

Dui nodded his approval. 'There you are, my *mort*,' he said to Vashti. 'There you are. Never missed one of 'em 'e didn't. *Mandi* said as 'ow he'd find 'em all right.' 'Well, I must say I never thought you'd see 'em at all,' said Vashti. 'Though 'e did make 'em clear enough, I must say. Still, that old school-master won't find 'em. I ain't *atrashed* of that—No, not afraid of that, I ain't. And even if 'e was to see 'em, 'e wouldn't know what they means, would 'e?' Vashti went on. '*Mandi* reckons 'e only thinks about taking the *chavies* and shuttin' 'em up in 'is school, so as to learn 'em 'ow to read the *gorgio* papers and that. 'E wouldn't know anything what was worth knowin'—not 'im!'

III.—O DROM LE LOWARENGO

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE AND TRAVEL WITH THE LOWARA

By JAN YOORS

(Continued from Vol. XXXVIII, p. 106)

10. THE SINTI

A MILE and a half before reaching the big Lowari camp, we see two wagons travelling ahead of us in the same direction. I force the horse into a sharp trot while Pulika stands upright, legs apart for balance, and surveys the small travelling unit. The wagons look smallish compared to ours, they are narrow and high in build and they sway uncomfortably on their too high and unsteady wheels. We drive level with them now. An old nervous-looking man greets us, slightly uneasy. They are Sinti. Outsiders designate them with the same generic name of Gypsy as they use for all tribes. To us, however, the Sinti are outcast and in most cases we avoid unnecessary contact with them. There exist several major sub-groups among them.

This man belongs to the self-styled 'German' Sinti clan. They are mostly violin makers, cut-throats and excellent musicians. It is this last qualification which prompts Pulika to invite them to join us and to play for us for a promised monetary remuneration. The frightened Sinti dare not refuse. They are

terror-stricken when they drive their poor-looking wagons into the huge camp. Jovially Pulika shows them an open space and invites the old man to follow him to his fire. After a while the Sinti relax, seeing that no harm is done to them. Their women come out of the wagons. They are big-eyed and beautiful, but we dislike their black, shiny, half-long dresses and their loose curly hair. They seem to sense it and remain isolated. Their speech differs so entirely from ours that we have to use German or French to make ourselves understood by them. After a grandiose supper of roast beef with hot pepper, chicken à la paprika, stuffed cabbage leaves and all the trimmings, served on the green for all the men of the camp, we open the big barrel, affix a small hand-pump to it to produce the necessary pressure and the cool foaming beer squirts out for the next few hours. The Sinti have eaten, in their own quarters, food prepared by themselves from provisions provided by us. The old nervous-looking man, whose name among the Sinti is Pivola, has come to join us. Under his arm, wrapped in a piece of blanket, he carries his violin. Several other young men follow him. They are dressed in shabby black evening suits, which makes them feel out of place among us. They play *czardas*, Hungarian rhapsodies, sentimental Germanic songs, popular French tunes and 'passodobles'. At the request of the old men who hum bits of old-time songs, they also play Greek, Turkish and Serbian folk-songs. Late in the evening Çukurka has taken them apart by himself and is patiently trying to teach them the accompaniment to, and variations on, old Lowari songs. When they eventually succeed in doing this, playing it by ear, he is triumphant. He begs Pulika to sing the song of their sib, the brave *Yojeshi* of old.

The Sinti play for all they are worth, but are soon forgotten, for Pulika is singing the ancient words, and transported by sweeping emotions, improvises new verses to the old air. Couplet after couplet the words grow deeper and more heavy with meaning. It is as if floodgates have opened. Unobserved, the Sinti creep back to their wagons where they hesitate between just keeping very quiet with no fire burning and all lights out or plain hurried flight. This they do not dare to do as yet, but they have fetched the horses from the pastures and keep them close at hand. Hours go by in singing and dancing before the Rom notice the disappear-

ance of our Sinti entertainers, and Pulika sends for them. They are received with amazing affection. With praise and affection they are requested to please resume their playing. They are dumbfounded by such an unexpected welcome after having probably spent hours in the worst of apprehensions, brooding over the many tales told about unpredictable Lowari excesses, violent changes of mood and their curious addiction to the use of powerful magic.

Pivola, that old time-scarred Sinti, plays the violin, his son accompanies him on the 'cello and his son-in-law vigorously strums the guitar. They play romantic Sinti songs and we pretend we like them, but we don't. To us the Sinti seem a strange gang, romantic and unsteady, hard-living and mean in their fights. They play clever sentimental music for the *gajé*, by the day, till in the end they themselves lose their sense of values and like what is weak, decadent and superficial. They travel in very small groups and mostly hang around the big cities where they can earn easy money playing in restaurants and night-clubs. They are dominated by their women and have no recognized form of marriage agreement or ceremony. The woman rules the entire household. When a Sinti girl feels she is capable, and willing, to provide for a family, she elopes with a young man of her choice. His duties will be to be patient with her now, and with their children later, and in his spare moments to practise the violin. The money he earns by his music will be his for spending on smoking, drinking and other personal uses. The members of this tribe do not share, they do not live in large communities, even temporarily, as we do. They hardly ever sing for their own pleasure and they dance only to entertain the outside world. They have become show people and forget to be what they could be: Gypsies, free and wild, intense, vigorous and unafraid. A natural life might be theirs but they prefer to dwell in the slums of some city. They have the gift of music and forget its meaning. They waste their talents and time and themselves, trying to excite or please lust-craving, idle weaklings in night-clubs, in exchange for very little money. This money does not even buy them freedom or peace, but is spent instead in the same silly way as by the crowd of night-birds they have endeavoured to entertain. They love to go to the 'movies', avidly absorbing the glamour and

stupidity of the films. Their girls and women wear cheap and gaudy costumes and jewellery. They are far too fond of the ways of the *gajó* world to make good Romani mothers in the Lowari sense. They are jealous and quick-tempered, and treacherously make use of razor-blades in their fights. Some Sinti groups have begun to intermarry with circus people, while others have married out and out *gajé*. Their young men make fair lovers but not good husbands. Their views are diametrically opposed to those of the Lowara on such subjects as pride, responsibility, manhood, fidelity, respect, childbirth and womanhood. They lack the essential reverence for life and for creativeness which distinguishes the Lowara among all other tribes. They are losing their original Gypsy roots and fail to grow new ones in the *gajó* soil. To-night Pivola fiddles for us and tries to endear himself to us. I sense a loneliness in him and nostalgia for a rapidly vanishing world of true values. We want to be good to him to-night and to his people, we want them to taste with us the solidarity of one day. We want them to be proud of being Gypsies and to forget their painful, self-conscious, double personalities. Pivola is an old man and he has lived and travelled long enough to sense what we mean in our relations of man to man. His son and son-in-law look at us vacantly, dreaming of the silliness and superficiality of the city of the *gajé* at its worst, where everything is cheap and has lost its essential value and meaning, where the concept of woman is the exact opposite of what we Lowara mean by it, with all our love, intensity and respect.

11. THE ČURARA

A few days later a group of small children come running excitedly, bringing us the news that in the distance they have seen a group of five Gypsy wagons coming our way. Nobody pays any serious attention to the rumour but a furtive glance in the distance tells more. The newcomers are not Lowari. They drive on to the camping ground in a savage hurry, unhitch the horses and settle down. Only after this do they come to greet the older men and haughtily ask permission to share the amenities of the site with those who have preceded them. In doing this they overlook one of the first rules of Romany etiquette, generally observed by all Gypsies: the right of priority and the privileges attached

to it. We have met them before and for a short while we did travel together. This was several years ago when they had come in strength from Norway and Finland and were on their way to Spain. The headmen of that group had been Gumari and his brother Nanoš, who is married to Pita, and their brother Pani. Among the Čurara¹ who have just arrived is the oldest son of Pani, by name Čurkina, with his wild wife Liza, and also the three sons of old Nanoš with their families. The fifth wagon belongs to Čurkina's son-in-law who less than a year ago married the now twelve-year-old and ravishingly beautiful dark-eyed Šofranka. The children look neglected, impudent and hungry. They spread through the camp, without restraint, like a swarm of greedy little sparrows. They bring all kinds of news and gossip and create a real stir in our midst. Instead of the women gathering wood to light their fires, a couple of young men cut down several young live pine-trees. Their men joke rudely with the young Sinti girls and pay them doubtful compliments in un-Romany fashion. Čurkina offers old Pivola some brandy in a dirty coffee-cup in such a fashion that the old man dare not refuse. Both Čurkina and his wife drink hard, and force the old Sinti to do the same. Soon he feels dizzy and sick. They joke with him and make him some proposals about selling them one of his daughters as a bride for their son Djemi. Old Pivola is horrified and this partly sobers him. At the first opportunity he gets he complains to Pulika and begs him for protection. We know the Čurari ways, but what can we do? Towards the evening we notice their section of the camp is deserted and quiet. All the men and most of the women have sneaked away during the afternoon, leaving behind the very old people and the children. They are drinking wildly among themselves at a nearby inn. They drink without eating and they don't invite others to share. They drink as if in a hurry without joy or graciousness. The women drink like men while at the same time nursing their infants. At dawn they are back at the camp. They argue loudly about the fare of the taxi-cab, which they at first refuse to pay, but in the end have to give way. The dogs bark as the cab makes a full turn on the camp-site, to drive back to town, the full glare of its headlights sweeping slowly across the entire place disturbing

¹ See *JGLS*. (3) xxiv. 16.

sit with their guests around long tables next to the large window overlooking the stone-paved yards where the horses stand, and keep an eye on activities there. Each new round of drinks adds a green bottle of dark beer to the impressive number of empty ones which, according to custom, are left on the table. Some men have one or two cases of twelve bottles still full, standing next to their chairs. It is a much appreciated gesture of courtesy extended to the entire Lowara group that the owner of the inn allows empty glasses or bottles to remain on the tables. On his part it is a high mark of trust in their good behaviour and peacefulness, since in cases of brawl or violence, so great a number of empty bottles might be considered most welcome ammunition. The beer most favoured by the Rom in the place is a dark, potent and sourish-tasting one locally called 'geuze'. They like to add to it a lump of white sugar or else some fruit extract, trade-marked 'grenadine', which is the basic ingredient of a soft drink popular in Western Europe. The Lowari women come and bring us food, which they put in small heaps on the wooden tables, broiled chicken, cold cuts, hot pepper, raw onions, various cheeses, young cucumbers, pork chops and long rolls of French bread. The house provides salt, pepper, vinegar and quantities of paper napkins. Before we leave Pulika makes sure all bills have been paid or credits checked and approved.

It is now nearly two o'clock in the afternoon. The unsold horses and the newly bought ones are taken back to the camp. I manage to stay on with Pulika, Rupa, Kaja and a whole group of people, having found another boy to replace me for the ride back. He is eager to prove his worth. We visit the big shops of the main streets in the centre of the town, where Rupa and Kaja buy dress material and printed silk and heavy brocades for three-quarter length jackets. They buy Spanish olive oil, spices and herbs at a little Central European Jewish grocery shop. There are a few things that can be bought in this city only. Rupa and Kaja, full of fun, match their knowledge of European languages with that of the little, widely travelled, white-haired Jew, with the broad Transylvanian accent. Excitedly he tells them, stumbling over his own words, about having met a lonesome young Gypsy man who had been asking questions in the neighbourhood, about the whereabouts of Gypsy camps. He had been sent to the Jew by

emigrant relatives of his with whom he had travelled for many days, sharing hardships in common. He had spoken, with what the Jewish merchant claims was a strong Russian accent, fair German, Hungarian and Spanish. We are puzzled. Rarely does a Gypsy travel alone, especially without at least a woman, be it his mother or sister, if he has no wife. Rupa promises to ring up the storekeeper the next day and the day after and leaves several money bills behind should he, the unknown, turn up again and need cash to take a cab to come and join us. If he is a Rom, one of ours, it may help him to feel more comfortable, and if he is in immediate need it will then be easier for him to come to us, having some spendable money of his own in his pocket. The little Transylvanian Jewish emigrant nods understandingly: he knows and appreciates the meaning and need of such a brotherhood. The following day I volunteer to call up the storekeeper from a nearby inn but there is no news yet. Nor has he any new information the day after, or the day after that; and gradually we forget about the whole incident.

13. THE ČURARA COMPARED WITH THE LOWARA

The Trokešti¹ have received word from relatives of theirs who are coming to this country soon. They send their greetings to Pulika and Čukurka and humbly beg for their assistance while travelling through our territory. They are on their way to Paris to visit some kinsmen of theirs and to look for suitable brides for their growing sons and nephews. Towards nightfall a large group of wagons suddenly invades the camping-grounds with wild yells to encourage the tired and thirsty horses to pull strongly on the uneven ground. In the half darkness they do not see the big stones, furrows and pits. At every rough hump one can hear crockery, glasses and cooking-pans crashing inside the swaying wagons and sliding from side to side as on a ship in distress on a rough sea. The men laugh but the women yell in anger. The Čurara are with us again. We stay round our fires and continue our conversation undisturbed. Everybody has eaten to satiety and the day has been one blessed with serenity, good cheer and graciousness. We listen to wondrous tales told by a stout mild spoken Trokešti, tales of travel and adventure, told in the gram-

¹ See above, *JGLS*. Vol. xxxviii. 12-18.

matical first person, in which fact, and ardent poetic imagery, and fantastic feats of daring invention are blended into what we Lowara call 'swato'. These 'swato' tales¹ describe circumstances larger than life and more heroic than legends. They are unquestionably based on reality, enriched by imaginative and sometimes supernatural overtones. They are told with emphatic and undisguised candour and listened to with wonder and perhaps a touch of appreciative humour.

This is the peaceful hour devoted to colourful phantasy, wonder and Romany relaxation. A group of Čurara women are plucking chickens and in the dark night the snow-white feathers fly. They gut the fowls, and in broiling and cooking them disturb the serenity and solemnity of the evening. The Čurara are hungry. They devour their food half-cooked and in a hurry. They chew and crush the chicken bones with their strong, white teeth and wipe their hands on their oily, blue-black hair or on the overskirts of their wives. The night is dark and impregnated with unexpressed latent feline meaning. One has to be aware of this to receive its secret and soul-filling joys. This Čurara clan share the camp with us, profiting from the privileges obtained by our chief. They are unwilling, however, to observe the essentials of the truce, that of peaceful behaviour, avoidance of wild drinking and violent quarrels, refraining from plundering and stealing, and the practice of fortune-telling in its more reprehensible or fraudulent aspects.

Far be it from me to imply, in any way, that the Lowara essentially have more respect than other Gypsies for the *gajó's* right of ownership. As a matter of fact I believe that since the Lowara have more energy than the latter this would apply as much to their positive potentialities as to their more negative inclinations. The Čurara have conceived a bitterness of feeling towards the whole gentile community as such, and in their entirety. Whereas the Lowara's distrust of the *gajó* world would tend to be directed more towards certain aspects of the latter's attitude to a conception of life, nature and man in his relationship to God.

Flies buzz furiously all over the encampment and it is hot. Many unmarried girls and young women have left the site early

in the morning, in couples or by threes or fours. They go on long errands through the countryside visiting isolated farmhouses, hamlets and rural communities in pursuit of their remunerative trade of fortune-telling, palm-reading or conjuration, selling charms and spells and giving occult advice. This affords them the welcome opportunity to add voluntarily to the resources of the community. It gives them also a chance to display their individual skill, to see the world at large away from wagon, tent and horses, and to study the *gajó* in his superstitious foolishness. The women come back laden with gifts and spoils. They are happy because, as Gypsy women, they love to give as much as they do to receive. Part of their income, at their sole discretion, is used to supplement their collection of Gypsy skirts and to acquire things for their personal use, in addition to their current allowance from husband or father. All the eiderdowns, their elaborate silk covers and pillows are the property of the women; so are plates and cups, forks and knives, cooking-pots and most other things connected with domestic activities. The women return to the camp in colourful swarms and although it is still difficult to distinguish their faces in the distance, the old people make stray guesses at what the day's spoils may be. From slight signs old Luba can tell that several Čurara women are carrying stolen chickens, cleverly concealed by their wide skirts and aprons. Pulika will be displeased. He has secured the ten days' truce and offers his own people, and also his camp guests, all the food and drink they can possibly consume, entirely at his own expense. As a Lowari he knows and understands their traditions and ways. It is not that he objects *per se* to pilfering, begging, spoliation or the practice of fortune-telling or the Black Art. He knows that circumstances and events may necessitate more devious ways in the struggle for material survival. He is displeased because in the present circumstances there is no urgent necessity to revert to these archaic habits and, in his mind and heart, it casts a black shadow on his generous concept of Romany hospitality. It is for him a needless insult. Does he not personally provide for them all, while they accept his truce? And does not he provide plentifully, according to the best Lowari traditions of old Yoyo his better, his grand-sire and all his forefathers?

¹ Cp. the term 'Tales of Experience' used by Mr. T. W. Thompson in describing Gypsy Tales of this character, *JGLS*. (3) xxi. 2.

The Ćurara live in very small, independent, fast-moving units. They plunder and move on at a deceptive speed. The saying goes 'Do not search for the Ćurari to-day where he cooked his meal last night'. Every and any opportunity is welcome to them to take crude advantage of the *gajó*. To fail to do so, under any circumstances, would for them be the mark of the weakling. They are skittish like nervous horses and are continuously on the run. They steal and are chased away, therefore they steal more and flee before they are driven away. It is mostly they who, through their frequent, vicious raids, have provoked ever-increasing animosity and distrust toward nomadic Gypsy bands all over Europe. The Lowara on the other hand like to congregate in large groups to talk and feast. They appreciate, and are eager to have intervals of peaceful leisure in the midst of nature to think and dream and contemplate. The Lowara, therefore, frequently request periods of truce from the authorities, which when granted are strictly observed, thus gaining much needed and renewed credentials for further grants of pacts in the future.

14. AN UNPLEASANT INCIDENT

Towards nightfall some half naked children spread the news of the approach of a car with several police inspectors. It creates a hushed stir in the Ćurara section of the camp. The commanding officer of the local police force comes towards Pulika's fire, followed at a safe distance by throngs of half naked, healthy-looking Gypsy children. Most of them speak no more than a few words of the vernacular but they chatter like excited young birds in their native Romani. The police chief is followed by a red-faced, indignant, vociferating farmer who keeps repeating a confused yarn about Gypsy women, stolen chickens, and a stolen goose and his intentions to shoot at sight all Gypsies approaching his land, and his wish to see them all jailed, expelled or preferably hanged. Now Pulika steps forward. He looks imposing, powerful and sad and the farmer's voice lowers in pitch and softens in tone. Without waiting for the official police explanation of the visit and without strategic show of surprise or excusatory negation of responsibility for any harm done, Pulika asks simply: 'How many were stolen?' Before the farmer, addressing himself to the police inspector in a lengthy complaint, has time to reckon

the exact number of fowls, etc., Pulika puts his next question: 'How much does Monsieur expect as satisfactory restitution from him, the Chief of the nomads?' To this proposition the farmer reacts as a Spanish bull would to the red cape of the bull-fighter. He is not interested in restitution, what he wants is to see justice done. He demands the identification of the culprits. He wants them dragged before the tribunals, condemned and duly sent to jail. The inspector shrugs his shoulders, thinking that Pulika's offer is an unusual, if implicating one, suggests that it should be accepted at its full value. The peasant does not agree. So Pulika voluntarily orders all the women and girls of the camp to come forward and line up. Over one hundred women stand here, all for a few chickens. As Pulika expects, the *gajó* is more than bewildered. Most of the women look alike to his unaccustomed eye, with their large-eyed dark faces, long black braided hair, bare feet and full skirts reaching to the ankles, low-cut bodices and necklaces of gold coins, and half nude babies sitting astride and clinging to the hips of their mothers. Moreover it is pretty certain that those implicated in the chicken-stealing have intentionally made possible identification still harder by changing clothes, in such fashion that none of the women present are dressed in the colours worn originally by the two or three culprits, if these are present at all at this inspection. It would have been fairly easy for them to leave the camp quietly and hide for a while in its bush-covered surroundings or they could lie under some eiderdown pretending to be sick, if discovered, but probably relying on the belief that the whole camp will not be searched thoroughly.

After a long and ridiculous demonstration, it dawns on the enraged farmer that he is being made a fool of, in the best Gypsy tradition. He admits that he cannot spot the one or more persons he accuses. The inspector grows impatient. After a while he decides briskly to leave the whole affair as it is. The farmer refused the offer of Pulika to pay whatever price he named, and on the other hand failed to identify any of the women culprits. After the police leave a strange tenseness remains. Pulika is visibly displeased. Kaja is preparing strong black coffee. A few hours later the older men call on Ćukurka and invite him to accompany them to Pulika's tent. They have come to discuss the matter before being called upon by the Chief to do so. Contrary

to painful expectation, Pulika takes the whole matter as unimportant in itself. No decision had to be made. The money offered was rejected, and not offered a second time, and no woman had been arrested and dragged away from her people. But Pulika declares, as a reluctant afterthought, that he is sick and tired of the present camp-site. The landscape bores him. The horses are getting fidgety, feeding and resting all day. He longs for the open road again and new adventures awaiting them there. Why should not he and his family travel to some other far-off region and make some money? Any way most of his camp-guests must be tired of feasting. He does not press further his thought, but the insinuation is clear, and all know that his decision to break up camp is unchangeable. It is as if unexpectedly the wind has changed its direction, with all that this can imply to nomadic people.

(To be concluded)

IV.—GYPSIES IN THE BOROUGH OF BRADDOCK, U.S.A.

By ENDRE DE SPUR

(Continued from Vol. XXXVIII, p 94.)

III

FROM THE PIONEERS TO THE 'GYPSY' FASHION IN AMERICAN MUSICAL LIFE

After the reporter has finished his job, the musico-gypsiologist must endeavour to boil down the narrative of the Braddock excursion into some statements of greater historical significance. There are a few facts that seem at least temporarily symptomatic of the Hungarian Gypsy musicians in the United States. (By Hungarian Gypsy musicians I want to denote the large group that came over to America from Hungary, comprising the present Slovakia and Transylvania, as in the days of the Confederation with Austria.) Their infiltration was surely the product of the wave of emigration that took such large numbers from ancient Hungary one or two decades before the First World War. As the parish priest of Braddock affirmed, these Gypsy