

## THE GYPSIES.

The Camp Near the Fair Grounds – Their Origin – Historical Sketch – Their Peculiar Characteristics  
– Treatment of Strangers – The Future of the Band, &c.

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The immediate neighborhood of the city for sometime past has been the scene of a genuine Gypsy encampment, and large numbers of our citizens have visited them. These singular people have periodically visited the cities in the neighborhood of the falls, coming among us upon almost all occasions from different directions of the country, and departing suddenly in a body, generally in a westerly direction. It is the only nomadic people we have upon the continent, all others having some local habitation, even including the wild tribes on the western prairies. While the reputation of the Gypsies has suffered from the accounts furnished us, particularly by European writers, yet we do not think that our people have cause to complain of them, other than their apparent shiftless habits. In Europe they are regarded as a pilfering gang, and have been stigmatized as bands of robbers, but we have never known them to be guilty of the crime of thieving, although they have frequently visited this section, at one time coming among us and successfully competing at one of our fairs, in the rings of fast horses, an animal of which they appear to be extremely fond, and they are regarded as excellent judges of horses.

The habits of these people, who have been among us so frequently, and the absence of the generally received characteristic of a Gypsy, a natural thief, has led many to believe that they are not genuine Gypsies, but men and women who have assumed the habits and garb merely to answer an aimless life. We cannot agree with this opinion, however, and an examination of the physical characteristics of the band located near the Fair Grounds answers the description of the well-known Gypsies of the European States, who are described as possessing in a marked degree the Asiatic type of physiognomy, with tawny complexion, quick black eyes, black hair, high cheek bones, slightly projecting lower jaw, narrow mouth with fine white teeth, which, with their lithe and agile figure, causes some of their young women to be considered beauties. A few moments with these people will convince the observer that this band are peculiarly marked as described above.

The Gypsies have attracted the attention of the civilized world, and any attempt to fathom their origin has to a great extent proved a failure. Some eminent men have given this matter earnest attention, and hardly any two of them agree, so that it is impossible to definitely fix a point at which to begin, and from whence they come. It is most probable, however, that they are of East Indian origin, from whence they were driven by the ravages of Tamerlane near the close of the fourteenth century, and were of the Soodra caste, or Pariahs. It is said that there are still many roving tribes in India that bear a striking resemblance to the Gypsies. Some writers have ascribed their origin as Egyptian, and this theory may not be improbable, as they strongly resemble them, and large numbers of them are still to be found near the mouths of the Indus. This, however, is all speculation, and the truth cannot, with any certainty, be arrived at. As organized bands they first made their appearance in some of the German States in the early part of the fifteenth century. In 1427 a band of strangers, numbering near one hundred and fifty,

arrived in Paris, claiming to be Christians from lower Egypt, professing to have been expelled by the Saracens. This party had among them several dignitaries, including a duke, a count, ten lords, and a number of women. The women wore gold ear rings, and had black curly hair. They professed the gifts of fortune-telling and palmistry. Their reputation was such that the authorities would not permit them to reside within the city of Paris, but assigned them to one of the remote fauburges, where they were consulted on occult matters by great numbers of the citizens in all the walks of life, rich and poor alike giving credence to their gifts of prophecy. It became necessary eventually to expel them from Paris, and the Bishop of the church excommunicated those who consulted them. This same band afterward wandered in all parts of France, and they were succeeded by other bands. They crossed from France into England, and soon spread themselves all over the empire, and even called down upon themselves harsh measures on the part of the government, which made several ineffectual attempts to expel them from the country. For two hundred years, in the fourteenth and fifteenth and part of the sixteenth centuries they received the harshest of treatment, being driven from one country to another. About the middle of the sixteenth century they received an accession of members from Egypt, in consequence of a revolt against the conquest of the Sultan Selim. The leader of the Gypsies, Zinganeus, together with his followers, after their defeat by Selim, were banished, and they dispersed themselves in small companies throughout Europe.

Frequent efforts have been made to relocate and settle these nomadic tribes, but have, in almost every case, resulted in signal failures. As late as 1768 Maria Theresa ordered that the Gypsies throughout her dominions should be collected in settled habitations, practice some trade, have their children educated, and incorporated as part of the peasantry. They having failed to obey the orders, in 1872, harsher measures were instituted, which had some effect, as they are now to be found in Wallashia, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Hungary to the number of near two hundred thousand in a more settled and civilized condition than their brethren in any other part of the world. In Transylvania, they are under the rule of one of their own race, who bears the title of "walwede", a sort of governor, elected by themselves. In other parts of continental Europe there are a few who follow fixed occupations, but it is not the rule among them in any country.

In England their numbers have decreased fully one-half within the last thirty years, a large portion of them having emigrated to this country, where they have rapidly increased and now number in the neighborhood of fifty thousand. It is estimated that in various countries of the world there are near one million Gypsies and their number increasing. It is impossible to imagine what would be the result if all the tribes could be consolidated in an empire of their own choosing; but it is fair to presume that if they were to abandon their nomadic habits they would, with their knowledge and shrewdness, make a respectable showing in human progress. The past history of these people gives evidence that among them are men of ability and not void of statesmanship. There are but few countries, if any, where the stringent laws enacted against the Gypsies are now enforced; but they have to contend against an agency far more powerful than legal enactments – the increased intelligence of the masses of mankind, who are throwing off the superstition that formerly attached to the faculty of these people to divine the future. It was among the ignorant and superstitious that they were formerly held specially in reverence.

As a general rule they are what may be termed a sharp, shrewd people, driving a bargain with the view to their own advantage with the keenest relish. Both sexes are fond of dancing and frequently exhibit their skill for money. The men wear no distinguishing dress, but the women indulge a passion for gay colors and trinkets, and not unfrequently make a great display of the most grotesque colors in their costume.

We have visited the camp of the band now near our city, and to which accessions have been made within a few days. They treat visitors with a great deference and courtesy, but keep a watchful eye over all the movements made while in their camp. Their manners are not such as to invite their adoption by our people, and it is not at all probable that they will succeed in winning converts to their mode of life. The men, with this band, are a shrewd set of fellows, and we should pity any of our best jockies who fall into their hands. They have some very fine horses among them, and take great pride in showing their qualities. We are not attracted by the appearance of the women, and would rather be excused from visiting among them were we seeking a companion for life. That they are the thieving vagabonds they have been represented we do not believe, and that the public have been deceived in this regard we feel confident. We had quite a long conversation with one of the principal men, and he did not manifest a very great desire to abandon his present mode of life, and intimated that his people are much better contented when wandering up and down the earth. The language spoken by these people is perfectly unintelligible to us, not having the sound of anything we ever before heard; but in talking with those who speak a broken tongue, it is not unpleasant, not near so much as some of the languages of other foreigners in this country. The Gypsy language is called Sinte, and has no letters of its own, but its phonetism is harmonious, and falls upon the ear rather pleasantly. We could learn nothing of the future intentions of the band, and they appear to be rather reticent upon the subject of their movements, speaking of it much as a man would who was waiting for orders from some one superior in authority. Those of our citizens who are curious in these matters would be well repaid by a visit to the camp, and they can patronize them in the art of fortune-telling as well as to throw their money away upon others who have not the faculty of impressing them as these singular fortune-tellers do.

- New Albany Daily Ledger 06 June 1870, p. 1 col. 6

## MORE ABOUT THE GYPSIES.

The Vicinity of New Albany To Be Made the Headquarters of the Gypsies –  
What They Will Engage In.

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A few days ago we published quite a lengthy article in relation to the Gypsies, their origin and habits, called out by the presence here of a large number of these singular people. It is not, therefore, our object to enter into any historic account of them to-day, but only to tell why they are among us in such numbers as at the present time; and this relation will doubtless prove sufficiently interesting to compensate our readers for the space we devote to it.

There are now some thirty-five or forty families of Gypsies camped in the vicinity of New Albany. One or two families have purchased farms near here, and are living upon them as other people live. Within a few days there have been additions to the community we mentioned last week of some fifteen families, and to-night quite a number more will arrive here from points along the lower Ohio on the steamer *Tarascon*.

The object had in view by these Gypsies in coming here is to permanently settle and engage in trade. They will purchase horses, mules, and cattle, and ship them South, and as there is no race of people that can boast a more thorough knowledge of stock than the Gypsies, we presume the men will drive a very profitable business, while the women, or a portion of them, will engage in fortune-telling and domestic pursuits.

The Gypsies now here are evidently of the better class. They dress comfortably, though somewhat gaudily, are very cleanly, and the men are fine specimens of manhood. Several of the women are quite handsome, and one of them, the Queen, is quite good looking. She is the pride of the community, and being a great favorite is somewhat coquettish. Of all Gypsy women it can be said with truth and to their honor, that their chastity is immovable and unconquerable. Under the Gypsy code unchastity in a woman is punishable with death.

We are informed that several farms, adjoining each other, will be purchased by these Gypsies, and be used as grazing farms for their stock.

- New Albany Daily Ledger 14 June 1870, p. 2 col. 2