

The old man made a haughty gesture of impatience. "What do you want with me, my Romany *chal*?"* he asked sharply.

The young man replied hastily. He seemed to speak by rote. His manner was too eager to suit the impressiveness of his words. "The sheep are without a shepherd," he said. "The young men marry among the Gorgios, or they are lost in the cities and return no more to the tents and the fields and the road. There is disorder in all the world among the Romanys. The ancient ways are forgotten. Our people gather and settle upon the land and live as the Gorgios live. They forget the way beneath the trees, they lose their skill in horses. If the fountain is choked, how shall the water run?"

A cold sneer came to the face of Gabriel Druse. "The way beneath the trees!" he growled. "The way of the open road is enough. The way beneath the trees is the way of the thief, and the skill of the horse is the skill to cheat."

"There is no other way. It has been the way of the Romany since the time of Timur Beg and centuries beyond Timur, so it is told. One man and all men must do as the tribe has done since the beginning."

The old man pulled at his beard angrily. "You do not talk like a Romany, but like a Gorgio of the schools."

The young man's manner became more confident as he replied. "Thinking on what was to come to me, I read in the books as the Gorgio reads. I sat in my tent and worked with a pen; I saw in the printed sheets what the world was doing every day. This I did because of what was to come."

"And have you read of me in the printed sheets? Did they tell you where I was to be found?" Gabriel Druse's eyes were angry, his manner was authoritative.

* A glossary of Romany words will be found at the end of the book.