

A HAMPSHIRE MOOR.

By ROSE G. KINGSLEY.

With Illustrations by ALFRED PARSONS.

HARTFORDBRIDGE FLATS are a typical specimen of the Hampshire Moor—stretching from Bramshill park to Blackwater village—with wide views to the south over Aldershot to the Beacon Hill, the Hogsback, and the far away Hindhead—to the north into the heart of Windsor Forest and the Royal County of Berks, and the Valley of the Thames.

Through the deep heather all along the Flats run ancient lines of ruts, the pack-horse track of the middle ages from Winchester to London. And through the heather too runs a smooth turf ride—the “Welsh Road”—by which, till within a few years, thousands of black Welsh and red Devon cattle came every autumn to Blackwater and the other great cattle-fairs in the environs of London—their drivers boasting that they had never left turf or gone through a “pike” on the way. It was pleasant on foggy autumn mornings to hear the lowing of the cattle up on the moor above, and the shouts of the drovers on their sturdy ponies, coming down through the still heavy air. The Welsh Road is used no longer. And one wonders whether the poor beasts, packed tightly in uncomfortable railway trucks, are better off than their great-grandparents were, as they travelled slowly and happily over the moorland, nibbling the fine grasses as they went, and never leaving the smooth turf save as they crossed one of the equally smooth yellow roads that intersect the moor.

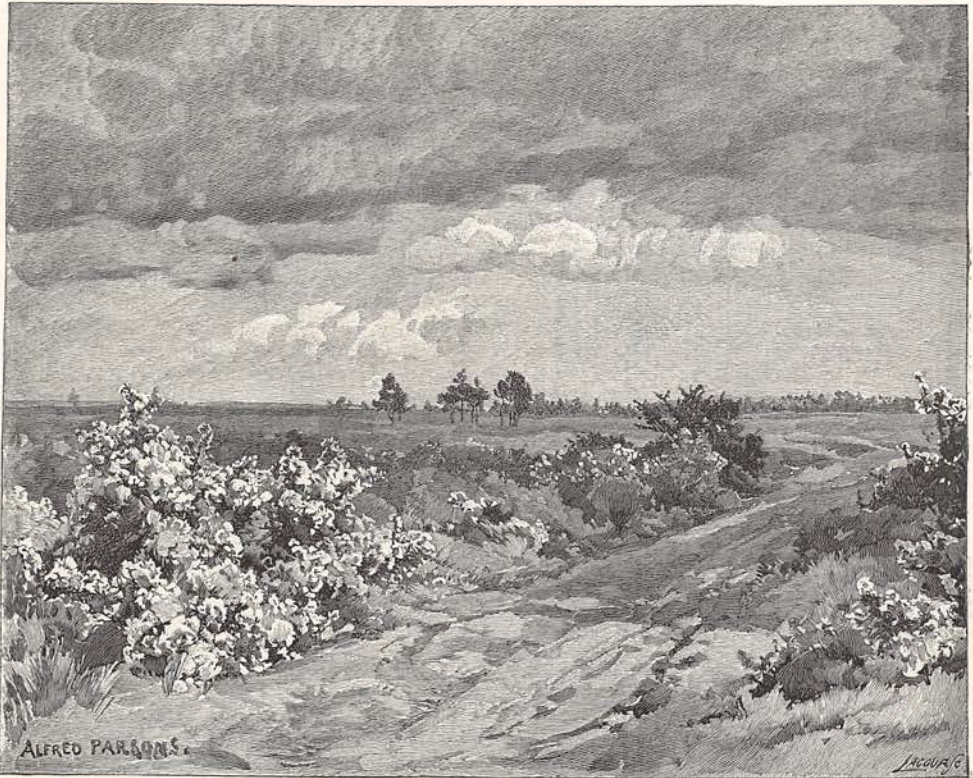
Where can you find such roads as ours, level, clean, and dry as any garden path, made of the fine hard gravel of the Upper Bagshots? Half an hour after a shower, as the saying is, you may walk out on them in satin shoes. Mud is unknown. There is nothing to make it of; for the sand is sharp and porous, drying up as soon as it is wetted.

Ah! the freshness of the moor after a shower. Down in the vale the grass is reeking with rain, and a white mist is rising from the steaming ground. But come up the hill and all is changed. The wood-wren is trilling heavenly little cadences in the oak-tree tops on the Mount. The “storm-cock”¹ and the blackbird are shouting against each other across the road, beyond the old red-brick farm-house with its tall chimneys on Vass’s Hill, where the gnarled oak-roots crawl like huge green snakes down the sandy banks. The nightingale is sobbing out her heart in the dark holly by the roadside. And as we reach the beginning of the moor the sun bursts forth, and turns every oak branch, every holly leaf, every fir bough, every heather twig, into a quivering, shimmering mass of diamonds.

Sentinel over the bog on our right stand three huge Scotch firs. On our left a few poor fields crawl out into the waste—the last remnants of cultivation, hardly richer or more fruitful than the moorland itself. The point where fields end and moor begins is marked outside the crumbly banks of earth by a delicate growth of turf, short, crisp, springy turf—close-cropped by the wandering cow, by the gipsy’s donkey—turf unlike any other we have ever seen—turf that, when cut in long strips, rolled up, and carted into gardens, makes the most velvety lawns imaginable: but turf that in its own place is a thousand times more lovely and lovable than in the stateliest garden in the world. It is so close, so sweet, so herby, our moorland turf. The grass is so fine and aromatic, one quite envies the donkey nibbling away at it; though doubtless he, poor fellow, would find the rank grass of the Midlands, the rich hay of the Thames Valley, more satisfying to his appetite. Then such dainty things grow in this moorland turf. After our shower the eye-bright is opening the little yellow eye in its tiny white flower, and twinkling at the sun. The milkworts, blue, white, and pink, have shaken the

¹ Misselthrush.

rain off their hard, smooth leaves and flowers, like water off the backs of microscopic ducks. The graceful harebell raises her head as the sparkling drops fall from her blue, almost transparent bell, and free the over-weighted hair-like stalk from its unwonted burden. The bird's-foot trefoil lifts claw-shaped yellow and red blossoms from its creeping stem. Only the camomile is the worse for its wetting; for the daisy petals cling sadly together. But as we crush it under foot it gives forth its pungent aromatic odour with double strength to make up for its bedraggled looks. And what shall we say of the wild-thyme? Nay, but a burning hot day suits that best. As one lies on the crisp grass that gives under one with a dry little crushing sound, and buries one's face, regardless of ants and spiders, in a bed of purple thyme, one is



A MOORLAND ROAD.

inclined to think that life has nothing better, certainly nothing more freshly fragrant, to give one.

The rain has brought out all savours. The air is a very bouquet of sweetness. The silver birches trooping in dainty procession like dancing nymphs down the sides of the bog, fill the whole atmosphere with that subtle and delicious fragrance they possess while the sap is rising, that emanates not from flower or leaf only, but from the whole tree itself. And from the golden gorse—the king of the moorland—rises a scent of apricots that exceeds all else for richness. It has more the quality of a tropic perfume than of one in our chill northern clime. A noble plant truly is the gorse—the furze, or “fuzz,” as we Hampshire folk call it. Save in springtime on a Californian hill-side it is difficult to find a more vivid mass of colour than a sheet of gorse in full bloom. Almost rivalling it in intensity is the broom. Perhaps the colour is as brilliant. Yet it is a slightly colder yellow, wanting the touch of red gold that gives the gorse its strength.

In early summer the heath here and there is covered with a web of multitudes of finest red threads. On these presently appear clusters of minute flowers, looking as if they had been moulded in white or pink wax by fairies' hands: it is that strange, leafless parasite, the lesser dodder (*Cuscuta epithimum*), which lives on the heath and

almost smothers it in its tangle of crossing red threads. In one or two favoured spots—far be it from me to betray their whereabouts—the dark blue head of *Gentiana pncunomanthe* rises through the pink carpet of heather, startling in the intensity of its colour, and bringing with it visions of its cousins *Gentiana acaulis* and *bavarica* on far away Alps; of primulas and ranunculi and white lilies, stretches of alpenrose, tinkling cowbells, work-worn peasants, snow-peaks rising above the cruel rocks, and the “everlasting glory of the hills.”

The only approach to a hill here is where the moor sinks away into a little valley worn by “rain and rivers”—by the tiny spring that, like our streamlet, has eaten its way in past ages down through the porous gravel soil, and formed a hollow often running up half a mile or more into the tableland of the moor. So gentle is the descent of the little stream that the hollow is filled with a mass of bog. And woe to the unwary youth who, having just joined his regiment at Aldershot, ventures in the arrogance of his young experience to despise the perils of a Hampshire bog. There are many round Hartfordbridge Flats several hundred yards in width and length. How deep their treachery who can tell? Certain young heath-croppers in the old house at Eversley tried over and over again to touch the bottom of one specially dangerous quaking-bog within a quarter of a mile of their home. But no pole they could carry ever reached solid ground. And the horror of the bog with its quivering hummocks of tussock-grass remained one of the delightful terrors of their childhood, more especially as a stray cow on one occasion, and a reckless hunter's horse on another, had to be dragged—half dead—from its depths by men with cartropes from the neighbouring farm.

The bog, though bad for fox-hunters, is a rich hunting ground for the botanist and entomologist. The surface is white with the snowy silk tassels of the cotton-grass; orange late into the autumn in places with the seed spikes of the bog asphodel (*Nartheicum ossifragum*). As we cross it, jumping lightly from hummock to hummock to gather the sweet-scented lesser butterfly orchis (*Habenaria albida*) or the spotted orchis (*O. Maculata*), we brush against a bush of bog myrtle—the “Sweet Gale”—that fills the air with aromatic fragrance. The pink Pedicularis grows in wet grassy places. The slender trailing stalks of the bog pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), strung with its fairy bells of the most delicate shell-pink, creep over the surface of the damp black earth. And beside it we find that strangest of all bog plants, the little carnivore, with its cruel red hairy hands and exquisite two-inch spike of minute white flowers—*Drosera rotundifolia*, the sundew or fly-catcher. The sundew, with its drop of clear nectar at the end of each hair, tempting unwary flies on to the red hands that close on them, squeeze them to death, and suck their bodies as dry as paper, is an easily domesticated pet. A soup-plate full of wet mud, plenty of light and air and a generous diet, are all the little half-animal plant needs. And it will live for months, eating flies and morsels of raw meat with avidity.

Our Hampshire bogs—unlike those of Ireland and Scotland—are not peat-yielding. But the place of peat is, or was, taken by the “turf” from the moors, which until a few years ago was universally burnt for fuel by the cottagers. Each house had its turf-stack, and “a thousand of turf” was given away to widows and old people, as now we order them a hundredweight of coal. “A turf” is a circular sod of heather some eighteen inches in diameter, with three inches thickness of soil and matted roots, besides the heather tops eight to fifteen inches in length. The turf-cutter uses a heart-shaped, pointed spade turned up almost at right angles from the stout handle. This he pushes before him under the surface roots of the heather—leaving only bare gravel below. The turf makes excellent but dangerous fuel. Three or four sods piled up against a bar on the open hearth smoulder away for hours, till one falls and blazes up suddenly and fiercely as the heath catches. Then woe betide the small child who has been drying its “pinna,” or trying to warm its little hands over the apparently dead fire. Indeed so terrible were the burns from turf fires that one was thankful when coal grew cheap enough to give away instead of turf. But the fragrant turf smoke of one's childhood, the lonely figure of the turf-cutter out on the wide brown moor, were a grievous loss, when they disappeared after an Enclosure Act which brought dismay among our people, and put an end to turf-cutting as well as many other small privileges.

Here and there about the moor we come in the midst of the heather to a little grassy oasis. The bracken hides the heath all round with its graceful fronds, green

in summer, rich bronze or pale gold in autumn. It is a capricious plant, this bracken—the only fern of our moorlands—and grows dwarf and stunted on the upper ground where it happens to find a yard to its liking. But on the sheltered slopes of the moor, and down in the oak wood that join it, the bracken thrives, growing often five or six feet high in almost tropical luxuriance. Ancient thorns rise out of the close thymy turf of the oasis, wreathed about with honey-suckle—a patch of the handsome butcher's broom with its glossy leaves and red berries growing close against their grey stems; while a stunted oak makes one fancy this must be a survival of some outlying bit of the forest that clothed all this land when Domesday Book was compiled.

Now the land is lapsing into forest once more. Over the moors, throwing out



THE SCOTCH FIRS IN BRAMSHILL PARK.

their scouts before them like a well-disciplined army, advance from year to year the blue-black ranks of the great fir-tree invasion. It is war to the knife between heather and fir-trees. But steadily, surely, the advancing force has made its way eastward since the day that James the First planted his groups of Scotch firs at Elvetham, at Bramshill, and on Hartfordbridge Flats. In the stillness of a hot summer noonday one may hear the crack of the fir-cones overhead, as they burst open and let the winged seed take its flight, whirling round and round like some transparent brown insect till it reaches the ground. There it buries its sharp beak in the thin vegetable soil among the heather roots, formed by rotting needles from the parent tree and fine leaves of the struggling heath that knows its hour has come and grows tall and wild in its desperate endeavour to reach the light the fir-trees are shutting out from it. Next year the winged seed will have turned into a minute fir-tree, hardly distinguishable from the mosses round about. The year after it will shoot out green branches round its sturdy leader. And if its natural enemies, the little grey rabbits or the gipsy's donkey, do not eat or break down that leader, it will grow a foot or more in all directions every

year, till it forms a shelter for a fresh rank of seedlings taking their turn as vanguard to the army.

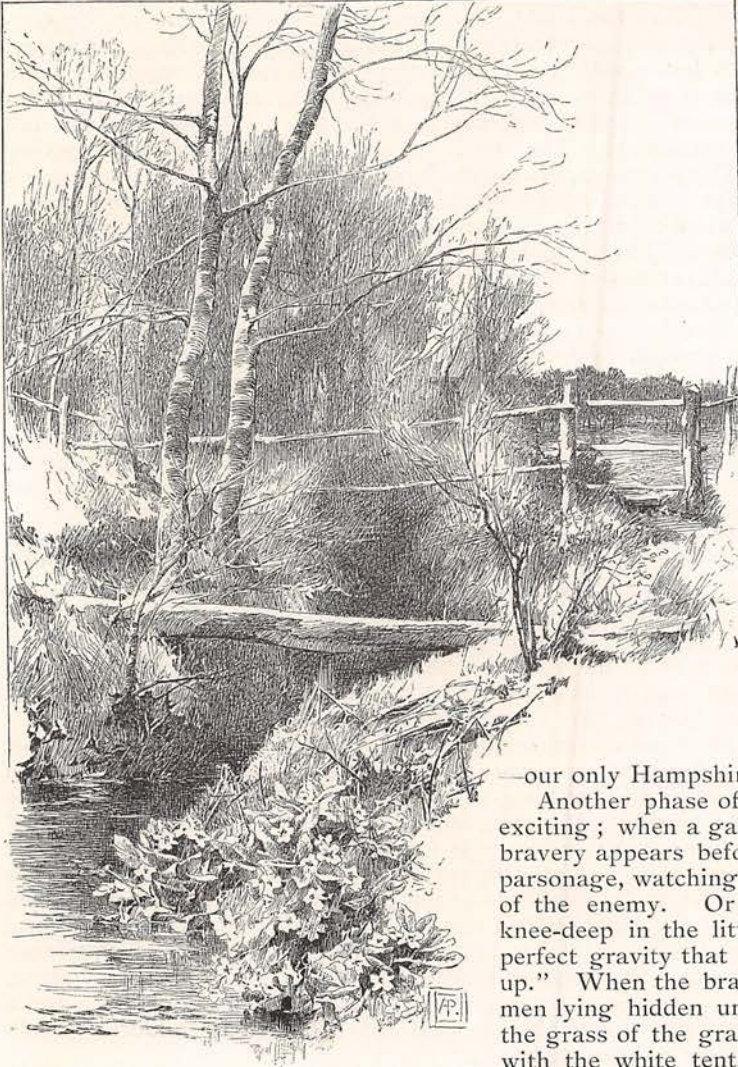
No one who has not lived year in year out in a heath and fir country can know the charm of these woods at every season. In summer the elastic carpet of fallen needles, the trees themselves oozing with turpentine, are richly aromatic, though perhaps less enchanting than the "chequered shade" of a beech or oak wood. But in autumn there is no fear of the "fall of the leaf"—that season so dreaded in our stately elm-grown midlands, when the dripping leaves overhead fall on the cold grass below, when the atmosphere is laden with rank exhalations from rotting vegetation, and chill mists rise from the clay lands. In our fir-woods there may be a good white fog. But that harms no one; and only serves to make the lonely woods more full of mystery and weird attraction. The air is purified by the fresh health-giving scent of the fir-trees. The porous carpet of brown needles below them lets the wet sink through to the porous gravel soil over which it is spread. And through that carpet appear wonderful growths like glowing jewels—toad-stools and fungi of every shape and size and colour. There are hundreds of the splendid scarlet agaric with white spots, that would send one raving mad in an hour if one eat it. Dainty brown parasols too of exquisite tones, with fringed collars encircling the graceful stems. Some are rich amethyst—others pale sulphur. There are balls and hoods and little cups—brown, orange, white, pale grey, in endless variety. And when set in great dishes of the freshest green ferny moss, they make a really gorgeous bit of decoration.

But in winter the charm of the firwoods is greatest. We forget the length of cold, dark months while underfoot we have the brown heather—overhead the never-failing green in dark cushioned masses springing from the crisply-defined ruddy branches and all about us the straight warm red trunks, among which, far away, hangs a delicious blue haze. There are no bare boughs that we scan with almost hopeless eyes, longing for the first swelling of the buds that tells us leaves may possibly appear some day in the uncertain future. Here with our "Winter Garden" of green fir-trees and rich brown heather, and curious mosses and lichens, the cold short days seem to have lost all their terror. "The hounds of spring are on winter's traces," before we have missed the leaves of last autumn. And the south-west equinoctial gale is sighing through the tree-tops—sighing of the ocean and the sun, the western trade-winds and the summer that follows close behind.

Perhaps out on the moorland autumn is the most delightful season of the year; for autumn loses half its sadness when we are spared the bareness of winter. On an early autumn morning as we follow one of the turf roads that lead through the heather, every twig, every bush, is a miracle of beauty, covered with great spiders' webs that stretch from furze-bush or bramble to the heather-tops. Every thread is encrusted with dew-drops that show off the weaver's excellent art. And the weaver himself—a splendid nutbrown fellow as large as a filbert, with a white cross and crown on his back, sits boldly in the centre of his fragile castle, and looks out undismayed upon the world. A hare jumps out of her lair in the bushes. A covey of partridges whirr away across the moor. A gossamer thread floats slowly past in the sunshine. Dewdrops hang heavy on the tops of the tall fine grasses that fringe the path. And a whiff of pungent foxy smell tells us that Reynard has been out for a morning walk before us, and left his scent on the grass.

Cub-hunting on our moorland is as pretty sport as heart can desire. All its surroundings are pleasant. The pebbles thrown against the window to wake you at dawn—the welcome cup of hot coffee, left ready overnight and heated by the faithful old groom—the early start while the rest of the household is sleeping the sleep of the just—and that charming sense of self-satisfaction which early rising induces in a naturally lazy person—making one, as the wise man said, "conceited all the morning and sleepy all the evening." Then the beauty of the sunrise—the freshness of roads and hedges as the horses dance and catch at their bits in sheer enjoyment of life—the smoke curling up from newly-lighted fires in the cottages—the teams with whistling carter-boys turning out of farmyards on their way to plough—all these delights lead us to moralize on the folly of losing the best hours of the day, and to make rash vows that we will follow the example of German philosophers and other great minds, whose work was always done before breakfast—vows to be broken next morning, when we sleep till nine o'clock to make up for the exertions of the previous day.

But for to-day, as we are up betimes, what can be more enchanting than the scene when we join the few friends who, like ourselves, have been tempted out at six in the morning? On the edge of the moor the little field stands—a few hard-riding farmers—a few officers from Sandhurst—one or two well-known members of Mr. Garth's hunt—and two or three ladies. Down in the valley the soft white mists are burning



STREAM LEAVING THE MOOR.

off the meadows along the little Blackwater. The hounds are drawing, working close under us in a bog among deep heather that hides all but their keen eager heads and feathering tails. The brilliant red of the huntsman's and whip's coats against the brown heath gives value to the picture. And away beyond men and hounds, beyond the green valley and its fields and meadows, its church towers and red-brick cottages, the further moor rises up to its crown of dark firwoods; and we look over it again to the long line of the Beacon Hill and the far faint Hindhead

—our only Hampshire mountain.

Another phase of the moor is yet more exciting; when a gallant Lancer in all his bravery appears before some quiet country parsonage, watching for the first appearance of the enemy. Or half-a-dozen hussars, knee-deep in the little river, tell you with perfect gravity that "this bridge is blown up." When the bracken is alive with rifle-men lying hidden under its tall fronds, and the grass of the grand old park is covered with the white tents and camp-fires of a flying column, while strings of horses are taken to water in the great pond, where the

coots and moorhens and tiny dabchicks scurry away in terror to the reed beds. Then, when the opposing column marches up from Aldershot, our moor is transformed into a mimic battle-field, as a sheet of smoke and flame bursts from the scarlet line of our outposts under the fir-trees of the old camp, where George the Third had his encampment of regulars and volunteers about 1800. The splendid batteries of horse and field artillery thunder up to the edge of the bog and open fire upon the enemy. Our horses stand snorting and trembling as they snuff the powder. And the men grip their rifles, and set their teeth, and forget that they are firing blank cartridge, and that they and the enemy will parade together to-morrow morning. Great must be the terrors of the small inhabitants of the moor while the crack of the rifles, the roar of the guns, the clouds of smoke that hang over the firwoods in the still summer air, send them cowering into their burrows or the shelter of the bushes.

Hares, rabbits, and most of all the wee brown dormice who build their nests in the forks of the furze stems, have however a more dreaded foe than "Tommy Atkins."

In the month of May, when turpentine is rising and oozing from every crack in the rugged red bark of the firs, from the point of every green shoot, a white column of smoke is too often seen to rise on the moor. The heath is on fire. Some passer-by has dropped a lighted match or knocked the hot ashes out of his pipe, or the fir-woods have been fired by some incendiary to spite their owner for an old grudge. At night these fires are a splendid sight. We have seen a great bog turned into a seething cauldron of flame half a mile across. But in the clear sunlight of noonday the effect of the line of fire running along the ground and leaving black desolation behind it, is even more ghastly. The worst of all, however, is when the fire gets hold in the fir woods. Out of the dense white smoke come the shouts of men—for every one in the parish leaves his work and turns out to fight a big fire—the ring of the axes—the roar and hiss of the flames—the crash of falling trees cut down to stay their progress—the sharp crackle of burning furze. Round the outskirts man, woman, and child are armed with fir-boughs, and beat down the tongues of vivid flame that lick up the heather about the fir-roots. And now and again the fire catches a big fir, and with the report of a cannon rushes up to the topmost branches, turning it into a tree of living flame.

Alas! for the squirrels and the grey rabbits and the foolish long-eared hares and the tiny brown wrens and the green wood-peckers that make their nest in the hollow fir-tree stem. Alas! even for the adders that wriggle out before the line of fire, only to be despatched by the sticks of the beaters. Happy for us if, by hours of hard work in smoke and flame, the fox-earths with their precious cubs, are saved from destruction.

The Hampshire moor is not wanting in life. There are no grouse it is true. The Prince Consort tried to establish them: but in vain. There is nothing for grouse to eat; no undergrowth of whortleberries, bilberries, blueberries and such like, that abound on the Yorkshire and Scotch moors. There are no deer either, no russet-brown roes scudding daintily through the red stems of the fir-trees. But the moor is alive with butterflies and moths in endless variety, and musical with birds. The lark "leaves her watery nest" among the heather and pours forth joyous cadences in the clear still air. The rare Dartford warbler and the glossy black-headed furze-chat make citadels of the gorse-bushes in which to build their nests far away from the haunts of schoolboys of bird's-nesting propensities. Flocks of plovers whirl up into the air and tumble and twist in their strange erratic flight, crying "pee-wit, pee-wit" in plaintive tones; or strut pertly in an open grass track, raising their pretty crests and displaying their lustrous green and purple plumage. They are charming humbugs. In the air their doleful cry wrings one's heart; but once on the ground again they laugh in one's face, the picture of conceit and prosperity, while we search in vain for their excellent eggs. Jays with blue wings and nutmeg-coloured breasts, fly shrieking discordantly through the fir-trees. The fierce grey shrike makes his larder of impaled beetles on a holly-tree. One may see a whole family of fire-crested wrens—tiny balls of feathers bearing a speck of flame on each minute head—clustered together, fifteen to twenty of them on a branch; while their two active, anxious parents dart about them with excited twitterings, popping a dainty morsel into each open hungry beak. A mother partridge flutters before us down the road, trailing a broken wing and uttering faint cries of pain. Ah! cunning little lady, we have seen that trick of yours too often. Your nest is somewhere close at hand. Let us but try to catch you, your maimed wing spreads out strong and straight, and you whirr away over the heather tops like a brown rocket.

But most typical of all moorland birds is the weird fern owl—the night-jar—the goat-sucker (*Caprimulgus Europæus*). In daylight it is never seen—lying close among the heather (or sometimes, it is said, head downwards on a branch), so much the colour of its hiding-place that one may walk by it twenty times and never dream a bird is there until one happens to meet a bright watchful eye among the heather stems. When twilight comes on the silence is broken by a strange chr-r-r-ing noise, and a stranger cry as of some soul in anguish; a dusky ghost flits past with noiseless wings, and lights in the road before us. We advance. It rises and flits on again with broad sweeps, on wings that give one the impression of being made of cobwebs rather than feathers, so soft, so silent is their flight. The night-jar is awake, hawking

over moor and pasture, and filling its wide open beak, guarded by a fringe of hairs, with night-flying moths. It is no wonder that round the mysterious, solitary bird, coming out of the unknown with the heat of a hot summer, vanishing who knows where with the first breath of autumn, legends and fables should have grown up; that—as one of its Latin names denotes—it should be supposed to milk the goats at night: or that, hovering over weaning calves, it should inflict a dangerous disease by striking them with its wide beak and claws. Needless to say the goat-sucker is guiltless of all such crimes. The only sign of ferocity the gentle creature shows is by clapping its



A GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.

wings together over its back with a snapping noise, when you approach its young. The night-jar was a great favourite with that most delightful Hampshire gentleman, Gilbert White. And in his *Natural History of Selborne* he gives many curious details of the bird's habits, devoting some hours to a close and careful consideration of its ways on July 14, 1789—sublimely unconscious, dear old man, that the whole civilized world is at that very moment being shaken to its foundations by the fall of the Bastille.

A pretty fashion has existed for ages on our Hampshire moors of marking the boundaries of parishes or estates by a pair of trees planted close together—a birch and fir—a beech and fir—a birch and holly—and so forth. Here and there too the monotony of the firwoods is broken by a bit of better soil, where a patch of the ancient forest has held its own successfully against the encroachments of the fir-tree army. Soft green turf, oaks and grand hollies all wreathed with woodbine, make a delicious abode for some modern Robin Hood, were he minded to settle there. As he does not appear his place is often taken by the nomad gipsy tribes. We have occasional visits from Smiths and Coopers; and when the latter are in the neighbour-

hood, farmers look sharply after their horses in outlying fields—as Coopers are well-known amateurs in horseflesh. But Gregories and Lees are the two tribes who swarm over North Hampshire, who “hatch” on our moors and commons, wandering with “the sticks and the nuts” from fair to fair—never sleeping under a roof—never crossing a doorstep for fear the lintel should fall upon them—selling a few baskets, skewers, or clothes-pegs at exorbitant rates—telling a few fortunes—and perhaps doing a small amount of innocent pilfering. Of this last propensity, however, I cannot speak from actual knowledge—as the Romanys never took so much as a dead stick from the ground of their “Patrico Rye.”

Dear, strange, kindly, exasperating folk—with their mysterious patter—their eastern features and ways—their soft, insinuating voices, demanding immediate and quite endless supplies of clothes, food, money, and medicine—while their great soft brown eyes tell you all the time that every word they utter is a lie, and that they know it, and know that you know it.

The Lees were once a powerful tribe, with great store of silver plate hidden away in some *cache* in forest or moor, as is the fashion to this day with some of the richer tribes. But at the end of last century the seven brothers who were heads of the tribe were taken up for sheep-stealing. In vain did the Lees sacrifice all their precious plate to get counsel. The seven brothers, according to the horribly barbarous ways of the time, were all hanged in one day. The tribe was ruined, and it has remained poor and wretched ever since. Old Damon or “Demon” Lee, as the country people called him, was the only surviving brother; a broken, feeble old man, who nevertheless was treated with considerable respect by his numerous descendants and relations. His daughter Mercy would have been a superb beauty had she not been slightly marked by smallpox. And her three grand-daughters, Sinfy, Darcus, and Talitha, who were all born on Hartfordbridge Flats and brought down to be christened in Eversley Church, are as lovely brown creatures as one could wish to see—lithe and graceful as cats, with delicate features and soft almond-shaped eyes.

Quick to remember kindness, and with their almost occult power of knowing one’s whereabouts, they never lose sight of a friend. One family who had befriended the gipsies, moved to another county. In less than six months dusky faces appeared at the door, and whining voices were asking “how the dear lady did,” and giving news of the old home; while one of the sons of the family suffered not a little from their devotion. Catching sight of him at a regatta on the Thames, Lees and Gregories made a ring round him, and called upon the amused and astonished crowd to “come and look upon a man whose parents had been the best friends the gipsies ever had.” The luckless victim’s feelings may be better imagined than described.

The “hatching” ground of one of these tribes that are too poor to travel in the hideous modern van of their richer relations, is wonderfully picturesque. Donkeys and ponies browse around, picking the tufts of sweet grass out of the heather. Brown children sprawl barefoot on the ground with a few dogs of entirely original breeds. Men with orange or crimson handkerchiefs round their throats are lounging about the low tents. Handsome, black-haired women are busy over the camp-fire, concocting a savoury stew of “hedge-pig,” or a rabbit that has been caught by the nondescript dogs regardless of game laws; while the blue smoke rises among the blue-black fir-trees.

Alas! the gipsies’ days of freedom are numbered. The romance of the moor is vanishing. With the enclosure of common and moorland the hatching grounds are getting fewer every year. The turf-cutters are gone. Old Townshend, the ancient outlaw who wandered over the wide expanse of the Flats with his troop of keen-scented lurchers, picking up hares and rabbits, and living in a mud hovel under a turf bank—an object of awe and mystery in our childhood—he and his like are a thing of the past.

Yet let us humbly thank heaven that our Hampshire moor is absolutely worthless land save for building purposes—and who would be so rash as to sink some hundreds or even thousands upon making a garden in the middle of the Flats. That the soil is so hopelessly poor that it can never be cultivated, and its most profitable crop will always be its fir-trees to supply railroad sleepers to half the kingdom. And lastly, that within sixty miles of London such a world of wild beauty exists unspoilt by the hand of man.