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JOHN BUNYAN AND THE GIPSIES.

BY

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"SIMSON'S HISTORY OF THE GIPSIES,"

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"CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATURAL HISTORY AND PAPERS ON OTHER SUBJECTS"; "CHARLES WATERTON"; "THE ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES AND JOHN BUNYAN"; "THE SCOTTISH CHURCHES AND THE GIPSIES"; AND "REMINISCENCES OF CHILDHOOD AT INVERKEITHING, OR LIFE AT A LAZARETTO."

"According to the fair play of the world,
Let me have audience."—SHAKSPEARE.

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JAMES SIMSON

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PREFACE.

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Although what is contained in the following pages should explain itself, a few prefatory remarks may not be out of place. In the *Scottish Churches and the Gipsies* I said that, "in regard to the belief about the destiny of the Gipsies," "almost all have joined in it, as something established"—

that "the Gipsies 'cease to be Gipsies' by conforming, in a great measure, with the dress and habits of others, and keeping silence as to their being members of the race;" and that "in bringing forward this subject for discussion and action I thus find the way barred in every direction." Although I have said that the belief about the disappearance, or rather the *extinction*, of the race has been tacitly if not formally maintained by almost everyone, "no one seems inclined to give a reason for this belief in regard to the destiny of the Gipsies, nor an intelligible definition of the word Gipsy."

This is the position in which the Gipsy problem stands to-day. The latest work on the subject which I have seen is that of *The Gipsies* (New York, 1882), by Mr. Leland, so fully reviewed in the following pages. He leaves the question, in its most important meaning, just where he found it; and confesses that it has "puzzled and muddled" him. In 1874 I wrote in *Contributions to Natural History, etc.*, as follows:—

"What becomes of the Gipsies is a question that cannot be settled by reference to any of Mr. Borrow's writings, although these contain a few incidental remarks that throw some light on it when information of a positive and circumstantial nature is added" (p. 120).

In offering to a London journal the double-article on *Mr. Leland on the Gipsies* I said, on the 30th May, 1882:—

"I admit that it is a very difficult and delicate matter for a journal to 'go back on' a position once taken up on any question; but I think that if you admit the intended article the point will be gained, without any responsibility on the part of the journal or editor;" and that the insertion of it would put the journal "in its proper position before the world, without recanting anything." I further wrote that "Purely literary journals must necessarily labour under great disadvantages when called on to notice a book on a very special subject, unless they can find a writer who can do it for them."

If all that has been written on the Gipsies "ceasing to be Gipsies," under any circumstances, "be allowed to go uncontradicted, it will become rooted in the public mind, and gather credit as time goes by, making it daily more difficult to set it aside, and allow truth to take its place"—as I wrote in reply to two fulsome eulogies on Charles Waterton. p. 4

There are various phenomena connected with the subject of the Gipsies; not the least striking one being the popular impression about the *extinction* of the *race* by its *changing its habits*, which has been arrived at without investigation and evidence, and against all analogy and the "nature of things." So fully has this idea taken possession of the public mind that a hearing on the true position of the question can scarcely be had. One purpose this has served, that it has saved the public almost every serious thought or care in regard to its duty towards the race, and relieved it of every *ultimate* responsibility connected with it. But that is not a becoming position for any people to occupy—that of getting rid of its obligations by ignoring them. In 1871 I wrote thus:—

"The subject of the Gipsies, so far as it is understood . . . presents little interest to the world if it means only a *certain style of life* that may *cease at any moment*; in which case it would be deserving of little notice."

But all of the aspects connected with the popular idea of a Gipsy are of interest and importance when they represent the primitive condition of a people who sooner or later pass into a more or less settled condition, and look back to the style of life of their ancestors. In this respect the Gipsies differ from most of the wild races, inasmuch as they become perpetuated, especially in English-speaking countries, by those of more or less mixed blood. In regard to that I wrote thus in the *Disquisition on the Gipsies*:—

"The fact of these Indians, and the aboriginal races found in the countries colonized by Europeans, disappearing so rapidly, prevents our regarding them with any great degree of interest. This circumstance detracts from that idea of dignity which the perpetuity and civilization of their race would inspire in the minds of others" (p. 446).

If the "ordinary inhabitant" considers for a moment what his feelings are for everything Gipsy, so far as he understands it, he will realize in some degree the responding feelings of the Gipsies, whatever their positions in life. These create two currents in society—the native and the Gipsy; so that the Gipsy element by marrying with the Gipsy element, or in the same way drawing in and assimilating the native blood with it, keeps the Gipsy current in full flow, and distinct from the other. The Gipsy element, mixed as it is in regard to blood, never having been acknowledged, necessarily exists incognito, and in an outcast condition, however painful it is to use such an expression towards people that have lived so long in the British Isles, and are frequently of unquestionable standing in society; with nothing, in many instances, to distinguish them outwardly from the rest of the population, but possessing signs and words, and a cast of mind peculiar to themselves, that is, a sense of tribe and a soul of nationality, which remain with their descendants.

This subject is not conventional, but will doubtless sooner or later become such, as there are things conventional to-day that were not such lately. In that respect the discussion or even the sentiments of a prominent person or journal can make a thing conventional; such is the nature of p. 5

a highly complex society anywhere. With reference to this matter I wrote to the journal alluded to in the following terms:—

“Surely the strange and unfortunate Gipsy race and its various off-shoots have not sinned beyond the forgiveness of the rest of their fellow-creatures, so that what represents a relatively-large body of British subjects cannot be acknowledged even by name; leaving to others to look upon or associate with them as each member of the native race may see fit.”

One would naturally think that the inhabitants of Great Britain would at least take some little interest in what might be called their “coloured population;” and hold in respect *some* of its members who could doubtless tell us much that is interesting on the subject of the Gipsies, so that that should not be a reproach to them which would be a credit to others. To do so, and have the people, in some form or other, acknowledged, is due to the spirits of research and philanthropy that characterize this age. I admit that there are many difficulties attending a movement of this kind. These I have explained fully on previous occasions, and I need not repeat them here.

In regard to John Bunyan having been of the Gipsy race, I find that I stated the question in *Notes and Queries* on the 12th December, 1857; so that it has stood over, like a “case in Chancery” under the old system, for a quarter of a century, unattended to!

This little publication is intended in the first place for the British Press, although I cannot be expected to send every journal a copy of it. Each publication in its sphere has an influence, which should be exercised in the way indicated; for here there is no opening for the display of those passions that too frequently enter into discussions generally. For myself personally (the last to be considered), although it is thirty-one years since I left Great Britain, I should still have some rights there; and especially among high-toned people, who should remember that one of the ends for which they were created was to see justice done to an absent person.

NEW YORK, July 1, 1882.

JOHN BUNYAN. TWO LETTERS TO AN ENGLISH CLERGYMAN. [7]

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I.

YOUR letter of the 14th April reached me after some delay. When you wrote it I presume you had not given your fullest consideration to the question raised by you. For when John Bunyan said that his “father’s house was of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land,” and that they were “not of the Israelites,” that is, “not Jews,” he could not possibly have meant that they were what are generally called “natives of England.” Who in Bunyan’s time were the “meanest and most despised of *all* the families in the land”? No one can doubt that they were the Gipsies, who were numerous and well known to Bunyan. Does it not then follow that this particular Bunyan family were Gipsies, in whatever ways and at whatever times its blood may have got mixed with native, and whatever its social development? And who then living in England—when Jews were excluded from it—would have taken so much trouble as Bunyan did—that is, exhausted every means at his command—to ascertain whether their family were Jews but Gipsies? This Bunyan did, and recorded the fact of his having done it after he had become an old man. Here we have no alternative but to conclude that *John* Bunyan’s family were of the Gipsy race; whatever natives of a similar surname there might have been in the county or neighbourhood before the Gipsies arrived there. It is even possible in this case, as it has taken place in others, that a native family had been changed into a Gipsy one by the male representative of it marrying a Gipsy, but not necessarily one following an outdoor life, and having the issue passed into the Gipsy tribe in the ordinary way of society. There is neither proof to show nor reason for holding that John Bunyan’s family, in the face of what he told us, were *not* Gipsies, but of the ordinary race of Englishmen; for which reason I think that an honourable minded man should not maintain it, nor allow it to be asserted in his presence.

You say that the “rank” Bunyan spoke of was “the rank of tinkers, not the race of Gipsies.” But tinkering was his calling, while the word rank was only applicable to “his father’s house,” who probably did not all follow tinkering for a living. I do not think that Bunyan used the word tinker anywhere in his writings; the only allusion to it apparently being at the scene before Justice Hale, when his wife said, “Yes, and because he is a tinker, and a poor man, therefore he is despised and cannot have justice.” In my Disquisition on the Gipsies and elsewhere I attached weight to the fact of Bunyan having been a tinker, as illustrative and confirmatory proof of his having been a Gipsy, when the name of Gipsy was so severely proscribed by law; in consequence of which the Gipsies would call themselves tinkers, to evade the legal and social responsibility. At the present day it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain who English tinkers are or were originally. They will all deny that they are or were ever related to the Gipsies; and the Gipsies proper will do the same. I attach no weight to the loose assertions either way made by people promiscuously, who know little or nothing of the subject, or merely have a theory to maintain. All this I have already very

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fully put in print.

In your letter is a phrase that sounds a little unpleasantly to my ear. You say, "However, whatever may have been Bunyan's pedigree, he merits honour as a man;" which seems to imply that his memory would have been disgraced if he had been of the Gipsy race. Why should that have been a disparagement? This is the entire question at issue. How could we have expected Bunyan to have said plainly that he was a member of the Gipsy race in the face of the legal and social responsibility attaching to the name, as I have illustrated at great length on various occasions?

I may exaggerate the feeling in question when I say that no publication will admit the subject into its columns, nor any one allude to it publicly, or even privately, without something like losing social caste. As a consequence, no member of the race that can help it will own the blood unless he wants it to be known for his benefit. The rest of it, in its various mixtures of blood, characters, and positions in life, are born and live and die incognito so far as the rest of the world are concerned. This is a state of things that should not exist in England; but there seems no remedy for it unless the question can meet with discussion, and be taken up by persons of influence in whom the public has confidence. As I have said on another occasion, "The question at issue is really not one of evidence, but of an unfortunate feeling of caste," that bars the way against all investigation and proof. John Bunyan's nationality forms only a part of the subject of the "Social Emancipation of the Gipsies," but a very important part of it; but all that might be said of it has no meaning to such as, looking neither to the right nor the left, will listen to no representation of any kind of Gipsy but such as they have been accustomed to see in the open air in England.

It would be uncandid on my part if I refrained from saying that Bedford and its people have been cited before the bar of the world to show reason why John Bunyan should not be admitted to have been "the first (that is known to the world) of eminent Gipsies, the prince of allegorists, and one of the most remarkable of men and Christians." They have an opportunity of receiving, first or last, the illustrious pilgrim, not as the progeny of (as some have thought) native English vagabonds, but as a Great Original in whatever light he might be looked at.

In opposition to this view of the great dreamer, we have the ferocious prejudice of caste against the name of Gipsy, that leads a person to feel, if not to say, "May I lose my right hand and may I be struck dumb if I admit that he was one of the race." To him the subject of the Gipsies, in the development of the race from the tent upwards, and in its complex ramifications through society, has no interest. To comprehend it might even be beyond his capacity. To have it investigated and understood, and the people acknowledged, if it implied that John Bunyan was to be included as one of them, is what he will never countenance; on which account his wish is that the subject may remain in perpetual darkness. Proof is not what he wants, nor will he say what it should consist of. As regards John Bunyan personally, we have never had an explanation of what he told us he and his father's family were and were not; but we may yet see it treated with fanciful interpretations and comments. Then it has been said at random that he was "not a Gipsy, but a tinker," without considering who the tinkers really were, and forgetting that a person could have been both a tinker and a Gipsy; tinkering having been the Gipsy's representative calling. Then we have the assertion that he could not have been a Gipsy because of his fairish appearance, and because his surname existed in England before the race arrived in it; and consequently that no one having a fairish appearance and bearing a British name can or could have been a Gipsy! Then we are told that people following, more or less, the established ways of English life during 120 years before the birth of Bunyan could not possibly have been related in any way to the Gipsies! And finally, certificates of marriages, births and deaths of people bearing British names, taken from a parish register, settle the question that people bearing them were not and could not have been others than ordinary natives of the British Isles, in no way related to the Gipsies! In that respect I wrote in the Appendix to the *Reminiscences* as follows:—

"The whole trouble or mystery in regard to Bunyan is solved by the simple idea of a Gipsy family settling in the neighbourhood of native families of influence, whose surname they assumed, and making Elstow their headquarters or residence, as was the uniform custom of the tribe all over Great Britain. This circumstance makes it a difficult matter, in some instances, to distinguish, by the Christian and surnames in county parish registers, 'which was which,' so far back as the early part of the seventeenth century" (p. 82).

The pamphlet addressed to the "University Men of England" explains itself. I think that ministers of the Church of England should do more for the subject of the Gipsies, in the light in which I have presented it, than could be expected from those of other denominations.

With the hope that I have written nothing that can be considered in any way personally offensive, I remain, etc.

II.

In regard to what might be called the "nationality" of John Bunyan I said, in my letter of the 5th May, that "the question at issue is really not one of evidence, but of an unfortunate feeling of caste that bars the way against all investigation and proof." I do not know what the congregation of Bunyan's Church at Bedford consists of, but I presume it is composed of humble people, engaged in making a living and bringing up their children becomingly, and indulging in the simple conventionalities suitable to their positions in life. To ask them even to entertain the

question whether the great dreamer was of the Gipsy race would apparently horrify them in their simplicity; and it might be useless to attempt to explain matters so as to “convert” them to a belief in it. Proof is perhaps not what such people want, nor would they all be likely to be able to say what it should consist of, or to appreciate it if it was laid before them. It is from no lack of charity or politeness on my part that I say this, and that I would attach little weight to what they might say were they to assert that it is only proof they require to satisfy them that John Bunyan was of the Gipsy race; or that the fact of it has not been proved. He was either of the Gipsy race, of mixed blood, or of the ordinary English one. What proof is there that he was of the latter one? If there is no proof of his having been of the ordinary English race, why assert it, and deny that he was of the Gipsy one, and refuse to investigate the meaning of what he said himself and people were and were not, which, if language has any meaning, clearly showed that he was of the Gipsy race? Why assume, without investigation, that he was not that, but of the ordinary English race, even in the face of his calling having been that of a tinker?

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If the congregation of Bunyan’s chinch and the people living in the neighbourhood of it have a difficulty in judging of evidence in a matter like this, they can have none in explaining, in a general or more or less crude way at least, their feelings of antipathy to the idea of the illustrious pilgrim having been of the Gipsy race; and drawing the logical conclusion that he was not likely to have said plainly that he was one of it, in the face of the storm of indignation that seems to be entertained to-day; an indignation which is so great that it has not yet found expression.

If some highly educated men have missed the hinge on which the Gipsy question turns—that the race perpetuates itself in a settled condition, irrespective of character and other circumstances—and have had a difficulty in realizing it in all its bearings, we can easily excuse the congregation of Bunyan’s church for holding views similar to those of the community at large, on a subject that is more or less complex in its nature. But they can never expect to do justice to it unless they approach it with every desire to do what is proper, and not with the rooted aversion with which it has hitherto been regarded. What Bunyan told us of himself and family he said was “well known to many”; and he seems to have assumed that it was, or would have been, understood by the world. I have even suggested that he had been more precise with some of his friends, who might (as they very probably would) have suppressed what he told them in regard to the nationality of himself and his “father’s house.” If he had publicly said plainly that he was of the Gipsy race, that would have been a *fact*, which required no *proof*. But there was no necessity or occasion for him to have said what he did.

It appeals to every principle of fair play and abstract reason that a race that has been in Great Britain for 375 years must be considered in many respects British, whatever its origin, or whatever the habits of some of it may be. It would be very wrong to show and perpetuate a prejudice against the name, or blood as such, however little or however much there may be of it in the person possessing and claiming it. Everything else being equal, such a man, instead of having a prejudice entertained for him, is entitled to a greater respect than should be shown to another who labours under no such prejudice in regard to his blood. Apply this principle to Bunyan and he will stand higher than he has done. He was evidently a man that was “chosen of God” to shine brilliantly among the children of a common parent; and it becomes all of us to acknowledge him. It is to be hoped that the congregation of the church of which he was the honoured pastor will approach this subject at least with wariness, and not, against all evidence, reject him who was a divine instrument for the benefit of humanity, in its highest concernment; merely because he was a member of a particular “family in the land,” which has never yet been acknowledged in any shape or form, however numerous it is.

MR. LELAND ON THE GIPSIES. ^[11a]

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I.

THE *History of the Gipsies*, by Walter Simson, which I edited and published in 1865, was ready for the press in 1858. In a prefatory note to it I said:—

“In the present work the race has been treated of so fully and elaborately, in all its aspects, as in a great measure to fill and satisfy the mind, instead of being, as heretofore, little better than a myth to the understanding of the most intelligent person.”

In 1872 Mr. Leland published his work on *The English Gipsies and their Language*, in which no reference was made to mine, [that is, my part of it]. ^[11b]

In 1874 he wrote, for *Johnson’s Cyclopædia*, an article on the Gipsies, in which he made use of the History proper to illustrate the race in Scotland, and my addition (which made about half of the book) exclusively to illustrate it in America, and giving my words. It did not appear from this article that he had any personal knowledge of the subject, ^[11c] excepting that he said that he knew of one Gipsy who had travelled from Canada to Texas, as confirmatory of what I had written; and asserted that “there is probably *not one* theatre or circus in England or America in which there are not one or more performers of more or less mixed Gipsy blood.” The only other remark he made of that nature was the following:—“The reader who will devote a very few weeks to either

Dr. B. Smart's *Vocabulary*, to G. Borrow's *Romano Lavo Lil*, or G. C. Leland's *English Gipsies* (London, 1872), can speak the language better than most English or American Gipsies." In other words, that any person with tact and a turn to pick up, remember and use Gipsy words could do just what he had done; and by going over the same ground produce, in a varied form as regards circumstances, scenes described by others. It is exceedingly probable that the work edited and published by me specially stimulated Mr. Leland to take up the subject so fully treated in it.

In his book entitled *The Gipsies* (New York, 1882), Mr. Leland complains of "a reviewer" saying of his *English Gipsies and their Language* that it "had added nothing to our knowledge on the subject;" which was morally if not literally true, that on the language excepted, which was mainly an illustration and continuation of the collections of others, acquired with great labour. He has made several allusions to my work, without indicating it, such as frequently using the word "Gipsydom," although that might have been done by any one; which could not have been said of "the old thing" (p. 274), which I used on several occasions to describe a settled Gipsy visiting a Gipsy tent, to view the style of life of his primitive ancestor. He has also made unfair allusion to the "mixed multitude" of the Exodus as being the origin of the Gipsies, (p. 89); and to the subject of the Scottish Tinklers or Gipsies, (p. 371). In *The Gipsies* he says, "No one will accuse me of wide discussion or padding," (p. 84). That is obvious to any one, for almost every chapter contains an intolerable amount of extraneous matter or padding, that has no reference to the title page or headings of the chapters. In some parts of the book there are several pages at a stretch—once as much as seven pages—of such extraneous matter; and it would be interesting to make an analysis of it, line by line, to ascertain the proportion of the two kinds of matter.

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But what I wish more particularly to allude to is Mr. Leland's discovery that the Gipsies are a tribe from India that are known there under the name of "Syrians," and therefore not originally natives of India; which latter conclusion, however, he does not admit, but accounts for the phenomenon in this way:—"I offer as an hypothesis that bands of Gipsies who roamed from India to Syria have, after returning, been called Trablûs or Syrians, just as I have known Germans after returning from the fatherland to America to be called Americans" (p. 338). That is, a family or company of Indian nomads returning from a visit to Syria would afterwards be called, and cause the whole of the race who never left India to be called, Syrians for ever! Again he says:—"It will probably be found that they are Hindoos who have roamed from India to Syria and back again, here and there, until they are regarded as foreigners in both countries" (!). The allusion to Germans in illustration is not merely inapplicable, but unintelligible. Of the "Syrians" in India Mr. Leland writes:—"Whether they have or had any connection with the migration to the West we cannot establish" (p. 339). For this reason he should not have identified them with the Gipsies out of India. "Their language and their name would seem to indicate it; but then it must be borne in mind that the word *rom*, like *dom*, is one of wide dissemination, *dum* being a Syrian Gipsy word for the race" (p. 339); and "among the Copts . . . the word for man is *romi*" (p. 20).^[12] "Among the hundred and fifty wandering tribes of India and Persia . . . it is of course difficult to identify the exact origin of the European Gipsy" (p. 18). For that reason he should not have written so positively that he had "definitely determined the existence in India of a peculiar tribe of Gipsies who are *par eminence* the Romanys of the East, and whose language is there what it is in England, the same in vocabulary and the chief slang of the roads. This I claim as a discovery, having learned it from a Hindoo who had been himself a Gipsy in his native land" (Pref. iv.). He describes them as "thieves, fortune-tellers and vagrants" (p. 339), yet his informant, John Nano, said he was, or had been, one of them; which would imply that there were different kinds of "Syrians," inasmuch as he was found to be a maker of curry powder in London, and the husband of an English woman, a Mahometan by religion, and sufficiently educated to have written an autobiography, which had unfortunately been burnt. According to John's account, these "Syrians" were "full blood Hindoos, and not Syrians," and he "was very sure that his Gipsies were Indians." The term "full-blood Hindoos" who are "thieves, fortune-tellers and vagrants," and strollers out of and back to India, requires explanation. John's information as to these people being called by the other natives of India "Syrians" may be very reliable; but that they were "full-blood Hindoos" could have been, at its best, nothing but a supposition on his part. As I said in the Introduction to the *History of the Gipsies*, "I can conceive nothing more difficult than an attempt to elucidate the history of any of the infinity of sects, castes or tribes to be met with in India" (p. 41). The nature of the population of India is such that there would hardly be a possibility of its people at large becoming acquainted with the movements of a few families of outcasts leaving their race behind and going to and returning from Syria (if they ever did that), so as to give the whole race the name of Syrians. The name must have had its origin from the people having come originally from Syria, or from parts surrounding it.

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In *The Gipsies* Mr. Leland says that he has "carefully read everything ever printed on the Romany" (Pref. v.); and that it is his "opinion that one ought, when setting forth any subject, to give quite as good an opportunity to others who are in our business as to ourselves" (p. 88). And yet, although he made exclusive use of the work I edited and published for parts of his article in *Johnson's Cyclopædia*, and has alluded to Messrs. Borrow, Smart, Palmer and Groome, he has carefully abstained from mentioning my name, however much he may have been indebted to my work. By referring to it, he cannot but remember having "carefully read" the following:—

"I am inclined to believe that the people in India corresponding to the Gipsies in Europe will be found among those tented tribes who perform certain services to the British armies; at all events there is such a tribe in India who are called Gipsies by the Europeans who come in contact with them. A short time ago, one of these people, who followed the occupation of a camel driver, found his way to England, and 'pulled up'

with some English Gipsies, whom he recognized as his own people; at least he found that they had the ways and ceremonies of them. But it would be unreasonable to suppose that such a tribe in India did not follow various occupations" (p. 40). "What evidently leads Mr. Borrow and others astray in the matter of the origin of the Gipsies, is that they conclude that because the language spoken by the Gipsies is apparently, or for the most part, Hindostanee, therefore the people speaking it originated in Hindostan; as just a conclusion as it would be to maintain that the Negroes in Liberia originated in England because they speak the English language!" (p. 41). [Mr. Leland alludes to this simile by saying that English spoken by American Negroes does not prove Saxon descent (p. 20).]

In discussing the question of the origin of the Gipsies with some English members of the race, I found that "a very intelligent Gipsy informed me that his race sprang from a body of men—a cross between the Arabs and Egyptians—that left Egypt in the train of the Jews" (p. 14). And I wrote when I published this, that "the intelligent reader will not differ with me as to the weight to be attached to the Gipsy's remark on this point." To that question I devoted ten (13-23) closely printed pages to demonstrate that the "mixed multitude," or part of it, that left Egypt with Moses, after separating from the Jews, travelled East into Northern Hindostan, where they formed the Gipsy caste (p. 21); becoming in every way a people like the Gipsy so far as he is known to the public to-day. I further said that this people "travelled East, *their own masters*, and became the origin of the Gipsy nation throughout the world" (p. 40).

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"What objection could any one advance against the Gipsies being the people that left Egypt in the train of the Jews? Not certainly an objection as to race, for there must have been many captive people or tribes introduced into Egypt from the many countries surrounding it . . . That the 'mixed multitude' travelled into India, acquired the language of that part of Asia, *and perhaps modified its appearance there*, and became the origin of the Gipsy race, we may safely assume . . . Everything harmonizes so beautifully with the idea that the Gipsies are the 'mixed multitude' of the Exodus that it may be admitted by the world. Even in the matter of religion, we could imagine Egyptian captives losing a knowledge of their religion, as has happened with the Africans in the New World, ^[14] and, not having had another taught them, leaving Egypt under Moses without any religion at all. After entering India they would in all probability become a wandering people, and for a certainty live aloof from all others" (pp. 494-496). "If we could but find traces of an Egyptian origin among the Gipsies of Asia, say Central and Western Asia, the question would be beyond dispute. But that might be a matter of some trouble" (p. 40).

In this way Mr. Leland's informant, John Nano, if he was correct in what he said, confirmed my conjecture as to the Gipsies' Egyptian or rather Syrian origin; for after escaping from Egypt they would remain for some time in Syria or its neighbourhood before they would become a body and proceed East. As illustrative of Mr. Leland's desire to "give quite as good an opportunity to others who are in our business as to ourselves," I find him writing thus:—

"Here I interrupt the lady," a writer on Magyarland, "to remark that I cannot agree with her nor with her probable (!) authority, Walter (!) Simson, in believing that the Gipsies are the descendants of the mixed races who followed Moses out of Egypt. The Rom in Egypt is a Hindoo stranger, as he ever was (!)" (p. 89).

The "authority" was mine, not Walter Simson's, which Mr. Leland perhaps did not care to state. One would naturally think that a people who left Egypt under Moses would be looked upon there as "strangers" to-day, rather than that a straggling family or company of Gipsies returning to India from Syria (if they ever did that) would cause all their race that never left India to be called Syrians for ever! According to Mr. Leland's style of reasoning it would follow that he and Americans generally could not have originated in England, because they are "strangers" there, and are looked upon as foreigners by the law and by people whose sentiments are not of the most delicate nature!

II.

p. 15

Mr. Leland's style of reasoning, his lack of candour, and his reserve as to how he took up the Gipsy question, and to whom he had been indebted at first for some of his ideas, detract very much from the desire that one would naturally have to put confidence in him. His many confident assertions about what others have grave doubts and his frequent contradictions have a similar effect.

In *The Gipsies* there is very little told us of the race in America (not *American* Gipsies) of any kind, and yet Mr. Leland says that it will

"Possess at least the charm of novelty, but little having as yet been written on this extensive and very interesting branch of our nomadic population" (Pref. III.).

In my Preface I said:—

"To the American reader generally the work will illustrate a phase of life and history with which it may be reasonably assumed he is not much conversant; for, although he

must have some knowledge of the Gipsy race generally, there is no work, that I am aware of, that treats of the body like the present" (p. 7).

And I illustrated the race in America in notes to the work, and in as much as I could well introduce in my long Disquisition, bringing in that part of it which had its origin perhaps from the settlement of the American Colonies. When Mr. Leland borrowed from my work for his article in *Johnson's Cyclopædia* he gave the name of the book with the *London* imprint, while from the first page to the last it showed that it was an *American* book, based on a *Scotch* MS.; and the copy which he used in all probability bore a *New York* imprint.

I admit this of Mr. Leland, that, by availing himself of the hard labours of others, at least to give him a start, he has added greatly to our knowledge of the Gipsy language, so far as I know and can judge; but that is nearly all that can be said of him. What he has told us of the information got from a native of India as to the Gipsies there being called "Syrians" shows that he was merely in good luck in falling in with the man from whom he obtained it; while, if it is reliable, it confirms my conjecture, although of that it does not seem to have been his business to inform the world. His chapter on the "Shelta or Tinkers' Talk," picked up also as it were by accident from a stray tinker, is indeed of great interest; but the world has reason to question his judgment when he says that "it is, in fact, a language, for it can be spoken grammatically, and without using English or Romany" (p. 371). Another occasion for questioning his judgment is when he says that "Mr. [Walter] Simson, had he known the 'Tinklers' better, would have found that, not Romany, but Shelta was the really secret language which they employed, although Romany is also more or less familiar to them all" (p. 371); for almost anyone by reading the *History* can see the absurdity of it. ^[15]

This book of Mr. Leland (although described in the Preface as "Sketches of experiences among the Gipsies"), to justify its title of *The Gipsies*, should have been constructed on some plan and scientifically arranged, with a great variety of particulars, and no extraneous matter or padding in it. In place of that we have little but random sketches or scenes connected with the race. There is no principle running through it, for we are told in the Introduction that

"The day is coming when there will be no . . . wild wanderers . . . and certainly no Gipsies" (p. 15). And after describing how English sparrows have driven so many kinds of native birds out of Philadelphia, he says, "So the people of self-conscious culture and the mart and factory are banishing the wilder sort . . . As a London reviewer said when I asserted in a book that the child was perhaps born who would see the last Gipsy, 'Somehow we feel sorry for that child'" (p. 15). And in describing English fairs, as represented by that at Cobham, he says, "In a few years the last of them will have been closed, and the last Gipsy will be there to look on" (p. 142).

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Profound research and philosophical observation and reasoning do not seem to constitute Mr. Leland's forte. It is a little puzzling to decide how to treat a man like him; for his "confident assertions" in regard to the disappearance, or what some would call the *extinction*, of the race are but "contradictions" of his own information and opinions; saying nothing of what I published at great length on the perpetuation of the Gipsies in a settled state, all of which he admits having "carefully read." Among Mr. Leland's information is the following:—

"Go where we may we find the Jew. Has any other wandered so far? Yes, one; for wherever Jew has gone there too we find the Gipsy" (p. 18). "It . . . has penetrated into every village which European civilization has ever touched. He who speaks Romany . . . will meet those with whom a very few words may at once establish a peculiar understanding . . . This widely spread brotherhood . . . are honestly proud that a gentleman is not ashamed of them" (p. 25). "Communities of gentlemanly and lady-like Gipsies" in Russia (p. 25). "All the Gipsies in the country are not upon the roads. Many of them live in houses, and that very respectably, nay, even aristocratically. Yea, and it may be, O reader, that thou hast met them and knowest them not . . . It is intelligible enough" that such a Gipsy "should say as little as possible of his origin, . . . and ever carefully keep the lid of silence on the pot of his birth" (p. 272). "The Gipsy of society, not always, but yet frequently, retains a keen interest in his wild ancestry. He keeps up the language; it is a delightful secret; he loves now and then to take a look at 'the old thing' [one of my phrases, as I have already mentioned] . . . I know ladies in England and in America, both of the blood and otherwise, who would give up a ball of the highest flight in society to sit an hour in a Gipsy tent, and on whom a whispered word in Romany acts like wild-fire. Great as my experience has been I can really no more explain the intensity of this yearning, this *rapport*, than I can fly. My own fancy for Gipsydom is faint and feeble compared to what I have found in many others" (p. 274).

One would naturally conclude that this *race* is not disappearing as "British birds are chasing American ones out of Philadelphia"; and that it could not be said that "the child is perhaps born who will see the last Gipsy," even in his primitive condition. ^[16]

Mr. Leland explains, in his chapter on Cobham Fair, how the Gipsy problem "puzzled and muddled" him.

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"I was very much impressed at this fair with the extensive and unsuspected amount of Romany existent in our rural population . . . There were many men in the common

room, mostly well dressed, and decent even if doubtful looking. I observed that several used Romany words in casual conversation. I came to the conclusion at last that all who were present knew something of it" (p. 140). And of eleven kinds of people that were at the fair, he said that "there is always a leaven and a suspicion of Gipsiness. If there be no descent, there is affinity by marriage, familiarity, knowledge of words and ways, sweethearting and trafficking, so that they know the children of the Rom as the house-world does not know them, and they in some sort belong together" (p. 140).

In my Disquisition on the Gipsies I said:—

"In Scotland the prejudice towards the name of Gipsy might be safely allowed to drop, were it only for this reason, that the race has got so much mixed up with the native blood, and even with good families of the country, as to be, in plain language, a jumble, a pretty kettle of fish, indeed" (p. 427).

Mr. Leland continues:—

"No novelist, no writer whatever, has as yet *clearly* explained the curious fact that our entire nomadic population, excepting tramps, is not, as we thought in our childhood, composed of English people like ourselves. It is leavened with direct Indian blood; it has, more or less modified, a peculiar *morale*." "It is a muddle, perhaps, and a puzzle; I doubt if anybody quite understands it" (p. 140).

Had Mr. Leland said that, with the exception of myself, "no writer whatever" had even alluded to the phenomenon described, I believe he would have stated what was true. I endeavoured to explain it in a Disquisition of 171 pages, which he indirectly admitted he "carefully read"; so that if I did not "clearly explain" the "puzzle and muddle" it must have proceeded from a lack of intellect on my part, or on his in not understanding me. Since then I have frequently expatiated on and described it, but I am not aware that Mr. Leland has seen what I wrote on these occasions. In *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies* I said that the Gipsy problem "may at first present an aspect of a 'labyrinth of difficulties'"; but that to solve it "there is little intellect wanted for the occasion, but such as it is it should be allowed to act freely on the subject of inquiry" (p. 23). To judge of Mr. Leland's works on the Gipsies one would think that he had been indebted to no one for anything; so that it is remarkable he should have complained that *novelists* should not have "clearly explained" to him what he himself should have told us—particularly as he spoke of his "great experience" among the Gipsies—unless it appears that even to novelists he—as a professional writer taking up a subject that came to his hand—has been indebted for putting him on the track for repeating or illustrating an "oft-told tale."^[18] We can easily imagine how Mr. Leland got "puzzled and muddled" in contemplating his subject when he says so positively that the Gipsies are disappearing as "British birds are chasing American ones out of Philadelphia"; and that the mixed state of Gipsydom seen at Cobham Fair "was old before the Saxon Heptarchy" (p. 140). What he said he could find in "no writer whatever" was elaborately described in the book which I published. That he used for his own purposes, and then apparently turned round and threw out his heels at it.

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I have spoken of Mr. Leland's "confident assertions," but I have space merely to allude to some of them. Among these are the following:—That there is no mystery about the origin of the Gipsies (p. 331), and that "it is a matter of history that, since the Aryan morning of mankind, the Romany have been chiromancing" (p. 225); that "among those who left India were men of different castes and different colours, ranging from the pure Northern invader to the Negro-like Southern Indian" (p. 24); that the Gipsies in Egypt have lost their tongue (p. 296); that the English Gipsy cares not a farthing "to know anything about his race as it exists in foreign countries, or whence it came" (p. 34); and that there is hardly a travelling company of dancers, musicians, singers, or acrobats, or theatre "in Europe or America in which there is not at least one person with some Romany blood" (p. 332). This at least is common, I dare say very common. On one occasion I looked over the show-bill while in MS. of an English Gipsy company who travelled in America with a small panorama.^[19a]

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The conclusion which I drew of Mr. Leland after reading his Cyclopædia article was that, apart from the language, he knew little of the *subject of the Gipsies*. The knowledge of the language has given him the entrée into the circle of a certain class of the Gipsies, leading to a "flash-in-the-pan" knowledge of them; but not constituting him a reliable guide on the whole question under consideration; for, in keeping with his "confident assertions" generally, he disposes of it by saying that "the child is perhaps born who will see the last Gipsy."^[19b]

As long as Mr. Leland has stuck to his subject he has confirmed what I said in the work published by me, although he has made no acknowledgment of it in any way. Even on the subject of the tinkers in England, he—so far as he may be considered an authority—has confirmed what I said of their being Gipsies of mixed blood:—"These are but instances of, I might say, all the English tinkers. Almost every old countrywoman about the Scottish Border knows that the Scottish tinkers are Gipsies" (p. 508). He also speaks of John Bunyan having been a "half-blood Gipsy tinker" (p. 213). He was only justified in saying that he was of "mixed blood"; but he made no allusion to my long argument (pp. 313 and 506–523) in defence of it, which I published in *Notes and Queries* on the 12th December, 1857, and illustrated it in two shorter articles in the early part of 1858, in which the outline of the *History of the Gipsies* was given; so that the question of Bunyan's nationality has been before "all England" for a quarter of a century unanswered.

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What I wrote in *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies* is equally applicable to Mr. Leland:—

“As I have said of Mr. Borrow, any one treating of such a subject as the Gipsies should, so far as space allowed, ‘comment on and admit or reject the facts and opinions of his case as discovered and advanced by others,’ and not ‘put forth his own ideas only, as if nothing had been said by others before or besides him’” (p. 12).—“I think that what I have written and published on the Gipsies should have been treated with more candour and courtesy, at least with more care and consideration, by others who have done likewise, saying nothing of the press. I also think that I have embraced almost all, if not all, of the principles connected with the existence and perpetuation of the race; so that others in discussing them should ‘comment on and admit or reject’ what I have advanced, and I think proved, in place of putting forth opinions apparently without due investigation” (p. 14).—“His illustrations of their language, in common with those of other writers, are very interesting, . . . and the occasional, as if accidental, remarks made by the Gipsies, at intervals, bearing on the Gipsy question proper, are of importance” (p. 17).—“He gives us nothing of the philosophy of the existence, history, perpetuation, development and destiny of the tribe and its off-shoots. He seems to use his eyes and ears only, and with those and his turn for writing he has given us some really good sketches and scenes . . . But besides using the eyes and ears in connection with such a subject, it is necessary to exercise the intellect to discover and explain what is not obvious or hidden, and illustrate the meaning and bearing of what is described . . . His book however interesting parts of it may be, is not calculated to serve any ultimate purpose of importance; nor is it written in a regular or systematic manner . . . Nothing can make a subject like that of the Gipsies attractive (if it can ever be made attractive) to the better classes of readers, and perpetuate an interest in it, but by treating it in such a way as will combine a variety of facts, well arranged and illustrated, and principles; out of which can be constructed a theory or system that can be discussed and proved by a reference to the facts and principles given . . . These writers are useful in their ways, but beyond that they *spoil* the subject of the Gipsies, in consequence of the ‘utter absence in them of everything of the nature of a philosophy of the subject’; which is peculiar to ‘all the works that have hitherto appeared on the Gipsies’ (*Dis.*, p. 532), so far as I have seen or heard of them” (p. 18).—“A knowledge of the science of race, in the essential meaning of the word, and especially as it applies to the Gipsies, cannot be said to be even in its infancy. Still, it might have been asked, what could two Scotch Gipsies propagate, in body and mind, but Gipsies? They certainly could not give origin to Jews or *common* Scotch; but Gipsy Scotch or Scotch Gipsy would infallibly follow” (p. 19).—“Of late years a number of publications and articles, of more or less importance, on the Gipsies have appeared in Great Britain. Some of these doubtless had their origin in the work published by me in 1865, although no acknowledgment was made of it in any way; and yet the most of the *original* MS. of it was prepared before Mr. Borrow had apparently even thought of writing on the race” (p. 17), (that is, between 1817 and 1831).—“If they really have at heart the desire of knowing and informing the public ‘all about the Gipsies,’ why do they so persistently lead it inferentially to believe that the mass of information on the subject, in all its bearings, published by me has no existence? One would naturally think that they would grasp at it, and illustrate and supplement it; and *prove* anything in it to be wrong that they allege or suppose to be so, and *let me hear of their objections*” (p. 17).

With all his professed candour in regard to *all* who have written on the subject of the Gipsies, and cooperating with his “colleagues” in connection with it, why did Mr. Leland not take it up from where it was left by me, and used by him for his article in *Johnson’s Cyclopædia*? In place of amusing the world with the fictions that the Gipsy race is disappearing as “British birds are chasing American ones out of Philadelphia,” and that “the child is perhaps born who will see the last Gipsy,” he might have assisted me in “breaking down the middle wall of partition” between them and the rest of the world; so that the Gipsy race, at least in its off-shoots, may be acknowledged openly, and allowed as such to take their places in society, as “men and brethren,” which in many instances they do now, although unknown to the world.

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Notwithstanding all that has been and could be said of Mr. Leland as a writer on the Gipsies, and of the work under review, *The Gipsies*, taking it all in all, is an interesting book, and deserves to be well read. ^[21]

ADVERTISEMENTS.

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EVER since entering Great Britain, about the year 1506, the Gipsies have been drawing into their body the blood of the ordinary inhabitants and conforming to their ways; and so prolific has the race been, that there cannot be less than 250,000 Gipsies of all castes, colours, characters, occupations, degrees of education, culture, and position in life, in the British Isles alone, and possibly double that number. There are many of the same race in the United States of America. Indeed, there have been Gipsies in America from nearly the first day of its settlement; for many

of the race were banished to the plantations, often for very trifling offences, and sometimes merely for being by "habit and repute Egyptians." But as the Gipsy race leaves the tent, and rises to civilization, it hides its nationality from the rest of the world, so great is the prejudice against the name of Gipsy. In Europe and America together, there cannot be less than 4,000,000 Gipsies in existence. John Bunyan, the author of the celebrated *Pilgrim's Progress*, was one of this singular people, as will be conclusively shown in the present work. The philosophy of the existence of the Jews, since the dispersion, will also be discussed and established in it.

When the "wonderful story" of the Gipsies is told, as it ought to be told, it constitutes a work of interest to many classes of readers, being a subject unique, distinct from, and unknown to, the rest of the human family. In the present work, the race has been treated of so fully and elaborately, in all its aspects, as in a great measure to fill and satisfy the mind, instead of being, as heretofore, little better than a myth to the understanding of the most intelligent person.

The history of the Gipsies, when thus comprehensively treated, forms a study for the most advanced and cultivated mind, as well as for the youth whose intellectual and literary character is still to be formed; and furnishes, among other things, a system of science not too abstract in its nature, and having for its subject-matter the strongest of human feelings and sympathies. The work also seeks to raise the name of Gipsy out of the dust, where it now lies; while it has a very important bearing on the conversion of the Jews, the advancement of Christianity generally, and the development of historical and moral science.

LONDON, *October 10th*, 1865.

SECOND EDITION.

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SIMSON'S HISTORY OF THE GIPSIES.

575 PAGES. CROWN 8VO. PRICE, \$2.00.

NOTICES OF THE AMERICAN PRESS.

National Quarterly Review.—"The title of this work gives a correct idea of its character; the matter fully justifies it. Even in its original form it was the most interesting and reliable history of the Gipsies with which we were acquainted. But it is now much enlarged, and brought down to the present time. The disquisition on the past, present, and future of that singular race, added by the editor, greatly enhances the value of the work, for it embodies the results of extensive research and careful investigation." "The chapter on the Gipsy language should be read by all who take any interest either in comparative philology or ethnology; for it is much more curious and instructive than most people would expect from the nature of the subject. The volume is well printed and neatly bound, and has the advantage of a copious alphabetical index."

Congregational Review. (Boston.)—"The senior partner in the authorship of this book was a Scotchman who made it his life-long pleasure to go a 'Gipsy hunting,' to use his own phrase. He was a personal friend of Sir Walter Scott . . . His enthusiasm was genuine, his diligence great, his sagacity remarkable, and his discoveries rewarding." "The book is undoubtedly the fullest and most reliable which our language contains on the subject." "This volume is valuable for its instruction, and exceedingly amusing anecdotically. It overruns with the humorous." "The subject in its present form is novel, and we freely add, very sensational." "Indeed, the book assures us that our country is full of this people, mixed up as they have become, by marriage, with all the European stocks during the last three centuries. The amalgamation has done much to merge them in the general current of modern education and civilization; yet they retain their language with closest tenacity, as a sort of Freemason medium of intercommunion; and while they never are willing to own their origin among outsiders, they are very proud of it among themselves." "We had regarded them as entitled to considerable antiquity, but we now find that they were none other than the 'mixed multitude' which accompanied the Hebrew exode (Ex. XII 38) under Moses—stragglers or disaffected Egyptians, who went along to ventilate their discontent, or to improve their fortunes. . . . We are not prepared to take issue with these authors on any of the points raised by them."

Methodist Quarterly Review.—"Have we Gipsies among us? Yea, verily, if Mr. Simson is to be believed, they swarm our country in secret legions. There is no place on the four quarters of the globe where some of them have not penetrated. Even in New England a sly Gipsy girl will enter the factory as employe, will by her allurements win a young Jonathan to marry her, and in due season, the 'cute gentleman will find himself the father of a young brood of intense Gipsies. The mother will have opened to her young progeny the mystery and the romance of its lineage, will have disclosed its birth-right connection with a secret brotherhood, whose profounder Freemasonry is based on blood, historically extending itself into the most dim antiquity, and geographically spreading over most of the earth. The fascinations of this mystic tie are wonderful. Afraid or ashamed to reveal the secret to the outside world, the young Gipsy is inwardly intensely proud of his unique nobility, and is very likely to despise his alien father, who is of course glad to keep the late discovered secret from the world. Hence dear reader, you know not but your next neighbour is a Gipsy." "The volume before us possesses a rare interest, both from the unique character of the subject, and from the absence of nearly any other source of full information. It is the result of observation from real life." The language "is spoken with varying dialects in different countries, but with standard purity in Hungary. It is the precious inheritance

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and proud peculiarity of the Gipsy, which he will never forget and seldom reveal. The varied and skillful manoeuvres of Mr. Simson to purloin or wheedle out a small vocabulary, with the various effects of the operation on the minds and actions of the Gipsies, furnish many an amusing narrative in these pages." "Persecutions of the most cruel character have embittered and barbarized them. . . . Even now . . . they do not realize the kindly feeling of enlightened minds toward them, and view with fierce suspicion every approach designed to draw from them the secrets of their history, habits, laws and language." "The age of racial caste is passing away. Modern Christianity will refuse to tolerate the spirit of hostility and oppression based on feature, colour, or lineage." The "book is an intended first step for the improvement of the race that forms its subject, and every magnanimous spirit must wish that it may prove not the last. We heartily commend the work to our readers as not only full of fascinating details, but abounding with points of interest to the benevolent Christian heart." "The general spirit of the work is eminently enlightened, liberal, and humane."

Evangelical Quarterly Review.—"The Gipsies, their race and language have always excited a more than ordinary interest. The work before us, apparently the result of careful research, is a comprehensive history of this singular people, abounding in marvelous incidents and curious information. It is highly instructive, and there is appended a full and most careful index—so important in every work."

National Freemason.—"We feel confident that our readers will relish the following concerning the Gipsies, from the British Masonic Organ: That an article on Gipsyism is not out of place in this Magazine will be admitted by every one who knows anything of the history, manners, and customs of these strange wanderers among the nations of the earth. The Freemasons have a language, words, and signs peculiar to themselves; so have the Gipsies. A Freemason has in every country a friend, and in every climate a home, secured to him by the mystic influence of that worldwide association to which he belongs; similar are the privileges of the Gipsy. But here, of course, the analogy ceases. Freemasonry is an Order banded together for purposes of the highest benevolence. Gipsyism, we fear, has been a source of constant trouble and inconvenience to European nations. The interest, therefore, which as Masons we may evince in the Gipsies arises principally, we may say wholly, from the fact of their being a secret society, and also from the fact that many of them are enrolled in our lodges. . . . There are in the United Kingdom a vast multitude of mixed Gipsies, differing very little in outward appearance, manners, and customs from ordinary Britons; but in heart thorough Gipsies, as carefully and jealously guarding their language and secrets, as we do the secrets of the Masonic Order." "Mr. Simson makes masterly establishment of the fact that John Bunyan, the world-renowned author of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' was descended from Gipsy blood."

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New York Independent.—"Such a book is the History of the Gipsies. Every one who has a fondness for the acquisition of out-of-the-way knowledge, chiefly for the pleasure afforded by its possession, will like this book. It contains a mass of facts, and of stories, and of legends connected with the Gipsies; a variety of theories as to their origin . . . and various interesting incidents of adventures among these modern Ishmaelites. There is a great deal of curious information to be obtained from this history, nearly all of which will be new to Americans." "It is singular that so little attention has been heretofore given to this particular topic; but it is probably owing to the fact that Gipsies are so careful to keep outsiders from a knowledge of their language that they even deny its existence." "The history is just the book with which to occupy one's idle moments; for, whatever else it lacks, it certainly is not wanting in interest."

New York Observer.—"Among the peoples of the world, the Gipsies are the most mysterious and romantic. Their origin, modes of life, and habits have been, until quite recently, rather conjectural than known. Mr. Walter Simson, after years of investigation and study, produced a history of this remarkable people which is unrivalled for the amount of information which it conveys in a manner adapted to excite the deepest interest." "We are glad that Mr. James Simson has not felt the same timidity, but has given the book to the public, having enriched it with many notes, an able introduction, and a disquisition upon the past, present, and future of the Gipsy race." "Of the Gipsies in Spain we have already learned much from the work of Borrow, but this is a more thorough and elaborate treatise upon Gipsy life in general, though largely devoted to the tribe as it appeared in England and Scotland." "Such are some views and opinions respecting a curious people, of whose history and customs Mr. Simson has given a deeply interesting delineation."

New York Methodist.—"The Gipsies present one of the most remarkable anomalies in the history of the human race. Though they have lived among European nations for centuries, forming in some districts a prominent element in the population, they have succeeded in keeping themselves separate in social relations, customs, language, and in a measure, in government, and excluding strangers from real knowledge of the character of their communities and organizations. Scarcely more is known of them by the world in general than was known when they first made their appearance among civilized nations." "Another curious thing advanced by Mr. Simson is that of the perpetuity of the race . . . He thinks that it never dies out, and that Gipsies, however much they may intermarry with the world's people, and adopt the habits of civilization, remain Gipsies, preserve the language, the Gipsy mode of thought, and loyalty to the race and its traditions to remote generations. His work turns, in fact, upon those two theories, and the incidents, facts, and citations from history with which it abounds, are all skillfully used in support of them." "There are some facts of interest in relation to the Gipsies in Scotland and America, which are brought out quite fully in Mr. Simson's book," which "abounds in novel and interesting

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matter . . . and will well repay perusal." "Pertinent anecdotes, illustrating the habits and craft of the Gipsies, may be picked up at random in any part of the book."

New York Evening Post.—"The editor corrects some popular notions in regard to the habits of the Gipsies. They are not now, in the main, the wanderers they used to be. Through intermarriage with other people, and from other causes, they have adopted more stationary modes of life, and have assimilated to the manners of the countries in which they live . . . As the editor of this volume says: 'They carry the language, the associations, and the sympathies of their race, and their peculiar feelings toward the community with them; and, as residents of towns, have greater facilities, from others of their race residing near them, for perpetuating their language, than when strolling over the country.'" "We have no space for such full extracts as we should like to give."

New York Journal of Commerce.—"We have seldom found a more readable book than Simson's History of the Gipsies. A large part of the volume is necessarily devoted to the local histories of families in England (Scotland), but these go to form part of one of the most interesting chapters of human history." "We commend the book as very readable, and giving much instruction on a curious subject."

New York Times.—"Mr . . . has done good service to the American public by reproducing here this very interesting and valuable volume." "The work is more interesting than a romance, and that it is full of facts is very easily seen by a glance at the index, which is very minute, and adds greatly to the value of the book."

New York Albion.—"An extremely curious work is a History of the Gipsies." "The wildest scenes in 'Lavengro,' as for instance the fight with the Flaming Tinman, are comparatively tame beside some of the incidents narrated here."

Hours at Home (now Scribner's Monthly).—"Years ago we read, with an interest we shall never forget, Borrow's book on the Gipsies of Spain. We have now a history of this mysterious race as it exists in the British Islands, which, though written before Borrow's, has just been published. It is . . . the result of much time and patient labor, and is a valuable contribution toward a complete history of this extraordinary people. The Gypsy race and the Gypsy language are subjects of much interest, socially and ethnologically." "He estimates the number of Gipsies in Great Britain at 250,000, and the whole number in Europe and America at 4,000,000." "The work is what it professes to be, a veritable history—a history in which Gypsy life has been stripped of everything pertaining to fiction, so that the reader will see depicted in their true character this strange people. . . . And yet, these pages of sober history are crowded with facts and incidents stranger and more thrilling than the wildest imaginings of the romantic school."

NEW YORK: JAMES MILLER.

NOTICES OF THE BRITISH PRESS.

p. 28

THE ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES AND JOHN BUNYAN, AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA AND THE GIPSIES.

"In this pamphlet Mr. James Simson again does battle in support of his contention that Bunyan was a Gipsy—a thesis first promulgated by him in an elaborate work on the Gipsies, published in 1865. He is indignant at Mr. Froude for ignoring the discussion of the question in his recent biography of Bunyan, and he comments in strong terms on the dicta of Mr. Francis H. Groome, in the article 'Gipsies,' in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, that John Bunyan 'does not appear to have had one drop of Gipsy blood.'" "Mr. Simson's tractate will be perused with deep interest by all students of the customs and history of the Gipsies."—*Edinburgh Courant*, November 3, 1880.

"In this pamphlet Mr. James Simson, editor of *Simson's History of the Gipsies*, states his grounds for believing that John Bunyan was a Gipsy, and invokes the assistance of the Universities to investigate the matter and put it beyond the possibility of doubt. It may not matter much whether or not the 'immortal dreamer' was a Gipsy; and we do not think Mr. Simson attaches any great importance to the circumstance *per se*. What he aims at, we believe, is to stir up some interest in the Gipsy race, and this he thinks may be done were the public to have their sympathies awakened by the fact that John Bunyan was a descendant of it. By way of supplement, Mr. Simson criticises some statements made in an article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, on the Gipsies. The curious in the subject of Gipsy lore will doubtless find in the pamphlet matter that will interest them."—*Perthshire Advertiser*, October 28, 1880.

"Mr. Simson suggests, and supports, on arguments that have the highest bearing on anthropological questions, the theory that John Bunyan was a Gipsy. The great secret that civilised Europe has even now amongst it a few individuals who are descended from a Hindoo race, and are capable, by reason of the fact that they have a particularly original soul of their own, to reconcile some of the difficulties between the eastern and the western schools of thought, may be the real future fact of modern anthropology. The difficulty is, of course, where and how to find the Gipsies. We have been much pleased with Mr. Simson's pamphlet. It is not every writer who has treated the subject in his philosophical manner; and we are glad to perceive that he strongly accents the fact that a person may be a Gipsy and yet be entirely ignorant [not absolutely so] of the Gipsy language. Evidently Mr. Simson has studied anthropological problems

at first hand, and apart from the speculators who have regarded language as the first key to the science of man."—*Public Opinion*, October 15, 1880.

CHARLES WATERTON, NATURALIST.

"That Mr. Simson had a duty—to himself as well as to the public—to perform in justifying his previous remarks about Charles Waterton, by writing this monograph, is unquestionable. Although it is a somewhat difficult task unsparingly to point out the mistakes and shortcomings of a man, when he can no longer defend himself, without seeming to be guilty of an offence against the old rule—*Nil nisi bonum de mortuis*—Mr. Simson may fairly claim credit for having adhered to the Shakespearian advice in regard to fault-finding; for, if he has extenuated nothing, he has set down naught in malice. The example of Charles Waterton, country gentleman and naturalist, may serve as a useful warning to students of natural history, by teaching them that only the most patient investigation and careful reflection can produce results that will be of real and permanent value to science. They have here the example of a man who had most excellent opportunities for such investigations, as well as the strongest taste for their pursuit, and who, by an exact and systematic method of study, might have made most important additions to our knowledge of natural history. But by inaccurate observation, by a certain looseness of statement, and by taking things for granted instead of personally verifying them, he has greatly diminished the value of his labours. Mr. Simson, though his task is to set right the unduly high estimate in which the squire of Walton Hall has been held as a man of science, shows an appreciation of the strong points of his character that completely takes away any appearance of censoriousness; and his work incidentally affords an interesting study of the man himself, who, in his personal life and his enthusiastic devotion to natural history, showed a strong individuality that is quite refreshing in this age of conventionalities."—*Aberdeen Journal*, August 30, 1880.

AMERICAN EDITION OF 1878, WITH APPENDIX.

p. 29

210 Pages, Octavo, Cloth. Price, \$1.25.

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATURAL HISTORY,
AND PAPERS ON OTHER SUBJECTS.**

BY JAMES SIMSON,

EDITOR OF SIMSON'S "HISTORY OF THE GIPSIES."

NOTICES OF THE BRITISH PRESS.

Dublin University Magazine, July, 1875.

"The principal articles in this volume that have reference to natural history originally appeared in *Land and Water*, and are, in many respects, highly interesting. Concerning vipers and snakes, we are presented with a good deal of information that is instructive, not only as regards their habits generally, but also with respect to points that are in dispute among naturalists." "For instance, it is a vexed question whether, under any circumstances, the young retreat into the stomach [inside] of the mother snake. A great authority, [?] Mr. Frank Buckland, affirms that they do not; while our author is as positive that they do. And he certainly, with reason, contends that the question is entirely one of evidence, and, therefore, should be settled 'as a fact is proved in a court of justice; difficulties, suppositions, or theories not being allowed to form part of the testimony. In support of his own views, Mr. Simson has collected a large body of evidence that undoubtedly appears authentic and conclusive.'" "Of the miscellaneous papers in this volume, the best is a critical study of the late John Stuart Mill. Taken altogether, the volume is very entertaining, and affords pleasing and instructive reading."

Evening Standard, June 8, 1875.

"It is with real pleasure we see these Contributions to *Land and Water* no longer limited to the columns of a newspaper, whatever may be its circulation. For the excellence and charm of these papers we must refer the reader to the volume before us, which cannot fail to interest and instruct its readers. Their variety and range may be gathered from the subjects treated:—Snakes, Vipers, English Snakes, Waterton as a Naturalist, John Stuart Mill, History of the Gipsies, and the Duke of Argyll on the Preservation of the Jews."

London Courier, June, 1875.

"The Natural History Contributions, which are very interesting, though partaking largely of a controversial nature, deal chiefly with questions affecting snakes and vipers. Of the other Contributions, the most attractive and readable is the one which contests some of Mr. Borrow's conclusions in his well-known account of the Gipsies. Mr. John Stuart Mill forms the subject of a slashing dissertation, which is not likely to find much favour with the friends of the departed philosopher."

Rochdale Observer, June 19, 1875.

"The study of natural history has a peculiar charm for most people, but for Lancashire folk it seems to have a special interest. Perhaps the most striking feature of the book at the head of this notice is the variety of topics touched upon; topics which, although apparently incompatible and

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incongruous, are, nevertheless, both curious and interesting. The author certainly brings a large amount of special knowledge to the discussion of the questions he introduces, and the essays are undoubtedly well written. Our readers will see that the work is full of controversial matter, embracing natural history, theology, and biography, and consequently will suit the taste of those who like to enter into discussions which excite the feelings, and in which abundance of energy and ability is displayed. The book is certainly ably written, and the author shows himself to be a man of large accomplishments.”

Liverpool Albion, June 18, 1875.

“The articles are written in a very readable manner, and will be found interesting even by those who have no special knowledge of natural history or interest in it. The Gipsies are competitors with the snakes for Mr. Simson’s regards, and several papers are devoted to these mysterious nomadic tribes. Perhaps the most curious paper in the volume is written to prove that John Bunyan was a Gipsy, and a very fair case is certainly made out, principally from Bunyan’s own autobiographical statements. With the exception of the papers on John Stuart Mill, to which we have already alluded, and which are far worse than worthless, the book is one which we can recommend.”

Newcastle Courant, June 11, 1875.

“The bulk of these Contributions appeared in *Land and Water*. We think the author has done well to give them to the public in the more enduring form of a well got up volume. The book contains, also, a critical sketch of the career of John Stuart Mill; some gossip about Gipsies; and the Duke of Argyll’s notions about the preservation of the Jews. Altogether, the book is very readable.”

Northern Whig, June 17, 1875.

“This volume consists of Contributions to *Land and Water* by a writer well-known as the author [editor] of a standard book on the Gipsies, and is evidently the production of a clear, intelligent, and most observant mind. Mr. Simson adds a number of miscellaneous papers, including a masterly, though severe, criticism of John Stuart Mill—‘his religion, his education, a crisis in his history, his wife, Mill and son,’—as well as several desultory papers on the Gipsies, elicited, for the most part, by criticisms on his work on that singular race.”

Western Times, June 29, 1875.

“The preface to this volume is dated from New York, and the contents bear marks of the free, racy style of transatlantic writers. The volume closes with a paper on the ‘Preservation of the Jews.’ The writer deals with his several subjects with marked ability, and his essays form a volume which will pay for reading, and therefore pay for purchasing.”

Daily Review, June 11, 1875.

“We need only mention the other subjects—Waterton as a Naturalist, Romanism, John Stuart Mill, Simson’s History of the Gipsies, Borrow on the Gipsies, the Scottish Churches and the Gipsies, Was John Bunyan a Gipsy? and, of course, the literary ubiquitous Duke of Argyll on the Preservation of the Jews. The only paper we have not ventured to look at is the last, in the dread that on this question the versatile Duke might be found, as in the matter of the Scottish Church, verifying the French proverb—*Il va chercher midi à quatorze heures*—a work in which the author of this volume is an adept, in quiet, quaint, and clever ways, however, which make it interesting.”

NEW YORK: JAMES MILLER.

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FOOTNOTES.

[7] These two letters, dated the 5th and 19th of May, 1882, were in answer to a short one from a clergyman of the Church of England, acknowledging the receipt of a copy of my *Reminiscences of Childhood, etc.*, which contained an Appendix on John Bunyan and the Gipsies.

[11a] The text represents the article as originally written.

[11b] I endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to get another reading of this book before saying that "no reference was made in it to mine." I alluded, from memory, to *my* part of it. On examination I find that the only indirect reference to it is the following:—"Mr. Simson, in his *History of the Gipsies* [that is, in the *Disquisition on the Gipsies*] asserts that there is not a tinker or scissors-grinder in Great Britain that cannot talk this language; and my own experience agrees with his declaration, to this extent—that they all have some knowledge of it, or claim to have it, however slight it may be," (p. 4). I did not express myself so absolutely as represented by Mr. Leland, who did not see fit to mention the double authorship of the book; the subject of which I took up from where it was left by Walter Simson. This double authorship may prove a little confusing to the reader when the book is alluded to.

[11c] See second note at page 19.

[12] In *The English Gipsies, etc.*, Mr. Leland writes:—"I asked a Copt scribe if he were Muslim, and he replied, '*La, ana Gipti*' ('No, I am a Copt') pronouncing the word *Gipti*, or Copt, so that it might readily be taken for 'Gipsy.' And learning that *romi* is the Coptic for a man, I was again startled; and when I found *tema* (tem, land) and other Romany words in ancient Egyptian (*vide* Brugsch. *Grammaire, etc.*) it seemed as if there were still many mysteries to solve in this strange language." Of some Egyptian Gipsies Mr. Leland says that "they all resembled the one whom I have described . . . They all differed slightly, as I thought, from the ordinary Egyptians in their appearance" (p. 193).

[14] Tacitus makes Caius Cassius, in the time of Nero, say:—"At present we have in our service whole nations of slaves, the scum of mankind, collected from all quarters of the globe; a race of men who bring with them foreign rites, and the religion of their country, *or probably no religion at all.*"—*Murphy's Translation.*

[15] Perhaps the most interesting scene connected with the Gipsy language in Scotland, given in the *History*, is that at St. Boswell's (pp. 309-318). The word "Tinkler," assumed by and applied to the Scotch Gipsies, seems to have been used from a desire to escape the legal responsibility attaching to the word "Gipsy."

[16] It is not only puzzling, but provoking to decide how to treat a writer like Mr. Leland, for sometimes he shows a great deal of knowledge of his subject, and sometimes apparently nothing of it—one assertion contradicting another on the same question. What in reality has an antipathy between birds, or the idea of "people of self-conscious culture and the man and factory," or the destiny of the American Indians to do with the destiny of the Gipsies? For he says, "Gipsies in England are passing away as rapidly as Indians in North America" (*The English Gipsies, Pref. X.*). As a native of the United States, Mr. Leland must know that these Indians become extinct, and of the Gipsies in England that although there are comparatively few "dwellers in tents" of full blood, so called, there are many, many thousands of more or less mixed blood following various callings, or in various positions in life, as he has frequently admitted. The distinction between

“old-fashioned” Gipsies and other members of the tribe is but trifling with the subject.

The following extracts from *The English Gipsies and their Language* are interesting:—

“Other writers have had much to say of their incredible distrust of *Gorgios* and unwillingness to impart their language, but I have always found them obliging and communicative” (Pref. V.).—“In every part of the world it is extremely difficult to get Romany words even from intelligent Gipsies, *although they may be willing with all their heart to communicate them*” (p. 17).—“Now the reader is possibly aware that of all difficult tasks, one of the most difficult is to induce a disguised Gipsy, or even a professed one, to utter a word of Romany to a man not of the blood” (p. 37).—“Be it remembered, reader, that in Germany, at the present day, the mere fact of being a Gipsy is still treated as a crime” (p. 74).—“Though the language of the Gipsies has been kept a great secret for centuries, still a few words have in England oozed out here and there from some unguarded crevice” (p. 78).—“The very fact that they hide as much as they can of their Gipsy life and nature from the *Gorgios* would of itself indicate the depths of singularity concealed beneath their apparent life” (p. 153).—“Behind it all . . . the fierce spirit of social exile from the world in which they lived . . . and the joyous consciousness of a secret tongue and hidden ways” (p. 156).—“A feeling of free-masonry, and of guarding a social secret, long after they leave the roads and become highly reputable members of society. But they have a secret, and no one can know them who has not penetrated it” (p. 174).

With all that has been said, the words which I have put in italics have a curious meaning—that the Gipsies in giving their language to “strangers” “may be willing with all their heart to communicate them”! I have explained this subject at length in the Disquisition (pp. 281 and 282) in reference to Mr. Borrow and others, not in regard to the willingness and stupidity, but the shuffling of the Gipsy in giving the meaning of words, although isolated and abstract ideas might occasionally puzzle some of them; for they translated to Mr. Borrow the Apostles’ Creed, sentence by sentence. The Lord’s Prayer, given by Mr. Borrow, Mr. Leland admits to be “pure English Gipsy” (p. 70). I do not think Mr. Leland states, with what stock of words and how acquired, he first approached the Gipsies, and how he used them, to get inside of the guard of the tribe.

[18] In the Preface to *The English Gipsies and their Language*, Mr. Leland says that all that it contains “was gathered directly from the Gipsies themselves” (v.); that he did not take “anything from Simson, Hoyland, or any other writer on the Romany race in England”; and that nothing is a “re-warming of that which was gathered by others” (x.). All that appears strictly true; yet he says nothing of how he was “put on the track for repeating or illustrating an ‘oft-told tale.’” But he says:—

“If I have not given in this book a sketch of the history of the Gipsies, or statistics of their numbers, or accounts of their social condition in different countries, it is because nearly everything of the kind may be found in the works of George Borrow and Walter Simson” (xi.).

He did not find much of the kind mentioned in Mr. Borrow’s books, so far as I remember, and omitted to say that I had written very fully on the points stated. It would have been interesting to have been told by Mr. Leland about his being “puzzled and muddled” at what he saw at Cobham Fair, how he came to write, nine years before that, as follows:—

“There have been thousands of *swell* Romany chals who have moved in sporting circles of a higher class than they are to be found in at the present day” (p. 92).—“It may be worth while to state, in this connection, that Gipsy blood intermingled with Anglo-Saxon, when educated, generally results in intellectual and physical vigour” (p. 174).—And where was it that he found the idea that John Bunyan was a member of the Gipsy race (p. 63), if it was not as elaborately given in my Disquisition?

[19a] One of Mr. Leland’s “confident assertions” is that “the English Gipsy cares not a farthing ‘to know anything about his race as it exists in foreign countries, or whence it came’”; which is not a fact. He seems to have misinterpreted the *English Gipsy* peculiarity which assimilates *in appearance* to the *native English* one, as I have written thus in the *History of the Gipsies*:—“Though Gipsies everywhere, they differ in some respects in the various countries which they inhabit. For example, an English Gipsy of pugilistic tendencies will, in a vapouring way, engage to *thrash* a dozen of his Hungarian brethren” (p. 359). And of the more mixed kind of Gipsies, I have said:—“In Great Britain the Gipsies are entitled, in one respect at least, to be called Englishmen, Scotchmen, or Irishmen; for their general ideas as men, as distinguished from their being Gipsies, and their language indicate them at once to be such, nearly as much as the common natives of these countries” (p. 372).—What is described very fully throughout the *History*, and especially in the note at pp. 342 and 343, about the different colours or castes of the Gipsies, meets Mr. Leland’s remarks about those who left India. Thus:—“What are full-blood Gipsies, to commence with? The idea itself is intangible; for, by adopting, more or less, wherever they have been, others into their body, during their singular history, a pure Gipsy, like the pure Gipsy language, is doubtless nowhere to be found” (p. 342).

[19b] With the limited space at his disposal for his cyclopædia article, Mr. Leland could not be expected to tell us much in it about the Gipsies. In it he says that “their hair seldom turns gray,

even in advanced age, unless there be 'white' blood in their veins"; that, "like North American Indians, the Gipsies all walk with their feet straight"; and that "there are nearly 100 English Gipsy family names, most of which are represented in America." And further:—"At the present day the Romany is the life of the entire vagabond population of the roads in England, it being almost impossible to find a tinker or petty hawker who is not part Gipsy. There are now but a few hundred full-blooded *tent* Gipsy persons in England (1874), but of . . . house-dwellers, who keep their Gipsy blood a secret, and of half-breeds . . . or of those affiliated by blood, all of whom possess the great secret of the Romany language to a greater or less degree, there are perhaps 20,000." "The tinkers in England are all Gipsies."

Including *all* of "the blood" in *various* positions in life, there are doubtless *vastly* more of the tribe in England than 20,000, considering the time they have been in the country, and the healthy and prolific nature of the race.

[21] The same remark applies to *The English Gipsies and their Language*.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JOHN BUNYAN AND THE GIPSIES ***

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