

John Bunyan [followed by] the Gipsies / [James Simson].

Contributors

Simson, James, 1826-

Publication/Creation

New York : T. R. Knox, 1886.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/mnc493hc>

License and attribution

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

JOHN BUNYAN

AND

THE GIPSIES.

AND

THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA ON THE VIPER.

BY

JAMES SIMSON,

Editor of

"SIMSON'S HISTORY OF THE GIPSIES."

And Author of

"CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATURAL HISTORY AND PAPERS ON OTHER SUBJECTS," ETC.

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men."—ACTS xvii. 26.

NEW YORK: THOMAS R. KNOX & CO.,

813 BROADWAY.

EDINBURGH: MACLACHLAN & STEWART.

LONDON: BAILLIÈRE, TYNDALL & COX.

1886.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

O. XI. 0

19/

EVER since entering Great Britain, about the year 1506, the Gipsies have been drawing into their body the blood of the ordinary inhabitants and conforming to their ways; and so prolific has the race been, that there cannot be less than 250,000 Gipsies of all castes, colours, characters, occupations, degrees of education, culture, and position in life, in the British Isles alone, and possibly double that number. There are many of the same race in the United States of America. Indeed, there have been Gipsies in America from nearly the first day of its settlement; for many of the race were banished to the plantations, often for very trifling offences, and sometimes merely for being by "habit and repute Egyptians." But as the Gipsy race leaves the tent, and rises to civilization, it hides its nationality from the rest of the world, so great is the prejudice against the name of Gipsy. In Europe and America together, there cannot be less than 4,000,000 Gipsies in existence. John Bunyan, the author of the celebrated *Pilgrim's Progress*, was one of this singular people, as will be conclusively shown in the present work. The philosophy of the existence of the Jews, since the dispersion, will also be discussed and established in it.

When the "wonderful story" of the Gipsies is told, as it ought to be told, it constitutes a work of interest to many classes of readers, being a subject unique, distinct from, and unknown to, the rest of the human family. In the present work, the race has been treated of so fully and elaborately, in all its aspects, as in a great measure to fill and satisfy the mind, instead of being, as heretofore, little better than a myth to the understanding of the most intelligent person.

The history of the Gipsies, when thus comprehensively treated, forms a study for the most advanced and cultivated mind, as well as for the youth whose intellectual and literary character is still to be formed; and furnishes, among other things, a system of science not too abstract in its nature, and having for its subject-matter the strongest of human feelings and sympathies. The work also seeks to raise the name of Gipsy out of the dust, where it now lies; while it has a very important bearing on the conversion of the Jews, the advancement of Christianity generally, and the development of historical and moral science.

LONDON, October 10th, 1865.

82161

JOHN BUNYAN

AND

THE GIPSIES.

AND

THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA ON THE VIPER.

BY

JAMES SIMSON.

Editor of

“SIMSON’S HISTORY OF THE GIPSIES.”

And Author of

“CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATURAL HISTORY AND PAPERS ON OTHER SUBJECTS,” ETC.

“And hath made of one blood all nations of men.”—ACTS xvii. 26.

NEW YORK: THOMAS R. KNOX & CO.,

813 BROADWAY.

EDINBURGH: MACLACHLAN & STEWART.

LONDON: BAILLIÈRE, TYNDALL & COX.

1886.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

COPYRIGHT, 1886, BY
JAMES SIMSON.

The Social Emancipation of the Gipsies.

THE writer of the accompanying Pamphlet on *John Bunyan and the Gipsies*, prepared specially for the British Press, takes the liberty of sending a copy of it to the Presbytery Clerks of the three Scotch Presbyterian Churches. His object in doing so is to enlist their sympathy and co-operation in having the subject thoroughly discussed, understood, and treated with justice, in Scotland. That can be done by the Presbytery Clerks in so many ways that are obvious that they need not be enumerated.

He thinks that they will agree with him when he says that this Gipsy blood, which has been in Scotland since at least 1506, must now be considered in many respects Scotch, and entitled to the respect of the rest of the population, according to the rules observed by society in estimating and treating members of the community generally; with no disparagement shown to Gipsy blood as such, however ardent may be the attachment for it shown by its possessor. They will doubtless, intuitively and instinctively, appreciate the reasons for people not publicly acknowledging it; which is no reason why the rest of the population should not respect it, at least in feeling and on principle, so that "members of the tribe," should they present themselves for social acknowledgment, may be all made "honest Scotch men and Scotch women," or at least allowed to "open their mouths or raise their heads above water" in connection with *this* subject.

J. S.

The Social Emancipation of the Gipsies.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30580869>

PREFACE.

THE two following articles, entitled *John Bunyan* and *The Gipsies*, were offered, unsuccessfully, to several English publications, and are now submitted in this form to the British Press generally. I am not in a position to assert very positively why they were rejected. I think that they explain themselves, and require little to be said on that head. The race, blood, family or name, never having been acknowledged, necessarily led to what I have called the "Gipsy current in society"; that is, the Gipsy element has no alternative but to keep itself separate in its feelings from the rest of the world. The subject is one that is, or should be, easily understood, were it only by the admission of a very respectable Scotchman, made under great excitement, and confirmed by an oath, when he said, "I am one myself, for ours is a Gipsy family." It necessarily follows that the subject should be thoroughly investigated and have justice done to it. There seems hitherto to have been a great aversion to do that, whatever the cause—whether from a fear of offending conventional feeling or from business, social, or personal timidity. But it is to be hoped that something will be done in the future. I may well make such a request, for since I left Scotland, in 1851, I have had the subject on hand for thirty years, and spent on it fully £1,000 in money, which at simple interest would now exceed £2,000, and would be very valuable to me to-day. And yet the "Social emancipation of the Gipsies," could it be brought about, would be cheap at an expenditure of even £20,000, to a person who had the money to lay out on it. It is to be hoped that the British and especially the Scotch Press will bring into prominent notice the subject in all its bearings, so that any one possessing "the blood" can say

plainly that he or she is "one of the tribe"; especially as it includes such people as the late Mrs. Carlyle, whose progenitor, William Baillie, and his tribe are very fully described in *The History of the Gipsies*. Her admission, as I have said, "should endear her to all of 'the tribe,' as well as human nature itself" (p. 12). Still, it seems to be a difficult matter to get a new idea like this even entertained, for when one speaks of Gipsies people are apt to think exclusively of what are popularly understood to be such.

J. S.

NEW YORK, 1st May, 1886.

JOHN BUNYAN.

THE Rev. John Brown, of Bedford, in the preface to the book just published by him, says of Bunyan that "everything relating to him that can be reliably told is matter of unflinching interest to minds the most diverse. . . . There is still room, and even need, for one that should aim at strictest accuracy, and bring up to present date all that can be known concerning him." In reality he has not told us who Bunyan was, and has ignored what has been advanced by others on that head. Thus Sir Walter Scott said that "Bunyan was most probably a Gipsy reclaimed," Mr. Offor, an editor of Bunyan's works, that "his father must have been a Gipsy," and Mr. Leland that he "was a Gipsy."

In opposition to this, Mr. Brown says:—"It is more than probable that the Bunyans sprang from those Northmen who came to us through Normandy. . . . In this way probably the Bunyans came to be the feudal tenants of Nigel de Albini, the ancestor of the Earls of Arundel" (p. 22). In his *Book of the Bunyan Festival* Mr. Brown asserted that the fact of the name of Bunyan (variously spelt) having existed in England before the Gipsies made their appearance there "effectually disposes of the supposition that the Bunyans were Gipsies." He does not make the same assertion in the present work, but assumes it, although he is well aware (for I informed him of the fact) that in a Writ of the Scots Parliament, of the 8th April, 1554, we have "John Brown and George Brown, Egyptians." In regard to this I said, in *Was John Bunyan a Gipsy?* that these "had been the children of a native father,

or had previously assumed the surname of Brown, the first being the most probable"; and that they "seem to have been the first Gipsies mentioned officially in Great Britain with full native names" (p. 18). If Bunyan's ancestors came into England with William the Conqueror he could have said that his descent was "the noblest and most honoured of all the families in the land." Instead of that he told us that his "descent" was "of a low and inconsiderable generation," his "father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land," and "not of the Israelites," but "tinkers," that is, Gipsies of mixed blood. His descent, he said, was "well known to many," so that there never was occasion to question it, although it was most likely suppressed by those who became possessed of the secret.

In regard to the "Tinkers," it is natural to ask, who were they? All over Great Britain and Ireland, and the world generally, they are looked upon as almost a foreign caste, distinct from the rest of the population, who will not marry with them, and will avoid all but business or outdoor intercourse with them. Still, it is not generally known who they are in reality. I have on previous occasions very elaborately shown that they are Gipsies of more or less mixed blood, of whatever length of descent from the original stock; and that if there were native travelling tinkers in England before the arrival of the Gipsies there, the latter as travelling smiths, with their organization, would soon have driven off the others or amalgamated with them.

Another admission of Bunyan Mr.

Brown has not noticed, although I pointed it out to him when I saw him in New York in 1882, and it is this:—

“Another thought came into my mind, and that was whether we [his family and relations] were of the Israelites or no; for finding in the Scriptures that they were once the peculiar people of God, thought I, if I were one of this race, [how significant is the expression!] my soul must needs be happy. Now, again, I found within me a great longing to be resolved about this question, but could not tell how I should. At last I asked my father of it, who told me, No, we [his father included] were not.”

Such an admission, taken with his “father’s house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land,” and being “tinkers,” that is, Gipsies of mixed blood, is proof that Bunyan did not consider that his “father’s house” was a broken-down branch of an aristocratic family that entered England with William the Conqueror.*

In the appendix to my *Reminiscences of Childhood, etc.*, I said:—

“Even in regard to solid English farmers of to-day, no one would ever think of saying that a tinker (whatever his pedigree) was necessarily, or under any circumstances, a brother or a cousin of them, merely on account of the similarity of the surname, and his frequenting or living in their neighbourhood, or having been born in it. And no more reason would there be for saying the same in 1628, when Bunyan was born. Between 1506, when the Gipsies arrived in Great Britain, and 1628, there had doubtless been six generations of the race born in the land, so that there had been ample time for it, in its mixtures of blood, to have settled and advanced so far as it did to the birth of the immortal dreamer” (p. 81). In *Was John Bun-*

* In *The Social Emancipation of the Gipsies*, I said:—“Still it is probable that if the name Bonyon indicated a Norman origin, there was that blood in Bunyan’s veins, as there was Knox and Welsh blood in Mrs. Carlyle, in addition to her Gipsy blood” (p. 15).

yan a Gipsy? I said:—“Asserting as a fact that from the surname, his ancestors were ordinary natives of England, and landed proprietors at that, is nearly as unreasonable as to maintain that every English Gipsy of the name of Stanley is nearly related to the Earl of Derby because *his* name is Stanley” (p. 13).

This still leaves the question to be answered, What was Bunyan’s pedigree? It was most probably as given in *Was John Bunyan a Gipsy?*:—

“William Bonyon (who died in 1542) and his wife were apparently ordinary English people, which would make Thomas of the same race. His wife—the ‘lawless brewer and baker’—was either of the native race or of a superior class of mixed Gipsies, perhaps of the second generation born in England. If she was the former, the male heir of Thomas married a Gipsy while he kept his little wayside public house, leading to their issue being turned into the Gipsy current in society. Thus the little property of ‘Bunyan’s End’ would remain in the family, leading to a will being made to bequeath it from generation to generation. ‘Petty chapmen and tinkers’ (using tinker instead of brazier) are the happiest words that could be used to describe many Gipsies of mixed blood in England to-day.” Had William Bonyon and his wife been ordinary English people, “the tradition of it would soon have died out in their Gipsy descendants of mixed blood but for the little property that remained in the family; for the associations of descent from the native race are not pleasant to the tribe when they consider the hard feelings which it has entertained for their Gipsy blood” (p. 19).

Acquiring the little property of “Bunyan’s End” would give the family a settled residence and apparently prevent its descendants using a tent in its *hereditary* calling of *travelling tinkers*. And it is as likely that the family, having been “turned into the Gipsy current in society,” would, with its travelling tinker calling and habits, sooner or later become completely separated from

the blood on the "native side of the house." Their settled residence, belonging to the family, would lead to them having their marriages and baptisms recorded, like their neighbours, and as is common with Gipsies under such circumstances. Hence it follows, as I have said in the appendix to my *Reminiscences of Childhood, etc.*, that,

"The whole trouble or mystery in regard to Bunyan is solved by the simple idea of a Gipsy family settling in the neighbourhood of native families of influence whose surname they assumed [or marrying into a native family] and making Elstow their headquarters or residence, as was the uniform custom of the tribe all over Great Britain. This circumstance makes it a difficult matter in some instances to distinguish by the Christian and surname, in county parish registers, 'which was which,' so far back as the early part of the seventeenth century" (p. 82), or at any time or under any circumstances.

Even Mr. Brown writes as follows:—"There were in Bedfordshire at that time no fewer than three other John Bunyans, each of whom would be more likely to be asked to sign the return [relating to a member of parliament] than the tinker of Elstow. One of these was a farmer at Streatley, the other two, father and son, were yeomen at Cranfield" (p. 102).

John Bunyan's father, himself, and his son styled themselves "braziers" to the last, while John admitted that he was a "tinker"—the public designation of at least three generations of the family. Brazier is a favourite word with the Gipsies, as it sounds better than tinker, and is frequently put on their tombstones. On the 20th August, 1672, a barn was conveyed to "John Bunyan of the town of Bedford, brazier," and others whose businesses were also designated (p. 230); and in a deed dated 23 December, 1685, he styles himself a "brazier" (p. 350). "His eldest son, John, was brought up to

the ancestral trade of a brazier, and carried on business in the town till his death in 1728" (p. 401), and styled himself a "brazier" in his will (p. 402).

Mr. Brown says:—"John Bunyan, born in the English Midlands, may be taken as in some sense a characteristic representative of the region that gave him birth" (!) (p. 1). "'Even as a child,' he says, 'I had few equals in cursing, swearing, lying and blaspheming the holy name of God.' The wickedness begun thus early lasted long. He was a grown man when one who was 'herself a loose and ungodly wretch,' and therefore not over-nice, 'protested that it made her tremble to hear him that was the ungodliest fellow for swearing ever she heard in all her life, and that it was enough to spoil all the youth in the whole town.' But it was Bunyan's misfortune to be surrounded by men who, either from want of sympathy or lack of light, could help him very little till his fiercest battle was fought out and ended" (p. 60). "Unfortunately their son, while telling so much about his own inward experiences, tells us but little concerning his father and mother" (p. 33).

The fact of them being "tinkers," with the prejudice that existed against the calling and caste, would prevent Bunyan, with his natural tact and taste, from saying almost anything about them, as well as his other relations. His case, as he himself expressed it, was one of "Grace Abounding," however it might have been with his relatives. Still, as his ancestors owned a cottage, and a little ground surrounding it, and left wills bequeathing them and personal property, it could not have been said by John Bunyan, according to any *native* hypothesis, that his "father's house" was "of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land," and "not of the Israelites." They were

simply tinkers, that is, Gipsies of mixed blood. Bunyan's language I have elsewhere described as "in harmony with that of the population at large," but that he "doubtless had the feelings peculiar to all of the tribe with reference to their origin and race."

Mr. Brown, so far from telling us who Bunyan was, has misled the world in regard to the immortal dreamer. He cannot plead ignorance, for of all I have published latterly on the subject I have sent copies to him, as well as several copies to his congregation. I did the same with the Rev. James Copner, vicar of Elstow, and his congregation. These, I think, included the following:—1st. *John Bunyan and the Gipsies*; 2d. *Was John Bunyan a Gipsy?* 3d. *The Gipsies as illustrated by John Bunyan, Mrs. Carlyle and others*; 4th. *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies*; 5th. *Reminiscences of Childhood, etc.*, containing an appendix on the Gipsies; and 6th. *The Social Emancipation of the Gipsies*, containing articles entitled *The English Universities and John Bunyan*, and *The Encyclopædia Britannica and the Gipsies*—all as published by Messrs. Maclachlan & Stewart, Edinburgh, and Messrs. Baillière, Tyndall & Cox, London; besides a double circular entitled *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies*, and *The Church of England and the Gipsies*.

When I saw Mr. Brown in New York in 1882, "I alluded to all of Bunyan's admissions. . . . And when I said that 'one cannot say in England that Bunyan was a Gipsy for society would not allow it,' he made no reply, so far as I noticed, but appeared to wince at the remark. . . . I was satisfied that he did not wish to have the truth about Bunyan admitted. . . . Now he says that there is no 'ferocious prejudice of caste against the name of Gipsy,' and that 'none of Bunyan's admirers would object to his being shown to

be a Gipsy if only sufficient proof were adduced,' while he has ignored everything that bears upon the subject, even what came out of Bunyan's mouth"—as I wrote in *Was John Bunyan a Gipsy?* pp. 15 and 16. What has been said of Mr. Brown applies equally well to the Rev. James Copner, vicar of Elstow.

In *The Social Emancipation of the Gipsies* I wrote as follows:—

"The objection on the part of the world to acknowledge the Gipsy blood, and the aversion on the part of 'the blood' when mixed with that of others to present itself for acknowledgment, seem to constitute the knot or 'snarl' which requires adjusting. And yet this subject is well worthy of the attention of humanity as a turning-point in history, viz.: the social emancipation of a people, or at least of an idea, that calls for little more trouble or expense, *on the part of the world*, than the 'stroke of a pen,' supported by the influence of such people or organs of society as the world regards as leaders in the realms of progress and thought" (p. 15).

In my *Contributions to Natural History, etc.*, I wrote thus:—

"It unfortunately happens that, owing to the peculiarity of their origin and the prejudice of the rest of the population, the race hide the fact of their being Gipsies from the rest of the world, as they acquire settled habits or even leave the tent, so that they never get the credit of any good that may spring from them as a people" (p. 158). "Settling this question in the affirmative would resemble a decision in a supreme court of justice, in a case that is representative of many others, and could not fail to have an immense influence on the raising up of the Gipsy tribe to which Bunyan belonged" (p. 203).

In *The Gipsies as illustrated, etc.*, I said:—

"*The Graphic*, for the 26th August, expressed its pleasure on finding, according to Mr. Brown's fanciful theory, that Bunyan's family were 'positively respectable people,' and not 'tinkering Gipsies.' Therein lies all the trouble.

Surely the Rev. Dr. Robert Gordon [of the High Church, Edinburgh] was, in every way in which he could be considered, a man of the highest respectability, and Mrs. Carlyle's respectability can be questioned by no one. As I have already said, her admission 'has a very important bearing on the elucidation of the history of the Gipsy race in Scotland' (p. 9).

She gave her descent as from William Baillie, who was killed in 1724, and spoke of his son Matthew, who was living about 1770, as "a thorough gentleman in his way, and six feet four in stature" (p. 22); and of Tennyson having "something of the Gipsy in his appearance, which for me is perfectly charming" (p. 26). "Her affections or real allegiance doubtless went to 'her tribe' that entered Scotland before 1506, and in particular to Towla Bailyow and Geleyr Bailyow, two of the 'twelve patriarchs of Scottish Gipsydom'; one of them probably having been

her progenitor. . . . Hence Carlyle's account of her indifference to her *native connexion*" (p. 29).

Mr. Froude, in his highly conventional work on Bunyan, did not raise the question of his nationality, and, like Mr. Brown, entirely ignored the immortal dreamer's information about his "father's house" *not* being "of the Israelites." And he left out the most interesting fact connected with Mrs. Carlyle. Neither has made any reply to what I have published on these subjects. The fifteen interrogatories in *Was John Bunyan a Gipsy?* (p. 16) addressed to Mr. Brown are not likely to be answered by him. The question at issue is the acknowledgment of John Bunyan "as the first that is known to the world of eminent Gipsies, the prince of allegorists, and one of the most remarkable of men and Christians," who doubtless spoke the Gipsy language in great purity.

THE GIPSIES.

I. Mr. V. E. Morwood on the Gipsies.

THE *History of the Gipsies*, by Walter Simson, collected for the most part between 1817 and 1831, and edited and brought down by me, and published by Messrs. Sampson Low & Co., in 1865, contained the following:—

“To thoroughly understand how a Gipsy with fair hair and blue eyes can be as much a Gipsy as one with black may be termed ‘passing the *pons asinorum* of the Gipsy question.’ Once over the bridge and there are no difficulties to be encountered on the journey, unless it be to understand that a Gipsy can be a Gipsy without living in a tent or being a rogue” (p. 383).

This work, including the index, made a closely printed book of 575 pages, and contained “all or almost all of the points referring to the subject in hand”; and yet Mr. Morwood speaks of it as “a short account of the Gipsies written a few years since”; and of his own as follows:—“Although, according to the best authorities, Gipsies have lived in England nearly four hundred years, yet comparatively little is known either of their origin, character or general life.”

His title is incorrect, as his book is *not* an account of the Gipsies in “city, tent and van,” but in the tent and van only, for he speaks of “the few instances in which Gipsies of this and other countries have been induced to abandon tent life and to settle in towns.” At its best his book is a collection of anecdotes of the outdoor primitive Gipsies, taken from others who have written on the subject, and his own experiences, which are given in a fair, tolerant and kindly spirit; but seldom or never does he intimate the sources

from which he takes his anecdotes from others when that would lead his readers to refer to the works alluded to. Thus he takes at least two from the book I published, without acknowledgment. I might say of Mr. Morwood's book what I wrote of those of Mr. Borrow, Mr. Groome, and Mr. Leland:—

“These writers are useful in their ways, but beyond that they *spoil* the subject of the Gipsies, in consequence of the utter absence in them of everything of the nature of a philosophy of the subject, which is peculiar to all the works that have hitherto appeared on the Gipsies (p. 532), so far as I have seen or heard of them.”*

Mr. Morwood's contributions to the subject are but illustrations or repetitions of an “oft-told tale.” And so are his opinions on the points raised by him, such as the Sudra origin of the Gipsies. He gives no reason why this caste only should have left India, in the face of the argument given by me to the contrary (p. 38). In the work published by me, and in my subsequent publications, there will be found how the Gipsies acquired British names, that is, by assuming them, and by intermarriage with males of the native race.

In short, Mr. Morwood's book has no real standing on this subject, inasmuch as it contains little or nothing of what may be called “original research,” and accords almost noth-

* *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies*, p. 18.—I have reviewed these three writers very fully:—Mr. Borrow, in *The History of the Gipsies* (see index), and in *Contributions to Natural History, etc.*, pp. 112-150, and pp. 200-201; Mr. Groome, in *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies*, pp. 7-19, and pp. 59-61; and Mr. Leland, in *John Bunyan and the Gipsies* (1882), pp. 11-21.

ing of importance to those who have treated the subject. He does not advance it, but rather spoils it, as I have said. He lays great (but not undue) stress on the prejudice that exists against the Gipsies. That prejudice forces all the Gipsies to assume an incognito, except when it is unavoidable, or when it will serve their purposes to be known as Gipsies; so that the race, in its mixed state as regards blood, occupying many positions in life, "never get the credit of any good that may spring from them as a people." When we come to define "what a Gipsy is," we find that a person may be one of the race whether he lives in a tent or a house, in a "but-and-a-ben" or a palace, representing "the blood" in its descent since 1506, as I have illustrated at great length on so many occasions that it would take up too much room to enumerate them here. Let this fact be established and it breaks down, at least in feeling or principle, the prejudice of caste that exists against the name and blood as such; and presents to the primitive Gipsies a position to which they may aspire, so that the prejudice that exists against them in their present condition is applicable to their ways of life only, and not to their blood and descent, or tribe and language. This is the most important step towards improving the Gipsies. It does not serve much purpose to interfere too directly with them as Gipsies.

I notice that the word Gipsy is always printed by Mr. Morwood with a small g. In that respect I said:—

"Among the various means by which the name of Gipsy can be raised up, it may be mentioned that beginning the word with a capital is one of no small importance. The almost invariable custom with writers in that respect has been as if they were describing rats and mice instead of a race of men" (p. 441), that is to be found in the British Islands in hundreds of thousands, and in many positions of life.

II. *The Social Emancipation of the Gipsies.*

In one of my publications on the Gipsies, I said that "perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon connected with the Gipsies is that the rest of the world, without any real investigation or knowledge, should have believed that 'ceasing to be Gipsies' has been brought about by a change of dress, character, habits or ideas,"* so that "we have the bare supposition that if there are 10,000 Gipsies of the popular kind in England to-day, there will be none to-morrow in the event of their dropping every outward thing peculiar to them as Gipsies, and 10,000 the day following by their resuming it"; and that "Gipsies can become common natives in a night, and be either as often and at as short intervals as they please."†

What I have written shows that the subject of the Gipsies requires a thorough investigation on its merits, and not according to preconceived opinions and popular impressions. It is surprising that people should not have stumbled by accident on the true position of the question rather than on the current one, which led me to ask, "How could anyone say that the progeny and descendants of this people had no more affinity with the tribe, or even knowledge of it, than the company that played the part on the stage the night before?"‡

"That there should be great difficulties in the way of it being investigated and the facts of it ascertained is natural enough; but that there should be difficulties in the way of it being understood and treated with justice, after being investigated and ascertained, is surprising, for it is very simple in its nature." §

* *The Social Emancipation of the Gipsies*, p. 14.

† *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies*, pp. 5-6.

‡ *Contributions to Natural History, etc.*, p. 112.

§ *Circular to the Scottish Churches*, 1.

In my various publications on this subject I think I presented every aspect in which it could be viewed. In the *Disquisition on the Gipsies*, I said :—

“What guarantee have we that Professor Wilson was not ‘taking a look at the old thing’ when rambling with the Gipsies in his youth? There are Gipsy families in Edinburgh to-day of as respectable standing and of as good descent as could be said of him or many others who have distinguished themselves in the world” (p. 471). In *The Gipsies as illustrated by John Bunyan, Mrs. Carlyle and others*, I have given my reasons for thinking that he was “a member of the tribe” (p. 30).

Perhaps there is no other subject that could be mentioned that requires us, in investigating it, to go so entirely according to evidence, and lay aside “preconceived opinions, prejudices and dogmatisms.” In my different publications I think I explained it very logically, minutely and satisfactorily, preparing the way for the admission of a person like Mrs. Carlyle, who was described by Mr. Froude as follows :—“Her features were not regular, but I thought I had never seen a more interesting-looking woman. Her hair was raven black, her eyes dark, soft, sad, with dangerous light in them.”

In my publication last alluded to, I said :—

“In regard to her pedigree Carlyle wrote in his *Reminiscences* that she ‘cared little or nothing about these genealogies’ about John Knox. . . . Her heart in that respect, beating in response to her Gipsy blood and feelings, went out to the Gipsy chief, Matthew Baillie—the granduncle of her grandmother, who, as she said, ‘could steal a horse from under the owner if he liked, but left always the saddle and bridle’” (p. 22).

Mrs. Carlyle’s admission of her descent from William Baillie, and her relationship, so affectionately expressed, to his son Matthew Baillie, and his wife Mary Yorkston—all so minutely described in *The History of*

the Gipsies—should endear her to all of the tribe, as well as human nature itself, especially as I have said that she is “the first Scotch woman of standing, so far as I know, who publicly avowed having been of the Gipsy race” (p. 11).

I heard from Scotland lately that people there “do not deny that there are many people amongst them who are of Gipsy blood, and are aware of it; but they do not believe that these are Gipsies.” To that I replied :—“That surely is more than half the battle. Being ‘aware of being of Gipsy blood’ should of itself make them ‘members of the tribe.’ What is wanted in this case seems to be discussion, accompanied by the publicly expressed belief of people whose opinions are apt to influence others.” In *The Gipsies as illustrated, etc.*, I said :—

“Such is the position of Scottish Gipsydom, developed or ‘evolved’ since 1506, that we cannot distinguish to-day who are Gipsy from who are not Gipsy; from which the conclusion is to be drawn that the social proscription of the name and blood should be removed, and each member of the race as such treated according to his personal merits. They are both Scotch, that is, ordinary or common Scotch, and Scotch on a Gipsy foundation, or Gipsy on a Scotch foundation. The latter hold themselves to be ‘Scoto-Egyptians,’ or ‘of a Gipsy family’ that came trooping into Scotland at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and were long allowed to govern themselves, through their chiefs, under treaties with the various sovereigns” (p. 30).

III. *The Destiny of the Gipsies.*

There should be no surprise excited in our knowing so little about the Gipsies, especially after they leave the tent or van; the real wonder being that they should tell us almost anything about themselves. For the idea of presenting the race, so far as it is known, for the respect of the world seems to many to be little better than picking up a rattlesnake and proposing to make a man

of him ; while in Scotland the humblest native will say that he "would as soon take a toad to his bosom as marry a tinkler."

In my *Contributions to Natural History, etc.*, I said that the subject of the Gipsies "presents little interest to the world if it means only a certain style of life that may cease at any moment" (p. 153). "The real interest, in the higher sense of the word, attaching to this people is centred in the relation in which it stands to others around it, with reference to intermarriage and the destiny of the mixed progeny and that of the tribe generally, especially in English-speaking countries" (p. 200). In *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies* I said :—"Who originated this idea of the Gipsies 'ceasing to be Gipsies' it is unnecessary particularly to enquire ; it is of more importance to say that it has acquired the strength almost of truth, and illustrates how careful people should be in making assertions that may cause much evil and more labour in setting them aside" (p. 5). The Gipsies being a question of race cannot be affected by a change of habits of any kind, which led me to speak of the so-called "ceasing to be Gipsies" as illustrative of the "vagaries of the human mind"; and to ask, "What could two Scotch Gipsies propagate in body and mind but Gipsies? They certainly could not give origin to Jews or common Scotch ; but Gipsy Scotch or Scotch Gipsy would infallibly follow."* In regard to this subject I entered very fully into it in my *Disquisition on the Gipsies* and asked :—

"What is to be the future of the Gipsy race? A reply to this question will be found in the history of it during the past, as described ; for it resolves itself into two very simple matters of fact. In the first place we have a foreign race deemed by itself to be, as indeed it is, universal, introduced into Scotland, for example, taken root there,

* *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies*, p. 19.

spread and flourished ; a race that rests upon a basis the strongest imaginable. On the other hand there is the prejudice of caste towards the name, which those bearing it escape only by assuming an incognito among their fellow-creatures. These two principles, acting upon beings possessing the feelings of men will of themselves produce that state of things which will constitute the history of the Gipsies during all time coming, whatever may be the changes that may come over their character and condition. . . . How can we imagine this race, arriving in Europe so lately as the fifteenth century, and in Scotland the century following, with an origin so distinct from the rest of the world, and so treated by the world, can possibly have lost a consciousness of nationality in its descent in so short a time after arrival? . . . This sensation in the minds of the Gipsies of the perpetuity of their race creates in a great measure its immortality" (p. 441). In *The Gipsies as illustrated, etc.*, I said :—"Hence the natural feeling on the part of the Gipsies for their origin, tribe and language *pulled* very strongly in that direction, while the prejudice of the natives *pushed* them from them in the same direction. The result has been two currents in society, or a double nationality—the Gipsy one and the ordinary one of the country. A *complete* amalgamation with the natives, so that the Gipsy element and feeling would disappear was thus in the nature of things impossible" (p. 6).

In the *Disquisition* I said :—

"A Gipsy's life is like a continual conspiracy towards the rest of the world ; he has always a secret upon his mind, and from his childhood to his old age he is so placed as if he were, in a negative sense, engaged in some gunpowder plot, or as if he had committed a crime, let his character be as good as it possibly may. Into whatever company he may enter he naturally remarks to himself, 'I wonder if there are any of us here?' That is the position which the mixed and better kind of Gipsy occupies generally and passively" (p. 453). I have compared this phenomenon to "an essence hermetically sealed. Keep it in that position and it retains its inherent qualities

undiminished, but uncork the vessel containing it and it might (I do not say it *would*) evaporate among the surrounding elements" (p. 534).

In *The Scottish Churches and the Gipsies* I wrote thus:—

"To ignore the whole subject . . . would perpetuate what an acknowledgment might possibly break up. The social emancipation of the Gipsies is in reality a turning-point in history. It is surrounded by many difficulties which I need not further expatiate on except to say that preconceived opinions, prejudices and dogmatisms would be out of place in the discussion of it" (p. 24).

It seems unnecessary to say that

"members of the tribe" look at this subject through their own eyes, and not through those of others; just as every other race has regarded their descent, whatever may have been the origin of their ancestors or their state of civilization. In the case of the Gipsies we have a race that entered Great Britain about 1506—as if it were yesterday; an independent, oriental, tented tribe, of great mystery and antiquity, that is to be found everywhere, and hitherto acknowledged by none. All the circumstances connected with its history have cast a fascination over the mind of every one more or less belonging or related to it.