

Chapter 8

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**Stray Wanderings—  
The Fasting Girl**

**THE GYPSIES—THE MODERN "DER FREISCHUTZ"—  
FLEE FROM THE WORLD OF FASHION—JUANITA, QUEEN  
OF THE GYPSIES—SOMETHING OF HER WONDERFUL GIFTS.**

"Come, Louis! let us leave all this. I am tired for you—tired of seeing you exhausted in body and mind to please insatiate marvel-seekers; tired of beholding every nerve kept on the stretch, and a young life ebbing away to feed the curiosity of those who little know or heed that they are looking into the realms of the invisible through the telescope of your weary eyes. Come, my Louis! we will leave these festive scenes, where your very being furnishes forth the feast, to go and regale ourselves upon the fair face of Nature."

Thus spoke Professor von Marx as I lay on a couch where I had sunk in sheer exhaustion some hours before, worn out indeed both in body and mind with the repeated seances, undertaken to gratify the numerous kind entertainers who besought us to "come and take rest" at their hospitable mansions in some charming retreat, which they converted into a scene of fashionable saturnalia, where crowds of visitors were invited to meet and stare, and not uncommonly to sneer at also, "the great German occultist and his young somnambulist, who were so very wonderful and so very entertaining, and all that sort of thing."

Thoroughly sick of being lionized, and solicited, the professor to talk philosophy and put fine ladies into becoming trances, and I to raise up Undines and Sylphs, and predict which would be the winning horse at the next "Derby," I joyfully obeyed the behest of my dear master to depart with him that evening on "urgent business," which would compel us to decline all further invitations, and leave the world of fashion for parts unknown.

We did not travel very far at first, for I was too thoroughly depleted to endure the fatigue of a long journey anywhere. Professor von Marx either desired me to realize practically, or else had to learn the lesson himself, that the aims for which spiritual forces are employed determine in a great measure the recuperative powers of the body that is their vehicle. So long as I was occupied as the seer of the noble professor, and the high-toned and powerful adepts with whom I had been constantly associated on the Continent, my soul was fed with intellectual inspiration, and my physique was vitalized by life-giving magnetism. I frequently passed whole days without food, whilst engaged in these sessions, yet I never experienced the slightest sense of fatigue, weariness or hunger.

I lived in a state of semi-ecstasy, my whole being sustained to its fullest capacity of reception, both mentally and physically.

In my dear master's presence I felt an influx of strength and spiritual power impossible to describe. I should not dare to relate to those who have never experienced their exalting and ecstatic possibilities the phenomenal evidences of magnetic force, too, which these seances evolved. It is enough to affirm, it was as natural for the seers on such occasions to ascend in air, and float there at will, as to remain attached to the earth, in fact the token which a closed circle of adepts were accustomed to receive that their magnetic aura had combined in the required degree was the levitation of their seers, and their suspension in air for given periods of time. But let it be remembered that my companions were all intellectual men, and isolated in the grand purpose of their researches they could at will send forth the spirits of their seers to traverse space, but they never exerted this stupendous power on trivial occasions or for the mere gratification of selfish aims.

Their sole aspiration was to discover and gauge the forces of the unseen universe and penetrate into the profoundest of Nature's mysteries. They were often cold, hard, stern, and remorseless in the pursuit of knowledge, but in their presence the minds of their seers could not fail to grow and expand into lofty aspirations and soar away above the frivolities and petty aims in which most young people are educated.

Of all their seers, too, I believed they loved me the most. Combined with their indomitable purpose of wresting from Nature her secrets at any cost, there was a special gentleness and appreciative respect in their dealings with me, which made the bond between us unusually kind and sympathetic, and thus I was kept completely isolated, I might say sacredly reserved for the most exalted purposes of research and aspirational effort.

Let the character of these seances be compared with the littleness, selfishness, and frivolity of the fashionable crowds by whom I had been recently surrounded, and the effect of the latter upon me may be measurably appreciated. It required but a few weeks of such a life to convert me into a forlorn, worn-out invalid, and to assure my dear master the stern restrictions he had laid upon the very thoughts no less than the lives and habits of the persons whose magnetisms were permitted to become incorporated into the systems of his sensitives were justified by the practical though bitter experiences of his best-beloved somnambulist in fashionable English society.

How well he understood both the nature of my sufferings and their cause, I one day learned by hearing him addressing a party of ladies and gentlemen who had been pleading for another seance, "just one more, before the cruel professor took his charming young mystic away, to bury his talents amongst German boors or plotting Illuminee." Addressing these butterflies in his gravest tones, I heard him say: "Spiritual forces are sacred elements which should not be tampered with, and unholy, impure, or sensually-minded individuals can more safely play with the lightnings, or hurl burning coals at each other's heads, than deal with or touch the lightnings of life, or palter with the fires of soul. My Louis," he added with terrible emphasis, "is almost dying of such play, and I take him hence at once to save the remnant of his—to me—most precious life."

I fear I may not succeed in impressing my inexperienced readers with the force of these positions. I narrate them as they occur, faithfully and truthfully, but to an age that has been accustomed to regard occult power as a mere hap-hazard endowment requiring no culture, no conditions, and spiritual gifts, as a mere source of amusement or curious experiment, to be exercised at will in any company or under any circumstances, I shall never write under-

standingly, and my views will be regarded as overstrained or rhapsodical, and my narrative as exaggerated if not actually untrue. Still I re-echo the above-quoted words of my beloved master, and confident that in a succeeding generation, if not in this, their import will be duly recognized and acted upon, I proceed with my narrative.

After passing through many a lovely scene, and halting as our inclination prompted us at little wayside inns in the most rural and unfrequented spots we could find, Professor von Marx and I determined to make a tour through the lake district of Cumberland. Whilst we were lingering in this enchanting region, we were induced to make a detour of several miles from our projected route, for the purpose of visiting the humble dwelling of one Frances Jones, an abnormal personage, known in that district as the "Welsh fasting girl." This case, which had attained considerable celebrity, presented most of the general features which accompany protracted fasting, namely, long-continued fits of somnolence and occasional intervals of remarkable lucidity, during which the girl delivered trance addresses of wonderful beauty and exhibited striking powers of clairvoyance and prevision. Professor von Marx was not prompted to make this visit by the motives of vulgar curiosity which attracted crowds of persons to the residence of this phenomenon.

He knew how long I could myself subsist without material sustenance; he had witnessed the extraordinary effects of renewed life and vitality I had exhibited by sleeping for some time on beds of fresh flowers or sweet-scented herbs; above all, he had frequently seen me maintain a protracted fast of several days, Without experiencing hunger or weakness, by simply placing me in the magnetic condition at stated periods, and surrounding me with a strong circle of powerful magnetizers.

The professor and his associates had demonstrated to their entire satisfaction the triumph of spiritual forces over material in my case, and were prepared to carry their theories forward into still more extraordinary results, when opportunities were favorable for their experiments. It was, therefore, with a view of analyzing a case which might present some kindred features that Professor von Marx and myself set out upon this visit.

We found our subject sitting upright in bed, with her eyes firmly closed, and her form and face by no means emaciated, though somewhat pallid from her frequent isolation from the light, which at times affected her unfavorably. Just as we arrived she was "in one of her fits," as her rustic parents informed us; that is to say, in one of those crises or periods of her disorder when she was impelled to utter her singularly beautiful improvisations, one of which she was pouring forth in a strain of remarkable eloquence to a crowd of gaping country folks as we entered the cottage. Directly Professor von Marx crossed the threshold the girl stopped speaking, and beckoning to him with an authoritative air, took his hand, laid it on her head, and with looks of ecstasy which transfigured her face into an almost angelic expression, murmured: "Great master, you are welcome! Speak, and I will answer you."

Question. Tell me truly, is it Frances Jones or the spirit of another who addresses me?

Answer. I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord!

Q. Whose voice cries?

A. Him that crieth now as of old.

Q. You call yourself John the Baptist, then?

A. Thou sayest it.

Q. Who and what is the Messiah you predicate?

A. The outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh; and behold (pointing her finger at me) even there, is one of the prophets of the new dispensation. Thou knowest it, and he can tell thee all thou hast come here to inquire.

Q. Not all; I wish to hear from your own lips a description of your case.

A. Ask him; he knoweth.

Q. By what means are you sustained in life?

A. I am fed by the angels, and live on angels' food; I hunger not, neither do I thirst.

Q. You speak now as Frances Jones; where is the spirit who first addressed me?

A. He moves these utterances and inspires these answers.

Q. Was he a man or an angel?

A. If I should answer thee thou wouldst not believe me. Thou art of the sect of Sadducees, who say there is no spirit or angel. I cast not my pearls before swine.

The professor here smiled at me significantly, but continuing to address the patient, he rejoined:

Q. Can I do you any good by the touch of my hand?

A. Thou hast done all that was required of thee; the closed gate is unlocked by thy hand, and in due course of time the angels of restored health will reopen it and walk in. Now depart in peace. Thy seer will tell thee the rest.

At this point the invalid sank back upon her pillow with a slight convulsion, which, passing rapidly away, left her features calm, pale, and tranquil, when her ordinary deep sleep fell upon her, and her parents assured us it might be many hours ere she would re-awaken. Before we quitted the cottage I informed my Master what I had clairvoyantly perceived in this case, namely, that a partial paralysis had attacked first the great solar plexus, then extended throughout the ganglionic system, finally impinging in the same partial way upon the cerebro-spinal nerves. The medulla and cerebellum were more powerfully affected than the cerebrum, and the pneumogastric nerve was more completely paralyzed than any other of the cranial system. I observed that the processes of evaporation and absorption remained untouched, and acted with their usual force; hence, she could receive such nourishment as imponderable elements afforded her, and her assertion that she partook of angels' food was not altogether irrational.

It is certain that little or no waste of tissue could ensue in a state which was entirely one of passivity. Though the vital functions were in operation, they proceeded so slowly that there could be little more waste or evaporation than the process of absorption might renew; hence the absence of emaciation or any evidence of that decay which might have been the result of inanition. It seemed that a certain periodical condition of activity set in at stated times, and kind Nature used these opportunities to attempt a renovation of the paralyzed system; then it was, that the invalid became clairvoyant, uttered her remarkable trance addresses, and with eyes closely bandaged to exclude the light, which distracted her sensitive brain, the poor girl cut out paper flowers and made little drawings, which were sold by her poor relatives. I perceived that this young creature was surrounded by crowds of spiritual beings, who fed her with the emanations of plants, vegetables, and the magnetism of some of those who visited her parents' cottage.

I also saw that the strong and potential magnetism of Professor von Marx, had, through the hand which he placed on her head, infused new life into her system, by virtue of which the paralytic condition of her frame had in truth been "unlocked." Recuperative action once commenced, I had the pleasure of perceiving that Nature would do the rest; that the real source of cure was already infused, and that with ordinary care this girl would be restored in two months more. I mentioned this promise in my clairvoyant vision to her family. Professor von Marx at the same time generously supplied them with funds to supersede the necessity

of their appealing to the charity of inquisitive strangers, and I had the satisfaction of learning some months later, that a gradual and apparently spontaneous cure had set in from the time of our visit, until this poor sufferer had become completely restored.

I understood that her faculty of trance-speaking and clairvoyance ceased with her recovery, in a word, spirits found no more a vehicle for the reception of their influence, and her own normal activity furnished no longer the conditions for abnormal control. I have since witnessed many cases of long-protracted fasting, accompanied by somnolent states and periodical conditions of clairvoyance, and I very much doubt if the physical causes would not be found in every instance measurably the same, had scientists the same opportunities for analyzing the obscure realms of causation as clairvoyance afforded me.

It was a few days after our visit to the "Welsh fasting girl" that Professor von Marx and I, sitting in the porch of a rustic inn-door, observed a tall and stately female approaching us, attired in the humble peasant garb, with the scarlet cloak and hood which distinguishes that singular class of vagrants known as "gypsies." Dressed as we were, simply in sportsmen's costume and lodgers at an humble wayside public house, we did not expect to attract the attention of those shrewd wanderers whose favors are most liberally tendered to the wealthy; but our new visitor evidently deemed she was in the right track when she approached us, for she advanced with an air so decided that we felt as if we were fairly captured before she had spoken a word. Fixing her lustrous black eyes with the most piercing expression upon me, she asked in a sweet voice, and with a far more polished mode of expression than ordinary, if I did not want my fortune told. "See what you can find out for my father first," I replied laughingly, pointing to the professor, who sat by my side.

"He is no father of yours, senor," said the girl decidedly, "nor does he come from the same land, or own one drop of the blue blood that flows in your veins."

Now, if there ever were two human beings, who, without the slightest tie of consanguinity between them, closely resembled each other, those two persons were Professor von Marx and myself. We were constantly taken for father and son by those who first met us; and whether from our peculiar interior relations to each other, or because Nature had formed us out of the same mold, I know not, but certain it is that it would have required some direct evidence to the contrary, to convince any stranger that we were not what we called each other, namely, father and son. As such we had been known in our rural wanderings of the last few weeks, and in those characters we had charged the single groom who attended us, to represent us at the inns where we stayed.

This striking proof of our new acquaintance's discernment then, awakened our curiosity, and induced us to let her proceed with her proposed delineation of our future. As far as the past was concerned, she gave a perfectly correct account of myself, my family connections and characteristics, but when she came to depict the future she gazed at me with such deep and pitying earnestness that her eyes filled with tears and her sweet voice became broken with emotion. Her mode of speech changed, too, from the rambling monotone of her craft to a fine sonorous rhyme, a sort of lofty "rune," in which she prophesied for me a life of deeply tragic import, and sorrows which God alone knows how truthfully she foreshadowed. At length she paused in her sad, wild song--indeed I interrupted her--for I felt she spoke the truth, and yet I would rather not have heard the sad page rehearsed in those hours of fleeting sunshine and gladness.

When it came to Professor von Marx's turn she absolutely refused to give him one word. He could neither bribe, threaten nor coax her into a prophecy, and though her own bright

eyes fell before his still more lustrous and penetrating glances, I saw the unbidden moisture trembling on her long lashes, as she resolutely reiterated that she had nothing to tell him.

Professor von Marx was in one of his satirical, if not gay moods, and snatching the little hand with which she was waving him off, he exclaimed: "What, not one word, my pretty Gitana? not if I cross this hand of yours with gold instead of silver?"

"Not for the wealth of the Indies!" she cried, in a harsh, frightened tone, as she fiercely drew her hand away. Then, as the color died on her flushed cheek, and the wild expression of her dark eyes became subdued before his resistless glance, she murmured in a beseeching tone: "Master of spirits, spare me! I dare not speak now."

"Enough, enough!" he replied, waving her off and throwing into her hand several pieces of silver, which she as hastily pushed back. "You are wiser in holding your tongue, Gitana, than you are in losing it; but take your money—nay, I command you!" The girl slowly and reluctantly dropped the money into a bag at her side, and was turning away, when the professor recalled her in a half-laughing tone, by saying: "We shall see you again, my fair Zingara; we are coming to board with you a while. What is your name, my princess?"

"Juanita," replied the gypsy, in a low, humble tone.

"And you are a queen in your tribe, Juanita, is it not so?" "I am, senor," replied the girl, proudly.

"I thought so," rejoined my master. "Well, good-by for the present! We shall soon meet again."

The gypsy turned submissively away without a word, and that night, in obedience to my wayward father's will, we left our groom and baggage at the inn, and the professor, carrying a small valise in his hand, led me, by an instinct peculiar to himself, over moss and fell, moorland waste, and through mountain passes, until we had traversed a distance of nearly seven miles, and at length, a little before midnight, we came in sight of the lonely field where outstretched tents marked an extensive gypsy encampment.

Juanita, who was indeed the veritable queen or leader of the tribe which we were about to visit, seemed, by the same instinct that had guided us, to be fully prepared for our coming. She had ordered two tents to be got ready for us, and already our savory supper smoked upon the wooden platters laid out for our entertainment. The red fires were smouldering in dotted heaps over the wild heath; a few lanterns still burned at intervals on the crossed sticks that upheld them. Most of the encampment were asleep, but the beautiful Juanita welcomed us as expected guests, with that natural grace which belongs to the dispenser of hospitality everywhere. Professor von Marx took her aside and spoke a few earnest words, to which she listened with a downcast and reluctant manner. He then gave her money, which she received in the same subdued way, although at first she strenuously endeavored to return it. When the interview closed, she waited on us at supper with the grace and condescension of a captive princess, and showed us to our tents, in which beds of fragrant heather, covered with the skins of deer, were already prepared for us. My tent, I observed, was adorned with bouquets of sweet wild flowers, the professor's with some curious skins and a few stuffed lizards and reptiles.

"The girl's a witch," said the professor, as he observed these significant arrangements, "and has read us like a book."

Before parting for the night my master gave me to understand he had long been seeking an opportunity for me to spend some days in this rough tent-life. "I want to bring you down from heaven to earth," he said—"to make you sleep on the earth, and partake of earthly things; it is only in this way I can hope to keep you upon the earth as long as you ought to remain." My master's expectations of benefit to an overtaxed frame were speedily realized. Deep and unbroken slumbers visited me under the greenwood tree, such as I had not known for many years. Relieved from the artificial restraints of conventional life, and subject to the rough but appetizing fare of these wanderers, I became positively rugged, and delighted my watchful and anxious companion by the length of my daily rambles and the keen enjoyment with which I entered, for the time being, into the rough sports of my entertainers.

Everything was so new, free, and enchantingly natural that I began to contemplate the tent-life as my future destiny, and actually set myself to studying the manners, customs, and language of these vagrants, with a view to my adoption in their respectable ranks. Whilst the charm of this recuperative and healthful change lasted I sought to excuse to myself the aimless life of indolence I was leading, by endeavoring to discover if this singular people cherished amongst themselves any legendary opinions concerning their own origin. Existing everywhere, but everywhere as a solitary, marked, and isolated band of fugitives; never at home, though everywhere familiar; always strangers, though they might be in the very country of their birth; realizing more completely than any other created beings the awful legend of Cain: "A vagabond and a fugitive shalt thou be on the face of the earth;" homeless, nationless, unconnected with any other races than those so widely scattered over the world, yet ever hearing in their physiognomy, character, language, and customs, peculiar traits which never forsake them and at once distinguish and isolate them from all other living peoples—who can solve the problem of their exceptional and incomprehensible destinies?

Except in respect to the peculiar characteristics which must accompany very poor nomadic tribes, I have never found amongst the Bohemians of France and Germany, the Zingari of Italy, the Gitanas of Spain, the Gypsies of England, etc., any marked criminal tendencies or specialties that seemed to explain the worldwide ban of proscription that has followed them for at least the eight hundred years during which they have been known as a separate people. I found on this occasion, as on many others, when, in later years I spent a few days of free, wild, untrammelled life amongst the Gypsies, that the great majority of them, though shrewd and crafty enough in some respects, were stolidly ignorant and indifferent concerning their origin or national existence.

Juanita was one of those rare and exceptional beings whose appearance amongst such hordes, serves to stamp them with an air of romance and throw around their name and fame those captivations of ideality which have rendered them so celebrated in poetry, music, and romantic literature. Juanita was the reigning queen of a large tribe composed partly of Spanish and partly of English gypsies, over all of whom she, a Spaniard by birth and descendant of a former king of the tribe, ruled with undisputed sway. She was but twenty-five years of age, beautiful as a poet's dream, impulsive, passionate, poetical, and proud, with a natural tone of refinement and sensibility in her nature, come from whence it may, which would have graced an Andalusian princess.

This beautiful and wayward being deigned to select me as the special object of her favor during our escapade, and by way of disposing of Professor von Marx, for whom she conceived a corresponding aversion not unmixed with awe, she assigned him a guide and companion, in the person of her young brother Guido, a fine, intelligent lad, some ten years her junior, with whom the professor took long rambles and soon became fast friends. It was our daily custom to make our simple sportsman's toilet, by a fresh bath in the flowing river

which skirted the encampment. Our breakfast was partaken of in the large common tent to which Professor von Marx on our first entrance, had paid such a footing, as should ensure the foragers of the party a quiet holiday and total cessation from their ordinary methods of replenishing the larder, during the whole time of our residence amongst them. The morning meal disposed of, the men betook themselves to their petty trades as itinerants, the women to their domestic duties and the care of their children, of whom there were the usual bountiful supply. The professor wandered off with Guido, and sometimes joined a hunting party, which, in less choice phraseology, might have been termed by the more conventional name of poaching. Meantime I wandered off with Juanita to gather flowers and mosses, visit the most romantic nooks and glens of a wild and almost savage district, and hear this beautiful creature pour out rapid and singularly sweet poetical improvisations concerning that beloved Andalusia of which she informed me she was a native, though descended as she sometimes claimed from "a long line of Moorish kings." At night we returned to the tents, where the professor won all hearts by romping with the little ones, playing at rough sports with the boys, cards with the English gypsies, whom of course he always allowed to beat him, and making himself generally delightful to young and old, an such an astonishment in my eyes, that he would often burst into a fit of uncontrollable merriment as he caught my looks of amazement at his thorough transfiguration.

I was not less popular with these ragamuffins than my plastic master, for besides being the chosen friend of their proud and authoritative ruler, I sang them songs which I will venture to affirm obtained more rapturous encores and genuine applause than ever greeted a prima donna assolitta. Besides my volks lied and Italian canzonets, Juanita and the Spanish gypsies made sweet music with their guitars and lutes, and some of the English girls sang glees with a simplicity and sweetness that was wonderfully touching in this moon and star-lit auditorium.

One old crone of the English tribe, whose forte was story telling, and who varied our evening camp-fire amusements by legends which would have done honor to Munchausen, traced back for me the history of her people, to one of the Pharaohs. She also detailed graphic accounts of some of her former states of existence, she being, like others of her compeers, a decided "reincarnationist," and finally gave me to understand that though she then performed the humble duty of tending the gigantic cauldron from whose savory steams the promise of a real gypsy feast was to be derived, she well remembered the time when she was "one of the highly trusted officers of a Certain mighty Pharaoh, by whose orders the great pyramid of Egypt had been erected, under her supervision."

In their natural gifts of improvisations, prevision, and spontaneous clairvoyance, no less than in certain physiognomical peculiarities, these people continually reminded me of some of the still existing low castes of Hindoostan.

There can be no doubt that their nomadic lives and constant intercourse with Nature in her ever-varying moods, are all aids in unfolding the interior perceptions of these dwellers in tents; still there are vestiges of Oriental tendencies in their fervid imaginations, allegorical modes of expression. some of their customs and religious beliefs, which plead strongly for an inheritance derived from the far East in many successive generations. Their language, too, although containing whole vocabularies of slang phrases and thieves' jargon, still partakes of the Sanskrit character, and there are some words which I found to be pure and unadulterated Sanskrit. A vague traditionary belief exists amongst them all that they originally came from the East, were a once "mighty people," but had become degraded and scattered. To my mind they have never been anything but a degraded people. I am more and more inclined to the opinion that they came from one of those low and oppressed castes of

India which were driven forth and scattered upon the face of the earth under Mohammedan rule and oppression.

The most accomplished amongst them were astrologers, and I found that their calculations and methods were purely Chaldaic. Juanita was as well skilled in this art as any person, save one, I ever met with. That one was a distinguished Arabian physician, a member of the "Berlin Brotherhood," an admirable astronomer and mathematician; in fact, he was professor of astronomy at the scene of my boyhood's studies, and from him I learned the Chaldaic method of calculating the stars, one that had never been published to the world, and was only imparted under certain conditions to adepts. Yet here in the wilds of Cumberland I found it substantially known and practiced by a poor Gitana, who could neither read nor write. "See, *senor mio*," she would cry, "I can not tell you how I know these things, but I will show you." She would then find a flat stone or smooth piece of wood, and chalk thereon maps of the heavens, dividing the stars by lines and connecting them in squares and figures with an accuracy which perfectly bewildered me. Substantially I repeat, her method was that of the Arabian philosopher, and yet this untaught girl worked out with her fingers and piles of pebbles a scheme that she could have obtained only from Chaldaic sources, and those of the most occult and secret nature. Juanita informed me she had derived her knowledge from her father, like herself a ruler in his tribe, and that he again had obtained it by direct succession from a long line of ancestors.

"Now, Nita," I said, "tell me the names of the stars you have figured out here, and then, show them to me on the heavens;" for I wished to see if this was mere routine work, or whether the girl really understood what she had drawn. Fixing her dark eyes on the shining field of light above our heads she began, in a high strain of poetical imagery, to describe the famous legend of the astronomical religion, pointing out correctly every constellation of which she spoke, but to my utter amazement giving to those shining bodies, not the ordinary astronomical names, but their cabalistic titles and history, and reciting some of the myths in this connection that I have never seen anywhere detailed, except in the ancient "Zohar" or "Book of Light." More and more perplexed by this sibyl's strange lore, I endeavored by every means I could devise, to ascertain how she had gained her extraordinary knowledge. I found then, what I had before suspected, that the gypsies were not, as has been generally supposed, conformists to the religion of any country in which they chanced to sojourn, but that with all their slang habits and reprobate style of life, they were genuine fire worshippers, and cherished amongst them the Sabaen system with the real ardor of Parsees.

More than this I could not learn; but as Nita would go into ecstasies over certain stars which she delighted to liken to my eyes, ending by christening me her "star-beam," I determined to change the conversation by inviting her to teach me the art of palmistry—"that art, you know, Nita, by which we first became acquainted," I said. "Palmistry!" replied the girl, with a scornful laugh; "there is no such thing as palmistry in the sense you mean it *senor*; we don't really tell fortunes by the lines of the hand. See, she added, snatching impulsively at my hand and pointing to its undefined lines, "you have no lines here, like working people. Such a hand tells nothing, save of the menials that work for you. No, no, *senor*; it was your eyes that told me all your sad, wild history. When I look at the stars they tell me a thousand times more than those charts of my fathers; so it is when I look at your eyes. There I read your history, your soul, your mind; past, present, future—all linger in those dark depths so plainly, so clearly, that I could see, did I dare to gaze long enough—ay! see the day when the earth will grow cold and chill because the lustre of your life will be quenched out of it."

"Never mind that day, Nita—would to heaven it were to-morrow!—but tell me yet more plainly how you see all this."

"How should Nita know? It comes; it rises up to my mind and trembles on my lips before I know the words that are spoken. Mark you, senor, I have two ways of knowing. I first look into the eyes, and there I see the soul—see its joys and sorrows, its weary travail and happy hours; I see its loves and hates, and many of the paths it has taken the body, and many more it will have to follow. As to the hand, I feel, not see its meaning. Few hands are so difficult to read as yours, senor, for your heart is locked away in the keeping of yon dark Master of Spirits," pointing off, as she spoke, towards Professor von Marx, of whom she still retained an unconquerable fear; "but with most persons whose hands I touch, their modes of life, past, present and future, come up with the heart's blood, and thrill through my fingers just as if I could feel out the words which tell the tale. This, too, is the way Marianna and Louise (alluding to two other sibyls of her tribe) tell fortunes, senor mio. Mother Elsie is blind, you know, yet she tells better than all of us, and she tells everything by the touch, and sometimes when she lays her withered hand on a stranger's head or a lady's dress, or even touches the glove or handkerchief that an inquirer has touched, she knows just as much as if the whole story were read out from a book. Don't you know this is true, senor?"

"Quite so, Juanita. I have tested this Mother Elsie, as you say, and she can tell very wonderful truths; but still you have not told me how Mother Elsie can do this, or how you can read my life in my eyes or feel it in my hand. That is what I wish to know, Juanita."

"Because Elsie is a Gypsy and I am a Zingara, senor," replied the girl, simply.

"You refuse to tell me then, Juanita," I replied, assuming to be piqued at her reticence. "I thought you would have told everything to your friend; you promised you would."

A passionate burst of tears and the wildest protestations of devotion, sincerity, willingness to lay down her life to please me, etc., followed, making me feel condemned and humiliated for questioning the simple earnestness of this poor, untaught child of the forest, and measuring her utter guilelessness by my own world-craft. It was evident to me, as it had become to Professor von Marx, though he took other means to arrive at his conclusions, that these wanderers were naturally gifted with strong clairvoyant and psychometric perceptions, varying in degree, of course, with their different endowments, and that where these powers existed, they resorted to the fascinating gaze, or the touch of the hand, merely as a means of entering into rapport with their subjects, even as the old woman above alluded to—one of the most celebrated pythonesses of her time—found the contact of some object which had been touched, necessary to open up her psychometric perceptions.

These methods are familiar enough now amongst well-informed spiritists; but in the earlier days of my investigations, I was unceasing in my endeavors to find a deeper philosophy than Nature herself afforded me for the exercise of spiritual powers. My search was and ever will be in vain. As to the astrological lore existing amongst these people, that still remained a mystery. The possession of such knowledge involves scientific attainments, not natural endowments; and from whence they derived their information except, as Juanita insisted, by inheritance from their ancestors, I was at a loss to discover.

The poor girl had no more to tell, that was evident. She was beautiful, intelligent, and highly gifted beyond any one that I have ever met amongst her class. Transplanted into a fairer soil, she might have graced the royalty of a nation instead of a tribe of vagabonds; but she was a Zingara, and the laws of fate which bound her to her destiny were as absolute as those which had set the ineffaceable mark upon the first fratricide. During the fortnight we spent amongst her people, I learned one trait concerning them which merits more consideration than is usually allotted to it. The gypsies, as a race, are everywhere acknowledged to be

irrepressible thieves, and their approach in any neighborhood has proverbially been recognized as the signal for drawing bolts and bars against their inroads.

Some of their biographers have even gone so far as to assert that they live entirely by plunder, and that their assumption of practicing itinerant trades and fortune-telling, are only so many pretenses to facilitate their access to the houses or pockets of the wealthy. Whilst emphatically disclaiming the character of an apologist for this distinguishing feature of gypsy life, I must be allowed to urge that the people in their innermost natures regard themselves as Ishmaelites, and the whole human family as their natural enemies. They conceive themselves to be in some way outcast from their nation, land, inheritance, or place amongst them. Regarding mankind ever as their oppressors, they deem they are as much justified in plundering from the rich and highly favored of earth, as God's chosen people of old deemed themselves righteously employed in spoiling the Egyptians. I learned this questionable piece of morality through the unlimited confidence reposed in me by the fair Juanita, who was better informed of her people's secret opinions and idiosyncrasies than any one of her generation perhaps. I learned, also, that whilst they dared not openly avow these opinions, they were in reality unquestioned articles of faith with them, as much so as gratitude is towards those who favor or oblige them.

I have been repeatedly assured that the smallest article of property belonging to any person or persons who treated them well was as safe and exempt from spoliation, though it lay in their path, as if it had been guarded by bolts and bars. "Our honor and gratitude are the best bolts and bars mankind can use with the gypsy folk," said one of their old patriarchs, in enlarging upon this subject; and in truth they gave us a practical proof of their good faith, for though Professor von Marx and I had brought with us some few toilet appendages of value, and left these, like our money, wholly unguarded in our tents, often scattering small coin amongst the children with tempting profusion, we never found a single article touched or a penny abstracted; more than this, we had occasion to send several times to the servant we had left at our inn, and though the external appearance of some of our messengers would have furnished a ready passport to any jail in the land, and our groom, according to order, frequently left them in tempting situations for petty plunder, we never found them fail in the strictest fidelity to their trust, or guilty of committing the slightest act of peculation whilst thus engaged in a confidential capacity.

I have already said we had commenced our residence in the encampment upon certain conditions, and I am bound to add that during the whole period of our stay, the neighborhood enjoyed complete exemption from the ordinary predatory habits of the gypsies, as a strict furlough was observed, and not one foraging party of an illegal nature issued from our peaceful ranks.

The evening at length arrived when our gypsy life was to terminate.

The Zingari were instinctively aware of this, although we had made no formal announcement of the fact. Our groom was ordered to be in waiting with the horses at a short distance, and old and young, from the cooking crones to the crowing babies, hung around us with a half-respectful, half-sorrowful fondness, which showed what a depth of human kindness still lingered in those outcast hearts, and how readily noble instincts and gentle sentiments might be enkindled in the rudest natures under appropriate influences.

When all was done, many mutual kindnesses exchanged, and many slight presents forced upon the youngest and oldest of the tribe, the hardest task of all—at least for me—still remained. No word of our intention to depart immediately, had been spoken to the fair queen,

whose stately form I silently pointed out to, Professor von Marx as she lingered by the river-side, some half-mile distant from us, gathering the wild flowers with which she had been accustomed to adorn my tent. "Well, what of her?" asked the professor brusquely. Somewhat confused by this direct question, I ventured to suggest, in a low voice, that it might be as well to take advantage of her preoccupation, and depart without further leave-taking.

"What!" cried my master, with an unusual burst of merriment "steal a march upon our gypsy queen in the fashion of deserters, Louis? Shame upon you for so recreant a proposal! No, no; that will never do. Besides, Juanita is too much of a sibyl not to know that the hour has come when she can sing her siren songs no longer in the ears of her young Telemachus. But fear not, craven cavalier as you are! The gypsy queen will speed our departure, not oppose it."

"I think not," I answered, with some hesitation. "But why this haste, father? Could we not wait till to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" rejoined the professor; sternly. "To-morrow may be too late. We have lingered too long already. Know you not that this Juanita is the peerless beauty of her tribe, and that there is not an unmated youth in the gypsy universe who does not look to her with some vague foreshadowing that he may yet secure her as his especial prize? Come away, foolish boy, and that right speedily, unless you calculate to live with a dozen bullets in your body from the rifles of as many vagabond rivals."

"The bullet is not yet forged. my father, that can harm my life. My hour is not come."

"Trust not too much to destiny, Louis. These half-and-half savages know you bear a charmed life, but they are not altogether unacquainted with the arts of 'Gramarie.' Do you know that some amongst them have been melting up the silver we have been so lavish in dispensing, and forming bullets with it? and do you know what silver bullets are used for in the black art?"

"To destroy those whose lives are deemed invincible with baser missiles," I replied, carelessly. "I have no fear; but how did you learn there was such a murderous plot on foot, father?"

"Oh, by using my eyes and ears, and listening to the voice of a certain little bird called reason: But come! we lose time. I give you one half-hour to make your adieux--and then for a swift horse and a midnight ride!"

A few minutes more and I was by the side of Juanita, of whom, during this conversation I had never lost sight, as she gathered flowers by the river half a mile off. No one had been near her nor did she change her attitude until I reached her, when, stooping to address her as she sat on a mossy stone, she murmured in her sweet, sad tone: "Juanita will sing no more siren songs in the ear of Star-beam. The hour has come when he must go, and the gypsy queen will speed his departure, not oppose it." The professor's very words! but how on earth could she have heard them at half a mile's distance? Then raising herself from the ground and slowly turning to gaze on the figure of my master, who still stood on the hillside and in plain view, she said, with a stern pride peculiar to her lofty moods: "O, coldhearted, insolent man of the world! Dost thou then think that the gypsy would turn to sting the hand that has fostered him? Dost thou know the wanderer so little as to deem that under the shadow of his own tent he would murder in treachery and cold blood, the guest he has broken bread with?"

"How is this, Juanita?" I said gravely. "Do you then know that I am in danger from some of your people, and you have not warned me of it?"

"Danger!" cried the girl, fixing her full, fearless eyes upon me, with an indescribable expression of mingled tenderness and reproach. "You, senor, in danger? Know you not," she added, sinking her voice again almost to a whisper, "that you bear a charmed life, and that the bullet is not yet forged which can harm you? Your hour is not come. Nevertheless I am not unmindful of what is around us; but oh!" she cried, her voice raised to a pitch of enthusiasm and her cheek deepening to the richest crimson, "Juanita has thrown around her Star-beam a spell from which every danger will fall away, and every bullet will turn back harmless, save to him who speeds it against thee. My people may pursue the sunbeams that have dazzled their poor eyes, accustomed only to look upon the humble light of the glow-worm; they may with insensate envy of a beauty and nobility they can never attain to, hunt for thee after thou hast left behind the boundaries which even our rude hospitalities make sacred and which would shelter thee from harm, shouldst thou stay amongst us forever; but my spell extends farther than that—farther than the bullets of envy can ever reach; and thou mayst go on thy way harmless forever from any wrong that Juanita or her people can work thee."

Poor Juanita! I left her with a path in life to tread the more lonely and desolate, because the sun had shone across it, for once, all too brightly: a destiny the more unendurable because glimpses of a better lot had flashed like streaks of lightning before the eyes that would look on their brightness no more.

Three days after we had quitted the gypsy encampment a strange accident befell us. We were wandering on the shores of a beautiful lake, and had halted to rest beneath the shelter of an overhanging precipice, where rugged projections shielded us from the afternoon sun. Just as we had placed ourselves in reclining position against the rocks, an immense mass from the portion above and beyond our heads, was suddenly dislodged, and fell with a tremendous crash on the pebbly shore, burying itself with enormous force to a considerable depth in the loose ground at our very feet, and enclosing us in a narrow chasm between itself and the rocks against which we leaned. Simultaneously with this astounding descent, a shower of bullets was launched against us, which, being intercepted by the descending mass, dashed upon it in every direction. At the same moment the discharge of several rifles rang in our ears.

The whole of these motions were so coincident one with the other that for some time we were unable to separate and arrange each in its proper order. When we had succeeded in extricating ourselves from our newly-formed prison and took note of the different points of our situation, we found the following series of striking coincidences. The rock above us had no doubt been long upheld in a very threatening position. Had we not retreated beneath the alcove to which it formed a sort of roof, at a certain moment, it must have crushed us to death, as we should then infallibly have been standing in the immediate line of its descent. There in fact, we had remained up to the minute before it fell, when the inviting character of the nook induced us to retreat within its pleasant shade.

Yet again, it was evident from a comparison of the rifle-sounds that we had heard, and the shower of bullets that beat against the descending rock, that but for that friendly catastrophe, the said bullets would have found their lodgment in our recumbent forms. That they were aimed against us was unmistakable from the fact that nothing but the intervening rock separated them from us, and their flight could only have been directed at the same instant, or possibly one second earlier than the fall of the rock, seeing that the bullets reached its sides and surface at the same moment that it touched the sand.

"The bullets were evidently aimed by the hands of assassins, Louis," said my master, after carefully inspecting the whole scene.

"And the rock thrown down by those of our guardian angels," I added.

"Or the 'atmospheric spirit' of the fair gypsy queen, perchance," said the professor, smiling; "for see! here are the traces of her subjects' work," gathering up and showing me a handful of the flattened bullets, which were made of pure silver.

"You see, father," I remarked, "we bear charmed lives."

"Even so," answered the professor, gravely; "but it may be as well in future to avoid visiting powder magazines with lighted torches in our hands."