

THE FREETHINKER  
LONDON, ENGLAND  
15 JANUARY 1939  
(page 36)

**Nature Notes of A Freethinker.**

In Norfolk, I came in with three gypsies on the road; they were Serbian. The old woman looked like some eternal Cassandra who had lived on earth since the days of Plato, the daughter was handsome and attractive, and was busy making her excellent teeth meet in an apple. The man, dark and swarthy, was leading a small horse that was pulling an automatic piano, playing, with plenty of drums to the music. On the top of the piano was a monkey. And I suppose my guess as an answer would be as near as anyone's, about the little incident I noticed. An Englishwoman left her two friends and ran after the old woman to give her money. It was probably done on the spur of the moment, impelled not a little by the music—it was perhaps the result of some early recollection of her youthful days, when the figure of Romance was gracious and comely to look upon, and when gypsies had played a memorable part in it. Anyway, with Borrow, I would not willingly agree to the abolition of the Cuckoo or the Gypsy. Nor would I agree to the abolition of poetry or prose about the Gypsy—who, in the words of Richard Jefferies, "will not dance to the pipe ecclesiastic, sound it who may—Churchman, Dissenter, priest, or laie." In *Swift Wings*, Songs in Sussex, **Victor B. Neuburg**, there is an excellent poem, "Gypsies," which qualifies in every respect for inclusion in the next Gypsy Anthology. Here is the last verse, but not the last word on those who will not have our civilization:—

"And here you are, under a Sussex coppice  
Cursing and boozing round a smoky fire,  
Familiar with old starlight: earth, whose top is  
Nowhere, still claims you for your old desire

Of wandering and wandering. What stop is  
Possible for you now? Oh, gray as granite,  
Stronger than steers, perpetual as poppies,  
You ramble roughly round an old, worn planet.

Nicholas Mere