

Upon what trifles depend events of the utmost importance. I was on a little rundreise with a cousin Egerton Y. Davis Jr. an instructor in English at ----- University. We had left the Grand Hotel Heidelberg at 10 on a Sunday morning in May for a days tramp over the mountains. The day was bright and clear with just enough crispness in the air to make walking pleasant. We had even blamed ourselves on reaching the Molkenkur that we had taken the new Berg-bahn. Through the woods along the well kept paths half an hour found us at Königshoh. the invitation of an old woman to ascend the tower we trudge on to ----- where we had been told there was a good table. Over a glass of good München beer at the alte Gasthaus we discussed the trivial question whether we should stay at or push on to Neckar grun for dinner. Egerton, for so my cousin was called, said that we had the day before us & the view over the sloping ----- in front of the hotel invited repose. I urged that the greater pleasure of the walk of our dinner was before us. Not without grumbling he consented. That scene under the trees at the old Gasthaus, ~~commonplace~~ & (as it was) is stamped on my memory beside two others which commonplace & ^(?) we led to ^{among} far reaching and serious. Thru the lovely woods we walked, stopping only at the cross paths to read the directions & with the descent Egerton's spirits seemed to rise & no schoolboy could have been more joyous as we entered the little town of Neckargrun. Turning into the Platz in front of the hotel we heard voices in angry dispute & saw men, women & children rushing out of the houses. A glance was sufficient to reveal the cause. The town guard, a short stout fellow unrefined like soldier with a short sword at his side had collared a gypsy who was leading one of those tented wagons thro the town. The noise came chiefly from a burly woman in the front wagon who poured out a stream of imprecation upon the policeman for daring to lay hands on her husband. For a few moments the four men in the party were under arrest on the charge so far as we could ascertain of stealing tho we gathered afterwards that it was against the law for gipsies to come thro the town. The men were unmistakable Zingari in every feature, but with the exception of the burros the whole outfit presented a great contrast to gypsy trains which I had met in England. In the first tent wagon were seated the voluble gypsy-woman, who looked and spoke more like a German, and an old dame who could have sat for the portrait of a witch. From the second wagon a woman more comely than the others had descended & then from the recesses appeared in the front a young girl of about 18 wretchedly dressed but with a face which at once attracted our attention. I addressed her in German, wh. she spoke with fluency and in reply to questions said that they were on the way from Elsass & that the men had been taken for the night, her father among them, & they would have to go on without them. With a red kerchief over her raven-black hair, a complexion of the softest nut brown which glowed as she spoke, features clean cut & exquisite teeth she formed a striking picture in spite of the wretched condition of her clothing. We gave the women a mark apiece, for which they seemed very grateful, & passed on to Hirsch. Egerton could talk of nothing but the gypsy girl during dinner, and went repeatedly to the window to see if the wagons had gone on. He told me that in his philological studies he had been much interested in Zingari, that ----- was one of his favorite characters and that on several occasions a strong temptation has come upon him to join a gypsy band & learn their language u.s.w. As we strolled out of the town, a beggar stopped up opposite a neat looking public house, the host of which was on the doorstep & made a remark about the nuisance such people were in a community. I asked him if he heard if the gipsies had passed the way & he pointed down to a lane which led directly to the Neckar. At the foot of this we found in a sloping meadow, with the gypsy wagon in the background, the horses cobbled, and in charge of the fair haired girl. The old woman had gone off to the town.