

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON

**THE DISOWNED –
VOLUME 01**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон
The Disowned – Volume 01

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CHAPTER I

I'll tell you a story if you please to attend.
G. KNIGHT: Limbo.

It was the evening of a soft, warm day in the May of 17—. The sun had already set, and the twilight was gathering slowly over the large, still masses of wood which lay on either side of one of those green lanes so peculiar to England. Here and there, the outline of the trees irregularly shrunk back from the road, leaving broad patches of waste land covered with fern and the yellow blossoms of the dwarf furze, and at more distant intervals thick clusters of rushes, from which came the small hum of gnats,—those "evening revellers" alternately rising and sinking in the customary manner of their unknown sports,—till, as the shadows grew darker and darker, their thin and airy shapes were no longer distinguishable, and no solitary token of life or motion broke the voiceless monotony of the surrounding woods.

The first sound which invaded the silence came from the light, quick footsteps of a person whose youth betrayed itself in its elastic and unmeasured tread, and in the gay, free carol which broke out by fits and starts upon the gentle stillness of the evening.

There was something rather indicative of poetical taste than musical science in the selection of this vesper hymn, which always commenced with,—

"'T is merry, 't is merry, in good green wood,"

and never proceeded a syllable further than the end of the second line,—

"when birds are about and singing;"

from the last word of which, after a brief pause, it invariably started forth into joyous "iteration."

Presently a heavier, yet still more rapid, step than that of the youth was heard behind; and, as it overtook the latter, a loud, clear, good-humoured voice gave the salutation of the evening. The tone in which this courtesy was returned was frank, distinct, and peculiarly harmonious.

"Good evening, my friend. How far is it to W—? I hope I am not out of the direct road?"

"To W—, sir?" said the man, touching his hat, as he perceived, in spite of the dusk, something in the air and voice of his new acquaintance which called for a greater degree of respect than he was at first disposed to accord to a pedestrian traveller,— "to W—, sir? why, you will not surely go there to-night? it is more than eight miles distant, and the roads none of the best"

"Now, a curse on all rogues!" quoth the youth, with a serious sort of vivacity. "Why, the miller at the foot of the hill assured me I should be at my journey's end in less than an hour."

"He may have said right, sir," returned the man, "yet you will not reach W— in twice that time."

"How do you mean?" said the younger stranger.

"Why, that you may for once force a miller to speak truth in spite of himself, and make a public-house, about three miles hence, the end of your day's journey."

"Thank you for the hint," said the youth. "Does the house you speak of lie on the road-side?"

"No, sir: the lane branches off about two miles hence, and you must then turn to the right; but till then our way is the same, and if you would not prefer your own company to mine we can trudge on together."

"With all my heart," rejoined the younger stranger; "and not the less willingly from the brisk pace you walk. I thought I had few equals in pedestrianism; but it should not be for a small wager that I would undertake to keep up with you."

"Perhaps, sir," said the man, laughing, "I'll have had in the course of my life a better usage and a longer experience of my heels than you have."

Somewhat startled by a speech of so equivocal a meaning, the youth, for the first time, turned round to examine, as well as the increasing darkness would permit, the size and appearance of his companion. He was not perhaps too well satisfied with his survey. His fellow pedestrian was about six feet high, and of a corresponding girth of limb and frame, which would have made him fearful odds in any encounter where bodily strength was the best means of conquest. Notwithstanding the mildness of the weather, he was closely buttoned in a rough great-coat, which was well calculated to give all due effect to the athletic proportions of the wearer.

There was a pause of some moments.

"This is but a wild, savage sort of scene for England, sir, in this day of new-fashioned ploughs and farming improvements," said the tall stranger, looking round at the ragged wastes and grim woods, which lay steeped in the shade beside and before them.

"True," answered the youth; "and in a few years agricultural innovation will scarcely leave, even in these wastes, a single furze-blossom for the bee or a tuft of green-sward for the grasshopper; but, however unpleasant the change may be for us foot-travellers, we must not repine at what they tell us is so sure a witness of the prosperity of the country."

"They tell us! who tell us?" exclaimed the stranger, with great vivacity. "Is it the puny and spiritless artisan, or the debased and crippled slave of the counter and the till, or the sallow speculator on morals, who would mete us out our liberty, our happiness, our very feelings by the yard and inch and fraction? No, no, let them follow what the books and precepts of their own wisdom teach them; let them cultivate more highly the lands they have already parcelled out by dikes and fences, and leave, though at scanty intervals, some green patches of unpolluted land for the poor man's beast and the free man's foot."

"You are an enthusiast on this subject," said the younger traveller, not a little surprised at the tone and words of the last speech; "and if I were not just about to commence the world with a firm persuasion that enthusiasm on any matter is a great obstacle to success, I could be as warm though not so eloquent as yourself."

"Ah, sir," said the stranger, sinking into a more natural and careless tone, "I have a better right than I imagine you can claim to repine or even to inveigh against the boundaries which are, day by day and hour by hour, encroaching upon what I have learned to look upon as my own territory. You were, just before I joined you, singing an old song; I honour you for your taste: and no offence, sir, but a sort of fellowship in feeling made me take the liberty to accost you. I am no very great scholar in other things; but I owe my present circumstances of life solely to my fondness for those old songs and quaint madrigals. And I believe no person can better apply to himself Will Shakspeare's invitation,—

'Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither,
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.'"

Relieved from his former fear, but with increased curiosity at this quotation, which was half said, half sung, in a tone which seemed to evince a hearty relish for the sense of the words, the youth replied,—

"Truly, I did not expect to meet among the travellers of this wild country with so well-stored a memory. And, indeed, I should have imagined that the only persons to whom your verses could exactly have applied were those honourable vagrants from the Nile whom in vulgar language we term gypsies."

"Precisely so, sir," answered the tall stranger, indifferently; "precisely so. It is to that ancient body that I belong."

"The devil you do!" quoth the youth, in unsophisticated surprise; "the progress of education is indeed astonishing!"

"Why," answered the stranger, laughing, "to tell you the truth, sir, I am a gypsy by inclination, not birth. The illustrious Bamfylde Moore Carew is not the only example of one of gentle blood and honourable education whom the fleshpots of Egypt have seduced."

"I congratulate myself," quoth the youth, in a tone that might have been in jest, "upon becoming acquainted with a character at once so respectable and so novel; and, to return your quotation in the way of a compliment, I cry out with the most fashionable author of Elizabeth's days,—

'O for a bowl of fat Canary,
Rich Palermo, sparkling Sherry,'

in order to drink to our better acquaintance."

"Thank you, sir,—thank you," cried the strange gypsy, seemingly delighted with the spirit with which his young acquaintance appeared to enter into his character, and his quotation from a class of authors at that time much less known and appreciated than at present; "and if you have seen already enough of the world to take up with ale when neither Canary, Palermo, nor Sherry are forthcoming, I will promise, at least, to pledge you in large draughts of that homely beverage. What say you to passing a night with us? our tents are yet more at hand than the public-house of which I spoke to you." The young man hesitated a moment, then replied,—

"I will answer you frankly, my friend, even though I may find cause to repent my confidence. I have a few guineas about me, which, though not a large sum, are my all. Now, however ancient and honourable your fraternity may be, they labour under a sad confusion, I fear, in their ideas of meum and tuum."

"Faith, sir, I believe you are right; and were you some years older, I think you would not have favoured me with the same disclosure you have done now; but you may be quite easy on that score. If you were made of gold, the rascals would not filch off the corner of your garment as long as you were under my protection. Does this assurance satisfy you?"

"Perfectly," said the youth; "and now how far are we from your encampment? I assure you I am all eagerness to be among a set of which I have witnessed such a specimen."

"Nay, nay," returned the gypsy, "you must not judge of all my brethren by me: I confess that they are but a rough tribe. However, I love them dearly; and am only the more inclined to think them honest to each other, because they are rogues to all the rest of the world."

By this time our travellers had advanced nearly two miles since they had commenced companionship; and at a turn in the lane, about three hundred yards farther on, they caught a glimpse of a distant fire burning brightly through the dim trees. They quickened their pace, and striking a little out of their path into a common, soon approached two tents, the Arab homes of the vagrant and singular people with whom the gypsy claimed brotherhood and alliance.

CHAPTER II

*Here we securely live and eat
The cream of meat;
And keep eternal fires
By which we sit and do divine.*

HERRICK: Ode to Sir Cclipseby Crew.

Around a fire which blazed and crackled beneath the large seething- pot, that seemed an emblem of the mystery and a promise of the good cheer which are the supposed characteristics of the gypsy race, were grouped seven or eight persons, upon whose swarthy and strong countenances the irregular and fitful flame cast a picturesque and not unbecoming glow. All of these, with the exception of an old crone who was tending the pot, and a little boy who was feeding the fire with sundry fragments of stolen wood, started to their feet upon the entrance of the stranger.

"What ho! my bob cuffins," cried the gypsy guide, "I have brought you a gentry cove, to whom you will show all proper respect: and hark ye, my maunders, if ye dare beg, borrow, or steal a single croker,—ay, but a bawbee of him, I'll—but ye know me." The gypsy stopped abruptly, and turned an eye, in which menace vainly struggled with good-humour, upon each of his brethren, as they submissively bowed to him and his protege, and poured forth a profusion of promises, to which their admonitor did not even condescend to listen. He threw off his great-coat, doubled it down by the best place near the fire, and made the youth forthwith possess himself of the seat it afforded. He then lifted the cover of the mysterious caldron. "Well, Mort," cried he to the old woman, as he bent wistfully down, "what have we here?"

"Two ducks, three chickens, and a rabbit, with some potatoes," growled the old hag, who claimed the usual privilege of her culinary office, to be as ill-tempered as she pleased.

"Good!" said the gypsy; "and now, Mim, my cull, go to the other tent, and ask its inhabitants, in my name, to come here and sup; bid them bring their caldron to eke out ours: I'll find the lush."

With these words (which Mim, a short, swarthy member of the gang, with a countenance too astute to be pleasing, instantly started forth to obey) the gypsy stretched himself at full length by the youth's side, and began reminding him, with some jocularly and at some length, of his promise to drink to their better acquaintance.

Something there was in the scene, the fire, the caldron, the intent figure and withered countenance of the old woman, the grouping of the other forms, the rude but not unpicturesque tent, the dark still woods on either side, with the deep and cloudless skies above, as the stars broke forth one by one upon the silent air, which (to use the orthodox phrase of the novelist) would not have been wholly unworthy the bold pencil of Salvator himself.

The youth eyed, with that involuntary respect which personal advantages always command, the large yet symmetrical proportions of his wild companion; nor was the face which belonged to that frame much less deserving of attention. Though not handsome, it was both shrewd and prepossessing in its expression; the forehead was prominent, the brows overhung the eyes, which were large, dark, and, unlike those of the tribe in general, rather calm than brilliant; the complexion, though sun-burnt, was not swarthy, and the face was carefully and cleanly shaved, so as to give all due advantage of contrast to the brown luxuriant locks which fell rather in flakes than curls, on either side of the healthful and manly cheeks. In age, he was about thirty-five, and, though his air and mien were assuredly not lofty nor aristocratic, yet they were strikingly above the bearing of his vagabond companions: those companions were in all respects of the ordinary race of gypsies; the cunning and

flashing eye, the raven locks, the dazzling teeth, the bronzed colour, and the low, slight, active form, were as strongly their distinguishing characteristics as the tokens of all their tribe.

But to these, the appearance of the youth presented a striking and beautiful contrast.

He had only just passed the stage of boyhood, perhaps he might have seen eighteen summers, probably not so many. He had, in imitation of his companion, and perhaps from mistaken courtesy to his new society, doffed his hat; and the attitude which he had chosen fully developed the noble and intellectual turn of his head and throat. His hair, as yet preserved from the disfiguring fashions of the day, was of a deep auburn, which was rapidly becoming of a more chestnut hue, and curled in short close curls from the nape of the neck to the commencement of a forehead singularly white and high. His brows finely and lightly pencilled, and his long lashes of the darkest dye, gave a deeper and perhaps softer shade than they otherwise would have worn to eyes quick and observant in their expression and of a light hazel in their colour. His cheek was very fair, and the red light of the fire cast an artificial tint of increased glow upon a complexion that had naturally rather bloom than colour; while a dark riding frock set off in their full beauty the fine outline of his chest and the slender symmetry of his frame.

But it was neither his features nor his form, eminently handsome as they were, which gave the principal charm to the young stranger's appearance: it was the strikingly bold, buoyant, frank, and almost joyous expression which presided over all. There seemed to dwell the first glow and life of youth, undimmed by a single fear and unbaffled in a single hope. There were the elastic spring, the inexhaustible wealth of energies which defied in their exulting pride the heaviness of sorrow and the harassments of time. It was a face that, while it filled you with some melancholy foreboding of the changes and chances which must, in the inevitable course of fate, cloud the openness of the unwrinkled brow, and soberize the fire of the daring and restless eye, instilled also within you some assurance of triumph, and some omen of success,—a vague but powerful sympathy with the adventurous and cheerful spirit which appeared literally to speak in its expression. It was a face you might imagine in one born under a prosperous star; and you felt, as you gazed, a confidence in that bright countenance, which, like the shield of the British Prince, [Prince Arthur.—See "The Faerie Queene."] seemed possessed with a spell to charm into impotence the evil spirits who menaced its possessor.

"Well, sir," said his friend, the gypsy, who had in his turn been surveying with admiration the sinewy and agile frame of his young guest, "well, sir, how fares your appetite? Old Dame Bingo will be mortally offended if you do not do ample justice to her good cheer."

"If so," answered our traveller, who, young as he was, had learnt already the grand secret of making in every situation a female friend, "if so, I shall be likely to offend her still more."

"And how, my pretty master?" said the old crone with an iron smile.

"Why, I shall be bold enough to reconcile matters with a kiss, Mrs.

Bingo," answered the youth.

"Ha! Ha!" shouted the tall gypsy; "it is many a long day since my old Mort slapped a gallant's face for such an affront. But here come our messmates. Good evening, my mumpers; make your bows to this gentleman who has come to bowse with us to-night. 'Gad, we'll show him that old ale's none the worse for keeping company with the moon's darlings. Come, sit down, sit down. Where's the cloth, ye ill-mannered loons, and the knives and platters? Have we no holiday customs for strangers, think ye? Mim, my cove, off to my caravan; bring out the knives, and all other rattletaps; and harkye, my cuffin, this small key opens the inner hole, where you will find two barrels; bring one of them. I'll warrant it of the best, for the brewer himself drank some of the same sort but two hours before I nimm'd them. Come, stump, my cull, make yourself wings. Ho, Dame Bingo, is not that pot of thine seething yet? Ah, my young gentleman, you commence betimes; so much the better; if love's a summer's day, we all know how early a summer morning begins," added the jovial Egyptian in a lower voice (feeling perhaps that he was only understood by himself), as he gazed complacently on

the youth, who, with that happy facility of making himself everywhere at home so uncommon to his countrymen, was already paying compliments suited to their understanding to two fair daughters of the tribe who had entered with the new-comers. Yet had he too much craft or delicacy, call it which you will, to continue his addresses to that limit where ridicule or jealousy from the male part of the assemblage might commence; on the contrary, he soon turned to the men, and addressed them with a familiarity so frank and so suited to their taste that he grew no less rapidly in their favour than he had already done in that of the women, and when the contents of the two caldrons were at length set upon the coarse but clean cloth which in honour of his arrival covered the sod, it was in the midst of a loud and universal peal of laughter which some broad witticism of the young stranger had produced that the party sat down to their repast.

Bright were the eyes and sleek the tresses of the damsel who placed herself by the side of the stranger, and many were the alluring glances and insinuated compliments which replied to his open admiration and profuse flattery; but still there was nothing exclusive in his attentions; perhaps an ignorance of the customs of his entertainers, and a consequent discreet fear of offending them, restrained him; or perhaps he found ample food for occupation in the plentiful dainties which his host heaped before him.

"Now tell me," said the gypsy chief (for chief he appeared to be), "if we lead not a merrier life than you dreamt of? or would you have us change our coarse fare and our simple tents, our vigorous limbs and free hearts, for the meagre board, the monotonous chamber, the diseased frame, and the toiling, careful, and withered spirit of some miserable mechanic?"

"Change!" cried the youth, with an earnestness which, if affected, was an exquisite counterfeit, "by Heaven, I would change with you myself."

"Bravo, my fine cove!" cried the host, and all the gang echoed their sympathy with his applause.

The youth continued: "Meat, and that plentiful; ale, and that strong; women, and those pretty ones: what can man desire more?"

"Ay," cried the host, "and all for nothing,—no, not even a tax; who else in this kingdom can say that? Come, Mim, push round the ale."

And the ale was pushed round, and if coarse the merriment, loud at least was the laugh that rang ever and anon from the old tent; and though, at moments, something in the guest's eye and lip might have seemed, to a very shrewd observer, a little wandering and absent, yet, upon the whole, he was almost as much at ease as the rest, and if he was not quite as talkative he was to the full as noisy.

By degrees, as the hour grew later and the barrel less heavy, the conversation changed into one universal clatter. Some told their feats in beggary; others, their achievements in theft; not a viand they had fed on but had its appropriate legend; even the old rabbit, which had been as tough as old rabbit can well be, had not been honestly taken from his burrow; no less a person than Mim himself had purloined it from a widow's footman who was carrying it to an old maid from her nephew the Squire.

"Silence," cried the host, who loved talking as well as the rest, and who for the last ten minutes had been vainly endeavouring to obtain attention. "Silence! my maunders, it's late, and we shall have the queer cuffins [magistrates] upon us if we keep it up much longer. What, ho, Mim, are you still gabbling at the foot of the table when your betters are talking? As sure as my name's King Cole, I'll choke you with your own rabbit skin, if you don't hush your prating cheat,—nay, never look so abashed: if you will make a noise, come forward, and sing us a gypsy song. You see, my young sir," turning to his guest, "that we are not without our pretensions to the fine arts."

At this order, Mim started forth, and taking his station at the right hand of the soi-disant King Cole, began the following song, the chorus of which was chanted in full diapason by the whole group, with the additional force of emphasis that knives, feet, and fists could bestow:—

THE GYPSY'S SONG

The king to his hall, and the steed to his stall,
And the cit to his bilking board;
But we are not bound to an acre of ground,
For our home is the houseless sward.
We sow not, nor toil; yet we glean from the soil
As much as its reapers do;
And wherever we rove, we feed on the cove
Who gibes at the mumping crew.
CHORUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

We care not a straw for the limbs of the law,
Nor a fig for the cuffin queer;
While Hodge and his neighbour shall lavish and labour,
Our tent is as sure of its cheer.
CHORUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

The worst have an awe of the harman's [constable] claw,
And the best will avoid the trap; [bailiff]
But our wealth is as free of the bailiff's see
As our necks of the twisting crap. [gallows]
CHORUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

They say it is sweet to win the meat
For the which one has sorely wrought;
But I never could find that we lacked the mind
For the food that has cost us nought!
CHRUS.—So the king to his hall, etc.

And when we have ceased from our fearless feast
Why, our jigger [door] will need no bars;
Our sentry shall be on the owlet's tree,
And our lamps the glorious stars.

CHORUS.

So the king to his hall, and the steed to his stall,
And the cit to his bilking board;
But we are not bound to an acre of ground,
For our home is the houseless sward.

Rude as was this lawless stave, the spirit with which it was sung atoned to the young stranger for its obscurity and quaintness; as for his host, that curious personage took a lusty and prominent part in the chorus; nor did the old woods refuse their share of the burden, but sent back a merry echo to the chief's deep voice and the harsher notes of his jovial brethren.

When the glee had ceased, King Cole rose, the whole band followed his example, the cloth was cleared in a trice, the barrel—oh! what a falling off was there!—was rolled into a corner of the tent,

and the crew to whom the awning belonged began to settle themselves to rest; while those who owned the other encampment marched forth, with King Cole at their head. Leaning with no light weight upon his guest's arm, the lover of ancient minstrelsy poured into the youth's ear a strain of eulogy, rather eloquent than coherent, upon the scene they had just witnessed.

"What," cried his majesty in an enthusiastic tone, "what can be so truly regal as our state? Can any man control us? Are we not above all laws? Are we not the most despotic of kings? Nay, more than the kings of earth, are we not the kings of Fairyland itself? Do we not realize the golden dreams of the old rhymers, luxurious dogs that they were? Who would not cry out,—

'Blest silent groves! Oh, may ye be
Forever Mirth's best nursery!
May pure Contents
Forever pitch their tents
Upon these downs, these meads, these rocks, these mountains.'"

Uttering this notable extract from the thrice-honoured Sir Henry Wotton, King Cole turned abruptly from the common, entered the wood which skirted it, and, only attended by his guest and his minister Mim, came suddenly, by an unexpected and picturesque opening in the trees, upon one of those itinerant vehicles termed caravans, he ascended the few steps which led to the entrance, opened the door, and was instantly in the arms of a pretty and young woman. On seeing our hero (for such we fear the youth is likely to become), she drew back with a blush not often found upon regal cheeks.

"Pooh," said King Cole, half tauntingly, half fondly, "pooh, Lucy, blushes are garden flowers, and ought never to be found wild in the woods:" then changing his tone, he said, "come, put some fresh straw in the corner, this stranger honours our palace to-night; Mim, unload thyself of our royal treasures; watch without and vanish from within!"

Depositing on his majesty's floor the appurtenances of the regal supper-table, Mim made his respectful adieus and disappeared; meanwhile the queen scattered some fresh straw over a mattress in the narrow chamber, and, laying over all a sheet of singularly snowy hue, made her guest some apology for the badness of his lodging; this King Cole interrupted by a most elaborately noisy yawn and a declaration of extreme sleepiness. "Now, Lucy, let us leave the gentleman to what he will like better than soft words even from a queen. Good night, sir, we shall be stirring at daybreak;" and with this farewell King Cole took the lady's arm, and retired with her into an inner compartment of the caravan.

Left to himself, our hero looked round with surprise at the exceeding neatness which reigned over the whole apartment. But what chiefly engrossed the attention of one to whose early habits books had always been treasures were several volumes, ranged in comely shelves, fenced with wirework, on either side of the fireplace. "Courage," thought he, as he stretched himself on his humble couch, "my adventures have commenced well: a gypsy tent, to be sure, is nothing very new; but a gypsy who quotes poetry, and enjoys a modest wife, speaks better than books do for the improvement of the world!"

CHAPTER III

*Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp?*

—*As You Like It.*

The sun broke cheerfully through the small lattice of the caravan, as the youth opened his eyes and saw the good-humoured countenance of his gypsy host bending over him complacently.

"You slept so soundly, sir, that I did not like to disturb you; but my good wife only waits your rising to have all ready for breakfast."

"It were a thousand pities," cried the guest, leaping from his bed, "that so pretty a face should look cross on my account, so I will not keep her waiting an instant."

The gypsy smiled, as he answered, "I require no professional help from the devil, sir, to foretell your fortune."

"No!—and what is it?"

"Honour, reputation, success: all that are ever won by a soft tongue, if it be backed by a bold heart."

Bright and keen was the flash which shot over the countenance of the one for whom this prediction was made, as he listened to it with a fondness for which his reason rebuked him.

He turned aside with a sigh, which did not escape the gypsy, and bathed his face in the water which the provident hand of the good woman had set out for his lavations.

"Well," said his host, when the youth had finished his brief toilet, "suppose we breathe the fresh air, while Lucy smooths your bed and prepares the breakfast?"

"With all my heart," replied the youth, and they descended the steps which led into the wood. It was a beautiful, fresh morning; the air was like a draught from a Spirit's fountain, and filled the heart with new youth and the blood with a rapturous delight; the leaves—the green, green leaves of spring—were quivering on the trees, among which the happy birds fluttered and breathed the gladness of their souls in song. While the dewdrops that—

"strewed
A baptism o'er the flowers"—

gave back in their million mirrors the reflected smiles of the cloudless and rejoicing sun.

"Nature," said the gypsy, "has bestowed on her children a gorgeous present in such a morning."

"True," said the youth; "and you, of us two, perhaps only deserve it; as for me, when I think of the long road of dust, heat, and toil, that lies before me, I could almost wish to stop here and ask an admission into the gypsy's tents."

"You could not do a wiser thing!" said the gypsy, gravely.

"But fate leaves me no choice," continued the youth, as seriously as if he were in earnest; "and I must quit you immediately after I have a second time tasted of your hospitable fare."

"If it must be so," answered the gypsy, "I will see you, at least, a mile or two on your road." The youth thanked him for a promise which his curiosity made acceptable, and they turned once more to the caravan.

The meal, however obtained, met with as much honour as it could possibly have received from the farmer from whom its materials were borrowed.

It was not without complacency that the worthy pair beheld the notice their guest lavished upon a fair, curly-headed boy of about three years old, the sole child and idol of the gypsy potentates. But they did not perceive, when the youth rose to depart, that he slipped into the folds of the child's dress a ring of some value, the only one he possessed.

"And now," said he, after having thanked his entertainers for their hospitality, "I must say good-bye to your flock, and set out upon my day's journey."

Lucy, despite her bashfulness, shook hands with her handsome guest; and the latter, accompanied by the gypsy chief, strolled down to the encampments.

Open and free was his parting farewell to the inmates of the two tents, and liberal was the hand which showered upon all—especially on the damsel who had been his Thais of the evening feast—the silver coins which made no inconsiderable portion of his present property.

It was amidst the oracular wishes and favourable predictions of the whole crew that he recommenced his journey with the gypsy chief.

When the tents were fairly out of sight, and not till then, King Cole broke the silence which had as yet subsisted between them.

"I suppose, my young gentleman, that you expect to meet some of your friends or relations at W—? I know not what they will say when they hear where you have spent the night."

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