

Gipsies and Their Music.



CATTERED throughout Europe, America, Africa, and the remotest parts of Asia are the mysterious and interesting people known as Gipsies. Owning nowhere a foot of land, acknowledging no rulers, holding to no form of religion, they pitch their low black, tents beside the high-ways of every country, living a wild, strange life, as free as the birds of the air—the very children of nature. Too vain of their own sad race to mingle with others, betraying no memory of the past, expressing no hope for the future, they stand apart from all the world sharing neither its joys nor its sorrows. Ever living among others and yet ever strangers, they have preserved, unaltered for centuries, the same physiognomy, language, and customs, and neither persecution nor persuasion can turn them from their nomadic habits and questionable pursuits to accept the settled life of civilized nations. To many, their name is a synonym for vagabondage and picturesque outlawry, but the careful student of human-nature sees in the passionate love of freedom, the idealism of race and the genius manifested by this “enigmatical people,” much that is worthy of study and admiration.

Ethnology in its fascinating tracery of the ancestry and migrations of the different branches of the human family, has no subject of more interest than the dark-skinned Romany or Gipsy. For years their origin was wrapped in darkness, and they were in turn regarded as Egyptians, Persians and Hindus. With the latter, their language, physical appearance and customs appear to identify them completely. The name of Romany, which means wanderers from the Scuid or Indus, seems to prove conclusively that their early home was in India, “that cradle of many races.” But, among the many nomadic tribes inhabiting India at that time it is of course difficult to ascertain the exact one from which they may have sprung. Many scholars have worked on this problem