrow would conceal from the public “several years” of this kind. Nevertheless, in none of his books has he so much as hinted at a period of adoption with Gypsies when he was a boy. Nor has that massive sleuth-hound, Dr. Knapp, discovered any traces of such an adoption. If there is any foundation for the story except Borrow’s wish to please the secretary, it is the escapade of his fourteenth or fifteenth year—when he and three other boys from Norwich Grammar School played truant, intending to make caves to dwell in among the sandhills twenty miles away on the coast, but were recognised on the road, deceitfully detained by a benevolent gentleman and within a few days brought back, Borrow himself being horsed on the back of James Martineau, according to the picturesque legend, for such a thrashing that he had to lie in bed a fortnight and must bear the marks of it while he was flesh and blood. Borrow celebrated this escapade by a ballad in dialogue called “The Wandering Children and the Benevolent Gentleman. An Idyll of the Roads.” [{13a}](#) There may have been another escapade of the same kind, for Dr Knapp [{13b}](#) prints an account of how Borrow, at the age of fifteen, and two schoolfellows lived for three days in a cave at Acle when they ought to have been at school. But his companions were the same in both stories, and “three days in a cave” is a very modest increase for such a story in half-a-century. It was only fifteen years later that Borrow took revenge upon the truth and told the story of his exile with the Gypsies.

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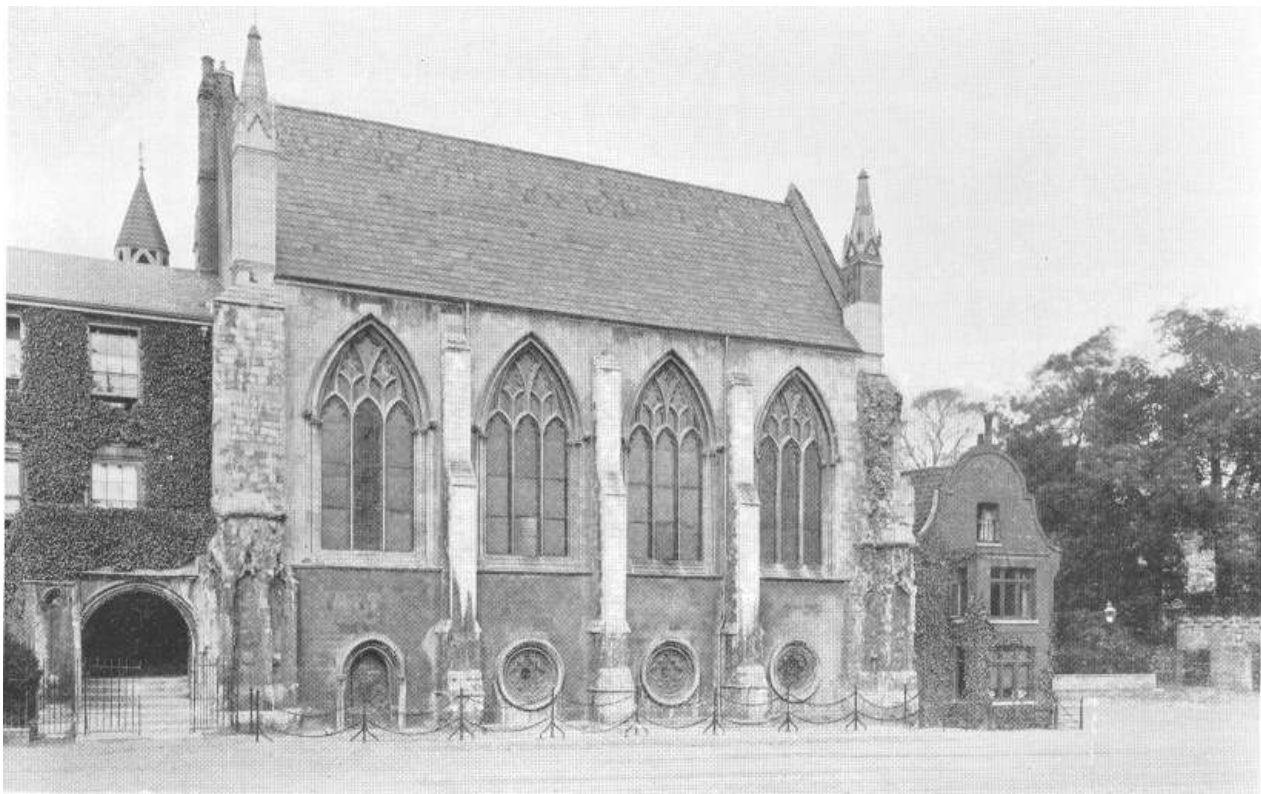


Photo: Jarrold & Sons, Norwich

THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL NORWICH

Probably every man has more or less clearly and more or less constantly before his mind’s eye an ideal self which the real seldom more than approaches. This ideal self may be morally or in other ways inferior, but it remains the standard by which the man judges his acts. Some men prove the existence of this ideal self by announcing now and then that they are misunderstood. Or they do

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things which they afterwards condemn as irrelevant or uncharacteristic and out of harmony. Borrow had an ideal self very clearly before him when he was writing, and it is probable that in writing he often described not what he was but what in a better, larger, freer, more Borrowian world he would have actually become. He admired the work of his Creator, but he would not affect to be satisfied with it in every detail, and stepping forward he snatched the brush and made a bolder line and braver colour. Also he ardently desired to do more than he ever did. When in Spain he wrote to his friend Hasfeldt at St. Petersburg, telling him that he wished to visit China by way of Russia or Constantinople and Armenia. When indignant with the Bible Society in 1838 he suggested retiring to "the Wilds of Tartary or the Zigani camps of Siberia." He continued to suggest China even after his engagement to Mrs. Clarke.

Just as he played up to the Secretary in conversation, so he played up to the friends and the public who were allured by the stories left untold or half-told in "The Zincali" and "The Bible in Spain." Chief among his encouragers was Richard Ford, author (in 1845) of the "Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home," a man of character and style, learned and a traveller. In 1841, before "The Bible in Spain" appeared, Ford told Borrow how he wished that he had told more about himself, and how he was going to hint in a review that Borrow ought to publish the whole of his adventures for the last twenty years. The publisher's reader, who saw the manuscript of "The Bible in Spain" in 1842, suggested that Borrow should prefix a short account of his birth, parentage, education and life. But already Borrow had taken Ford's hint and was thinking of an autobiography. By the end of 1842 he was suggesting a book on his early life, studies and adventures, Gypsies, boxers, philosophers; and he afterwards announced that "Lavengro" was planned and the characters sketched in 1842 and 1843. He saw himself as a public figure that had to be treated heroically. Read, for example, his preface to the second edition of "The Zincali," dated March 1, 1843. There he tells of his astonishment at the success of "The Zincali," and of John Murray bidding him not to think too much of the book but to try again and avoid "Gypsy poetry, dry laws, and compilations from dull Spanish authors."

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"Borromeo," he makes Murray say to him, "Borromeo, don't believe all you hear, nor think that you have accomplished anything so very extraordinary. . . ."

And so, he says, he sat down and began "The Bible in Spain." He proceeds to make a picture of himself amidst a landscape by some raving Titanic painter's hand:

"At first," he says, "I proceeded slowly,—sickness was in the land and the face of nature was overcast,—heavy rain-clouds swam in the heavens,—the blast howled amid the pines which nearly surround my lonely dwelling, and the waters of the lake which lies before it, so quiet in general and tranquil, were fearfully agitated. 'Bring lights hither, O Hayim Ben Attar, son of the miracle!' And the Jew of Fez brought in the lights, for though it was midday I could scarcely see in the little room where I was writing. . . ."

"A dreary summer and autumn passed by, and were succeeded by as gloomy a winter. I still proceeded with 'The Bible in Spain.' The winter passed and spring came with cold dry winds and occasional sunshine, whereupon I arose, shouted, and mounting my horse, even Sidi Habismilk, I scoured all the surrounding district, and thought but little of 'The Bible in Spain.'"

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"So I rode about the country, over the heaths, and through the green lanes of my native land, occasionally visiting friends at a distance, and sometimes, for variety's sake, I staid at home and amused myself by catching huge pike, which lie perdue in certain deep ponds skirted with lofty reeds, upon my land, and to which there is a communication from the lagoon by a deep and narrow watercourse.—I had almost forgotten "The Bible in Spain."

"Then came the summer with much heat and sunshine, and then I would lie for hours in the sun and recall the sunny days I had spent in Andalusia, and my thoughts were continually reverting to Spain, and at last I remembered that 'The Bible in Spain' was still unfinished; whereupon I arose and said: This loitering profiteth nothing,—and I hastened to my summer-house by the side of the lake, and there I thought and wrote, and every day I repaired to the same place, and thought and wrote until I had finished 'The Bible in Spain.'"

"And at the proper season 'The Bible in Spain' was given to the world; and the world, both learned and unlearned, was delighted with 'The Bible in Spain,' and the highest authority said, 'This is a much better book than the Gypsies;' and the next great authority said, 'Something betwixt Le Sage and Bunyan.' 'A far more entertaining work than Don Quixote,' exclaimed a literary lady. 'Another Gil Blas,' said the cleverest writer in Europe. 'Yes,' exclaimed the cool sensible Spectator, 'a Gil Blas *in water colours*.'

"A *Gil Blas* in water colours"—that, he says himself, pleased him better than all the rest. He liked to think that out of his adventures in distributing Bibles in Spain, out of letters describing his work to his employers, the Bible Society, he had made a narrative to be compared with the fictitious life and adventures of that gentle Spanish rogue, Gil Blas of Santillana. No wonder that he saw himself a public figure to be treated reverently, nay! heroically. And so when he comes to consider somebody's suggestion that the Gypsies are of Jewish origin, he relates a "little adventure" of his own, bringing in Mr. Petulengro and the Jewish servant whom he had brought back with him after his last visit to Spain. He mounts the heroic figure upon an heroic horse:

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"So it came to pass," he says, "that one day I was scampering over a heath, at some distance from my present home: I was mounted upon the good horse Sidi Habismilk, and the Jew of Fez, swifter than the wind, ran by the side of the good horse Habismilk, when what should I see at a

corner of the heath but the encampment of certain friends of mine; and the chief of that camp, even Mr. Petulengro, stood before the encampment, and his adopted daughter, Miss Pinfold, stood beside him.

"Myself.—'Kosko divvus, {17a} Mr. Petulengro! I am glad to see you: how are you getting on?"

"Mr. Petulengro.—'How am I getting on? as well as I can. What will you have for that nokengro? {17b}

"Thereupon I dismounted, and delivering the reins of the good horse to Miss Pinfold, I took the Jew of Fez, even Hayim Ben Attar, by the hand, and went up to Mr. Petulengro, exclaiming, 'Sure ye are two brothers.' Anon the Gypsy passed his hand over the Jew's face, and stared him in the eyes: then turning to me, he said, 'We are not dui palor; {17c} this man is no Roman; I believe him to be a Jew; he has the face of one; besides if he were a Rom, even from Jericho, he could rokra a few words in Rommany.'"

Still more important than this equestrian figure of Borrow on Sidi Habismilk is the note on "The English Dialect of the Rommany" hidden away at the end of the second edition of "The Zincali." p. 18

"Tachipen if I jaw 'doi, I can lel a bit of tan to hatch: N'etist I shan't puch kekomi wafu gorgies.'

"The above sentence, dear reader, I heard from the mouth of Mr. Petulengro, the last time that he did me the honour to visit me at my poor house, which was the day after Mol-divvus, {18a} 1842: he stayed with me during the greatest part of the morning, discoursing on the affairs of Egypt, the aspect of which, he assured me, was becoming daily worse and worse. 'There is no living for the poor people, brother,' said he, 'the chokengres (police) pursue us from place to place, and the gorgios are become either so poor or miserly, that they grudge our cattle a bite of grass by the way side, and ourselves a yard of ground to light a fire upon. Unless times alter, brother, and of that I see no probability, unless you are made either poknees or mecralliskoe geiro (justice of the peace or prime minister), I am afraid the poor persons will have to give up wandering altogether, and then what will become of them?"

"'However, brother,' he continued, in a more cheerful tone: 'I am no hindity mush, {18b} as you well know. I suppose you have not forgot how, fifteen years ago, when you made horse-shoes in the little dingle by the side of the great north road, I lent you fifty cottors {18c} to purchase the wonderful trotting cob of the innkeeper with the green Newmarket coat, which three days after you sold for two hundred.

"'Well, brother, if you had wanted the two hundred, instead of the fifty, I could have lent them to you, and would have done so, for I knew you would not be long pazorrhush to me. I am no hindity mush, brother, no Irishman; I laid out the other day twenty pounds, in buying ruponoe peamengries; {19a} and in the Chong-gav, {19b} have a house of my own with a yard behind it. p. 19

"'And, forsooth, if I go thither, I can choose a place to light a fire upon, and shall have no necessity to ask leave of these here Gentiles.'

"Well, dear reader, this last is the translation of the Gypsy sentence which heads the chapter, and which is a very characteristic specimen of the general way of speaking of the English Gypsies."

Here be mysteries. The author of "The Bible in Spain" is not only taken for a Gypsy, but once upon a time made horse-shoes in a dingle beside the great north road and trafficked in horses. When Borrow told John Murray of the Christmas meeting with Ambrose Smith, whom he now called "The Gypsy King," he said he was dressed in "true regal fashion." On the last day of that year he told Murray that he often meditated on his "life" and was arranging scenes. That reminder about the dingle and the wonderful trotting cob, and the Christmas wine, was stirring his brain. In two months time he had begun to write his "Life." He got back from the Bible Society the letters written to them when he was their representative in Russia, and these he hoped to use as he had already used those written in Spain. Ford encouraged him, saying: "Truth is great and always pleases. Never mind nimminy-pimminy people thinking subjects low. Things are low in manner of handling." In the midsummer of 1843 Borrow told Murray that he was getting on—"some parts are very wild and strange," others are full of "useful information." In another place he called the pictures in it Rembrandts interspersed with Claudes. At first the book was to have been "My Life, a Drama, by George Borrow"; at the end of the year it was "Lavengro, a Biography," and also "My Life." He was writing slowly "to please himself." Later on he called it a biography "in the Robinson Crusoe style." Nearly three years passed since that meeting with Mr. Petulengro, and still the book was not ready. Ford had been pressing him to lift a corner of the curtain which he had gradually let fall over the seven years of his life preceding his work for the Bible Society, but he made no promise. He was bent on putting in nothing but his best work, and avoiding haste. In July, 1848, Murray announced, among his "new works in preparation," "Lavengro, an Autobiography, by George Borrow." The first volume went to press in the autumn, and there was another announcement of "Lavengro, an Autobiography," followed by one of "Life, a Drama." Yet again in 1849 the book was announced as "Lavengro, an Autobiography," though the first volume already bore the title, "Life, a Drama." In 1850 publication was still delayed by Borrow's ill health and his reluctance to finish and have done with the book. It was still announced as "Lavengro, an Autobiography." But at the end of the year it was "Lavengro: the Scholar—the Gypsy—the Priest," and with that title it appeared early in 1851. Borrow was then forty-six years old, and the third volume of his book left him still in the dingle beside the great north road, when he was, according to the conversation with Mr. Petulengro, a young man of twenty-one. p. 20



Photo: H. T. Carter, East Dereham

EAST DEREHAM CHURCH, NORFOLK

CHAPTER III—PRESENTING THE TRUTH

p. 21

“Life, a Drama,” was to have been published in 1849, and proof sheets with this name and date on the title page were lately in my hands: as far as page 168 the left hand page heading is “A Dramatic History,” which is there crossed out and “Life, a Drama” thenceforward substituted. Borrow’s corrections are worth the attention of anyone who cares for men and books.

“Lavengro” now opens with the sentence: “On an evening of July, in the year 18--, at East D---, a beautiful little town in a certain district of East Anglia, I first saw the light.”

The proof shows that Borrow preferred “a certain district of East Anglia” to “The western division of Norfolk.” Here the added shade of indefiniteness can hardly seem valuable to any but the author himself. In another place he prefers (chapter XIII.) the vague “one of the most glorious of Homer’s rhapsodies” to “the enchantments of Canidia, the masterpiece of the prince of Roman poets.”

In the second chapter he describes how, near Pett, in Sussex, as a child less than three years old, he took up a viper without being injured or even resisted, amid the alarms of his mother and elder brother. After this description he comments:

“It is my firm belief that certain individuals possess an inherent power, or fascination, over certain creatures, otherwise I should be unable to account for many feats which I have witnessed, and, indeed, borne a share in, connected with the taming of brutes and reptiles.”

This was in the proof preceded by a passage at first modified and then cut out, reading thus:

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“In some parts of the world and more particularly in India there are people who devote themselves to the pursuit and taming of serpents. Had I been born in those regions I perhaps should have been what is termed a snake charmer. That I had a genius for the profession, as probably all have who follow it, I gave decided proof of the above instance as in others which I shall have occasion subsequently to relate.”

This he cut out presumably because it was too “informing” and too little “wild and strange.”

A little later in the same chapter he describes how, before he was four years old, near Hythe, in Kent, he saw in a penthouse against an old village church, “skulls of the old Danes”:

“‘Long ago’ (said the sexton, with Borrow’s aid), ‘long ago they came pirating into these parts: and then there chanced a mighty shipwreck, for God was angry with them, and He sunk them; and their skulls, as they came ashore, were placed here as a memorial. There were many more when I was young, but now they are fast disappearing. Some of them must have belonged to strange fellows, madam. Only see that one; why, the two young gentry can scarcely lift it!’ And, indeed, my brother and myself had entered the Golgotha, and commenced handling these grim relics of mortality. One enormous skull, lying in a corner, had fixed our attention, and we had drawn it forth. Spirit of eld, what a skull was yon!

“I still seem to see it, the huge grim thing; many of the others were large, strikingly so, and appeared fully to justify the old man’s conclusion that their owners must have been strange fellows; but compared with this mighty mass of bone they looked small and diminutive, like those of pigmies; it must have belonged to a giant, one of those red-haired warriors of whose strength and stature such wondrous tales are told in the ancient chronicles of the north, and whose grave-hills, when ransacked, occasionally reveal secrets which fill the minds of puny moderns with

p. 23

astonishment and awe. Reader, have you ever pored days and nights over the pages of Snorro? probably not, for he wrote in a language which few of the present day understand, and few would be tempted to read him tamed down by Latin dragomans. A brave old book is that of Snorro, containing the histories and adventures of old northern kings and champions, who seemed to have been quite different men, if we may judge from the feats which they performed, from those of these days. One of the best of his histories is that which describes the life of Harald Haardraade, who, after manifold adventures by land and sea, now a pirate, now a mercenary of the Greek emperor, became King of Norway, and eventually perished at the battle of Stanford Bridge, whilst engaged in a gallant onslaught upon England. Now, I have often thought that the old Kemp, whose mouldering skull in the Golgotha at Hythe my brother and myself could scarcely lift, must have resembled in one respect at least this Harald, whom Snorro describes as a great and wise ruler and a determined leader, dangerous in battle, of fair presence, and measuring in height just *five ells*, neither more nor less."

Of this incident he says he need offer no apology for relating it "as it subsequently exercised considerable influence over his pursuits," *i.e.*, his study of Danish literature; but in the proof he added also that the incident, "perhaps more than anything else, tended to bring my imaginative powers into action"—this he cut out, though the skulls may have impressed him as the skeleton disinterred by a horse impressed Richard Jefferies and haunted him in his "Gamekeeper," "Meadow Thoughts," and elsewhere.

Sometimes he modified a showy phrase, and "when I became ambitious of the title of Lavengro and strove to deserve it" was cut down to "when I became a student." When he wrote of Cowper in the third chapter he said, to justify Cowper's melancholy, that "Providence, whose ways are not our ways, interposed, and with the withering blasts of misery nipped that which otherwise might have terminated in fruit, noxious and lamentable"; but he substituted a mere "perhaps" for the words about Providence. In the description of young Jasper he changed his "short arms like" his father, into "long arms unlike."

p. 24

In the fourteenth chapter Borrow describes his father's retirement from the army after Waterloo, and his settling down at Norwich, so poor as to be anxious for his children's future. He speaks of poor officers who "had slight influence with the great who gave themselves very little trouble either about them or their families." Originally he went on thus, but cut out the words from the proof:

"Yet I have reason for concluding that they were not altogether overlooked by a certain power still higher than even the aristocracy of England and with yet more extensive influence in the affairs of the world. I allude to Providence, which, it is said, never forsakes those who trust in it, as I suppose these old soldiers did, for I have known many instances in which their children have contrived to make their way gallantly in the world, unaided by the patronage of the great, whilst others who were possessed of it were most miserably shipwrecked, being suddenly overset by some unexpected squall, against which it could avail them nothing."

This change is a relief to the style. The next which I shall quote is something more than that. It shows Borrow constructing the conversation of his father and mother when they were considering his prospects at the age of twelve. His father was complaining of the boy's Gypsy look, and of his ways and manners, and of the strange company he kept in Ireland—"people of evil report, of whom terrible things were said—horse-witches and the like." His mother made the excuse: "But he thinks of other things now." "Other languages, you mean," said his father. But in the proof his mother adds to her speech, "He is no longer in Ireland," and the father takes her up with, "So much the better for him; yet should he ever fall into evil practices, I shall always lay it to the account of that melancholy sojourn in Ireland and the acquaintances he formed there."

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Instead of putting into his friend, the Anglo-Germanist Williams Taylor's mouth, the opinion "that as we are aware that others frequently misinterpret us, we are equally liable to fall into the same error with respect to them," he alters it to the very different one, "That there is always some eye upon us; and that it is impossible to keep anything we do from the world, as it will assuredly be divulged by somebody as soon as it is his interest to do so."

In the twenty-fourth chapter Borrow makes Thurtell, the friend of bruisers, hint, with unconscious tragic irony, at his famous end—by dying upon the gallows for the murder of Mr. William Weare. He tells the magistrate whom he has asked to lend him a piece of land for a prize-fight that his own name is no matter.

"However," he continues, "a time may come—we are not yet buried—whensoever my hour arrives, I hope I shall prove myself equal to my destiny, however high—

"Like bird that's bred amongst the Helicons."

In the original Thurtell's quotation was:

"No poor unminded outlaw sneaking home."

This chapter now ends with the magistrate's question to young Borrow about this man: "What is his name?" In the manuscript Borrow answered, "John Thurtell." The proof had, "John . . ." Borrow hesitated, and in the margin, having crossed out "John," he put the initial "J" as a substitute, but finally crossed that out also. He was afraid of names which other people might know and regard in a different way. Thus in the same proof he altered "the philologist Scaliger"

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to "a certain philologist": thus, too, he would not write down the name of Dereham, but kept on calling it "pretty D---"; and when he had to refer to Cowper as buried in Dereham Church he spoke of the poet, not by name, but as "England's sweetest and most pious bard."

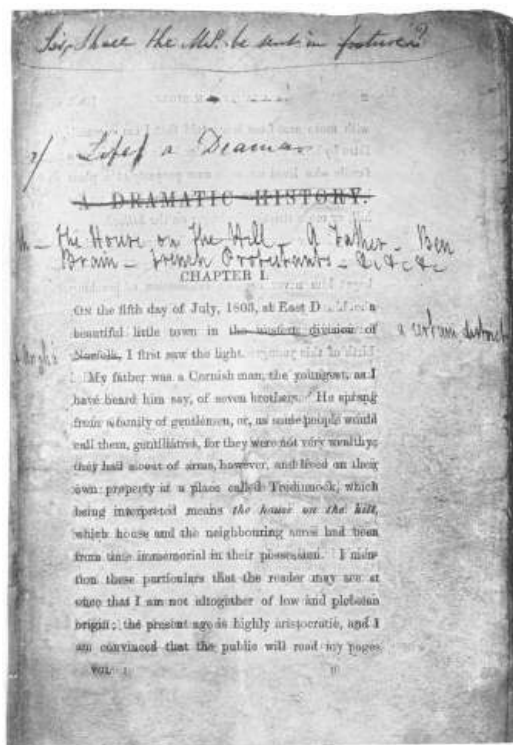


Photo: W. F. Roberts
PAGE 1 OF "LAVENGRO," SHOWING BORROW'S CORRECTIONS

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CHAPTER IV—WHAT IS TRUTH?

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These changes in the proof of what was afterwards called "Lavengro" were, it need hardly be said, made in order to bring the words nearer to a representation of the idea in Borrow's brain, and nearer to a perfect harmony with one another. Take the case of Jasper Petulengro's arm. Borrow knew the man Ambrose Smith well enough to know whether he had a long or a short arm: for did not Jasper say to him when he was dismal, "We'll now go to the tents and put on the gloves, and I'll try to make you feel what a sweet thing it is to be alive, brother!" Possibly he had a short arm like his father, but in reading the proof it must somehow have seemed to Borrow that his Jasper Petulengro—founded on Ambrose Smith and at many points resembling him—ought to have a long arm. The short arm was true to "the facts"; the long arm was more impressive and was truer to the created character, which was more important.

It was hardly these little things that kept Borrow working at "Lavengro" for nearly half of his fourth decade and a full half of his fifth. But these little things were part of the great difficulty of making an harmonious whole by changing, cutting out and inserting. When Ford and John Murray's reader asked him for his life they probably meant a plain statement of a few "important facts," such facts as there could hardly be two opinions about, such facts as fill the ordinary biography or "Who's Who." Borrow knew well enough that these facts either produce no effect in the reader's mind or they produce one effect here and a different one there, since the dullest mind cannot blankly receive a dead statement without some effort to give it life. Borrow was not going to commit himself to incontrovertible statements such as are or might be made to a Life Insurance Company. He had no command of a tombstone style and would not have himself circumscribed with full Christian name, date of birth, etc., as a sexton or parish clerk might have done for him. Twenty years later indeed—in 1862—he did write such an account of himself to be printed as part of an appendix to a history of his old school at Norwich. It is full of dates, but they are often inaccurate, and the years 1825 to 1833 he fills with "a life of roving adventures." He cannot refrain from calling himself a great rider, walker and swimmer, or from telling the story of how he walked from Norwich to London—he calls it London to Norwich—in twenty-seven hours. But in 1862 he could rely on "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye"; he was an author at the end of his career, and he had written himself down to the best of his genius. The case was different in 1842.

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He saw himself as a man variously and mysteriously alive, very different from every other man and especially from certain kinds of man. When you look at a larch wood with a floor of fern in October at the end of twilight, you are not content to have that wood described as so many hundred poles growing on three acres of land, the property of a manufacturer of gin. Still less

was Borrow content to sit down at Oulton, while the blast howled amid the pines which nearly surround his lonely dwelling, and answer the genial Ford's questions one by one: "What countries have you been in? What languages do you understand?" and so on. Ford probably divined a book as substantial and well-furnished with milestones as "The Bible in Spain," and he cheerfully told Borrow to make the broth "thick and slab."

Ford, in fact, doubled the difficulty. Not only did Borrow feel that his book must create a living soul, but the soul must be heroic to meet the expectations of Ford and the public. The equestrian group had been easy enough—himself mounted on Sidi Habismilk, with the swift Jew and the Gypsy at his side—but the life of a man was a different matter. Nor was the task eased by his exceptional memory. He claimed, as has been seen, to remember the look of the viper seen in his third year. Later, in "Lavengro," he meets a tinker and buys his stock-in-trade to set himself up with. The tinker tries to put him off by tales of the Blazing Tinman who has driven him from his beat. Borrow answers that he can manage the Tinman one way or other, saying, "I know all kinds of strange words and names, and, as I told you before, I sometimes hit people when they put me out." At last the tinker consents to sell his pony and things on one condition. "Tell me what's my name," he says; "if you can't, may I—." Borrow answers: "Don't swear, it's a bad habit, neither pleasant nor profitable. Your name is Slingsby—Jack Slingsby. There, don't stare, there's nothing in my telling you your name: I've been in these parts before, at least not very far from here. Ten years ago, when I was little more than a child, I was about twenty miles from here in a post chaise, at the door of an inn, and as I looked from the window of the chaise, I saw you standing by a gutter, with a big tin ladle in your hand, and somebody called you Jack Slingsby. I never forget anything I hear or see; I can't, I wish I could. So there's nothing strange in my knowing your name; indeed there's nothing strange in anything, provided you examine it to the bottom. Now what am I to give you for the things?"

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(I once heard a Gypsy give a similar and equal display of memory.) Dr. Knapp has corroborated several details of "Lavengro" which confirm Borrow's opinion of his memory. Hearing the author whom he met on his walk beyond Salisbury, speak of the "wine of 1811, the comet year," Borrow said that he remembered being in the market-place of Dereham, looking at that comet. [30] Dr Knapp first makes sure exactly when Borrow was at Dereham in 1811 and then that there was a comet visible during that time. He proves also from newspapers of 1820 that the fight, in the twenty sixth chapter of "Lavengro," ended in a thunderstorm like that described by Borrow and used by Petulengro to forecast the violent end of Thurtell.

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Now a brute memory like that, which cannot be gainsaid, is not an entirely good servant to a man who will not put down everything he can, like a boy at an examination. The ordinary man probably recalls all that is of importance in his past life, though he may not like to think so, but a man with a memory like Borrow's or with a supply of diaries like Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff's may well ask, "What is truth?" as Borrow often did. The facts may convey a false impression which an omission or a positive "lie" may correct.

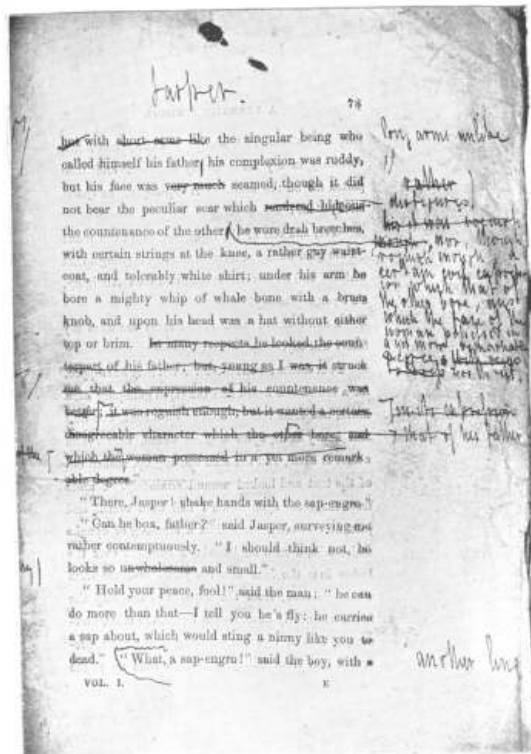


Photo: W. J. Roberts

A PAGE FROM THE AUTHOR'S PROOF COPY OF "LAVENGRO," SHOWING BORROW'S SIGNIFICANT CORRECTIONS

(Photographed by kind permission of Mr. Kyllmann and Mr. Thos. Seccombe)

Just at first, as has been seen, a month after his Christmas wine with Mr Petulengro, Borrow saw his life as a drama, perhaps as a melodrama, full of Gypsies, jockeys and horses, wild men of

many lands and several murderers. "Capital subject," he repeated. That was when he saw himself as an adventurer and Europe craning its neck to keep him in sight. But he knew well, and after the first flush he remembered, that he was not merely a robust walker, rider and philologist. When he was only eighteen he was continually asking himself "What is truth?" "I had," he says, "involved myself imperceptibly in a dreary labyrinth of doubt, and, whichever way I turned, no reasonable prospect of extricating myself appeared. The means by which I had brought myself into this situation may be very briefly told; I had inquired into many matters, in order that I might become wise, and I had read and pondered over the words of the wise, so called, till I had made myself master of the sum of human wisdom; namely, that everything is enigmatical and that man is an enigma to himself; thence the cry of 'What is truth?' I had ceased to believe in the truth of that in which I had hitherto trusted, and yet could find nothing in which I could put any fixed or deliberate belief. I was, indeed, in a labyrinth! In what did I not doubt? With respect to crime and virtue I was in doubt; I doubted that the one was blameable and the other praiseworthy. Are not all things subjected to the law of necessity? Assuredly; time and chance govern all things: yet how can this be? alas!

p. 31

"Then there was myself; for what was I born? Are not all things born to be forgotten? That's incomprehensible: yet is it not so? Those butterflies fall and are forgotten. In what is man better than a butterfly? All then is born to be forgotten. Ah! that was a pang indeed; 'tis at such a moment that a man wishes to die. The wise king of Jerusalem, who sat in his shady arbours beside his sunny fishpools, saying so many fine things, wished to die, when he saw that not only all was vanity, but that he himself was vanity. Will a time come when all will be forgotten that now is beneath the sun? If so, of what profit is life? . . .

"'Would I had never been born!' I said to myself; and a thought would occasionally intrude. But was I ever born? Is not all that I see a lie—a deceitful phantom? Is there a world, and earth, and sky? . . ."

If he no longer articulated these doubts he was still not as sure of himself as Ford imagined. He was, by the way, seldom sure of his own age, and Dr. Knapp {31} gives four instances of his underestimating it by two and even five years. Whatever may be the explanation of this, after three years' work at "Lavengro" he "will not be hurried for anyone." He was probably finding that, with no notebooks or letters to help, the work was very different from the writing of "The Bible in Spain," which was pieced together out of long letters to the Bible Society, and, moreover, was written within a few years of the events described. The events of his childhood and youth had retired into a perspective that was beyond his control: he would often be tempted to change their perspective, to bring forward some things, to set back others. In any case these things were no longer mere solid material facts. They were living a silent life of spirits within his brain. He took to calling the book his "life" or "autobiography," not "Life: a Drama." It was advertised as such; but he would not have it. At the last moment he refused to label it an autobiography, because he knew that it was inadequate, and that in any case other men would not understand or would misunderstand it. He must have felt certain that the fair figure of "Don Jorge," created in "The Bible of Spain," had been poisoned for most readers by many a passage in "Lavengro," like that where he doubted the existence of self and sky and stars, or where he told of the breakdown in his health when he was sixteen and of the gloom that followed:

p. 32

"But how much more quickly does strength desert the human frame than return to it! I had become convalescent, it is true, but my state of feebleness was truly pitiable. I believe it is in that state that the most remarkable feature of human physiology frequently exhibits itself. Oh, how dare I mention the dark feeling of mysterious dread which comes over the mind, and which the lamp of reason, though burning bright the while, is unable to dispel! Art thou, as leeches say, the concomitant of disease—the result of shattered nerves? Nay, rather the principle of woe itself, the fountain head of all sorrow co-existent with man, whose influence he feels when yet unborn, and whose workings he testifies with his earliest cries, when, 'drowned in tears,' he first beholds the light; for, as the sparks fly upward, so is man born to trouble, and woe doth he bring with him into the world, even thysel, dark one, terrible one, causeless, unbegotten, without a father. Oh, how frequently dost thou break down the barriers which divide thee from the poor soul of man, and overcast its sunshine with thy gloomy shadow. In the brightest days of prosperity—in the midst of health and wealth—how sentient is the poor human creature of thy neighbourhood! how instinctively aware that the floodgates of horror may be cast open, and the dark stream engulf him for ever and ever! Then is it not lawful for man to exclaim, 'Better that I had never been born!' Fool, for thysel thou wast not born, but to fulfil the inscrutable decrees of thy Creator; and how dost thou know that this dark principle is not, after all, thy best friend; that it is not that which tempers the whole mass of thy corruption? It may be, for what thou knowest, the mother of wisdom, and of the great works: it is the dread of the horror of the night that makes the pilgrim hasten on his way. When thou feelest it nigh, let thy safety word be 'Onward'; if thou tarry, thou art overwhelmed. Courage! build great works—'tis urging thee—it is ever nearest the favourites of God—the fool knows little of it. Thou wouldst be joyous, wouldst thou? then be a fool. What great work was ever the result of joy, the puny one? Who have been the wise ones, the mighty ones, the conquering ones of this earth? the joyous? I believe not. The fool is happy, or comparatively so—certainly the least sorrowful, but he is still a fool; and whose notes are sweetest, those of the nightingale, or of the silly lark?

p. 33

"'What ails you, my child?' said a mother to her son, as he lay on a couch under the influence of the dreadful one; 'what ails you? you seem afraid!'

p. 34

"Boy.—'And so I am; a dreadful fear is upon me.'

"Mother.—'But of what? there is no one can harm you; of what are you apprehensive?'

"Boy.—'Of nothing that I can express; I know not what I am afraid of, but afraid I am.'

"Mother.—'Perhaps you see sights and visions; I knew a lady once who was continually thinking that she saw an armed man threaten her, but it was only an imagination, a phantom of the brain.'

"Boy.—'No armed man threatens me; and 'tis not a thing that would cause me any fear. Did an armed man threaten me, I would get up and fight him; weak as I am, I would wish for nothing better, for then, perhaps, I should lose this fear; mine is a dread of I know not what, and there the horror lies.'

"Mother.—'Your forehead is cool, and your speech collected. Do you know where you are?'

"Boy.—'I know where I am, and I see things just as they are; you are beside me, and upon the table there is a book which was written by a Florentine; all this I see, and that there is no ground for being afraid. I am, moreover, quite cool, and feel no pain—but, but—'

"And then there was a burst of 'gemiti, sospiri ed alti guai.' Alas, alas, poor child of clay! as the sparks fly upward, so wast thou born to sorrow—Onward!"

And if men passed over this as a youthful distemper, rather often recurring, what would they make of his saying that "Fame after death is better than the top of fashion in life"? Would they not accuse him of entertaining them, as he did his companion and half-sweetheart of the dingle, Isopel Berners, "with strange dreams of adventure, in which he figures in opaque forests, strangling wild beasts, or discovering and plundering the hordes of dragons; and sometimes . . . other things far more genuine—how he had tamed savage mares, wrestled with Satan, and had dealings with ferocious publishers"?

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He did not simplify the matter by his preface. There he announced that the book was "a dream." He had, he said, endeavoured to describe a dream, partly of adventure, in which will be found copious notices of books and many descriptions of life and manners, some in a very unusual form. A dream containing "copious notices of books"! A dream in three volumes and over a thousand pages! A dream which he had "endeavoured to describe"! From these three words it was necessary to suppose that it was a real dream, not a narrative introduced by the machinery of a dream, like "Pilgrim's Progress," and "The Dream of Fair Women." And so it was. The book was not an autobiography but a representation of a man's life in the backward dream of memory. He had refused to drag the events of his life out of the spirit land, to turn them into a narrative on the same plane as a newspaper, leaving readers to convert them back again into reality or not, according to their choice or ability. His life seemed to him a dream, not a newspaper obituary, not an equestrian statue on a pedestal in Albemarle Street opposite John Murray's office.

The result was that "the long-talked-of autobiography" disappointed those who expected more than a collection of bold picaresque sketches. "It is not," complained the "Athenæum," "an autobiography, even with the licence of fiction;" "the interest of autobiography is lost," and as a work of fiction it is a failure. "Fraser's Magazine" said that it was "for ever hovering between Romance and Reality, and the whole tone of the narrative inspires profound distrust. Nay, more, it will make us disbelieve the tales in 'The Zinçali' and 'The Bible in Spain.'" Another critic found "a false dream in the place of reality, a shadowy nothing in the place of that something all who had read 'The Bible in Spain' craved and hoped for from his pen." His friend, William Bodham Donne, in "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine," explained how "Lavengro" was "not exactly what the public had been expecting." Another friend, Whitwell Elwin, in the "Quarterly Review," reviewing "Lavengro" and its continuation, "The Romany Rye," not only praised the truth and vividness of the descriptions, but said that "various portions of the history are known to be a faithful narrative of Mr. Borrow's career, while we ourselves can testify, as to many other parts of his volumes, that nothing can excel the fidelity with which he has described both men and things," and "why under these circumstances he should envelop the question in mystery is more than we can divine. There can be no doubt that the larger part, and possibly the whole, of the work is a narrative of actual occurrences, and just as little that it would gain immensely by a plain avowal of the fact." I have suggested that there were good reasons for not calling the work an autobiography. Dr. Knapp has shown in his fortieth chapter that the narrative was interrupted to admit lengthy references to much later events for purposes of "occult vengeance"; and that these interruptions helped to cause the delay and to change the title there can be little doubt.

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Borrow was angry at the failure of "Lavengro," and in the appendix to "The Romany Rye" he actually said that he had never called "Lavengro" an autobiography and never authorised anyone to call it such. This was not a lie but a somewhat frantic assertion that his critics were mistaken about his "dream." In later years he quietly admitted that "Lavengro" gave an account of his early life.

Yet Dr. Knapp was not strictly and completely accurate in saying that the first volume of "Lavengro" is "strictly autobiographical and authentic as the whole was at first intended to be." He could give no proof that Borrow's memory went back to his third year or that he first handled a viper at that time. He could only show that Borrow's accounts do not conflict with other accounts of the same matters. When they did conflict, Dr. Knapp was unduly elated by the discovery.

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Take, for example, the sixteenth chapter of "Lavengro," where he describes the horse fair at Norwich when he was a boy:

"The reader is already aware that I had long since conceived a passion for the equine race, a passion in which circumstances had of late not permitted me to indulge. I had no horses to ride, but I took pleasure in looking at them; and I had already attended more than one of these fairs: the present was lively enough, indeed horse fairs are seldom dull. There was shouting and whooping, neighing and braying; there was galloping and trotting; fellows with highlows and white stockings, and with many a string dangling from the knees of their tight breeches, were running desperately, holding horses by the halter, and in some cases dragging them along; there were long-tailed steeds, and dock-tailed steeds of every degree and breed; there were droves of wild ponies, and long rows of sober cart horses; there were donkeys and even mules: the last rare things to be seen in damp, misty England, for the mule pines in mud and rain, and thrives best with a hot sun above and a burning sand below. There were—oh, the gallant creatures! I hear their neigh upon the wind; there were—goodliest sight of all—certain enormous quadrupeds only seen to perfection in our native isle, led about by dapper grooms, their manes ribanded and their tails curiously clubbed and balled. Ha! ha!—how distinctly do they say, ha! ha!

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"An old man draws nigh, he is mounted on a lean pony, and he leads by the bridle one of these animals; nothing very remarkable about that creature, unless in being smaller than the rest and gentle, which they are not; he is not of the sightliest look; he is almost dun, and over one eye a thick film has gathered. But stay! there *is* something remarkable about that horse, there is something in his action in which he differs from all the rest: as he advances, the clamour is hushed! all eyes are turned upon him—what looks of interest—of respect—and, what is this? people are taking off their hats—surely not to that steed! Yes, verily! men, especially old men, are taking off their hats to that one-eyed steed, and I hear more than one deep-drawn ah!

"'What horse is that?' said I to a very old fellow, the counterpart of the old man on the pony, save that the last wore a faded suit of velveteen, and this one was dressed in a white frock.

"'The best in mother England,' said the very old man, taking a knobbed stick from his mouth, and looking me in the face, at first carelessly, but presently with something like interest; 'he is old like myself, but can still trot his twenty miles an hour. You won't live long, my swain; tall and overgrown ones like thee never does; yet, if you should chance to reach my years, you may boast to thy great grand boys, thou hast seen Marshland Shales.'

"'Amain I did for the horse what I would neither do for earl or baron, doffed my hat; yes! I doffed my hat to the wondrous horse, the fast trotter, the best in mother England; and I, too, drew a deep ah! and repeated the words of the old fellows around. 'Such a horse as this we shall never see again, a pity that he is so old.'"

But Dr. Knapp informs us that the well-known trotting stallion, Marshland Shales, was not offered for sale by auction until 1827, when he was twenty-five years old, and ten years after the date implied in "Lavengro." And what is more, Dr. Knapp concludes that Borrow must have been in Norwich in 1827, on the fair day, April 12.

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CHAPTER V—HIS PREDECESSORS

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I do not wish to make Borrow out a suffering innocent in the hands of that learned heavy-weight and wag, Dr. Knapp. Borrow was a writing man; he was sometimes a friend of jockeys, of Gypsies and of pugilists, but he was always a writing man; and the writer who is delighted to have his travels in Spain compared with the rogue romance, "Gil Blas," is no innocent. Photography, it must be remembered, was not invented. It was not in those days thought possible to get life on to the paper by copying it with ink. Words could not be the equivalents of acts. Life itself is fleeting, but words remain and are put to our account. Every action, it is true, is as old as man and never perishes without an heir. But so are words as old as man, and they are conservative and stern in their treatment of transitory life. Every action seems new and unique to the doer, but how rarely does it seem so when it is recorded in words, how rarely perhaps it is possible for it to seem so. A new form of literature cannot be invented to match the most grand or most lovely life. And fortunately; for if it could, one more proof of the ancient lineage of our life would have been lost. Borrow did not sacrifice the proof. He had read many books in many languages, and he had a strong taste. He liked "Gil Blas," which is a simple chain of various and surprising adventures. He liked the lives of criminals in the "Newgate Lives and Trials" (or rather "Celebrated Trials," 1825), which he compiled for a publisher in his youth.

"What struck me most," he said, "with respect to these lives was the art which the writers, whoever they were, possessed of telling a plain story. It is no easy thing to tell a story plainly and distinctly by mouth; but to tell one on paper is difficult indeed, so many snares lie in the way. People are afraid to put down what is common on paper, they seek to embellish their narrative, as they think, by philosophic speculations and reflections; they are anxious to shine, and people who are anxious to shine, can never tell a plain story. 'So I went with them to a music booth, where they made me almost drunk with gin, and began to talk their flash language, which I did not understand,' says, or is made to say, Henry Simms, executed at Tyburn some seventy years before the time of which I am speaking. I have always looked upon this sentence as a

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masterpiece of the narrative style, it is so concise and yet so very clear."

Borrow read Bunyan, Sterne and Smollett: he liked Byron's "Childe Harold" and his "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte";—he liked that portrait with all Europe and all history for a background. Above all, he read Defoe, and in the third chapter of "Lavengro" he has described his first sight of "Robinson Crusoe" as a little child:

"The first object on which my eyes rested was a picture; it was exceedingly well executed, at least the scene which it represented made a vivid impression upon me, which would hardly have been the case had the artist not been faithful to nature. A wild scene it was—a heavy sea and rocky shore, with mountains in the background, above which the moon was peering. Not far from the shore, upon the water, was a boat with two figures in it, one of which stood at the bow, pointing with what I knew to be a gun at a dreadful shape in the water; fire was flashing from the muzzle of the gun, and the monster appeared to be transfixed. I almost thought I heard its cry. I remained motionless, gazing upon the picture, scarcely daring to draw my breath, lest the new and wondrous world should vanish of which I had now obtained a glimpse. 'Who are those people, and what could have brought them into that strange situation?' I asked myself; and now the seed of curiosity, which had so long lain dormant, began to expand, and I vowed to myself to become speedily acquainted with the whole history of the people in the boat. After looking on the picture till every mark and line in it were familiar to me, I turned over various leaves till I came to another engraving; a new source of wonder—a low sandy beach on which the furious sea was breaking in mountain-like billows; cloud and rack deformed the firmament, which wore a dull and leaden-like hue; gulls and other aquatic fowls were toppling upon the blast, or skimming over the tops of the maddening waves—'Mercy upon him! he must be drowned!' I exclaimed, as my eyes fell upon a poor wretch who appeared to be striving to reach the shore; he was upon his legs, but was evidently half smothered with the brine; high above his head curled a horrible billow, as if to engulf him for ever. 'He must be drowned! he must be drowned!' I almost shrieked, and dropped the book. I soon snatched it up again, and now my eye lighted on a third picture; again a shore, but what a sweet and lovely one, and how I wished to be treading it; there were beautiful shells lying on the smooth white sand, some were empty like those I had occasionally seen on marble mantelpieces, but out of others peered the heads and bodies of wondrous crayfish; a wood of thick green trees skirted the beach and partly shaded it from the rays of the sun, which shone hot above, while blue waves slightly crested with foam were gently curling against it; there was a human figure upon the beach, wild and uncouth, clad in the skins of animals, with a huge cap on his head, a hatchet at his girdle, and in his hand a gun; his feet and legs were bare; he stood in an attitude of horror and surprise; his body was bent far back, and his eyes, which seemed starting out of his head, were fixed upon a mark on the sand—a large distinct mark—a human footprint!

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"Reader, is it necessary to name the book which now stood open in my hand, and whose very prints, feeble expounders of its wondrous lines, had produced within me emotions strange and novel? Scarcely, for it was a book which has exerted over the minds of Englishmen an influence certainly greater than any other of modern times, which has been in most people's hands, and with the contents of which even those who cannot read are to a certain extent acquainted; a book from which the most luxuriant and fertile of our modern prose writers have drunk inspiration; a book, moreover, to which, from the hardy deeds which it narrates, and the spirit of strange and romantic enterprise which it tends to awaken, England owes many of her astonishing discoveries both by sea and land, and no inconsiderable part of her naval glory.

"Hail to thee, spirit of De Foe! What does not my own poor self owe to thee? England has better bards than either Greece or Rome, yet I could spare them easier far than De Foe, 'unabashed De Foe,' as the hunchbacked rhymer styled him."

It was in this manner, he declares, that he "first took to the paths of knowledge," and when he began his own "autobiography" he must have well remembered the opening of "Robinson Crusoe":—"I was born in the year 1632, in the City of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, named Kreutznaer, who first settled at Hull," though Borrow himself would have written it: "I was born in the year 16---, in the City of Y---, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, named Kruschen, who first settled at H---." Probably he remembered also that other fictitious autobiography of Defoe's, "The Adventures of Captain Singleton," of the child who was stolen and disposed of to a Gypsy and lived with his good Gypsy mother until she happened to be hanged, a little too soon for him to be "perfected in the strolling trade." Defoe had told him long before Richard Ford that he need not be afraid of being low. He could always give the same excuse as Defoe in "Moll Flanders"—"as the best use is to be made even of the worst story, the moral, 'tis hoped, will keep the reader serious, even where the story might incline him to be otherwise." In fact, Borrow did afterwards claim that his book set forth in as striking a way as any "the kindness and providence of God." Even so, De Quincey suggested as an excuse in his "Confessions" the service possibly to be rendered to other opium-eaters. Borrow tells us in the twenty-second chapter of "Lavengro" how he sought for other books of adventure like "Robinson Crusoe"—which he will not mention by name!—and how he read many "books of singular power, but of coarse and prurient imagination." One of these, "The English Rogue," he describes as a book "written by a remarkable genius." He might have remembered in its preface the author lamenting that, though it was meant for the life of a "witty extravagant," readers would regard it as the author's own life, "and notwithstanding all that hath been said to the contrary many still continue in this belief." He might also have remembered that the apology for portraying so much vice was that the

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ugliness of it—"her *vizard-mask* being remov'd"—"cannot but cause in her (*quondam*) adorers, a *loathing* instead of *loving*." The dirty hero runs away as a boy and on the very first day tires of nuts and blackberries and longs "to taste of the *fleshpots* again." He sleeps in a barn until he is waked, pursued and caught by Gypsies. He agrees to stay with them, and they have a debauch of eating, drinking and fornication, which makes him well content to join the "Ragged Regiment." They colour his face with walnut juice so that he looks a "true son of an Egyptian." Hundreds of pages are filled thereafter by tediously dragging in, mostly from other books, joyless and leering adventures of low dishonesty and low lust. Another book of the kind which Borrow knew was the life of Bamfylde Moore-Carew, born in 1693 at a Devonshire rectory. He hunted the deer with some of his schoolfellows from Tiverton and they played truant for fear of punishment. They fell in with some Gypsies feasting and carousing and asked to be allowed to "enlist into their company." The Gypsies admitted them after the "requisite ceremonies" and "proper oaths." The philosophy of Carew or his historian is worth noticing. He says of the Gypsies:

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"There are perhaps no people so completely happy as they are, or enjoy so great a share of liberty. The king is elective by the whole people, but none are allowed to stand as candidates for that honour but such as have been long in their society, and perfectly studied the nature and institution of it; they must likewise have given repeated proofs of their personal wisdom, courage and capacity; this is better known as they always keep a public record or register of all remarkable (either good or bad) actions performed by any of their society, and they can have no temptation to make choice of any but the most worthy, as their king has no titles or legislative employments to bestow, which might influence or corrupt their judgments.

"The laws of these people are few and simple, but most exactly and punctually observed; the fundamental of which is that strong love and mutual regard for each member in particular and for the whole community in general, which is inculcated into them from the earliest infancy. . . . Experience has shown them that, by keeping up their nice sense of honour and shame, they are always enabled to keep their community in better order than the most severe corporal punishments have been able to effect in other governments.

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"But what has still more tended to preserve their happiness is that they know no other use of riches than the enjoyment of them. They know no other use of it than that of promoting mirth and good humour; for which end they generously bring their gains into a common stock, whereby they whose gains are small have an equal enjoyment with those whose profits are larger, excepting only that a mark or ignominy is affixed on those who do not contribute to the common stock proportionately to their abilities and the opportunities they have of gain, and this is the source of their uninterrupted happiness; fully this means they have no griping usurer to grind them, no lordly possessor to trample on them, nor any envyings to torment them; they have no settled habitations, but, like the Scythian of old, remove from place to place, as often as their convenience or pleasure requires it, which render their life a perpetual source of the greatest variety.

"By what we have said above, and much more that we could add of the happiness of these people and of their peculiar attachment to each other, we may account for what has been matter of much surprise to the friends of our hero, viz., his strong attachment, for the space of about forty years, to this community, and his refusing the large offers that have been made to quit their society."

Carew himself met with nothing but success in his various impersonations of Tom o' Bedlam, a rat-catcher, a non-juring clergyman, a shipwrecked Quaker, and an aged woman with three orphan grandchildren. He was elected King of the Beggars, and lost the dignity only by deliberate abdication. "The restraints of a town not suiting him after the free rambling life he had led, he took a house in the country, and having acquired some property on the decease of a relation, he was in a position to purchase a residence more suited to his taste, and lived for some years a quiet life 'respected best by those who knew him best.'"

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A very different literary hero of Borrow's was William Cobbett, in spite of his radical opinions. Cobbett was a man who wrote, as it were, with his fist, not the tips of his fingers. When I begin to read him I think at once of a small country town where men talk loudly to one another at a distance or as they walk along in opposite directions, and the voices ring as their heels do on the cobbles. He is not a man of arguments, but of convictions. He is so full of convictions that, though not an indolent man, he has no time for arguments. "On this stiff ground," he says in North Wiltshire, "they grow a good many beans and give them to the pigs with whey; which makes excellent pork for the *Londoners*; but which must meet with a pretty hungry stomach to swallow it in Hampshire." When he was being shouted down at Lewes in 1822, and someone moved that he should be put out of the room, he says: "I rose that they might see the man that they had to put out." The hand that holds the bridle holds the pen. The night after he has been hare-hunting—Friday, November the sixteenth, 1821, at Old Hall, in Herefordshire—he writes down this note of it:

"A whole day most delightfully passed a hare-hunting, with a pretty pack of hounds kept here by Messrs. Palmer. They put me upon a horse that seemed to have been made on purpose for me, strong, tall, gentle and bold; and that carried me either over or through every thing. I, who am just the weight of a four-bushel sack of good wheat, actually sat on her back from daylight in the morning to dusk (about nine hours) without once setting my foot on the ground. Our ground was at Orcop, a place about four miles distance from this place. We found a hare in a few minutes after throwing off; and, in the course of the day, we had to find four, and were never more than

ten minutes in finding. A steep and naked ridge, lying between two flat valleys, having a mixture of pretty large fields and small woods, formed our ground. The hares crossed the ridge forward and backward, and gave us numerous views and very fine sport. I never rode on such steep ground before; and, really, in going up and down some of the craggy places, where the rain had washed the earth from the rocks, I did think, once or twice of my neck, and how Sidmouth would like to see me. As to the *cruelty*, as some pretend, of this sport, that point I have, I think, settled, in one of the chapters of my 'Year's Residence in America.' As to the expense, a pack, even a full pack of harriers, like this, costs less than two bottles of wine a day with their inseparable concomitants. And as to the *time* spent, hunting is inseparable from *early rising*; and, with habits of early rising, who ever wanted time for any business?"

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Borrow could not resist this man's plain living and plain thinking, or his sentences that are like acts—like blows or strides. And if he had needed any encouragement in the expression of prejudices, Cobbett offered it. The following, from "Cottage Economy," will serve as an example. It is from a chapter on "Brewing":—

"The practice of tea drinking must render the frame feeble and unfit to encounter hard labour or severe weather, while, as I have shown, it deducts from the means of replenishing the belly and covering the back. Hence succeeds a softness, an effeminacy, a seeking for the fireside, a lurking in the bed, and, in short, all the characteristics of idleness for which, in his case, real want of strength furnishes an apology. The tea drinking fills the public-house, makes the frequenting of it habitual, corrupts boys as soon as they are able to move from home, and does little less for the girls, to whom the gossip of the teatable is no bad preparatory school for the brothel. At the very least, it teaches them idleness. The everlasting dawdling about with the slops of the tea-tackle gives them a relish for nothing that requires strength and activity. When they go from home, they know how to do nothing that is useful, to brew, to bake, to make butter, to milk, to rear poultry; to do any earthly thing of use they are wholly unqualified. To shut poor young creatures up in manufactories is bad enough; but there at any rate they do something that is useful; whereas the girl that has been brought up merely to boil the teakettle, and to assist in the gossip inseparable from the practice, is a mere consumer of food, a pest to her employer, and a curse to her husband, if any man be so unfortunate as to fix his affections upon her.

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"But is it in the power of any man, any good labourer who has attained the age of fifty, to look back upon the last thirty years of his life, without cursing the day in which tea was introduced into England? Where is there such a man who cannot trace to this cause a very considerable part of all the mortifications and sufferings of his life? When was he ever too late at his labour; when did he ever meet with a frown, with a turning off and with pauperism on that account, without being able to trace it to the teakettle? When reproached with lagging in the morning, the poor wretch tells you that he will make up for it by *working during his breakfast time!* I have heard this a hundred and a hundred times over. He was up time enough; but the teakettle kept him lolling and lounging at home; and now instead of sitting down to a breakfast upon bread, bacon and beer, which is to carry him on to the hour of dinner, he has to force his limbs along under the sweat of feebleness, and at dinner-time to swallow his dry bread, or slake his half-feverish thirst at the pump or the brook. To the wretched teakettle he has to return at night with legs hardly sufficient to maintain him; and then he makes his miserable progress towards that death which he finds ten or fifteen years sooner than he would have found it had he made his wife brew beer instead of making tea. If he now and then gladdens his heart with the drugs of the public-house, some quarrel, some accident, some illness is the probable consequence; to the affray abroad succeeds an affray at home; the mischievous example reaches the children, cramps them or scatters them, and misery for life is the consequence." As Cobbett wrote against tea so was Borrow to write against the Pope.

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Being a reading and a writing man who had set down all his most substantial adventures in earlier books, Borrow, says Mr. Thomas Seccombe, had no choice but "to interpret autobiography as 'autobiographiction.'" [50] Parts of the autobiography, he says, are "as accurate and veracious as John Wesley's 'Journal,' but the way in which the dingle ingredients" [in the stories of Isopel Berners, the postillion, and the Man in Black] "are mingled, and the extent to which lies—damned lies—or facts predominate, will always be a fascinating topic for literary conjecture." It must not be forgotten, however, that Borrow never called the published book his autobiography. He did something like what I believe young writers often do; he described events in his own life with modifications for the purpose of concealment in some cases and of embellishment in others. If he had never labelled it an autobiography there would have been no mystery, and the conclusion of readers would be that most of it could not have been invented, but that the postillion's story, for example, is a short story written to embody some facts and some opinions, without any appearance of being the whole truth and nothing but the truth. If Borrow made a set of letters to the Bible Society into a book like "Gil Blas," he could hardly do less—especially when he had been reminded of the fact—with his remoter adventures; and having taken out dates and names of persons and places he felt free. He produced his view of himself, as De Quincey did in his "Confessions of an English Opium Eater." This view was modified by his public reputation, by his too potent memory and the need for selection, by his artistic sense, and by his literary training. So far from suffering by the two elements, if they are to be separated, of fiction and autobiography, "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" gain immensely. The autobiographical form—the use of the first person singular—is no mere device to attract an interest and belief as in "Captain Singleton" and a thousand novels. Again and again we are made perfectly certain that the man could not have written otherwise. He is sounding his own depths, and out of mere shyness, at times, uses the transparent amateur trick of pretending that

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he was writing of someone else. Years afterwards, when Mr. Watts-Dunton asked him, "What is the real nature of autobiography?" he answered in questions: "Is it a mere record of the incidents of a man's life? or is it a picture of the man himself—his character, his soul?"

CHAPTER VI—THE BIOGRAPHER'S MATERIAL

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"Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" give Borrow's character and soul by direct and indirect means. Their truth and fiction produce a consistent picture which we feel to be true. Dr. Knapp has shown, where the facts are accessible, that Borrow does not much neglect, mislay or pervert them. But neither Dr. Knapp nor anyone else has captured facts which would be of any significance had Borrow told us nothing himself. Some of the anecdotes lap a branch here and there; some disclose a little rotten wood or fungus; others show the might of a great limb, perhaps a knotty protuberance with a grotesque likeness, or the height of the whole; others again are like clumsy arrogant initials carved on the venerable bark. I shall use some of them, but for the most part I shall use Borrow's own brush both to portray and to correct.

CHAPTER VII—PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST

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The five works of Borrow's maturity—from "The Zincoli: or the Gypsies of Spain," written when he had turned thirty, to "Wild Wales," written when he had turned fifty—have this in common, and perhaps for their chief quality, that of set purpose and by inevitable accident they reveal Borrow, the body and the spirit of the man. Together they compose a portrait, if not a small gallery of portraits. Of these the most deliberate is the one that emerges from "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye." In these books, written after he had passed forty, he described the first twenty-two years of his life, without, so far as is known, using any notebooks or other contemporary documents. As I have said before, the literal accuracy of such a description must have been limited by his power and his willingness to see things as they were. In some ways there is no greater stranger to the youth of twenty than the man of forty who was once that youth, and if he overcomes that strangeness it is often by the perilous process of concealing the strangeness and the difference. The result is—or is it an individual misfortune of mine?—that the figure of "Lavengro" seems to me, more often than not, and on the whole, to be nearer the age of forty than of twenty. The artist, that is to say, dominates his subject, the tall overgrown youth of twenty-two, as grey as a badger. It is very different in "The Bible in Spain," where artist and subject are equally matched, and both mature. In "Lavengro" there is a roundabout method, a painful poring subtlety and minuteness, a marvellous combination of Sterne and Defoe, resulting in something very little like any book written by either man: in "The Bible in Spain" a straightforward, confident, unqualified revelation that seems almost unconsidered.

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CHAPTER VIII—CHILDHOOD

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And now for some raw bones of the life of a man who was born in 1803 and died in 1881, bones picked white and dry by the winds of thirty, forty, fifty, and a hundred years.

Thomas Borrow, his father, an eighth and youngest son, was born in 1758 of a yeoman family long and still settled in Cornwall, near Liskeard. He worked for some time on his brother's farm. At nineteen he joined the Militia and was apprenticed to a maltster, but, having knocked his master down in a free fight at Menheniot Fair in 1783, disappeared and enlisted as a private in the Coldstream Guards. He was then a man of fresh complexion and light brown hair, just under five feet eight inches in height. He was a sergeant when he was transferred nine years later to the West Norfolk Regiment of Militia. In 1798 he was promoted to the office of adjutant with the rank of captain. In 1793 he had married Ann Perfrement, a tenant farmer's daughter from East Dereham, and probably of French Protestant descent, whom he had first met when she was playing a minor part as an amateur at East Dereham with a company from the Theatre Royal at Norwich. She had, says Borrow, dark brilliant eyes, oval face, olive complexion, and Grecian forehead.

The first child of this marriage, John Thomas, was born in 1800. Borrow describes this elder brother as a beautiful child of "rosy, angelic face, blue eyes and light chestnut hair," yet of "not exactly an Anglo-Saxon countenance," having something of "the Celtic character, particularly in the fire and vivacity which illumined it." John was his father's favourite. He entered the army and became a lieutenant, but also, and especially after the end of the war, a painter, studying under B. R. Haydon and old Crome. He went out to Mexico in the service of a mining company in 1826, and died there in 1834.

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George Borrow was born in 1803 at another station of the regiment, East Dereham. He calls

himself a gloomy child, a "lover of nooks and retired corners . . . sitting for hours together with my head on my breast . . . conscious of a peculiar heaviness within me, and at times of a strange sensation of fear, which occasionally amounted to horror, and for which I could assign no real cause whatever." A maidservant thought him a little wrong in the head, but a Jew pedlar rebuked her for saying so, and said the child had "all the look of one of our people's children," and praised his bright eyes. With the regiment he travelled along the Sussex and Kent coast during the next four years. They were at Pett in 1806, and there he tells us that he first handled a viper, fearless and unharmed. In 1806 also they were at Hythe, where he saw the skulls of the Danes. They were at Canterbury in 1807, and near there was the scene of his eating the "green, red, and purple" berries from the hedge and suffering convulsions. They were, says Dr. Knapp, from the regimental records, never at Winchester, but at Winchelsea. In 1809 and 1810 they were back at Dereham, which was then the home of Eleanor Fenn, his "Lady Bountiful," widow of the editor of the "Paston Letters," Sir John Fenn. He had "increased rapidly in size and in strength," but not in mind, and could read only imperfectly until "Robinson Crusoe" drew him out. He went to church twice on Sundays, and never heard God's name without a tremor, "for I now knew that God was an awful and inscrutable being, the maker of all things; that we were His children, and that we, by our sins, had justly offended Him; that we were in very great peril from His anger, not so much in this life as in another and far stranger state of being yet to come; that we had a Saviour withal to whom it was necessary to look for help: upon this point, however, I was yet very much in the dark, as, indeed, were most of those with whom I was connected. The power and terrors of God were uppermost in my thoughts; they fascinated though they astounded me."

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Photo: H. T. Cave, East Dereham

BORROW'S BIRTH-PLACE, EAST DEREHAM, NORFOLK

Later in 1810 he was at Norman Cross, in Huntingdonshire, and was free to wander alone by Whittlesea Mere. There he met the old viper-hunter and herbalist, into whose mouth he puts the tale of the King of the Vipers. There he met the Gypsies. He answered their threats with a viper that had lain hid in his breast; they called him "Sapengro, a chap who catches snakes and plays tricks with them." He was sworn brother to Jasper, the son, who despised him for being puny.

The Borrowes were at Dereham again in 1811, and George went to school "for the acquisition of Latin," and learnt the whole of Lilly's Grammar by heart. Other marches of the regiment left him time to wonder at that "stupendous erection, the aqueduct at Stockport"—to visit Durham and "a capital old inn" there, where he had "a capital dinner off roast Durham beef, and a capital glass of ale, which I believe was the cause of my being ever after fond of ale"—so he told the Durham miner whom he met on his way to the Devil's Bridge, in Cardiganshire—and to attend school at Huddersfield in 1812 and at Edinburgh in 1813 and 1814.

He mentions the frequent fights at the High School and the pitched battles between the Old and the New Town. Climbing the Castle Rock was his favourite diversion, and on one "horrible edge" he came upon David Haggart sitting and thinking of William Wallace:

"And why were ye thinking of him?" Borrow says that he asked the lad. "The English hanged him long since, as I have heard say."

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"I was thinking," he answered, "that I should wish to be like him."

"Do ye mean," Borrow says that he said, "that ye would wish to be hanged?"

This youth was a drummer boy in Captain Borrow's regiment. Borrow describes him upsetting the New Town champion in one of the bickers. Seven years later he was condemned to death at Edinburgh, and to earn a little money for his mother he dictated an account of his life to the prison chaplain before he died. It was published in 1821 with the title: "The Life of David Haggart, alias John Wilson, alias John Morison, alias Barney M'Coul, alias John M'Colgan, alias David O'Brien, alias the Switcher. Written by himself, while under sentence of death." It is worth reading, notable in itself and for its style.

He was a gamekeeper's son, and being a merry boy was liberally tipped by sportsmen. Yet he ran away from home at the age of ten. One of his first exploits was the stealing of a bantam cock. It belonged to a woman at the back of the New Town of Edinburgh, says he, and he took a great fancy to it, "for it was a real beauty and I offered to *buy*, but mistress would not *sell*, so I got another cock, and set the two a fighting, and then off with my prize." This is like Mr. W. B. Yeats' Paddy Cockfight in "Where there is nothing"; he got a fighting cock from a man below Mullingar—"The first day I saw him I fastened my eyes on him, he preyed on my mind, and next night if I didn't go back every foot of nine miles to put him in my bag." When he was twelve he got drunk at the Leith races and enlisted in the Norfolk Militia, which had a recruiting party for patriots at the races. "I learned," he says, "to beat the drum very well in the course of three months, and afterwards made considerable progress in blowing the bugle-horn. I liked the red coat and the soldiering well enough for a while, but soon tired. We were too much confined, and there was too little pay for me;" and so he got his discharge. "The restraining influences of military discipline," says Dr. Knapp, "gradually wore away." He went back to school even, but in vain. He was "never happier in his life" than when he "fingered all this money"—£200 acquired by theft. He worked at his trade of thieving in many parts of Scotland and Ireland. As early as 1818 he was sentenced to death, but escaped, and, being recognised by a policeman, killed him and got clear away. He served one or two sentences and escaped from another. He escaped a third time, with a friend, after hitting the gaoler in such a manner that he afterwards died. The friend was caught at once, but David ran well—"never did a fox double the hounds in better style"—and got away in woman's clothes. As he was resting in a haystack after his run of ten miles in an hour, he heard a woman ask "if that lad was taken that had broken out of Dumfries Gaol," and the answer: "No; but the gaoler died last night at ten o'clock." He got arrested in Ireland through sheer carelessness, was recognised and taken in irons to Dumfries again—and so he died.

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In 1814 and 1815 Borrow was for a time at the Grammar School at Norwich, but sailed with the regiment "in the autumn of the year 1815" for Ireland. "On the eighth day of our voyage," he says, "we were in sight of Ireland. The weather was now calm and serene, the sun shone brightly on the sea and on certain green hills in the distance, on which I descried what at first sight I believed to be two ladies gathering flowers, which, however, on our near approach, proved to be two tall white towers, doubtless built for some purpose or other, though I did not learn for what." He was at "the Protestant Academy" at Clonmel, and "read the Latin tongue and the Greek letters with a nice old clergyman." From a schoolfellow he learnt something of the Irish tongue in exchange for a pack of cards.

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School, he says, had helped him to cast aside, in a great degree, his unsocial habits and natural reserve, and when he moved to Templemore, where there was no school, he roamed about the wild country, "sometimes entering the cabins of the peasantry with a 'God's blessing upon you good people!'" Here, as in Scotland, he seems to have done as he liked. His father had other things to do than look after the child whom he was later on to upbraid for growing up in a displeasing way. Ireland made a strong impression upon the boy, if we may judge from his writing about it when he looked back on those days. He recalls, in "Wild Wales," hearing the glorious tune of "Croppies lie Down" in the barrack yard at Clonmel. Again and again he recalls Murtagh, the wild Irish boy who taught him Irish for a pack of cards. In Ireland he learnt to be "a frank rider" without a saddle, and had awakened in him his "passion for the equine race": and here he had his cob shoed by a "fairy smith" who first roused the animal to a frenzy by uttering a strange word "in a sharp pungent tone," and then calmed it by another word "in a voice singularly modified but sweet and almost plaintive." Above all there is a mystery which might easily be called Celtic about his memories of Ireland, due chiefly to something in his own blood, but also to the Irish atmosphere which evoked that something in its perfection.

After less than a year in Ireland the regiment was back at Norwich, and war being at an end, the men were mustered out in 1815.



Photo: Jarrold & Sons, Norwich

BORROW'S COURT, NORWICH

CHAPTER IX—SCHOOLDAYS

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The Borrows now settled at Norwich in what was then King's Court and is now Borrow's Court, off Willow Lane. George Borrow, therefore, again attended the Grammar School of Norwich. He could then, he says, read Greek. His father's dissatisfaction was apparently due to some instinctive antipathy for the child, who had neither his hair nor his eyes, but was "absolutely swarthy, God forgive me! I had almost said like that of a Gypsy." As in Scotland and Ireland, so now at Norwich, Captain Borrow probably let the boy do what he liked. As for Mrs. Borrow, perhaps she favoured the boy, who took after her in eyes and complexion, if not also in temperament. Her influence was of an unconscious kind, strengthening her prenatal influence; unlike her husband, she had no doubt that "Providence" would take care of the boy. Borrow, at least, thought her like himself. In a suppressed portion of the twentieth chapter of "Lavengo" he makes his parents talk together in the garden, and the mother having a story to tell suggests their going in because it is growing dark. The father says that a tale of terror is the better for being told in the dark, and hopes she is not afraid. The mother scoffs at the mention of fear, and yet, she says, she feels a thrill as if something were casting a cold shadow on her. She wonders if this feeling is like the indescribable fear, "which he calls the shadow," which sometimes attacks her younger child. "Never mind the child or his shadow," says the father, and bids her go on. And from what follows the mother has evidently told the story before to her son. This dialogue may very well express the contrast between husband and wife and their attitudes towards their younger son. Borrow very eloquently addresses his father as "a noble specimen of those strong single-minded Englishmen, who, without making a parade either of religion or loyalty, feared God and honoured their king, and were not particularly friendly to the French," and as a pugilist who

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almost vanquished the famous Ben Bryan; but he does not conceal the fact that he was "so little to thee that thou understoodst me not."

At Norwich Grammar School Borrow had as schoolfellows James Martineau and James Brooke, afterwards Rajah of Sarawak. The headmaster was one Edward Valpy, who thrashed Borrow, and there is nothing more to be said. The boy was fond of study but not of school. "For want of something better to do," he taught himself some French and Italian, but wished he had a master. A master was found in a French *émigré*, the Rev. Thomas D'Eterville, who gave private lessons to Borrow, among others, in French, Italian and Spanish. His other teachers were an old musket with which he shot bullfinches, blackbirds and linnets, a fishing rod with which he haunted the Yare, and the sporting gent, John Thurtell, who taught him to box and accustomed him to pugilism.

Something is known of Thurtell apart from Borrow. He was the son of a man who was afterwards Mayor of Norwich. He had been a soldier and he was now in business. He arranged prize fights and boxed himself. He afterwards murdered a man who had dishonestly relieved him of £400 at gambling, and he was executed for the offence at Hertford in 1824. The trial was celebrated. It was there that a "respectable" man was defined by a witness as one who "kept a gig." The trial was included in the "Celebrated Trials and Remarkable Cases of Criminal Jurisprudence" which Borrow compiled in 1825; and Borrow may have written this description of the accused:

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"Thurtell was dressed in a plum-coloured frock coat, with a drab waistcoat and gilt buttons, and white corded breeches. His neck had a black stock on, which fitted as usual stiffly up to the bottom of the cheek and end of the chin, and which therefore pushed forward the flesh on this part of the face so as to give an additionally sullen weight to the countenance. The lower part of the face was unusually large, muscular and heavy, and appeared to hang like a load to the head, and to make it drop like the mastiff's jowl. The upper lip was long and large, and the mouth had a severe and dogged appearance. His nose was rather small for such a face, but it was not badly shaped; his eyes, too, were small and buried deep under his protruding forehead, so indeed as to defy detection of their colour. The forehead was extremely strong, bony and knotted—and the eyebrows were forcibly marked though irregular—that over the right eye being nearly straight and that on the left turning up to a point so as to give a very painful expression to the whole face. His hair was of a good lightish brown, and not worn after any fashion. His frame was exceedingly well knit and athletic."

An eye witness reports that seven hours before his execution, Thurtell said: "It is perhaps wrong in my situation, but I own I should like to read Pierce Egan's account of the great fight yesterday" (meaning that between Spring and Langan). He slept well through his last night, and said: "I have dreamt many odd things, but I never dreamt anything about *this business* since I have been in Hertford." Pierce Egan described the trial and execution, and how Thurtell bowed in a friendly and dignified manner to someone—"we believe, Mr. Pierce Egan"—in the crowd about the gallows. Pierce Egan did not mention the sound of his cracking neck, but Borrow is reported to have said it was a shame to hang such a man as Thurtell: "Why, when his neck broke it went off like a pistol."

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Thurtell is the second of Borrow's friends who preceded him in fame.

During his school days under Valpy, Borrow met his sworn brother again—the Gypsy Petulengro. He places this meeting at the Tombland Fair at Norwich, and Dr. Knapp fixes it, precisely, on March 19, 1818. According to Borrow's account, which is the only one, he was shadowed and then greeted by Jasper Petulengro. They went together to the Gypsy encampment on Household Heath, and they were together there often again, in spite of the hostility of one Gypsy, Mrs. Herne, to Borrow. He says that he went with them to fairs and markets and learnt their language in spite of Mrs. Herne, so that they called him Lav-engro, or Word Master. The mighty Tawno Chikno also called him Cooro-mengro, because of his mastery with the fist. He was then sixteen. He is said to have stained his face to darken it further, and to have been asked by Valpy: "Is that jaundice or only dirt, Borrow?"

CHAPTER X—LEAVING SCHOOL

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With so much liberty Borrow desired more. He played truant and, as we have seen, was thrashed for it. He was soon to leave school for good, though there is nothing to prove that he left on account of this escapade, or that the thrashing produced the "symptoms of a rapid decline," with a failure of strength and appetite, which he speaks of in the eighteenth chapter of "Lavengro," after the Gypsies had gone away. He was almost given over by the physicians, he tells us, but cured by an "ancient female, a kind of doctress," with a decoction of "a bitter root which grows on commons and desolate places." An attack of "the dark feeling of mysterious dread" came with convalescence.

But "never during any portion of my life did time flow on more speedily," he says, than during the next two or three years. After some hesitation between Church and Law, he was articled in 1819 to Messrs. Simpson and Rackham, solicitors, of Tuck's Court, St. Giles', Norwich, and he lived with Simpson in the Upper Close. As a friend said, the law was an excellent profession for those who never intend to follow it. As Borrow himself said, "I have ever loved to be as explicit as

possible; on which account, perhaps, I never attained to any proficiency in the law." Borrow sat faithfully at his desk and learned a good deal of Welsh, Danish, Hebrew, Arabic, Gaelic, and Armenian, making translations from these languages in prose and verse. In "Wild Wales" he recalls translating Danish poems "over the desk of his ancient master, the gentleman solicitor of East Anglia," and learning Welsh by reading a Welsh "Paradise Lost" side by side with the original, and by having lessons on Sunday afternoons at his father's house from a groom named Lloyd.

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His chief master was William Taylor, the "Anglo-Germanist" of "Lavengro." Taylor was born in 1765. He studied in Germany as a youth and returned to England with a great enthusiasm for German literature. He translated Goethe's "Iphigenia" (1793), Lessing's "Nathan" (1791), Wieland's "Dialogues of the Gods," etc. (1795); he published "Tales of Yore," translated from several languages, and a "Letter concerning the two first chapters of Luke," in 1810, "English Synonyms discriminated" in 1813, and an "Historical Survey of German Poetry," interspersed with various translations, in 1823-30. He was bred among Unitarians, read Hume, Voltaire and Rousseau, disliked the Church, and welcomed the French Revolution, though he was no friend to "the cause of national ambition and aggrandisement." He belonged to a Revolution Society at Norwich, and in 1790 wrote from Paris calling the National Assembly "that well-head of philosophical legislation, whose pure streams are now overflowing the fairest country upon earth and will soon be sluiced off into the other realms of Europe, fertilising all with the living energy of its waters." In 1791 he and his father withdrew their capital from manufacture and William Taylor devoted himself to literature. Hazlitt speaks of the "style of philosophical criticism which has been the boast of the 'Edinburgh Review,'" as first introduced into the "Monthly Review" by Taylor in 1796. Scott said that Taylor's translation of Burger's "Lenore" made him a poet. Sir James Mackintosh learned the Taylorian language for the sake of the man's "vigour and originality"—"As the Hebrew is studied for one book, so is the Taylorian by me for one author."



WILLIAM TAYLOR, OF NORWICH

I will give a few hints at the nature of his speculation. In one of his letters he speaks of stumbling on "the new hypothesis that the Nebuchadnezzar of Scripture is the Cyrus of Greek History," and second, that "David, the Jew, a favourite of this prince, wrote all those oracles scattered in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel relative to his enterprises, for the particularisation of which they afford ample materials." Writing of his analysis, in the "Critical Review," of Paulus' Commentary on the New Testament, he blames the editor for a suppression—"an attempt to prove, from the first and second chapter of Luke, that Zacharias, who wrote these chapters, meant to hold himself out as the father of Jesus Christ as well as of John the Baptist. The Jewish idea of being conceived of the Holy Ghost did not exclude the idea of human parentage. The rabbinical commentator on Genesis explains this." He was called "Godless Billy Taylor," but says he: "When I publish my other pamphlet in proof of the great truth that Jesus Christ wrote the 'Wisdom' and translated the 'Ecclesiasticus' from the Hebrew of his grandfather Hillel, you will be convinced (that I am convinced) that I and I alone am a precise and classical Christian; the only man alive who thinks concerning the person and doctrines of Christ what he himself thought and taught." His "Letter concerning the two first chapters of Luke" has the further title, "Who was the father of Christ?" He calls "not absolutely indefensible" the opinion of the anonymous German author of the "Natural History of Jesus of Nazareth," that Joseph of Arimathea was the father of Jesus Christ. He mentions that "a more recent anonymous theorist, with greater

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plausibility, imagines that the acolytes employed in the Temple of Jerusalem were called by the names of angels, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, accordingly as they were stationed behind, beside, or before, the mercy-seat; and that the Gabriel of the Temple found means to impose on the innocence of the virgin." "This," he says, "is in many ways compatible with Mary's having faithfully given the testimony put together by Luke." He gives at great length the arguments in favour of Zacharias as the father, and tells Josephus' story of Mundus and Paulina. {68}

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Norwich was then "a little Academe among provincial cities," as Mr. Seccombe calls it; he continues:

"Among the high lights of the illuminated capital of East Anglia were the Cromes, the Opies, John Sell Cotman, Elizabeth Fry, Dr. William Enfield (of Speaker fame), and Dr. Rigby, the father of Lady Eastlake; but pre-eminent above all reigned the twin cliques of Taylors and Martineaus, who amalgamated at impressive intervals for purposes of mutual elevation and refinement.

"The salon of Susannah Taylor, the mother of Sarah Austin, the wife of John Taylor, hymn writer and deacon of the seminal chapel, the once noted Octagon, in Norwich, included in its zenith Sir James Mackintosh, Mrs. Barbauld, Crabb Robinson, the solemn Dr. John Alderson, Amelia Opie, Henry Reeve of Edinburgh fame, Basil Montagu, the Sewards, the Quaker Gurneys of Earham, and Dr. Frank Sayers, whom the German critics compared to Gray, who had handled the Norse mythology in poetry, to which Borrow was introduced by Sayer's private biographer, the eminent and aforesaid William Taylor" [no relation of *the* "Taylors of Norwich"] "whose 'Jail-delivery of German Studies' the jealous Thomas Carlyle stigmatized in 1830 as the work of a natural-born English Philistine."

Nevertheless, in spite of *the* Taylors and the Martineaus, says William Taylor's biographer, Robberds: "The love of society almost necessarily produces the habit of indulging in the pleasures of the table; and, though he cannot be charged with having carried this to an immoderate excess, still the daily repetition of it had taxed too much the powers of nature and exhausted them before the usual period." Taylor died in 1836 and was remembered best for his drinking and for his bloated appearance. Harriet Martineau wrote of him in her autobiography:

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"William Taylor was managed by a regular process, first of feeding, then of wine-bibbing, and immediately after of poking to make him talk: and then came his sayings, devoured by the gentlemen and making ladies and children aghast;—defences of suicide, avowals that snuff alone had rescued him from it: information given as certain that 'God Save the King' was sung by Jeremiah in the Temple of Solomon,—that Christ was watched on the day of His supposed ascension, and observed to hide Himself till dark, and then to make His way down the other side of the mountain; and other such plagiarisms from the German Rationalists. When William Taylor began with 'I firmly believe,' we knew that something particularly incredible was coming. . . . His virtues as a son were before our eyes when we witnessed his endurance of his father's brutality of temper and manners, and his watchfulness in ministering to the old man's comfort in his infirmities. When we saw, on a Sunday morning, William Taylor guiding his blind mother to chapel, and getting her there with her shoes as clean as if she had crossed no gutters in those flint-paved streets, we could forgive anything that had shocked or disgusted us at the dinner table. But matters grew worse in his old age, when his habits of intemperance kept him out of the sight of the ladies, and he got round him a set of ignorant and conceited young men, who thought they could set the world right by their destructive tendencies. One of his chief favourites was George Borrow. . . ."

Another of "the harum-scarum young men" taken up by Taylor and introduced "into the best society the place afforded," writes Harriet Martineau, was Polidori.

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Borrow was introduced to Taylor in 1820 by "Mousha," the Jew who taught him Hebrew. Taylor "took a great interest" in him and taught him German. "What I tell Borrow *once*," he said, "he ever remembers." In 1821 Taylor wrote to Southey, who was an early friend:

"A Norwich young man is constringing with me Schiller's 'Wilhelm Tell,' with the view of translating it for the Press. His name is George Henry Borrow, and he has learnt German with extraordinary rapidity; indeed he has the gift of tongues, and, though not yet eighteen, understands twelve languages—English, Welsh, Erse, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese; he would like to get into the Office for Foreign Affairs, but does not know how."

Borrow was at that time a "reserved and solitary" youth, tall, spare, dark complexioned and usually dressed in black, who used to be seen hanging about the Close and talking through the railings of his garden to some of the Grammar School boys. He was a noticeable youth, and he told his father that a lady had painted him and compared his face to that of Alfieri's Saul.



Photo: Farrist & Sons, Norwich
TUCK'S COURT, NORWICH

Borrow pleased neither his master nor his father by his knowledge of languages, though it was largely acquired in the lawyer's office. "The lad is too independent by half," Borrow makes his father say, after painting a filial portrait of the old man, "with locks of silver gray which set off so nobly his fine bold but benevolent face, his faithful consort at his side, and his trusty dog at his feet." Nor did the youth please himself. He was languid again, tired even of the Welsh poet, Ab Gwilym. He was anxious about his father, who was low spirited over his elder son's absence in London as a painter, and over his younger son's misconduct and the "strange notions and doctrines"—especially the doctrine that everyone has a right to dispose as he thinks best of that which is his own, even of his life—which he had imbibed from Taylor. Taylor was "fond of getting hold of young men and, according to orthodox accounts, doing them a deal of harm." {71a} His views, says Dr. Knapp, sank deep "into the organism of his pupil," and "would only be eradicated, if at all, through much suffering." Dr. Knapp thought that the execution of Thurtell ought to have produced a "favourable change in his mode of thinking"—as if prize fighting and murder were not far more common among Christians than atheists. But if Borrow had never met Taylor he would have met someone else, atheist or religious enthusiast, who would have lured him from the straight, smooth, flowery path of orthodoxy; otherwise he might have been a clergyman or he might have been Dr. Knapp, but he would not have been George Borrow. "What is truth?" he asked. "Would that I had never been born!" he said to himself. And it was an open air ranter, not a clergyman or unobtrusive godly man, that made him exclaim: "Would that my life had been like his—even like that man's." Then the Gypsy reminded him of "the wind on the heath" and the boxing gloves.

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When his father asked Borrow what he proposed to do, {71b} seeing that he was likely to do nothing at law, he had nothing to suggest. Southey apparently could not help him to the Foreign Office. The only opening that can have seemed possible to him was literature. He might, for example, produce a volume of translations like the "Specimen of Russian Poets" (1820) of John Bowring, whom he met at Taylor's. Bowring, a man of twenty-nine in 1821, was the head of a commercial firm and afterwards a friend of Borrow and the author of many translations from Russian, Dutch, Spanish, Polish, Servian, Hungarian and Bohemian song. He was, as the "Old Radical" of "The Romany Rye," Borrow's victim in his lifetime, and after his death the victim of Dr. Knapp as the supposed false friend of his hero. The mud thrown at him had long since dried, and has now been brushed off in a satisfactory manner by Mr. R. A. J. Walling. {72}

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TOM SHELTON



JACK RANDALL

CHAPTER XI—LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES

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When Borrow was in his nineteenth year—according to Dr. Knapp’s estimate—he told his father what he had done: “I have learned Welsh, and have translated the songs of Ab Gwilym, some ten thousand lines, into English rhyme. I have also learnt Danish, and have rendered the old book of Ballads into English metre. I have learned many other tongues, and have acquired some knowledge even of Hebrew and Arabic.” He read and conversed with William Taylor; he read alone in the Guildhall of Norwich, where the Corporation Library offered him the books from which he gained “his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and early English, Welsh or British, Northern or Scandinavian learning”—so writes Dr. Knapp, who has seen the “neat young pencilled notes” of Borrow in Edmund Lhuyd’s ‘Archæologia Britannica’ and the ‘Danica Literatura Antiquissima’ of Olaus Wormius, etc. He tells us himself that he passed entire nights in reading an old Danish book, till he was almost blind.

In 1823 Borrow began to publish his translations. Taylor introduced him to Thomas Campbell, then editor of the “New Monthly,” and to Sir Richard Phillips, editor and proprietor of the “Monthly Magazine.” Both editors printed Borrow’s works.

Sir Richard Phillips was particularly flattering: he used Borrow’s article on “Danish Poetry and Ballad Writing” and about six hundred lines of translation from German, Danish, Swedish and Dutch poetry in the first year of the connection, usually with the signature, “George Olaus Borrow.” I will quote only one specimen, his version of Goethe’s “Erl King” (“Monthly Magazine,” December, 1823):

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Who is it that gallops so late on the wild!
O it is the father that carries his child!
He presses him close in his circling arm,
To save him from cold, and to shield him from harm.

“Dear baby, what makes ye your countenance hide?”
“Spur, father, your courser and rowel his side;
The Erl-King is chasing us over the heath;”
“Peace, baby, thou seest a vapoury wreath?”

“Dear boy, come with me, and I’ll join in your sport,
And show ye the place where the fairies resort;
My mother, who dwells in the cool pleasant mine
Shall clothe thee in garments so fair and so fine.”

“My father, my father, in mercy attend,
And hear what is said by the whispering fiend.”
“Be quiet, be quiet, my dearly-loved child;
’Tis naught but the wind as it stirs in the wild.”

“Dear baby, if thou wilt but venture with me,
My daughter shall dandle thy form on her knee;
My daughter, who dwells where the moon-shadows play,
Shall lull ye to sleep with the song of the fay.”

“My father, my father, and seest thou not
His sorceress daughter in yonder dark spot?”
“I see something truly, thou dear little fool,—

I see the great alders that hang by the pool."

"Sweet baby, I doat on that beautiful form,
And thou shalt ride with me the wings of the storm."
"O father, my father, he grapples me now,
And already has done me a mischief, I vow."

The father was terrified, onward he press'd,
And closer he cradled the child to his breast,
And reach'd the far cottage, and, wild with alarm,
He found that the baby hung dead on his arm!

The only criticism that need be passed on this is that any man of some intelligence and patience can hope to do as well: he seldom wrote any verse that was either much better or much worse. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the success of the translation is no measure of the impression made on the young Borrow by the legend.

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His translations from Ab Gwilym are not interesting either to lovers of that poet or to lovers of Borrow: some are preserved in a sort of life in death in the pages of "Wild Wales."

From the German he had also translated F. M. Von Klinger's "Faustus: his life, death and descent into hell." {75a} The preface announces that "although scenes of vice and crime are here exhibited, it is merely in the hope that they may serve as beacons, to guide the ignorant and unwary from the shoals on which they might otherwise be wrecked." He insisted, furthermore, that the book contained "the highly useful advice," that everyone should bear their lot in patience and not seek "at the expense of his repose to penetrate into those secrets which the spirit of man, while dressed in the garb of mortality cannot and must not unveil. . . . To the mind of man all is dark; he is an enigma to himself; let him live, therefore, in the hope of once seeing clearly; and happy indeed is he who in that manner passeth his days."

From the Danish of Johannes Evald, he translated "The Death of Balder," a play, into blank verse with consistently feminine endings, as in this speech of Thor to Balder: {75b}

How long dost think, degenerate son of Odin,
Unmanly pining for a foolish maiden,
And all the weary train of love-sick follies,
Will move a bosom that is steel'd by virtue?
Thou dotest! Dote and weep, in tears swim ever;
But by thy father's arm, by Odin's honour,
Haste, hide thy tears and thee in shades of alder!
Haste to the still, the peace-accustom'd valley,
Where lazy herdsmen dance amid the clover.
There wet each leaf which soft the west wind kisses,
Each plant which breathes around voluptuous odours,
With tears! There sigh and moan, and the tired peasant
Shall hear thee, and, behind his ploughshare resting,
Shall wonder at thy grief, and pity Balder!

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There are lyrics interspersed. The following is sung by three Valkyries marching round the cauldron before Rota dips the fatal spear that she is to present to Hother:

In juice of rue
And trefoil too;
In marrow of bear
And blood of Troid,
Be cool'd the spear,
Threetimes cool'd,
When hot from blazes
Which Nastroud raises
For Valhall's May.

1st Valk. Whom it woundeth,
It shall slay.

2nd Whom it woundeth,
It shall slay.

3rd Whom it woundeth,
It shall slay.

In 1826 he was to publish "Romantic Ballads," translated from the Gaelic, Danish, Norse, Swedish, and German, with eight original pieces. He "hoped shortly" to publish a complete translation of the "Kjæmpe Viser" and of Gaelic songs, made by him "some years ago." Few of these are valuable or interesting, but I must quote "Svend Vonved" because Borrow himself so often refers to it. The legend haunted him of "that strange melancholy Swayne Vonved, who roams about the world propounding people riddles; slaying those who cannot answer, and rewarding those who can with golden bracelets." When he was walking alone in wild weather in Cornwall he roared it aloud:

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Svend Vonved sits in his lonely bower;
He strikes his harp with a hand of power;
His harp returned a responsive din;
Then came his mother hurrying in:
 Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

In came his mother Adeline,
And who was she, but a queen so fine:
"Now hark, Svend Vonved! out must thou ride
And wage stout battle with knights of pride."
 Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"Avenge thy father's untimely end;
To me, or another, thy gold harp lend;
This moment bouned thee, and straight begone!
I rede thee, do it, my own dear son."
 Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

Svend Vonved binds his sword to his side;
He fain will battle with knights of pride.
"When may I look for thee once more here?
When roast the heifer and spice the beer?"
 Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

"When stones shall take, of themselves, a flight
And ravens' feathers are waxen white,
Then may'st thou expect Svend Vonved home:
In all my days, I will never come."
 Look out, look out, Svend Vonved.

If we did not know that Borrow used these verses as a kind of incantation we should be sorry to have read them. But one of the original pieces in this book is as good in itself as it is interesting. I mean "Lines to Six-foot-three":

A lad, who twenty tongues can talk,
And sixty miles a day can walk;
Drink at a draught a pint of rum,
And then be neither sick nor dumb;
Can tune a song, and make a verse,
And deeds of northern kings rehearse;
Who never will forsake his friend,
While he his bony fist can bend;
And, though averse to brawl and strife,
Will fight a Dutchman with a knife.
O that is just the lad for me,
And such is honest six-foot three.

A braver being ne'er had birth
Since God first kneaded man from earth;
O, I have come to know him well,
As Ferroe's blacken'd rocks can tell.
Who was it did, at Suderöe,
The deed no other dared to do?
Who was it, when the Boff had burst,
And whelm'd me in its womb accurst,
Who was it dashed amid the wave,
With frantic zeal, my life to save?
Who was it flung the rope to me?
O, who, but honest six-foot three!

Who was it taught my willing tongue,
The songs that Braga fram'd and sung?
Who was it op'd to me the store
Of dark unearthly Runic lore,
And taught me to beguile my time
With Denmark's aged and witching rhyme;
To rest in thought in Elvir shades,
And hear the song of fairy maids;
Or climb the top of Dovrefeld,
Where magic knights their muster held!
Who was it did all this for me?
O, who, but honest six-foot three!

Wherever fate shall bid me roam,
Far, far from social joy and home;
'Mid burning Afric's desert sands;
Or wild Kamschatka's frozen lands;

Bit by the poison-loaded breeze
Or blasts which clog with ice the seas;
In lowly cot or lordly hall,
In beggar's rags or robes of pall,
'Mong robber-bands or honest men,
In crowded town or forest den,
I never will unmindful be
Of what I owe to six-foot three.

That form which moves with giant grace—
That wild, tho' not unhandsome face;
That voice which sometimes in its tone
Is softer than the wood-dove's moan,
At others, louder than the storm
Which beats the side of old Cairn Gorm;
That hand, as white as falling snow,
Which yet can fell the stoutest foe;
And, last of all, that noble heart,
Which ne'er from honour's path would start,
Shall never be forgot by me—
So farewell, honest six-foot three.

This is already pure Borrow, with a vigour excusing if not quite transmuting its rant. He creates a sort of hero in his own image, and it should be read as an introduction and invocation to "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye." It is one of the few contemporary records of Borrow at about the age when he wrote "Celebrated Trials," made horse-shoes and fought the Blazing Tinman. So far as I know, it was more than ten years before he wrote anything so good again, and he never wrote anything better in verse, unless it is the song of the "genuine old English gentleman," in the twenty-fourth chapter of "Lavengro":

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"Give me the haunch of a buck to eat, and to drink Madeira old,
And a gentle wife to rest with, and in my arms to fold,
An Arabic book to study, a Norfolk cob to ride,
And a house to live in shaded with trees, and near to a river side;
With such good things around me, and blessed with good health withal,
Though I should live for a hundred years, for death I would not call."

The only other verse of his which can be remembered for any good reason is this song from the Romany, included among the translations from thirty languages and dialects which he published, in 1835, with the title of "Targum," and the appropriate motto: "The raven has ascended to the nest of the nightingale." The Gypsy verses are as follows:

The strength of the ox,
The wit of the fox,
And the leveret's speed,—
Full oft to oppose
To their numerous foes,
The Rommany need.

Our horses they take,
Our waggons they break,
And ourselves they seize,
In their prisons to coop,
Where we pine and droop,
For want of breeze.

When the dead swallow
The fly shall follow
O'er Burra-panee,
Then we will forget
The wrongs we have met
And forgiving be.

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It will not be necessary to say anything more about Borrow's verses. Poetry for him was above all declamatory sentiment or wild narrative, and so he never wrote, and perhaps never cared much for poetry, except ballads and his contemporary Byron. He desired, as he said in the note to "Romantic Ballads," not the merely harmonious but the grand, and he condemned the modern muse for "the violent desire to be smooth and tuneful, forgetting that smoothness and tunefulness are nearly synonymous with tameness and unmeaningness." He once said of Keats: "They are attempting to resuscitate him, I believe." He regarded Wordsworth as a soporific merely.

Early in 1824, and just before George Borrow's articles with the solicitors expired, Captain Borrow died. He left all that he had to his widow, with something for the maintenance and education of the younger son during his minority. Borrow had already planned to go to London, to write, to abuse religion and to get himself prosecuted. A month later, the day after the expiration of his articles, before he had quite reached his majority, he went up to London. He was "cast upon the world" in no very hopeful condition. He had lately been laid up again—was it by the "fear" or something else?—by a complaint which destroyed his strength, impaired his understanding and threatened his life, as he wrote to a friend: he was taking mercury for a cure. But he had his translations from Ab Gwilym and his romantic ballads, and he believed in them. He took them to Sir Richard Phillips, who did not believe in them, and had moreover given up publishing. According to his own account, which is very well known (Lavengro, chapter XXX.), Sir Richard suggested that he should write something in the style of the "Dairyman's Daughter" instead.

Men of this generation, fortunate at least in this ignorance, probably think of the "Dairyman's Daughter" as a fictitious title, like the "Oxford Review" (which stood for "The Universal Review") and the "Newgate Lives" (which should have been "Celebrated Trials," etc.). But such a book really was published in 1811. It was an "authentic narrative" by a clergyman of the Church of England named Legh Richmond, who thought it "delightful to trace and discover the operations of Divine love among the poorer classes of mankind." The book was about the conversion and holy life and early death of a pale, delicate, consumptive dairyman's daughter in the Isle of Wight. It became famous, was translated into many languages, and was reprinted by some misguided or malevolent man not long ago. I will give a specimen of the book which the writer of "Six-foot-three" was asked to imitate:

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"Travellers, as they pass through the country, usually stop to inquire whose are the splendid mansions which they discover among the woods and plains around them. The families, titles, fortune, or character of the respective owners, engage much attention. . . . In the meantime, the lowly cottage of the poor husbandman is passed by as scarcely deserving of notice. Yet, perchance, such a cottage may often contain a treasure of infinitely more value than the sumptuous palace of the rich man; even "the pearl of great price." If this be set in the heart of the poor cottager, it proves a jewel of unspeakable value, and will shine among the brightest ornaments of the Redeemer's crown, in that day when he maketh up his "jewels."



Photo: Emery Walker

SIR RICHARD PHILLIPS

(From the painting by James Saxon in The National Portrait Gallery)

“Hence, the Christian traveller, while he bestows, in common with others, his due share of applause on the decorations of the rich, and is not insensible to the beauties and magnificence which are the lawfully allowed appendages of rank and fortune, cannot overlook the humbler dwelling of the poor. And if he should find that true piety and grace beneath the thatched roof, which he has in vain looked for amidst the worldly grandeur of the rich, he remembers the word of God. . . . He sees, with admiration, that ‘the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, dwelleth with *him also* that is of a contrite and humble spirit,’ Isaiah lvii., 15; and although heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool, yet when a home is to be built, and a place of rest to be sought for himself, he says, ‘To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word,’ Isaiah lxvi., 1, 2. When a home is thus tenanted, faith beholds this inscription written on the walls, *The Lord lives here*. Faith, therefore, cannot pass it by unnoticed, but loves to lift up the latch of the door, and sit down, and converse with the poor, though perhaps despised, inhabitant. Many a sweet interview does faith obtain when she thus takes her walks abroad. Many such a sweet interview have I myself enjoyed beneath the roof where dwelt the Dairyman and his little family.

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“I soon perceived that his daughter’s health was rapidly on the decline. The pale, wasting consumption, which is the Lord’s instrument for removing so many thousands every year from the land of the living, made hasty strides on her constitution. The hollow eye, the distressing cough, and the often too flattering red on the cheek, foretold the approach of death.

“I have often thought what a field for usefulness and affectionate attention, on the part of ministers and Christian friends, is opened by the frequent attacks and lingering progress of *consumptive* illness. How many such precious opportunities are daily lost, where Providence seems in so marked a way to afford time and space for serious and Godly instruction! Of how many may it be said: ‘The way of peace have they not known’; for not one friend ever came nigh to warn them to ‘flee from the wrath to come.’

“But the Dairyman’s Daughter was happily made acquainted with the things which belonged to her everlasting peace before the present disease had taken root in her constitution. In my visits to her I might be said rather to receive information than to impart it. Her mind was abundantly stored with Divine truths, and her conversations truly edifying. The recollection of it still

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produces a thankful sensation in my heart.”

Nevertheless, when Borrow had bought a copy of this book he was willing to do what was asked, and to attempt also to translate into German Phillips’ “Proximate Causes of the Material Phenomena of the Universe,” or what the translator called “his tale of an apple and a pear.” But Phillips changed his mind about the “Dairyman’s Daughter” and commissioned a compilation of “Newgate Lives and Trials” instead. Borrow failed with the translation of the “Proximate Causes” but liked very well the compiling of the “Celebrated Trials”—of Joan of Arc, Cagliostro, Mary Queen of Scots, Raleigh, the Gunpowder Plotters, Queen Caroline, Thurtell, the Cato Street Conspirators, and many more—in six volumes. He also wrote reviews for Phillips’ Magazine, and contributed more translations of poetry and many scraps of “Danish Traditions and Superstitions,” like the following:

“At East Hissing, in the district of Calling, there was once a rural wedding; and when the morning was near at hand, the guests rushed out of the house with much noise and tumult. When they were putting their horses to the carts, in order to leave the place, each of them boasted and bragged of his bridal present. But when the uproar was at the highest, and they were all speaking together, a maiden dressed in green, and with a bulrush plaited over her head, came from a neighbouring morass, and going up to the fellow who was noisiest and bragged most of his bridal gift, she said, ‘What will you give to Lady Bœ?’ The boor, who was half intoxicated from the brandy and ale he had swallowed, seized a whip, and answered, ‘Three strokes of my waggon-whip.’ But at the same moment he fell a corpse to the ground.”

If translation like this is journeyman’s work for the journeyman, for Borrow it was of great value because it familiarised him with the marvellous and the supernatural and so helped him towards the expression of his own material and spiritual adventures. The wild and often other-worldly air of much of his work is doubtless due to his wild and other-worldly mind, but owes a considerable if uncertain debt to his reading of ballads and legends, which give a little to the substance of his work and far more to the tone of it. Among other things translated at this time he mentions the “Saga of Burnt Njal.”

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He was not happy in London. He had few friends there, and perhaps those he had only disturbed without sweetening his solitude. One of these was a Norwich friend, named Roger Kerrison, who shared lodgings with him at 16, Millman Street, Bedford Row. Borrow confided in Kerrison, and had written to him before leaving Norwich in terms of perhaps unconsciously worked-up affection. But Borrow’s low spirits in London were more than Kerrison could stand. When Borrow was proposing a short visit to Norwich his friend wrote to John Thomas Borrow, suggesting that he should keep his brother there for a time, or else return with him, for this reason. Borrow had “repeatedly” threatened suicide, and unable to endure his fits of desperation Kerrison had gone into separate lodgings: if his friend were to return in this state and find himself alone he would “again make some attempt to destroy himself.” Nothing was done, so far as is known, and he did not commit suicide. It is a curious commentary on the work of hack writers that this youth should have written as a note to his translation of “The Suicide’s Grave,” [\[85\]](#) that it was not translated for its sentiments but for its poetry; “although the path of human life is rough and thorny, the mind may always receive consolation by looking forward to the world to come. The mind which rejects a future state has to thank itself for its utter misery and hopelessness.” His malady was youth, aggravated, the food reformer would say, by eating fourteen pennyworth of bread and cheese at a meal, and certainly aggravated by literary ambition.

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Judging from the thirty-first chapter of “Lavengro,” he was exceptionally sensitive at this time to all impressions—probably both pleasant and unpleasant. He describes himself on his first day gazing at the dome of St. Paul’s until his brain became dizzy, and he thought the dome would fall and crush him, and he shrank within himself, and struck yet deeper into the heart of the big city. He stood on London Bridge dazed by the mighty motion of the waters and the multitude of men and “horses as large as elephants. There I stood, just above the principal arch, looking through the balustrade at the scene that presented itself—and such a scene! Towards the left bank of the river, a forest of masts, thick and close, as far as the eye could reach; spacious wharfs, surmounted with gigantic edifices; and, far away, Cæsar’s Castle, with its White Tower. To the right, another forest of masts, and a maze of buildings, from which, here and there, shot up to the sky chimneys taller than Cleopatra’s Needle, vomiting forth huge wreaths of that black smoke which forms the canopy—occasionally a gorgeous one—of the more than Babel city. Stretching before me, the troubled breast of the mighty river, and, immediately below, the main whirlpool of the Thames—the Maelstrom of the bulwarks of the middle arch—a grisly pool, which, with its superabundance of horror, fascinated me. Who knows but I should have leapt into its depths?—I have heard of such things—but for a rather startling occurrence which broke the spell. As I stood upon the bridge, gazing into the jaws of the pool, a small boat shot suddenly through the arch beneath my feet. There were three persons in it; an oarsman in the middle, whilst a man and woman sat at the stern. I shall never forget the thrill of horror which went through me at this sudden apparition. What!—a boat—a small boat—passing beneath that arch into yonder roaring gulf! Yes, yes, down through that awful water-way, with more than the swiftness of an arrow, shot the boat, or skiff, right into the jaws of the pool. A monstrous breaker curls over the prow—there is no hope; the boat is swamped, and all drowned in that strangling vortex. No! the boat, which appeared to have the buoyancy of a feather, skipped over the threatening horror, and the next moment was out of danger, the boatman—a true boatman of Cockaigne, that—elevating one of his skulls in sign of triumph, the man hallooing, and the woman, a true Englishwoman that—of

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a certain class—waving her shawl. Whether any one observed them save myself, or whether the feat was a common one, I know not; but nobody appeared to take any notice of them. As for myself, I was so excited, that I strove to clamber up the balustrade of the bridge, in order to obtain a better view of the daring adventurers. Before I could accomplish my design, however, I felt myself seized by the body, and, turning my head, perceived the old fruit-woman, who was clinging to me.”

On this very day, in his account, he first met the “fiery, enthusiastic and open-hearted,” pleasure-loving young Irishman, whom he calls Francis Ardry, who took him to the theatre and to “the strange and eccentric places of London,” and no doubt helped to give him the feeling of “a regular Arabian Nights’ entertainment.” C. G. Leland [87] tells a story told to him by one who might have been the original of Ardry. The story is the only independent evidence of Borrow’s London life. This “old gentleman” had been in youth for a long time the most intimate friend of George Borrow, who was, he said, a very wild and eccentric youth. “One night, when skylarking about London, Borrow was pursued by the police, as he wished to be, even as Panurge so planned as to be chased by the night-watch. He was very tall and strong in those days, a trained shoulder-hitter, and could run like a deer. He was hunted to the Thames, and there they thought they had him. But the Romany Rye made for the edge, and leaping into the wan water, like the Squyre in the old ballad, swam to the other side, and escaped.”

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It is no wonder he “did not like reviewing at all,” especially as he “never could understand why reviews were instituted; works of merit do not require to be reviewed, they can speak for themselves, and require no praising; works of no merit at all will die of themselves, they require no killing.” He forgot “The Dairyman’s Daughter,” and he could not foresee the early fate of “Lavengro” itself. He preferred manlier crime and riskier deception to reviewing. As he read over the tales of rogues, he says, he became again what he had been as a boy, a necessitarian, and could not “imagine how, taking all circumstances into consideration, these highwaymen, these pickpockets, should have been anything else than highwaymen and pickpockets.”

These were the days of such books as “The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Samuel Denmore Hayward, denominated the Modern Macheath, who suffered at the Old Bailey, on Tuesday, November 27, 1821, for the Crime of Burglary,” by Pierce Egan, embellished with a highly-finished miniature by Mr. Smart, etched by T. R. Cruikshank; and a facsimile of his handwriting. London, 1822.”

It is a poor book, and now has descendants lower in the social scale. It pretends to give “a most awful but useful lesson to the rising generation” by an account of the criminal whose appearance as a boy “was so superior to other boys of his class in life as to have the look of a gentleman’s child.” He naturally became a waiter, and “though the situation did not exactly accord with his ambition, it answered his purpose, because it afforded him an opportunity of studying *character*, and being in the company of gentlemen.” He was “a generous high-minded fellow towards the ladies,” and became the fancy man of someone else’s mistress, living “in the style of a gentleman *solely* at the expense of the beautiful Miss ---.” His “unembarrassed and gentlemanly” behaviour survived even while he was being searched, and he entered the chapel before execution “with a firm step, accompanied with the most gentlemanly deportment.” The end came nevertheless: “Bowling to the sheriffs and the few persons around him with all the manners of an accomplished gentleman, he ascended the drop with a firmness that astonished everyone present; and resigned his eventful life without scarce a struggle.”

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The moral was the obvious one. “His talents were his misfortunes.” The biographer pretends to believe that, though the fellow lived in luxury, he must always have had a harassed mind; the truth being that he himself would have had a harassed mind if he had played so distinguished a part. “The chequered life of that young man,” he says, “abounding with incidents and facts almost incredible, and scarcely ever before practised with so much art and delusion in so short a period, impressively points out the danger arising from the possession of *great talents* when perverted or *misapplied*.”

He points out, furthermore, how vice sinks before virtue. “For instance, view the countenances of thieves, who are regaling themselves on the most expensive liquors, laughing and singing, how they are changed in an instant by the appearance of police officers entering a room in search of them. . . .”

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Finally, “let the youth of London bear in mind that honesty is the best policy. . . .”

“In this happy country, where every individual has an opportunity of raising himself to the highest office in the State, what might the abilities of the unfortunate Hayward have accomplished for him if he had not deviated from the paths of virtue? There is no place like London in the world where a man of talents meets with so much encouragement and liberality; his society is courted, and his presence gives a weight to any company in which he appears; if supported by a good character.”

But the crime was the thing. Of a different class was John Hamilton Reynolds’ “The Fancy.” This book, published in 1820, would have wholly delighted Borrow. I will quote the footnote to the “Lines to Philip Samson, the Brummagem Youth”:

“Of all the great men of this age, in poetry, philosophy, or pugilism, there is no one of such transcendent talent as Randall;—no one who combines the finest natural powers with the most elegant and finished acquired ones. The late Professor Stewart (who has left the learned ring) is

acknowledged to be clever in philosophy, but he is a left-handed metaphysical fighter at best, and cannot be relied upon at closing with his subject. Lord Byron is a powerful poet, with a mind weighing fourteen stone; but he is too sombre and bitter, and is apt to lose his temper. Randall has no defect, or at best he has not yet betrayed the appearance of one. His figure is remarkable, when *peeled*, for its statue-like beauty, and nothing can equal the alacrity with which he uses either hand, or the coolness with which he *receives*. His goodness on his legs, Boxiana (a Lord Eldon in the skill and caution of his judgments) assures us, is unequalled. He doubles up an opponent, as a friend lately declared, as easily as though he were picking a flower or pinching a girl's cheek. He is about to fight Jos. Hudson, who challenged him lately at the Royal Tennis Court. Randall declared, that 'though he had declined fighting, he would *accommodate Joshua*'; a kind and benevolent reply, which does equal honour to his head and heart. The editor of this little volume, like Goldfinch in the 'Road to Ruin,' 'would not stay away for a thousand pounds.' He has already looked about for a tall horse and a taxed cart, and he has some hopes of compassing a drab coat and a white hat, for he has no wish to appear singular at such scenes."

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Reynolds, like Borrow, was an admirer of Byron, and he anticipated Borrow in the spirit of his remark to John Murray that the author's trade was contemptible compared with the jockey's. At that moment it was unquestionably so. Soon even reviewing failed. The "Universal Review" died at the beginning of 1825, and Borrow seems to have quarrelled with Phillips because some Germans had found the German of his translation as unintelligible as he had found the publisher's English. He had nothing left but his physical strength, his translations, and a very little money. When he had come down to half-a-crown, he says, he thought of accepting a patriotic Armenian's invitation to translate an Armenian work into English; only the Armenian went away.

CHAPTER XIII—"JOSEPH SELL"

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Then, on a fair day on Blackheath, he met Mr. Petulengro again who said he looked ill and offered him the loan of £50, which he would not accept, nor his invitation to join the band. Dr. Knapp confidently gives the date of May 12 to this incident because that is the day of the annual fair. Then seeing an advertisement: "A Novel or Tale is much wanted," outside a bookseller's shop, Borrow wrote "The Life and Adventures of Joseph Sell, the Great Traveller." Did he? Dr. Knapp thinks he did, but that the story had another name, and is to be sought for in such collections of 1825 and 1826 as "Watt's Literary Souvenir." As Borrow speaks of the materials of it having come from his own brain, and as Dr. Knapp says he could not invent, why not conclude that it was autobiographical?

There is no evidence except that the account sounds true, and might very well be true. Dr. Knapp thinks that he wrote this book, and that he did many other things which he said he did, because wherever there is any evidence it corroborates Borrow's statements except in small matters of names and dates. In the earlier version of "Lavengro," represented by a manuscript and a proof, "Ardry" is "Arden," "Jasper" is "Ambrose," and the question "What is his name?" is answered by "Thurtell," instead of a blank. Now there was an Ambrose Smith whom Borrow knew, and Thurtell was such a man as he describes in search of a place for the fight. Therefore, Dr. Knapp would be inclined to say that Borrow did know a young man named Arden. And, furthermore, as Isopel is called Elizabeth in that earlier version, Isopel did exist, but her name was Elizabeth: she was, says Mr. Watts-Dunton, "really an East Anglian road girl" (not a Gypsy) "of the finest type, known to the Boswells and remembered not many years ago." And speaking of Isopel—there is a story still to be heard at Long Melford of a girl "who lived on the green and ran away with the Gypsy," in about the year 1825. With this may possibly be connected another story: of a young painter of dogs and horses who was living at Melford in 1805 and seduced either one or two sisters of the warden of the hospital or almshouse, and had two illegitimate children, one at any rate a girl. The Great House was one used, but not built, for a workhouse: it stood near the vicarage at Melford, but has now disappeared, and apparently its records with it.

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Borrow did not invent, says Knapp, which is absurd. Some of his reappearances, recognitions and coincidences must be inventions. The postillion's tale must be largely invention. But it is not fair or necessary to retort as Hindes Groome did: "Is the Man in Black then also a reality, and the Reverend Mr. Platitude? In other words, did Tractarianism exist in 1825, eight years before it was engendered by Keble's sermon?" For Borrow was unscrupulous or careless about time and place. But it is fair and necessary to say, as Hindes Groome did, that some of the unverities in "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" are "probably due to forgetfulness," the rest to "love of posing, but much more to an honest desire to produce an amusing and interesting book." {93a} Borrow was a great admirer of the "Memoirs" {93b} of Vidocq, "principal agent of the French police till 1827—now proprietor of the paper manufactory at St. Maude," and formerly showman, soldier, galley slave, and highwayman. Of this book the editor says:

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"It is not our province or intention to enter into a discussion of the veracity of Vidocq's "Memoirs": be they true or false, were they purely fiction from the first chapter to the last, they would, from fertility of invention, knowledge of human nature, and easy style, rank only second to the novels of Le Sage."

It was certainly with books such as this in his mind that Borrow composed his autobiography, but

it goes so much deeper that it is at every point a revelation, usually of actual events and emotions, always of thought and taste. In these “Memoirs” of Vidocq there is a man named Christian, or Caron, with a reputation for removing charms cast on animals, and he takes Vidocq to his Gypsy friends at Malines:

“Having traversed the city, we stopped in the Faubourg de Louvain, before a wretched looking house with blackened walls, furrowed with wide crevices, and many bundles of straw as substitutes for window glasses. It was midnight, and I had time to make my observations by the moonlight, for more than half an hour elapsed before the door was opened by one of the most hideous old hags I ever saw in my life. We were then introduced to a long room where thirty persons of both sexes were indiscriminately smoking and drinking, mingling in strange and licentious positions. Under their blue loose frocks, ornamented with red embroidery, the men wore blue velvet waistcoats with silver buttons, like the Andalusian muleteers; the clothing of the women was all of one bright colour; there were some ferocious countenances amongst them, but yet they were all feasting. The monotonous sound of a drum, mingled with the howling of two dogs tied under the table, accompanied the strange songs, which I mistook for a funeral psalm. The smoke of tobacco and wood which filled this den, scarcely allowed me to perceive in the midst of the room a woman, who, adorned with a scarlet turban, was performing a wild dance with the most wanton postures.”

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Dr. Knapp, on insufficient evidence, attributes the translation to Borrow. But certainly Borrow might have incorporated this passage in his own work almost word for word without justifying a charge either of plagiarism or untruth. Other men had written fiction as if it were autobiography; he was writing autobiography as if it were fiction; he used his own life as a subject for fiction. Ford crudely said that Borrow “coloured up and poetised” his adventures.

CHAPTER XIV—OUT OF LONDON

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If Borrow is taken literally, he was at Blackheath on May 12, 1825, sold his “Life of Joseph Sell” on the 20th, and left London on the 22nd. “For some months past I had been far from well, and my original indisposition, brought on partly by the peculiar atmosphere of the Big City, partly by anxiety of mind, had been much increased by the exertions which I had been compelled to make during the last few days. I felt that, were I to remain where I was, I should die, or become a confirmed valetudinarian. I would go forth into the country, travelling on foot, and, by exercise and inhaling pure air, endeavour to recover my health, leaving my subsequent movements to be determined by Providence.”

He says definitely in the appendix to “The Romany Rye,” that he fled from London and hack-authorship for “fear of a consumption.” Walking on an unknown road out of London the “poor thin lad” felt tired at the ninth milestone, and thought of putting up at an inn for the night, but instead took the coach to ---, *i.e.*, Amesbury.

The remaining ninety chapters of “Lavengro” and “The Romany Rye” are filled by the story of the next four months of Borrow’s life and by stories told to him during that period. The preceding fifty-seven chapters had sufficed for twenty-two years. “The novelty” of the new itinerant life, says Mr. Thomas Seccombe, {96} “graved every incident in the most vivid possible manner upon the writer’s recollection.” After walking for four days northwest from Salisbury he met an author, a rich man who was continually touching things to avert the evil chance, and with him he stayed the night. On the next day he bought a pony and cart from the tinker, Jack Slingsby, with the purpose of working on the tinker’s beat and making horse-shoes. After some days he was visited down in a Shropshire dingle by a Gypsy girl, who poisoned him at the instigation of his enemy, old Mrs. Herne. Only the accidental appearance of the Welsh preacher, Peter Williams, saved him. Years afterwards, in 1854, it may be mentioned here, he told a friend in Cornwall that his fits of melancholy were due to the poison of a Gypsy crone. He spent a week in the company of the preacher and his wife, and was about to cross the Welsh border with them when Jasper Petulengro reappeared, and he turned back. Jasper told him that Mrs. Herne had hanged herself out of disappointment at his escape from her poison. This made it a point of honour for Jasper to fight Borrow, whose bloody face satisfied him in half an hour: he even offered Borrow his sister Ursula for a wife. Borrow refused, and settled alone in Mumper’s Dingle, which was perhaps Mumber Lane, five miles from Willenhall in Staffordshire. {97} Here he fought the Flaming Tinman, who had driven Slingsby out of his beat. The Tinman brought with him his wife and Isopel Berners, the tall fair-haired girl who struck Borrow first with her beauty and then with her right arm. Isopel stayed with Borrow after the defeat of the Tinman, and their companionship in the dingle fills a very large part of “Lavengro” and “The Romany Rye,” with interruptions and diversions from the Man in Black, the gin-drinking priest, who was then at work undermining the Protestantism of old England. Isopel stood by him when suffering from “indescribable horror,” and recommended “ale, and let it be strong.” Borrow makes her evidently inclined to marry him; for example, when she says that if she goes to America she will go alone “unless—unless that should happen which is not likely,” and when he says “. . . If I had the power I would make you queen of something better than the dingle—Queen of China. Come, let us have tea,” and “‘Something less would content me,’ said Belle, sighing, as she rose to prepare our evening meal”—and when at the postillion’s suggestion of a love affair, she buries her face in her hands.

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"She would sigh, too," he says, "as I recounted the many slights and degradations I had received at the hands of ferocious publishers." In one place Borrow says: "I am, of course, nothing to her, but she is mistaken in thinking she is nothing to me." Borrow represents himself as tyrannically imposing himself upon the girl as teacher of Armenian, enlivening the instruction with the one mild *double entendre*, of "I decline a mistress." At times they seem on terms of as perfect good fellowship as ever was, with a touch of post-matrimonial indifference; but Isopel had fits of weeping and Borrow of listlessness. Borrow was uncommonly fond of prophetic tragic irony. As he made Thurtell unconsciously suggest to the reader his own execution, so he makes Isopel say one day when she is going a journey: "I shall return once more." Lavengro starts but thinks no more of it.

While she was away he began to think: "I began to think, 'What was likely to be the profit of my present way of life; the living in dingles, making pony and donkey shoes, conversing with Gypsy-women under hedges, and extracting from them their odd secrets?' What was likely to be the profit of such a kind of life, even should it continue for a length of time?—a supposition not very probable, for I was earning nothing to support me, and the funds with which I had entered upon this life were gradually disappearing. I was living, it is true, not unpleasantly, enjoying the healthy air of heaven; but, upon the whole, was I not sadly misspending my time? Surely I was; and, as I looked back, it appeared to me that I had always been doing so. What had been the profit of the tongues which I had learned? had they ever assisted me in the day of hunger? No, no! it appeared to me that I had always misspent my time, save in one instance, when by a desperate effort I had collected all the powers of my imagination, and written the 'Life of Joseph Sell'; but even when I wrote the 'Life of Sell,' was I not in a false position? Provided I had not misspent my time, would it have been necessary to make that effort, which, after all, had only enabled me to leave London, and wander about the country for a time? But could I, taking all circumstances into consideration, have done better than I had? With my peculiar temperament and ideas, could I have pursued with advantage the profession to which my respectable parents had endeavoured to bring me up? It appeared to me that I could not, and that the hand of necessity had guided me from my earliest years, until the present night in which I found myself seated in the dingle, staring on the brands of the fire. But ceasing to think of the past which, as irrecoverably gone, it was useless to regret, even were there cause to regret it, what should I do in future? Should I write another book like the 'Life of Joseph Sell;' take it to London, and offer it to a publisher? But when I reflected on the grisly sufferings which I had undergone whilst engaged in writing the 'Life of Sell,' I shrank from the idea of a similar attempt; moreover, I doubted whether I possessed the power to write a similar work—whether the materials for the life of another Sell lurked within the recesses of my brain? Had I not better become in reality what I had hitherto been merely playing at—a tinker or a Gypsy? But I soon saw that I was not fitted to become either in reality. It was much more agreeable to play the Gypsy or the tinker, than to become either in reality. I had seen enough of gypsying and tinkering to be convinced of that. All of a sudden the idea of tilling the soil came into my head; tilling the soil was a healthful and noble pursuit! but my idea of tilling the soil had no connection with Britain; for I could only expect to till the soil in Britain as a serf. I thought of tilling it in America, in which it was said there was plenty of wild, unclaimed land, of which any one, who chose to clear it of its trees, might take possession. I figured myself in America, in an immense forest, clearing the land destined, by my exertions, to become a fruitful and smiling plain. Methought I heard the crash of the huge trees as they fell beneath my axe; and then I bethought me that a man was intended to marry—I ought to marry; and if I married, where was I likely to be more happy as a husband and a father than in America, engaged in tilling the ground? I fancied myself in America, engaged in tilling the ground, assisted by an enormous progeny. Well, why not marry, and go and till the ground in America? I was young, and youth was the time to marry in, and to labour in. I had the use of all my faculties; my eyes, it is true, were rather dull from early study, and from writing the 'Life of Joseph Sell'; but I could see tolerably well with them, and they were not bleared. I felt my arms, and thighs, and teeth—they were strong and sound enough; so now was the time to labour, to marry, eat strong flesh, and beget strong children—the power of doing all this would pass away with youth, which was terribly transitory. I bethought me that a time would come when my eyes would be bleared, and perhaps, sightless; my arms and thighs strengthless and sapless; when my teeth would shake in my jaws, even supposing they did not drop out. No going a wooing then—no labouring—no eating strong flesh, and begetting lusty children then; and I bethought me how, when all this should be, I should bewail the days of my youth as misspent, provided I had not in them founded for myself a home, and begotten strong children to take care of me in the days when I could not take care of myself; and thinking of these things, I became sadder and sadder, and stared vacantly upon the fire till my eyes closed in a doze."

So, before going to bed, he filled the kettle in case Isopel should return during the night. He fell asleep and was dreaming hard and hearing the sound of wheels in his dream "grating amidst sand and gravel," when suddenly he awoke. "The next moment I was awake, and found myself sitting up in my tent; there was a glimmer of light through the canvas caused by the fire; a feeling of dread came over me, which was perhaps natural, on starting suddenly from one's sleep in that wild lone place; I half imagined that some one was nigh the tent; the idea made me rather uncomfortable, and to dissipate it I lifted up the canvas of the door and peeped out, and, lo! I had an indistinct view of a tall figure standing by the tent. 'Who is that?' said I, whilst I felt my blood rush to my heart. 'It is I,' said the voice of Isopel Berners; 'you little expected me, I dare say; well, sleep on, I do not wish to disturb you.' 'But I was expecting you,' said I, recovering myself, 'as you may see by the fire and the kettle. I will be with you in a moment.'

"Putting on in haste the articles of dress which I had flung off, I came out of the tent, and

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addressing myself to Isopel, who was standing beside her cart, I said—‘Just as I was about to retire to rest I thought it possible that you might come to-night, and got everything in readiness for you. Now, sit down by the fire whilst I lead the donkey and cart to the place where you stay; I will unharness the animal, and presently come and join you.’ ‘I need not trouble you,’ said Isopel; ‘I will go myself and see after my things.’ ‘We will go together,’ said I, ‘and then return and have some tea.’ Isopel made no objection, and in about half an hour we had arranged everything at her quarters. I then hastened and prepared tea. Presently Isopel rejoined me, bringing her stool; she had divested herself of her bonnet, and her hair fell over her shoulders; she sat down, and I poured out the beverage, handing her a cup. ‘Have you made a long journey to-night?’ said I. ‘A very long one,’ replied Belle, ‘I have come nearly twenty miles since six o’clock.’ ‘I believe I heard you coming in my sleep,’ said I; ‘did the dogs above bark at you?’ ‘Yes,’ said Isopel, ‘very violently; did you think of me in your sleep?’ ‘No,’ said I, ‘I was thinking of Ursula and something she had told me.’ ‘When and where was that?’ said Isopel. ‘Yesterday evening,’ said I, ‘beneath the dingle hedge.’ ‘Then you were talking with her beneath the hedge?’ ‘I was,’ said I, ‘but only upon Gypsy matters. Do you know, Belle, that she has just been married to Sylvester, so you need not think that she and I . . .’ ‘She and you are quite at liberty to sit where you please,’ said Isopel. ‘However, young man,’ she continued, dropping her tone, which she had slightly raised, ‘I believe what you said, that you were merely talking about Gypsy matters, and also what you were going to say, if it was, as I suppose, that she and you had no particular acquaintance.’ Isopel was now silent for some time. ‘What are you thinking of?’ said I. ‘I was thinking,’ said Belle, ‘how exceedingly kind it was of you to get everything in readiness for me, though you did not know that I should come.’ ‘I had a presentiment that you would come,’ said I; ‘but you forget that I have prepared the kettle for you before, though it was true I was then certain that you would come.’ ‘I had not forgotten your doing so, young man,’ said Belle; ‘but I was beginning to think that you were utterly selfish, caring for nothing but the gratification of your own strange whims.’ ‘I am very fond of having my own way,’ said I, ‘but utterly selfish I am not, as I dare say I shall frequently prove to you. You will often find the kettle boiling when you come home.’ ‘Not heated by you,’ said Isopel, with a sigh. ‘By whom else?’ said I; ‘surely you are not thinking of driving me away?’ ‘You have as much right here as myself,’ said Isopel, ‘as I have told you before; but I must be going myself.’ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘we can go together; to tell you the truth, I am rather tired of this place.’ ‘Our paths must be separate,’ said Belle. ‘Separate,’ said I, ‘what do you mean? I shan’t let you go alone, I shall go with you; and you know the road is as free to me as to you; besides, you can’t think of parting company with me, considering how much you would lose by doing so; remember that you scarcely know anything of the Armenian language; now, to learn Armenian from me would take you twenty years.’

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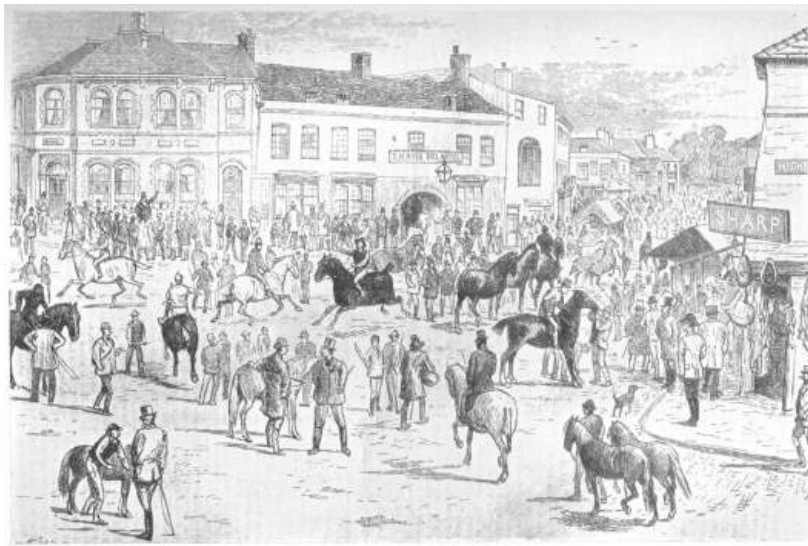
“Belle faintly smiled. ‘Come,’ said I, ‘take another cup of tea.’ Belle took another cup of tea, and yet another; we had some indifferent conversation, after which I arose and gave her donkey a considerable feed of corn. Belle thanked me, shook me by the hand, and then went to her own tabernacle, and I returned to mine.”

He torments her once more with Armenian and makes her speak in such a way that the reader sees—what he himself did not then see—that she was too sick with love for banter. She bade him farewell with the same transparent significance on the next day, when he was off early to a fair. “I waved my hand towards her. She slowly lifted up her right arm. I turned away and never saw Isopel Berners again.” That night as he was going home he said: “Isopel Berners is waiting for me, and the first word that I shall hear from her lips is that she has made up her mind. We shall go to America, and be so happy together.” She sent him a letter of farewell, and he could not follow her, he would not try, lest if he overtook her she should despise him for running after her.

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I can only say that it is an extraordinary love-making, but then all love-making, when truthfully reported, is extraordinary. There can be little doubt, therefore, that this episode is truthfully reported. Borrow himself has made a comment on himself and women through the mouth of Jasper. The Gypsy had overheard him talking to his sister Ursula for three hours under a hedge, and his opinion was: “I begin to think you care for nothing in this world but old words and strange stories.” When, afterwards, invited to kiss the same Ursula, he refused, “having,” he says, “inherited from nature a considerable fund of modesty, to which was added no slight store acquired in the course of my Irish education,” *i.e.* at the age of twelve.

After Isopel had gone he bought a fine horse with the help of a loan of £50 from Jasper, and travelled with it across England, meeting adventures and hearing of others. He was for a time bookkeeper at a coaching inn, still with some pounds in his purse. At Horncastle, which he mentions more than once by name, he sold the horse for £150. As the fair at Horncastle lasted from the 11th to the 21st of August, the date of this last adventure is almost exactly fixed. Here the book ends.



HORNCASTLE HORSE FAIR
(From an old print)

CHAPTER XV—AN EARLY PORTRAIT

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At the end of these travels Borrow had turned twenty-two. His brother John painted his portrait, but it has disappeared, and Borrow himself, as if fearing lest no adequate picture of him should remain, took pains to leave the material for one. It is a peculiarity of his books that people whom he meets and converses with often remark on his appearance. He must himself have been tolerably familiar with it and used to comment on it. He told his father that a lady thought him like Alfieri's Saul; at a later date Haydon, the painter, said he would "make a capital Pharaoh." Years before, when he was a boy, Petulengro recognised him after a long absence, because there was something in his face to prevent people from forgetting him. Mrs. Herne, his Gypsy enemy, praised him for his "singular and outrageous ugliness." He was lean, long-limbed and tall, having reached his full height of six-feet-two probably before the end of his teens; he had plenty of room to fill before becoming a big man, and yet he was already powerful and clearly destined to be a big man. His hair had for some time been rapidly becoming grey, and was soon to be altogether white: it had once been black, and his strongly-marked eyebrows were still dark brown. His face was oval and inclining to olive in complexion; his nose rounded, but not too large; his mouth good and well-moulded; his eyes dark brown and noticeable indescribably, either through their light or through the curve of the eyelids across them. "You have a flash about that eye of yours," says the old apple woman, and it is she that notices the "blob of foam" on his lips, while he is musing aloud, exclaiming "Necessity!" and cracking his finger-joints. He had an Irish look, or so thought his London acquaintance, Ardry. He looked "rather wild" at times and he had a way of clenching his fist when he was determined not to be put upon, as the bullying coachman found who had said: "One-and-ninepence, sir, or the things which you have brought with you will be taken away from you." Yet he had small hands for his size and "long white fingers," which "would just serve for the business," said the thimble-rigger. Though ready to hit people when he is angry, "a more civil and pleasant-spoken person than yourself," says Ursula, "can't be found." His own opinion was "that he was not altogether deficient in courage and in propriety of behaviour. . . . That his appearance was not particularly against him, his face not being like that of a convicted pickpocket, nor his gait resembling that of a fox that has lost his tail." It is as a "poor thin lad" that he commends himself to us, through the mouth of the old apple woman, at his setting out from London, but as he gets on he shows himself "an excellent pedestrian."

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Already in London he has made one or two favourable impressions, as when he convinces the superb waiter that he is "accustomed to claret." But it is upon the roads that he wishes to shine. When the Man in Black asks how he knows him, he answers that "Gypsies have various ways of obtaining information." Later on, he makes the Man in Black address him as "Zingaro." He impresses the commercial traveller as "a confounded sensible young fellow, and not at all opinionated," and Lord Whitefeather as a highwayman in disguise, and the Gypsies as one who never spoke a bad word and never did a bad thing. This is his most impressive moment, when the jockey discovers that he is the Romany Rye and tells him there is scarcely a part of England where he has not heard the name of the Romany Rye mentioned by the Gypsies. Here he makes another praise him. Now let him mount the fine horse he has bought with £50 borrowed from a Gypsy, and is about to sell for £150 at Horncastle Fair.

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"After a slight breakfast I mounted the horse, which, decked out in his borrowed finery, really looked better by a large sum of money than on any former occasion. Making my way out of the yard of the inn, I was instantly in the principal street of the town, up and down which an immense number of horses were being exhibited, some led, and others with riders. 'A wonderful small quantity of good horses in the fair this time!' I heard a stout jockey-looking individual say, who was staring up the street with his side towards me. 'Halloo, young fellow!' said he, a few

moments after I had passed, 'whose horse is that? Stop! I want to look at him!' Though confident that he was addressing himself to me, I took no notice, remembering the advice of the ostler, and proceeded up the street. My horse possessed a good walking step; but walking, as the reader knows, was not his best pace, which was the long trot, at which I could not well exercise him in the street, on account of the crowd of men and animals; however, as he walked along, I could easily perceive that he attracted no slight attention amongst those who, by their jockey dress and general appearance, I imagined to be connoisseurs; I heard various calls to stop, to none of which I paid the slightest attention. In a few minutes I found myself out of the town, when, turning round for the purpose of returning, I found I had been followed by several of the connoisseur-looking individuals, whom I had observed in the fair. 'Now would be the time for a display,' thought I; and looking around me I observed two five-barred gates, one on each side of the road, and fronting each other. Turning my horse's head to one, I pressed my heels to his sides, loosened the reins, and gave an encouraging cry, whereupon the animal cleared the gate in a twinkling. Before he had advanced ten yards in the field to which the gate opened, I had turned him round, and again giving him cry and rein, I caused him to leap back again into the road, and still allowing him head, I made him leap the other gate; and forthwith turning him round, I caused him to leap once more into the road, where he stood proudly tossing his head, as much as to say, 'What more?' 'A fine horse! a capital horse!' said several of the connoisseurs. 'What do you ask for him?' 'Too much for any of you to pay,' said I. 'A horse like this is intended for other kind of customers than any of you.' 'How do you know that?' said one; the very same person whom I had heard complaining in the street of the paucity of good horses in the fair. 'Come, let us know what you ask for him?' 'A hundred and fifty pounds!' said I; 'neither more nor less.' 'Do you call that a great price?' said the man. 'Why, I thought you would have asked double that amount! You do yourself injustice, young man.' 'Perhaps I do,' said I, 'but that's my affair; I do not choose to take more.' 'I wish you would let me get into the saddle,' said the man; 'the horse knows you, and therefore shows to more advantage; but I should like to see how he would move under me, who am a stranger. Will you let me get into the saddle, young man?' 'No,' said I, 'I will not let you get into the saddle.' 'Why not?' said the man. 'Lest you should be a Yorkshireman,' said I, 'and should run away with the horse.' 'Yorkshire?' said the man; 'I am from Suffolk; silly Suffolk—so you need not be afraid of my running away with the horse.' 'Oh! if that's the case,' said I, 'I should be afraid that the horse would run away with you; so I will by no means let you mount.' 'Will you let me look in his mouth?' said the man. 'If you please,' said I; 'but I tell you, he's apt to bite.' 'He can scarcely be a worse bite than his master,' said the man, looking into the horse's mouth; 'he's four off. I say, young man, will you warrant this horse?' 'No,' said I; 'I never warrant horses; the horses that I ride can always warrant themselves.' 'I wish you would let me speak a word to you,' said he. 'Just come aside. It's a nice horse,' said he, in a half whisper, after I had ridden a few paces aside with him. 'It's a nice horse,' said he, placing his hand upon the pommel of the saddle and looking up in my face, 'and I think I can find you a customer. If you would take a hundred, I think my lord would purchase it, for he has sent me about the fair to look him up a horse, by which he could hope to make an honest penny.' 'Well,' said I, 'and could he not make an honest penny, and yet give me the price I ask?' 'Why,' said the go-between, 'a hundred and fifty pounds is as much as the animal is worth, or nearly so; and my lord, do you see . . .' 'I see no reason at all,' said I, 'why I should sell the animal for less than he is worth, in order that his lordship may be benefited by him; so that if his lordship wants to make an honest penny, he must find some person who would consider the disadvantage of selling him a horse for less than it is worth, as counterbalanced by the honour of dealing with a lord, which I should never do; but I can't be wasting my time here. I am going back to the . . ., where if you, or any person, are desirous of purchasing the horse, you must come within the next half-hour, or I shall probably not feel disposed to sell him at all.' 'Another word, young man,' said the jockey; but without staying to hear what he had to say, I put the horse to his best trot, and re-entering the town, and threading my way as well as I could through the press, I returned to the yard of the inn, where, dismounting, I stood still, holding the horse by the bridle."

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As no one else troubled to paint Borrow either at Horncastle or any other place, and as he took advantage of the fact to such purpose, I must leave this portrait as it is, only I shall remind the reader that it is not a photograph but a portrait of the painter. A little time ago this painter was a consumptive-looking literary hack, and is still a philologist, with eyes a bit dim from too much reading, and subject to frantic melancholy;—a liker of solitude and of men and women who do not disturb it, but a man accustomed to men and very well able to deal with them.

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CHAPTER XVI—THE VEILED PERIOD

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The last words of "The Romany Rye" narrative are: "I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Petulengro and Tawno Chikno came originally from India. I think I'll go there." This is his way of giving impressiveness to the "veiled period" of the following seven or eight years, for the benefit of those who had read "The Zincali" and "The Bible in Spain," and had been allured by the hints of earlier travel. In "The Zincali" he has spoken of seeing "Gypsies of various lands, Russian, Hungarian and Turkish; and also the legitimate children of most countries of the world": of being "in the shop of an Armenian at Constantinople," and "lately at Janina in Albania." In "The Bible in Spain" he had spoken of "an acquaintance of mine, a Tartar Khan." He had described strange things, and said: "This is not the first instance in which it has been my lot to verify the wisdom of

the saying, that truth is sometimes wilder than fiction;" he had met Baron Taylor and reminded the reader of other meetings "in the street or the desert, the brilliant hall or amongst Bedouin haimas, at Novgorod or Stambul." Before 1833 he had been in Paris and Madrid. "I have been everywhere," he said to the simple company at a Welsh inn. Speaking to Colonel Napier in 1839 at Seville, he said that he had picked up the Gypsy tongue "some years ago in Moultan," and he gave the impression that he had visited most parts of the East.

A little too much has been made of this "veiled period," not by Borrow, but by others. It would have been fair to surmise that if he chose not to write about this period of his life, either there was very little in it, or there was something in it which he was unwilling—perhaps ashamed—to disclose; and what has been discovered suggests that he was in an unsettled state—writing to please himself and perhaps also the booksellers, travelling a little and perhaps meeting some of the adventures which he crammed into those few months of 1825, suffering from "the horrors" either in solitude or with no confidant but his mother.

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Borrow himself took no great pains to preserve the veil. For instance, in the preface to his translation of "Y Bardd Cwsg" in 1860, he says that it was made "in the year 1830 at the request of a little Welsh bookseller of his acquaintance" in Smithfield.

In 1826 he was in Norwich: the "Romantic Ballads" were published there, and in May he received a letter from Allan Cunningham, whose cheery commendatory verses ushered in the book. The letter suggests that Borrow was indolent from apathy. The book had no success or notice, which Knapp puts down to his not sending out presentation copies. "I judge, however," says he, "that he sent one to Walter Scott, and that that busy writer forgot to acknowledge the courtesy. Borrow's lifelong hostility to Scott would thus be accounted for;" but the hostility is his reason for supposing that the copy was sent. Some time afterwards, in 1826, he was at 26, Bryanstone Street, Portman Square, and was to sit for the artist, B. R. Haydon, before going off to the South of France. If he went, he may have paid the visits to Paris, Bayonne, Italy and Spain, which he alludes to in "The Bible in Spain"; he may, as Dr. Knapp suggests, have covered the ground of Murtagh's alleged travels in "The Romany Rye," and have been at Pau, with Quesada's army marching to Pamplona, at Torrelodones, and at Seville. But in a letter to the Bible Society in 1838 he spoke of his earlier acquaintance with Spain being confined almost entirely to Madrid. It may be true, as he says in "The Zincali," that "once in the south of France, when he was weary, hungry, and penniless, he observed one of these patterans or Gypsy trails, and, following the direction pointed out, arrived at the resting place of some Gypsies, who received him with kindness and hospitality on the faith of no other word of recommendation than patteran." It may be true that he wandered in Italy, and rested at nightfall by a kiln "about four leagues from Genoa." But by April, 1827, he must have been back in Norwich, according to Knapp, to see Marshland Shales at the fair. Knapp gives certain proof that he was there between September and December. Thereafter, if Knapp was right, he was translating Vidocq's "Memoirs." In 1829 again he was in London, at 17, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, and was projecting with John Bowring a collection of "Songs of Scandinavia." He applied for work to the Highland Society and to the British Museum, in 1830. In that summer he was at 7, Museum Street, Bloomsbury. He was not satisfied with his work or its remuneration. He thought of entering the French Army, of going to Greece, of getting work, with Bowring's help, under the Belgian Government. His name "had been down for several years" for the purchase of a commission in the English Army, and Bowring offered to recommend him to "a corps in one of the Eastern Colonies," where he could perfect his Arabic and Persian. In 1842 he wrote a letter to Bowring, printed by Mr. Walling, asking for "as many of the papers and manuscripts which I left at yours some twelve years ago, as you can find," and for advice and a loan of books, and promising that Murray will send a copy of "The Bible in Spain" to "my oldest, I may say my *only* friend." But whatever Bowring's help, Borrow was "drifting on the sea of the world, and likely to be so," and especially hurt because of the figure he must cut in the eyes of his own people. Was it now, or when he was bookkeeper at the inn in 1825, that he saw so much of the ways of commercial travellers? [\[114\]](#)

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It is not necessary to quote from the metrical translations, probably of this period, "selections from a huge, undigested mass of translation, accumulated during several years devoted to philological pursuits," published in "The Targum" of 1835. They were made from originals in the Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Tartar, Tibetan, Chinese, Mandchou, Russian, Malo-Russian, Polish, Finnish, Anglo-Saxon, Ancient Norse, Suabian, German, Dutch, Danish, Ancient Danish, Swedish, Ancient Irish, Irish, Gaelic, Ancient British, Cambrian British, Greek, Modern Greek, Latin, Provençal, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Rommany.

I will, however, quote from "The Sleeping Bard, or Visions of the World, Death and Hell," his translation of Elis Wyn's "Y Bardd Cwsg." The book would please Borrow, because in the City of Perdition Rome stands at the gate of Pride, and the Pope has palaces in the streets of Pleasure and of Lucre; because the Church of England is the fairest part of the Catholic Church, surmounted by "Queen Anne on the pinnacle of the building, with a sword in each hand"; and because the Papist is turned away from the Catholic Church by a porter with "an exceedingly large Bible." "One fair morning," he begins:

"One fair morning of genial April, when the earth was green and pregnant, and Britain, like a paradise, was wearing splendid liveries, tokens of the smile of the summer sun, I was walking upon the bank of the Severn, in the midst of the sweet notes of the little songsters of the wood, who appeared to be striving to break through all the measures of music, whilst pouring forth praise to the Creator. I, too, occasionally raised my voice and warbled with the feathered choir, though in a manner somewhat more restrained than that in which they sang; and occasionally

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read a portion of the book of "The Practice of Godliness."

And in his vision he saw fiends drive men and women through the foul river of the Fiend to their eternal damnation, where

"I at the first glance saw more pains and torments than the heart of man can imagine or the tongue relate; a single one of which was sufficient to make the hair stand erect, the blood to freeze, the flesh to melt, the bones to drop from their places—yea, the spirit to faint. What is empaling or sawing men alive, tearing off the flesh piecemeal with iron pincers, or broiling the flesh with candles, collop fashion, or squeezing heads flat in a vice, and all the most shocking devices which ever were upon earth, compared with one of these? Mere pastime! There were a hundred thousand shoutings, hoarse cries, and strong groans; yonder a boisterous wailing and horrible outcry answering them, and the howling of a dog is sweet, delicious music when compared with these sounds. When we had proceeded a little way onward from the accursed beach, towards the wild place of Damnation, I perceived, by their own light, innumerable men and women here and there; and devils without number and without rest, incessantly employing their strength in tormenting. Yes, there they were, devils and damned, the devils roaring with their own torments, and making the damned roar by means of the torments which they inflicted upon them. I paid particular observation to the corner which was nearest me. There I beheld the devils with pitchforks, tossing the damned up into the air that they might fall headlong on poisoned hatchets or barbed pikes, there to wriggle their bowels out. After a time the wretches would crawl in multitudes, one upon another, to the top of one of the burning crags, there to be broiled like mutton; from there they would be snatched afar, to the top of one of the mountains of eternal frost and snow, where they would be allowed to shiver for a time; thence they would be precipitated into a loathsome pool of boiling brimstone, to wallow there in conflagration, smoke and the suffocation of horrible stench; from the pool they would be driven to the marsh of Hell, that they might embrace and be embraced by the reptiles, many times worse than serpents and vipers; after allowing them half an hour's dalliance with these creatures the devils would seize a bundle of rods of steel, fiery hot from the furnace, and would scourge them till their howling, caused by the horrible inexpressible pain which they endured, would fill the vast abode of darkness, and when the fiends deemed that they had scourged them enough, they would take hot irons and sear their bloody wounds. . . ."

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And this would have particularly pleased Borrow, who disliked and condemned smoking:

"For one of late origin I will not deny, O Cerberus, that thou hast brought to us many a booty from the island of our enemies, by means of tobacco, a weed the cause of much deceit; for how much deceit is practised in carrying it about, in mixing it, and in weighing it: a weed which entices some people to bib ale; others to curse, swear, and to flatter in order to obtain it, and others to tell lies in denying that they use it: a weed productive of maladies in various bodies, the excess of which is injurious to every man's body, without speaking of his *soul*: a weed, moreover, by which we get multitudes of the poor, whom we should never get did they not set their love on tobacco, allow it to master them, and pull the bread from the mouths of their children."

In the preface to this book as it was finally published in 1860, Borrow said that the little Welsh bookseller had rejected it for fear of being ruined—"The terrible descriptions of vice and torment would frighten the genteel part of the English public out of their wits. . . . I had no idea, till I read him in English, that Elis Wyn had been such a terrible fellow."

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In September, 1830, Borrow left London and returned to Norwich, having done nothing which attracted attention or deserved to. His brother's opinion was that his want of success in life was due chiefly to his being unlike other people. So far as his failure in literature went, it was due to the fact that he was doing either poorly or only moderately well work that very few people wanted to read, viz., chiefly verse translations from unfashionable languages. It may be also that his health was partly the cause and was in turn lowered by the long continued failure. When Borrow, at the age of forty or more, came to write about the first twenty-two years of his life, he not only described himself suffering from several attacks of "the horrors," but also with almost equal vividness three men suffering from mental afflictions of different kinds: the author who lived alone and was continually touching things to avert the evil chance; the old man who had saved himself from being overwhelmed in his terrible misfortunes by studying the inscriptions on Chinese pots, but could not tell the time; and the Welshman who wandered over the country preaching and living piously, but haunted by the knowledge that in his boyhood he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. The most vivid description of his "horrors," which he said in 1834 always followed if they did not result from weakness, is in the eighty-fourth chapter of "Lavengro":

"Heaviness had suddenly come over me, heaviness of heart, and of body also. I had accomplished the task which I had imposed upon myself, and now that nothing more remained to do, my energies suddenly deserted me, and I felt without strength, and without hope. Several causes, perhaps, co-operated to bring about the state in which I then felt myself. It is not improbable that my energies had been overstrained during the work, the progress of which I have attempted to describe; and every one is aware that the results of overstrained energies are feebleness and lassitude—want of nourishment might likewise have something to do with it. During my sojourn in the dingle my food had been of the simplest and most unsatisfying description, by no means calculated to support the exertions which the labour I had been engaged upon required; it had consisted of coarse oaten cakes, and hard cheese, and for beverage I had been indebted to a neighbouring pit, in which, in the heat of the day, I frequently saw, not golden or silver fish, but

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frogs and efts swimming about. I am, however, inclined to believe that Mrs. Herne's cake had quite as much to do with the matter as insufficient nourishment. I had never entirely recovered from the effects of its poison, but had occasionally, especially at night, been visited by a grinding pain in the stomach, and my whole body had been suffused with cold sweat; and indeed these memorials of the drow have never entirely disappeared—even at the present time they display themselves in my system, especially after much fatigue of body, and excitement of mind. So there I sat in the dingle upon my stone, nerveless and hopeless, by whatever cause or causes that state had been produced—there I sat with my head leaning upon my hand, and so I continued a long, long time. At last I lifted my head from my hand, and began to cast anxious, unquiet looks about the dingle—the entire hollow was now enveloped in deep shade—I cast my eyes up; there was a golden gleam on the tops of the trees which grew towards the upper parts of the dingle; but lower down, all was gloom and twilight—yet, when I first sat down on my stone, the sun was right above the dingle, illuminating all its depths by the rays which it cast perpendicularly down—so I must have sat a long, long time upon my stone. And now, once more, I rested my head upon my hand, but almost instantly lifted it again in a kind of fear, and began looking at the objects before me, the forge, the tools, the branches of the trees, endeavouring to follow their rows, till they were lost in the darkness of the dingle; and now I found my right hand grasping convulsively the three forefingers of the left, first collectively, and then successively, wringing them till the joints cracked; then I became quiet, but not for long.

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“Suddenly I started up, and could scarcely repress the shriek which was rising to my lips. Was it possible? Yes, all too certain; the evil one was upon me; the inscrutable horror which I had felt in my boyhood had once more taken possession of me. I had thought that it had forsaken me; that it would never visit me again; that I had outgrown it; that I might almost bid defiance to it; and I had even begun to think of it without horror, as we are in the habit of doing of horrors of which we conceive we run no danger; and lo! when least thought of, it had seized me again. Every moment I felt it gathering force, and making me more wholly its own. What should I do?—resist, of course; and I did resist. I grasped, I tore, and strove to fling it from me; but of what avail were my efforts? I could only have got rid of it by getting rid of myself; it was a part of myself, or rather it was all myself. I rushed among the trees, and struck at them with my bare fists, and dashed my head against them, but I felt no pain. How could I feel pain with that horror upon me! and then I flung myself on the ground, gnawed the earth, and swallowed it; and then I looked round; it was almost total darkness in the dingle, and the darkness added to my horror. I could no longer stay there; up I rose from the ground, and attempted to escape; at the bottom of the winding path which led up the acclivity I fell over something which was lying on the ground; the something moved, and gave a kind of whine. It was my little horse, which had made that place its lair; my little horse; my only companion and friend, in that now awful solitude. I reached the mouth of the dingle; the sun was just sinking in the far west, behind me; the fields were flooded with his last gleams. How beautiful everything looked in the last gleams of the sun! I felt relieved for a moment; I was no longer in the horrid dingle; in another minute the sun was gone, and a big cloud occupied the place where he had been; in a little time it was almost as dark as it had previously been in the open part of the dingle. My horror increased; what was I to do?—it was of no use fighting against the horror; that I saw; the more I fought against it, the stronger it became. What should I do: say my prayers? Ah! why not? So I knelt down under the hedge, and said, ‘Our father’; but that was of no use; and now I could no longer repress cries; the horror was too great to be borne. What should I do: run to the nearest town or village, and request the assistance of my fellow-men? No! that I was ashamed to do; notwithstanding the horror was upon me, I was ashamed to do that. I knew they would consider me a maniac, if I went screaming amongst them; and I did not wish to be considered a maniac. Moreover, I knew that I was not a maniac, for I possessed all my reasoning powers, only the horror was upon me—the screaming horror! But how were indifferent people to distinguish between madness and this screaming horror? So I thought and reasoned; and at last I determined not to go amongst my fellow men, whatever the result might be. I went to the mouth of the dingle, and there, placing myself on my knees, I again said the Lord's Prayer; but it was of no use; praying seemed to have no effect over the horror; the unutterable fear appeared rather to increase than diminish; and I again uttered wild cries, so loud that I was apprehensive they would be heard by some chance passenger on the neighbouring road; I therefore went deeper into the dingle; I sat down with my back against a thorn bush; the thorns entered my flesh, and when I felt them, I pressed harder against the bush; I thought the pain of the flesh might in some degree counteract the mental agony; presently I felt them no longer; the power of the mental horror was so great that it was impossible, with that upon me, to feel any pain from the thorns. I continued in this posture a long time, undergoing what I cannot describe, and would not attempt if I were able. Several times I was on the point of starting up and rushing anywhere; but I restrained myself, for I knew I could not escape from myself, so why should I not remain in the dingle? So I thought and said to myself, for my reasoning powers were still uninjured. At last it appeared to me that the horror was not so strong, not quite so strong upon me. Was it possible that it was relaxing its grasp, releasing its prey? O what a mercy! but it could not be—and yet I looked up to heaven, and clasped my hands, and said ‘Our Father.’ I said no more; I was too agitated; and now I was almost sure that the horror had done its worst.

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“After a little time I arose, and staggered down yet farther into the dingle. I again found my little horse on the same spot as before, I put my hand to his mouth; he licked my hand. I flung myself down by him and put my arms round his neck, the creature whinnied, and appeared to sympathise with me; what a comfort to have any one, even a dumb brute, to sympathise with me at such a moment! I clung to my little horse, as if for safety and protection. I laid my head on his

neck, and felt almost calm; presently the fear returned, but not so wild as before; it subsided, came again, again subsided; then drowsiness came over me, and at last I fell asleep, my head supported on the neck of the little horse. I awoke; it was dark, dark night—not a star was to be seen—but I felt no fear, the horror had left me. I arose from the side of the little horse, and went into my tent, lay down, and again went to sleep. . . .”

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It may be said that the man who had gone through this, and could describe it, would find it easy enough to depict other sufferings of the same kind, though in later or less violent stages. It is certain, however, that for such a one to acquire the habit of touching was easy. He says himself, that after the night with the author who had this habit and who feared ideas more than thunder and lightning, he himself touched things and wondered if “the long-forgotten influence” had returned. Mr. Walling says that “he has been informed” that Borrow “suffered in his youth from the touching mania,” and like many other readers probably, I had concluded the same. But Mr. Watts-Dunton had already told us that “in walking through Richmond Park,” when an old man, Borrow “would step out of his way constantly to touch a tree and was offended if observed.” The old man diverting himself with Chinese inscriptions on teapots would be an easy invention for Borrow; he may not have done this very thing, but he had done similar things. Here again, Mr. Walling says that “he has been told” the incident was drawn from Borrow’s own experience. As to Peter Williams and the sin against the Holy Ghost, Borrow hinted to him that his case was not exceptional:

“‘Dost thou then imagine,’ said Peter, ‘the sin against the Holy Ghost to be so common an occurrence?’

“‘As you have described it,’ said I, ‘of very common occurrence, especially amongst children, who are, indeed, the only beings likely to commit it.’

“‘Truly,’ said Winifred, ‘the young man talks wisely.’

“Peter was silent for some moments, and appeared to be reflecting; at last, suddenly raising his head, he looked me full in the face, and, grasping my hand with vehemence, he said, ‘Tell me, young man, only one thing, hast thou, too, committed the sin against the Holy Ghost?’

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“‘I am neither Papist nor Methodist,’ said I, ‘but of the Church, and, being so, confess myself to no one, but keep my own counsel; I will tell thee, however, had I committed at the same age, twenty such sins as that which you committed, I should feel no uneasiness at these years—but I am sleepy, and must go to rest.’”

This is due to probably something more than a desire to make himself and his past impressive. The man’s story in several places reminds me of Borrow, where, for instance, after he has realised his unpardonable sin, he runs wild through Wales, “climbing mountains and wading streams, burnt by the sun, drenched by the rain,” so that for three years he hardly knew what befel him, living with robbers and Gypsies, and once about to fling himself into the sea from a lofty rock.

If it be true, as it is likely, that Borrow suffered in a more extended manner than he showed in his accounts of the horrors, the time of the suffering is still uncertain. Was it before his first escape from London, as he says in “Lavengro”? Was it during his second long stay in London or after his second escape? Or was it really not long before the actual narrative was written in the ‘forties? There is some reason for thinking so. The most vivid description of “the horrors,” and the account of the touching gentleman and of Peter Williams, together with a second reference to “the horrors” or the “evil one,” all occur in a section of “Lavengro” equal to hardly more than a sixth of the whole. And further, when Borrow was writing “Wild Wales,” or when he met the sickly young man at the “Castle Inn” of Caernarvon, he thought of himself as always having had “the health of an elephant.” I should be inclined to conclude at least that when he was forty great mental suffering was still fresh in his mind, something worse than the heavy melancholy which returned now and then when he was past fifty.

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CHAPTER XVII—THE BIBLE SOCIETY: RUSSIA

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From the phrase, “He said in ‘32,” which Borrow uses of himself in Chapter X. of the Appendix to “The Romany Rye,” it was to be concluded that he was writing political articles in 1832; and Dr. Knapp was able to quote a manuscript of the time where he says that “there is no Radical who would not rejoice to see his native land invaded by the bitterest of her foreign enemies,” etc., and also a letter, printed in the “Norfolk Chronicle,” on August 18, 1832, on the origin of the word “Tory.”

At the end of this year he became friendly with the family of Skepper, including the widowed Mrs. Mary Clarke, then 36 years old, who lived at Oulton Hall, near Lowestoft, in Suffolk. With or through them he met the Rev. Francis Cunningham, Vicar of St. Margaret’s, Lowestoft, who had married a sister of the Quaker banker, Joseph John Gurney, and through the offices of these two, Borrow was invited to go before the British and Foreign Bible Society, as a candidate for employment in some branch of the Society’s work where his knowledge of languages would be useful. He walked to London for the purpose in December, 1832. The Society was satisfied and

sent him back to Norwich to learn the Manchu-Tartar language. There he wrote a letter, which, if we take Dr. Knapp's word for it, was "a sort of recantation of the Taylorism of 1824." Being now near thirty, and perhaps having his worst "horrors" behind him, or at least having reason to think so if he was already fond of Mrs. Clarke, whom he afterwards married, it was easy for him to fall into the same way of speaking as these good and kindly people, and to abuse Buddhism, which he did not understand, for their delectation. Mrs. Clarke had four or five hundred pounds a year of her own, and one child, a daughter, then about fourteen years old. Perhaps it was natural that he should remember then, as he did later, the words of the cheerful and forgetful wise man: "I have been young and now am grown old, yet never have I seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread."

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From a gloomily fanatical atheist Borrow changed to a cheerfully fanatical Protestant, described as "of the middle order in society, and a very produceable person." {126} He was probably never a good atheist of the reasonable critical type like William Taylor, whose thinking was too dull and too difficult for him. Above all it was too negative and unrelated to anything but the brain for the man who wrote "Lines to Six-foot-three" and consorted with Gypsies. He had taken atheism along with Taylor's literary and linguistic teaching, perhaps with some eagerness at first as a form of protest against conventionally pious and respectable Norwich life. The Bible Society and Mrs. Clarke and her friends came radiant and benevolent to his "looped and windowed" atheism. They gave him friends and money: they gave him an occupation on which he felt, and afterwards found, that he could spend his hesitating energies. He gathered up all his powers to serve the Bible Society. He suffered hunger, cold, imprisonment, wounded feet, long hours of indoor labour and long hours of dismal attendance upon inexorable official delay. Personally he irritated Mr. Brandram, the secretary, and his bold and unexpected ways gave the Society something to put up with, but he was always a faithful and enthusiastic servant. He had many reasons for being grateful to them. He, who was going to get himself imprisoned for atheism, had already become, as Mr. Cunningham thought, a man "of certain Christian principle," if "of no very exactly defined denomination of Christians." He certainly did become an unquestioning wild missionary—though not merely wild, for he was discreet in his boldness; he was careful to save the Society money; he made himself respected by the highest English and Spanish officials in Spain; so that in 1837, for the first time in the Society's history, an English ambassador made their cause a national one. He wanted to shout and the Bible Society gave him something to shout for. He wanted to fight and they gave him something to fight for. Twenty years afterwards, in writing the Appendix to "The Romany Rye," he looked back on his travels in Spain as on a campaign:

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"It is true he went to Spain with the colours of that Society on his hat—oh! the blood glows in his veins! oh! the marrow awakes in his old bones when he thinks of what he accomplished in Spain in the cause of religion and civilisation with the colours of that Society on his hat, and its weapon in his hand, even the sword of the word of God; how with that weapon he hewed left and right, making the priests fly before him, and run away squeaking: 'Vaya! que demonio es este!' Ay, and when he thinks of the plenty of bible swords which he left behind him, destined to prove, and which have already proved, pretty calthrops in the heels of Popery. 'Hallo! Batuschca,' he exclaimed the other night, on reading an article in a newspaper; 'what do you think of the present doings in Spain? Your old friend the zingaro, the gitano who rode about Spain, to say nothing of Galicia, with the Greek Buchini behind him as his squire, had a hand in bringing them about; there are many brave Spaniards connected with the present movement who took Bibles from his hands, and read them and profited by them."

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He was as sure in 1839 as in 1857 of the diabolic power and intention of Popery, that "unrelenting fiend," whose secrets few, he said, knew more than himself. {128a}

In the gladness of his now fully exerted powers of body and mind, travelling in wild country and observing and conflicting with men, he adopted not merely the unctuous phraseology of "I am at present, thanks be to the Lord, comfortable and happy," {128b} but a more attractive religious arrogance. "That I am an associate of Gypsies and fortune-tellers I do not deny," he says, "and why should I be ashamed of their company when my Master mingled with publicans and thieves." {128c} He painted himself as a possible martyr among the wild Catholics, a St. Stephen. When he suffered at the same time from hardship and the Society's disfavour, he exclaimed: "It was God's will that I, who have risked all and lost almost all in the cause, be taunted, suspected, and the sweat of agony and tears which I have poured out be estimated at the value of the water of the ditch or the moisture which exudes from rotten dung. But I murmur not, and hope I shall at all times be willing to bow to the dispensations of the Almighty." {128d} He exulted in melodramatic nature, in the sublime of Salvator Rosa, in the desperate, wild, and strange. His very prayers, as reported by himself to the Secretary, distressed the Society because they were "passionate." True, he could sometimes, under the inspiration of the respectable Secretary, write like a perfect middle-class English Christian. He condemned the Sunday amusements of Hamburg, for example, remarking that "England, with all her faults, has still some regard to decency, and will not tolerate such a shameful display of vice" (as rope-dancing) "in so sacred a season, when a decent cheerfulness is the freest form in which the mind or countenance ought to invest themselves." {129a} He argued against the translator of the Bible into Manchu that concessions should not be made to a Chinese way of thought, because it was the object of the Society to wean the Chinese from their own customs and observances, not to encourage them. But the opposite extreme was more congenial to Borrow. He would go to the market place in a remote Spanish village and display his Testaments on the outspread horsecloth, crying: "Peasants, peasants, I bring you the Word of God at a cheap price." {129b} He would disguise

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himself, travelling with a sack of Testaments on his donkey; and when a woman asked if it was soap he had, he answered: "Yes; it is soap to wash souls clean." This was the man to understand Peter Williams, the Welsh preacher who had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost and wandered about preaching and refusing a roof. Neither must it be forgotten that this was the man who, in a conversation not reported to the Bible Society, said: "What befalls my body or soul was written in a *gabicote* a thousand years before the foundation of the world."

Borrow was only seven weeks in getting so far as to be able to translate from Manchu, though it had been said, as he pointed out, that the language took five or six years to acquire. It cost him an even shorter time to acquire the dialect of his employers, for in less than a month after he had retired to Norwich to learn Manchu, he was writing thus:

"Revd. and Dear Sir,—I have just received your communication, and notwithstanding it is Sunday morning, and the bells with their loud and clear voices are calling me to church, I have sat down to answer it by return of post. . . .

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"Return my kind and respected friend, Mr. Brandram, my best thanks for his present of 'The Gypsies' Advocate,' and assure him that, next to the acquirement of Mandchou, the conversion and enlightening of those interesting people occupy the principal place in my mind. . . . {130}

Never had his linguistic power a greater or more profitable triumph than in this acquisition. As this was probably a dialect not unknown at Earlham, Norwich, and Oulton, among people whom he loved, respected, or beheld successful, the difficulty of the task was a little decreased. Thurtell and Haggart had passed away, Petulengro had not yet reappeared. There was no one to tell him that he was living in a country and an age that were afterwards to appear among the most ignorant and cruel on record. He himself had not yet discovered the "gentility-nonsense," nor did he ever discover that gentility was of the same family, if it was not an albinism of the same species, as pious and oily respectability. So delighted was he with the new dialect that he rolled it on his tongue to the confusion of habitués, who had to rap him over the knuckles for speaking of becoming "useful to the Deity, to man, and to himself."

In July, 1833, Borrow was appointed, with a salary of £200 a year and expenses, to go to St. Petersburg, to help in editing a Manchu translation of the New Testament, or transcribing and collating a translation of the Old, accompanied by a warning against "a tone of confidence in speaking of yourself" in such a phrase as "useful to the Deity, to man, and to yourself." Borrow accepted the correction, and Norwich laughed at him in his new suit. At the end of July he sailed, and as at this time he had no objection to gentility he regretted the end of his passage with so many "genteel, well-bred and intelligent passengers," though he had suffered from sea-sickness, followed by "the horrors."

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St. Petersburg he thought the finest of the many capitals he had seen. He made the acquaintance of several men who could help him with their learning and their books, and above all he gained the friendship of John P. Hasfeldt, a Dane, a little older than himself, who was interpreter to the Danish Legation and teacher of European languages, evidently a man after Borrow's own heart, with his opinion that "The greater part of those products of art, called 'the learned,' would not be able to earn a living if our Lord were not a guardian of fools." The copying of the Old Testament was finished by the end of the year, without having prevented Borrow from profiting by his unusual facilities for the acquisition of languages. He had then to superintend, or as it fell out, to help largely with his own hands, the printing of the first Manchu translation of the New Testament, with type which had first to be cleansed of ten years' rust and with compositors who knew nothing of Manchu. Lacking almost in time to eat or to sleep he impressed the Bible Society by his prodigious labours under "the blessing of a kind and gracious Providence watching over the execution of a work in which the wide extension of the Saviour's glory is involved."

He was living cheaply, suffering sometimes from "the horrors," and curing them with port wine—sending money home to his mother, bidding her to employ a maid and to read and "think as much of God as possible." Nor was he doing merely what he was bound to do. For example, he translated some of the "Homilies of the Church of England" into Russian and into Manchu. He also published in St. Petersburg his "Targum" and "Talisman," a short further collection of translations from Pushkin, Mickiewicz, and from Russian national songs. The work was finished and formally and kindly approved by the Bible Society. He had proposed long before that he should distribute the books himself, wandering overland with them by Lake Baïkal and Kiakhta right to Pekin; but the Russian Government refused a passport. Dr. Knapp believes that this intention of going among the Tartars and overland from Russia to Pekin was the sole ground for his crediting himself with travels in the Far East. In the flesh he had to content himself with a journey to Novgorod and Moscow. As he had visited the Jews at Hamburg so he did the Gypsies at Moscow. This adventure moved him to his first characteristic piece of prose, in a letter to the Society. This letter, which was afterwards printed in the "Athenæum," {132} and incorporated in "The Zincali," mentions the Gypsies who have become successful singers and married noblemen, but continues:

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"It is not, however, to be supposed that all the female Gypsies are of this high, talented and respectable order: amongst them are many low and profligate females, who sing at taverns or at the various gardens in the neighbourhood, and whose husbands and male connexions subsist by horse jobbing and like kinds of traffic. The principal place of resort of this class is Marina Rotche, lying about two versts from Moscow, and thither I drove, attended by a *valet de place*. Upon my arriving there, the Gypsies swarmed out from their tents, and from the little trader, or

tavern, and surrounded me; standing on the seat of the calèche, I addressed them in a loud voice in the dialect of the English Gypsies, with which I have some slight acquaintance. A scream of wonder instantly arose, and welcomes and greetings were poured forth in torrents of musical Rommany, amongst which, however, the most prominent air was, 'Ah kak mi toute karmama,' 'Oh, how we love you'; for at first they supposed me to be one of their brothers, who they said, were wandering about in Turkey, China, and other parts, and that I had come over the great pawnee, or water, to visit them. . . . I visited this place several times during my sojourn at Moscow, and spoke to them upon their sinful manner of living, upon the advent and suffering of Christ Jesus, and expressed, upon my taking leave of them, a hope that they would be in a short period furnished with the word of eternal life in their own language, which they seemed to value and esteem much higher than the Russian."

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The tone of this letter suggests that it was meant for the Bible Society—and a copy was addressed to them—but at this date it is possible to see in it an outline of the Gypsy gentleman, very much the gentleman, the "colossal clergyman" of later days.

Borrow liked the Russians, and for some reasons was sorry to leave them and Hasfeldt in September, 1835. But for other reasons he was glad. He would see his mother and comfort her for the loss of her elder son in November, 1833, as he had already done to some extent by telling her that he would "endeavour to get ordained." He also would see Mrs. Clarke, with whom he had been corresponding for the past two years. Both she and his mother had been unwilling for him to go to Peking.

CHAPTER XVIII—THE BIBLE SOCIETY: SPAIN

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Borrow's chief regret at leaving Russia was that his active life was interrupted, perhaps at an end. He was dreading the old life of unprofitable study with no complete friends. But luckily, when he had only been a month in England, the Bible Society resolved to send him to Lisbon and Oporto, to look for openings for circulating the Bible in Portugal and perhaps in Spain. After this they had thoughts of sending him to China by sea. In November, 1835, he sailed for Lisbon.

Spain was at this time the victim of private quarrels which had been allowed to assume public importance. King Ferdinand VII. had twice been restored to an unloving people by foreign, especially English, aid. This King had for heir his brother Carlos, until his fourth wife, Maria Christina, bore him a daughter, Isabella, in 1830; and to secure her succession he set aside the Salic law. In 1833 he died. Isabella II. was proclaimed Queen, and Christina Regent. Christinists and Carlists were soon at war, and very bloody war. The English intervened, once diplomatically, once with a foreign legion. The war wavered, with success now to the Carlist Generals Zumalacarre and Cabrera and now to the Christinist Espartero. There were new Prime Ministers about twice yearly. The parties were divided amongst themselves, and treachery was common. The only result that could always be foreseen was that the people and the country would suffer. Not until 1841 did Espartero finally defeat Cabrera.

Portugal, in 1835, had just had its eight years of civil war between the partisans of a child—Maria II.—aged seven, and her uncle, Miguel, ending in the departure of Miguel. Borrow made a preliminary journey in the forlorn country and decided for Spain instead. Escaping the bullets of Portuguese soldiers, he crossed the boundary at the beginning of 1836 and entered Badajoz. There he met the Gypsies, and put off his journey to Madrid to see more of them and translate the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke into their tongue. At Merida he stopped again for a Gypsy wedding. His guide was the Gypsy, Antonio Lopez, who sold him the donkey which he rode as far as Talavera. At Madrid his business was to print the New Testament in a Spanish Catholic translation. He had to wait; but with a new Cabinet permission was obtained and arrangements for the printing were made. The Revolution of La Granja, which he describes in "The Bible in Spain," caused another delay. Then, in October, after a visit to the Gypsies of Granada, he returned to London.

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He had written long letters to the Bible Society, and one which was combined and published in the "Athenæum" with that written from Moscow. It is dated, Madrid, July 19, 1836, but describes his visit to Badajoz on January 6. He says, on entering Badajoz:

"I instantly returned thanks to God, who had protected me during a journey of five days through the wilds of the Alemtejo, the province of Portugal the most infested by robbers and desperate characters, and which I had traversed with no other human companion than a lad, nearly idiotic, who was to convey back the mules which carried myself and luggage."

Two men were passing him in the street, and seeing the face of one he touched his arm: "I said a certain word, to which, after an exclamation of surprise, he responded in the manner I expected." They were Gypsies. He continues:

"They left me in haste and went about the town informing the rest that a stranger had arrived who spoke Rommany as well as themselves, who had the eyes and face of a Gitano, and seemed to be of the 'cratti' or blood. In less than half an hour the street before the inn was filled with the men, women and children of Egypt. I went out amongst them, and my heart sank within me as I surveyed them; so much squalidness, dirt and misery I had never before seen amongst a similar

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number of human beings; but the worst of all was the evil expression of their countenances, denoting that they were familiar with every species of crime, and it was not long before I found that their countenances did not belie them. After they had asked me an infinity of questions, and felt my hands, face, and clothes, they returned to their homes."

He stayed with them nearly three weeks, he says; about ten days, says Dr. Knapp. Borrow continues:

"The result of my observations was a firm belief that the Spanish Gitanos are the most vile, degraded and wretched people upon the earth. The great wickedness of these outcasts may, perhaps, be attributed to their having abandoned their wandering life and become inmates of the towns, where, to the original bad traits of their character, they have superadded the evil and vicious habits of the rabble. . . . They listened with admiration, but alas, not of the truths, the eternal truths I was telling them, but at finding that their broken jargon could be written and read; the only words of assent to the heavenly doctrine which I ever obtained, and which were rather of the negative kind, were the following, from a woman—'Brother! you tell us strange things, though perhaps you do not lie; a month since I would sooner have believed these tales than that I should this day have seen one who could write Rommany.' . . ."

He preserves the clergyman, but deepens the Gypsy stain. The "Athenæum" was "not at liberty on this occasion" to publish the name of this man whom Gypsies called "Brother," but apparently it would not be the name of any writer hitherto known to readers of the "Athenæum."

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He was a month in England, and then left for Spain to print and distribute Testaments. He had hardly put his feet on Spanish soil than, said the Marquis of Santa Colona, {137} he "looked round, saw some Gypsies lounging there, said something that the Marquis could not understand, and immediately 'that man became *une grappe de Gitanos*.' They hung round his neck, clung to his knees, seized his hands, kissed his feet, so that the Marquis hardly liked to join his comrade again, after such close embraces by so dirty a company." At Cordova he was very well received by the Gypsies "on the supposition that he was one of their own race." He says in "The Gypsies of Spain":

"As for myself, I was admitted without scruple to their private meetings, and was made a participator of their most secret thoughts. During our intercourse, some remarkable scenes occurred: one night more than twenty of us, men and women, were assembled in a long low room on the ground floor, in a dark alley or court in the old gloomy town of Cordova. After the Gitanos had discussed several jockey plans, and settled some private bargains amongst themselves, we all gathered round a huge brasero of flaming charcoal, and began conversing *sobre las cosas de Egipto*, when I proposed that, as we had no better means of amusing ourselves, we should endeavour to turn into the Calo language some piece of devotion, that we might see whether this language, the gradual decay of which I had frequently heard them lament, was capable of expressing any other matters than those which related to horses, mules, and Gypsy traffic. It was in this cautious manner that I first endeavoured to divert the attention of these singular people to matters of eternal importance. My suggestion was received with acclamations, and we forthwith proceeded to the translation of the Apostle's Creed. I first recited in Spanish, in the usual manner and without pausing, this noble confession, and then repeated it again, sentence by sentence, the Gitanos translating as I proceeded. They exhibited the greatest eagerness and interest in their unwonted occupation, and frequently broke into loud disputes as to the best rendering—many being offered at the same time. In the meanwhile, I wrote down from their dictation, and at the conclusion I read aloud the translation, the result of the united wisdom of the assembly, whereupon they all raised a shout of exultation, and appeared not a little proud of the composition."

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In his desire to see the Gypsies and the ways of the people he more than doubled his difficulties, and suffered from cold and the rudeness of the roads and of the people. But in spite of the internecine civil war he got safe to Madrid. Printing was begun in 1837, and when copies were ready Borrow advertised them and arranged for their distribution. He himself set out with his servant, Antonio Buchini, a Greek of Constantinople, who had served an infinity of masters, and once been a cook to the overbearing General Cordova, and answered the General's sword with a pistol. They travelled to Salamanca, Valladolid, Leon, Astorga, Villafranca, Lugo, Coruña, to Santiago, Vigo, and again to Coruña, to Ferrol, Oviedo, Santander, Burgos, Valladolid, and so back to Madrid in October. He had suffered from fever, dysentery and ophthalmia on the journey. According to Dr. Knapp it was the most unpropitious country possible. If chosen by anything but ignorance, it must have been by whim and the unconscious desire to delight posterity and amaze Dr. Knapp. Borrow had met, among others, Benedict Mol, the Swiss seeker after treasure hidden in the earth under the Church of San Roque at St. James' of Compostella. This traveller was not his only acquaintance. He formed a friendship at Madrid with the Spanish scholar, Luis de Usoz, afterwards editor of "The Early Spanish Reformers," who became a member of the Bible Society, helped Borrow in editing the Spanish Testament, and looked after his interests while he was away from Madrid. At St. James' itself he made a friend and a co-operator of the old bookseller, Rey Romero, who knew Benedict Moll.

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Borrow returned to the sale of Testaments at Madrid, and to his own favourite project of printing his Spanish Gypsy translation of the Gospel of St. Luke. To advertise his Testaments he posted up and sent about flaming tricoloured placards. This was too much for the Moderate Government which had followed the Liberals: the sale of Testaments was stopped, and that for thirty years after. The officials had been irritated by the far graver indiscretions of another but

irregular agent of the Bible Society, Lieutenant Graydon, R.N., "a fervid Irish Protestant." {139} Apparently this man had advertised Bibles in Valencia as to be sold at very low prices and even given away; had printed abuse of the Spanish clergy and Government, and had described himself as co-operating with Borrow. Except at Madrid, the Bibles and Testaments in Borrow's depôts throughout Spain were seized by the Government. The books had at last to be sent out of the country, British Consuls were forbidden to countenance religious agents; and in the opinion of the Consul at Seville, J. M. Brackenbury, this was directly due to Graydon's indiscretions. The Society were kind to him. They cautioned him not to attack Popery, but to leave the Bible to speak for itself. The caution was vain, but in spite of the harm done to Borrow and themselves they recalled Graydon with but a qualified disavowal of his conduct. Borrow did not conceal from the Society his opinion that this man, with his "lunatic vagaries," had been the "evil genius" of the Bible cause and of himself. The incident did no good to the already bickering relations between Borrow and the Rev. A. Brandram, the Secretary. Evidently Borrow's character jarred upon Brandram, who took revenge by a tone of facetious cavil and several criticisms upon Borrow's ways, upon his confident masculine tone, for example, his "passionate" prayer, and his confession of superstitious obedience to an ominous dream. Brandram even took the trouble to remind Borrow that when it came to distribution in Russia his success had ended: which was true but not through any fault of his. Borrow took the criticism as if applied to his Spanish work also, saying: "It was unkind and unjust to taunt me with having been unsuccessful in distributing the Scriptures. Allow me to state that no other person under the same circumstances would have distributed the tenth part. Yet had I been utterly unsuccessful, it would have been wrong to charge me with being so, after all I have undergone—and with how little of that are you acquainted." {140} If Borrow had been as revengeful as Dr. Knapp believed him, he would not have allowed Brandram to escape an immortality of hate in "Lavengro" or "The Romany Rye."

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Borrow irritated the Spanish Government yet a little more by issuing his Gypsy "Luke," and in May, 1838, he was illegally imprisoned in the *Carcel de Corte*, where he insisted upon staying until he was set free with honour and the payment of his expenses. He vindicated his position by a letter to a newspaper, pointing out that his Society was neither sectarian nor political, and that he was their sole authorised agent. This led directly to the breaking of his connection with the Bible Society, who reprimanded him for his letter and virtually recalled him from Spain.

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Nevertheless Borrow made a series of excursions into the country to sell his Testaments, until in August he was definitely recalled. He returned to England, as he says himself, for "change of scene and air" after an attack of fever. He obtained a new lease from the Bible Society and was back in Spain at the end of 1838. Early in 1839 he made further excursions with Antonio Lopez to sell his Testaments, until he had to stop. Thereupon he went to Seville. He was still forming plans on behalf of the Society. He wished to go to La Mancha, the worst part of Spain, then through Saragossa and into France.

At Seville it was, in May, 1839, that Colonel Napier met him. Nobody knew who, or of what nationality, he was—this "mysterious Unknown," the white-haired young man, with dark eyes of almost supernatural penetration and lustre, who gave himself out to be thirty instead of thirty-five, who spoke English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, and Romaic to those who best understood these languages. Borrow and Napier rode out together to the ruins of Italica:

"We sat down," he says, "on a fragment of the walls; the "Unknown" began to feel the vein of poetry creeping through his inward soul, and gave vent to it by reciting, with great emphasis and effect, the following well-known and beautiful lines:

"Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower, grown
Matted and massed together, hillocks heap'd
On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescoes steep'd
In subterranean damp, where the owl peep'd,
Deeming it midnight:—Temples, baths, or halls—
Pronounce who can; for all that Learning reap'd
From her research hath been, that these are walls."

"I had been too much taken up with the scene, the verses, and the strange being who was repeating them with so much feeling, to notice the approach of a slight female figure, beautiful in the extreme, but whose tattered garments, raven hair, swarthy complexion, and flashing eyes, proclaimed her to be of the wandering tribe of Gitanos. From an intuitive sense of politeness she stood with crossed arms and a slight smile on her dark and handsome countenance, until my companion had ceased, and then addressed us in the usual whining tone of supplication—'Gentlemen, a little charity; God will repay it to you!' The Gypsy girl was so pretty and her voice so sweet, that I involuntarily put my hand in my pocket.

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"'Stop!' said the 'Unknown.' 'Do you remember what I told you of the Eastern origin of these people? You shall see I am correct.' 'Come here, my pretty child,' said he in Moultee, 'and tell me where are the rest of your tribe.' The girl looked astounded, and replied in the same tongue, but in broken language; when, taking him by the arm, she said in Spanish: 'Come, Caballero, come to one who will be able to answer you'; and she led the way down among the ruins towards one of the dens formerly occupied by the wild beasts, and disclosed to us a set of beings scarcely less savage. The sombre walls of this gloomy abode were illumined by a fire, the smoke from which escaped through a deep fissure in the mossy roof, whilst the flickering flames threw a blood-red glare on the bronzed features of a group of children, two men, and a decrepit old hag

who appeared busily engaged in some culinary operations.

“On our entrance, the scowling glance of the males of the party, and a quick motion of the hand towards the folds of the faja (where the clasp-knife is concealed), caused in me, at least, anything but a comfortable sensation; but their hostile intentions were immediately removed by a wave of the hand from our conductress, who, leading my companion towards the sibyl, whispered something in her ear. The old crone appeared incredulous. The ‘Unknown’ uttered one word; but that word had the effect of magic. She prostrated herself at his feet, and in an instant, from an object of suspicion, he became one of worship to the whole family, to whom on taking leave he made a handsome present, and departed with their united blessings.

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“I was, as the phrase goes, dying with curiosity, and as soon as we mounted our horses, exclaimed: ‘Where, in the name of goodness, did you pick up your acquaintance with the language of these extraordinary people?’ ‘Some years ago, in Moulton,’ he replied. ‘And by what means do you possess such apparent influence over them?’ But the ‘Unknown’ had already said more than he perhaps wished on the subject. He dryly replied that he had more than once owed his life to Gypsies and had reason to know them well; but this was said in a tone which precluded all further queries on my part.”

This report is a wonderful testimony to Borrow’s power, for he seems to have made the Colonel write almost like himself and produce a picture exactly like those which he so often draws of himself.

From Seville Borrow took a journey of a few weeks to Tangier and Barbary. There he met the strongest man in Tangier, one of the old Moors of Granada, who waved a barrel of water over his head as if it had been a quart pot. There he and his Jewish servant, Hayim Ben Attar, sold Testaments, and, says he, “with humble gratitude to the Lord,” the blessed Book was soon in the hands of most of the Christians in Tangier. But with an account of his first day in the city he concluded “The Bible in Spain.”

When he was back again in Seville he had the society of Mrs. Clarke and her daughter; Henrietta, who had come to Spain to avoid some legal difficulties and presumably to see Borrow. Before the end of 1839 the engagement of Borrow and Mrs. Clarke was announced without surprising old Mrs. Borrow at Norwich. In November Borrow wrote almost his last long letter to the Bible Society. He had the advantage of a singular address, being for the moment in the prison of Seville, where he had been illegally thrown, after a quarrel with the Alcalde over the matter of a passport. He told them how this “ruffian” quailed before his gaze of defiance. He told them how well he was treated by his fellow prisoners:

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Photo: C. Wilson, Lowestoft

THE SUMMER HOUSE, OULTON COTTAGE

“The black-haired man who is now looking over my shoulder is the celebrated thief Palacio, the most expert housebreaker and dexterous swindler in Spain—in a word, the modern Guzman Dalfarache. The brawny man who sits by the brasero of charcoal, is Salvador, the highwayman of Ronda, who has committed a hundred murders. A fashionably dressed man, short and slight in person, is walking about the room: he wears immense whiskers and mustachios; he is one of that most singular race of Jews of Spain; he is imprisoned for counterfeiting money. He is an atheist, but like a true Jew, the name which he most hates is that of Christ: . . .” {144} So well did Borrow choose his company, even in prison. Some of his letters to the Society went astray at this time and he was vainly expected in England. He was able to send them a very high testimony to his discretion from the English Consul at Seville, and he himself reminded them that he had been “fighting with wild beasts” during this last visit. The Society several times repeated his recall, but he did not return, apparently because he wished to remain with Mrs. Clarke in Seville, and because he no longer felt himself at their beck and call. He was also at work on “The Gypsies of Spain.” Nevertheless he wrote to the Society in March, 1840, a letter which would have been remarkable from another man about to marry a wife, for he said that he wished to spend the

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remaining years of his life in the northern parts of China, as he thought he had a call, and still hoped "to die in the cause of my Redeemer." In April he left Spain with Mrs. and Miss Clarke. Fifty or sixty years later Mrs. Joseph Pennell "saw the sign, 'G. Borrow, Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society,' high upon a house in the Plaza de la Constitucion, in Seville." Borrow was never again in Spain. After reporting himself for the last time to the Society, and making a suggestion which Brandram answered by saying, "the door seems shut," he married Mrs. Clarke on April 23, 1840. She had £450 a year and a home at Oulton. Fifteen or sixteen years later he spoke of his wife and daughter thus: "Of my wife I will merely say that she is a perfect paragon of wives—can make puddings and sweets and treacle posset, and is the best woman of business in Eastern Anglia—of my step daughter—for such she is, though I generally call her daughter, and with good reason, seeing that she has always shown herself a daughter to me—that she has all kinds of good qualities, and several accomplishments, knowing something of conchology, more of botany, drawing capitally in the Dutch style, and playing remarkably well on the guitar—not the trumpery German thing so called—but the real Spanish guitar." His wife wrote letters for him, copied his manuscripts, and helped to correct his proofs. She remained at Oulton, or Yarmouth, while he went about; if he went to Wales or Ireland she sometimes accompanied him to a convenient centre and there remained while he did as he pleased. She admired him, and she appears to have become essential to his life, apart from her income, and not to have resented her position at any time, though grieved by his unconcealed melancholy.

A second time he praised her in print, saying that he had an exceedingly clever wife, and allowed her "to buy and sell, carry money to the bank, draw cheques, inspect and pay tradesmen's bills, and transact all my real business, whilst I myself pore over old books, walk about the shires, discoursing with Gypsies, under hedgerows, or with sober bards—in hedge alehouses."

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CHAPTER XIX—"THE ZINCALI"

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Borrow and his wife and stepdaughter settled at Oulton Cottage before the spring of 1840 was over. This house, the property of Mrs. Borrow, was separated from Oulton Broad only by a slope of lawn, at the foot of which was a private boat. Away from the house, but equally near lawn and water stood Borrow's library—a little peaked octagonal summer house, with toplights and windows. The cottage is gone, but the summer house, now mantled with ivy, where he wrote "The Bible in Spain" and "Lavengro," is still to be seen. Here, too, he arranged and completed the book written "at considerable intervals during a period of nearly five years passed in Spain—in moments snatched from more important pursuits—chiefly in *ventas* and *posádas* (inns), whilst wandering through the country in the arduous and unthankful task of distributing the Gospel among its children,"—"The Zincali: or the Gypsies of Spain." It was published in April, 1841.

This book is a description of Gypsies in Spain and wherever else he has met them, with some history, and, as Borrow says himself, with "more facts than theories." It abounds in quotations from out of the way Spanish books, but was by far "less the result of reading than of close observation." It is patched together from scattered notes with little order or proportion, and cannot be regarded as a whole either in intention or effect. Nor is this wholly due to the odd times and places in which it was written. Borrow had never before written a continuous original work of any length. He had formed no clear idea of himself, his public, or his purpose. Personality was strong in him and it had to be expressed. He was full also of extraordinary observation, and this he could not afford to conceal. It was not easy to satisfy the two needs in one coherent book; he hardly tried, and he certainly did not succeed. Ford described it well in his review of "The Bible in Spain": [{148}](#)

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"'The Gypsies of Spain' was a Spanish olla—a hotchpotch of the jockey tramper, philologist, and missionary. It was a thing of shreds and patches—a true book of Spain; the chapters, like her bundle of unamalgamating provinces, were just held together, and no more, by the common tie of religion; yet it was strange and richly flavoured with genuine *borrachá*. It was the first work of a diffident, inexperienced man, who, mistrusting his own powers, hoped to conciliate critics by leaning on Spanish historians and Gypsy poets."

Nevertheless, "The Zincali" is a book that is still valuable for these two separate elements of personality and extraordinary observation. Probably Borrow, his publisher, and the public, regarded it chiefly as a work of information, picturesquely diversified, and this it still is, though the increase and systematization of Gypsy studies are said to have superseded it. A book of spirit cannot be superseded. But pure information does not live long, and the fact that its information is inaccurate or incomplete does not rot a book like "The Compleat Angler" or the "Georgics." Thus it may happen that the first book on a subject is the best, and its successors mere treatises destined to pave the way for other treatises. "The Gypsies of Spain" is still read as no other book on the Gypsy is read. It is still read, not only by those just infected with Gypsy fever, but by men as men. It does not, indeed, survive as a whole, because it never was a whole, but there is a spirit in the best parts sufficiently strong to carry the reader on over the rest.

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To-day very few will do more than smile when Borrow says of the Gypsies, that there can be no doubt "they are human beings and have immortal souls," and that the chief object of his book is to "draw the attention of the Christian philanthropist towards them, especially that degraded and unhappy portion of them, the Gitanos of Spain." In 1841 many of the Christian public probably

felt a slight glow of satisfaction at starting on a book that brought the then certain millenium, of a Christian and English cast, definitely nearer. Probably they liked to know that this missionary called pugilistic combats “disgraceful and brutalising exhibitions”; and they were almost as certainly, as we are to-day, delighted with the descriptions that followed, because it brought for the first time clearly before them a real prize-fighting scene, and the author, a terrible child of fourteen, looking on—“why should I hide the truth?” says he. This excellent moral tone accompanied the reader of 1841 with satisfaction to the end. For example, Borrow describes the Gypsies at Tarifa swindling a country man and woman out of their donkey. When he sees them being treated and fondled by their intending robbers, he exclaims: “Behold, poor humanity, thought I to myself, in the hands of devils; in this manner are human souls ensnared to destruction by the fiends of the pit.” When he sees them departing penniless and without their donkey, the woman bitterly lamenting it, he comments: “Upon the whole, however, I did not much pity them. The woman was certainly not the man’s wife. The labourer had probably left his village with some strolling harlot, bringing with him the animal which had previously served to support himself and a family.” Borrow was a man who pronounced the Bible to be “the wonderful Book which is capable of resolving every mystery.” He was a man, furthermore, who called sorcery simply “a thing impossible,” and thus addressed a writer on chiromancy: “We . . . believe that the lines of the hand have as little connection with the events of life as the liver and stomach, notwithstanding Aristotle, who you forget was a heathen and cared as little for the Scriptures as the Gitanos, whether male or female.”

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Another satisfactory side to Borrow’s public character, as revealed in “The Zincali,” was his contempt for “other nations,” such as Spain—“a country whose name has long and justly been considered as synonymous with every species of ignorance and barbarism.” His voice rises when he says that “avarice has always been the dominant passion in Spanish minds, their rage for money being only to be compared to the wild hunger of wolves for horseflesh in the time of winter; next to avarice, envy of superior talent and accomplishment is the prevailing passion.” These were the people whom he had gone to convert. His contempt for those who were not middle-class Englishmen seemed unmitigated. Speaking of the Gypsies, to whom the schools were open and the laws kinder, he points out that, nevertheless, they remain jockeys and blacksmiths, though it is true they have in part given up their wandering life. But “much,” he says, “will have been accomplished if, after the lapse of a hundred years, one hundred human beings shall have been evolved from the Gypsy stock who shall prove sober, honest, and useful members of society,” *i.e.*, resembling the Spaniards whom he so condemned.

But if men love a big fellow at the street corner bellowing about sin and the wrath to come, they love him better if he was a black sinner before he became white as the driven snow. Borrow reprimanded Spaniard and Gypsy, but he also knew them: there is even a suspicion that he liked them, though in his public black-coated capacity he had to condemn them and regret that their destiny was perdition. Had he not said, in his preface, that he had known the Gypsies for twenty years and that they treated him well because they thought him a Gypsy? and in another place referred to the time when he lived with the English Gypsies? Had he not, in his introductions, spoken of “my brethren, the Smiths,” a phrase then cryptic and only to be explained by revealing his sworn brotherhood with Ambrose Smith, the Jasper Petulengro of later books? He had said, moreover, in a perfectly genuine tone, with no trace of missionary declamation:

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“After the days of the great persecution in England against the Gypsies, there can be little doubt that they lived a right merry and tranquil life, wandering about and pitching their tents wherever inclination led them: indeed, I can scarcely conceive any human condition more enviable than Gypsy life must have been in England during the latter part of the seventeenth, and the whole of the eighteenth century, which were likewise the happy days for Englishmen in general; there was peace and plenty in the land, a contented population, and everything went well.”

If a man wishes to condemn the seven deadly sins we tolerate him if in the process they are sufficiently well described. If Borrow described the tinker family as wretched, and their donkey as miserable, he added, “though life, seemingly so wretched, has its charms for these outcasts, who live without care and anxiety, without a thought beyond the present hour, and who sleep as sound in ruined posadas and ventas, or in ravines amongst rocks and pines, as the proudest grandee in his palace at Seville or Madrid.” If he condemned superstition, he yet thought it possibly “founded on a physical reality”; he regarded the moon as the true “evil eye,” and bade men “not sleep uncovered beneath the smile of the moon, for her glance is poisonous, and produces insupportable itching in the eye, and not infrequently blindness.” If he believed in the immortality of the soul, he did not disdain to know the vendor of poisons who was a Gypsy. If he stayed three weeks in Badajoz because he knew he should never meet any people “more in need of a little Christian exhortation” than the Gypsies, he did not fill his pages with three weeks of Christian exhortation, but told the story of the Gypsy soldier, Antonio—how he recognised as a Gypsy the enemy who was about to kill him, and saved himself from the uplifted bayonet by crying “Zincalo, Zincalo!” and then, having been revived by him, sat for hours with his late enemy, who said: “Let the dogs fight and tear each other’s throats till they are all destroyed, what matters it to the Zincali? they are not of our blood, and shall that be shed for them?” This man who, if he had his way, would have washed his face in the blood of the Busné (those who are not Gypsies), this man called Borrow “brother!” If Borrow distributed Testaments, he knew little more of the recipients than a bolt from the blue, or if he did he cared to tell but little. That little is the story of the Gypsy soldier, Chaléco, who came to him at Madrid in 1838 with a copy of the Testament. He told his story from his cradle up; he imposed himself on Borrow’s hospitality, eating “like a wolf of the Sierra,” and drinking in proportion. Borrow could only escape from him

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by dining out. When Borrow was imprisoned the fellow drew his sword at the news and vowed to murder the Prime Minister "for having dared to imprison his brother." In what follows, Borrow reveals in a consummate manner his power of drawing into his vicinity extraordinary events:

"On my release, I did not revisit my lodgings for some days, but lived at an hotel. I returned late one afternoon, with my servant Francisco, a Basque of Hernáni, who had served me with the utmost fidelity during my imprisonment, which he had voluntarily shared with me. The first person I saw on entering was the Gypsy soldier, seated by the table, whereon were several bottles of wine which he had ordered from the tavern, of course on my account. He was smoking, and looked savage and sullen; perhaps he was not much pleased with the reception he had experienced. He had forced himself in, and the woman of the house sat in a corner looking upon him with dread. I addressed him, but he would scarcely return an answer. At last he commenced discoursing with great volubility in Gypsy and Latin. I did not understand much of what he said. His words were wild and incoherent, but he repeatedly threatened some person. The last bottle was now exhausted—he demanded more. I told him in a gentle manner that he had drunk enough. He looked on the ground for some time, then slowly, and somewhat hesitatingly, drew his sword and laid it on the table. It was become dark. I was not afraid of the fellow, but I wished to avoid any thing unpleasant. I called to Francisco to bring lights, and obeying a sign which I made him, he sat down at the table. The Gypsy glared fiercely upon him—Francisco laughed, and began with great glee to talk in Basque, of which the Gypsy understood not a word. The Basques, like all Tartars, and such they are, are paragons of fidelity and good nature; they are only dangerous when outraged, when they are terrible indeed. Francisco to the strength of a giant joined the disposition of a lamb. He was beloved even in the patio of the prison, where he used to pitch the bar and wrestle with the murderers and felons, always coming off victor. He continued speaking Basque. The Gypsy was incensed; and, forgetting the languages in which, for the last hour, he had been speaking, complained to Francisco of his rudeness in speaking any tongue but Castilian. The Basque replied by a loud *carcajada*, and slightly touched the Gypsy on the knee. The latter sprang up like a mine discharged, seized his sword, and, retreating a few steps, made a desperate lunge at Francisco.

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"The Basques, next to the Pasiegos, are the best cudgel-players in Spain, and in the world. Francisco held in his hand part of a broomstick, which he had broken in the stable, whence he had just ascended. With the swiftness of lightning he foiled the stroke of Chaléco, and, in another moment, with a dexterous blow, struck the sword out of his hand, sending it ringing against the wall.

"The Gypsy resumed his seat and his cigar. He occasionally looked at the Basque. His glances were at first atrocious, but presently changed their expression, and appeared to me to become prying and eagerly curious. He at last arose, picked up his sword, sheathed it, and walked slowly to the door, when there he stopped, turned round, advanced close to Francisco, and looked him steadfastly in the face. 'My good fellow,' said he, 'I am a Gypsy, and can read *baji*. Do you know where you will be this time to-morrow?' [\[154\]](#) Then laughing like a hyena, he departed, and I never saw him again.

"At that time on the morrow, Francisco was on his death-bed. He had caught the jail fever, which had long raged in the Carcel de la Corte, where I was imprisoned. In a few days he was buried, a mass of corruption, in the Campo Santo of Madrid."

Having attracted the event, he recorded it with a vividness well set off by his own nonchalance. Again and again he was to repeat this triumph of depicting the wild, and the wild in a condition of activity and often fury.

His success is all the greater because it is unexpected. He sets out "to direct the attention of the public towards the Gypsies; but he hopes to be able to do so without any romantic appeals on their behalf." He is far from having a romantic tone. He wields, as a rule, with any amount of dignity the massive style of the early Victorian "Quarterly Review" and Lane's so-called "Arabian Nights." Thus, speaking of Gypsy fortune-tellers, he says: "Their practice chiefly lies among females, the portion of the human race most given to curiosity and credulity." Sentences like this always remind me of Lord Melbourne's indignation at the thought of religion intruding on private life. His indignation is obviously of the same period as the sentence: "Among the Zingari are not a few who deal in precious stones, and some who vend poisons; and the most remarkable individual whom it has been my fortune to encounter amongst the Gypsies, whether of the Eastern or Western world, was a person who dealt in both these articles." A style like this resembles a paunchy man who can be relied on not to pick the daisies. At times Borrow writes as if he were translating, as in "The anvil rings beneath the thundering stroke, hour succeeds hour, and still endures the hard sullen toil." He adds a little vanity of no value by a Biblical echo now and again, as in the clause: "And it came to pass, moreover, that the said Fajardo . . ." or in "And the chief of that camp, even Mr. Petulengro, stood before the encampment. . . ."

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This is a style for information, instruction, edification, and intervals of sleep. It is the style of an age, a class, a sect, not of an individual. Deeds and not words are what count in it. Only by big, wild, or extraordinary things can it be compelled to a semblance of life. Borrow gives it such things a hundred times, and they help one another to be effective. The reader does not forget the Gypsies of Granada:

"Many of them reside in caves scooped in the sides of the ravines which lead to the higher regions of the Alpujarras, on a skirt of which stands Granada. A common occupation of the Gitanos of Granada is working in iron, and it is not infrequent to find these caves tenanted by

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Gypsy smiths and their families, who ply the hammer and forge in the bowels of the earth. To one standing at the mouth of the cave, especially at night, they afford a picturesque spectacle. Gathered round the forge, their bronzed and naked bodies, illuminated by the flame, appear like figures of demons; while the cave, with its flinty sides and uneven roof, blackened by the charcoal vapours which hover about it in festoons, seems to offer no inadequate representation of fabled purgatory."

The picture of the Gitana of Seville hands on some of its own power to the quieter pages, and at length, with a score of other achievements of the same solid kind, kindles well-nigh every part of the shapeless book. I shall quote it at length:

"If there be one being in the world who, more than another, deserves the title of sorceress (and where do you find a word of greater romance and more thrilling interest?), it is the Gypsy female in the prime and vigour of her age and ripeness of her understanding—the Gypsy wife, the mother of two or three children. Mention to me a point of devilry with which that woman is not acquainted. She can at any time, when it suits her, show herself as expert a jockey as her husband, and he appears to advantage in no other character, and is only eloquent when descanting on the merits of some particular animal; but she can do much more; she is a prophetess, though she believes not in prophecy; she is a physician, though she will not taste her own philters; she is a procuress, though she is not to be procured; she is a singer of obscene songs, though she will suffer no obscene hands to touch her; and though no one is more tenacious of the little she possesses, she is a cutpurse and a shoplifter whenever opportunity shall offer. . . . Observe, for example, the Gitana, even her of Seville.

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"She is standing before the portals of a large house in one of the narrow Moorish streets of the capital of Andalusia; through the grated iron door, she looks in upon the court; it is paved with small marble slabs of almost snowy whiteness; in the middle is a fountain distilling limpid water, and all around there is a profusion of macetas, in which flowering plants and aromatic shrubs are growing, and at each corner there is an orange tree, and the perfume of the azahár may be distinguished; you hear the melody of birds from a small aviary beneath the piazza which surrounds the court, which is surrounded by a toldo or linen awning, for it is the commencement of May, and the glorious sun of Andalusia is burning with a splendour too intense for its rays to be borne with impunity. It is a fairy scene such as nowhere meets the eye but at Seville, or perhaps at Fez and Shiraz, in the palaces of the Sultan and the Shah. The Gypsy looks through the iron-grated door, and beholds, seated near the fountain, a richly dressed dame and two lovely delicate maidens; they are busied at their morning's occupation, intertwining with their sharp needles the gold and silk on the tambour; several female attendants are seated behind. The Gypsy pulls the bell, when is heard the soft cry of 'Quien es'; the door, unlocked by means of a string, recedes upon its hinges, when in walks the Gitana, the witch-wife of Multan, with a look such as the tiger-cat casts when she stealeth from her jungle into the plain.

"Yes, well may you exclaim, 'Ave Maria purissima,' ye dames and maidens of Seville, as she advances towards you; she is not of yourselves, she is not of your blood, she or her fathers have walked to your clime from a distance of three thousand leagues. She has come from the far East, like the three enchanted kings to Cologne; but unlike them she and her race have come with hate and not with love. She comes to flatter, and to deceive, and to rob, for she is a lying prophetess, and a she-Thug; she will greet you with blessings which will make your heart rejoice, but your heart's blood would freeze, could you hear the curses which to herself she murmurs against you; for she says, that in her children's veins flows the dark blood of the 'husbands,' whilst in those of yours flows the pale tide of the 'savages,' and therefore she would gladly set her foot on all your corpses first poisoned by her hands. For all her love—and she can love—is for the Romas; and all her hate—and who can hate like her?—is for the Busnees; for she says that the world would be a fair world were there no Busnees, and if the Romamiks could heat their kettles undisturbed at the foot of the olive trees; and therefore she would kill them all if she could and if she dared. She never seeks the houses of the Busnees but for the purpose of prey; for the wild animals of the sierra do not more abhor the sight of man than she abhors the countenances of the Busnees. She now comes to prey upon you and to scoff at you. Will you believe her words? Fools! do you think that the being before ye has any sympathy for the like of you?

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"She is of the middle stature, neither strongly nor slightly built, and yet her every movement denotes agility and vigour. As she stands erect before you, she appears like a falcon about to soar, and you are almost tempted to believe that the power of volation is hers; and were you to stretch forth your hand to seize her, she would spring above the house-tops like a bird. Her face is oval, and her features are regular but somewhat hard and coarse, for she was born amongst rocks in a thicket, and she has been wind-beaten and sun-scorched for many a year, even like her parents before her; there is many a speck upon her cheek, and perhaps a scar, but no dimples of love; and her brow is wrinkled over, though she is yet young. Her complexion is more than dark, for it is almost that of a Mulatto; and her hair, which hangs in long locks on either side of her face, is black as coal, and coarse as the tail of a horse, from which it seems to have been gathered.

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"There is no female eye in Seville can support the glance of hers, so fierce and penetrating, and yet so artful and sly, is the expression of their dark orbs; her mouth is fine and almost delicate, and there is not a queen on the proudest throne between Madrid and Moscow who might not, and would not, envy the white and even rows of teeth which adorn it, which seem not of pearl but of the purest elephant's bone of Multan. She comes not alone; a swarthy two-year old bantling clasps her neck with one arm, its naked body half extant from the coarse blanket which, drawn

round her shoulders, is secured at her bosom by a skewer. Though tender of age it looks wicked and sly, like a veritable imp of Roma. Huge rings of false gold dangle from wide slits in the lobes of her ears; her nether garments are rags, and her feet are cased in hempen sandals. Such is the wandering Gitana, such is the witch-wife of Multan, who has come to spae the fortune of the Sevillian countess and her daughters.

“O may the blessing of Egypt light upon your head, you high-born Lady! (May an evil end overtake your body, daughter of a Busnee harlot!) and may the same blessing await the two fair roses of the Nile here flowering by your side! (May evil Moors seize them and carry them across the water!) O listen to the words of the poor woman who is come from a distant country; she is of a wise people, though it has pleased the God of the sky to punish them for their sins by sending them to wander through the world. They denied shelter to the Majari, whom you call the queen of heaven, and to the Son of God, when they flew to the land of Egypt, before the wrath of the wicked king; it is said that they even refused them a draught of the sweet waters of the great river when the blessed two were athirst. O you will say that it was a heavy crime; and truly so it was, and heavily has the Lord punished the Egyptians. He has sent us a-wandering, poor as you see, with scarcely a blanket to cover us. O blessed lady (accursed be thy dead as many as thou mayest have), we have no money to purchase us bread; we have only our wisdom with which to support ourselves and our poor hungry babes; when God took away their silks from the Egyptians, and their gold from the Egyptians, he left them their wisdom as a resource that they might not starve. O who can read the stars like the Egyptians? and who can read the lines of the palm like the Egyptians? The poor woman read in the stars that there was a rich ventura for all of this goodly house, so she followed the bidding of the stars and came to declare it. O blessed lady (I defile thy dead corpse), your husband is at Granada, fighting with King Ferdinand against the wild Corahai! (May an evil ball smite him and split his head!) Within three months he shall return with twenty captive Moors, round the neck of each a chain of gold. (God grant that when he enter the house a beam may fall upon him and crush him!) And within nine months after his return God shall bless you with a fair chabo, the pledge for which you have sighed so long! (Accursed be the salt placed in its mouth in the church when it is baptized!) Your palm, blessed lady, your palm, and the palms of all I see here, that I may tell you all the rich ventura which is hanging over this good house; (May evil lightning fall upon it and consume it!) but first let me sing you a song of Egypt, that the spirit of the Chowahanee may descend more plenteously upon the poor woman.’

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“Her demeanour now instantly undergoes a change. Hitherto she has been pouring forth a lying and wild harangue, without much flurry or agitation of manner. Her speech, it is true, has been rapid, but her voice has never been raised to a very high key; but she now stamps on the ground, and placing her hands on her hips, she moves quickly to the right and left, advancing and retreating in a sidelong direction. Her glances become more fierce and fiery, and her coarse hair stands erect on her head, stiff as the prickles of the hedgehog; and now she commences clapping her hands, and uttering words of an unknown tongue, to a strange and uncouth tune. The tawny bantling seems inspired with the same fiend, and, foaming at the mouth, utters wild sounds, in imitation of its dam. Still more rapid become the sidelong movements of the Gitana. Movements! she springs, she bounds, and at every bound she is a yard above the ground. She no longer bears the child in her bosom; she plucks it from thence, and fiercely brandishes it aloft, till at last, with a yell, she tosses it high into the air, like a ball, and then, with neck and head thrown back, receives it, as it falls, on her hands and breast, extracting a cry from the terrified beholders. Is it possible she can be singing? Yes, in the wildest style of her people; and here is a snatch of the song, in the language of Roma, which she occasionally screams:

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“En los sastos de yesque plai me diquélo,
Doscusañas de sonacai terélo,—
Corojai diquélo abillar,
Y ne asislo chapescar, chapescar.”

“On the top of a mountain I stand,
With a crown of red gold in my hand,—
Wild Moors come trooping o’er the lea,
O how from their fury shall I flee, flee?
O how from their fury shall I flee?”

Such was the Gitana in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella, and much the same is she now in the days of Isabel and Christina. . . .”

Here, it is true, there is a substantial richly-coloured and strange subject matter, such as could hardly be set down in any way or by anyone without attracting the attention. Borrow makes it do more than this. The word “extant” may offend a little, but the writer can afford many such blemishes, for he has life in his pen. He is, as it were himself substantial, richly-coloured, strange and with big strokes and splashes he suggests the thing itself. There have been writers since Borrow’s day who have thought to use words so subtly that they are equivalent to things, but in the end their words remain nothing but words. Borrow uses language like a man, and we forget his words on account of the vividness of the things which they do not so much create as evoke. I do not mean that it can be called unconscious art, for it is naively conscious and delighting in itself. The language is that of an orator, a man standing up and addressing a mass in large and emphatic terms. He succeeds not only in evoking things that are very much alive, but in suggesting an artist that is their equal, instead of one, who like so many more refined

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writers, is a more or less pathetic admirer of living things. In this he resembles Byron. It may not be the highest form of art, but it is the most immediate and disturbing and genial in its effect. Finally, the whole book has body. It can be browsed on. It does not ask a particular mood, being itself the result of no one mood, but of a great part of one man's life. Turn over half a dozen pages and a story, or a picture, or a bit of costume, or of superstition, will invariably be the reward. It reads already like a book rather older than it really is, but not because it has faded. There was nothing in it to fade, being too hard, massive and unvarnished. It remains alive, capable of surviving the Gypsies except in so far as they live within it and its fellow books.

CHAPTER XX—"THE BIBLE IN SPAIN"

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In "The Zincali" Borrow used some of his private notes and others supplied by Spanish friends, together with parts of letters to the Bible Society. It used to be supposed that "The Bible in Spain" was made up almost entirely from these letters. But this has now been disproved by the newly published "Letters of George Borrow to the Bible Society." {163a} These letters are about half the length of "The Bible in Spain," and yet only about a third part of them was used by Borrow in writing that book. Some of his letters were never received by the Society and had probably been lost on the way. But this was more of a disaster to the Society than to Borrow. He kept journals {163b} from which his letters were probably copied or composed; and he was able, for example, in July, 1836, to send the Society a detailed and dated account of his entry into Spain in January, and his intercourse with the Gypsies of Badajoz. It is also possible that the letters lent to him by the Society were far more numerous than those returned by him. He missed little that could have been turned to account, unless it was the suggestion that if he knew the country his safest way from Seville to Madrid was to go afoot in the dress of beggar or Gypsy, and the remark that in Tangier one of his principal associates was a black slave, whose country was only three days journey from Timbuctoo. {163c} He had already in 1835 planned to write "a small volume" on what he was about to see and hear in Spain, and it must have been from notes or full journals kept with this view that he drew for "The Zincali" and still more for "The Bible in Spain." He wrote his journals and letters very much as Cobbett his "Rural Rides," straight after days in the saddle. Except when he was presenting a matter of pure business he was not much troubled by the fact that he was addressing his employers, the Bible Society. He did not always begin "Bible" with a capital B, an error corrected by Mr. Darlow, his editor. He prefixed "Revd. and dear sir," and thought little more about them unless to add such a phrase as: "A fact which I hope I may be permitted to mention with gladness and with decent triumph in the Lord." He did not, however, scorn to make a favourable misrepresentation of his success, as for example in the interview with Mendizabal, which was reduced probably to the level of the facts in its book form. The Society were not always pleased with his frankness and confidence, and the Secretary complained of things which were inconvenient to be read aloud in a pious assembly, less concerned with sinners than with repentance, and not easily convinced by the improbable. He sent them, for example, after a specimen Gypsy translation of the Gospel of St. Luke and of the Lord's Prayer, "sixteen specimens of the horrid curses in use amongst the Spanish Gypsies," with translations into English. These do not re-appear either in "The Bible in Spain" or in the edition of Borrow's letters to the Society. He spared them, apparently, the story of Benedict Moll and many another good thing that was meant for mankind.

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I should be inclined to think that a very great part of "The Bible in Spain" was written as the letters were, on the spot. Either it was not sent to the Society for fear of loss, or if copied and sent to them, it was lost on the way or never returned by Borrow after he had used it in writing the book, for the letters are just as careful in most parts as the book, and the book is just as fresh as the letters. When he wrote to the Society, he said that he told the schoolmaster "the Almighty would never have inspired His saints with a desire to write what was unintelligible to the great mass of mankind"; in "The Bible in Spain" he said: "It [*i.e.*, the Bible] would never have been written if not calculated by itself to illumine the minds of all classes of mankind." Continuous letters or journals would be more likely to suit Borrow's purpose than notes such as he took in his second tour to Wales and never used. Notes made on the spot are very likely to be disproportionate, to lay undue stress on something that should be allowed to recede, and would do so if left to memory; and once made they are liable to misinterpretation if used after intervals of any length. But the flow and continuity of letters insist on some proportion and on truth at least to the impression of the day, and a balance is ensured between the scene or the experience on the one hand and the observer on the other.

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"The Zincali" was not published before Borrow realised what a treasure he had deposited with the Bible Society, and not long afterwards he obtained the loan of his letters to make a new book on his travels in Spain. Borrow's own account, in his preface to the second edition of "The Zincali," is that the success of that book, and "the voice not only of England but of the greater part of Europe" proclaiming it, astonished him in his "humble retreat" at Oulton. He was, he implies, inclined to be too much elated. Then the voice of a critic—whom we know to have been Richard Ford—told him not to believe all he heard, but to try again and avoid all his second hand stuff, his "Gypsy poetry, dry laws, and compilations from dull Spanish authors." And so, he says, he began work in the winter, but slowly, and on through summer and autumn and another winter, and into another spring and summer, loitering and being completely idle at times, until at last he went to his summer house daily and finished the book. But as a matter of fact "The Zincali" had

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no great success in either public or literary esteem, and Ford's criticism was passed on the manuscript, not the printed book.

Borrow and his wife took about six months to prepare the letters for publication as a book. He took great pains with the writing and only worked when he was in the mood. His health was not quite good, as he implies in the preface to "The Zincali," and he tried "the water system" and also "lessons in singing," to cure his indigestion and sleeplessness. He had the advantage of Ford's advice, to avoid fine writing, mere description, poetry and learned books, and to give plenty of "racy, real, genuine scenes, and the more out of the way the better," stories of adventure, extraordinary things, prisons, low life, Gypsies, and so on. He was now drawing entirely from "his own well," and when the book was out Ford took care to remark that the author had cast aside the learned books which he had used as swimming corks in the "Zincali," and now "leaped boldly into the tide" unaided. John Murray's reader sent back the manuscript to be revised and augmented, and after this was done, "The Bible in Spain" was published, at the end of 1842, when Borrow was thirty-nine.

"The Bible in Spain" was praised and moreover purchased by everyone. It was translated into French, American, Russian, and printed in America. The "Athenæum" found it a "genuine book"; the "Examiner" said that "apart from its adventurous interest, its literary merit is extraordinary." Ford compared it with an old Spanish ballad, "going from incident to incident, bang, bang, bang!" and with Gil Blas, and with Bunyan. Ford, it must be remembered, had ridden over the same tracks as Borrow in Spain, but before him, and had written his own book with a combination of learning and gusto that is one of the rarest of literary virtues. Like Borrow he wrote fresh from the thing itself when possible, asserting for example that the fat of the hams of Montanches, when boiled, "looked like melted topazes, and the flavour defies language, although we have dined on one this very day, in order to secure accuracy and undeniable prose." For the benefit of the public Ford pointed out that "the Bible and its distribution have been *the* business of his existence; whenever moral darkness brooded, there, the Bible in his hand, he forced his way."

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When Borrow was actually in Spain he was much influenced by the conditions of the moment. The sun of Spain would shine so that he prized it above English civilization. The anarchy and wildness of Spain at another time would make him hate both men and land. But more lasting than joy in the sun and misery at the sight of misery was the feeling that he was "adrift in Spain, the land of old renown, the land of wonder and mystery, with better opportunities of becoming acquainted with its strange secrets and peculiarities than, perhaps, ever yet were afforded to any individual, certainly to a foreigner." When he entered it, by crossing a brook, out of Portugal, he shouted the Spanish battle-cry in ecstasy, and in the end he described his five years in Spain as, "if not the most eventful"—he cannot refrain from that vainglorious dark hint—yet "the most happy years" of his existence. Spain was to him "the most magnificent country in the world": it was also "one of the few countries in Europe where poverty is not treated with contempt, and I may add, where the wealthy are not blindly idolized." His book is a song of wild Spain when Spain was Spain.

Borrow, as we already know, had in him many of the powers that go to make a great book, yet "The Zincali" was not a great book. The important power developed or employed later which made "The Bible in Spain" a great book was the power of narrative. The writing of those letters from Spain to the Bible Society had taught him or discovered in him the instinct for proportion and connection which is the simplest, most inexplicable and most essential of literary gifts. With the help of this he could write narrative that should suggest and represent the continuity of life. He could pause for description or dialogue or reflection without interrupting this stream of life. Nothing need be, and nothing was, alien to the narrator with this gift; for his writing would now assimilate everything and enrich itself continually.

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The reader could follow, as he preferred, the Bible distribution in particular, or the Gypsies, or Borrow himself, through the long ways and dense forests of the book, and through the moral darkness of Spain. It could be treated as a pious book, and as such it was attacked by Catholics, as "Lavengro" still is. For certainly Borrow made no secret of his piety. When "a fine young man of twenty-seven, the only son of a widowed mother . . . the best sailor on board, and beloved by all who were acquainted with him" was swept off the ship in which Borrow was sailing, and drowned, as he had dreamed he would be, the author exclaimed: "Truly wonderful are the ways of Providence!" When a Spanish schoolmaster suggested that the Testament was unintelligible without notes, Borrow informed him that on the contrary the notes were far more difficult, and "it would never have been written if not calculated of itself to illumine the minds of all classes of mankind." The Bible was, in his published words, "the well-head of all that is useful and conducive to the happiness of society"; and he told the poor Catalans that their souls' welfare depended on their being acquainted with the book he was selling at half the cost price. He could write not unlike the author of "The Dairyman's Daughter," as when he exclaimed: "Oh man, man, seek not to dive into the mystery of moral good and evil; confess thyself a worm, cast thyself on the earth, and murmur with thy lips in the dust, Jesus, Jesus!" He thought the Pope "the head minister of Satan here on earth," and inspired partly by contempt of Catholics, he declared that "no people in the world entertain sublimer notions of the uncreated eternal God than the Moors . . . and with respect to Christ, their ideas even of Him are much more just than those of the Papists." And he said to the face of the Spanish Prime Minister: "It is a pleasant thing to be persecuted for the Gospel's sake." Nor was this pure cant; for he meant at least this, that he loved conflict and would be fearless and stubborn in battle; and, as he puts it, he was "cast into prison for the Gospel's sake."

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In 1843, no doubt, what first recommended this book to so many thousands was the Protestant fervour and purpose of the book, and the romantic reputation of Spain. At this day Borrow's Bible distribution is mainly of antiquarian and sectarian interest. We should not estimate the darkness of Madrid by the number of Testaments there in circulation and daily use, nor on the other hand should we fear, like Borrow, to bring them into contempt by making them too common. Yet his missionary work makes the necessary backbone of the book. He was, as he justly said, "no tourist, no writer of books of travels." His work brought him adventure as no mere wandering could have done. What is more, the man's methods are still entertaining to those who care nothing about the distribution itself. Where he found the remains of a robber's camp he left a New Testament and some tracts. To carry the Bibles over the flinty hills of Galicia and the Asturias he bought "a black Andalusian stallion of great power and strength, . . . unbroke, savage and furious": the cargo, he says, would tame the animal. He fixed his advertisement on the church porch at Pitiagua, announcing the sale of Testaments at Salamanca. He had the courage without the ferocity of enthusiasm, and in the cause of the Bible Society he saw and did things which little concerned it, which in fact displeased it, but keep this book alive with a great stir and shout of life, with a hundred pages where we are shown what the poet meant by "forms more real than living men." We are shown the unrighteous to the very life. What matters it then if the author professes the opinion that "the friendship of the unrighteous is never of long duration"? Nevertheless, these pious ejaculations are not without their value in the composition of the author's amazing character.

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Borrow came near to being a perfect traveller. For he was, on the one hand, a man whose individuality was carved in clear bold lines, who had a manner and a set of opinions as remarkable as his appearance. Thus he was bound to come into conflict with men wherever he went: he would bring out their manners and opinions, if they had any. But on the other hand he had abounding curiosity. He was bold but not rude: on the contrary he was most vigilantly polite. He took snuff, though he detested it; he avoided politics as much as possible: "No, no!" he said, "I have lived too long with *Romany chals and Petulengres* to be of any politics save Gypsy politics," in spite of what he had said in '32 and was to say again in '57. When he and the Gypsy Antonio came to Jaraicejo they separated by Antonio's advice. The Gypsy got through the town unchallenged by the guard, though not unnoticed by the townspeople. But Borrow was stopped and asked by a man of the National Guard whether he came with the Gypsy, to which he answered, "Do I look a person likely to keep company with Gypsies?" though, says he, he probably did. Then the National asked for his passport:

"I remembered having read that the best way to win a Spaniard's heart is to treat him with ceremonious civility. I therefore dismounted, and taking off my hat, made a low bow to the constitutional soldier, saying, 'Señor Nacional, you must know that I am an English gentleman travelling in this country for my pleasure. I bear a passport, which on inspecting you will find to be perfectly regular. It was given me by the great Lord Palmerston, Minister of England, whom you of course have heard of here. At the bottom you will see his own handwriting. Look at it and rejoice; perhaps you will never have another opportunity. As I put unbounded confidence in the honour of every gentleman, I leave the passport in your hands whilst I repair to the posada to refresh myself. When you have inspected it, you will perhaps oblige me so far as to bring it to me. Cavalier, I kiss your hands.'

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"I then made him another low bow, which he returned with one still lower, and leaving him now staring at the passport and now looking at myself, I went into a posada, to which I was directed by a beggar whom I met.

"I fed the horse, and procured some bread and barley, as the Gypsy had directed me. I likewise purchased three fine partridges of a fowler, who was drinking wine in the posada. He was satisfied with the price I gave him, and offered to treat me with a copita, to which I made no objection. As we sat discoursing at the table, the National entered with the passport in his hand, and sat down by us.

"*National*.—'Caballero, I return you your passport; it is quite in form. I rejoice much to have made your acquaintance. I have no doubt that you can give me some information respecting the present war.'

"*Myself*.—'I shall be very happy to afford so polite and honourable a gentleman any information in my power.'"

He won the hearts of the people of Villa Seca by the "formality" of his behaviour and language; for he tells us that in such remote places might still be found the gravity of deportment and the grandiose expressions which are scoffed at as exaggerations in the romances. He speaks of himself in one place as strolling about a town or neighbourhood, entering into conversation with several people whom he met, shopkeepers, professional men, and others. Near Evora he sat down daily at a fountain and talked with everyone who came to it. He visited the College of the English Catholics at Lisbon, excusing himself, indeed, by saying that his favourite or his only study was man. His knowledge of languages and his un-English appearance made it easier for him to become familiar with many kinds of men. He introduced himself among some Jews of Lisbon, and pronounced a blessing: they took him for a powerful rabbi, and he favoured their mistake so that in a few days he knew all that related to these people and their traffic. On his journey in Galicia, when he was nearing Finisterra, the men of the cabin where he rested took him for a Catalan, and "he favoured their mistake and began with a harsh Catalan accent to talk of the fish of Galicia, and the high duties on salt." When at this same cabin he found there was

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no bed, he went up into the loft and lay down on the boards' without complaint. So in the prison at Madrid he got on so well with the prisoners that on the third day he spoke their language as if he were "a son of the prison." At Gibraltar he talked to the man of Mogador in Arabic and was taken for "a holy man from the kingdoms of the East," especially when he produced the shekel which had been given him by Hasfeldt: a Jew there believed him to be a Salamancan Jew. At Villafranca a woman mistook his voice in the dark for that of "the German clockmaker from Pontevedra." For some time in 1839 he went among the villages dressed in a peasant's leather helmet, jacket and trousers, and resembling "a person between sixty and seventy years of age," so that people addressed him as Uncle, and bought his Testaments, though the Bible Society, on hearing it, "began to inquire whether, if the old man were laid up in prison, they could very conveniently apply for his release in the proper quarter." {173}

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He saw men and places, and with his pen he created a land as distinct, as wild, as vast, and as wonderful as the Spain of Cervantes. He did this with no conscious preconceived design. His creation was the effect of a multitude of impressions, all contributory because all genuine and true to the depth of Borrow's own nature. He had seen and felt Spain, and "The Bible in Spain" shows how; nor probably could he have shown it in any other way. Not but what he could speak of Spain as the land of old renown, and of himself—in a letter to the Bible Society in 1837—as an errant knight, and of his servant Francisco as his squire. He did not see himself as he was, or he would have seen both Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in one, now riding a black Andalusian stallion, now driving an ass before him.

Only a power as great as Borrow's own could show how this wild Spain was built up. For it was not done by this and that, but by a great man and a noble country in a state of accord continually vibrating.

Thus he drew near to Finisterra with his wild Gallegan guide:

"It was a beautiful autumnal morning when we left the choza and pursued our way to Corcuvion. I satisfied our host by presenting him with a couple of pesetas; and he requested as a favour that if on our return we passed that way, and were overtaken by the night, we would again take up our abode beneath his roof. This I promised, at the same time determining to do my best to guard against the contingency, as sleeping in the loft of a Gallegan hut, though preferable to passing the night on a moor or mountain, is anything but desirable.

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"So we again started at a rapid pace along rough bridleways and footpaths, amidst furze and brushwood. In about an hour we obtained a view of the sea, and directed by a lad, whom we found on the moor employed in tending a few miserable sheep, we bent our course to the north-west, and at length reached the brow of an eminence, where we stopped for some time to survey the prospect which opened before us.

"It was not without reason that the Latins gave the name of Finisterræ to this district. We had arrived exactly at such a place as in my boyhood I had pictured to myself as the termination of the world, beyond which there was a wild sea, or abyss, or chaos. I now saw far before me an immense ocean, and below me a long and irregular line of lofty and precipitous coast. Certainly in the whole world there is no bolder coast than the Gallegan shore, from the *débouchement* of the Minho to Cape Finisterra. It consists of a granite wall of savage mountains, for the most part serrated at the top, and occasionally broken, where bays and firths like those of Vigo and Pontevedra intervene, running deep into the land. These bays and firths are invariably of an immense depth, and sufficiently capacious to shelter the navies of the proudest maritime nations.

"There is an air of stern and savage grandeur in everything around which strongly captivates the imagination. This savage coast is the first glimpse of Spain which the voyager from the north catches, or he who has ploughed his way across the wide Atlantic; and well does it seem to realize all his visions of this strange land. 'Yes,' he exclaims, 'this is indeed Spain—stern, flinty Spain—land emblematic of those spirits to which she has given birth. From what land but that before me could have proceeded those portentous beings who astounded the Old World and filled the New with horror and blood—Alba and Philip, Cortez and Pizarro—stern colossal spectres looming through the gloom of bygone years, like yonder granite mountains through the haze, upon the eye of the mariner? Yes, yonder is indeed Spain—flinty, indomitable Spain—land emblematic of its sons!'

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"As for myself, when I viewed that wide ocean and its savage shore, I cried, 'Such is the grave, and such are its terrific sides; those moors and wilds over which I have passed are the rough and dreary journey of life. Cheered with hope, we struggle along through all the difficulties of moor, bog, and mountain, to arrive at—what? The grave and its dreary sides. Oh, may hope not desert us in the last hour—hope in the Redeemer and in God!'

"We descended from the eminence, and again lost sight of the sea amidst ravines and dingles, amongst which patches of pine were occasionally seen. Continuing to descend, we at last came, not to the sea, but to the extremity of a long, narrow firth, where stood a village or hamlet; whilst at a small distance, on the western side of the firth, appeared one considerably larger, which was indeed almost entitled to the appellation of town. This last was Corcuvion; the first, if I forget not, was called Ria de Silla. We hastened on to Corcuvion, where I bade my guide make inquiries respecting Finisterra. He entered the door of a wine-house, from which proceeded much noise and vociferation, and presently returned, informing me that the village of Finisterra was distant about a league and a half. A man, evidently in a state of intoxication, followed him to the door. 'Are you bound for Finisterra, cavalheiros?' he shouted.

"Yes, my friend," I replied; 'we are going thither.'

"Then you are going amongst a flock of drunkards' (*fato de borrachos*), he answered. 'Take care that they do not play you a trick.' p. 176

"We passed on, and striking across a sandy peninsula at the back of the town, soon reached the shore of an immense bay, the north-westernmost end of which was formed by the far-famed cape of Finisterra, which we now saw before us stretching far into the sea.

"Along the beach of dazzling white sand we advanced towards the cape, the bourne of our journey. The sun was shining brightly, and every object was illumined by his beams. The sea lay before us like a vast mirror, and the waves which broke upon the shore were so tiny as scarcely to produce a murmur. On we sped along the deep winding bay, overhung by gigantic hills and mountains. Strange recollections began to throng upon my mind. It was upon this beach that, according to the tradition of all ancient Christendom, St. James, the patron saint of Spain, preached the gospel to the heathen Spaniards. Upon this beach had once stood an immense commercial city, the proudest in all Spain. This now desolate bay had once resounded with the voices of myriads, when the keels and commerce of all the then known world were wafted to Duyo.

"What is the name of this village?' said I to a woman, as we passed by five or six ruinous houses at the bend of the bay, ere we entered upon the peninsula of Finisterra.

"This is no village,' said the Gallegan—'this is no village, Sir Cavalier; this is a city—this is Duyo.'

"So much for the glory of the world! These huts were all that the roaring sea and the tooth of time had left of Duyo, the great city! Onward now to Finisterra."

He spends little time on such declamatory description, but it is essential to the whole effect. This particular piece is followed by the difficulty of a long ascent, by a sleep of exhaustion on a rude and dirty bed, by Borrow's arrest as the Pretender, Don Carlos, in disguise, by an escape from immediate execution into the hands of an Alcalde who read "Jeremy Bentham" day and night; all this in one short chapter. p. 177

Equally essential is the type of landscape represented by the solitary ruined fort in the monotonous waste between Estremoz and Elvas, which he climbed to over stones that cut his feet:

"Being about to leave the place, I heard a strange cry behind a part of the wall which I had not visited; and hastening thither, I found a miserable object in rags seated upon a stone. It was a maniac—a man about thirty years of age, and I believe deaf and dumb. There he sat, gibbering and mowing, and distorting his wild features into various dreadful appearances. There wanted nothing but this object to render the scene complete; banditti amongst such melancholy desolation would have been by no means so much in keeping. But the maniac on his stone, in the rear of the wind-beaten ruin overlooking the blasted heath, above which scowled the leaden heaven, presented such a picture of gloom and misery as I believe neither painter nor poet ever conceived in the saddest of their musings. This is not the first instance in which it has been my lot to verify the wisdom of the saying that truth is sometimes wilder than fiction."

At Oropesa he heard from the barber-surgeon of the mysterious Guadarrama mountains, and of the valley that lay undiscovered and unknown for thousands of years until a hunter found there a tribe of people speaking a language unknown to anyone else and ignorant of the rest of men. Rough wild ways intersect the book. Thunder storms overhang it. Immense caverns echo beneath it. The travellers left behind a mill which "stood at the bottom of a valley shaded by large trees, and its wheels were turning with a dismal and monotonous noise," and they emerged, by the light of "a corner of the moon," on to the wildest heath of the wildest province of Spain, ignorant of their way, making for a place which the guide believed not to exist. They passed a defile where the carrier had been attacked on his last journey by robbers, who burnt the coach by means of the letters in it, and butchered all except the carrier, who had formerly been the master of one of the gang: as they passed, the ground was still saturated with the blood of one of the murdered soldiers and a dog was gnawing a piece of his skull. Borrow was told of an old viper catcher caught by the robbers, who plundered and stripped him and then tied his hands behind him and thrust his head into his sack, "which contained several of these horrible reptiles alive," and so he ran mad through the villages until he fell dead. As a background, he had again and again a scene like that one, whose wild waters and mountains, and the "Convent of the Precipices" standing out against the summit, reminded him at once of Salvator Rosa and of Stolberg's lines to a mountain torrent: "The pine trees are shaken. . . ." Describing the cave at Gibraltar, he spoke of it as always having been "a den for foul night birds, reptiles, and beasts of prey," of precipice after precipice, abyss after abyss, in apparently endless succession, and of an explorer who perished there and lay "even now rotting in the bowels of the mountain, preyed upon by its blind and noisome worms." p. 178

When he saw a peaceful rich landscape in a bright sunny hour, as at Monte Moro, he shed tears of rapture, sitting on and on in those reveries which, as he well knew, only enervate the mind: or he felt that he would have desired "no better fate than that of a shepherd on the prairies or a hunter on the hills of Bembibre": or looking through an iron-grated door at a garden court in Seville he sighed that his fate did not permit him to reside in such an Eden for the remainder of his days. For as he delights in the dismal, grand, or wild, so he does with equal intensity in the sweetness of loveliness, as in the country about Seville: "Oh how pleasant it is, especially in p. 179

springtide, to stray along the shores of the Guadalquivir! Not far from the city, down the river, lies a grove called Las Delicias, or the Delights. It consists of trees of various kinds, but more especially of poplars and elms, and is traversed by long, shady walks. This grove is the favourite promenade of the Sevillians, and there one occasionally sees assembled whatever the town produces of beauty or gallantry. There wander the black-eyed Andalusian dames and damsels, clad in their graceful silken mantillas; and there gallops the Andalusian cavalier on his long-tailed, thick-maned steed of Moorish ancestry. As the sun is descending, it is enchanting to glance back from this place in the direction of the city; the prospect is inexpressibly beautiful. Yonder in the distance, high and enormous, stands the Golden Tower, now used as a toll-house, but the principal bulwark of the city in the time of the Moors. It stands on the shore of the river, like a giant keeping watch, and is the first edifice which attracts the eye of the voyager as he moves up the stream to Seville. On the other side, opposite the tower, stands the noble Augustine Convent, the ornament of the faubourg of Triana; whilst between the two edifices rolls the broad Guadalquivir, bearing on its bosom a flotilla of barks from Catalonia and Valencia. Farther up is seen the bridge of boats which traverses the water. The principal object of this prospect, however, is the Golden Tower, where the beams of the setting sun seem to be concentrated as in the focus, so that it appears built of pure gold, and probably from that circumstance received the name which it now bears. Cold, cold must the heart be which can remain insensible to the beauties of this magic scene, to do justice to which the pencil of Claude himself were barely equal. Often have I shed tears of rapture whilst I beheld it, and listened to the thrush and the nightingale piping forth their melodious songs in the woods, and inhaled the breeze laden with the perfume of the thousand orange gardens of Seville.

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‘Kennst du das land wo die citronen bluhent?’

If a scene was not in fact superlative his creative memory would furnish it with what it lacked, giving the cathedral of Palencia, for example, windows painted by Murillo.

CHAPTER XXI—“THE BIBLE IN SPAIN”: THE CHARACTERS

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In such scenes, naturally, Borrow placed nothing common and nothing mean. He must have a madman among the ruins, or by a pool a peasant woman sitting, who has been mad ever since her child was drowned there, or a mule and a stallion fighting with hoofs and teeth. The clergy, in their ugly shovel hats and long cloaks, glared at him askance as he passed by their whispering groups in Salamanca: at the English College in Valladolid, he thought of “those pale, smiling, half-foreign priests who, like stealthy grimalkins, traversed green England in all directions” under the persecution of Elizabeth. If he painted an archbishop plainly dressed in black cassock and silken cap, stooping, feeble, pale and emaciated, he set upon his finger a superb amethyst of a dazzling lustre—Borrow never saw a finer, except one belonging to an acquaintance of his own, a Tartar Khan.

The day after his interview with the archbishop he had a visit from Benedict Mol. This man is proved to have existed by a letter from Rey Romero to Borrow mentioning “The German of the Treasure.” {181} “True, every word of it!” says Knapp: “Remember our artist never created; he painted from models.” Because he existed, therefore every word of Borrow’s concerning him is true. As Borrow made him, “He is a bulky old man, somewhat above the middle height, and with white hair and ruddy features; his eyes were large and blue, and, whenever he fixed them on anyone’s countenance, were full of an expression of great eagerness, as if he were expecting the communication of some important tidings. He was dressed commonly enough, in a jacket and trousers of coarse cloth of a russet colour; on his head was an immense sombrero, the brim of which had been much cut and mutilated, so as in some places to resemble the jags or denticles of a saw.”

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And thus, at Madrid in 1836, he told his story on the first meeting, as men had to do when they were interrogated by Borrow:

“Upon my asking him who he was, the following conversation ensued between us:

“‘I am a Swiss of Lucerne, Benedict Mol by name, once a soldier in the Walloon Guard, and now a soap-boiler, *para servir usted.*’

“‘You speak the language of Spain very imperfectly,’ said I; ‘how long have you been in the country?’

“‘Forty-five years,’ replied Benedict. ‘But when the guard was broken up I went to Minorca, where I lost the Spanish language without acquiring the Catalan.’

“‘You have been a soldier of the King of Spain,’ said I; ‘how did you like the service?’

“‘Not so well but that I should have been glad to leave it forty years ago; the pay was bad, and the treatment worse. I will now speak Swiss to you; for, if I am not much mistaken, you are a German man, and understand the speech of Lucerne. I should soon have deserted from the service of Spain, as I did from that of the Pope, whose soldier I was in my early youth before I

came here; but I had married a woman of Minorca, by whom I had two children: it was this that detained me in these parts so long. Before, however, I left Minorca, my wife died; and as for my children, one went east, the other west, and I know not what became of them. I intend shortly to return to Lucerne, and live there like a duke.'

"Have you then realized a large capital in Spain?' said I, glancing at his hat and the rest of his apparel.

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"Not a quart, not a quart; these two wash-balls are all that I possess.'

"Perhaps you are the son of good parents, and have lands and money in your own country wherewith to support yourself.'

"Not a heller, not a heller. My father was hangman of Lucerne, and when he died, his body was seized to pay his debts.'

"Then doubtless,' said I, 'you intend to ply your trade of soap-boiling at Lucerne. You are quite right, my friend; I know of no occupation more honourable or useful.'

"I have no thoughts of plying my trade at Lucerne,' replied Benedict. 'And now, as I see you are a German man, Lieber Herr, and as I like your countenance and your manner of speaking, I will tell you in confidence that I know very little of my trade, and have already been turned out of several fabriques as an evil workman; the two wash-balls that I carry in my pocket are not of my own making. *In kurtzen*, I know little more of soap-boiling than I do of tailoring, horse-farriery, or shoe-making, all of which I have practised.'

"Then I know not how you can hope to live like a hertzog in your native canton, unless you expect that the men of Lucerne, in consideration of your services to the Pope and to the King of Spain, will maintain you in splendour at the public expense.'

"Lieber Herr,' said Benedict, 'the men of Lucerne are by no means fond of maintaining the soldiers of the Pope and the King of Spain at their own expense; many of the guard who have returned thither beg their bread in the streets: but when I go, it shall be in a coach drawn by six mules with a treasure, a mighty schatz which lies in the church of St. James of Compostella, in Galicia.'

"I hope you do not intend to rob the church,' said I. 'If you do, however, I believe you will be disappointed. Mendizabal and the Liberals have been beforehand with you. I am informed that at present no other treasure is to be found in the cathedrals of Spain than a few paltry ornaments and plated utensils.'

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"My good German Herr,' said Benedict, 'it is no church schatz; and no person living, save myself, knows of its existence. Nearly thirty years ago, amongst the sick soldiers who were brought to Madrid, was one of my comrades of the Walloon Guard, who had accompanied the French to Portugal; he was very sick, and shortly died. Before, however, he breathed his last, he sent for me, and upon his death-bed told me that himself and two other soldiers, both of whom had since been killed, had buried in a certain church in Compostella a great booty which they had made in Portugal; it consisted of gold moldores and of a packet of huge diamonds from the Brazils: the whole was contained in a large copper kettle. I listened with greedy ears, and from that moment, I may say, I have known no rest, neither by day nor night, thinking of the schatz. It is very easy to find, for the dying man was so exact in his description of the place where it lies, that were I once at Compostella I should have no difficulty in putting my hand upon it. Several times I have been on the point of setting out on the journey, but something has always happened to stop me. When my wife died, I left Minorca with a determination to go to St. James; but on reaching Madrid, I fell into the hands of a Basque woman, who persuaded me to live with her, which I have done for several years. She is a great hax, {184} and says that if I desert her she will breathe a spell which shall cling to me for ever. *Dem Got sey dank*, she is now in the hospital, and daily expected to die. This is my history, Lieber Herr.'"

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Notice that Borrow continues:

"I have been the more careful in relating the above conversation, as I shall have frequent occasion to mention the Swiss in the course of these journals."

Benedict Mol had the faculty of re-appearance. In the next year at Compostella the moonlight fell on his grey locks and weatherbeaten face and Borrow recognised him. "*Och*," said the man, "*mein Gott, es ist der Herr!*" (it is that gentleman). "*Och*, what good fortune, that the *Herr* is the first person I meet in Compostella." Even Borrow could scarcely believe his eyes. Benedict had come to dig for the treasure, and in the meantime proposed to live at the best hotel and pay his score when the digging was done. Borrow gave him a dollar, which he paid to a witch for telling him where exactly the treasure lay. A third time, to his own satisfaction and Borrow's astonishment, he re-appeared at Oviedo. He had, in fact, followed Borrow to Corunna, having been despitely used at Compostella, met highwaymen on the road, and suffered hunger so that he slaughtered a stray kid and devoured it raw. From Oviedo he trod in Borrow's footsteps, which was "a great comfort in his horrible journeys." "A strange life has he led," said Borrow's Greek servant, "and a strange death he will die—it is written on his countenance." He re-appeared a fourth time at Madrid, in light green coat and pantaloons that were almost new, and a glossy Andalusian hat "of immense altitude of cone," and leaning not on a ragged staff but "a huge bamboo rattan, surmounted by the grim head of either a bear or lion, curiously cut out of

pewter." He had been wandering after Borrow in misery that almost sent him mad:

"Oh, the horror of wandering about the savage hills and wide plains of Spain without money and without hope! Sometimes I became desperate, when I found myself amongst rocks and barrancos, perhaps after having tasted no food from sunrise to sunset, and then I would raise my staff towards the sky and shake it, crying, Lieber herr Gott, ach lieber herr Gott, you must help me now or never. If you tarry, I am lost. You must help me now, now! And once when I was raving in this manner, methought I heard a voice—nay, I am sure I heard it—sounding from the hollow of a rock, clear and strong; and it cried, 'Der schatz, der schatz, it is not yet dug up. To Madrid, to Madrid! The way to the schatz is through Madrid.'"

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But now he had met people who supported him with an eye to the treasure. Borrow tried to persuade him to circulate the Gospel instead of risking failure and the anger of his clients. Luckily Benedict went on to Compostella:

"He went, and I never saw him more. What I heard, however, was extraordinary enough. It appeared that the government had listened to his tale, and had been so struck with Benedict's exaggerated description of the buried treasure, that they imagined that, by a little trouble and outlay, gold and diamonds might be dug up at St. James sufficient to enrich themselves and to pay off the national debt of Spain. The Swiss returned to Compostella 'like a duke,' to use his own words. The affair, which had at first been kept a profound secret, was speedily divulged. It was, indeed, resolved that the investigation, which involved consequences of so much importance, should take place in a manner the most public and imposing. A solemn festival was drawing nigh, and it was deemed expedient that the search should take place upon that day. The day arrived. All the bells in Compostella pealed. The whole populace thronged from their houses; a thousand troops were drawn up in a square; the expectation of all was wound up to the highest pitch. A procession directed its course to the church of San Roque. At its head were the captain-general and the Swiss, brandishing in his hand the magic rattan; close behind walked the *meiga*, the Gallegan witch-wife, by whom the treasure-seeker had been originally guided in the search; numerous masons brought up the rear, bearing implements to break up the ground. The procession enters the church; they pass through it in solemn march; they find themselves in a vaulted passage. The Swiss looks around. 'Dig here,' said he suddenly. 'Yes, dig here,' said the meiga. The masons labour; the floor is broken up—a horrible and fetid odour arises. . .

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"Enough, no treasure was found, and my warning to the unfortunate Swiss turned out but too prophetic. He was forthwith seized and flung into the horrid prison of St. James, amidst the execrations of thousands, who would have gladly torn him limb from limb.

"The affair did not terminate here. The political opponents of the government did not allow so favourable an opportunity to escape for launching the shafts of ridicule. The Moderados were taunted in the cortes for their avarice and credulity, whilst the Liberal press wafted on its wings through Spain the story of the treasure-hunt at St. James.

"'After all, it was a *trampa* {187} of Don Jorge's,' said one of my enemies. 'That fellow is at the bottom of half the picardias which happen in Spain.'

"Eager to learn the fate of the Swiss, I wrote to my old friend Rey Romero, at Compostella. In his answer he states: 'I saw the Swiss in prison, to which place he sent for me, craving my assistance, for the sake of the friendship which I bore to you. But how could I help him? He was speedily after removed from St. James, I know not whither. It is said that he disappeared on the road.'

"Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. Where in the whole cycle of romance shall we find anything more wild, grotesque, and sad than the easily authenticated history of Benedict Mol, the treasure-digger of St. James?"

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Knapp, by the way, prints this very letter from Rey Romero. It was his son who saw Benedict in prison, and he simply says that he does not know what has become of him.

As Dr. Knapp says, Borrow painted from a model. That is to say, he did like everybody else. Of course he did not invent. Why should a man with such a life invent for the purpose of only five books? But there is no such thing as invention (in the popular sense), except in the making of *bad* nonsense rhymes or novels. A writer composes out of his experience, inward, outward and histrionic, or along the protracted lines of his experience. Borrow felt that adventures and unusual scenes were his due, and when they were not forthcoming he revived an old one or revised the present in the weird light of the past. Is this invention?

Pictures like that of Benedict Mol are not made out of nothing by Borrow or anybody else. Nor are they copies. The man who could merely copy nature would never have the eyes to see such beauties as Benedict Mol. It must be noticed how effective is the re-appearance, the intermingling of such a man with "ordinary life," and then finally the suggestion of one of Borrow's enemies that he was put up to it by *Don Jorge*—"That fellow is at the bottom of half the *picardias* which happen in Spain." What glory for *Don Jorge*. The story would have been entertaining enough as a mere isolated short story: thus scattered, it is twice as effective as if it were a mere fiction, whether labelled "a true story" or introduced by an ingenious variation of the same. It is one of Borrow's triumphs never to let us escape from the spell of actuality into a languid acquiescence in what is "only pretending." The form never becomes a fiction, even to the same extent as that of Turgenev's "Sportsman's Sketches"; for Borrow is always faithful to the form of a book of travel in Spain during the 'thirties. In "Don Quixote" and "Gil Blas," the lesser

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narratives are as a rule introduced without much attempt at probability, but as mere diversions. They are never such in "The Bible in Spain," though they are in "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye." The Gypsy hag of Badajoz, who proposed to poison all the *Busné* in Madrid, and then away with the London Caloro to the land of the Moor—his Greek servant Antonio, even though he begins with "Je vais vous raconter mon histoire du commencement jusqu'ici."—the Italian whom he had met as a boy and who now regretted leaving England, the toasted cheese and bread, the Suffolk ale, the roaring song and merry jests of the labourers,—and Antonio again, telling him "the history of the young man of the inn,"—these story-tellers are not merely consummate variations upon those of the "Decameron" and "Gil Blas." The book never ceases to be a book of travel by an agent of the Bible Society. It is to its very great advantage that it was not written all of a piece with one conscious aim. The roughness, the merely accurate irrelevant detail here and there, the mention of his journal, and the references to well-known and substantial people, win from us an openness and simplicity of reception which ensure a success for it beyond that of most fictions. I cannot refuse complete belief in the gigantic Jew, Abarbanel, for example, when Borrow has said: "I had now a full view of his face and figure, and those huge featured and Herculean form still occasionally revisit me in my dreams. I see him standing in the moonshine, staring me in the face with his deep calm eyes." I do not feel bound to believe that he had met the Italian of Corunna twenty years before at Norwich, though to a man with his memory for faces such re-appearances are likely to happen many times as often as to an ordinary man. But I feel no doubt about Judah Lib, who spoke to him at Gibraltar: he was "about to exclaim, 'I know you not,' when one or two lineaments struck him, and he cried, though somewhat hesitatingly, 'surely this is Judah Lib.'" He continues: "It was in a steamer in the Baltic in the year '34, if I mistake not." That he had this strong memory is certain; but that he knew it, and was proud of it, and likely to exaggerate it, is almost equally certain.

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It was natural that such a knight should have squires of high degree, as Francisco the Basque and the two Antonios, Gypsy and Greek. Antonio the Greek left Borrow to serve a count as cook, but the count attacked him with a rapier, whereupon he gave notice in the following manner:

"Suddenly I took a large casserole from the fire in which various eggs were frying; this I held out at arm's length, peering at it along my arm as if I were curiously inspecting it—my right foot advanced, and the other thrown back as far as possible. All stood still, imagining, doubtless, that I was about to perform some grand operation; and so I was: for suddenly the sinister leg advancing, with one rapid *coup de pied* I sent the casserole and its contents flying over my head, so that they struck the wall far behind me. This was to let them know that I had broken my staff and had shaken the dust off my feet. So casting upon the count the peculiar glance of the Sceirote cooks when they feel themselves insulted, and extending my mouth on either side nearly as far as the ears, I took down my haversack and departed, singing as I went the song of the ancient Demos, who, when dying, asked for his supper, and water wherewith to lave his hands:

Ὁ ἥλιος εἰσαίλεινε, κὶ ὁ Δῆμος διατάζει.
Σύρτε, παιδία, μου, 'σ τὸ νερὸν ψωμί νὰ φατ' ἀποψε.

And in this manner, mon maître, I left the house of the Count of ---."

The morning after Francisco died, when Borrow was lying in bed ruminating on his loss, he heard someone cleaning boots and singing in an unknown tongue, so he rang the bell. Antonio appeared. He had, he said, engaged himself to the Prime Minister at a high salary, but on hearing of Borrow's loss, he "told the Duke, though it was late at night, that he would not suit me; and here I am." Again he left Borrow. When he returned it was in obedience to a dream, in which he saw his master ride on a black horse up to his inn—yet this was immediately after Borrow's landing on his third visit to Spain, of which "only two individuals in Madrid were aware." This Greek was acquainted with all the cutthroats in Galicia; he could tell a story like Sterne, and in every way was a servant who deserved no less a master than *Monsieur Georges*.

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Francisco has already sufficiently adorned these pages. As for the other Antonio, the Gypsy, he guided Borrow through the worst of Spain on his way to Madrid. This he offered to do in such terms that Borrow's hint at the possible danger of accepting it falls flat. He was as mysterious as Borrow himself, and being asked why he was taking this particular road, he answered: "It is an affair of Egypt, brother, and I shall not acquaint you with it; peradventure it relates to a horse or an ass, or peradventure it relates to a mule or a *macho*; it does not relate to yourself, therefore I advise you not to inquire about it—*Dosta*. . . ." He carried a loadstone in his bosom and swallowed some of the dust of it, and it served both for passport and for prayers. When he had to leave Borrow he sold him a savage and vicious she ass, recommending her for the same reason as he bought her, because "a savage and vicious beast has generally four excellent legs."

CHAPTER XXII—"THE BIBLE IN SPAIN": STYLE

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Borrow's Spanish portrait of himself was worthy of its background. Much was required of him in a world where a high fantastical acrobatic mountebankery was almost a matter of ceremony, where riders stand on their heads in passing their rivals and cooks punt a casserole over their heads to the wall behind by way of giving notice: much was required of him and he proved worthy. He saw himself, I suppose, as a great imaginative master of fiction sees a hero. His

attitude cannot be called vanity: it is too consistent and continuous and its effect by far too powerful. He puts his own name into the speeches of other men in a manner that is very rare: he does not start at the sound of *Don Jorge*. He said to the silent archbishop: "I suppose your lordship knows who I am? . . . I am he whom the *Manolos* of Madrid call *Don Jorgito el Ingles*; I am just come out of prison, whither I was sent for circulating my Lord's Gospel in this Kingdom of Spain." He allows the archbishop to put this celebrity on horseback: "*Vaya!* how you ride! It is dangerous to be in your way." His horses are magnificent: "What," he asks, "what is a missionary in the heart of Spain without a horse? Which consideration induced me now to purchase an Arabian of high caste, which had been brought from Algiers by an officer of the French legion. The name of this steed, the best I believe that ever issued from the desert, was Sidi Habismilk."

Who can forget Quesada and his two friends lording it on horseback over the crowd, and Borrow shouting "*Viva Quesada,*" or forget the old Moor of Tangier talking of horses?—

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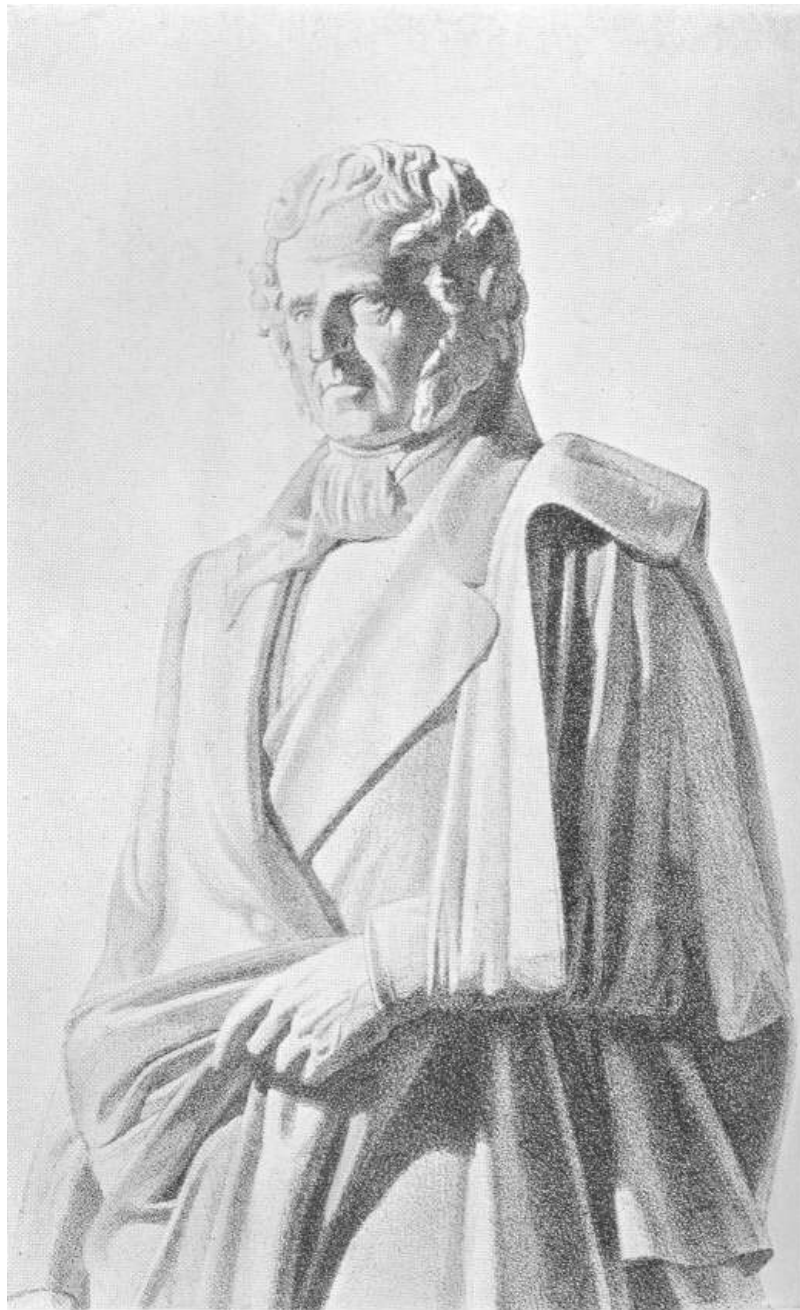
"'Good are the horses of the Moslems,' said my old friend; 'where will you find such? They will descend rocky mountains at full speed and neither trip nor fall; but you must be cautious with the horses of the Moslems, and treat them with kindness, for the horses of the Moslems are proud, and they like not being slaves. When they are young and first mounted, jerk not their mouths with your bit, for be sure if you do they will kill you—sooner or later you will perish beneath their feet. Good are our horses, and good our riders—yea, very good are the Moslems at mounting the horse; who are like them? I once saw a Frank rider compete with a Moslem on this beach, and at first the Frank rider had it all his own way, and he passed the Moslem. But the course was long, very long, and the horse of the Frank rider, which was a Frank also, panted; but the horse of the Moslem panted not, for he was a Moslem also, and the Moslem rider at last gave a cry, and the horse sprang forward, and he overtook the Frank horse, and then the Moslem rider stood up in his saddle. How did he stand? Truly he stood on his head, and these eyes saw him. He stood on his head in the saddle as he passed the Frank rider, and he cried, Ha, ha! as he passed the Frank rider; and the Moslem horse cried, Ha, ha! as he passed the Frank breed, and the Frank lost by a far distance. Good are the Franks, good their horses; but better are the Moslems, and better the horses of the Moslems.'"

It is said that he used to ride his black Andalusian horse in Madrid with a Russian skin for a saddle and without stirrups. He had, he says, been accustomed from childhood to ride without a saddle. Yet Borrow could do without a horse. He never fails to make himself impressive. He stoops to his knee to scare a huge and ferocious dog by looking him full in the eyes. The spies, as he sat waiting for the magistrate at Madrid, whisper, "He understands the seven Gypsy jargons," or "He can ride a horse and dart a knife full as well as if he came from my own country." The captain of the ship tells a friend in a low voice, overheard by Borrow: "That fellow who is lying on the deck can speak Christian, too, when it serves his purpose; but he speaks others which are by no means Christian. He can talk English, and I myself have heard him chatter in Gitano with the Gypsies of Triana. He is now going amongst the Moors; and when he arrives in their country, you will hear him, should you be there, converse as fluently in their gibberish as in Christiano—nay, better, for he is no Christian himself. He has been several times on board my vessel already; but I do not like him, as I consider that he carries something about with him which is not good."

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The American at Tangier is perplexed by his speaking both Moorish and Gaelic, by hearing from an Irish woman that he is "a fairy man."

He does not confine himself to the mysterious sublime. He tells us, for example, that Mendizabal, the Prime Minister, was a huge athletic man, "somewhat taller than myself, who measure six-feet-two without my shoes." Several times he was mistaken for a Jew, and once for a Rabbi, by the Jews themselves. Add to this the expression that he put on for the benefit of the farrier at Betanzos: he was stooping to close the vein that had been opened in the leg of his horse, and he "looked up into the farrier's face, arching his eyebrows. '*Carracho!* what an evil wizard!' muttered the farrier, as he walked away."



MENDIZABAL, THE SPANISH MINISTER

In the wilds he grew a beard—he had one at Jaraicejo—and it is perhaps worth noticing this, to rebut the opinion that he could not grow a beard, and that he was therefore as other men are with the same disability. He speaks more than once of his shedding tears, and at Lisbon he kissed the stone above Fielding's grave. But these are little things of little importance in the landscape portrait which emerges from the whole of the book, of the grave adventurer, all but always equal in his boldness and his discretion, the lord of those wild ways and wild men, who "rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm" all over Spain.

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In brief, he is the very hero that a wondering and waiting audience would be satisfied to see appearing upon such a stage. Except Dante on his background of Heaven and Hell, and Byron on his background of Europe and Time, no writer had in one book placed himself with greater distinction before the world. His glory was threefold. He was the man who was a Gypsy in politics, because he had lived with Gypsies so long. He was the man who said to the Spanish Prime Minister: "It is a pleasant thing to be persecuted for the Gospel's sake." He was the man of whom it was said *by an enemy*, after the affair of Benedict Mol, that *Don Jorge* was at the bottom of half the knavish farces in Spain.

Very little of Borrow's effectiveness can seriously be attributed to this or that quality of style, for it will all amount to saying that he had an effective style. But it may be permissible to point out that it is also a style that is unnoticeable except for what it effects. It runs at times to rotten Victorianism, both heavy and vague, as when he calls *El Greco* or *Domenico* "a most extraordinary genius, some of whose productions possess merit of a very high order." He is capable of calling the eye the "orb of vision," and the moon "the beauteous luminary." I quote a passage lest it should seem incredible:

"The moon had arisen when we mounted our horses to return to the village, and the rays of the beauteous luminary danced merrily on the rushing waters of the Tagus, silvered the plain over which we were passing, and bathed in a flood of brightness the bold sides of the calcareous hill of

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Villaluengo, the antique ruins which crowned its brow. . . .”

Description, taking him away from men and from his active self, often lured him into this kind of thing. And, nevertheless, such is Borrow that I should by no means employ a gentleman of refinement to go over “The Bible in Spain” and cross out the like. It all helps in the total of half theatrical and wholly wild exuberance and robustness. Another minute contributory element of style is the Biblical phrasing. His home and certainly his work for the Society had made him familiar with the Bible. He quotes it several times in passages which bring him into comparison, if not equality, with Jesus and with Paul. A little after quoting, “Ride on, because of the word of righteousness,” he writes: “I repaired to the aqueduct, and sat down beneath the hundred and seventh arch, where I waited the greater part of the day, *but he came not, whereupon I arose and went into the city.*” He is fond of “even,” saying, for example, or making Judah Lib say, “He bent his way unto the East, *even to Jerusalem.*” The “beauteous luminary” vein and the Biblical vein may be said to be inseparable from the long cloak, the sombrero, the picturesque romance and mystery of Spain, as they appeared to one for whom romance and mystery alike were never without pomp. But with all his rant he is invariably substantial, never aerial, and he chequers it in a Byronic manner with a sudden prose reference to bugs, or a question, or a piece of dialogue.

His dialogue can hardly be over-praised. It is life-like in its effect, though not in its actual phrases, and it breaks up the narrative and description over and over again at the right time. What he puts into the mouth of shepherds with whom he sits round the fire is more than twice as potent as if it were in his own narrative; he varies the point of view, and yet always without allowing himself to disappear from the scene—he, the *señor* traveller. These spoken words are, it is true, in Borrow’s own style, with little or no colloquialism, but they are simpler. They also, in their turn, are broken up by words or phrases from the language of the speaker. The effect of this must vary with the reader. The learned will not pause, some of the unlearned will be impatient. But as a glossary was afterwards granted at Ford’s suggestion, and is now to be had in the cheapest editions of “The Bible in Spain,” these few hundred Spanish or Gypsy words are at least no serious stumbling block. I find them a very distinct additional flavour in the style. A good writer can afford these mysteries. Children do not boggle at the unpronounceable names of a good book like “The Arabian Nights,” but rather use them as charms, like Izaak Walton’s marrow of the thighbone of a heron or a piece of mummy. The bullfighter speaks:

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“‘Cavaliers and strong men, this cavalier is the friend of a friend of mine. *Es mucho hombre.* There is none like him in Spain. He speaks the crabbed *Gitano*, though he is an *Inglesito.*’

“‘We do not believe it,’ replied several grave voices. ‘It is not possible.’

“‘It is not possible, say you? I tell you it is.—Come forward, Balseiro, you who have been in prison all your life, and are always boasting that you can speak the crabbed *Gitano*, though I say you know nothing of it—come forward and speak to his worship in the crabbed *Gitano.*’

“A low, slight, but active figure stepped forward. He was in his shirt sleeves, and wore a *montero* cap; his features were handsome, but they were those of a demon.

“He spoke a few words in the broken Gypsy slang of the prison, inquiring of me whether I had ever been in the condemned cell, and whether I knew what a *gitana* was.

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“‘*Vamos Inglesito,*’ shouted Sevilla, in a voice of thunder, ‘answer the *monro* in the crabbed *Gitano.*’

“I answered the robber, for such he was, and one, too, whose name will live for many years in the ruffian histories of Madrid—I answered him in a speech of some length, in the dialect of the Estremenian Gypsies.

“‘I believe it is the crabbed *Gitano,*’ muttered Balseiro. ‘It is either that or English, for I understand not a word of it.’

“‘Did I not say to you,’ cried the bullfighter, ‘that you knew nothing of the crabbed *Gitano*? But this *Inglesito* does. I understood all he said. *Vaya*, there is none like him for the crabbed *Gitano*. He is a good *ginete*, too; next to myself, there is none like him, only he rides with stirrup leathers too short.—*Inglesito*, if you have need of money, I will lend you my purse. All I have is at your service, and that is not a little; I have just gained four thousand *chulés* by the lottery. Courage, Englishman! Another cup. I will pay all—I, Sevilla!’

“And he clapped his hand repeatedly on his breast, reiterating, ‘I, Sevilla! I—’”

Borrow breaks up his own style in the same way with foreign words. As Ford said in his “Edinburgh Review” criticism:

“To use a Gypsy term for a linguist, ‘he knows the seven jargons’; his conversations and his writings resemble an intricate mosaic, of which we see the rich effect, without comprehending the design. . . . Mr. Borrow, in whose mouth are the tongues of Babel, selects, as he dashes along *currente calamo*, the exact word for any idiom which best expresses the precise idea which sparkles in his mind.”

This habit of Borrow’s should be compared with Lamb’s archaisms, but, better still, with Robert Burton’s interlardation of English and Latin in “The Anatomy of Melancholy.”

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Here again what I may call his spotted dog style is only a part of the whole, and as the whole is

effective, we solemnly conclude that this is due in part to the spotted dog. My last word is that here, as always in a good writer, the whole is greater than the mere sum of the parts, just as with a bad writer the part is always greater than the whole. Or a truer way of saying this is that many elements elude discovery, and therefore the whole exceeds the discoverable parts. Nor is this the whole truth, for the mixing is much if not all, and neither Borrow nor any critic knows anything about the mixing, save that the drink is good that comes of it.

CHAPTER XXIII—BETWEEN THE ACTS

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Six three-volume editions of "The Bible in Spain" were issued within the first twelve months: ten thousand copies of a cheap edition were sold in four months. In America it was sold rapidly without benefit to Borrow. It was translated into German in 1844 and French in 1845. Borrow came up to town and did not refuse to meet princes, bishops, ambassadors, and members of Parliament. He was pleased and flattered by the sales and the reviews, and declared that he had known it would succeed. He did not quite know what to say to an invitation from the Royal Institution, but as to the Royal Academy, it would "just suit him," because he was a safe man, he said, fitted by nature for an Academician. He did not think much of episcopal food, wine, or cigars. He was careful of his hero and disliked hearing him abused or treated indifferently. If he had many letters, he answered but few. He had made nothing yet out of literature because the getting about to receive homage, etc., had been so expensive: he did not care, for he hated to speak of money matters, yet he could not but mention the fact. When the money began to arrive he did not resent it by any means, as he was to buy a blood horse with it—no less. His letters have a jolly, bullying, but offhand and jerky tone, and they are very short. He gives Murray advice on publishing and is willing to advise the Government how to manage the Irish—"the blackguards."

He was now, by virtue of his wife, a "landed proprietor," and filled the part with unction, though but little satisfaction. For he was not a magistrate, and he had to get up in the middle of the night to look after "poachers and thieves," as he says in giving a reason for an illness. In the summer-house at Oulton hung his father's coat and sword, but it is to be noticed that to the end of his life an old friend held it "doubtful whether his father commenced his military career with a commission." Borrow probably realised the importance of belonging to the ruling classes and having a long steady pedigree. "If report be true," says the same friend, {201} "his mother was of French origin, and in early life an actress." The foreignness as an asset overcame his objection to the French, and "an actress" also sounded unconventional. The friend continues: "But the subject of his family was one on which Borrow never touched. He would allude to Borrowdale as the country whence they came, and then would make mysterious allusions to his father's pugilistic triumphs. But this is certain, that he has not left a single relation behind him." Yet he had many relatives in Cornwall and did not scorn to visit their houses. He would only talk of his works to intimate friends, and "when he went into company it was as a gentleman, not because he was an author."

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Lady Eastlake, in March, 1844, calls him "a fine man, but a most disagreeable one; a kind of character that would be most dangerous in rebellious times—one that would suffer or persecute to the utmost. His face is expressive of wrong-headed determination."

A little earlier than this, in October, 1843, Caroline Fox saw him "sitting on one side of the fire and his old mother on the other." It was known to her that "his spirits always sink in wet weather, and to-day was very rainy, but he was courteous and not displeased to be a little lionised, for his delicacy is not of the most susceptible." He was "a tall, ungainly, uncouth man," in her opinion, "with great physical strength, a quick penetrating eye, a confident manner, and a disagreeable tone and pronunciation." In no place does he make anyone praise his voice, and, as he said, it reminded one Spanish woman of a German clockmaker's.

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But Borrow was not happy or at ease. He took a riding tour in the east of England; he walked, rowed and fished; but that was not enough. He was restless, and yet did not get away. Evidently he did not conceal the fact that he thought of travelling again. He had talked about Africa and China: he was now talking about Constantinople and Africa. He was often miserable, though he had, so far as he knew, "no particular disorder." If at such times he was away from Oulton, he thought of his home as his only refuge in this world; if he was at home he thought of travel or foreign employment. His disease was, perhaps, now middle age, and too good a memory in his blood and in his bones. Whatever it was it was apparently not curable by his kind of Christianity, nor by a visit from the genial Ford, and a present of caviare and pheasant; nor by the never-out-of-date reminder from friends that he was very well off, etc. If he had been caught by Dissenters, as he should have been, he might by this time have had salvation, and an occupation for life, in founding a new truculent sect of Borrovians. As the Rev. the Romany Rye he might have blazed in an entertaining and becoming manner. As "a sincere member of the old-fashioned Church of England, in which he believes there is more religion, and consequently less cant, than in any other Church in the world," there was nothing for him to do but sit down at Oulton and contemplate the fact. This and the other fact that "he eats his own bread, and is one of the very few men in England who are independent in every sense of the word," were afterwards to be made subjects for public rejoicing in the Appendix to "The Romany Rye."

"We wish he would, on some leisure day, draw up the curtain of his own eventful biography. We collected from his former work that he was not always what he now is. The pursuits and society of his youth scarcely could be denominated, in Troloppian euphemism, *la crème de la crème*; but they stood him in good stead; then and there was he trained for the encounter of Spain . . . whilst sowing his wild oats, he became passionately fond of horseflesh. . . ."

"How much has Mr. Borrow yet to remember, yet to tell! let him not delay. His has been a life, one day of which is more crowded than is the fourscore-year vegetation of a squire or alderman. . . . Everything seems sealed on a memory, wax to receive and marble to retain. He is not subjective. He has the new fault of not talking about self. We vainly want to know what sort of person must be the pilgrim in whose wanderings we have been interested. That he has left to other pens. . . ."

Then Ford went on to identify Borrow with the mysterious Unknown of Colonel Napier's newly-published book.

He began to write his autobiography to fulfil the expectations of Ford and his own public. It was not until 1844, exactly four years after his return from Spain, that he set out again on foreign travel. He made stops at Paris, Vienna, Constantinople, Venice, and Rome, but spent most of his time in Hungary and Roumania, visiting the Gypsies and compiling a "vocabulary of the Gypsy language as spoken in Hungary and Transylvania," which still exists in manuscript. He was seven months away altogether.

Knapp possessed documents proving that Borrow was at this and that place, and the Gypsy vocabulary is in the British Museum, but little other record of these seven months remains. Knapp, indeed, takes it for granted that the historical conversation between Borrow and the Magyar in "The Romany Rye" was drawn from his experiences in Hungary and Transylvania in the year 1844; but that is absurd, as the chapter might have been written by a man born and bred in the reading room of the British Museum who had never met any but similar unfortunates. It is very likely that the journey was a failure, and if it had been a success, an account of it would have interrupted the progress of the autobiography, as Ford expected it to do. But the thing was too deliberate to succeed. Borrow's right instinct was to get work which would take him abroad; he failed, and so he travelled because travel offered him relief from his melancholy and unrest. Whether or no he "satisfied his roving demon for a time," as Mr. Walling puts it, is unknown. What is known is that he did not make this journey a subject of mystery or boasting, and that he stayed in England thereafter. He had tasted comfort and celebrity; he had a wife; he was an older man, looking weak in the eyes by the time he was fifty; and he had no motive for travel except discontent with staying at home. He tried to get away again on a mission to the Convent of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai, to acquire manuscripts for the British Museum; but he failed, and the manuscripts went to St. Petersburg instead of Bloomsbury.

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In 1843 Henry Wyndham Phillips, R.A., painted his portrait. He was a restless sitter until the painter remarked: "I have always heard, Mr. Borrow, that the Persian is a very fine language; is it so?" "It is, Phillips; it is." "Perhaps you will not mind reciting me something in the Persian tongue?" said Phillips. "Dear me, no; certainly not." And then "Mr. Borrow's face lit up with the light that Phillips longed for, and he kept declaiming at the top of his voice, while the painter made the most of his opportunity." {205} According to the story, Phillips had the like success with Turkish and Armenian, and successfully stilled Borrow's desire "to get out into the fresh air and sunlight."

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In the same way, writing and literary ambition kept Borrow from travel. He stayed at home and he wrote "Lavengro," where, speaking of the rapid flow of time in the years of his youth, he says: "Since then it has flagged often enough; sometimes it has seemed to stand entirely still: and the reader may easily judge how it fares at the present, from the circumstance of my taking pen in hand, and endeavouring to write down the passages of my life—a last resource with most people." At one moment he got satisfaction from professing scorn of authorship, at another, speaking of Byron, he reflected:

"Well, perhaps after all it was better to have been mighty Milton in his poverty and blindness—witty and ingenious Butler consigned to the tender mercies of bailiffs, and starving Otway; they might enjoy more real pleasure than this lordling; they must have been aware that the world would one day do them real justice—fame after death is better than the top of fashion in life. They have left a fame behind them which shall never die, whilst this lordling—a time will come when he will be out of fashion and forgotten. And yet I don't know; didn't he write Childe Harold and that ode? Yes, he wrote Childe Harold and that ode. Then a time will scarcely come when he will be forgotten. Lords, squires, and cockneys may pass away, but a time will scarcely come when Childe Harold and that ode will be forgotten. He was a poet, after all—and he must have known it; a real poet, equal to—to—what a destiny!"

It is said that in actual life Borrow refused to be introduced to a Russian scholar "simply because he moved in the literary world." {206}

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Yet again he made the glorious Gypsy say that he would rather be a book-writer than a fighting-man, because the book-writers "have so much to say for themselves even when dead and gone":

"When they are laid in the churchyard, it is their own fault if people a'n't talking of them. Who

will know, after I am dead, or bitchadey pawdel, that I was once the beauty of the world, or that you, Jasper, were—'

"The best man in England of my inches. That's true, Tawno—however, here's our brother will perhaps let the world know something about us."

I should think, too, that Borrow was both questioner and answerer in the conversation with the literary man who had the touching mania:

"With respect to your present troubles and anxieties, would it not be wise, seeing that authorship causes you so much trouble and anxiety, to give it up altogether?"

"Were you an author yourself,' replied my host, 'you would not talk in this manner; once an author, ever an author—besides, what could I do? return to my former state of vegetation? no, much as I endure, I do not wish that; besides, every now and then my reason tells me that these troubles and anxieties of mine are utterly without foundation; that whatever I write is the legitimate growth of my own mind, and that it is the height of folly to afflict myself at any chance resemblance between my own thoughts and those of other writers, such resemblance being inevitable from the fact of our common human origin. . . ."

Knapp gives at length a story showing what an author Borrow was, and how little his travels had sweetened him. He had long promised to review Ford's "Handbook for Spain," when it should appear. In 1845 he wrote an article and sent it in to the "Quarterly" as a review of the Handbook. It had nothing to do with the book and very little to do with the subject of the book, and Lockhart, the "Quarterly" editor, suggested turning it into a review by a few interpolations and extracts. Borrow would not have the article touched. Both Lockhart and Ford advised him to send it to "Fraser's" or another magazine where it was certain to be welcomed as a Spanish essay by the author of "The Bible in Spain." But no: and the article was never printed anywhere.

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Yet Borrow was not settling down to authorship pure and simple. He flew into a passion because a new railway line, in 1846, ran through his estate. He flew into a passion, did nothing, and remained on his estates until 1853, when he and his family went into lodgings at Yarmouth. I have not discovered how much he profited by the intrusion of the railway, except when he pilloried the contractor, his neighbour, Mr. Peto, as Flamson, in the Appendix to "The Romany Rye." Then he tried again to be put on the Commission of the Peace, with no success. He probably spent much of his time in being either suspicious, or ambitious, or indignant. In 1847, for example, he suspected his friend Dr. Bowring—his "only friend" in 1842—of using his work to get for himself the consulship at Canton, which he was professing to obtain for Borrow. The result was the foaming abuse of "The Romany Rye," where Bowring is the old Radical. The affair of the Sinai manuscripts followed close on this. All that he saw of foreign lands was at the Exhibition of 1851, where he frequently accosted foreigners in their own tongue, so that it began to be whispered about that he was "uncanny": he excited so much remark that his daughter thought it better to drag him away.

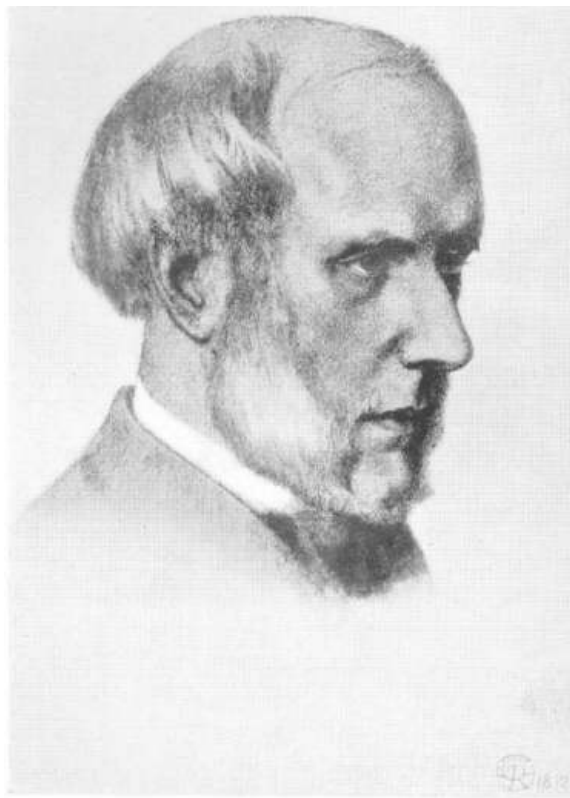
He was suffering from ill-health and untranquility of mind which gave his mother anxiety, though his physical strength appears not to have degenerated, for in 1853, at Yarmouth, he rescued a man out of a stormy sea. He was an unpleasant companion for those whom he did not like or could not get on with. Thackeray tried to get up a conversation with him, his final effort being the question, "Have you seen my 'Snob Papers' in 'Punch'?" To which Borrow answered: "In 'Punch'? It is a periodical I never look at." He once met Miss Agnes Strickland:

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"Borrow was unwilling to be introduced, but was prevailed on to submit. He sat down at her side; before long she spoke with rapture of his works, and asked his permission to send him a copy of her 'Queens of England.' He exclaimed, 'For God's sake, don't, madam, I should not know where to put them or what to do with them.' On this he rose, fuming, as was his wont when offended, and said to Mr. Donne, 'What a damned fool that woman is!' The fact is that, whenever Borrow was induced to do anything unwillingly, he lost his temper." {208}

The friend who tells this story, Gordon Hake, a poet and doctor at Bury St. Edmunds, tells also that once when he was at dinner with a banker who had recently "struck the docket" to secure payment from a friend of Borrow's, and the banker's wife said to him: "Oh Mr. Borrow, I have read your books with so much pleasure!" the great man exclaimed: "Pray, what books do you mean, madam? Do you mean my account books?" How touchy he was, Mr. Walling shows, by his story of Borrow in Cornwall neglecting a lady all one evening because she bore the name of the man his father had knocked down at Menheniot Fair. Several stories of his crushing remarks prove nothing but that he was big and alarming and uncontrolled.

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GORDON HAKE

*From the painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti
By kind permission of Mrs. George Gordon Hake*

Very little record of his friendly intercourse with men at this middle period remains. Several letters, of 1853, 1856 and 1857, alone survive to show that he met and received letters from Fitzgerald. That Fitzgerald enjoyed an evening with him in 1856 tells us little; and even so it appears that Fitzgerald only wanted to ask him to read some of the "Northern Ballads"—"but you shut the book"—and that he doubted whether Borrow wished to keep up the acquaintance. They had friends in common, and Fitzgerald had sent Borrow a copy of his "Six Dramas of Calderon," in 1853, confessing that he had had thoughts of sending the manuscript first for an inspection. He also told Borrow when he was about to make the "dangerous experiment" of marriage with Miss Barton "of Quaker memory." In 1857 Borrow came to see him and had the loan of the "Rubaiyat" in manuscript, and Fitzgerald showed his readiness to see more of the "Great Man." In 1859 he sent Borrow a copy of "Omar." He found Borrow's "masterful manners and irritable temper uncongenial," {209} but succeeded, unlike many other friends, in having no quarrel with him. Near the end of his life, in 1875, it was Borrow that tried to renew the acquaintance, but in vain, for Fitzgerald reminded him that friends "exist and enjoy themselves pretty reasonably without me," and asked, was not being alone better than having company?

If Borrow had little consideration for others' feelings, his consideration for his own was exquisite, as this story, belonging to 1856, may help to prove:

"There were three personages in the world whom he always had a desire to see; two of these had slipped through his fingers, so he was determined to see the third. 'Pray, Mr. Borrow, who were they?' He held up three fingers of his left hand and pointed them off with the forefinger of the right: the first, Daniel O'Connell; the second, Lamplighter (the sire of Phosphorus, Lord Berners's winner of the Derby); the third, Anna Gurney. . . ."

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One spring day during the Crimean War, when he was walking round Norfolk, he sent word to Anna Gurney to announce his coming, and she was ready to receive him.

"When, according to his account, he had been but a very short time in her presence, she wheeled her chair round and reached her hand to one of her bookshelves and took down an Arabic Grammar, and put it into his hand, asking for explanation of some difficult point, which he tried to decipher; but meanwhile she talked to him continuously; when, said he, 'I could not study the Arabic Grammar and listen to her at the same time, so I threw down the book and ran out of the room.' He seems not to have stopped running till he reached Old Tucker's Inn, at Cromer, where he renewed his strength, or calmed his temper, with five excellent sausages, and then came on to Sheringham. . . ." {210a}

The distance is a very good two miles, and Borrow's age was forty-nine.

He is said also to have been considerate towards his mother, the poor, and domestic animals. Probably he and his mother understood one another. When he could not write to her, he got his wife to do so; and from 1849 she lived with them at Oulton. As to the poor, Knapp tells us that he left behind him letters of gratitude or acknowledgment from individuals, churches, and chapels. As to animals, once when he came upon some men beating a horse that had fallen, he gave it ale

of sufficient quantity and strength to set it soon upon the road trotting with the rest of its kind, after the men had received a lecture. {210b} It is also related that when a favourite old cat crawled out to die in the hedge he brought it into the house, where he "laid it down in a comfortable spot and watched it till it was dead." His horse, Sidi Habismilk, the Arab, seems to have returned his admiration and esteem. He said himself, in "Wild Wales," after expressing his relief that a boy and dog had not seen a weazel that ran across his path:

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"I hate to see poor wild animals persecuted and murdered, lose my appetite for dinner at hearing the screams of a hare pursued by greyhounds, and am silly enough to feel disgust and horror at the squeals of a rat in the fangs of a terrier, which one of the sporting tribe once told me were the sweetest sounds in 'natur.'"

CHAPTER XXIV—"LAVENGRO" AND "THE ROMANY RYE"

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Instead of travelling over the world Borrow wrote his autobiography and spent so many years on it that his contempt for the pen had some excuse. I have already said almost all there is to say about these labours. {212} Knapp has shown that they were protracted to include matters relating to Bowring and long posterior to the period covered by the autobiography, and that the magnitude of these additions compelled him to divide the book in two. The first part was "Lavengro," published in 1851, with an ending that is now, and perhaps was then, obviously due to the knife. The sceptical and hostile criticism of "Lavengro" delayed the appearance of the remainder of the autobiography, "The Romany Rye."

Borrow had to reply to his critics and explain himself. This he did in the Appendix, and thus changed, the book was finished in 1853 or 1854. Something in Murray's attitude while they were discussing publication mounted Borrow on the high horse, and yet again he fumed because Murray had expressed a private opinion and had revealed his feeling that the book was not likely to make money for anyone.

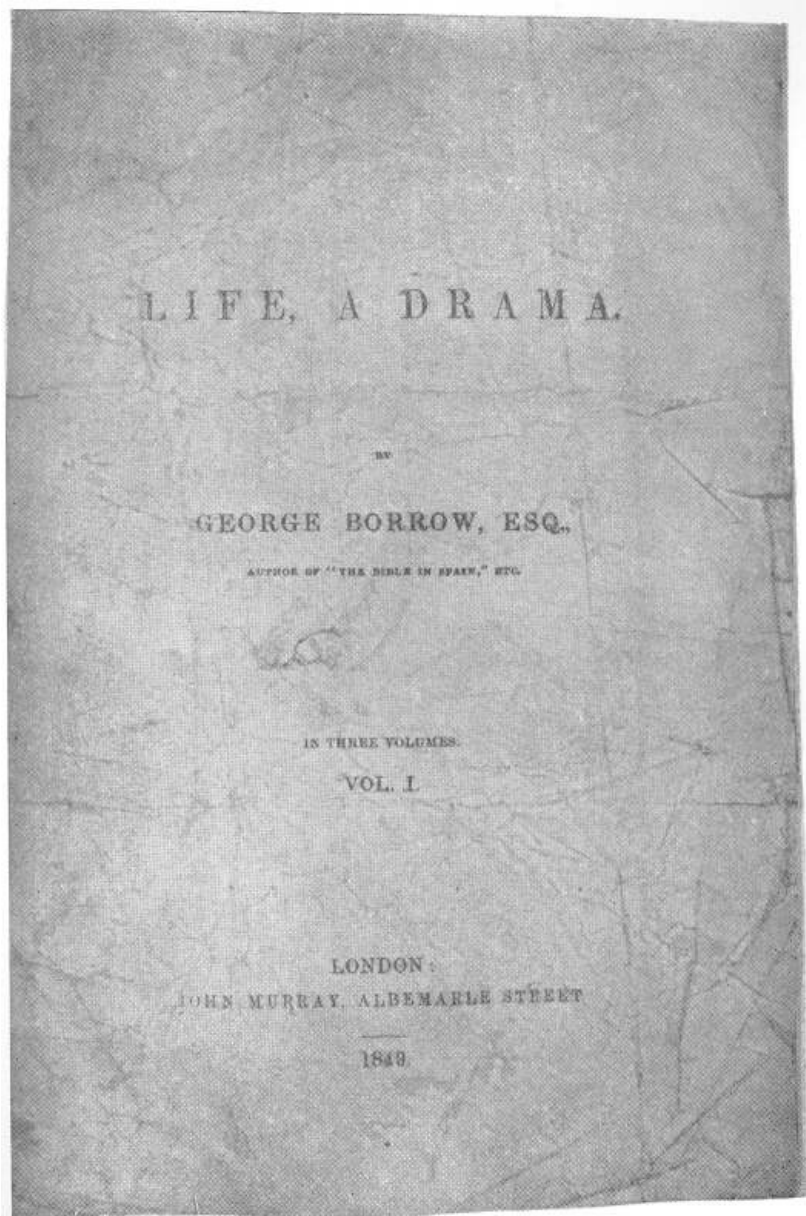


Photo: W. J. Roberts

CANCELLED TITLE-PAGE OF "LAVENGRO"

(Photographed from the Author's corrected proof copy, by kind permission of Mr. Kyllmann and Mr. Thos. Seccombe)

"Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" describe the author's early adventures and, at the same time, his later opinions and mature character. In some places he turns openly aside to express his feeling or opinion at the time of writing, as, for example, in his praise of the Orangemen, or, on the very first page, where he claims to spring from a family of gentlemen, though "not very wealthy," that the reader may see at once he is "not altogether of low and plebeian origin." But by far more important is the indirect self-revelation when he is recalling that other distant self, the child of three or of ten, the youth of twenty.

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Ford had asked Borrow for a book of his adventures and travels, something "thick and slab," to follow "The Bible in Spain." The result shows that Borrow had almost done with outward adventure. "The Bible in Spain" had an atmosphere composed at best of as much Spain as Borrow. But the autobiography is pure inward Borrow: except a few detachable incidents there is nothing in it which is not Borrow's creation, nothing which would have any value apart from his own treatment of it. A man might have used "The Bible in Spain" as a kind of guide to men and places in 1843, and it is possible he would not have been wholly disappointed. The autobiography does not depend on anything outside itself, but creates its own atmosphere and dwells in it without admitting that of the outer world—no: not even by references to events like the campaign of Waterloo or the funeral of Byron; and, as if conscious that this other atmosphere must be excluded, Borrow has hardly mentioned a name which could act upon the reader as a temporary check to the charm. When he does recall contemporary events, and speaks as a Briton to Britons, the rant is of a brave degree that is almost as much his own, and it makes more intense than ever the solitude and inwardness of the individual life going on side by side with war and with politics.

"Pleasant were those days of my early boyhood; and a melancholy pleasure steals over me as I recall them. Those were stirring times of which I am speaking, and there was much passing around me calculated to captivate the imagination. The dreadful struggle which so long

convulsed Europe, and in which England bore so prominent a part, was then at its hottest; we were at war, and determination and enthusiasm shone in every face; man, woman and child were eager to fight the Frank, the hereditary, but, thank God, never dreaded enemy of the Anglo-Saxon race. 'Love your country and beat the French, and then never mind what happens,' was the cry of entire England. Oh those were days of power, gallant days, bustling days, worth the bravest days of chivalry, at least; tall battalions of native warriors were marching through the land; there was the glitter of the bayonet and the gleam of the sabre; the shrill squeak of the fife and loud rattling of the drum were heard in the streets of county towns, and the loyal shouts of the inhabitants greeted the soldiery on their arrival or cheered them at their departure. And now let us leave the upland and descend to the sea-board; there is a sight for you upon the billows! A dozen men-of-war are gliding majestically out of port, their long buntings streaming from the top-gallant masts, calling on the skulking Frenchman to come forth from his bights and bays; and what looms upon us yonder from the fog-bank in the East? A gallant frigate towing behind her the long low hull of a crippled privateer, which but three short days ago had left Dieppe to skim the sea, and whose crew of ferocious hearts are now cursing their impudence in an English hold. Stirring times those, which I love to recall, for they were days of gallantry and enthusiasm, and were moreover the days of my boyhood."

"Pleasant were those days," and there is a "melancholy pleasure" in recalling them. The two combine in this autobiography with strange effect, for they set the man side by side with the child as an invisible companion haunting him.

Whatever was the change that came over Borrow in the 'forties, and showed itself in melancholy and unrest, this long-continued contemplation of his childhood betrayed him into a profound change of tone. Neither Africa nor the East could have shown him as much mystery as this wide England of a child ignorant of geography, and it kept hold of him for twice as long as Spain. It offered him relief and escape, and gladly did he accept them, and deeply he indulged in them. He found that he had that within himself as wild as any mountain or maniac-haunted ruin of Spain. For example, he recalled his schooldays in Ireland, and how one day he set out to visit his elder brother, the boy lieutenant:

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"The distance was rather considerable, yet I hoped to be back by evening fall, for I was now a shrewd walker, thanks to constant practice. I set out early, and, directing my course towards the north, I had in less than two hours accomplished considerably more than half of the journey. The weather had been propitious: a slight frost had rendered the ground firm to the tread, and the skies were clear; but now a change came over the scene, the skies darkened, and a heavy snow-storm came on; the road then lay straight through a bog, and was bounded by a deep trench on both sides; I was making the best of my way, keeping as nearly as I could in the middle of the road, lest, blinded by the snow which was frequently borne into my eyes by the wind, I might fall into the dyke, when all at once I heard a shout to windward, and turning my eyes I saw the figure of a man, and what appeared to be an animal of some kind, coming across the bog with great speed, in the direction of myself; the nature of the ground seemed to offer but little impediment to these beings, both clearing the holes and abysses which lay in their way with surprising agility; the animal was, however, some slight way in advance, and, bounding over the dyke, appeared on the road just before me. It was a dog, of what species I cannot tell, never having seen the like before or since; the head was large and round; the ears so tiny as scarcely to be discernible; the eyes of a fiery red; in size it was rather small than large; and the coat, which was remarkably smooth, as white as the falling flakes. It placed itself directly in my path, and showing its teeth, and bristling its coat, appeared determined to prevent my progress. I had an ashen stick in my hand, with which I threatened it; this, however, only served to increase its fury; it rushed upon me, and I had the utmost difficulty to preserve myself from its fangs.

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"'What are you doing with the dog, the fairy dog?' said a man, who at this time likewise cleared the dyke at a bound.

"He was a very tall man, rather well dressed as it should seem; his garments, however, were like my own, so covered with snow that I could scarcely discern their quality.

"'What are ye doing with the dog of peace?'

"'I wish he would show himself one,' said I; 'I said nothing to him, but he placed himself in my road, and would not let me pass.'

"'Of course he would not be letting you till he knew where ye were going.'

"'He's not much of a fairy,' said I, 'or he would know that without asking; tell him that I am going to see my brother.'

"'And who is your brother, little Sas?'

"'What my father is, a royal soldier.'

"'Oh, ye are going then to the detachment at ---; by my shoul, I have a good mind to be spoiling your journey.'

"'You are doing that already,' said I, 'keeping me here talking about dogs and fairies; you had better go home and get some salve to cure that place over your eye; it's catching cold you'll be in so much snow.'

"On one side of the man's forehead there was a raw and staring wound, as if from a recent and

terrible blow.

“Faith, then, I’ll be going, but it’s taking you wid me I will be.’

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“And where will you take me?’

“Why, then, to Ryan’s Castle, little Sas.’

“You do not speak the language very correctly,’ said I; ‘it is not Sas you should call me—’tis Sassanach,’ and forthwith I accompanied the word with a speech full of flowers of Irish rhetoric.

“The man looked upon me for a moment, fixedly, then, bending his head towards his breast, he appeared to be undergoing a kind of convulsion, which was accompanied by a sound something resembling laughter; presently he looked at me, and there was a broad grin on his features.

“By my shoul, it’s a thing of peace I’m thinking ye.’

“But now with a whisking sound came running down the road a hare; it was nearly upon us before it perceived us; suddenly stopping short, however, it sprang into the bog on the right-hand side; after it amain bounded the dog of peace, followed by the man, but not until he had nodded to me a farewell salutation. In a few moments I lost sight of him amidst the snow-flakes.”

This is more magical than nine-tenths of the deliberately Celtic prose or verse. I mean that it is real and credible and yet insubstantial, the too too solid flesh is melted into something like the mist over the bogland, and it recalls to us times when an account of our physical self, height, width, weight, colour, age, etc., would bear no relation whatever to the true self. In part, this effect may be due to Ireland and to the fact that Borrow was only there for one short impressionable year of his boyhood, and had never seen any other country like it. But most of it is due to Borrow’s nature and the conditions under which the autobiography was composed. While he was writing it he was probably living a more solitary and sedentary life than ever before, and could hear the voices of solitude; he was not the busy riding missionary of “The Bible in Spain,” nor the fêted author, but the unsocial morbid tinker, philologist, boxer, and religious doubter. It has been said that “he was a Celt of Celts. His genius was truly Celtic.” {218a} It has been said that “he inherited nothing from Norfolk save his accent and his love of ‘leg of mutton and turnips.’” {218b} Yet his father, the Cornish “Celt,” appears to have been entirely unlike him, while he draws his mother, the Norfolk Huguenot, as innately sympathetic with himself. I am content to leave this mystery for Celts and anti-Celts to grow lean on. I have known Celts who said that five and five were ten or, at most, eleven; and Saxons who said twenty-five, and even fifty-five.

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Borrow was writing without note books: things had therefore in his memory the importance which his nature had decreed for them, and among these things no doubt he exercised a conscious choice. Behind all was the inexplicable singular force which, Celtic or not, gave the “dream”-like, illusory quality which pervades the books in spite of more positive and arresting qualities sometimes apparently hostile to this one. It is true that his books have in them many rude or simple characters of Gypsies, jockeys, and others, living chiefly by their hands, and it is part of the conscious and unconscious object of the books to exalt them. But these people in Borrow’s hands seldom or never give the impression of coarse solid bodies well endowed with the principal appetites. There is, for example, a famous page where the young doubting Borrow listens to a Wesleyan preacher and wishes that his life had been like that man’s, and then comes upon his Gypsy friend after a long absence. He asks the Gypsy for news and hears of some deaths:

“What is your opinion of death, Mr. Petulengro?’ said I, as I sat down beside him

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“My opinion of death, brother, is much the same as that in the old song of Pharaoh, which I have heard my grandam sing—

“Canna marel o manus chivios andé puv,
Ta rovel pa leste o chavo ta romi.”

When a man dies, he is cast into the earth, and his wife and child sorrow over him. If he has neither wife nor child, then his father and mother, I suppose; and if he is quite alone in the world, why, then, he is cast into the earth, and there is an end of the matter.’

“And do you think that is the end of man?’

“There’s an end of him, brother, more’s the pity.’

“Why do you say so?’

“Life is sweet, brother.’

“Do you think so?’

“Think so!—There’s night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there’s likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?’

“I would wish to die—’

“You talk like a gorgio—which is the same as talking like a fool—were you a Rommany Chal you

would talk wiser. Wish to die, indeed!—A Rommany Chal would wish to live for ever!”

“‘In sickness, Jasper?’

“‘There’s the sun and stars, brother.’

“‘In blindness, Jasper?’

“‘There’s the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever. Dosta, we’ll now go to the tents and put on the gloves; and I’ll try to make you feel what a sweet thing it is to be alive, brother!’”

But how delicate it is, the two lads talking amidst the furze of Mousehold Heath at sunset. And so with the rest. As he grows older the atmosphere thins but never quite fades away; even Thurtell, the bull-necked friend of bruisers, is as much a spirit as a man.

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Mr. Watts-Dunton has complained [{220}](#) that Borrow makes Isopel taller than Borrow, and therefore too tall for beauty. But Borrow was not writing for readers who knew, or for those who, if they knew, always remembered, that he was six-feet-two. We know that Lavengro is tall, but we are not told so just before hearing that Isopel is taller; and the effect is that we think, not too distinctly, of a girl who somehow succeeds in being very tall and beautiful. If Borrow had said: “Whereas I was six feet two inches, the girl was six feet two and three-quarter inches,” it would have been different, and it would not have been Borrow, who, as I say, was not writing of ponderable, measurable bodies, but of possible immortal souls curiously dressed in flesh that can be almost as invisible. So again, Mr. Watts-Dunton says:

“With regard to Isopel Berners, neither Lavengro, nor the man she thrashed when he stole one of her flaxen hairs to conjure with, gives the reader the faintest idea of Isopel’s method of attack or defence, and we have to take her prowess on trust. In a word Borrow was content to give us the wonderful, without taking that trouble to find for it a logical basis which a literary master would have taken. And instances might easily be multiplied of this exaggeration of Borrow’s, which is apt to lend a sense of unreality to some of the most picturesque pages of ‘Lavengro.’”

But would Mr. Watts-Dunton seriously like to have these scenes touched up by Driscoll or Sullivan. Borrow did not write for real or imaginary connoisseurs.

I do not mean that a man need sacrifice his effect upon the ordinary man by satisfying the connoisseur. No one, for example, will deny that a ship by Mr. Joseph Conrad is as beautiful and intelligible as one by Stevenson; but neither would it be safe to foretell that Mr. Conrad’s, the more accurate, will seem the more like life in fifty years’ time. Borrow is never technical. If he quotes Gypsy it is not for the sake of the colour effect on those who read Gypsy as they run. His effects are for a certain distance and in a certain atmosphere where technicality would be impertinent.

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Mr. Hindes Groome [{221a}](#) was more justified in saying:

“Mr. Borrow, no doubt, knows the Gypsies well, and could describe them perfectly. But his love of effect leads him away. In his wish to impress his reader with a certain mysterious notion of himself, he colours his Gypsy pictures (the *form* of which is quite accurate) in a fantastic style, which robs them altogether of the value they would have as studies from life.”

For Groome wrote simply as a Gypsy student. He collected data which can be verified, but do not often give an impression of life, except the life of a young Cambridge man who is devoted to Gypsies. The “Athenæum” reviewer [{221b}](#) begs the question by calling the Gypsy dialogues of Hindes Groome, photographic; and is plainly inaccurate in saying that if they are compared with those in “Lavengro” “the illusion in Borrow’s narrative is disturbed by the uncolloquial vocabulary of the speakers.” For Borrow’s dialogues do produce an effect of some kind of life; those of Hindes Groome instruct us or pique our curiosity, but unless we know Gypsies, they produce no life-like effect.

Who else but Borrow could make the old viper-catcher thus describe the King of the Vipers?—

“It may be about seven years ago that I happened to be far down yonder to the west, on the other side of England, nearly two hundred miles from here, following my business. It was a very sultry day, I remember, and I had been out several hours catching creatures. It might be about three o’clock in the afternoon, when I found myself on some heathy land near the sea, on the ridge of a hill, the side of which, nearly as far down as the sea, was heath; but on the top there was arable ground, which had been planted, and from which the harvest had been gathered—oats or barley, I know not which—but I remember that the ground was covered with stubble. Well, about three o’clock, as I told you before, what with the heat of the day and from having walked about for hours in a lazy way, I felt very tired; so I determined to have a sleep, and I laid myself down, my head just on the ridge of the hill, towards the field, and my body over the side down amongst the heath; my bag, which was nearly filled with creatures, lay at a little distance from my face; the creatures were struggling in it, I remember, and I thought to myself, how much more comfortably off I was than they; I was taking my ease on the nice open hill, cooled with the breezes, whilst they were in the nasty close bag, coiling about one another, and breaking their very hearts all to no purpose; and I felt quite comfortable and happy in the thought, and little by little closed my eyes, and fell into the sweetest snooze that ever I was in in all my life; and there I lay over the hill’s side, with my head half in the field, I don’t know how long, all dead asleep. At last it seemed to me that I heard a noise in my sleep, something like a thing moving, very faint,

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however, far away; then it died, and then it came again upon my ear, as I slept, and now it appeared almost as if I heard crackle, crackle; then it died again, or I became yet more dead asleep than before, I know not which, but I certainly lay some time without hearing it. All of a sudden I became awake, and there was I, on the ridge of the hill, with my cheek on the ground towards the stubble, with a noise in my ear like that of something moving towards me, among the stubble of the field; well, I lay a moment or two listening to the noise, and then I became frightened, for I did not like the noise at all, it sounded so odd; so I rolled myself on my belly, and looked towards the stubble. Mercy upon us! there was a huge snake, or rather a dreadful viper, for it was all yellow and gold, moving towards me, bearing its head about a foot and a half above the ground, the dry stubble crackling beneath its outrageous belly. It might be about five yards off when I first saw it, making straight towards me, child, as if it would devour me. I lay quite still, for I was stupefied with horror, whilst the creature came still nearer; and now it was nearly upon me, when it suddenly drew back a little, and then—what do you think?—it lifted its head and chest high in the air, and high over my face as I looked up, flickering at me with its tongue as if it would fly at my face. Child, what I felt at that moment I can scarcely say, but it was a sufficient punishment for all the sins I ever committed; and there we two were, I looking up at the viper, and the viper looking down upon me, flickering at me with its tongue. It was only the kindness of God that saved me: all at once there was a loud noise, the report of a gun, for a fowler was shooting at a covey of birds, a little way off in the stubble. Whereupon the viper sunk its head and immediately made off over the ridge of the hill, down in the direction of the sea. As it passed by me, however—and it passed close by me—it hesitated a moment, as if it was doubtful whether it should not seize me; it did not, however, but made off down the hill. It has often struck me that he was angry with me, and came upon me unawares for presuming to meddle with his people, as I have always been in the habit of doing.”

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The passages quoted from “Lavengro” are representative only of the *spirit* of the book, which, as I have suggested, diminishes with Borrow’s increasing years, but pervades the physical activity, the “low life” and open air, and prevails over them. I will give one other example of his by no means everyday magic—the incident of the poisoned cake. The Gypsy girl Leonora discovers him and betrays him to his enemy, old hairy Mrs. Herne:

“Leaning my back against the tree I was not long in falling into a slumber; I quite clearly remember that slumber of mine beneath the ash tree, for it was about the sweetest slumber that I ever enjoyed; how long I continued in it I don’t know; I could almost have wished that it had lasted to the present time. All of a sudden it appeared to me that a voice cried in my ear, ‘Danger! danger! danger!’ Nothing seemingly could be more distinct than the words which I heard; then an uneasy sensation came over me, which I strove to get rid of, and at last succeeded, for I awoke. The Gypsy girl was standing just opposite to me, with her eyes fixed upon my countenance; a singular kind of little dog stood beside her.

“‘Ha!’ said I, ‘was it you that cried danger? What danger is there?’

“‘Danger, brother, there is no danger; what danger should there be? I called to my little dog, but that was in the wood; my little dog’s name is not danger, but stranger; what danger should there be, brother.’

“‘What, indeed, except in sleeping beneath a tree; what is that you have got in your hand?’

“‘Something for you,’ said the girl, sitting down and proceeding to untie a white napkin; ‘a pretty manricli, so sweet, so nice; when I went home to my people I told my grandbebee how kind you had been to the poor person’s child, and when my grandbebee saw the kekaubi, she said, “Hir mi devlis, it won’t do for the poor people to be ungrateful; by my God, I will bake a cake for the young harko mescro.”’

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“‘But there are two cakes.’

“‘Yes, brother, two cakes, both for you; my grandbebee meant them both for you—but list, brother, I will have one of them for bringing them. I know you will give me one, pretty brother, grey-haired brother—which shall I have, brother?’

“‘In the napkin were two round cakes, seemingly made of rich and costly compounds, and precisely similar in form, each weighing about half a pound.

“‘Which shall I have, brother?’ said the Gypsy girl.

“‘Whichever you please.’

“‘No, brother, no, the cakes are yours, not mine, it is for you to say.’

“‘Well, then, give me the one nearest you, and take the other.’

“‘Yes, brother, yes,’ said the girl; and taking the cakes, she flung them into the air two or three times, catching them as they fell, and singing the while. ‘Pretty brother, grey-haired brother—here, brother,’ said she, ‘here is your cake, this other is mine. . . .’”

I cannot afford to quote the whole passage, but it is at once as real and as phantasmal as the witch scene in “Macbeth.” He eats the poisoned cake and lies deadly sick. Mrs. Herne and Leonora came to see the effect of the poison:

“‘Ha, ha! bebee, and here he lies, poisoned like a hog.’

"You have taken drows, sir," said Mrs. Herne; 'do you hear, sir? drows; tip him a stave, child, of the song of poison.'

"And thereupon the girl clapped her hands, and sang—

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"The Rommany churl
And the Rommany girl
To-morrow shall hie
To poison the sty,
And bewitch on the mead
The farmer's steed."

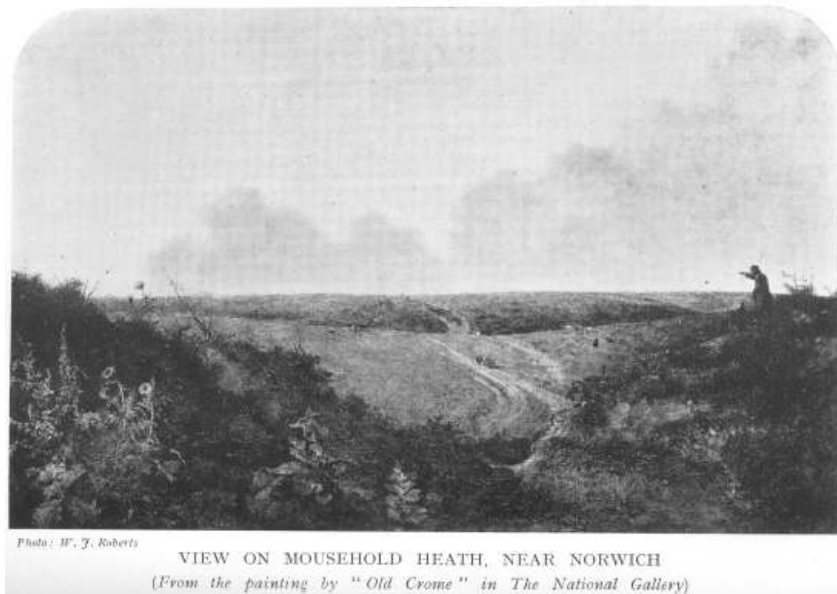
"Do you hear that, sir?" said Mrs. Herne; 'the child has tipped you a stave of the song of poison: that is, she has sung it Christianly, though perhaps you would like to hear it Romanly; you were always fond of what was Roman. Tip it him Romanly, child.'"

It is not much use to remark on "the uncolloquial vocabulary of the speakers." Iago's vocabulary is not colloquial when he says:

"Not poppy nor mandragora
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
That thou ow'dst yesterday."

Borrow is not describing Gypsy life but the "dream" of his own early life. I should say that he succeeds, because his words work upon the indifferent reader in something like the same way as memory worked upon himself. The physical activity, the "low life," and the open air of the books are powerful. These and the England of his youth gave Borrow his refuge from middle age and Victorian England of the middle class. "Youth," he says in "The Romany Rye," "is the only season for enjoyment, and the first twenty-five years of one's life are worth all the rest of the longest life of man, even though these five and twenty be spent in penury and contempt, and the rest in the possession of wealth, honour, respectability, ay, and many of them in strength and health. . . ." Still more emphatically did he think the same when he was looking on his past life in the dingle, feeling his arms and thighs and teeth, which were strong and sound; "so now was the time to labour, to marry, to eat strong flesh, and beget strong children—the power of doing all this would pass away with youth, which was terribly transitory."

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Youth and strength or their extreme opposites alone attracted him, and therefore he is best in writing of men, if we except the tall Brynhild, Isopel, and the old witch, Mrs. Herne, than whom "no she bear of Lapland ever looked more fierce and hairy." In the same breath as he praises youth he praises England, pouring scorn on those who traverse Spain and Portugal in quest of adventures, "whereas there are ten times more adventures to be met with in England than in Spain, Portugal, or stupid Germany to boot." It was the old England before railways, though Mr. Petulengro heard a man speaking of a wonderful invention that "would set aside all the old roads, which in a little time would be ploughed up, and sowed with corn, and cause all England to be laid down with iron roads, on which people would go thundering along in vehicles, pushed forward by fire and smoke." Borrow makes another of his characters also foretell the triumph of railways, and I insist on quoting part of the sentence as another example of Borrow's mysterious way: the speaker has had his information from the projector of the scheme: "which he has told me many of the wisest heads of England have been dreaming of during a period of six hundred years, and which it seems was alluded to by a certain Brazen Head in the story-book of Friar Bacon, who is generally supposed to have been a wizard, but in reality was a great philosopher. Young man, in less than twenty years, by which time I shall be dead and gone, England will be surrounded with roads of metal, on which armies may travel with mighty velocity, and of which the walls of brass and iron by which the friar proposed to defend his native land are types." And

yet he makes little of the practical difference between the England of railways and the England of coaches; in fact he hated the bullying coachmen so that he expressed nothing but gladness when they had disappeared from the road. No: it was first as the England of the successful wars with Napoleon, and second as the England of his youth that he idealised it—the country of Byron and Farmer George, not that of Tennyson, Victoria and Albert; for as Byron was one of the new age and yet looked back to Pope and down on Wordsworth, so did Borrow look back. p. 228

His English geography is far vaguer than his Spanish. He creeps—walking or riding—over this land with more mystery. The variety and difficulties of the roads were less, and actual movement fills very few pages. He advances not so much step by step as adventure by adventure. Well might he say, a little impudently, “there is not a chapter in the present book which is not full of adventures, with the exception of the present one, and this is not yet terminated”—it ends with a fall from his horse which stuns him. There is an air of somnambulism about some of the travel, especially when he is escaping alone from London and hack-writing. He shows great art in his transitions from day to day, from scene to scene, making it natural that one hour of one day should have the importance of the whole of another year, and one house more than the importance of several day’s journeys. It matters not that he crammed more than was possible between Greenwich and Horncastle fairs, probably by transplanting earlier or later events. Time and space submit to him: his old schoolfellows were vainly astonished that he gave no chapters to them and his years at Norwich Grammar School. Thus England seems a great and a strange land on Borrow’s page, though he does not touch the sea or the mountains, or any celebrated places except Stonehenge. His England is strange, I think, because it is presented according to a purely spiritual geography in which the childish drawling of “Witney on the Windrush manufactures blankets,” etc., is utterly forgot. Few men have the courage or the power to be honestly impressionistic and to say what they feel instead of compromising between that and what they believe to be “the facts.” p. 229

It is also strange on account of the many adventures which it provides, and these will always attract attention, because England in 1911 is not what it was in 1825, but still more because few men, especially writing men, ever take their chance upon the roads of England for a few months together. At the same time it must be granted that Borrow had a morbid fear of being dull or at least of being ordinary. He was a partly conscious provider of entertainment when he made the book so thick with incidents, scenes and portraits, and each incident, scene and portrait so perfect after its kind. Where he overdoes his emphasis or refinement, can only be decided by differing tastes. Some, for example, cannot abide his description of the sleepless man who had at last discovered a perfect opiate in Wordsworth’s poetry. I find myself stopping short at the effect of sherry and Popish leanings on the publican and his trade, and still more the effect of his return to ale and commonsense religion: how everyone bought his liquids and paid for them and wanted to treat him, while the folk of his parish had already made him a churchwarden. This might have been writ sarcastic by a witty Papist.

Probably Borrow used the device of recognition and reappearances to satisfy a rather primitive taste in fiction, and to add to the mystery, though I will again suggest that a man who travelled and went about among men as he did would take less offence at these things. The reappearances of Jasper are natural enough, except at the ford when Borrow is about to pass into Wales: those of Ardry less so. But when Borrow contrives to hear more of the old china collector and of Isopel also from the jockey, and shuffles about the postillion, Murtagh, the Man in Black, and Platitude, and introduces Sir John Bowring for punishment, he makes “The Romany Rye” much inferior to “Lavengro.” p. 230

These devices never succeed, except where their extravagance makes us laugh heartily—as when on Salisbury Plain he meets returning from Botany Bay the long lost son of his old London Bridge apple-woman. The devices are unnecessary and remain as stiffening stains upon a book that is otherwise full of nature and human nature.

CHAPTER XXV—“LAVENGRO” AND “THE ROMANY RYE”: p. 231 **THE CHARACTERS**

As the atmosphere of the two autobiographical books is more intense and pure than that of “The Bible in Spain,” so the characters in it are more elaborate. “The Bible in Spain” contained brilliant sketches and suggestions of men and women. In the autobiography even the sketches are intimate, like that of the “Anglo-Germanist,” William Taylor; and they are not less surprising than the Spanish sketches, from the Rommany chal who “fought in the old Roman fashion. He bit, he kicked, and screamed like a wild cat of Benygant; casting foam from his mouth, and fire from his eyes”—from this man upwards and downwards. Some are highly finished, and these are not always the best. For example, the portrait of his father, the stiff, kindly, uncomprehending soldier, strikes me as a little too much “done to a turn.” It is a little too like a man in a book, and so perfectly consistent, except for that one picturesque weakness—the battle with Big Ben, whose skin was like a toad. Borrow probably saw and cared very little for his father, and therefore found it too easy to idealise and produce a mere type, chiefly out of his head. His mother is more certainly from life, and he could not detach himself from her sufficiently to make her clear; yet he makes her his own mother plainly enough. His brother has something of the

same unreality and perfection as his father. These members of his family belong to one distinct class of studies which includes among others the publisher, Sir Richard Phillips. They are of persons not quite of his world whom he presents to us with admiration, or, on the other hand, with dislike, but in either case without sympathy. They do not contribute much to the special character of the autobiography, except in humour. The interviews with Sir Richard Phillips, in particular, give an example of Borrow's obviously personal satire, poisonous and yet without rancour. He is a type. He is the charlatan, holy and massive and not perfectly self-convincing. When Borrow's money was running low and he asked the publisher to pay for some contributions to a magazine, now deceased:

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"'Sir,' said the publisher, 'what do you want the money for?'

"'Merely to live on,' I replied; 'it is very difficult to live in this town without money.'

"'How much money did you bring with you to town?' demanded the publisher.

"'Some twenty or thirty pounds,' I replied.

"'And you have spent it already?'

"'No,' said I, 'not entirely; but it is fast disappearing.'

"'Sir,' said the publisher, 'I believe you to be extravagant; yes, sir, extravagant!'

"'On what grounds do you suppose me to be so?'

"'Sir,' said the publisher, 'you eat meat.'

"'Yes,' said I, 'I eat meat sometimes; what should I eat?'

"'Bread, sir,' said the publisher; 'bread and cheese.'

"'So I do, sir, when I am disposed to indulge; but I cannot often afford it—it is very expensive to dine on bread and cheese, especially when one is fond of cheese, as I am. My last bread and cheese dinner cost me fourteen pence. There is drink, sir; with bread and cheese one must drink porter, sir.'

"'Then, sir, eat bread—bread alone. As good men as yourself have eaten bread alone; they have been glad to get it, sir. If with bread and cheese you must drink porter, sir, with bread alone you can, perhaps, drink water, sir.'

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"'However, I got paid at last for my writings in the review, not, it is true, in the current coin of the realm, but in certain bills; there were two of them, one payable at twelve, and the other at eighteen months after date.'

The incident serves to diversify the narrative, and may be taken from his own London experiences, while the particular merriment of the rhyme is Borrow's; but it is not of the essence of the book, and fits only indifferently into the mysterious "Arabian Nights" London, the city of the gallant Ardry and the old apple-woman who called him "dear" and called Moll Flanders "blessed Mary Flanders." Sir Richard will not mysteriously re-appear, nor will Captain and Mrs. Borrow. I should say, in fact, that characters of this class have scarcely at all the power of motion. What is more, they take us not only a little way out of Borrow's world sometimes, but away from Borrow himself.

Apart from these characters, the men and women of "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" are all in harmony with one another, with Borrow, and with Borrow's world. Jasper Petulengro and his wife, his sister Ursula, the gigantic Tawno Chikno, the witch Mrs. Herne, and the evil sprite Leonora, Thurtell, the fighting men, the Irish outlaw Jerry Grant, who was suspected of raising a storm by "something Irish and supernatural" to win a fight, Murtagh, that wicked innocent, the old apple-woman, Blazing Bosville, Isopel Berners, the jockey who drove one hundred and ten miles in eleven hours to see "the only friend he ever had in the world," John Thurtell, and say, "God Almighty bless you, Jack!" before the drop fell, the old gentleman who had learned "Sergeant Broughton's guard" and knocked out the bullying coachman, the Welsh preacher and his wife, the Arcadian old bee-keeper, the rat-catcher—all these and their companions are woven into one piece by the genius of their creator, Borrow. I can imagine them all greeting him together as the Gypsies did, and much as the jockey did afterwards:

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"Here the Gipsy gemman see,
With his Roman jib and his rome and dree—
Rome and dree, rum and dry
Rally round the Rommany Rye."

He waves his wand and they disappear. He made them as Jerry Grant made the storm and beat Sergeant Bagg. In "Lavengro" he actually does raise such a storm, though Knapp affected to discover it in a newspaper of the period. Sampson and Martin are fighting at North Walsham, and a storm comes on:

"There's wind and dust, a crash, rain and hail; is it possible to fight amidst such a commotion? Yes! the fight goes on; again the boy strikes the man full on the brow, but it is no use striking that man, his frame is of adamant. 'Boy, thy strength is beginning to give way, thou art becoming confused'; the man now goes to work, amidst rain and hail. 'Boy, thou wilt not hold out ten

minutes longer against rain, hail, and the blows of such an antagonist.'

"And now the storm was at its height; the black thundercloud had broken into many, which assumed the wildest shapes and the strangest colours, some of them unspeakably glorious; the rain poured in a deluge, and more than one water-spout was seen at no great distance: an immense rabble is hurrying in one direction; a multitude of men of all ranks, peers and yokels, prize-fighters and Jews, and the last came to plunder, and are now plundering amidst that wild confusion of hail and rain, men and horses, carts and carriages. But all hurry in one direction, through mud and mire; there's a town only three miles distant which is soon reached, and soon filled, it will not contain one-third of that mighty rabble; but there's another town farther on—the good old city is farther on, only twelve miles; what's that! who'll stay here? onward to the old town.

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"Hurry skurry, a mixed multitude of men and horses, carts and carriages, all in the direction of the old town; and, in the midst of all that mad throng, at a moment when the rain gushes were coming down with particular fury, and the artillery of the sky was pealing as I had never heard it peal before, I felt some one seize me by the arm—I turned round and beheld Mr. Petulengro.

"'I can't hear you, Mr. Petulengro,' said I; for the thunder drowned the words which he appeared to be uttering.

"'Dearginni,' I heard Mr. Petulengro say, 'it thundereth. I was asking, brother, whether you believe in dukkeripens?'

"'I do not, Mr. Petulengro; but this is strange weather to be asking me whether I believe in fortunes.'

"'Grondinni,' said Mr. Petulengro, 'it haileth. I believe in dukkeripens, brother.'

"'And who has more right,' said I, 'seeing that you live by them? But this tempest is truly horrible.'

"'Dearginni, grondinni ta villaminni! It thundereth, it haileth, and also flameth,' said Mr. Petulengro. 'Look up there, brother!'

"I looked up. Connected with this tempest there was one feature to which I have already alluded—the wonderful colours of the clouds. Some were of vivid green; others of the brightest orange; others as black as pitch. The Gypsy's finger was pointed to a particular part of the sky.

"'What do you see there, brother?'

"'A strange kind of cloud.'

"'What does it look like, brother?'

"'Something like a stream of blood.'

"'That cloud foreshoweth a bloody dukkeripen.'

"'A bloody fortune!' said I. 'And whom may it betide?'

"'Who knows?' said the Gypsy.

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"Down the way, dashing and splashing, and scattering man, horse, and cart to the left and right, came an open barouche, drawn by four smoking steeds, with postillions in scarlet jackets, and leather skull-caps. Two forms were conspicuous in it; that of the successful bruiser, and of his friend and backer, the sporting gentleman of my acquaintance.

"'His!' said the Gypsy, pointing to the latter, whose stern features wore a smile of triumph, as, probably recognizing me in the crowd, he nodded in the direction of where I stood, as the barouche hurried by.

"There went the barouche, dashing through the rain gushes', and in it one whose boast it was that he was equal to 'either fortune.' Many have heard of that man—many may be desirous of knowing yet more of him. I have nothing to do with that man's after life—he fulfilled his dukkeripen. 'A bad, violent man!' Softly, friend; when thou wouldst speak harshly of the dead, remember that thou hast not yet fulfilled thy own dukkeripen!"

As Borrow fits these pugilists into the texture of his autobiography, so he does men who appear not once but a dozen times. Take Jasper Petulengro out of the books and he does not amount to much. In them he is a figure of most masculine beauty, a king, a trickster, and thief, but simple, good with his fists, loving life, manly sport and fair play. He and Borrow meet and shake hands as "brothers" when they are little boys. They meet again, by chance, as big boys, and Jasper says: "Your blood beat when mine was near, as mine always does at the coming of a brother; and we became brothers in that lane." Jasper laughs at the Sapengro and Lavengro and horse-witch because he lacks two things, "mother sense and gentle Rommany," and he has something to do with teaching Borrow the Gypsy tongue and Gypsy ways, and the "mother sense" of shifting for himself. The Gypsies approve him also as "a pure fist master." In return he teaches Mrs. Chikno's child to say his prayers in Rommany. They were willing—all but Mrs. Herne—that he should marry Mr. Petulengro's sister, Ursula. It is always by chance that they meet, and chance is very favourable. They meet at significant times, as when Borrow has been troubled by the preacher and the state of his own soul, or when he is sick of London and hack-writing and

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poverty. In fact, the Gypsies, and his "brother" Jasper in particular, returning and returning, are the motive of the book. They connect Borrow with what is strange, with what is simple, and with what is free. The very last words of "The Romany Rye," spoken as he is walking eastward, are "I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Petulengro and Tawno Chikno came originally from India. I think I'll go there." They are not a device. The re-appearances of these wandering men are for the most part only pleasantly unexpected. Their mystery is the mystery of nature and life. They keep their language and their tents against the mass of civilization and length of time. They are foreigners but as native as the birds. It is Borrow's triumph to make them as romantic as their reputation while yet satisfying Gypsy students as to his facts.

Jasper is almost like a second self, a kind of more simple, atavistic self, to Borrow, as in that characteristic picture, where he is drawing near to Wales with his friends, the Welsh preacher and his wife. A brook is the border and they point it out. There is a horseman entering it: "he stops in the middle of it as if to water his steed." They ask Lavengro if he will come with them into Wales. They persuade him:

"I will not go with you," said I. 'Dost thou see that man in the ford?'

"Who is staring at us so, and whose horse has not yet done drinking? Of course I see him.'

"I shall turn back with him. God bless you!'

"Go back with him not,' said Peter, 'he is one of those whom I like not, one of the clibberty-clabber, as Master Ellis Wyn observes—turn not with that man.'

"Go not back with him,' said Winifred. 'If thou goest with that man, thou wilt soon forget all our profitable counsels; come with us.'

"I cannot; I have much to say to him. Kosko Divous, Mr. Petulengro.'

"Kosko Divvus, Pal,' said Mr. Petulengro, riding through the water; 'are you turning back?'

"I turned back with Mr. Petulengro."

At another time Jasper twists about like a weasel bewitching a bird, and in so doing puts £50 unnoticed into Lavengro's pocket. Lavengro is indignant at the pleasantry. But Jasper insists; the money is for him to buy a certain horse; if he will not take the money and buy the horse there will be a quarrel. He has made the money by fair fighting in the ring, has nowhere to put it, and seriously thinks that it were best invested in this fine horse, which accordingly Borrow purchases and takes across England, and sells at Horncastle Fair for £150. The next scene shows Tawno Chikno at his best. Borrow has been trotting the horse and racing it against a cob, amid a company that put him "wonderfully in mind of the ancient horse-races of the heathen north," so that he almost thought himself Gunnar of Lithend. But Tawno was the man to try the horse at a jump, said Jasper. Tawno weighed sixteen stone, and the owner thought him more likely to break the horse's back. Jasper became very much excited, and offered to forfeit a handful of guineas if harm was done.

"Here's the man. Here's the horse-leaper of the world. . . .' Tawno, at a bound, leaped into the saddle, where he really looked like Gunnar of Hlitharend, save and except that the complexion of Gunnar was florid, whereas that of Tawno was of nearly Mulatto darkness; and that all Tawno's features were cast in the Grecian model, whereas Gunnar had a snub nose. 'There's a leaping-bar behind the house,' said the landlord. 'Leaping-bar!' said Mr. Petulengro, scornfully. 'Do you think my black pal ever rides at a leaping bar? No more than at a windle-straw. Leap over that meadow wall, Tawno.' Just past the house, in the direction in which I had been trotting, was a wall about four feet high, beyond which was a small meadow. Tawno rode the horse gently up to the wall, permitted him to look over, then backed him for about ten yards, and pressing his calves against the horse's sides, he loosed the rein, and the horse launching forward, took the leap in gallant style. 'Well done, man and horse!' said Mr. Petulengro; 'now come back, Tawno.' The leap from the side of the meadow was, however, somewhat higher; and the horse, when pushed at it, at first turned away; whereupon Tawno backed him to a greater distance, pushed the horse to a full gallop, giving a wild cry; whereupon the horse again took the wall, slightly grazing one of his legs against it. 'A near thing,' said the landlord, 'but a good leap. Now, no more leaping, so long as I have control over the animal.'"

A very different beautiful scene is where Mrs. Petulengro braids Isopel's fair hair in Gypsy fashion, half against her will, and Lavengro looks on, showing Isopel at a glance his disapproval of the fashion, while Petulengro admires it. If it is not too much to quote, I will do so, because it is the clearest and most detailed picture of more than one figure in the whole of the autobiography. Mr. and Mrs. Petulengro have come to visit Isopel, and Lavengro has fetched her to his tent, where they are awaiting her:

"So Belle and I advanced towards our guests. As we drew nigh Mr. Petulengro took off his hat and made a profound obeisance to Belle, whilst Mrs. Petulengro rose from her stool and made a profound curtsy. Belle, who had flung her hair back over her shoulders, returned their salutations by bending her head, and after slightly glancing at Mr. Petulengro, fixed her large blue eyes full upon his wife. Both these females were very handsome—but how unlike! Belle fair, with blue eyes and flaxen hair; Mrs. Petulengro with olive complexion, eyes black, and hair dark—as dark could be. Belle, in demeanour calm and proud; the Gypsy graceful, but full of movement and agitation. And then how different were those two in stature! The head of the

Romany rawnie scarcely ascended to the breast of Isopel Berners. I could see that Mrs. Petulengro gazed on Belle with unmixed admiration: so did her husband. 'Well,' said the latter, 'one thing I will say, which is, that there is only one on earth worthy to stand up in front of this she, and that is the beauty of the world, as far as man flesh is concerned, Tawno Chikno; what a pity he did not come down! . . .'

"Mrs. Petulengro says: 'You are very beautiful, madam, though you are not dressed as I could wish to see you, and your hair is hanging down in sad confusion; allow me to assist you in arranging your hair, madam; I will dress it for you in our fashion; I would fain see how your hair would look in our poor Gypsy fashion; pray allow me, madam?' and she took Belle by the hand.

"I really can do no such thing,' said Belle, withdrawing her hand; 'I thank you for coming to see me, but . . .'

"Do allow me to officiate upon your hair, madam,' said Mrs. Petulengro; 'I should esteem your allowing me a great mark of condescension. You are very beautiful, madam, and I think you doubly so, because you are so fair; I have a great esteem for persons with fair complexions and hair; I have a less regard for people with dark hair and complexions, madam.'

"Then why did you turn off the lord, and take up with me?' said Mr. Petulengro; 'that same lord was fair enough all about him.'

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"People do when they are young and silly what they sometimes repent of when they are of riper years and understandings. I sometimes think that had I not been something of a simpleton, I might at this time be a great court lady. Now, madam,' said she, again taking Belle by the hand, 'do oblige me by allowing me to plait your hair a little?'

"I have really a good mind to be angry with you,' said Belle, giving Mrs. Petulengro a peculiar glance.

"Do allow her to arrange your hair,' said I, 'she means no harm, and wishes to do you honour; do oblige her and me too, for I should like to see how your hair would look dressed in her fashion.'

"You hear what the young rye says?' said Mrs. Petulengro. 'I am sure you will oblige the young rye, if not myself. Many people would be willing to oblige the young rye, if he would but ask them; but he is not in the habit of asking favours. He has a nose of his own, which he keeps tolerably exalted; he does not think small-beer of himself, madam; and all the time I have been with him, I never heard him ask a favour before; therefore, madam, I am sure you will oblige him.' . . ."

The men talk together, Jasper telling about the passing of the "old-fashioned good-tempered constables," the advent of railways, and the spoiling of road life.

". . . 'Now, madam,' said Mrs. Petulengro, 'I have braided your hair in our fashion: you look very beautiful, madam; more beautiful, if possible, than before.' Belle now rose, and came forward with her tire-woman. Mr. Petulengro was loud in his applause, but I said nothing, for I did not think Belle was improved in appearance by having submitted to the ministry of Mrs. Petulengro's hand. Nature never intended Belle to appear as a Gypsy; she had made her too proud and serious. A more proper part for her was that of a heroine, a queenly heroine,—that of Theresa of Hungary, for example; or, better still, that of Brynhilda the Valkyrie, the beloved of Sigurd, the serpent-killer, who incurred the curse of Odin, because, in the tumult of spears, she sided with the young king, and doomed the old warrior to die, to whom Odin had promised victory.

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"Belle looked at me for a moment in silence; then turning to Mrs. Petulengro, she said, 'You have had your will with me; are you satisfied?' 'Quite so, madam,' said Mrs. Petulengro, 'and I hope you will be so too, as soon as you have looked in the glass.' 'I have looked in one already,' said Belle,' and the glass does not flatter.' . . ."

Here it is easy to notice how the uncolloquial and even ugly English does not destroy the illusion of the scene, but entirely subserves it and makes these two or three pages fine painter's work for richness and still drama.

I have not forgotten the Man in Black, though I gladly would. Not that I am any more in sympathy with his theology than Borrow's, if it is more interesting and venerable. But in this priest, Borrow's method, always instinctively intense if not exaggerated, falls to caricature. I have no objection to caricature; when it is of a logical or incidental kind I enjoy it, even in "The Romany Rye"; I enjoy, for example, the snoring Wordsworthian, without any prejudice against Wordsworth. "The Catholic Times" as late as 1900 was still angry with Borrow's "crass anti-Catholic bigotry." I should have expected them to laugh consumedly at a priest, a parson and a publican who deserve places in the same gallery with wicked earls and noble savages of popular fiction. It may be true that this "creation of Borrow's most studied hatred" is, as Mr. Seccombe says, {242} "a triumph of complex characterisation." He is "a joyous liver and an unscrupulous libertine, sceptical as Voltaire, as atheistic as a German professor, as practical as a Jew banker, as subtle as a Jesuit, he has as many ways of converting the folks among whom he is thrown as Panurge had of eating the corn in ear. For the simple and credulous—crosses and beads; for the hard-hearted and venal—material considerations; for the cultured and educated—a fine tissue of epigrams and anthropology; for the ladies—flattery and badinage. A spiritual ancestor of Anatole France's marvellous full-length figure of Jérôme Coignard, Borrow's conception takes us back first to Rabelais and secondly to the seventeenth-century conviction of the profound

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Machiavellism of Jesuitry."

But in "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye" he is an intruder with a design of turning these books into tracts. He is treated far more elaborately than any other character except the author's, and with a massive man's striving after subtlety. Moreover, Borrow has made it impossible to ignore him or to cut him out, by interlacing him with every other character in these two books. With sad persistency and naïve ingenuity he brings it about that every one shall see, or have seen in the past, this terrible priest. Borrow's natural way of dealing with such a man would be that of the converted pugilist who, on hearing of an atheist in the vicinity, wanted to go and "knock the beggar down for Jesus' sake"; and a variation upon this would have been delightful and in harmony with the rest of the book. But clever as the priest is, Borrow himself is stronger, honester and cleverer, too. Of course, the priest leads him to some good things. Above all, he leads to the incident of the half-converted publican, who is being ruined by sherry and Popery. Borrow persuades him to take ale, which gives him the courage to give up thoughts of conversion, and to turn on his enemies and re-establish himself, to make a good business, become a churchwarden, and teach boxing to the brewer's sons, because it is "a fine manly English art and a great defence against Popery." It is at least a greater defence than Borrow's pen, or deserves to be.

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CHAPTER XXVI—"LAVENGRO" AND "THE ROMANY RYE": THE STYLE p. 245

The writing of the autobiography differs from that of "The Bible in Spain." It is less flowing and more laboured. It has less movement and buoyancy, but more delicacy and variety. It is a finer and more intimate style, which over and over again distinguishes Borrow from the Victorian pure and simple. The dialogue is finer; it is used less to disguise or vary narrative, and more to reveal character and make dramatic effect; and it is even lyrical at times. Borrow can be Victorian still. This example is from the old man's history in "The Romany Rye":

"My mother had died about three years previously. I felt the death of my mother keenly, but that of my father less than was my duty; indeed, truth compels me to acknowledge that I scarcely regretted his death. The cause of this want of proper filial feeling was the opposition which I had experienced from him in an affair which deeply concerned me. I had formed an attachment for a young female in the neighbourhood, who, though poor, was of highly respectable birth, her father having been a curate of the Established Church."

This better one is from "Lavengro":

"And then Francis Ardry proceeded to make me his confidant. It appeared that he had had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of the most delightful young Frenchwoman imaginable, Annette La Noire by name, who had just arrived from her native country with the intention of obtaining the situation of governess in some English family; a position which, on account of her many accomplishments, she was eminently qualified to fill. Francis Ardry had, however, persuaded her to relinquish her intention for the present, on the ground that, until she had become acclimated in England, her health would probably suffer from the confinement inseparable from the occupation in which she was desirous of engaging; he had, moreover—for it appeared that she was the most frank and confiding creature in the world—succeeded in persuading her to permit him to hire for her a very handsome first floor in his own neighbourhood, and to accept a few inconsiderable presents in money and jewellery."

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But coarse and rigid as this is the same vocabulary, the same ample, oratorical tone, will help Borrow to genial, substantial effects such as the dinner with the landlord and the commercial traveller: "The dinner was good, though plain, consisting of boiled mackerel—rather a rarity in those parts at that time—with fennel sauce, a prime baron of roast beef after the mackerel, then a tart and noble Cheshire cheese; we had prime sherry at dinner, and whilst eating the cheese prime porter, that of Barclay, the only good porter in the world. After the cloth was removed we had a bottle of very good port; and whilst partaking of the port I had an argument with the commercial traveller on the subject of the corn-laws."

What is more, this is the vocabulary and tone of the whole book, and how far the total effect is from coarseness and rigidity I cannot show now if I have not done so already. Borrow's gusto triumphs over this style in descriptions of men riding, fighting, talking or drinking. His sense of mystery triumphs over it continually as the prevailing atmosphere must prove. The gusto and the mystery are all the more impressive because the means are entirely concealed, except when the writer draws himself up for an apostrophe, and that is not much too often nor always tedious. The style is capable of essential simplicity, though not of refined simplicity, just as a man with a hard hat, black clothes and a malacca cane may be a good deal simpler and more at home with natural things than a hairy hygienic gentleman. I will quote one example—the old bee-keeper in "The Romany Rye":

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"I was bidding him farewell, when he hemmed once or twice, and said that as he did not live far off, he hoped that I would go with him and taste some of his mead. As I had never tasted mead, of which I had frequently read in the compositions of the Welsh bards, and, moreover, felt rather

thirsty from the heat of the day, I told him that I should have great pleasure in attending him. Whereupon, turning off together, we proceeded about half a mile, sometimes between stone walls, and at other times hedges, till we reached a small hamlet, through which we passed, and presently came to a very pretty cottage, delightfully situated within a garden, surrounded by a hedge of woodbines. Opening a gate at one corner of the garden, he led the way to a large shed which stood partly behind the cottage, which he said was his stable; thereupon he dismounted and led his donkey into the shed, which was without stalls, but had a long rack and manger. On one side he tied his donkey, after taking off her caparisons, and I followed his example, tying my horse at the other side with a rope halter which he gave me; he then asked me to come in and taste his mead, but I told him that I must attend to the comfort of my horse first, and forthwith, taking a wisp of straw, rubbed him carefully down. Then taking a pailful of clear water which stood in the shed, I allowed the horse to drink about half a pint; and then turning to the old man, who all the time had stood by looking at my proceedings, I asked him whether he had any oats? 'I have all kinds of grain,' he replied; and, going out, he presently returned with two measures, one a large and the other a small one, both filled with oats, mixed with a few beans, and handing the large one to me for the horse, he emptied the other before the donkey, who, before she began to despatch it, turned her nose to her master's face and fairly kissed him. Having given my horse his portion, I told the old man that I was ready to taste his mead as soon as he pleased, whereupon he ushered me into his cottage, where, making me sit down by a deal table in a neatly-sanded kitchen, he produced from an old-fashioned closet a bottle, holding about a quart, and a couple of cups, which might each contain about half a pint, then opening the bottle and filling the cups with a brown-coloured liquor, he handed one to me, and taking a seat opposite to me, he lifted the other, nodded, and saying to me—'Health and welcome,' placed it to his lips and drank.

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"'Health and thanks,' I replied; and being very thirsty, emptied my cup at a draught; I had scarcely done so, however, when I half repented. The mead was deliciously sweet and mellow, but appeared strong as brandy; my eyes reeled in my head, and my brain became slightly dizzy. 'Mead is a strong drink,' said the old man, as he looked at me, with a half smile on his countenance. 'This is, at any rate,' said I, 'so strong, indeed, that I would not drink another cup for any consideration.' 'And I would not ask you,' said the old man; 'for, if you did, you would most probably be stupid all day, and wake next morning with a headache. Mead is a good drink, but woundily strong, especially to those who be not used to it, as I suppose you are not.' 'Where do you get it?' said I. 'I make it myself,' said the old man, 'from the honey which my bees make.' 'Have you many bees?' I inquired. 'A great many,' said the old man. 'And do you keep them,' said I, 'for the sake of making mead with their honey?' 'I keep them,' he replied, 'partly because I am fond of them, and partly for what they bring me in; they make me a great deal of honey, some of which I sell, and with a little I make me some mead to warm my poor heart with, or occasionally to treat a friend with like yourself.' 'And do you support yourself entirely by means of your bees?' 'No,' said the old man; 'I have a little bit of ground behind my house, which is my principal means of support.' 'And do you live alone?' 'Yes,' said he; 'with the exception of the bees and the donkey, I live quite alone.' 'And have you always lived alone?' The old man emptied his cup, and his heart being warmed with the mead, he told me his history, which was simplicity itself. His father was a small yeoman, who, at his death, had left him, his only child, the cottage, with a small piece of ground behind it, and on this little property he had lived ever since. About the age of twenty-five he had married an industrious young woman, by whom he had one daughter, who died before reaching years of womanhood. His wife, however, had survived her daughter many years, and had been a great comfort to him, assisting him in his rural occupations; but, about four years before the present period, he had lost her, since which time he had lived alone, making himself as comfortable as he could; cultivating his ground, with the help of a lad from the neighbouring village, attending to his bees, and occasionally riding his donkey to market, and hearing the word of God, which he said he was sorry he could not read, twice a week regularly at the parish church. Such was the old man's tale.

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"When he had finished speaking, he led me behind his house, and showed me his little domain. It consisted of about two acres in admirable cultivation; a small portion of it formed a kitchen garden, while the rest was sown with four kinds of grain, wheat, barley, pease, and beans. The air was full of ambrosial sweets, resembling those proceeding from an orange grove; a place, which though I had never seen at that time, I since have. In the garden was the habitation of the bees, a long box, supported upon three oaken stumps. It was full of small round glass windows, and appeared to be divided into a great many compartments, much resembling drawers placed sideways. He told me that, as one compartment was filled, the bees left it for another; so that, whenever he wanted honey, he could procure some without injuring the insects. Through the little round windows I could see several of the bees at work; hundreds were going in and out of the doors; hundreds were buzzing about on the flowers, the woodbines, and beans. As I looked around on the well-cultivated field, the garden, and the bees, I thought I had never before seen so rural and peaceful a scene."

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It may be said of this that it is the style of the time, modified inexplicably at almost every point by the writer's character. The Bible and the older-fashioned narrative English of Defoe and Smollett have obviously lent it some phrases, and also a nakedness and directness that is half disdainful of the emotions and colours which it cannot hide. Still further to qualify the Victorianism which he was heir to, Borrow took over something from the insinuating Sterne. Mr. Thomas Secombe {250} has noticed Sterne particularly in Borrow's picture of his father, one of the most deliberate and artificial portions of the book:

"The ironical humour blent with pathos in his picture of this ill-rewarded old disciplinarian (who combined a tenderness of heart with a fondness for military metaphor that frequently reminds one of 'My Uncle Toby'), the details of the ailments and the portents that attended his infantile career, and, above all, the glimpses of the wandering military life from barrack to barrack and from garrison to garrison, inevitably remind the reader of the childish reminiscences of Laurence Sterne, a writer to whom it may thus early be said that George Borrow paid no small amount of unconscious homage."

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The same critic has remarked on "the Sterne-like conclusion of a chapter: 'Italy—what was I going to say about Italy?'" It was perhaps Sterne who taught him the use of the dash when no more words are necessary or ready to meet the case, and also when no more are permissible by contemporary taste. The passage where Ardry and his French mistress talk to Borrow, she using her own language, is like "The Sentimental Journey." And, as Mr. Seccombe has suggested, Borrow found in Sterne's a precedent for the rate of progress in his autobiography.

But innumerable are the possible styles which combine something from the Bible, Defoe, and Sterne, with something else upon a Victorian foundation. Borrow's something else, which dominates and welds the rest, is the most important. It expresses the man, or rather it allows the man's qualities to appear, his melancholy, his independence, his curiosity, his love of strong men and horses. Of little felicities there are very few. It has gusto always at command, and mystery also. We feel in it a kind of reality not often associated with professional literature, but rather with the letters of men who are not writers and with the speech of illiterate men of character. The great difference between them and Borrow is that their speech can rarely be represented in print except by another genius, and that their letters only now and then reach the level which Borrow continues at and often rises above. Yet he has something in common with such men—for example, in his feeling for Nature. In Spain, it is true, he gave way to declamatory descriptions of grandeur and desolation: in England, where he saw nothing of the kind, he wrote little description, and the impression of the country through which he is passing is that of an inarticulate outdoor man, strong and sincere but vague. Here, again, he has something in common with the eighteenth-century man, who liked the country, but would probably agree that one green field was like another. He writes like the man who desired a gentle wife, an Arabic book, the haunch of a buck, and Madeira old. He reminds us of an even older or simpler type when he apostrophises the retired pugilist:

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"'Tis a treat to see thee, Tom of Bedford, in thy 'public' in Holborn way, whither thou hast retired with thy well-earned bays. 'Tis Friday night, and nine by Holborn clock. There sits the yeoman at the end of his long room, surrounded by his friends: glasses are filled, and a song is the cry, and a song is sung well suited to the place; it finds an echo in every heart—fists are clenched, arms are waved, and the portraits of the mightily fighting men of yore, Broughton, and Slack, and Ben, which adorn the walls, appear to smile grim approbation, whilst many a manly voice joins in the bold chorus:

'Here's a health to old honest John Bull,
When he's gone we shan't find such another,
And with hearts and with glasses brim full,
We will drink to old England, his mother.'"

There is little doubt of the immortality of this good old style, and it testifies to the full heart and perhaps the full glass also of George Borrow; but it was not this passage in particular that made Whitwell Elwin call his writing "almost affectedly simple."



NED TURNER



TOM CRIBB

"Lavengro" in 1851 and "The Romany Rye" in 1857 failed to impress the critics or the public. Men were disappointed because "Lavengro" was "not an autobiography." They said that the adventures did not bear "the impress of truth." They suggested that the anti-Papistry was "added and interpolated to suit the occasion of the recent Papal aggression." They laughed at its mystery-making. They said that it gave "a false dream in the place of reality." Ford regretted that Borrow had "told so little about himself." Two friends praised it and foretold long life for it. Whitwell Elwin in 1857 said that "the truth and vividness of the descriptions both of scenes and persons, coupled with the purity, force and simplicity of the language, should confer immortality upon many of its pages." "The Saturday Review" found that he had humour and romance, and that his writing left "a general impression of the scenery and persons introduced so strongly vivid and life-like," that it reminded them of Defoe rather than of any contemporary author; they called the books a "strange cross between a novel and an autobiography." In 1857 also, Émile Montégut wrote a study of "The Gypsy Gentleman," which he published in his "Ecrivains Modernes de l'Angleterre." He said that Borrow had revived a neglected literary form, not artificially, but as being the natural frame for the scenes of his wandering life: he even went so far as to say that the form and manner of the picaresque or rogue novel, like "Gil Blas," is the inevitable one for pictures of the low and vagabond life. This form, said he, Borrow adopted not deliberately but intuitively, because he had a certain attitude to express: he rediscovered it, as Cervantes and Mendoza invented it, because it was the most appropriate clothing for his conceptions. Borrow had, without any such ambition, become the Quevedo and the Mendoza of modern England.

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The autobiography resembles the rogue novel in that it is well peppered with various isolated narratives strung upon the thread of the hero's experience. It differs chiefly in that the study of the hero is serious and without roguery. The conscious attempt to make it as good as a rogue novel on its own ground caused some of the chief faults of the book, the excess of recognitions and re-appearances, the postillion's story, and the visits of the Man in Black.

When Borrow came to answer his critics in the Appendix to "The Romany Rye," he assumed that they thought him vulgar for dealing in Gypsies and the like. He retorted:

"Rank, wealth, fine clothes and dignified employments, are no doubt very fine things, but they are merely externals, they do not make a gentleman, they add external grace and dignity to the gentleman and scholar, but they make neither; and is it not better to be a gentleman without them than not a gentleman with them? Is not Lavengro, when he leaves London on foot with twenty pounds in his pocket, entitled to more respect than Mr. Flamson flaming in his coach with a million? And is not even the honest jockey at Horncastle, who offers a fair price to Lavengro for his horse, entitled to more than the scoundrel lord, who attempts to cheat him of one-fourth of its value. . . ."

He might have said the books were a long tract to prove that many waters cannot quench gentlemanliness, or "once a gentleman always a gentleman." As a rule, when Borrow gets away from life and begins to think about it, he ceases to be an individual and becomes a tame and entirely convenient member of society, fit for the Commission of the Peace or a berth at the British Museum. After he has made £20 by pen-slavery and saved himself from serious poverty, he exclaims:

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"Reader, amidst the difficulties and dangers of this life, should you ever be tempted to despair, call to mind these latter chapters of the life of Lavengro. There are few positions, however difficult, from which dogged resolution and perseverance may not liberate you."

When he comes to discuss his own work he says that "it represents him, however, as never forgetting that he is the son of a brave but poor gentleman, and that if he is a hack author, he is likewise a scholar. It shows him doing no dishonourable jobs, and proves that if he occasionally associates with low characters, he does so chiefly to gratify the curiosity of a scholar. In his conversations with the apple-woman of London Bridge, the scholar is ever apparent, so again in his acquaintance with the man of the table, for the book is no raker up of the uncleanness of London, and if it gives what at first sight appears refuse, it invariably shows that a pearl of some kind, generally a philological one, is contained amongst it; it shows its hero always accompanied by his love of independence, scorning in the greatest poverty to receive favours from anybody, and describes him finally rescuing himself from peculiarly miserable circumstances by writing a book, an original book, within a week, even as Johnson is said to have written his 'Rasselas,' and Beckford his 'Vathek,' and tells how, leaving London, he betakes himself to the roads and fields.

"In the country it shows him leading a life of roving adventure, becoming tinker, Gypsy, postillion, ostler; associating with various kinds of people, chiefly of the lower classes, whose ways and habits are described; but, though leading this erratic life, we gather from the book that his habits are neither vulgar nor vicious, that he still follows to a certain extent his favourite pursuits, hunting after strange characters, or analysing strange words and names. At the conclusion of Chapter XLVII., which terminates the first part of the history, it hints that he is about to quit his native land on a grand philological expedition.

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"Those who read this book with attention—and the author begs to observe that it would be of little utility to read it hurriedly—may derive much information with respect to matters of philology and literature; it will be found treating of most of the principal languages from Ireland to China, and of the literature which they contain. . . ."

Away from the dingle and Jasper his view of life is as follows—ale, Tate and Brady, and the

gloves:

"But, above all, the care and providence of God are manifested in the case of Lavengro himself, by the manner in which he is enabled to make his way in the world up to a certain period, without falling a prey either to vice or poverty. In his history there is a wonderful illustration of part of the text quoted by his mother, 'I have been young, and now am old, yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread.' He is the son of good and honourable parents, but at the critical period of life, that of entering into the world, he finds himself without any earthly friend to help him, yet he manages to make his way; he does not become a Captain in the Life Guards, it is true, nor does he get into Parliament, nor does the last chapter conclude in the most satisfactory and unobjectionable manner, by his marrying a dowager countess, as that wise man Addison did, or by his settling down as a great country gentleman, perfectly happy and contented, like the very moral Roderick Random, or the equally estimable Peregrine Pickle; he is hack author, Gypsy, tinker, and postillion, yet, upon the whole, he seems to be quite as happy as the younger sons of most earls, to have as high feelings of honour; and when the reader loses sight of him, he has money in his pocket honestly acquired, to enable him to commence a journey quite as laudable as those which the younger sons of earls generally undertake. Surely all this is a manifestation of the kindness and providence of God: and yet he is not a religious person; up to the time when the reader loses sight of him, he is decidedly not a religious person; he has glimpses, it is true, of that God who does not forsake him, but he prays very seldom, is not fond of going to church; and, though he admires Tate and Brady's version of the Psalms, his admiration is rather caused by the beautiful poetry which that version contains than the religion; yet his tale is not finished—like the tale of the gentleman who touched objects, and that of the old man who knew Chinese without knowing what was o'clock; perhaps, like them, he is destined to become religious, and to have, instead of occasional glimpses, frequent and distinct views of his God; yet, though he may become religious, it is hardly to be expected that he will become a very precise and strait-laced person; it is probable that he will retain, with his scholarship, something of his Gypsyism, his predilection for the hammer and tongs, and perhaps some inclination to put on certain gloves, not white kid, with any friend who may be inclined for a little old English diversion, and a readiness to take a glass of ale, with plenty of malt in it, and as little hop as may well be—ale at least two years old—with the aforesaid friend, when the diversion is over; for, as it is the belief of the writer that a person may get to heaven very comfortably without knowing what's o'clock, so it is his belief that he will not be refused admission there because to the last he has been fond of healthy and invigorating exercises, and felt a willingness to partake of any of the good things which it pleases the Almighty to put within the reach of His children during their sojourn upon earth."

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It is quite evident then that Borrow does not advocate the open air, the tinkers' trade, and a-roving-a-roving, for the sons of gentlemen. It is not apparent that the open air did his health much good. As for tinkering, it was, he declares, a necessity and for lack of anything better to do, and he realised that he was only playing at it. When he was looking for a subject for his pen he rejected Harry Simms and Jemmy Abershaw because both, though bold and extraordinary men, were "merely highwaymen."

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On the other hand, when he has known a "bad man" he cannot content himself with mere disapproval. Take, for example, his friends the murderers, Haggart and Thurtell. He shows Haggart as an ambitious lad too full of life, "with fine materials for a hero." He calls the fatalist's question: "Can an Arabian steed submit to be a vile drudge?"—nonsense, saying: "The greatest victory which a man can achieve is over himself, by which is meant those unruly passions which are not convenient to the time and place." Then he exclaims:

"But peace to thee, poor David! why should a mortal worm be sitting in judgment over thee? The Mighty and Just One has already judged thee, and perhaps above thou hast received pardon for thy crimes, which could not be pardoned here below; and now that thy feverish existence has closed, and thy once active form become inanimate dust, thy very memory all but forgotten, I will say a few words about thee, a few words soon also to be forgotten. Thou wast the most extraordinary robber that ever lived within the belt of Britain; Scotland rang with thy exploits, and England, too, north of the Humber; strange deeds also didst thou achieve when, fleeing from justice, thou didst find thyself in the sister Isle; busy wast thou there in town and on curragh, at fair and race-course, and also in the solitary place. Ireland thought thee her child, for who spoke her brogue better than thyself?—she felt proud of thee, and said, 'Sure, O'Hanlon is come again.' What might not have been thy fate in the far west in America, whither thou hadst turned thine eye, saying, 'I will go there, and become an honest man!' But thou wast not to go there, David—the blood which thou hadst shed in Scotland was to be required of thee; the avenger was at hand, the avenger of blood. Seized, manacled, brought back to thy native land, condemned to die, thou wast left in thy narrow cell, and told to make the most of thy time, for it was short; and there, in thy narrow cell, and thy time so short, thou didst put the crowning stone to thy strange deeds, by that strange history of thyself, penned by thine own hand in the robber tongue. Thou mightest have been better employed, David!—but the ruling passion was strong with thee, even in the jaws of death. Thou mightest have been better employed!—but peace be with thee, I repeat, and the Almighty's grace and pardon."

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He makes the jockey speak in the same fashion of Thurtell whom he went to see hanged, according to an old agreement:

"I arrived at H--- just in the nick of time. There was the ugly jail—the scaffold—and there upon it stood the only friend I ever had in the world. Driving my Punch, which was all in a foam, into the

midst of the crowd, which made way for me as if it knew what I came for, I stood up in my gig, took off my hat, and shouted, 'God Almighty bless you, Jack!' The dying man turned his pale grim face towards me—for his face was always somewhat grim, do you see—nodded and said, or I thought I heard him say, 'All right, old chap.' The next moment . . . my eyes water. He had a high heart, got into a scrape whilst in the Marines, lost his half-pay, took to the turf, ring, gambling, and at last cut the throat of a villain who had robbed him of nearly all he had. But he had good qualities, and I know for certain that he never did half the bad things laid to his charge; for example, he never bribed Tom Oliver to fight cross, as it was said he did, on the day of the awful thunderstorm. Ned Flatnose fairly beat Tom Oliver, for though Ned was not what's called a good fighter, he had a particular blow, which if he could put in he was sure to win. His right shoulder, do you see, was two inches farther back than it ought to have been, and consequently his right fist generally fell short; but if he could swing himself round, and put in a blow with that right arm, he could kill or take away the senses of anybody in the world. It was by putting in that blow in his second fight with Spring that he beat noble Tom. Spring beat him like a sack in the first battle, but in the second Ned Painter—for that was his real name—contrived to put in his blow, and took the senses out of Spring; and in like manner he took the senses out of Tom Oliver.

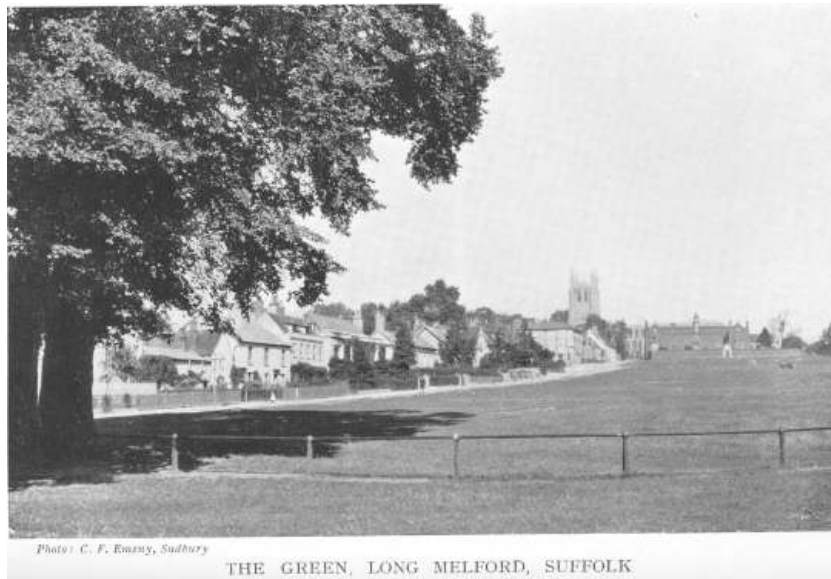
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"Well, some are born to be hanged, and some are not; and many of those who are not hanged are much worse than those who are. Jack, with many a good quality, is hanged, whilst that fellow of a lord, who wanted to get the horse from you at about two-thirds of his value, without a single good quality in the world, is not hanged, and probably will remain so. You ask the reason why, perhaps. I'll tell you: the lack of a certain quality called courage, which Jack possessed in abundance, will preserve him; from the love which he bears his own neck he will do nothing that can bring him to the gallows."

Isopel Berners, with Moses and David in her mind, expresses Borrow's private opinion more soberly when she says:

"*Fear God*, and take your own part. There's Bible in that, young man; see how Moses feared God, and how he took his own part against everybody who meddled with him. And see how David feared God, and took his own part against all the bloody enemies which surrounded him—so fear God, young man, and never give in! The world can bully, and is fond, provided it sees a man in a kind of difficulty, of getting about him, calling him coarse names, and even going so far as to hustle him; but the world, like all bullies, carries a white feather in its tail, and no sooner sees the man taking off his coat, and offering to fight its best, than it scatters here and there, and is always civil to him afterwards. So when folks are disposed to ill-treat you, young man, say 'Lord, have mercy upon me!' and then tip them Long Melford, to which, as the saying goes, there is nothing comparable for shortness all the world over."

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He had probably a natural inclination towards a liberal or eccentric morality, but he was no thinker, and he gave way to a middle-class phraseology—with exceptions, as when he gives it as the opinion of his old master, the Norwich solicitor, that "all first-rate thieves were sober, and of well-regulated morals, their bodily passions being kept in abeyance by their love of gain." Sometimes Borrow allows these two sides of him, his private and his social sides, to appear together dramatically. For example, he more than half seriously advises Jasper to read the Scriptures and learn his duty to his fellow-creatures and his duty to his own soul, lest he should be ranked with those who are "outcast, despised and miserable." Whereupon Jasper questions him and gets him to admit that the Gypsies are very much like the cuckoos, roguish, chaffing birds that everybody is glad to see again:

"You would wish to turn the cuckoos into barn-door fowls, wouldn't you?"

"Can't say I should, Jasper, whatever some people might wish."

"And the chals and chies into radical weavers and factory wenchies, hey, brother?"

"Can't say that I should, Jasper. You are certainly a picturesque people, and in many respects an

ornament both to town and country; painting and lil writing too are under great obligations to you. What pretty pictures are made out of your campings and groupings, and what pretty books have been written in which Gypsies, or at least creatures intended to represent Gypsies, have been the principal figures! I think if we were without you, we should begin to miss you.'

"Just as you would the cuckoos, if they were all converted into barn-door fowls. I tell you what, brother, frequently as I have sat under a hedge in spring or summer time, and heard the cuckoo, I have thought that we chals and cuckoos are alike in many respects, but especially in character. Everybody speaks ill of us both, and everybody is glad to see both of us again.'

"Yes, Jasper, but there is some difference between men and cuckoos; men have souls, Jasper!'

"And why not cuckoos, brother?'

"You should not talk so, Jasper; what you say is little short of blasphemy. How should a bird have a soul?'

"And how should a man?'

"Oh, we know very well that a man has a soul.'

"How do you know it?'

"We know very well.'

"Would you take your oath of it, brother—your bodily oath?'

"Why, I think I might, Jasper!'"

There is no doubt that Borrow liked a strong or an extraordinary man none the less for being a scoundrel. There is equally little doubt that he never demeaned himself with the lower orders. He never pretended, and was seldom taken, to be one of themselves. His attitude differed in degree, but not in kind, from that of a frank, free squire or parson towards keepers, fishermen or labourers. And if he did not drink and swear on an equality with them, neither did he crankily worship them as Fitzgerald did "Posh," the fisherman. They respected him—at least so he tells us—and he never gives himself away to any other effect—because he was honest, courageous and fair. Thus he never gave cause for suspicion as a man does who throws off the cloak of class, and he was probably as interesting to them as they to him. Nor did his refusal to adopt their ways and manners out and out prevent a very genuine kind of equality from existing between him and some of them. A man or woman of equal character and force became his equal, as Jasper did, as Isopel and David Haggart did, and he accepted this equality without a trace of snobbishness.

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He says himself that he has "no abstract love for what is low, or what the world calls low." Certainly there is nothing low in his familiars, as he presents them, at least nothing sordid. It may be the result of unconscious idealisation, but his Gypsies have nothing more sordid about them than wild birds have. Mrs. Herne is diabolical, but in a manner that would not be unbecoming to a duchess. Leonora is treacherous, but as an elf is permitted to be. As for Jasper and Mrs. Petulengro, they are as radiant as Mercutio and Rosalind. They have all the sweetness of unimprisoned air: they would prefer, like Borrow, "the sound of the leaves and the tinkling of the waters" to the parson and the church; and the smell of the stable, which is strong in "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye," to the smell of the congregation and the tombs.

CHAPTER XXVIII—WALKING TOURS

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When Borrow had almost finished "The Romany Rye" he went on a visit to his cousins in Cornwall. The story of his saving a man's life in a stormy sea had reached them, and they sent him an invitation, which he accepted at Christmas time in 1853. He stayed for a fortnight with a cousin's married daughter, Mrs. Anne Taylor, at Penquite Farm, near Liskeard, and then several days again after a fortnight spent on a walk to Land's End and back. In his last week he walked to Tintagel and Pentire. He was welcomed with hospitality and admiration. He in turn seems to have been pleased and at his ease, though he only understood half of what was said. Those who remember his visit speak of his tears in the house where his father was born, of his sitting in the centre of a group telling stories of his travels and singing a Gypsy song, of his singing foreign songs all day out of doors, of his fit of melancholy cured by Scotch and Irish airs played on the piano, of his violent opinions on sherry and "Uncle Tom's Cabin," of his protesting against some sign of gentility by using a filthy rag as a pocket handkerchief, and that in a conspicuous manner, of his being vain and not proud, of his telling the children stories, of one child crying out at sight of him: "That *is* a man!" He made his mark by unusual ways and by intellectual superiority to his rustic cousins. He rode about with one of his cousin's grandchildren. He walked hither and thither alone, doing as much as twenty-five miles a day with the help of "Look out, look out, Svend Vonved," which he sang in the last dark stretches of road. Mr. Walling was "told that he roamed the Caradons in all weathers without a hat, in search of sport and specimens, antiquities and dialects," but I should think the "specimens" were for the table. He talked to the men by the wayside or dived into the slums of Liskeard for disreputable characters. He visited remarkable and famous places, and was delighted with "Druidic" remains and tales of fairies.

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Thus Borrow made "fifty quarto pages" of notes, says Knapp, about people, places, dialect, and folk lore. Some of the notes are mere shorthand; some are rapid gossipy jottings; and they include; a verse translation of a Cornish tale.

A book on Cornwall, to have grown out of these notes, was advertised; but it was never written. Perhaps he found it hard to vivify or integrate his notes. In any case there could hardly have been any backbone to the book, and it would have been tourist's work, however good. He was not a man who wrote about everything; the impulse was lacking and he went on with the furious Appendix to "The Romany Rye."

In 1854 he paid a much longer visit to Wales. He took his wife and daughter as far as Llangollen, which he used as a centre during August. Then he had ten days walking through Corwen, Cerrigy-Drudion, Capel Curig, Bangor, Anglesey, Snowdon, Beth Gelert, Festiniog, and Bala. After three weeks more at Llangollen, he had his boots soled and his umbrella mended, bought a leather satchel with a lock and key, and put in it a white linen shirt, a pair of worsted stockings, a razor, and a prayer book, and with twenty pounds in his pocket and his umbrella grasped in the middle, set out on a tour of three weeks. He travelled through the whole length of Wales, by Llangarmon, Sycharth, Bala, Machynlleth, Devil's Bridge, Plinlimmon, Pont Rhyd Fendigaid, Strata Florida, Tregaron, Lampeter, Pumpsaint, Llandoverly, Llangadog, Gwynfe, Gutter Fawr (Brynamman), Swansea, Neath, Merthyr, Caerphilly, Newport, and Chepstow. He had loved the Welsh bards and Wales from his boyhood up, and these three months kept him occupied and happy. When at Llangollen he walked during the day, and in the evening showed his wife and stepdaughter a view, if he had found one. His wife reported to his mother that she had reason to praise God for his condition.

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Borrow was happy at seeing the places mentioned by the bards and the houses where some of them were born. "Oh, the wild hills of Wales," he exclaimed, "the land of old renown and of wonder, the land of Arthur and Merlin!" These were the very tones of his Spanish enthusiasm nearly twenty years ago. He travelled probably without maps, and with no general knowledge of the country or of what had been written of it, so that he did not know how to spell Manorbier or recognise it as the birthplace of Gerald of Wales. He remembered his youth, when he translated the bards, with complacent melancholy. He sunned himself in the admiration of his inferiors, talking at great length on subjects with which he was acquainted and repeating his own execrable verse translations. "Nice man"—"civil man"—"clever man . . . has been everywhere," the people said. In the South, too, he had the supreme good fortune to meet Captain Bosville for the first time for thirty years, and not being recognised, said, "I am the chap what certain folks calls the Romany Rye." Bejiggered if the Captain had not been thinking it was he, and goes on to ask after that "fine young woman and a virtuous" that he used to keep company with, and Borrow in his turn asked after Jasper—"Lord!" was the answer, "you can't think what grand folks he and his wife have become of late years, and all along of a trumpery lil which somebody has written about them." He also met an Italian whose friends he had last seen at Norwich, one whom he had found at Corunna. It is no wonder that it seemed to him he had always had "the health of an elephant," and could walk thirty-four miles a day, and the last mile in ten minutes. He took his chance for a night's lodging, content to have someone else's bed, but going to the best inn where he had a choice, as at Haverfordwest.

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He was very much moved by the adventure. "I have a wonderful deal to say if I once begin; I have been everywhere," he said to the old man at Gutter Fawr. He gave the shepherd advice about his sheep. "I am in the habit," he said to the landlord at Pont Erwyd, "of talking about everything, being versed in all matters, do you see, or affecting to be so, which comes much to the same thing." Even in the company of his stepdaughter—as they were not in Hyde Park—he sang in Welsh at the top of his voice. The miller's hospitality in Mona brought tears to his eyes; so did his own verse translation of the "Ode to Sycharth," because it made him think "how much more happy, innocent and holy I was in the days of my boyhood when I translated Iolo's ode than I am at the present time." He kissed the silver cup at Llanddewi Brefi and the tombstone of Huw Morus at Llan Silin. When the chair of Huw Morus was wiped and he was about to sit down in it, he uncovered and said in his best Welsh:

"Shade of Huw Morus, supposing your shade haunts the place which you loved so well when alive—a Saxon, one of the seed of the Coiling Serpent, has come to this place to pay that respect to true genius, the Dawn Duw, which he is ever ready to pay. He read the songs of the Nightingale of Ceiriog in the most distant part of Lloegr, when he was a brown-haired boy, and now that he is a grey-haired man he is come to say in this place that they frequently made his eyes overflow with tears of rapture.'

"I then sat down in the chair, and commenced repeating verses of Huw Morus. All which I did in the presence of the stout old lady, the short, buxom, and bare-armed damsel, and of John Jones, the Calvinistic weaver of Llangollen, all of whom listened patiently and approvingly though the rain was pouring down upon them, and the branches of the trees and the tops of the tall nettles, agitated by the gusts from the mountain hollows, were beating in their faces, for enthusiasm is never scoffed at by the noble, simple-minded, genuine Welsh, whatever treatment it may receive from the coarse-hearted, sensual, selfish Saxon."

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Unless we count the inn at Cemmaes, where he took vengeance on the suspicious people by using his note-book in an obvious manner, "now skewing at an object, now leering at an individual," he was only once thoroughly put out, and that was at Beth Gelert by a Scotchman: which suggests a great deal of amiability, on one side, considering that Borrow's Welsh was book-Welsh, execrably

pronounced.

He filled four books with notes, says Knapp, who has printed from them some parts which Borrow did not use, including the Orange words of "Croppies lie down," and Borrow's translation of "the best ghost story in the world," by Lope de Vega. The book founded on these Welsh notes was advertised in 1857, but not published until 1862.

In the September after his Welsh holiday, 1855, Borrow took his wife and daughter to the Isle of Man, deposited them at Douglas, and travelled over the island for seven weeks, with intervals at Douglas. He took notes that make ninety-six quarto pages in Knapp's copy. He was to have founded a book on them, entitled, "Wanderings in Quest of Manx Literature." Knapp quotes an introduction which was written. This and the notes show him collecting in manuscript or *viva voce* the *carvals* or carols then in circulation among the Manx; and he had the good fortune to receive two volumes of them as gifts. Some he translated during his visit. He went about questioning people concerning the carvals and a Manx poet, named George Killey. He read a Manx prayer-book to the poet's daughter at Kirk Onchan, and asked her a score of questions. He convinced one woman that he was "of the old Manx." Finding a Manxman who spoke French and thought it the better language, he made the statement that "Manx or something like it was spoken in France more than a thousand years before French." He copied Runic inscriptions, and took down several fairy tales and a Manx version of the story of "Finn McCoyle" and the Scotch giant. He went to visit a descendant of the ballad hero, Mollie Charane. When he wished to know the size of some old skeletons he inquired if the bones were as large as those of modern ones. As he met people to compliment him on his Manx, so he did on his walking. Knapp speaks of a "terrible journey" over the mountain from Ramsay to Braddan and Douglas in October, but does not make any quotation relating to it. In his opinion the notes "seldom present any matter of general interest save to the islanders of Man and the student of Runic inscriptions." Enough, however, is quoted to show that Borrow was delighted with the country and the people, finding plenty to satisfy his curiosity in languages and customs. But he was irritable, and committed to paper some sarcastic remarks about Sir John Bowring and Lord Raglan, "the secret friend" of Russia; while the advancement of an enemy and the death of a cousin caused him to reflect: "William Borrow, the wonderful inventor, dead, and Leicester Curzon . . . a colonel. Pretty justice!" In 1862, in the pages of "Once a Week," he published two of his Manx translations, the ballads—"Brown William" and "Mollie Charane." In August and September, 1857, Borrow was walking again in Wales, covering four hundred miles, as he told John Murray, and once, at least, between Builth and Mortimer's Cross, making twenty-eight miles in a day. His route was through Laugharne, Saundersfoot, Tenby, Pembroke, Milford and Milford Haven, Stainton, Johnston, Haverfordwest, St. Davids, Fishguard, Newport, Cardigan, Llechryd, Cilgerran, Cenarth, Newcastle Emlyn, Lampeter, Llanddewi Brefi, Builth, Presteign, Mortimer's Cross, and so to Shrewsbury, and to Uppington, where Goronwy Owen was curate in the middle of the eighteenth century. Knapp transcribed part of Borrow's journal for Messrs. T. C. Cantrill and J. Pringle, remarking that the rubbed pencil writing took him eight days to decipher. With the annotations of Messrs. Cantrill and Pringle it was printed in "Y Cymmrodor," [{270a}](#) the journal of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion. I will quote one day's entries, with the annotations, which are the fruit of the most patient devotion:

"Haverfordwest—little river—bridge; [{270b}](#) steep ascent [{270c}](#)—sounds of music—young fellows playing—steep descent—strange town—Castle Inn. H.W. in Welsh Hool-fordd.

"[August] 27th, Thursday.—Burning day as usual. Breakfasted on tea, eggs, and soup. Went up to the Castle. St. Mary's Church—river—bridge—toll—The two bridge keepers—River Dun Cledi [{270d}](#)—runs into Milford Haven—exceedingly deep in some parts—would swallow up the largest ship ever built [{270e}](#)—people in general dislike and despise the Welsh.

"Started for St. David's. Course S.W. [{270f}](#) After walking about 2 m. crossed Pelkham Bridge [{271a}](#)—it separates St. Martin's from Camrwyn [{271b}](#) parish, as a woman told me who was carrying a pipkin in which were some potatoes in water but not boiled. In her other hand she had a dried herring. She said she had lived in the parish all her life and could speak no Welsh, but that there were some people within it who could speak it. Rested against a shady bank, [{271c}](#) very thirsty and my hurt foot very sore. She told me that the mountains to the N. were called by various names. One the [Clo---?] mountain. [{271d}](#)

"The old inn [{271e}](#)—the blind woman. [{271f}](#) Arrival of the odd-looking man and the two women I had passed on the road. The collier [on] [{271g}](#) the ass gives me the real history of Bosvile. Written in Roche Castle, a kind of oblong tower built on the rock—there is a rock within it, a huge crag standing towards the East in what was perhaps once a door. It turned out to be a chapel. [{271h}](#)

"The castle is call'd in Welsh Castel y Garn, a translation of Roche. The girl and water—B---? (Nanny) Dallas. [{272a}](#) Dialogue with the Baptist [{272b}](#) who was mending the roads.

"Splendid view of sea—isolated rocks to the South. Sir las [{272c}](#) headlands stretching S. Descent to the shore. New Gall Bridge. [{272d}](#) The collier's wife. Jemmy Remaunt [{272e}](#) was the name of man on the ass. Her own husband goes to work by the shore. The ascent round the hill. Distant view of Roche Castle. The Welshers, the little village [{272f}](#)—all looking down on the valley appropriately called Y Cwm. Dialogue with tall man Merddyn? [{272g}](#)—The Dim o Clywed."

Not much of this second tour can be shown to have been used in "Wild Wales," where he alludes

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to it in the ninety-third chapter, saying that he “long subsequently” found some of the wildest solitudes and most romantic scenery among the mountains about Tregaron; but the collier may have given him the suggestion for the encounter with Bosvile in the ninety-eighth chapter. The spelling points to Borrow’s ignorance of the relation of pronunciation and orthography.

In 1858 Borrow’s mother died at Oulton and was buried in Oulton churchyard. During October and November in that year, partly to take his mind from his bereavement, he was walking in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. His note-book contains “nothing of general interest,” says Knapp, except an imperfect outline of the journey, showing that he was at Oban, Tobermory, the Mull of Cantire, Glasgow, Perth, Aberdeen, Inverness, Dingwall, Tain, Dornoch, Helmsdale, Wick, John o’Groats, Thurso, Stromness, Kirkwall, and Lerwick.

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In 1860, after taking a house at 20, Hereford Square, West Brompton, he and his wife and stepdaughter went to Dublin, and himself walked to Connemara and the Giant’s Causeway. His wife thought this journey “full of adventure and interest,” but he left no record of it. They were again in Ireland in 1866, Miss Clarke having lately married a Dr. MacOubrey, of Belfast. Borrow himself crossed over to Stranraer and had a month’s walking in Scotland, to Glen Luce, Castle Douglas, Dumfries, Ecclefechan, Carlisle, Gilnochie, Hawick, Jedburgh, Yetholm, Kelso, Melrose, Coldstream, Berwick, and Edinburgh. He talked to the people, admired the scenery, bathed, and enjoyed his meals. He left the briefest of journals, but afterwards, in “Romano Lavo-Lil,” published an account of the “Gypsy toon” of Kirk Yetholm and how he was introduced to the Gypsy Queen. He dropped his umbrella and flung his arms three times up into the air and asked her in Romany what her name was, and if she was a mumper or a true Gypsy. She asked him what was the meaning of this “gibberish,” but he describes how gradually he made her declare herself, and how she examined him in Gypsy and at last offered him a chair, and entered into “deep discourse” about Gypsy matters. He talked as he did to such people, saying “Whoy, I calls that a juggal,” etc. He found fault with her Romany, which was thin and mixed with Gaelic and cant words. She told him that he reminded her of her grandfather, Will Faa, “being a tall, lusty man like himself, and having a skellying look with the left eye, just like him.” He displayed his knowledge of the affairs of the tribe, both in her country and in England. She told him that she had never heard so much Romany before. She promised to receive him next day, but was out when he called. He found her at St. George’s Fair, near Roxburgh Castle, and she pointed him out several other Gypsies, but as she assured him they knew not a word of Romany and would only be uncivil to him, he left them to “pay his respects at the tomb of Walter Scott, a man with whose principles he had no sympathy, but for whose genius he had always entertained the most intense admiration.”

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In 1868 he took an autumn walk through Sussex and Hampshire while his wife was at Bognor. In the next year his wife died, after being afflicted for some time by troubles connected with her property, by dropsy, valvular disease of the heart, and “hysteria.” Borrow was melancholy and irritable, but apparently did not go for another walk in Scotland as was suggested for a cure; nor ever again did he get far afield on foot.

CHAPTER XXIX—“WILD WALES”

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In 1862, between Borrow’s two visits to Ireland, his “Wild Wales” was published. It had been heralded by an advertisement in 1857, by the publication of the “Sleeping Bard” in 1860, and by an article on “The Welsh and their Literature” in the “Quarterly” for January, 1861. This article quotes “an unpublished work called ‘Wild Wales’” and “Mr. Borrow’s unpublished work, ‘Celtic Bards, Chiefs and Kings.’” It opened with a vivid story of the coming of Hu Gadarn and his Cymry to Britain:

“Hu and his people took possession of the best parts of the island, either driving the few Gaels to other districts or admitting them to their confederacy. As the country was in a very wild state, much overgrown with forests in which bears and wolves wandered, and abounding with deep stagnant pools, which were the haunts of the avanc or crocodile, Hu forthwith set about clearing it of some of its horrors, and making it more fit to be the abiding place of civilised beings. He made his people cut down woods and forests, and destroy, as far as was possible, wild beasts and crocodiles. He himself went to a gloomy pool, the haunt of the king of the efync, baited a huge hook attached to a cable, flung it into the pool, and when the monster had gorged the snare drew him out by means of certain gigantic oxen, which he had tamed to the plough, and burnt his horrid, wet, scaly carcass on a fire. He then caused enclosures to be made, fields to be ploughed and sown, pleasant wooden houses to be built, bees to be sheltered and encouraged, and schools to be erected where song and music were taught. O a truly great man was Hu Gadarn! though a warrior, he preferred the sickle and pruning hook to the sword, and the sound of the song and lute to the hoarse blast of the buffalo’s horn:

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“The mighty Hu with mead would pay
The bard for his melodious lay;
The Emperor of land and sea
And of all living things was he.”

This probably represents Borrow’s view of early history, simple, heroic and clear, as it would

have been had he been in command of it. The article professed to be a review of Borrow's "Sleeping Bard," and was in fact by Borrow himself. He had achieved the supreme honour of reviewing his own work, and, as it fell out, he persuaded the public to buy every copy. Very few were found to buy "Wild Wales," notwithstanding. The first edition of a thousand copies lasted three years; the second, of three thousand, lasted twenty-three years. Borrow was ridiculed for informing his readers that he paid his bill at a Welsh inn, without mentioning the amount. He was praised for having written "the first clever book . . . in which an honest attempt is made to do justice to the Welsh literature," for knowing far more than most educated Welshmen about that literature, and for describing his travels and encounters "with much of the freshness, humour and geniality of his earlier days," for writing in fact "the best book about Wales ever published."

Certainly no later book which could be compared with it has been as good, or nearly as good. As for its predecessors, the "Itinerary" and the "Description" of Gerald of Wales, even setting aside the charm of antiquity, make a book that is equal to "Wild Wales" for originality, vivacity and truth. Of the antiquarian and picturesque travellers in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth none wrote anything that is valuable except for some facts and some evidence of taste. Borrow himself probably knew few or none of them, though he mentions Gerald. There is no evidence that he knew the great nineteenth-century collections of Welsh manuscripts and translations. He says nothing of the "Mabinogion." He had apparently never heard of the pedestrian Iolo Morganwg. He perhaps never saw Stephens' "Literature of the Kymry." His knowledge was picked up anyhow and anywhere from Welsh texts and Lhuyd's "Archæologia," without system and with very little friendly discussion or comparison. Wales, therefore, was to him as wonderful as Spain, and equally uncharted. What he saw did not spoil the visionary image, and his enthusiasm coupled with curiosity gives the book of his travels just the continuous impulse which he never found for his Cornish, Manx, Irish or Scottish notes. He was able to fill the book with sympathetic observation and genial self-revelation.

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The book is of course a tourist's book. Borrow went through the country as a gentleman, running no risks, and having scarcely an object except to see what was to be seen and to please himself. He got, as he probably counted on getting, the consideration due to a gentleman who can pay his way and meets only the humbler sort of people, publicans, farmers, drovers, labourers, sextons, parish clerks, and men upon the road. He seldom stayed more than a night or an hour or two anywhere. His pictures, therefore, are the impressions of the moment, wrought up at leisure. His few weeks in Wales made a book of the same size as an equal number of years in Spain.

Sometimes he writes like a detached observer working from notes, and the result has little value except in so far as it is a pure record of what was to be seen at such and such a place in the year 1854. There are many short passages apparently straight from his notes, dead and useless. The description of Llangollen Fair, on August 21, is of this kind, but superior, and I shall quote it entire:

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"The day was dull with occasional showers. I went to see the fair about noon. It was held in and near a little square in the south-east quarter of the town, of which square the police-station is the principal feature on the side of the west, and an inn, bearing the sign of the Grapes, on the east. The fair was a little bustling fair, attended by plenty of people from the country, and from the English border, and by some who appeared to come from a greater distance than the border. A dense row of carts extended from the police-station, half across the space. These carts were filled with pigs, and had stout cord nettings drawn over them, to prevent the animals escaping. By the sides of these carts the principal business of the fair appeared to be going on—there stood the owners, male and female, higgling with Llangollen men and women, who came to buy. The pigs were all small, and the price given seemed to vary from eighteen to twenty-five shillings. Those who bought pigs generally carried them away in their arms; and then there was no little diversion; dire was the screaming of the porkers, yet the purchaser invariably appeared to know how to manage his bargain, keeping the left arm round the body of the swine and with the right hand fast gripping the ear—some few were led away by strings. There were some Welsh cattle, small of course, and the purchasers of these seemed to be Englishmen, tall burly fellows in general, far exceeding the Welsh in height and size.

"Much business in the cattle-line did not seem, however, to be going on. Now and then a big fellow made an offer, and held out his hand for a little Pictish grazier to give it a slap—a cattle bargain being concluded by a slap of the hand—but the Welshman generally turned away, with a half-resentful exclamation. There were a few horses and ponies in a street leading into the fair from the south.

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"I saw none sold, however. A tall athletic figure was striding amongst them, evidently a jockey and a stranger, looking at them and occasionally asking a slight question of one or another of their proprietors, but he did not buy. He might in age be about eight-and-twenty, and about six feet and three-quarters of an inch in height; in build he was perfection itself—a better-built man I never saw. He wore a cap and a brown jockey coat, trowsers, leggings, and highlows, and sported a single spur. He had whiskers—all jockeys should have whiskers—but he had what I did not like, and what no genuine jockey should have, a moustache, which looks coxcombical and Frenchified—but most things have terribly changed since I was young. Three or four hardy-looking fellows, policemen, were gliding about in their blue coats and leather hats, holding their thin walking-sticks behind them; conspicuous amongst whom was the leader, a tall lathy North Briton with a keen eye and hard features. Now if I add there was much gabbling of Welsh round about, and here and there some slight sawing of English—that in the street leading from the north there were some stalls of gingerbread and a table at which a queer-looking being with a

red Greek-looking cap on his head, sold rhubarb, herbs, and phials containing the Lord knows what, and who spoke a low vulgar English dialect,—I repeat, if I add this, I think I have said all that is necessary about Llangollen Fair.”

But this is a somewhat exceptional passage, and the same detachment is rarely found except in his descriptions of scenery, which are short and serve well enough to remind the reader of the great hills, the rapid waters, the rocks, and the furnaces, chimneys and pits. Borrow certainly does remind us of these things. In the first place he does so by a hundred minute and scattered suggestions of the romantic and sublime, and so general that only a pedant will object to the nightingales which he heard singing in August near Bethesda. He gives us black mountains, gloomy shadows, cascades falling into lakes, “singular-looking” rocks, and mountain villages like one in Castile or La Mancha but for the trees, mountains that made him exclaim: “I have had Heaven opened to me,” moors of a “wretched russet colour,” “black gloomy narrow glens.” He can also be precise and connoisseur-like, as when he describes the cataract at Llan Rhaiadr:

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“What shall I liken it to? I scarcely know, unless to an immense skein of silk agitated and disturbed by tempestuous blasts, or to the long tail of a grey courser at furious speed. Through the profusion of long silvery threads or hairs, or what looked such, I could here and there see the black sides of the crag down which the Rhyadr precipitated itself with something between a boom and a roar.”

He is still more a connoisseur when he continues:

“I never saw water falling so gracefully, so much like thin beautiful threads as here. Yet even this cataract has its blemish. What beautiful object has not something which more or less mars its loveliness? There is an ugly black bridge or semicircle of rock, about two feet in diameter and about twenty feet high, which rises some little way below it, and under which the water, after reaching the bottom, passes, which intercepts the sight, and prevents it from taking in the whole fall at once. This unsightly object has stood where it now stands since the day of creation, and will probably remain there to the day of judgment. It would be a desecration of nature to remove it by art, but no one could regret if nature in one of her floods were to sweep it away.”

But Borrow’s temperamental method—where he undertakes to do more than sketch his environment in the blurred large method corresponding to ordinary passing impressions—is the rhetorical sublime of this mountain lake between Festiniog and Bala:

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“I sped towards it through gorse and heather, occasionally leaping a deep drain. At last I reached it. It was a small lake. Wearied and panting, I flung myself on its bank, and gazed upon it.

“There lay the lake in the low bottom, surrounded by the heathery hillocks; there it lay quite still, the hot sun reflected upon its surface, which shone like a polished blue shield. Near the shore it was shallow, at least near that shore upon which I lay. But farther on, my eye, practised in deciding upon the depths of waters, saw reason to suppose that its depth was very great. As I gazed upon it my mind indulged in strange musings. I thought of the afanc, a creature which some have supposed to be the harmless and industrious beaver, others the frightful and destructive crocodile. I wondered whether the afanc was the crocodile or the beaver, and speedily had no doubt that the name was originally applied to the crocodile.

“‘O, who can doubt,’ thought I, ‘that the word was originally intended for something monstrous and horrible? Is there not something horrible in the look and sound of the word afanc, something connected with the opening and shutting of immense jaws, and the swallowing of writhing prey? Is not the word a fitting brother of the Arabic timsah, denoting the dread horny lizard of the waters? Moreover, have we not the voice of tradition that the afanc was something monstrous? Does it not say that Hu the Mighty, the inventor of husbandry, who brought the Cumry from the summer-country, drew the old afanc out of the lake of lakes with his four gigantic oxen? Would he have had recourse to them to draw out the little harmless beaver? O, surely not. Yet have I no doubt that, when the crocodile had disappeared from the lands where the Cumric language was spoken, the name afanc was applied to the beaver, probably his successor in the pool; the beaver now called in Cumric Llostlydan, or the broad-tailed, for tradition’s voice is strong that the beaver has at one time been called the afanc.’ Then I wondered whether the pool before me had been the haunt of the afanc, considered both as crocodile and beaver. I saw no reason to suppose that it had not. ‘If crocodiles,’ thought I, ‘ever existed in Britain, and who shall say they have not? seeing that their remains have been discovered, why should they not have haunted this pool? If beavers ever existed in Britain, and do not tradition and Giraldus say that they have? why should they not have existed in this pool?’

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“‘At a time almost inconceivably remote, when the hills around were covered with woods, through which the elk and the bison and the wild cow strolled, when men were rare throughout the lands, and unlike in most things to the present race—at such a period—and such a period there has been—I can easily conceive that the afanc-crocodile haunted this pool, and that when the elk or bison or wild cow came to drink of its waters, the grim beast would occasionally rush forth, and seizing his bellowing victim, would return with it to the deeps before me to luxuriate at his ease upon its flesh. And at time less remote, when the crocodile was no more, and though the woods still covered the hills, and wild cattle strolled about, men were more numerous than before, and less unlike the present race, I can easily conceive this lake to have been the haunt of the afanc-beaver, that he here built cunningly his house of trees and clay, and that to this lake the native would come with his net and his spear to hunt the animal for his precious fur.

Probably if the depths of that pool were searched, relics of the crocodile and the beaver might be found, along with other strange things connected with the periods in which they respectively lived. Happy were I if for a brief space I could become a Cingalese, that I might swim out far into that pool, dive down into its deepest part, and endeavour to discover any strange things which beneath its surface may lie.' Much in this guise rolled my thoughts as I lay stretched on the margin of the lake."

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In another place he tells a poor man that he believes in the sea-serpent, and has a story of one seen in the very neighbourhood where he meets the man. Immediately after the description of the lake there is a proof—one of many—that he was writing straight from notes. Speaking of a rivulet, he says: "It was crossed by two bridges, one immensely old and terribly delapidated, the other old enough, but in better repair—*went and drank under the oldest bridge of the two.*" The book is large and strong enough to stand many such infinitesimal blemishes.

Alongside of the sublime I will put what Borrow says he liked better. He is standing on a bridge over the Ceiriog, just after visiting the house of Huw Morus at Pont y Meibion:

"About a hundred yards distant was a small watermill, built over the rivulet, the wheel going slowly, slowly round; large quantities of pigs, the generality of them brindled, were either browsing on the banks, or lying close to the sides, half immersed in the water; one immense white hog, the monarch seemingly of the herd, was standing in the middle of the current. Such was the scene which I saw from the bridge, a scene of quiet rural life well suited to the brushes of two or three of the old Dutch painters, or to those of men scarcely inferior to them in their own style—Gainsborough, Moreland, and Crome. My mind for the last half-hour had been in a highly-excited state; I had been repeating verses of old Huw Morus, brought to my recollection by the sight of his dwelling-place; they were ranting roaring verses, against the Roundheads. I admired the vigour, but disliked the principles which they displayed; and admiration on the one hand, and disapproval on the other, bred a commotion in my mind like that raised on the sea when tide runs one way and wind blows another. The quiet scene from the bridge, however, produced a sedative effect on my mind, and when I resumed my journey I had forgotten Huw, his verses, and all about Roundheads and Cavaliers."

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But it must be said that if the book is on the whole a cheerful one, its cheerfulness not only receives a foil from the rhetorical sublime, but is a little misted by a melancholy note here and there. Thus he sees "a melancholy ship" out on the sea near Holyhead. He qualifies russet twice as "wretched" in describing a moor. He speaks of "strange-looking" hills near Pont Erwyd, and again near the Devil's Bridge. His moods were easily changed. He speaks of "wretched russet hills," with no birds singing, but only "the lowing of a wretched bullock," and then of beautiful hills that filled his veins with fresh life so that he walked on merrily.

As for his people, it cannot be asserted that they are always alive though they are often very Welsh. They are sketched, with dialogue and description, after the manner of "The Bible in Spain," though being nearer home they had to be more modest in their peculiarities. He establishes Welsh enthusiasm, hospitality and suspiciousness, in a very friendly manner. The poet-innkeeper is an excellent sketch of a mild but by no means spiritless type. He is accompanied by a man with a bulging shoe who drinks ale and continually ejaculates: "The greatest poet in the world"; for example, when Borrow asks: "Then I have the honour to be seated with a bard of Anglesey?" "Tut, tut," says the bard. Borrow agrees with him that envy—which has kept him from the bardic chair—will not always prevail:

"'Sir,' said the man in grey, 'I am delighted to hear you. Give me your hand, your honourable hand. Sir, you have now felt the hand-grasp of a Welshman, to say nothing of an Anglesey bard, and I have felt that of a Briton, perhaps a bard, a brother, sir? O, when I first saw your face out there in the dyffryn, I at once recognised in it that of a kindred spirit, and I felt compelled to ask you to drink. Drink, sir! but how is this? the jug is empty—how is this?—O, I see—my friend, sir, though an excellent individual, is indiscreet, sir—very indiscreet. Landlord, bring this moment another jug of ale.'

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"'The greatest prydydd,' stuttered he of the bulged shoe—'the greatest prydydd—Oh—'

"'Tut, tut,' said the man in grey.

"'I speak the truth and care for no one,' said he of the tattered hat. 'I say the greatest prydydd. If any one wishes to gainsay me let him show his face, and Myn Diawl—'

The landlord brought the ale, placed it on the table, and then stood as if waiting for something.

"'I suppose you are waiting to be paid,' said I; 'what is your demand?'

"'Sixpence for this jug, and sixpence for the other,' said the landlord.

"I took out a shilling and said: 'It is but right that I should pay half of the reckoning, and as the whole affair is merely a shilling matter I should feel obliged in being permitted to pay the whole, so, landlord, take the shilling and remember you are paid.' I then delivered the shilling to the landlord, but had no sooner done so than the man in grey, starting up in violent agitation, wrested the money from the other, and flung it down on the table before me saying:—

"'No, no, that will never do. I invited you in here to drink, and now you would pay for the liquor which I ordered. You English are free with your money, but you are sometimes free with it at the expense of people's feelings. I am a Welshman, and I know Englishmen consider all Welshmen

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hogs. But we are not hogs, mind you! for we have little feelings which hogs have not. Moreover, I would have you know that we have money, though perhaps not so much as the Saxon.' Then putting his hand into his pocket he pulled out a shilling, and giving it to the landlord, said in Welsh: 'Now thou art paid, and mayst go thy ways till thou art again called for. I do not know why thou didst stay after thou hadst put down the ale. Thou didst know enough of me to know that thou didst run no risk of not being paid.'

"'But,' said I, after the landlord had departed, 'I must insist on being [*? paying*] my share. Did you not hear me say that I would give a quart of ale to see a poet?'

"'A poet's face,' said the man in grey, 'should be common to all, even like that of the sun. He is no true poet, who would keep his face from the world.'

"'But,' said I, 'the sun frequently hides his head from the world, behind a cloud.'

"'Not so,' said the man in grey. 'The sun does not hide his face, it is the cloud that hides it. The sun is always glad enough to be seen, and so is the poet. If both are occasionally hid, trust me it is no fault of theirs. Bear that in mind; and now pray take up your money.'

"'That man is a gentleman,' thought I to myself, 'whether poet or not; but I really believe him to be a poet; were he not he could hardly talk in the manner I have just heard him.'

"The man in grey now filled my glass, his own and that of his companion. The latter emptied his in a minute, not forgetting first to say 'the best prydydd in all the world!' The man in grey was also not slow to empty his own. The jug now passed rapidly between my two friends, for the poet seemed determined to have his full share of the beverage. I allowed the ale in my glass to remain untasted, and began to talk about the bards, and to quote from their works. I soon found that the man in grey knew quite as much of the old bards and their works as myself. In one instance he convicted me of a mistake.

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"I had quoted those remarkable lines in which an old bard, doubtless seeing the Menai Bridge by means of second sight, says: 'I will pass to the land of Mona notwithstanding the waters of Menai, without waiting for the ebb'—and was feeling not a little proud of my erudition when the man in grey, after looking at me for a moment fixedly, asked me the name of the bard who composed them—'Sion Tudor,' I replied.

"'There you are wrong,' said the man in grey; 'his name was not Sion Tudor, but Robert Vychan, in English, Little Bob. Sion Tudor wrote an englyn on the Skerries whirlpool in the Menai; but it was Little Bob who wrote the stanza in which the future bridge over the Menai is hinted at.'

"'You are right,' said I, 'you are right. Well, I am glad that all song and learning are not dead in Ynis Fon.'

"'Dead,' said the man in grey, whose features began to be rather flushed, 'they are neither dead, nor ever will be. There are plenty of poets in Anglesey. . . .'

The whole sketch is in Borrow's liberal unqualified style, but keeping on the right side of caricature. The combination of modesty, touchiness and pride, without humour, is typical and happily caught.

The chief fault of his Welsh portraits, in fact, is his almost invariable, and almost always unnecessary, exhibition of his own superiority. He is nearly always the big clever gentleman catechizing certain quaint little rustic foreigners. He met one old man with a crabstick who told him his Welsh was almost as bad as his English, and a drover who had the advantage of him in decided opinions and a sense of superiority, and put him down as a pig-jobber; but these are exceptions. He is not unkind, but on the other hand he forgets that as a rule his size, his purse, and his remarkable appearance and qualities put his casual hosts very much at a disadvantage, and he is thus led to exaggerate what suspiciousness he observed.

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His success is all the more wonderful when his position and his almost total lack of condescension and concession are considered, but considered they must be. When he met a Welsh clergyman who could talk about the Welsh language, Huw Morus and ale, he said nothing about him except that he was "a capital specimen of the Welsh country clergyman. His name was Walter Jones." Too often he merely got answers to his questions, which break up his pages in an agreeable manner, but do little more. In such conversations we should fare ill indeed if one of the parties were not Borrow, and even as it is, he can be tedious beyond the limits necessary for truth. I will give an example:

"After a little time I entered into conversation with my guide. He had not a word of English. 'Are you married?' said I.

"'In truth I am, sir.'

"'What family have you?'

"'I have a daughter.'

"'Where do you live?'

"'At the house of the Rhyadr.'

"'I suppose you live there as servant?'

“No, sir, I live there as master.’

“Is the good woman I saw there your wife?’

“In truth, sir, she is.’

“And the young girl I saw your daughter?’

“Yes, sir, she is my daughter.’

“And how came the good woman not to tell me you were her husband?’

“I suppose, sir, you did not ask who I was, and she thought you did not care to know.’ . . .”

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To multiply instances might cease to be amusing. It may have been Borrow’s right way of getting what he wanted, though it sounds like a Charity Organization inquisitor. As to the effectiveness of setting down every step of the process instead of the result, there can hardly be two opinions, unless the reader prefers an impression of the wandering inquisitive gentleman to one of the people questioned. Probably these barren dialogues may be set down to indolence or to the too facile adoption of a trick. They are too casual and slight to be exact, and on the other hand they are too literal to give a direct impression.

Luckily he diversified such conversation with stories of poets and robbers, gleaned from his books or from wayside company. The best of this company was naturally not the humble homekeeping publican or cottager, but the man or woman of the roads, Gypsy or Irish. The vagabond Irish, for example, give him early in the book an effective contrast to the more quiet Welsh; his guide tells how they gave him a terrible fright:

“I had been across the Berwyn to carry home a piece of weaving work to a person who employs me. It was night as I returned, and when I was about half-way down the hill, at a place which is called Allt Paddy, because the Gwyddelod are in the habit of taking up their quarters there, I came upon a gang of them, who had come there and camped and lighted their fire, whilst I was on the other side of the hill. There were nearly twenty of them, men and women, and amongst the rest was a man standing naked in a tub of water with two women stroking him down with clouts. He was a large fierce-looking fellow, and his body, on which the flame of the fire glittered, was nearly covered with red hair. I never saw such a sight. As I passed they glared at me and talked violently in their Paddy Gwyddel, but did not offer to molest me. I hastened down the hill, and right glad I was when I found myself safe and sound at my house in Llangollen, with my money in my pocket, for I had several shillings there, which the man across the hill had paid me for the work which I had done.”

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The best man in the book is the Irish fiddler, with a shock of red hair, a hat that had lost part of its crown and all its rim, and a game leg. This Irishman in the early part of the book and the Irishwoman at the end are characters that Borrow could put his own blood into. He has done so in a manner equal to anything in the same kind in his earlier books. I shall quote the whole interview with the man. It is an admirable piece of imagination. If any man thinks it anything else, let him spend ten years in taking down conversations in trains and taverns and ten years in writing them up, and should he have anything as good as this to show, he has a most rare talent:

“Good morning to you,’ said I.

“A good marning to your hanner, a merry afternoon, and a roaring joyous evening—that is the worst luck I wish to ye.’

“Are you a native of these parts?’ said I.

“Not exactly, your hanner—I am a native of the city of Dublin, or, what’s all the same thing, of the village of Donnybrook which is close by it.’

“A celebrated place,’ said I.

“Your hanner may say that; all the world has heard of Donnybrook, owing to the humours of its fair. Many is the merry tune I have played to the boys at that fair.’

“You are a professor of music, I suppose?’

“And not a very bad one as your hanner will say if you will allow me to play you a tune.’

“Can you play “Croppies Lie Down”?’

“I cannot, your hanner; my fingers never learnt to play such a blackguard tune; but if ye wish to hear “Croppies Get Up” I can oblige ye.’

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“You are a Roman Catholic, I suppose?’

“I am not, your hanner—I am a Catholic to the backbone, just like my father before me. Come, your hanner, shall I play ye “Croppies Get Up”?’

“No,’ said I; ‘It’s a tune that doesn’t please my ears. If, however, you choose to play “Croppies Lie Down,” I’ll give you a shilling.’

“Your hanner will give me a shilling?’

“Yes,’ said I, ‘if you play “Croppies Lie Down”: but you know you cannot play it, your fingers

never learned the tune.'

"'They never did, your hanner; but they have heard it played of ould by the blackguard Orange fiddlers of Dublin on the first of July, when the Protestant boys used to walk round Willie's statue on College Green—so if your hanner gives me the shilling they may perhaps bring out something like it.'

"'Very good,' said I; 'begin!'

"'But, your hanner, what shall we do for the words? Though my fingers may remember the tune, my tongue does not remember the words—that is unless . . .'

"'I give another shilling,' said I; 'but never mind you the words; I know the words, and will repeat them.'

"'And your hanner will give me a shilling?'

"'If you play the tune,' said I.

"'Hanner bright, your hanner?'

"'Honour bright,' said I.

"Thereupon the fiddler, taking his bow and shouldering his fiddle, struck up in first-rate style the glorious tune, which I had so often heard with rapture in the days of my boyhood in the barrack yard of Clonmel; whilst I walking by his side as he stumped along, caused the welkin to resound with the words, which were the delight of the young gentlemen of the Protestant academy of that beautiful old town.

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"'I never heard those words before,' said the fiddler, after I had finished the first stanza.

"'Get on with you,' said I.

"'Regular Orange words!' said the fiddler, on my finishing the second stanza.

"'Do you choose to get on?' said I.

"'More blackguard Orange words I never heard!' cried the fiddler, on my coming to the conclusion of the third stanza. 'Divil a bit farther will I play; at any rate till I get the shilling.'

"'Here it is for you,' said I; 'the song is ended and of course the tune.'

"'Thank your hanner,' said the fiddler, taking the money, 'your hanner has kept your word with me, which is more than I thought your hanner would. And now, your hanner, let me ask you why did your hanner wish for that tune, which is not only a blackguard one, but quite out of date; and where did your hanner get the words?'

"'I used to hear the tune in my boyish days,' said I, 'and wished to hear it again, for though you call it a blackguard tune, it is the sweetest and most noble air that Ireland, the land of music, has ever produced. As for the words, never mind where I got them; they are violent enough, but not half so violent as the words of some of the songs made against the Irish Protestants by the priests.'

"'Your hanner is an Orange man, I see. Well, your hanner, the Orange is now in the kennel, and the Croppies have it all their own way.'

"'And perhaps,' said I, 'before I die, the Orange will be out of the kennel and the Croppies in, even as they were in my young days.'

"'Who knows, your hanner? and who knows that I may not play the ould tune round Willie's image in College Green, even as I used some twenty-seven years ago?'

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"'O then you have been an Orange fiddler?'

"'I have, your hanner. And now as your hanner has behaved like a gentleman to me I will tell ye all my history. I was born in the city of Dublin, that is in the village of Donnybrook, as I tould your hanner before. It was to the trade of bricklaying I was bred, and bricklaying I followed till at last, getting my leg smashed, not by falling off the ladder, but by a row in the fair, I was obliged to give it up, for how could I run up the ladder with a patten on my foot, which they put on to make my broken leg as long as the other. Well, your hanner; being obliged to give up my bricklaying, I took to fiddling, to which I had always a natural inclination, and played about the streets, and at fairs, and wakes, and weddings. At length some Orange men getting acquainted with me, and liking my style of playing, invited me to their lodge, where they gave me to drink, and tould me that if I would change my religion and join them, and play their tunes, they would make it answer my purpose. Well, your hanner, without much sticking I gave up my Popery, joined the Orange lodge, learned the Orange tunes, and became a regular Protestant boy, and truly the Orange men kept their word, and made it answer my purpose. O the meat and drink I got, and the money I made by playing at the Orange lodges and before the processions when the Orange men paraded the streets with their Orange colours. And O, what a day for me was the glorious first of July when with my whole body covered with Orange ribbons I fiddled "Croppies Lie Down"—"Boyne Water," and the "Protestant Boys" before the procession which walked round Willie's figure on horseback in College Green, the man and horse all ablaze with Orange colours. But nothing lasts under the sun, as your hanner knows; Orangeism began to go down; the

Government scowled at it, and at last passed a law preventing the Protestant boys dressing up the figure on the first of July, and walking round it. That was the death-blow of the Orange party, your hanner; they never recovered it, but began to despond and dwindle, and I with them, for there was scarcely any demand for Orange tunes. Then Dan O'Connell arose with his emancipation and repale cries, and then instead of Orange processions and walkings, there were Papist processions and mobs, which made me afraid to stir out, lest knowing me for an Orange fiddler, they should break my head, as the boys broke my leg at Donnybrook fair. At length some of the repalers and emancipators knowing that I was a first-rate hand at fiddling came to me, and tould me, that if I would give over playing "Croppies Lie Down" and other Orange tunes, and would play "Croppies Get Up," and what not, and become a Catholic and a repaler, and an emancipator, they would make a man of me—so as my Orange trade was gone, and I was half-starved, I consinted, not however till they had introduced me to Daniel O'Connell, who called me a credit to my country, and the Irish Horpheus, and promised me a sovereign if I would consint to join the cause, as he called it. Well, your hanner, I joined with the cause and became a Papist, I mane a Catholic once more, and went at the head of processions, covered all over with green ribbons, playing "Croppies Get Up," "Granny Whale," and the like. But, your hanner; though I went the whole hog with the repalers and emancipators, they did not make their words good by making a man of me. Scant and sparing were they in the mate and drink, and yet more sparing in the money, and Daniel O'Connell never gave me the sovereign which he promised me. No, your hanner, though I played "Croppies Get Up," till my fingers ached, as I stumped before him and his mobs and processions, he never gave me the sovereign: unlike your hanner who gave me the shilling ye promised me for playing "Croppies Lie Down," Daniel O'Connell never gave me the sovereign he promised me for playing "Croppies Get Up." Och, your hanner, I often wished the ould Orange days were back again. However as I could do no better I continued going the whole hog with the emancipators and repalers and Dan O'Connell; I went the whole animal with them till they had got emancipation; and I went the whole animal with them till they nearly got repale—when all of a sudden they let the whole thing drop—Dan and his party having frightened the Government out of its seven senses, and gotten all they thought they could get, in money and places, which was all they wanted, let the whole hullabaloo drop, and of course myself, who formed part of it. I went to those who had persuaded me to give up my Orange tunes, and to play Papist ones, begging them to give me work; but they tould me very civilly that they had no farther occasion for my services. I went to Daniel O'Connell reminding him of the sovereign he had promised me, and offering if he gave it me to play "Croppies Get Up" under the nose of the lord-lieutenant himself; but he tould me that he had not time to attend to me, and when I persisted, bade me go to the Divil and shake myself. Well, your hanner, seeing no prospect for myself in my own country, and having incurred some little debts, for which I feared to be arrested, I came over to England and Wales, where with little content and satisfaction I have passed seven years.'

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"Well,' said I, 'thank you for your history—farewell.'

"Stap, your hanner; does your hanner think that the Orange will ever be out of the kennel, and that the Orange boys will ever walk round the brass man and horse in College Green as they did of ould?"

"Who knows?' said I. 'But suppose all that were to happen, what would it signify to you?"

"Why then Divil in my patten if I would not go back to Donnybrook and Dublin, hoist the Orange cockade, and become as good an Orange boy as ever.'

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"What,' said I, 'and give up Popery for the second time?"

"I would, your hanner; and why not? for in spite of what I have heard Father Toban say, I am by no means certain that all Protestants will be damned.'

"Farewell,' said I.

"Farewell, your hanner, and long life and prosperity to you! God bless your hanner and your Orange face. Ah, the Orange boys are the boys for keeping faith. They never served me as Dan O'Connell and his dirty gang of repalers and emancipators did. Farewell, your hanner, once more; and here's another scratch of the illigant tune your hanner is so fond of, to cheer up your hanner's ears upon your way.'

"And long after I had left him I could hear him playing on his fiddle in first-rate style the beautiful tune of 'Down, down, Croppies Lie Down.'"

CHAPTER XXX—"WILD WALES" (*continued*)

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Much more than in any of his other books Borrow is the hero in "Wild Wales"—a strange black-coated gentleman with white hair striding over the hills and along the rivers, carrying an umbrella, asking innumerable questions and giving infinite information about history, literature, religion, politics, and minor matters, willing to talk to anyone, but determined not to put up at a trampers' hostelry. The Irish at Chester took him for a minister, the Irish reapers in Anglesey took him for a priest and got him to bless them in Latin while they knelt. All wondered to hear

the Saxon speaking or reading in Welsh. A man who could speak Spanish addressed him in that language as a foreigner—"I can't tell you how it was, sir," said he, looking me very innocently in the face, "but I was forced to speak Spanish to you." At Pentre Dwr the man with the pigs heard his remarks on pigs and said: "I see you are in the trade and understand a thing or two." The man on the road south to Tregaron told him that he looked and spoke like the Earl of Leicester.

He reveals himself also without recourse to impartial men upon the road. The mere figure of the tall man inquiring for the birthplaces of poets and literally translating place names for their meaning, is very powerful in holding the attention. He does not conceal his opinions. Some were already familiar to readers of Borrow, his admiration for Smollett and for Scott as a writer, his hate of gentility, Cavaliers, Papists, France, sherry, and teetotalism. He had some bad ale in Wales, and he had some Allsopp, which he declared good enough for the summer, and at Bala one of his best Welshmen gave him the best of home-brewed, "rich and mellow, with scarcely any smack of the hop in it, and though so pale and delicate to the eye nearly as strong as brandy." The Chester ale he spirted out of the window after the Chester cheese. To his subjects of admiration he also adds Robert Southey, as "not the least of Britain's four great latter poets, decidedly her best prose writer, and probably the purest and most noble character to which she has ever given birth"; but this was when he was thinking of Madoc, the Welsh discoverer of America. I should be sorry to have to name any of the other "four poets" except Byron. Another literary *dictum* is that Macpherson's "Ossian" is genuine because a book which followed it and was undoubtedly genuine bore a strong resemblance to it. An opinion that shows as fully as any single one could Borrow's vivid and vague inaccuracy and perversity is this of Snowdon:

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"But it is from its connection with romance that Snowdon derives its chief interest. Who when he thinks of Snowdon does not associate it with the heroes of romance, Arthur and his knights? whose fictitious adventures, the splendid dreams of Welsh and Breton minstrels, many of the scenes of which are the valleys and passes of Snowdon, are the origin of romance, before which what is classic has for more than half a century been waning, and is perhaps eventually destined to disappear. Yes, to romance Snowdon is indebted for its interest and consequently for its celebrity; but for romance Snowdon would assuredly not be what it at present is, one of the very celebrated hills of the world, and to the poets of modern Europe almost what Parnassus was to those of old."

Who associates Snowdon with Arthur, and what Arthurian stories have the valleys and passes of Snowdon for their scenes? what "poets of modern Europe" have sung of it? And yet Borrow has probably often carried this point with his reader.

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Borrow as a Christian is very conspicuous in this book. He cannot speak of Sir Henry Morgan without calling him "a scourge of God on the cruel Spaniards of the New World. . . . On which account God prospered and favoured him, permitting him to attain the noble age of ninety." He was fond of discovering the hand of God, for example, in changing a nunnery—"a place devoted to gorgeous idolatry and obscene lust"—into a quiet old barn: "Surely," he asks, "the hand of God is visible here?" and the respectful mower answers: "It is so, sir." In the same way, when he has told a man called Dafydd Tibbot, that he is a Frenchman—"Dearie me, sir, am I indeed?" says the man, very pleased—he supposes the man a descendant of a proud, cruel, violent Norman, for the descendants of proud, cruel and violent men "are doomed by God to come to the dogs." He tells us that he comforted himself, after thinking that his wife and daughter and himself would before long be dead, by the reflection that "such is the will of Heaven, and that Heaven is good." He showed his respect for Sunday by going to church and hesitating to go to Plynlimmon—"It is really not good to travel on the Sunday without going into a place of worship." He wished, as he passed Gwynfe, which means Paradise,—or *Gwynfa* does; but no matter,—that he had never read Tom Payne, who "thinks there's not such a place as Paradise." He lectures a poet's mistress for not staying with her hunchbacked old husband and making him comfortable: he expresses satisfaction at the poet's late repentance. After praising Dafydd as the Welsh Ovid and Horace and Martial, he says:

"Finally, he was something more; he was what not one of the great Latin poets was, a Christian; that is, in his latter days, when he began to feel the vanity of all human pursuits, when his nerves began to be unstrung, his hair to fall off, and his teeth to drop out, and he then composed sacred pieces entitling him to rank with—we were going to say Cædmon—had we done so we should have done wrong; no uninspired poet ever handled sacred subjects like the grand Saxon Skald—but which entitle him to be called a great religious poet, inferior to none but the *protégé* of Hilda."

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(Here, by the way, he omits to correct the plural unity of the "Quarterly Reviewer.")

But perhaps these remarks are not more than the glib commonplaces of a man who had found Christianity convenient, but not exactly sufficient. In another place he says: "The wisest course evidently is to combine a portion of the philosophy of the tombstone with a portion of the philosophy of the publican and something more, to enjoy one's pint and pipe and other innocent pleasures, and to think every now and then of death and judgment—that is what I intend to do, and indeed is what I have done for the last thirty years." Which is as much as to say that he was of "the religion of all sensible men": which is as much as to say that he did not greatly trouble about such matters.

In the cognate matter of patriotism Borrow is superficially more unsound in "Wild Wales." At Birmingham railway station he "became a modern Englishman, enthusiastically proud of modern England's science and energy"; at the sight of Norman castles he felt no Norman enthusiasm, but

only hate for the Norman name, which he associated with “the deflowering of helpless Englishwomen, the plundering of English homesteads, and the tearing out of Englishmen’s eyes”; but when he was asked on Snowdon if he was a Breton, he replied: “I wish I was, or anything but what I am, one of a nation amongst whom any knowledge save what relates to money-making and over-reaching is looked upon as a disgrace. I am ashamed to say that I am an Englishman.” And at Gutter Fawr he gloomily expressed the opinion that we were not going to beat the Russians —“the Russians are a young nation and we are an old; they are coming on and we are going off; every dog has its day.” But this was mere refractoriness. England had not asked his advice; she had moreover joined forces with her old enemy, France: the patriot therefore hoped that she would perish to fulfil his own prophecy that she must. And after the vaticination he sat down to a large dish of veal cutlets, fried bacon and potatoes, with a jug of ale, and “made one of the best suppers he ever made in his life,” finally “trifling” with some whisky and water. That is “the religion of every sensible man,” which is Lord Tennyson’s phrase, I believe, but my interpretation.

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CHAPTER XXXI—“WILD WALES”: STYLE

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“Wild Wales” having been written from a tourist’s note books is less flowing than “The Bible in Spain” and less delicate than “Lavengro” and “The Romany Rye.” A man is often called an “individual,” the sun is called “the candle of God.” A book just bought is “my late literary acquisition.” Facts such as “I returned to Llangollen by nearly the same way by which I had come,” abound. Sentences straight from his note book, lacking either in subject or predicate, occur here and there. At times a clause with no sort of value is admitted, as when, forgetting the name of Kilvey Hill, he says that Swansea town and harbour “are overhung on the side of the east by a lofty green mountain with a Welsh name, no doubt exceedingly appropriate, but which I regret to say has escaped my memory.”



Photo: A. G. Taylor, Swansea

THE DOLAUCOTHY ARMS

More than once his direct simplicity slips into what could hardly have been supposed to be within the power of such a pen, as in this conclusion to a chapter:

“How one enjoys one’s supper at one’s inn, after a good day’s walk, provided one has the proud and glorious consciousness of being able to pay one’s reckoning on the morrow!”

Nor is the reader ever allowed to forget that a massive unfeeling Victorianism is the basis of Borrow’s style. Thus he tells the story of the Treachery of the Long Knives:

“Hengist, wishing to become paramount in Southern Britain, thought that the easiest way to accomplish his wish would be by destroying the South British chieftains. Not believing that he should be able to make away with them by open force, he determined to see what he could do by treachery. Accordingly he invited the chieftains to a banquet, to be held near Stonehenge, or the Hanging Stones, on Salisbury Plain. The unsuspecting chieftains accepted the invitation, and on the appointed day repaired to the banquet, which was held in a huge tent. Hengist received them with a smiling countenance, and every appearance of hospitality, and caused them to sit down to table, placing by the side of every Briton one of his own people. The banquet commenced and all seemingly was mirth and hilarity. Now Hengist had commanded his people that, when he should get up and cry ‘nemet eoure saxes,’ that is, take your knives, each Saxon should draw his long sax, or knife, which he wore at his side, and should plunge it into the throat of his neighbour. The banquet went on, and in the midst of it, when the unsuspecting Britons were revelling on the good cheer which had been provided for them, and half-drunken with the mead and beer which flowed in torrents, uprose Hengist, and with a voice of thunder uttered the fatal words, ‘nemet eoure saxes’; the cry was obeyed, each Saxon grasped his knife, and struck with it at the throat of his defenceless neighbour. Almost every blow took effect; only three

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British chieftains escaping from the banquet of blood. This infernal carnage the Welsh have appropriately denominated the treachery of the long knives. It will be as well to observe that the Saxons derived their name from the saxes, or long knives, which they wore at their sides, and at the use of which they were terribly proficient."

Even so, Borrow's personal vitality triumphs, as it does over his many mistakes, such as Lledach for Clydach, in Welsh orthography. There is perhaps hardly such a thing as prose which shall be accounted perfect by every different age: but what is most important of all, the harmony of style which gradually steals upon the reader and subjects him to incalculable minor effects, is not the property of any one age, but of every age; and Victorian prose in general, and Borrow's in particular, attains it. "Wild Wales" is rough in grain; it can be long-winded, slovenly and dull: but it can also be read; and if the whole, or any large portion, be read continuously it will give a lively and true impression of a beautiful, diverse country, of a distinctive people, and of a number of vivid men and women, including Borrow himself. It is less rich than "The Bible in Spain," less atmospheric than "Lavengro." It is Borrow's for reasons which lie open to the view, not on account of any hidden pervasive quality. Thus what exaggeration there is may easily be seen, as when a fallow deer is described as equal to a bull in size, or when carn-lleidydr is said to be one "who, being without house and home, was more desperate than other thieves, and as savage and brutish as the wolves and foxes with whom he occasionally shared his pillow, the earn." As a rule he keeps us upon an everyday normal plane. The bard of Anglesey and the man who attends upon him come through no ivory gate:

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"They saluted me; I returned their salutation, and then we all three stood still looking at one another. One of the men was rather a tall figure, about forty, dressed in grey, or pepper-and-salt, with a cap of some kind on his head, his face was long and rather good-looking, though slightly pock-broken. There was a peculiar gravity upon it. The other person was somewhat about sixty—he was much shorter than his companion, and much worse dressed—he wore a hat that had several holes in it, a dusty, rusty black coat, much too large for him; ragged yellow velveteen breeches, indifferent fustian gaiters, and shoes, cobbled here and there, one of which had rather an ugly bulge by the side near the toes. His mouth was exceedingly wide, and his nose remarkably long; its extremity of a deep purple; upon his features was a half-simple smile or leer; in his hand was a long stick."

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DOLAUCOTHY HOUSE

(From a photograph by Lady Pretymau, by whose kind permission it is reproduced)

My last example shall be the house of Dolau Cothi, near Pumpsaint, in Caermarthenshire:

"After breakfast I departed for Llandovery. Presently I came to a lodge on the left-hand beside an ornamental gate at the bottom of an avenue leading seemingly to a gentleman's seat. On inquiring of a woman who sat at the door of the lodge to whom the grounds belonged, she said to Mr. Johnes, and that if I pleased I was welcome to see them. I went in and advanced along the avenue, which consisted of very noble oaks; on the right was a vale in which a beautiful brook was running north and south. Beyond the vale to the east were fine wooded hills. I thought I had never seen a more pleasing locality, though I saw it to great disadvantage, the day being dull, and the season the latter fall. Presently, on the avenue making a slight turn, I saw the house, a plain but comfortable gentleman's seat with wings. It looked to the south down the dale. 'With what satisfaction I could live in that house,' said I to myself, 'if backed by a couple of thousands a-year. With what gravity could I sign a warrant in its library, and with what dreamy comfort translate an ode of Lewis Glyn Cothi, my tankard of rich ale beside me. I wonder whether the proprietor is fond of the old bard and keeps good ale. Were I an Irishman instead of a Norfolk man I would go in and ask him.'"

To the merit of this the whole book, perhaps the whole of Borrow's work, contributes. Simple-looking tranquil successes of this kind are the privilege of a master, and when they occur they proclaim the master with a voice which, though gentle, will find but few confessing to be deaf to it. They are not frequent in "Wild Wales." Borrow had set himself too difficult a task to succeed altogether with his methods and at his age. Wales was not unknown land; De Quincey, Shelley,

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and Peacock, had been there in his own time; and Borrow had not sufficient impulse or opportunity to transfigure it as he had done Spain; nor had he the time behind him, if he had the power still, to treat it as he had done the country of his youth in "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye."

CHAPTER XXXII—"ROMANO LAVO-LIL"

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Ambition, with a little revenge, helped to impel Borrow to write "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye." Some of this ambition was left over for "Wild Wales," which he began and finished before the publication of "The Romany Rye." There was little of any impulse left for the writing of books after "Wild Wales." In 1862 and 1863 he published in "Once a Week" some translations in prose and verse, from Manx, Russian, Danish and Norse—one poem, on Harald Harfagr, being illustrated by Frederick Sandys. He never published the two-volume books, advertised as "ready for the press" in 1857, "Celtic Bards, Chiefs, and Kings," "Kaempe Viser . . . translated from the Ancient Danish," "Northern Skalds, Kings and Earls."

Borrow was living in Hereford Square, seeing many people, occasionally dining well, walking out into the suburban country, and visiting the Gypsy camps in London. He made notes of his observations and conversations, which, says Knapp, "are not particularly edifying," whatever that may mean. Knapp gives one example from the manuscript, describing the race at Brompton, on October 14, 1861, between Deerfoot, the Seneca Indian, and Jackson, the "American Deer." Borrow also wrote for the "Antiquities of the Royal School of Norwich," an autobiography too long for insertion. This survived to be captured and printed by Knapp. It is very inaccurate, but it serves to corroborate parts of "Lavengro," and its inaccuracy, though now transparent, is characteristically exaggerated or picturesque.

Borrow's scattered notes would perhaps never have been published in his lifetime, but for an accident. In 1870 Charles Godfrey Leland, author of "Hans Breitmann," introduced himself to Borrow as one who had read "The Zincali," "Lavengro," and "The Romany Rye," five times. Borrow answered that he would be pleased to see him at any time. They met and Leland sent Borrow his "Breitmann Ballads" because of the German Romany ballad in it, and his "Music Lesson of Confucius" because of the poem in it inspired by Borrow's reference to Svend Vonved in "The Romany Rye." Leland confessed in a genial familiar way what "an incredible influence" Borrow's books had had on him, and thanked him for the "instructions in 'The Romany Rye' as to taking care of a horse on a thirty-mile ride." Borrow became jealous of this American "Romany Rye." Leland, suspecting nothing, wrote offering him the dedication of his "English Gypsies." John Murray assured Leland that Borrow received this letter, but it was never acknowledged except by the speedy announcement of a new book—"Romano Lavo-Lil: a word book of the Romany or English Gypsy Language, by George Borrow, with specimens of Gypsy poetry, and an account of certain Gypsyries or places inhabited by them, and of various things relating to Gypsy life in England." Leland speaks of the affair in "The Gypsies," saying that he had nothing but pleasant memories of the good old Romany Rye:

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"A grand old fellow he was—a fresh and hearty giant, holding his six-feet-two or three inches as uprightly at eighty as he ever had at eighteen. I believe that was his age, but may be wrong. Borrow was like one of the old Norse heroes, whom he so much admired, or an old-fashioned Gypsy bruiser, full of craft and merry tricks. One of these he played on me, and I bear him no malice for it. The manner of the joke was this: I had written a book on the English Gypsies and their language; but before I announced it, I wrote a letter to Father George, telling him that I proposed to print it, and asking his permission to dedicate it to him. He did not answer the letter, but 'worked the tip' promptly enough, for he immediately announced in the newspapers on the following Monday his 'Word-book of the Romany Language,' 'with many pieces in Gypsy, illustrative of the way of speaking and thinking of the English Gypsies, with specimens of their poetry, and an account of various things relating to Gypsy life in England.' This was exactly what I had told him that my book would contain. . . . I had no ill-feeling about it.

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"My obligations to him for 'Lavengro' and 'The Romany Rye' and his other works are such as I owe to few men. I have enjoyed Gypsying more than any other sport in the world, and I owe my love of it to George Borrow."

"The English Gypsies" appeared in 1873, and the "Romano Lavo-Lil" in 1874.

"Romano Lavo-Lil" contains a note on the English Gypsy language, a word-book, some Gypsy songs and anecdotes with English translations, a list of Gypsy names of English counties and towns, and accounts of several visits to Gypsy camps in London and the country. It was hastily put together, and the word-book, for example, did not include all the Romany used in "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye." There were now critics capable of discovering other shortcomings.

Borrow's book was reviewed along with Leland's "English Gypsies" and Dr. Miklosich's "Dialects and Migrations of the Gypsies in Europe," and he was attacked for his derivations, his ignorance of philology and of other writers on his subject, his sketchy knowledge of languages, his interference with the purity of the idiom in his Romany specimens. His Gypsy songs were found interesting, his translations, of course, bad. The final opinion of the book as a book on the Gypsy language was: {310}

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"Whether or not Mr. Borrow has in the course of his long experience become the *deep* Gypsy which he has always been supposed to be, we cannot say; but it is certain that his present book contains little more than he gave to the public forty years ago, and does not by any means represent the present state of knowledge on the subject. But at the present day, when comparative philology has made such strides, and when want of accurate scholarship is as little tolerated in strange and remote languages as in classical literature, the 'Romano Lavo-Lil' is, to speak mildly, an anachronism."

Nor, apart from the word-book and Gypsy specimens, is the book a good example of Borrow's writing. The accounts of visits to Gypsies at Kirk Yetholm, Wandsworth, Pottery Lane (Notting Hill), and Friar's Mount (Shore-ditch), are interesting as much for what they tell us of Borrow's recreations in London as for anything else. The portrait of the "dark, mysterious, beautiful, terrible" Mrs. Cooper, the story of Clara Bosvil, the life of Ryley Bosvil—"a thorough Gypsy, versed in all the arts of the old race, had two wives, never went to church, and considered that when a man died he was cast into the earth, and there was an end of him"—and his death and burial ceremony, and some of Borrow's own opinions, for example, in favour of Pontius Pilate and George IV.—these are simple and vigorous in the old style. They show that with a sufficient impulse he could have written another book at least equal to "Wild Wales." But these uneven fragments were not worthy of the living man. They were the sort of thing that his friends might have been expected to gather up after he was dead. Scraps like this from "Wisdom of the Egyptians," are well enough:

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"'My father, why were worms made?' 'My son, that moles might live by eating them.' 'My father, why were moles made?' 'My son, that you and I might live by catching them.' 'My father, why were you and I made?' 'My son, that worms might live by eating us.'"

Related to Borrow, and to a living Gypsy, by Borrow's pen, how much better! It is a book that can be browsed on again and again, but hardly ever without this thought. It was the result of ambition, and might have been equal to its predecessors, but competition destroyed the impulse of ambition and spoilt the book.

"Romano Lavo-Lil" was his last book. For posthumous publication he left only "The Turkish Jester; or, The Pleasantries of Cogia Nasr Eddin Effendi, translated from the Turkish by G. B." (Ipswich, 1884). This was a string of the sayings and adventures of one Cogia, in this style: "One day Cogia Nasr Eddin Effendi said: 'O Mussulmen, give thanks to God Most High that He did not give the camel wings; for had He given them, they would have perched upon your houses and chimneys, and have caused them to tumble down upon your heads.'" This may have been the translation from the Turkish that Fitzgerald read in 1857 and could not admire. It is a diverting book and illustrates Borrow's taste.

CHAPTER XXXIII—LAST YEARS

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From 1860 to 1874 Borrow lived at Brompton, and perhaps because he wrote few letters these years seem to have been more cheerful, except at the time of his wife's death. He is seen at "The Star and Garter" in 1861 entertaining Murray and two others at dinner, in a heavy and expensive style. He is still an uncomfortable, unattractive figure in a drawing-room, especially with accurate and intelligent ladies, like Miss Frances Power Cobbe, who would not humour his inaccurate dictatorship. Miss Cobbe was his neighbour in Hereford Square. She says that if he was not a Gypsy by blood he ought to have been one; she "never liked him, thinking him more or less of a hypocrite," but nevertheless invited him to her house and tried to console him in his bereavement by a gentle tact which was not tact in Borrow's case:

"Poor old Borrow is in a sad state. I hope he is starting in a day or two for Scotland. I sent C--- with a note begging him to come and eat the Welsh mutton you sent me to-day, and he sent back word, 'Yes.' Then, an hour afterwards, he arrived, and in a most agitated manner said he had come to say 'he would rather not. He would not trouble anyone with his sorrows.' I made him sit down, and talked to him as gently as possible, saying: 'It won't be a trouble, Mr. Borrow, it will be a pleasure to me.' But it was all of no use. He was so cross, so *rude*, I had the greatest difficulty in talking to him. I asked him would he look at the photos of the Siamese, and he said: 'Don't show them to me!' So, in despair, as he sat silent, I told him I had been at a pleasant dinner-party the night before, and had met Mr. L---, who told me of certain curious books of mediæval history. 'Did he know them?' 'No, and he *dared say* Mr. L--- did not, either! Who was Mr. L---?' I described that *obscure* individual (one of the foremost writers of the day), and added that he was immensely liked by everybody. Whereupon Borrow repeated at least twelve times, 'Immensely liked! As if a man could be immensely liked!' quite insultingly. To make a diversion (I was very patient with him as he was in trouble) I said I had just come home from the Lyell's and had heard . . . But there was no time to say what I had heard! Mr. Borrow asked: 'Is that old Lyle I met here once, the man who stands at the door (of some den or other) and *bets*?' I explained who Sir Charles was (of course he knew very well), but he went on and on, till I said gravely: 'I don't think you meet those sort of people here, Mr. Borrow—we don't associate with Blacklegs, exactly.'"

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A cantankerous man, and as little fitted for Miss Cobbe as Miss Cobbe for him.



FRANCIS POWER COBBE

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There is not one pleasant story of Borrow in a drawing-room. His great and stately stature, his bright "very black" or "soft brown" eyes, thick white hair, and smooth oval face, his "loud rich voice" that could be menacing with nervousness when he was roused, his "bold heroic air," [{313}](#) ever encased in black raiment to complete the likeness to a "colossal clergyman," never seemed to go with any kind of furniture, wall-paper, or indoor company where there were strangers who might pester him. His physical vigour endured, though when nearing sixty he is said to have lamented that he was childless, saying mournfully: "I shall soon not be able to knock a man down, and I have no son to do it for me." [{314a}](#) No record remains of his knocking any man down. But, at seventy, he could have walked off with E. J. Trelawny, Shelley's friend, under his arm, and was not averse to putting up his "dukes" to a tramp if necessary. [{314b}](#) At Ascot in 1872 he intervened when two or three hundred soldiers from Windsor were going to wreck a Gypsy camp for some affront. Amid the cursing and screaming and brandishing of belts and tent-rods appeared "an arbiter, a white-haired brown-eyed calm Colossus, speaking Romany fluently, and drinking deep draughts of ale—in a quarter of an hour Tommy Atkins and Anselo Stanley were sworn friends over a loving quart." [{314c}](#) But this is told by Hindes Groome, who said in one place that he met Borrow once, and in another three times. At seventy, he would breakfast at eight in Hereford Square, walk to Roehampton and pick up Mr. Watts-Dunton or Mr. Hake, roam about Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park, bathe in the Pen Ponds even if it were March and there were ice on the water, then run about to dry, and after fasting for twelve hours would eat a dinner at Roehampton "that would have done Sir Walter Scott's eyes good to see." [{314d}](#) He loved Richmond Park, and "seemed to know every tree." [{314e}](#) He loved also "The Bald-faced Stag," in Roehampton Valley, and over his pot of ale would talk about Jerry Abershaw, the highwayman, and his deeds performed in the neighbourhood. [{314f}](#) If he liked old Burton and '37 port he was willing to drink the worst swipes if necessary. [{314g}](#)

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At another "Bald-faced Hind," above Fairlop, he used to see the Gypsies, for it was their trysting place. He went in search of them in Wandsworth and Battersea and wherever they were to be found, from Notting Hill to Epsom Downs, though they were corrupted by loss of liberty and, in his opinion, were destined soon to disappear, "merged in the dregs of the English population." With them, as with others, his vocabulary was "rich in picturesque words of the high road and dingle." Once he consented to join a friend in trying Matthew Arnold's "Scholar Gypsy" on Gypsy taste. The Gypsy girl was pleased with the seventeenth-century story on which the poem is based, and with some "lovely bits of description," but she was in the main at first bewildered, and at last unsympathetic and ran away. The beauty of the girl was too much for Borrow's power of expression—it was "really quite—quite—" The girl's companion, a young woman with a child, was smoking a pipe, and Borrow took it out of her mouth and asked her not to smoke till he came

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again, because the child was sickly and his friend put it down to the tobacco. "It ought to be a criminal offence for a woman to smoke at all," said Borrow; "fancy kissing a woman's mouth that smelt of stale tobacco—pheugh!" {315} Whether this proves Borrow's susceptibility to female charm I cannot say, but it seems to me rather to prove a sort of connoisseurship, which is not the same thing.

Just after he was seventy, in 1874, the year of Jasper Petulengro's death, Borrow left London for Oulton. He was no longer the walker and winter bather of a year or two before, but was frequently at lodgings in Norwich, and seen and noted as he walked in the streets or sat in the "Norfolk." At Oulton he was much alone and was to be heard "by startled rowers on the lake" chanting verses after his fashion. His remarkable appearance, his solitariness in the neglected house and tangled garden, his conversation with Gypsies whom he allowed to camp on his land, created something of a legend. Children called after him "Gypsy!" or "Witch!" {316} Towards the end he was joined at Oulton by his stepdaughter and her husband, Dr. MacOubrey. In 1879 he was too feeble to walk a few hundred yards, and furious with a man who asked his age. In 1880 he made his will. On July 26, 1881, when he was left entirely alone for the day, he died, after having expected death for some time. He was taken to West Brompton to be buried in that cemetery beside his wife.

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CONCLUSION

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In his introduction to "The Romany Rye," {317} Hindes Groome gave a long list of Romany Ryes to show that Borrow was neither the only one nor the first. He went on to say that there must have been over a dozen Englishmen, in 1874, with a greater knowledge of the Anglo-Gypsy dialect than Borrow showed in "Romano Lavo-Lil." He added that Borrow's knowledge "of the strange history of the Gypsies was very elementary, of their manners almost more so, and of their folk-lore practically *nil*." And yet, he concluded, he "would put George Borrow above every other writer on the Gypsies. . . . He communicates a subtle insight into Gypsydom that is totally wanting in the works—mainly philological—of Pott, Liebich . . . and their *confrères*." Hindes Groome was speaking, too, from the point of view of a Romany student, not of a critic of human literature. In the same way Borrow stands above other English writers on Spain and Wales, for the insight and life that are lacking in the works of the authorities.

As a master of the living word, Borrow's place is high, and it is unnecessary to make other claims for him. He was a wilful roamer in literature and the world, who attained to no mastery except over words. If there were many Romany Ryes before Borrow, as there were great men before Agamemnon, there was not another Borrow, as there was not another Homer.

He sings himself. He creates a wild Spain, a wild England, a wild Wales, and in them places himself, the Gypsies, and other wildish men, and himself again. His outstanding character, his ways and gestures, irresistible even when offensive, hold us while he is in our presence. In these repressed indoor days, we like a swaggering man who does justice to the size of the planet. We run after biographies of extraordinary monarchs, poets, bandits, prostitutes, and see in them magnificent expansions of our fragmentary, undeveloped, or mistaken selves. We love strange mighty men, especially when they are dead and can no longer rob us of property, sleep, or life: we can handle the great hero or blackguard by the fireside as easily as a cat. Borrow, as his books portray him, is admirably fitted to be our hero. He stood six-feet-two and was so finely made that, in spite of his own statement which could not be less than true, others have declared him six-feet-three and six-feet-four. He could box, ride, walk, swim, and endure hardship. He was adventurous. He was solitary. He was opinionated and a bully. He was mysterious: he impressed all and puzzled many. He spoke thirty languages and translated their poetry into verse.

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Moreover, he ran away. He ran away from school as a boy. He ran away from London as a youth. He ran away from England as a man. He ran away from West Brompton as an old man, to the Gypsyries of London. He went out into the wilderness and he savoured of it. His running away from London has something grand and allegorical about it. It reminds me of the Welshman on London Bridge, carrying a hazel stick which a strange old man recognised as coming from Craig-y-Dinas, and at the old man's bidding he went to Craig-y-Dinas and to the cave in it, and found Arthur and his knights sleeping and a great treasure buried. . .



Photo: W. J. Roberts

THE GIPSYRIE AT BATTERSEA

In these days when it is a remarkable thing if an author has his pocket picked, or narrowly escapes being in a ship that is wrecked, or takes poison when he is young, even the outline of Borrow's life is attractive. Like Byron, Ben Jonson, and Chaucer, he reminds us that an author is not bound to be a nun with a beard. He depicts himself continually, at all ages, and in all conditions of pathos or pride. Other human beings, with few exceptions, he depicts only in relation to himself. He never follows men and women here and there, but reveals them in one or two concentrated hours; and either he admires or he dislikes, and there is no mistaking it. Thus his humour is limited by his egoism, which leads him into extravagance, either to his own advantage or to the disadvantage of his enemies.

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He kept good company from his youth up. Wistful or fancifully envious admiration for the fortunate simple yeomen, or careless poor men, or noble savages, or untradesmanlike fishermen, or unromanized *Germani*, or animals who do not fret about their souls, admiration for those in any class who are not for the fashion of these days, is a deep-seated and ancient sentiment, akin to the sentiment for childhood and the golden age. Borrow met a hundred men fit to awaken and satisfy this admiration in an age when thousands can over-eat and over-dress in comfort all the days of their life. Sometimes he shows that he himself admires in this way, but more often he mingles with them as one almost on an equality with them, though his melancholy or his book knowledge is at times something of a foil. He introduces us to fighting men, jockeys, thieves, and ratcatchers, without our running any risk of contamination. Above all, he introduces us to the Gypsies, people who are either young and beautiful or strong, or else witch-like in a fierce old age.

Izaak Walton heard the Gypsies talking under the honeysuckle hedge at Waltham, and the beggar virgin singing:

"Bright shines the sun, play, beggars play!
Here's scraps enough to serve to-day."

Glanvill told of the poor Oxford scholar who went away with the Gypsies and learnt their "traditional kind of learning," and meant soon to leave them and give the world an account of what he had learned. Men like George Morland have lived for a time with Gypsies. Matthew Arnold elaborated Glanvill's tale in a sweet Oxford strain. All these things delight us. Some day we shall be pleased even with the Gypsy's carrion-eating and thieving, "those habits of the Gypsy, shocking to the moralist and sanitarian, and disgusting to the person of delicate stomach," which please Mr. W. H. Hudson "rather than the romance and poetry which the scholar-Gypsy enthusiasts are fond of reading into him." Borrow's Gypsies are wild and uncoddled and without sordidness, and will not soon be superseded. They are painted with a lively if ideal colouring, and they live only in his books. They will not be seen again until the day of Jefferies' wild England, "after London," shall come, and tents are pitched amidst the ruins of palaces that had displaced earlier tents. Borrow's England is the old England of Fielding, painted with more intensity because even as Borrow was travelling the change was far advanced, and when he was writing had been fulfilled. And now most people have to keep off the grass, except in remotest parts or in the neighbourhood of large towns where landowners are, to some extent, kept in their place. The rivers, the very roads, are not ours, as they were Borrow's. We go out to look for them still, and of those who adventure with caravan, tent, or knapsack, the majority must be consciously under Borrow's influence.

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Yet he was no mere lover and praiser of old times. His London in 1825 is more romantic than the later London of more deliberate romances: he found it romantic; he did not merely think it would be so if only we could see it. He loved the old and the wild too well to deface his feeling by more than an occasional comparison with the new and the refined, and these comparisons are not effective.

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He is best when he is without apparent design. As a rule if he has a design it is too obvious: he exaggerates, uses the old-fashioned trick of re-appearance and recognition, or breaks out into

heavy eloquence of description or meditation. These things show up because he is the most "natural" of writers. His style is a modification of the style of his age, and is without the consistent personal quality of other vigorous men's, like Hazlitt or Cobbett. Perhaps English became a foreign language like his other thirty. Thus his books have no professional air, and they create without difficulty the illusion of reality. This lack of a literary manner, this appearance of writing like everybody else in his day, combines, with his character and habits, to endear him to a generation that has had its Pater and may find Stevenson too silky.

More than most authors Borrow appears greater than his books, though he is their offspring. It is one of his great achievements to have made his books bring forth this lusty and mysterious figure which moves to and fro in all of them, worthy of the finest scenes and making the duller ones acceptable. He is not greater than his books in the sense that he is greater than the sum of them: as a writer he made the most out of his life. But in the flesh he was a fine figure of a man, and what he wrote has added something, swelling him to more than human proportions, stranger and more heroic. So we come to admire him as a rare specimen of the *genus homo*, who had among other faculties that of writing English; and at last we have him armed with a pen that is mightier than a sword, but with a sword as well, and what he writes acquires a mythical value. Should his writing ever lose the power to evoke this figure, it might suffer heavily. We to-day have many temptations to over praise him, because he is a Great Man, a big truculent outdoor wizard, who comes to our doors with a marvellous company of Gypsies and fellows whose like we shall never see again and could not invent. When we have used the impulse he may give us towards a ruder liberty, he may be neglected; but I cannot believe that things so much alive as many and many a page of Borrow will ever die.

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Footnotes:

- [{1}](#) Thomas Seccombe; introduction to "Lavengro" (Everyman).
- [{2}](#) "Gypsy Lore," Jan., 1910.
- [{3}](#) "Lavengro," Chapter VI.
- [{13a}](#) Knapp I., 62-4.
- [{13b}](#) II., 207.
- [{17a}](#) Good-day.
- [{17b}](#) Glandered horse.
- [{17c}](#) Two brothers.
- [{18a}](#) Christmas, literally Wine-day.
- [{18b}](#) Irishman or beggar, literally a dirty squalid person.
- [{18c}](#) Guineas.
- [{19a}](#) Silver teapots.
- [{19b}](#) The Gypsy word for a certain town (Norwich).
- [{30}](#) Suppressed MS. of "Lavengro," quoted in Knapp I., 36.
- [{31}](#) Knapp I., 25.
- [{50}](#) "Lavengro."
- [{68}](#) See "Panthera" in "Time's Laughing Stocks," by Thomas Hardy.
- [{71a}](#) J. Ewing Ritchie.
- [{71b}](#) Dr. Knapp, I., 79, connects this question with Captain Borrow's last will and testament, made on Feb. 11, 1822.
- [{72}](#) "George Borrow: the Man and His Work," 1908.
- [{75a}](#) Translation published, Norwich, 1825, anonymous.
- [{75b}](#) Translation published, London, Jarrold & Sons, 1889.
- [{85}](#) "Romantic Ballads."
- [{87}](#) "The Gypsies."
- [{93a}](#) "The Romany Rye," edited by F. Hindes Groome.
- [{93b}](#) Translated, 1828.
- [{96}](#) "Isopel Berners."
- [{97}](#) Knapp, I., 105.
- [{114}](#) See "Wild Wales," Chapter XXXIII.
- [{126}](#) Borrow's Letters to the Bible Society: Introduction, p. 2.
- [{128a}](#) Borrow's Letters to the Bible Society, p. 469.
- [{128b}](#) *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- [{128c}](#) *Ibid.*, p. 280.
- [{128d}](#) *Ibid.*, p. 342.
- [{129a}](#) Borrow's Letters to the Bible Society, p. 20.
- [{129b}](#) *Ibid.*, p. 364.
- [{130}](#) Borrow's Letters to the Bible Society, p. 8.
- [{132}](#) August 20, 1836.
- [{137}](#) Wentworth Webster, in "Journal of Gypsy Lore Society."
- [{139}](#) "Borrow's Letters to the Bible Society," p. 271.
- [{140}](#) "Borrow's Letters to the Bible Society," p. 334.
- [{144}](#) Letter to the Bible Society, 25th Nov., 1839.
- [{148}](#) "Edinburgh Review," February, 1843.

[{154}](#) The hostess, Maria Diaz, and her son Juan José Lopez, were present when the outcast uttered these prophetic words.

[{163a}](#) Edited by T. H. Darlow, Hodder and Stoughton.

[{163b}](#) See, e.g., "Bible in Spain," Chapter XIII. "I shall have frequent occasion to mention the Swiss in the course of *these Journals* . . ."; also the preface.

[{163c}](#) *Ibid.*, p. 445.

[{173}](#) Borrow's Letters to the Bible Society, p. 391.

[{181}](#) Knapp, I., p. 270.

[{184}](#) Witch. Ger. Hexe.

[{187}](#) Fake.

[{201}](#) Egmont Hake; "Athenæum," 13th August, 1881.

[{205}](#) "George Borrow in East Anglia," by W. A. Dutt.

[{206}](#) T. Watts-Dunton in "Lavengro" (Minerva Library).

[{208}](#) "Memoirs of 80 years," by Gordon Hake.

[{209}](#) "Edward Fitzgerald," A. C. Benson.

[{210a}](#) "Athenæum," July, 1893.

[{210b}](#) Knapp and W. A. Dutt.

[{212}](#) See Chapters II., III., and IV.

[{218a}](#) R. A. J. Walling.

[{218b}](#) "Athenæum," 25th March, 1889.

[{220}](#) "Lavengro" (Minerva Library).

[{221a}](#) "In Gypsy Tents."

[{221b}](#) March 25th, 1899.

[{242}](#) "Isopel Berners."

[{250}](#) "Isopel Berners," edited by Thomas Seccombe.

[{270a}](#) Vol. XXII., 1910.

[{270b}](#) Merlin's Bridge, on the outskirts of Haverfordwest.

[{270c}](#) Merlin's Hill.

[{270d}](#) River Daucleddau. The river at Haverfordwest is the Western Cleddau; it joins the Eastern Cleddau about six miles below the town. Both rivers then become known as Daucleddau or the two Cleddaus.

[{270e}](#) Borrow means Milford Haven; the swallowing capacities of the Western Cleddau are small.

[{270f}](#) North-west.

[{271a}](#) Pelcomb Bridge.

[{271b}](#) Camrose parish.

[{271c}](#) Appropriately known as Tinker's Bank.

[{271d}](#) Dr. Knapp was unable to decipher this word. He remarks in a note that the pencillings are much rubbed and almost illegible. We think, however, that the word should be Plumstone, a lofty hill which Borrow would see just before he crossed Pelcomb Bridge.

[{271e}](#) This was a low thatched cottage on the St. David's road, half-way up Keeston Hill. A few years ago it was demolished, and a new and more commodious building known as the Hill Arms erected on its site.

[{271f}](#) The old inn was kept by the blind woman, whose name was Mrs. Lloyd. Many stories are related of her wonderful cleverness in managing her business, and it is said that no customer was ever able to cheat her with a bad coin. Her blindness was the result of an attack of small-pox when twelve years of age.

[{271g}](#) Dr. Knapp's insertion.

[{271h}](#) It is doubtful if there was a chapel; no one remembers it.

[{272a}](#) Nanny Dallas is a mistake. No such name is remembered by the oldest inhabitants, and it seems certain that the woman Borrow met was Nanny Lawless, who lived at Simpson a short

distance away.

[{272b}](#) Evan Rees, of Summerhill (a mile south-east of Roch).

[{272c}](#) Sger-lâs and Sger-ddu, two isolated rocky islets off Solva Harbour. The headlands are the numerous prominences which jut out along the north shore of St. Bride's Bay.

[{272d}](#) Newgale Bridge.

[{272e}](#) Jemmy Raymond. "Remaunt" is the local pronunciation. Jemmy and his ass appear to have been two well-known figures in Roch thirty or forty years ago; the former died about the year 1886.

[{272f}](#) Pen-y-cwm.

[{272g}](#) Davies the carpenter was undoubtedly the man; he was noted for his stature. Dim-yn-clywed—deaf.

[{310}](#) "Athenæum," 25th April, 1874.

[{313}](#) A. Egmont Hake.

[{314a}](#) Whitwell Elwin.

[{314b}](#) T. Watts-Dunton.

[{314c}](#) F. Hindes Groome.

[{314d}](#) T. Watts-Dunton.

[{314e}](#) *Ibid.*

[{314f}](#) A. Egmont Hake.

[{314g}](#) *Ibid.*

[{315}](#) T. Watts-Dunton.

[{316}](#) Thomas Seccombe: "Everyman" edition of "Lavengro."

[{317}](#) Methuen & Co.

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