

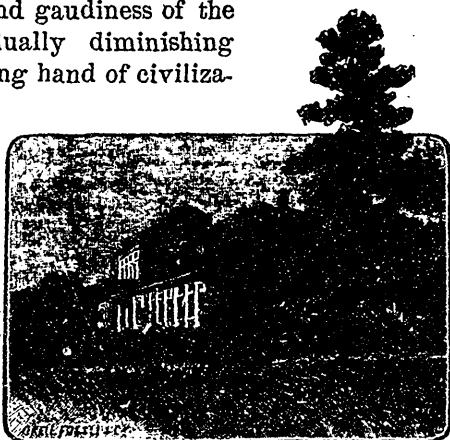
played even by the oldest and most experienced. But at the same time the peasant of the Hungarian Plain possesses considerable native intelligence, and frequently gives striking proofs of his mother-wit. The Plain, too, is the birthplace of most of those popular Magyar songs, which, sung for the first time by some youth at a village festival, are caught up and spread from place to place till the whole land resounds with them. In form and matter these native ballads have little to recommend them; for a foreigner, to whom their often untranslatable words remain unintelligible, they derive their charm from the airs, now melancholy, now wild and spirited, to which they are played with such entrancing skill by the Gypsy musicians of the Puszta.

In the Plain the peasantry still retain to a great extent the free and unrestrained manners of their ancestors, and here, too, the picturesque Magyar costume has held its ground the longest. It is true that the gaiety and gaudiness of the popular costume are gradually diminishing even here before the levelling hand of civiliza-

tion; the brightly-coloured flowing garments and the showy ornaments formerly in general vogue are yielding more and more to sober-coloured urban costumes and dark, unobtrusive colours. However, we still frequently meet with men clad in short, coarse linen shirts with wide sleeves, wide, petticoat-like trousers, jack-boots, and round,

broad-brimmed felt hats. Then comes the heavy sheepskin, and the embroidered mantle of a heavy, white, felt-like material, with a large brass clasp. The women wear close-fitting coloured bodices, white undergarments with puff sleeves, short smooth skirts—an incredible number one above the other, a rich display of ribbons in their hair, and high boots, like those worn by men; these boots, however, are gradually being exchanged for the more convenient shoes.

By far the greater number of the inhabitants of the Plain are employed in agriculture and cattle-breeding; trade and manufactures are much neglected, and the former is everywhere in the hands of the Jews. The wonderfully fertile soil well repays the labour bestowed upon it, and the luxuriant grass-lands afford



CHATEAU OF GESZT.