

CHAPTER XI

SOCIAL CHANGES

Social changes—Unwritten laws—A flapper story—Lost pearls—A deceived man—Good pals, not blood-suckers—Unofficial attachments—Platonic friendships—"Leave us in doubt"—A colonel's command to his wife—Lord Charles Beresford and his wife—Frightened pigeons—Making the best of ourselves—Love-making done by the ladies—Why men preen and strut—Safety of love-letters—Ways of making love—Poets—Old men searching for darlings—Long engagements—Cheated out of happiness—Gipsy friends—A kind action—Strange beliefs—Aristocratic gipsies—Debutante Yeira—Birds in the New Forest—A hasty operation—Wedding rings—Gratitude.

GREAT social changes have taken place and grown into customs of late years, and we are faced with problems of great magnitude. We seem to have skipped a generation or two. Girls have a much better time than we had when we were young; then, some of the best years of our lives were lost to us, owing to lack of opportunity for enjoyment. There used to be so much nonsense and pretence; girls were never allowed to go about alone or think for themselves. This was not fair, as it gave them no opportunity of seeing the world as it is instead of as the story-books presented it, when a girl's life was supposed to be over when she married, instead of just beginning.

In some ways the new emancipation is a glorious thing; girls and women can be more natural, pretence is left behind. But I do hope it will not see us a step down the scale instead of one up.

There are a number of unwritten laws which nice-minded people zealously observe. What we call "honour" plays a large part in our lives, and makes us obey the unwritten laws that instinct points out to

us and that experience teaches us are beneficial to ourselves or others. Fame can be won and honour can be lost. The newly emancipated should bear this in mind.

I was made sad a while ago by an emancipated flapper doing a very heartless thing. This is the story.

An officer in a smart and expensive regiment, where he found it hard to make all ends meet, was dancing at a ball with a girl newly introduced to him.

While dancing the clasp of a necklace she was wearing gave way, so she took it off and asked her partner to put it into his pocket to take care of it. This he did. When parting for the night she asked him for it. He searched all his pockets, but could not find it anywhere. He thought that he must have dropped it, and asked everybody as they passed him if they had seen such a thing as a pearl necklace anywhere, as he had lost one that had been given into his care.

Nowhere could the thing be found, and he was in great distress, but said he would certainly replace it if his partner would tell him the approximate worth of it.

A very large sum was named, good pearls being expensive things. He at once bought a necklace that he thought resembled the one placed in his care. Not being a rich man, this ruined him; he had to leave the regiment, which he dearly loved, and I believe he went to South Africa to try and begin afresh in any occupation he could find.

Some time afterwards the original necklace was found between the linings of the clothes he had been wearing, which he had left in England. The pearls were valued, and found to be worth a few shillings, not being pearls at all, but cheap beads in imitation of pearls.

The girl must have known they were of no value—probably had bought them out of her pocket-money—and she had ruined a quixotically honourable man.

I love to see girls having a good time, and every possible enjoyment I would put in their way; but I would like to say a word to them if I may, as sometimes they do much harm from thoughtlessness. Quite children, known under the appellation of "flappers," may now be seen making love or being made love to, sometimes with a view to matrimony, but more often only to pass the time and amuse themselves.

Young men ask their young women friends of all classes to luncheon, dinner, or theatre, so especially would I like to address the girls and women who are earning their own living and being well paid, and ask them to remember that many young men are not well off. Some work hard for what they have, others may only have their army or navy pay, which is not princely, or possibly only a small allowance from their parents, and cannot afford to splash about with their money. So, nice-minded girls should remember this, and not allow their friends to give them champagne, liqueurs, and chocolates or presents.

It is these things that lead to financial difficulties, and when once debts are incurred it is hard to overtake them. If girls are unselfish and thoughtful in this way, their men friends may in years to come remember them as good pals, who saved them from debt and folly, instead of as blood-suckers, to be cursed.

I know one instance where a girl in a big business was asked by a young man to dine with him and go to a theatre. She would not allow him to waste money on her, saying it did not add to the pleasure

of the evening; she had come for the pleasure of his society. He was much struck with her attitude, and told me about her, saying she was so different to many he had known. He became more and more friendly, and it ended in his asking her to marry him. He was not rich, and proposed exchanging into a regiment abroad, where he could live more cheaply.

The girl acknowledged that she had grown fond of him, and for that very reason would not marry him, as it would mean his having to leave a good regiment and go abroad, and in all probability offend his people. It so happened that his brother was killed in the Great War, and he became the heir to a good property. He had heard from the girl in answer to his letters, and again proposed to her. They are now married, and so far are very happy. He says she is a pearl of great price, and "utterly different to the general run of the present-day girls."

The day has gone when women are considered fast if they are seen being friendly with men; they can now be good pals and valuable companions without having to be engaged to them.

Most people have some unofficial attachment in their lives. No man or woman should be without one, a platonic attachment with the opposite sex. It is conducive to self-respect—just comprehensive kindness and comradeship.

In platonic friendships there are no disturbing undercurrents, no pretence is necessary. The man has no claim on the woman, and she has none on him; neither desire it. Naturally, these people must be of the same tastes, but that in all probability is what brought them together in the first place.

I was talking to a man friend of mine a short time ago, and I asked him what had become of the girl I used always to see him dancing with, as I never now

saw them together, and I knew they were great friends. He replied: "It's off."

"Oh?"

"Yes, she took to dodging her face in public, painting her lips, and all sorts of horrors—a want of refinement and delicacy of feeling, and I could not stand it, so I cried off."

Feeling I ought to take up the cudgels for my own sex, though I must confess it makes me feel most uncomfortable when I see women attending to their toilets in public, I said: "But the use of cosmetics is a very ancient custom. Cleopatra and Jezebel, for instance, were experts in the art, and so it has gone on to the time of our grandmothers; there is nothing new in it." But I had to allow that we never heard of their attending to these things in public; that is quite new, and I appreciated the fact that men preferred to be left in doubt.

He said: "Yes, that is just it; we would rather be left in doubt and not have it rubbed in."

I then told him of a well-known Colonel in India whom he knew well by name, who had commanded a crack cavalry regiment, and who was considered a terrible martinet by both his officers and men, who had a wife inclined to decorate a little freely on occasions. I think she was short-sighted, and did not know how badly she did it.

One day when she entered the room where her husband was writing and her complexion was somewhat pronounced, he stared fixedly at her for a moment or two, then in his orderly room voice and manner said to her: "Woman, go and wash your face." This she immediately did, and returned to the room. The fierce Colonel looked at her sternly and in amazement, then thundered out: "For Heaven's sake, woman, go and put it on again."

I would like to give the name of this Colonel, but fear there may be some of the lady's relatives still living, whom it might pain.

Lord Charles Beresford used to be very funny on this titivating business. Once at a ball in Calcutta, when his wife was standing near him, jerking his thumb in her direction he said: "She's got on an extra coat of varnish to-night, and, as you see, she's just been vaccinated again." This referred to some mosquito bites on her arm. I felt embarrassed, as she must have heard what he said.

The street where I am now living abounds in exceedingly tame pigeons; they will hardly move out of the way to allow one to walk on the pavement, regarding us all as good friends. Lately a lady has come to dwell among us who is evidently unaware that she looks like a clown in a pantomime, so grossly does she decorate her face. The moment she appears in the street every pigeon flies for its life on to the tallest chimney-pot; not a coo is heard, they are so terrified!

While on this subject, I may say that women are not the only people who assist nature and titivate. I knew a soldier, who has not long ago joined the majority, who was a great lady-killer, and went into battle with a beautiful gold-fitted dressing-case, full of toilet preparations and hair dye. I always hoped for the peace of his mind that he would never lose it. It would have been so painful and unseemly to have to go over the top unadorned. I also know a nobleman of eighty years who rejoices in a scarlet beard without apology.

I remember an acquaintance of mine, who had arrived at Southampton on her way to rejoin her merchant husband in Calcutta. At the last moment her dressing-case was missing. All the rest of her

luggage was already on board, but the dressing-case was nowhere to be found; it had, in fact, been stolen. To go without it presented all sorts of uncomfortable and impossible situations so rather than be deprived of it she forfeited her passage money, staying at home to make fresh arrangements and buy more toilet adjuncts. It is, of course, everybody's duty to make themselves look as little repulsive as possible, so if by chance an eye is lost, by all means hasten to replace it. If a front tooth is gone, it should be replaced without delay.

There are folks who consider that they show what fine characters they are by doing without these missing links, scorning artificial aids. But this is not fair to those who have to sit opposite to them, perhaps daily; their feelings—and appetites—should be respected.

Now I had better leave this subject, or some of my young readers will be saying, "The aged are fond of giving good advice; it consoles them for being no longer able to set a bad example," or some thrust of that kind.

It has occurred to me that at the present time a good deal of the love-making is done by the women. The subtlety of the art lies in making the men think they are doing it themselves. The way the love-making is conducted depends on the temperament of the individual woman, combined, of course, with environment and opportunity.

Men are very sensitive to the opinion of others, and it is the women who make them preen and strut. Tell a man with a bulbous nose and a squint that you can pick him out of a crowd anywhere by his splendid carriage and charming expression, and he will walk on air, preening himself in every shop window he passes.

The writing of love letters requires delicate handling. Men hate being bombarded by them, and have

a way of poking them into a drawer among their ties and handkerchiefs and forgetting all about them, or leaving them to go down and be brushed with their clothes for the amusement of the servants.

I know one case where the man hid his love letters, of a somewhat compromising kind; among his handkerchiefs, being quite certain they were safe from all prying eyes; while the housemaid copied some of the affectionate and poetic expressions for future use in her own letters.

We women are often to blame for our own disappointments, being apt to place our men on pedestals, worshipping them as super-men; then, when we find they are only clay and sinful mortals like ourselves, we consider that they have been deceiving us, whereas we have been deceiving ourselves. Men do the same by us, and are likewise disappointed when we fall with a crash from the pedestals on which they have placed us.

I have often been interested in watching the different ways people have of making love. The out-of-door athletic girls are good pals with most men. There are others who find they can attract attention the more easily by being very effeminate and helpless; they cry, faint, and scream on the smallest provocation, requiring burnt feathers held under their noses and perhaps just a little gentle friction to restore their circulation. This answers very well as a passage of arms between lovers, but I do not advise these tactics after matrimony; that is altogether another matter. Man's interest ceases and his emotions are not roused when the object of his affections has become familiar and the problematical, elusive element has disappeared.

Then what about the men? The way they make love is sometimes amusing and instructive, though

at times curious. The poet lover is delightful; the only drawback is in the difficulty of knowing when the poetry ends and the real business begins. The woman cannot well say: "Do you mean that you have proposed to me and love me?" It would be so awkward if he replied: "Poetry, madam—nothing but poetry." It would require an agile brain to find a suitable repartee on the spur of the moment.

Equally trying are the "Some day, some day I may be able to tell you all that is in my heart." It is, of course, intriguing, and, if the man plays his cards well, can be kept up for a considerable time to his own satisfaction and the mystification of the woman.

The old men searching for their darlings are pathetic, probably having had many darlings before. Love, like measles, is most dangerous when taken late in life. Old men are often attracted by the very young, and while being apologetic about their age do not really consider it in any way a drawback. They are feverish, wanting to cram so much happiness into what time is left to them. When they marry they are often exceedingly kind to their partners, but terribly jealous when younger men come philandering around.

I remember one dear old General, grown a little portly, making love to a girl just out of the school-room. He held an important Government appointment, was rich, and fancied himself not a little. The girl was bored to death with the man, but the parents considered it a good match. One day when staying with the girl's parents in the country, ostensibly to help to find posts for her brothers, not knowing what to do with him, it was suggested that he should go out with his gun and potter about after rabbits.

Later in the day, seeing the sportsman returning across the park, the girl, who had been reading the paper in the drawing-room, stepped through the

French window on to the lawn to go and meet him and ask what sport he had met with. The General, wishing to show his agility and sprightliness, gave a little run to jump over the wire over the sunk fence dividing the park from the lawn, and placed there to keep the rabbits from the flower beds. Unfortunately, the General caught his hind-leg in the wire and fell head over heels, or perhaps I should say heels over head, looking excruciatingly funny standing on his head with his coat tails enshrouding it.

The retriever, which had been the General's companion, had popped over the wire in a most graceful and accomplished manner. To her surprise she received a whack on the back from the General's gun as he fell. Her cries were heartrending; she did not know what she had done to deserve it.

Meanwhile the lady love on the lawn hid her face behind the newspaper, still in her hand, in the hope that he might think she had not seen the disaster, which would have been so humiliating for him, as she was shaking with laughter.

By the time he had picked himself up and reached her, out of breath and red in the face, she had managed to suppress her mirth.

Now here is a little warning for engaged young women. A friend of mine was engaged to a man in the Horse Artillery; she was not deeply in love with him, but for reasons of her own had decided to accept him. One day, feeling rather apologetic about the coldness of her demeanour, she said: "I don't think that I am half good enough to you." To her surprise he promptly said: "I quite agree with you, and so we will put an end to the matter now." And she saw him no more.

I think that long engagements are a mistake. I have several times seen them end unsatisfactorily.

A bonny parson's daughter that I used to know well, became engaged to a man who was employed in the Indian Civil Service, but who considered he was not well enough off to marry until he received his pension. He returned to India, his fiancée waiting at home. They wrote constantly to one another letters breathing devotion.

After some years he returned, looking forward to the happy day when at last he could claim the girl for his wife and, as they say in the story books, "live happily ever after."

His love went to meet him at Southampton. They eyed one another in dismay. The man she remembered as well set up and agile, now appeared before her with most of his thatch gone and his chest slipped. The girl he remembered with sunny brown hair, laughing blue eyes, and comely figure was now very thin, her hair streaked with grey, and with tired eyes.

Both had thought how much they would have to say to one another, but now found that they had nothing in common, and life held no promise for them.

They thought, however, that it was too late to begin all over again, and that they were under some sort of obligation to the other, and that life would seem very empty without each other, so they married, and endeavoured to fulfil all their obligations in a disappointed way. But they were not happy; both felt that they had been cheated out of happiness in some sort of way, but that neither was to blame.

Among the many interesting people that I have met I must not forget the gipsies, good friends of mine. We all have an atmosphere peculiar to ourselves; especially does this apply to gipsies, who even in moments of gladness have an air of sadness. They have a dignity all their own born of independence,

are full of superstition, legendary beliefs, and suspicion.

It is not surprising that they should be suspicious, considering that every man's hand is against them, and they are hunted from pillar to post—never allowed to stay more than forty-eight hours in one place without the permission of the police or forest-keepers.

I could write, and would like to write, a book on the origin of these people, but it might not interest my readers. Twiss, in his book of travels, states that he considers "all the gipsy men are thieves and the women libertines." That is not altogether my experience. I should not say that the women were immoral, judged by their own laws, and they are very particular about their castes, jealous of the least infringement of their class-laws and etiquettes.

A very small lapse from their laws of "honour amongst thieves," and the delinquent is driven forth like Hagar, and never more acknowledged.

Neither do I consider all the gipsy men are thieves; they do not look upon poaching as thieving.

A curious thing happened to me once when staying in the neighbourhood of the New Forest, which I love. Gipsies abound there, and some are great friends of mine. While on the seashore one day I lost a locket, which from sentimental reasons was very precious to me. It contained the photo of someone I should never see again, and was surrounded with small diamonds.

All inquiries and town criers were useless, and I looked upon it as lost to me for ever. One day, some little time after it was lost, I was talking to a young gipsy woman that I liked and admired, and I spoke to her of my loss. She asked a good many questions and seemed to be interested.

I did not see her again for some weeks, and was told, on making inquiries as to her whereabouts, that she was "away." Then one day I was told she had been to see me, but while I was out; she would leave no message and said she would call again.

Next time she came I was at home, but she would not come into the house. Would I go and speak to her by the gate? This I did, and on looking round to see that there was nobody about, she produced from the bosom of her very untidy blouse, which was much too large for her and was pinned in every direction—my locket.

I asked her how she found it, but she would not tell me. I offered her a reward, and she would not take it. I then asked her if there was nothing I could do for her, as it would give me so much pleasure. But she waved her hands as if to keep me at a distance, and said, "Nothing"; that I had never grudged them a few rabbits and chickens, and had always let them camp on our land, so she was glad to be able to do something for me.

The majority of gipsies are fat lists; some of their beliefs and superstitions are interesting.

It is a widespread belief amongst them that a gipsy forged the nails for the crucifixion of Christ, and that in consequence they have been ever more accursed. The Alsace clan or caste have a legend that they stole one of the nails, and that is why three were used instead of four, and they say that stealing has been permitted in their family by the Crucified Christ because they stole one of the nails, after which stealing was no longer a sin.

This sounds irreverent, but they do not treat it lightly; it is a belief that has grown up with them.

These people have contrived a sort of language of their own, partly Hindu, some Italian, and a

general coinage of their own. For instance, *pâni* is the Hindustani for water, and is likewise used by the Romanys for water. *Mia* is a favourite woman's Christian name, another is Reneé—surely French—while Yeira savours of Egypt.

It is the Hindu blood still running in the veins of the pure-bred gipsies that prevents their hair from turning grey; even in extreme old age. It is quite exceptional to see one with grey hair.

It is not easy to get in touch with or make friends with these self-contained people. As a rule they resent any overtures or interference, and the camp dog has to be taken into consideration; he may look tame, lean, and dejected, but is often unpleasantly fierce.

If one is lucky enough to become friendly with the dog's owners, it is not from any spoken word on their part or ours, but from being able to show them some unspoken kindness, which at the time passes with no word of thanks. Yet these much talked of and little understood people, with their great reserve and inscrutable faces, have, many of them, the hearts of eagles caged between poverty, ignorance, and inability through long years of suppression and reticence to give expression to what is in their hearts. It is almost impossible to break down their barrier of reserve. Yet we have been kinder to them than other nations. France expelled them in 1561, but England found room for them, as she has done for many another wanderer.

In all history, among the division of races only two seem to be set apart and marked, always living amongst others in an alien land—I mean the gipsies and the Jews, and there is a good deal to be admired in both.

The Jews are law abiding, which compensates a,

little for other Oriental lapses, the gipsies asking home and help from none, just living their own hand-to-mouth retired life, bearing in mind the Arabian proverb, "The Tree of Silence bears the fruit of peace."

One of the things that strikes one most, when coming upon a gipsy encampment, is its silence; not even the children talk and make merry.

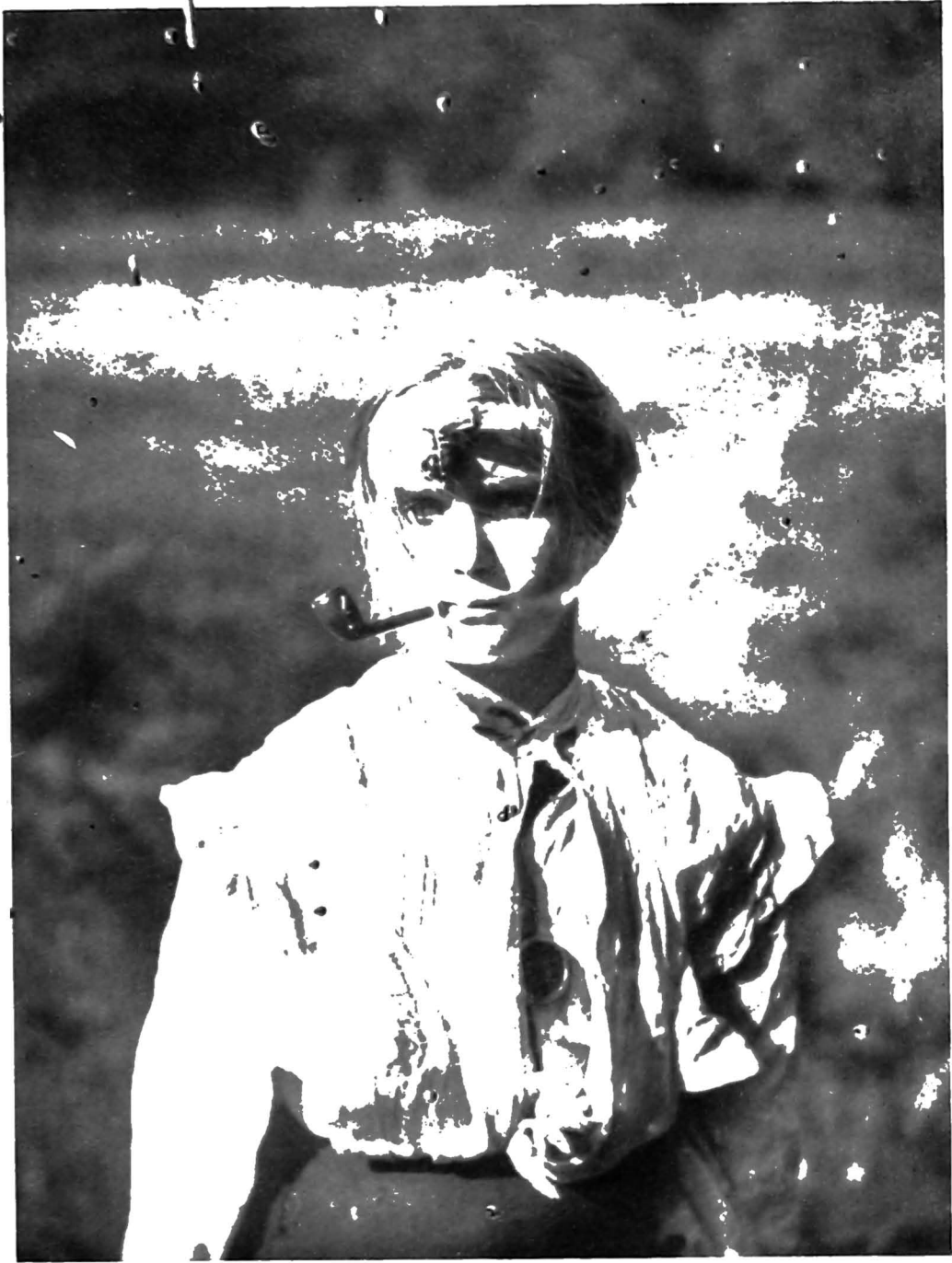
Gipsies cannot be gathered together under one label. The caravan dwellers are the aristocracy of the gipsy world, and they regard the tent dwellers as beneath their notice; they are the *canaille*, who carry their household goods in open carts.

The chief names amongst the aristocracy are Lee, Fua, Baillie, Stanley, Gray, Heron, and Boswell, dating back to the sixteenth century.

It is in the New Forest around Lyndhurst that most of the noble families dwell, moving from place to place amongst the rides. Different parts are frequented by different classes, and none would dream of removing his neighbour's landmark or intrude over his frontier.

There is great difficulty in getting good pictures of these people. They think it unlucky to be photographed; there is some old superstition attached to it. If by chance you can persuade one to be taken, you must present the individual with a shoe-string, to prevent bad luck overtaking them. I waited a long time before I could obtain photographs of them. I particularly wished to get one of them in the act of poaching, and at last succeeded, though they did not know it.

The women and children do the greater part of the work; the latter do not play together as other bairns do. When not working they sit on the ground, looking unhappy and worried.



F. P. Hobbs & Son.

A DEBUTANTE GIPSY.

In winter they all have a hard life and suffer from the cold, but the snow helps them to fill their larder, as they can trace the rabbits and hares from their foot-prints. If you were to meet one of these ladies returning from a foraging expedition with firewood under her arm, and were to ask her if she liked rabbit for dinner, she would say, "Rabbits? I don't know the taste o' rabbits," though while she speaks you may be able to see a string stretched across the inside of her tent, on which are hanging many rabbits' skins drying.

All are extraordinarily untidy. Look at Yeira enjoying her pipe of peace, yet in spite of her untidiness she does not appear to be quite devoid of coquetry, or why the little decoration on her brow and the plaited hair tied up in a twiddle with a lucky shoestring? Because good-looking Spico, with his rough-and-ready love-making, said he liked it.

If we were to meet this bonny girl again in another year, she will have aged considerably; there will be wrinkles round her eyes and mouth, chiefly from exposure and the strong light of out-of-door life, wearing no sort of hat to shade the eyes. The exposure to the changeable elements quickly ages both the men and the women.

These quaint people have some curious expressions. When they wish to say a person will not live through the cold spring, they say, "He won't climb up May Hill." Again, when they wish to describe the nature of the country they say, "Like a swarm of bees all in a charm." It sounds pretty, but is difficult to follow.

The New Forest is full of charming and interesting things. The bee-master still exists, attending to his hives, and brews old English mead, living on the industry of his bees.

The honey buzzard still nests in the old beeches, and the hen harriers on the moors near Bratley.

What a temple for man! I almost envy the gipsiês; being always surrounded by such soothing, healing sights and sounds—the birds gossiping as they say good-night, the silence of the nights made more eloquent by the occasional cry of the night birds, so suitable, I always think, to the hour and surroundings.

The caravan dwellers tell me that there are seventy-two different kinds of birds living in the Forest, not counting the summer holiday-makers and the cheap trippers.

Most of the gipsies know a little about the preparation of certain medicinal properties—know where to find and how to use herbs that they have proved to have healing powers. Some of the ferns growing in the Forest when stewed, allowed to grow cold, then boiled to half the original quantity and mixed with goose-grease or lard, form a valuable ointment in the case of wounds or blood-poisoning.

They also have a splendid remedy for hæmorrhage made from hemlock mixed with the oil from some ferns and, I believe, with cobwebs, but I forget now. I once had the satisfaction of seeing this prescription in use.

A small boy belonging to one of our farm labourers cut the tip off his finger. I was sent for to do what I could until the doctor arrived. In my haste to stop the bleeding and not to lose the piece of finger, I clapped the latter on and bound it up in bandages very tight; but the bleeding did not stop.

‘One of my old gipsy friends happened to be passing through the village at this time, and, hearing of the accident, called to offer her help. Taking off the outside bandage, she smothered the hand with its first wrappings in her healing compound; the bleeding

stopped like magic. When the doctor arrived he said he would not interfere with the dressing, as all seemed to be going nicely.

I am sorry to say the beauty of all this was marred by my having put the piece of finger on upside down, and this was not discovered until later, when to correct matters would have needed an operation, to which the youth objected. He was rather proud of his novel finger with the piece of nail wrong side up, and liked showing it to everybody.

The marriages of the gipsies are now conducted after the orthodox English Church fashion, but the bridegrooms have a habit of appearing at the appointed place for the service without a ring; this is done in the hope that the parson will provide a gold one, which will be pawned at once.

One day the parson provided an old and small curtain ring made of brass and past its first youth. The bridegroom refused to allow it to be placed upon his bride's finger. The kind and long-suffering clergyman said: "Well, you must wait, then, while I send for a new one for you." This was agreed to, and after some waiting a bright new brass ring arrived, exactly the same as the last except it was bright and new; but it gave satisfaction, and the ceremony proceeded.

When the king of the gipsies felt that his days were numbered, he gave instructions that a certain charm he valued and had worn for years, also a treasured rat-catching belt, were to be given on his death to his beloved friend, Parson Jack Russell, the well-known M.F.H. and M.O.H., who had always been the sympathetic friend of the gipsies, often fighting their battles when occasion arose.

Now, with much regret I must leave the dear New Forest and the gipsies. To any lover of nature

wanting an ideal holiday I recommend the New Forest with its wealth of interests, its birds, its creepy-crawlys, glorious patches of columbines, wood-sorrel, stately foxgloves, and crimson pimpinels crowding amongst the moss.