

GYPSY BLOOD

Lecture delivered to the Society by L.T.-COL. C. P. HAWKES, on December 16th, 1933.

I have entitled this paper *Gypsy Blood*, but its name in the Gypsy language should be *Kawlo Rat*, *Black Blood* - the colour adjective connoting among the gypsies the same genealogical purity and distinction as does "blue" with us. In a recent book of mine, there occurred a reference in this connexion to my friend the late Lord Birkenhead, an intensive analysis of whose personality and achievements in varying fields led me to the conviction that though he passed through an amazing career under the Gawgio surname of Smith, he really belonged to the ancient Romany clan of *Petulengro* which, in fact, means precisely the same thing. The passage ran as follows— "The Key to F. E. Smith's complex character, I think, was the fact that he must have been of gypsy blood. When, in the early eighteenth century, the parish clerks of England were instructed to round up the Romany for inclusion as far as possible in parish registers, many of them failed to find equivalents for the gypsy names and contented themselves with naming the men by their trades. When asked their trade, seven-tenths of the gypsies at once, of course, said Smith; and so the roll of the great Smith family increased by thousands. Physically and psychologically F. E. showed all the Romany characteristics : the sleek black hair, the bold intolerant eye, the long lithe limbs, the passionate vigour and terrific energy ; the nimble and persuasive tongue, the close and devoted family life alongside an incompatible and impulsive restlessness; the resolute acquisitiveness and the easy prodigality; the self-reliant pride and disregard of formalism, and the contemptuous unconventionality in dress and conduct. His Oxford challenges to after-dinner feats of athletics in College quads, which continued even after he had attained high office, find their counterparts in the inn-parlours of Borrow. F.E. loved tennis for its demands on agility and quickness of eye, and he took to yachting for the wander-scope that it afforded. But his abiding love was for horses, and in his earlier days at the Bar as soon as he made money enough he bought a horse. He had a gypsy's way with horses. His old grey hunter *Paddy* lived to a green senility, and he had another grey horse *John Ridd* which he hunted when he was an examiner in the final Law Schools at Oxford and rode in the Bar Point-to-Point in 1899. And this gypsy atavism was awakened recently in his daughter, Lady Eleanor Smith, when she was induced to support the Locker-Umpson campaign against the expulsion of the caravan folk from Epsom Downs. She examined

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the situation on the spot and at once found her spiritual and literary home among the wagons and round the camp fires of the Romanitschelo. The 'Red Wagon' and 'Flamenco,' I submit, cannot be the work of a purely Gawgio author." [sic]

I had put the point myself to Lord Birkenhead, and while neither admitting nor denying it, he agreed to the evidence, and admitted that his part of Lancashire, the peninsula between the Mersey and the Dee, had been for centuries a gypsy stronghold and that his father, a very remarkable man as athlete, soldier, and lawyer, had shown the same characteristics as himself. But a gypsy strain is frankly admitted in the biography recently published by the present Lord Birkenhead and involves mention of a true Romany grandmother named Bathsheba Smith. All this is merely introductory and explanatory of the line of thought and analysis which underlies the discursive observations which I have the honour now to bring to your notice. Gypsy blood may be implied in two ways : from names, and from physical characteristics ; and in some favourable instances from both. The name alone is poor evidence, for the gypsies have ever been shy of disclosing their true Romany names to the Gawgios and even used to live in public for years under what they called "ravelling names". The most familiar gypsy names found in the British Isles, with rare exceptions, are occupational names, or names adopted by the Romany from place-names, or those of well-known families who have befriended them, with whom they have been brought into contact, or upon whose estates they have been free to wander and camp for generations. The occupational names are interesting because they are usually equivalents in English of real gypsy names, and so give evidence of hereditary trades among the Romany. Such are:—

Smith, which in Romany is *Petul-engro*—the maker of metal things.

Marshall, an equivalent of this from the Norman-French *Marechal*-ferrant.

Churen: from *Churi*, a knife, anglicized into Shaw or Corrie.

Cooper, which in Romany is *Vardom-escro*---the wool-tenter.

Butcher, which in Romany is *Mas-engro*---whence comes *Mace* and *Mais*—the dealer in meat.

Heron, or *Herne*, a derivative from *Hero*, a wheel.

Then there are purely Romany patronymics unallied to occupation, such as :—

Faa, Fall and Falle—from the Scottish Lowland tribes.

Boss, anglicized into Bossh, Boswell, and Basville.

Lee, one of the oldest of all. (One of the best-known of this family in modern times was old Lucy Lee, the famous fortune-teller of the Devil's Dyke who for forty years dukkered

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for the Gawgio visitors there, amassed a considerable fortune herself, and drove out each morning from Brighton in her carriage and pair.

Lovell, from *Lova*, money:

Purum, which in Romany means a leak.

Tano, which means "young."

Blythe, Sir Walter Scott's friends of Kirk Yetholm on the Border.

Loveridge, or Liversedge.

Chilcot (oddly enough, the present Sir Warden Chilcott was one of the closest friends of F. E. Smith).

Aires or Ayres (a name familiar to us all from bats and tennis rackets).

Brazil (well known to those of us who buy books for our children).

Barney which is *Pawni* fair or white, anglicized into White.

Pidgley, and

Rickman,

The names borrowed from Gawgio names are Burton, Grey, Watland, Brinkley, Stanley, Hughes, Wells, Sanders, Bull, Doe, Fenner, Harris, Lamb, Sherrard, Willett, Taylor, Buckley, Buckland, James, Carey, Dighton and Allen. In Wales Fox, Lock, Wood, Wharton and Coleman; and in Ireland, where true Romany names are very rare, the commonest gypsy names are the borrowed ones of O'Neill and Barton. Christian names afford but little assistance, The Gypsies keep their own almost a secret among themselves and one rarely meets actual Romany names such as—Euri, Ruzlam, Khulai, Fennix, Hamalen, Zegul, Rinki, Supplisti, Niabi, among the men; and Zuba, Ashena, Siari, Tranit or Tranitza, Femi or Fazenti among the women. Biblical names are numerous and indicate the influence of the Church since the fifteenth century: Froniga (Veronica), Morecai, Enos (Amos), Elizah, Yoben (Job or Jobey), Noahrus (Noah) and the like, For baptismal names the gypsies have always, like the American negroes, been attracted by high-sounding and euphonious names, Pyramus, Plato, Fenella, Bendigo, Sanspirela (Sans-Pareil), and so on. A West-country parson was once asked to christen a Romany baby by the name of Jehovah, and on his refusal the parents indignantly left the church, vowing that the boy should thereafter be known as No-Name; and as " No-Name Wood " he lived to a ripe old age, .Another parson was urged to bestow the name of "Aluminium" because it sounded so grand; for the same reason "Vesuvius" has been found on the registers.

As to evidence from. physical characteristics, it becomes pertinent to know what to look for in these, what evidence of what race is to be sought for in form and features. Here we are confronted at once with the old 'question of the origin of the Gypsy race. From what part of the world did this mysterious people come, homogeneous

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through so many centuries and in the English form of their name with an implied origin in Egypt? It was in 1777 that the German philologist Rudiger published his discovery that Romany was an Indian dialect; and taking philology for our guide we may believe that the ancestors of our gypsies tarried for centuries in north-western India in the region of the Indus valley, a region which they quitted with their faces set towards the West not later than about A.D.1000. To quote Gilliat-Smith, an acknowledged authority on the linguistic side of the problem: "Their language proves that they once inhabited northern India; but as no Indian writers have left any documents describing this people, their mode of life in India, and—the most interesting point of all—why they

emigrated, must remain for ever a matter for conjecture, It is, however, surprising what can be proved from our present knowledge of their language, which, it is generally admitted, must rank as an independent eighth of the seven modern Indian languages of the Aryan stock, based on Sanskrit.

From words borrowed from Persia, Armenia, and Greece we know that the Gypsies must have passed through these countries on their westward migration; but since no Coptic or Arabic words are to be found in Romany, we infer that they could never have been in Egypt: nor indeed in Arabia, Barbary or Moorish Spain, The theory of their Egyptian origin probably arose from legends they themselves set afloat, But the Indian origin of the Gypsies and the identity of many words in Romany and Hindi are now accepted,

Black is *Kawlo* in one and *Kala* in the other ; *Pani*—water (one recalls the brandy-pani, the favourite tippie of Indian nabobs such as Thackeray's Jos. Sedley) is the same in both, as are *Rai* or *Raia* (Gentleman or Lord). A Romany Rye, to take Borrow's famous title, is a Romany Raia, or Rajah; and a lady is Raunee, whether she is a gypsy or the wife of an Indian Prince, To see or look is *Dik*, like the Hindustani; silver is *Rupi* or *Ruppee*. (Incidentally a few slang words only in current English come from the Romany. You are speaking the gypsy tongue when you allude to your friend as a Pal, the Romany for brother, or, a Chum (from the gypsy *Chum*, a kiss given to a loved friend or relative); or when you term a small boy a young Shaver (the gypsy *Tshavo*, son); or call your father Dad (the gypsy *Dadus*, father).

The name Gypsy is a corruption of Egyptian, as are also the variants Gyptien (France and Belgium), Gyptenaer (the Netherlands), and Gitano (Spain), All these forms indicate the country whence these people were supposed to have come - Egypt, or more frequently "Little Egypt." This, however, was by no means their only designation. In Spain, they were known besides as New Castilians, as Germans., as Flemings, as Greeks, and as Bohemians. Those of south-western France were Cascarrots and Biscayans, and in France

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they were also Bohemians and Saracens. In Scotland there is mention of "Gypsies or Saracens," otherwise "Moors or Saracens," the period of whose presence in Scotland was the fifteenth century. In Poland they have been styled Szalassi, Philistines, and Cygani ; this last word assumes also the forms Zigani (Russia.) Czigani (Hungary), Zigeuner (Germany), Ciganos (Portugal), Tsiganes (France), Cingani or Acingani (Corfu), Zingari (Italy), Zincali (Spain), and Tchingiane (Turkey). They have been frequently styled Tartars, notably in Scandinavia, where they are also called Fante-folk. Heiden (ie. "heathen") appears to have been alternated with Egyptian in the Netherlands. The appellation Greek appears to have been given to Gypsies in the Netherlands and in Scotland. Some of these names — such as German, Fleming, Bohemian, and Greek — seem merely to denote the country whence they happened to come at certain periods; probably because the laws of that country were then specially adverse to them. Their own self-applied name of Rom, Roum, or Romano (pl. Romi and Romane, or Romany) signifies "a gypsy man." (Geo. John Romanes, the great naturalist, as well as Alphonso Romano, the restaurant keeper, showed physical signs of gypsy origin.) But it is important to note that Rom or Roum was at one time equivalent to the Byzantine empire, and the wine called Romany received its name because it comes from Greece. This is all the more noteworthy when we find it stated that "Little Egypt," the alleged home of the Gypsies, was really Epirus, "commonly called Little Egypt." Such is the testimony afforded by two writers of the sixteenth century with reference to the Gypsies who came to Strassburg in 1418.

There are many indications of the existence of Gypsies in Europe during the Middle Ages. In 1122 an Austrian monk describes them, under the name of "Ishmaelites," as "travelling far over the world." An edict issued by King Boleslas V of Poland in the year 1256 calls them Szalassi; and Zielinsky explains that Szolassi (?tent-people) denoted Gypsies throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

It is asserted on fairly good evidence that there were Gypsies in Alsace about the year 1270, and in Westphalia before the end of the fourteenth century. But one thing clear is that they came into special prominence during the fifteenth century. In 1417 a company of them, traveling on pilgrimage as Christian penitents, received letters of protection from Sigismund, emperor of Germany, at Lindau, on the Lake of Constance. The same monarch again, when at Zipz in northern Hungary, in April 1423, granted a letter to our faithful Ladislas, Count (*Voyvode*) of the Cigani, with others of his tribe," wherein the authorities in Sigismund's empire are commanded to show every favour to Ladislas "and the Cigani who are subject to him; it being expressly

stipulated that, "if any variance or trouble occur among them, the neither you nor any of you, but the said Count Ladislas, shall have the power of judging and absolving."

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Previous to this, in 1477, a gypsy company travelling through Hanover, Holstein, and Mecklenburg "were bearers of and exhibited letters of protection (litteras promotorias) from several princes, amongst others Sigismund, king of the Romans, which caused them to be well received by the episcopal towns, by Princes, castellans, fortified towns, and by bishops and other mitred dignitaries." The presence of "Duke Michael of Egypt," with a following of earls, lords, and knights, is recorded in Switzerland in 1418; and "the lord Andreas, duke of Little Egypt," visited Macon in 1419 and Deventer in 1420.

"Sir Miquiel, prince of Latinghem in Egypt," with other "Egyptians," was present in Hainault in 1421 and "Thomas, earl of Little Egypt," arrived at Amiens on September 27, 1427, bearing letters from the Pope (Martin V) certifying that he and his followers had been driven from their country for not having consented to forsake the Christian faith.

Here we have the Gypsies recognized as Christian pilgrims ; nor are such instances exceptional. In spite of the fact that the name "Heathen" was used in at least one country as a synonym for "Gypsy," the "Egyptians" of the Middle Ages are described again and again as professing the Christian faith. Eloquent testimony to this fact is furnished by the Swabian chronicler, who records how in the year 1445, "On St. Sebastian's even, there died the high-born lord, Lord Panuel, duke (*herzog*) in Little Egypt and lord of Hirschhorn in the same land"; and further, how at Pfortzen, in 1498 "there died the well-born Lord John, Free Count (*Freygraf*) out of Little Egypt, to whose soul may God be gracious and merciful."

Emblazoned on the tomb of Lord Panuel are his arms—a yellow eagle crowned, and for crest, above a crowned helmet, a stag horn erect.

In all this there is nothing surprising, when it is understood that in some countries—probably in all the local ruler of the Gypsies was not of Gypsy race. Zielinski states (1890) that the Gypsies of Poland and Lithuania, during the sixteenth century and subsequently were ruled over by a "king (or regent) of the Cygans" who was selected from among the Polish nobility, and received his appointment from the chancellor royal. Emil Thewrewk de Ponor, writing (1888) of his own country, informs us that "the Gypsy captaincy was vested in the nobility of Transylvania and Hungary. The Voyvodeship, or captaincy of the Gypsies," he continues, "has long been with us an office of state, combined with which were '*cura praerogativa, fructus et emolumentum*,' which the crown bestowed on distinguished persons as a reward of merit, but not on Gypsies. In Transylvania, we find sometimes one, sometimes two such Captaincies. In Hungary there have been four—one on each side of the Danube, and one on each side of the Theiss." It may thus be safely inferred that the Emperor Sigismund's letter of 1423, granted to "our faithful

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Ladislas, count of the Cigani," was not granted to an alien, but to one of his own subjects. It is not likely that Hungary and Poland differed from other countries in this respect. In Corfu, as Colocci points out, there was a fief or barony of the Cingani, held by successive Venetians during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries ; and he cites a document of as recent a date as 1692, which was issued by a Venetian baron, "*Giudice e Capitano delli Acingani*."

A similar instance is discernible in Scotland. There the position of the Gypsies appears to have been the same as in other countries.

The lord high treasurer's accounts show that the king (James IV) paid fourteen shillings to an "earl of Greece" in May 1502, and seven pounds to a "knight of Greece" in the following month, while in April 1505 he disbursed seven pounds "to the Egyptians." In July 1505 he wrote a letter to his Uncle, King John of Denmark, commending "Anthonius Gagino, a count of Little Egypt, who with others of his company, was, according to their custom, making pilgrimage through Christendom"; which letter was duly delivered and is preserved in the royal archives of Denmark. On May 25, 1530, forty pounds were paid by James V "to the Egyptians that danced before the king in Holyrood House." About the year 1539 he granted letters under his great seal to "our lovit" ("beloved," a term in Scottish law used to denote a loyal subject, "John Faw, lord and earl of Little

Egypt," wherein all the officers of the law throughout Scotland are commanded to assist the gypsy leader "in execution of justice upon his company and folks conformable to the laws of Egypt"; an injunction similar to that contained in Sigismund's letter to "our faithful Ladislas, count of the Cigani," in 1423,

All this reveals the commanding position occupied by "Egyptians" four centuries ago; and it shows that, although they were regarded as foreigners, yet they constituted an *imperium in imperio* in Scotland as in other countries. This is further seen from a document issued under the privy seal of Scotland in May 1540 delegating full justiciary powers over his own subjects to "John Wanne, son and heir of John Fall, lord and earl of Little Egypt, and master of the Egyptians dwelling within the kingdom of Scotland." The surname Fall or Faw -was also borne in this time by "Earl George. called of Egypt," who figured at Aberdeen on January 22, 1540. And the family so named became identified with the Gypsies of the south of Scotland and the north of England in later times. From this incident of 1540, as from other references on the Continent, it is clear that the "Egyptians", while closely interlinked with the various nations of Europe, constituted a separate polity, and even possessed a country of their own. in the Scottish writ of 1540 it is explicitly stated that the earl of Little Egypt "is bound and obliged to bring home with him all them of his company that are in life, and a testimonial of them

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that are dead." Moreover, a later document shows that the outcome of the dispute between him and his recalcitrant followers was that it ,was "agreed among them to pass home and have the same decided before the duke of Egypt." Again, there is an instance of one of the followers of Jean Charles, a French gypsy captain of the sixteenth century, who, at the foot of the gallows, "appealed to the king of Little Egypt," thus carrying his case to a higher court.

Further statements point in the same direction. Thus, the Egyptians who visited Tournai in Hainault in 1422 "had privileges, so that none could punish them save themselves," Duke Michael's company, when in Switzerland in 1418, are stated to have had "a great deal of gold and silver, provided by *their own country*" which they lavishly expended. And an English writer of 1542, Dr. Andrew Boorde, says of the Gypsies: "Their money is brass and gold."

All such references plainly imply a distinct nationality, But the end of the fifteenth century marks the beginning of the decay of "Little Egypt," with its peculiar privileges and power ; and from that time onward, with little intermission, the European states concurred in issuing edict after edict by which. the Egyptians were doomed to persecution, banishment, and death, A decree issued in 1499 by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain forbade them to remain within that country, except under certain severe restrictions ; and all previous statutes in their favour were revoked. In 1500, Maximilian I ordained their expulsion from the whole German empire. In 1504 the Gypsies of France were ordered to leave the kingdom or go to the galleys : although the ineffectiveness of this edict may be gauged from one issued by Francis I in 1539, wherein the Gypsies are still described as wandering about "under cover of a simulated religion and of a certain penitence,"

Through all their wanderings the Gypsies kept themselves very much to themselves with regard to racial admixture, and it was not until the changing political and economic conditions of European civilization at the close of the Napoleonic wars at the end of the eighteenth century that by degrees and all through the nineteenth century they began to adopt a sedentary in place of a nomadic life.

in England they settled in specific quarters of the great provincial centres, and in London chiefly in the Potteries quarter around where now stands Latimer Road Station. Some of these town Gypsies still take to the road in summer, in the caravans which have so largely displaced the old-time double tents—brown blankets pinned over birch or larch rods bent to a semicircle, the openings opposite and closed by a wigwam-like tent in between them open at the like to let out the smoke of the fire in the middle—which looked like up-turned boats similar to the tents of Jugurtha's Berbers in Barbary, as Sallest, with the good journalist's observant eye, noticed so many centuries ago—"aedificia Numidarum, oblonga incurvis lateribus

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tecta quasi navium carinae essent." (I remember seeing as a boy the earlier caravans with tilts round-shaped like the tents ; but these gave way eventually to the flat-roofed vehicles now to be seen at every country fair.) House dwelling in town or village broke down the Romany exclusiveness: community of social and commercial interests led to the intermarriage of Rom and

Gawgio, and there are consequently many families today whose members have forgotten their gypsy origin. It is among these that there still survive peculiarities of temperament and character and a physical type which points back to a tent-dwelling ancestry. The physical characteristics which betray the *Kawlo rat* are generally those I have indicated in the case of F. E. Smith and show clearly an Indian origin, The thick sleek black hair and eyebrows, marked cheek-bones and nose, full mouth, swarthy colouring, and above all the changeful; eye of black with its penetrating quality, a strange stare through and past you like nothing else in the world, It is not every Burton or Barton of Galway or Westmorland or Yorks who is a Gypsy Burton, but here is the description by Sir Richard Burton, the great explorer, of his father, Colonel Burton of the 36th Regiment, "a very handsome man with dark hair, sallow skin, high nose and piercing eyes." Burton himself showed all the gypsy characteristics physical and temperamental and spoke and wrote Romany fluently. An original member of the Gypsy Lore Society, he wrote two books on the Gypsies and published accounts of the Jat peoples of the Indus Valley.

Sussex is full of the Lees, one of the oldest gypsy clans in England. But it is not every Lee who exhibits the real indubitable gypsy eye and colouring and features so markedly as a certain friend of mine, a distinguished Civil Servant of that name, whose character and psychology are, however, entirely alien to his appearance. An official of meticulous exactitude of mind and habit, it is only in his recreation as one of our most talented amateur actors that other characteristics unveil themselves temporarily a voice of penetrating power and a subtle expressiveness of gesture and quick gracefulness of movement, so foreign to his customary poise as almost to evidence a dual personality. Curiously enough, he is the only member of his family whose looks betray a trace of the *Kawlo rat*.

The Marshalls of the Surrey and Hampshire woods and commons have long been sedentary, and there are Marshalls whose forbears were Broom-Squires in the Hindhead country who show no trace of the Rom. But in recent years old Joe Marshall, of the Pride of the Valley public-house, was a veritable gypsy; and the late General Sir Frederick Marshall, Colonel of the Royal Dragoons, who lived near Godalming and was one of the best-known social figures in late Victorian London, was, in spite of his always immaculate attire, a perfect specimen of the Romany Rai. Gypsies have always been attracted to the Army, in spite of the rigours of discipline and the

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routine of military life. They specially favoured the old Militia, where their annual service was only numbered in weeks and months, and the rest of the year was their own: though many of them used to enlist in five or six Militia battalions under different names so as to draw pay the whole year round.

The Coopers in Kent used to gather in large numbers for the hop-picking in the late summer and autumn, and the late Charles Cooper, an artist and a well-known amateur in County Cricket, was fond of painting their picturesque encampments : the swarthy men with lurchers at their heels, the nut-brown maids with their black hair braided and looped in a bygone fashion and caught up in bright-coloured kerchiefs; the wrinkled pipe-puffing crones, the buxom mothers with babies slung Indian fashion across their hips, and the troops of shrill tawny children. Though entirely un-Romany in character and habits, Charles Cooper himself showed all the outward signs of the Romany chal, and with his black hair, olive face, and far-seeing black eyes was indistinguishable from those of his rougher-dressed models.

The Herne family of Kentish cricketers was undoubtedly of gypsy descent; and old George Herne, if divested of his flannels and county cap and dressed in moleskins, was the very type of the Romany. The Gypsies, of course, have always excelled in sports demanding a lithe agility of body and a lightning quickness of eye and hand, Of the great boxers, Jem Mace was of the greatest, as was Fighting Tom Cooper, the champion light-weight mentioned by Borrow.

The large proportion of Australians in New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland who show, or used to show, gypsy characteristics, is accounted for by the ruthless criminal law enforced by transportation in the early nineteenth century, when Muskro (Police) and the county benches of magistrates were set on extirpating the Gypsies for their poaching and larcenous proclivities, and men and women of the Rom were sent to Assizes in large numbers and sentenced to transportation for what would now be considered quite trivial offences.

It may be observed that I have made but little allusion to gypsy women; but it is to be noted that while Gypsy characteristics are more strongly evident and easily observed in the individual woman-gypsy, if she marries a Gawgio she fails to transmit them to her offspring, while the reverse is the case with the men; so that the name remains, and in almost all the cases which I have noticed the type recurs through male descent and in families whose name indicates a possibly Gypsy origin—a fact noted by so close, if humorous, an observer as Professor Starkie in his delightful book, “Raggle-Taggle.”

We may trace the gypsy blood, as I have tried to show, but of the real Romany of the open, the *tatcho Romano*, it has been written -

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You soon will pass away
Laid one by one below the village steeple
Facing the East from whence your fathers sprang,
Or sleep on moorland turf, beyond the clang
Of towns and fairs: your tribes have joined the people
Whom no true Romany will call by name,
The folk departed like the camp-fire fame
Of withered yesterday.