

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., September 5, 1930.

WILD GEESE.

Hark, that is more than wild geese
going south,
That cry from a cloud at the autumn
sunset's edge,
As keen as the word in a lonely
prophet mouth—
It is promise and pledge!

They will return, they will break on
the old earth's grieving
With clear, sweet clamor, prevailing on
and on;
And they will be more than wedge of
wild birds cleaving
Home through an April dawn.
Never that cry, that challenge flinging
free,
But I start to my feet with a hail,
laughing at death—
On a sudden as sure of immortality
As of my life and breath!

LEYLA.

The little village of Isman, a
cluster of green-painted, thatched,
little houses on a hill tinted in red
bronze by the early autumn, was un-
usually alive that Sunday morning.
Turkish fishermen in festive dress,
followed by their women and chil-
dren garbed in gaily-colored planta-
lions, crowded the square in front
of the mosque. Late-comers inquired
of their neighbors.

"What could have happened?"
For many years now, Gypsy
caravans had come to Isman, wagon
after wagon, the second week of
Bairam, the yearly four-week long
feast of the Moslems, to buy cured
fish for the winter; yet that fall
not one wagon of Gypsies had ap-
peared even during the third week
of the Bairam month.

The Turkish fishermen who had
never thought much of Gypsies be-
gan to miss them; not because of
the money the heathens paid for
the fish, but because they had be-
come accustomed to seeing these
strangers appear as regularly as
poppies and daisies on the fields, at
a definite time of the year. Veiled
women and white-turbaned men
joined their children in the anxious query:

"Why haven't they come? Why
don't they come? Have they gone
elsewhere? There hadn't been any
heavy rains to swell the brooks on
the road and halt their progress,
had there?"

The last day of the third week of
Bairam was half gone, and no Gyp-
sies had come. The Turks talked
about them every day now remem-
bering how a horse had once been
stolen, how brass kettles had dis-
appeared, how fuel was taken away
mysteriously. Soon, however, peo-
ple began to remember also how a
Gypsy has cured Mehmet's wife,
and how another one had found the
cause of the dryness of the widow
Aula's cow.

"Heathens, true enough; but good
heathens, and gay."
Suddenly a little Turkish boy
yelled: "Burda. Burda. They are
coming. They are coming. There,
There."

The women lowered the veils over
their faces. The men rose on their
toes. From around the bend of a
rock appeared covered wagons. In
the clear, dry air one could hear the
swish of the whip and the men talk-
ing to the horses.

The first wagon, the leader, stop-
ped within sight of the assembled
villagers. Tall, broad-shouldered,
long-bearded Gypsies jumped down
from their seats and talked softly
among themselves. Why were there
so many people waiting for them
in the shadow of the mosque? Was
it a good or a bad omen? Well,
they were there. They had to face
it out, come what may.

"Manu, you who speak their
language, go and find out," an
elderly Gypsy suggested, "Go,
Manu."

Manu, the oldest of the group,
left his whip behind and went empty
handed toward the Turks, who had
sat down to fan the embers under
the long-handled, brass coffee-pots
that glistened at a distance. The
mosque square was the market.
place and the open-air coffee-house
of the village. From there the Turks
could watch the colored, patched
sails that glided on the blue waters
of the Danube below. Arrived
within speaking distance, Manu, the
Gypsy, crossed his arms over his
chest and bowed deeply, Moslem
fashion.

"Hosh, gendi. Welcome," greeted
the oldest of the Turks, rising to his
feet.

"Hosh bourdum. Happy to find
you well," Manu answered, coming
nearer.

The formal greetings over, the
Turks asked excitedly all at once,
tugging at the Gypsies' long coat:
"Why haven't you come? Where
have you been? You are late. We
have been waiting for you. It is the
last day of the third Bairam week."

Before answering questions, Manu
whistled to his friends to come. The
Turks were anxious to see them.
They could buy their fish cheaper if
they took advantage of the enthu-
siasm of the villagers.

Gypsy men and women jumped
out of their wagons before the
eager, lean, little horses had come
to a standstill. In one word Manu
made the situation clear to his peo-
ple. The Gypsies hugged the vil-
lagers and called them brothers.
The women pulled down the veils
from the faces of the "Kadinas" and
said ecstatically:

"Ah, sister. You didn't look so
well last year. You are getting
younger every year. How do you
do it? Tell me. Tell me."

Even the Gypsy children under-
stood they were to cajole the little
Turks to help their parents. Packs
of cards came out from under the
folds of the skirts of Gypsy girls
ready to tell fortunes. Fiddlers were
tuned. One-eyed Maye was already

blowing a sad, sad Turkish melody
on his reed flute.

The Gypsies worked fast. At the
noon hour, when the Turks had gone
to prayers, the Gypsy carts were
full of cured fish, for which they
had paid less than half of what they
had paid the previous year. Manu,
the hero of the occasion, spoke wise-
ly to his daughter Leyla, who was
helping him store away the things
he had bought.

"It is well to let people wait for
you. Don't wear flowers in your
hair every day. When people get
accustomed to see them, they be-
come blind."

That Gypsy caravan did not be-
long to one band or tribe. Each
wagon had its own master. They
traveled in families. The villages
dotted the hills and stony valleys
of the Dobrougea, between the Dan-
ube and the Black Sea, were too
far apart and too small to give
scope to large tribes. But it so hap-
pened that they met in Sulina that
fall, at a gay tzigian wedding, and
having been delayed by the feast,
they came together to Isman to buy
their winter provisions. They were
in a gay mood and had stopped on
the way to eat and drink together
while the children and the young
chals and chies, girls and boys,
danced on the dry grass beside the
road.

The fish bought in one-half a day,
a transaction which would have
taken from four to five days under
ordinary circumstances, the Gypsies
didn't intend to leave immediately.
They were happy and unhappy at
the same time. They walked about
their wagons, looking at their horses,
at the canvas of their tents, chat-
ting, singing. Now they were a
little cross at having been robbed of
the pleasures of bargaining with
the Turks. It was great sport out-
witting such keen traders as the
Turks were.

Manu was sitting on the seat of
his wagon beside his daughter Leyla.
She was a tall, lean, copper-color-
ed girl, with large black eyes set
wide apart. Leaning against her
father's wide chest, she was playing
with her long, raven-black, thick
braids. The old man, whose long
beard was the same shade as his
lamb fur cap, was puffing mouth-
fuls from his long-stemmed, silver-
cupped pipe. After a while he said
to her:

"Why don't you play as all the
others do, Leyla? Why do you sit
here so idly?"

Without moving she looked her
father full in the face and asked
reproachfully:

"Are you tired of me?"

He shook his head and pointed his
thick, black, bejeweled forefinger.
"Look there, at the girls your age.
Singing, playing, talking, dancing.
Gregory and the boys are swimming
and you, the best swimmer of them
all! When we are alone, you com-
plain. When we meet people, you
stay away from them. Go, now,
Gregory's father, I'll want to talk to
me. I will ask two thousand—
go now."

With a rapid gesture of her hand
she wound the braids around her
head, saying: "Ask what you want.
You want to get rid of me. You
are tired of me."

She jumped down and walked away
with sinuous hip movements and
balancing shoulders. Suddenly, like
a flash, she began to run, and run-
ning, she shed her clothes one by
one as she raced down the slope
from the camp to the water. She
was stark naked when she splashed
into the river. The older Gypsies
turned their heads.

"There is a girl for you. One in a
thousand; Manu's daughter. Ah, if
I were young once more!"

Gregory and the others were far
away. Their black heads bobbed up
and down in the steel gray water.
Leyla began to gain on them, com-
ing up on top of the waves and
calling:

"Swim on faster. Leyla is com-
ing."

Gypsy men and women ran to the
shore, applauding Manu's daughter.
"Race him. Race Gregory. Race
and beat him."

The others stopped swimming.
Gregory waited for her to come
nearer.

"Let's race to the other shore,
Gregory," she said. "Come."
He looked at her, laughed, and
began to swim back.

"Why won't you race me, Greg-
ory?" Leyla asked angrily.
He splashed a handful of water
into her face, ducked, and swam
away with large strokes. Soon his
eager, bronzed body climbed out
on the sunny shore. The others were
still swimming about, splashing,
laughing, playing, yet no one would
take up Leyla's challenge to race
her.

"Oh, old women, who will race me
to the other shore?"

No one took her up. It was cold.
They had enough.

Ilie, Gregory's father, stepped up
to Manu's wagon. He was taller
and broader than Manu. A horse
dealer from the deserts. His voice
was louder than that of the other
man, louder and harsher.

"Can I have speech with you,
Rom?"

"I have told you already, it is
useless."

"Look at my son." The father
pointed proudly to the half-naked
young body that was beginning to
dress. "Is there a finer man to father
the children of your daughter? Look
at his long arms and neck and his
muscular legs. Look at them, Rom.
Look at them!"

"Few young men are worthier
than your son," Manu answered.
"But I don't want to marry her
yet. I am alone. Speak to me next
year."

"Is Gregory a cripple," Ilie bel-
lowed, "that he should wait a year
or do you think there are no other
girls in Gypsydom? Five hundred gold
pieces and I pay half the cost of
the wedding feast. What do you
say?"

Leyla's father did not trouble to
answer. Men and women surround-
ed them.

"Get busy, Roms. There will be

a wedding. Let these poor water-
drinking, fish-catching Turks see a
Gypsy wedding."

"I have spoken to you," Ilie cried
out in harsh tones.

"To me?" Manu inquired. "I
thought you merely remembered
what Yorgh paid for a blind wife
for his poor deaf-mute son. Five
hundred gold pieces for Leyla, ha!"
The Gypsies, Manu's friends, laugh-
ed aloud.

"You will have to pay money if
you want Leyla for a daughter-in-
law, Ilie."

"Shall I begin by offering you a
kingdom for that thin, naked wench
splashing in the water?"

"Should you begin with one king-
dom," Manu replied, "perhaps we
could come to some conclusion in a
week or two from now. Do you
think I am a poor Turk selling
cured fish, eh?"

Gregory sat down on the shore
and waited for Leyla, while his fa-
ther was bargaining for her. Tall,
handsome, a pure Gypsy, brown-
skinned, insolent, a little over twen-
ty, he gave himself the airs of a
man who knew life.

Ilie's friends said to Manu:

"There is no better husband for
Leyla than Gregory. Look at him.
No cold is to cold for him. No heat
too warm. Naked in the dead of
winter, in furs in the summer. She
is headstrong. She needs taming.
Gregory knows how to handle a wo-
man. She doesn't obey even you.
We have seen that. Come, sell her
to Ilie for Gregory."

"Come out of the water," Gregory
called to Leyla after a while, rising
to his feet and turning his back to
allow her to cover herself.

A splash and a loud laugh were
the answer. She was farther away
from him now than she had been
when he had called her. He shrugged
his shoulders and went to join a
group of youngsters, but everybody
knew that Leyla had earned for her-
self the first beating after the wed-
ding. Gregory would never forget
that she had not obeyed his first
order.

There were two factions, Manu's
and Ilie's. They quarreled, bar-
gained, and insulted each other,
stretching their long whips and
lurching wildly right and left.
Leyla joined her father, who whis-
pered in her ear.

"He has already offered a thous-
and gold pieces."

"A thousand gold pieces," Leyla
echoed, and ran back to her tent to
gloat over the enormous price.

Gregory looked on from a dis-
tance, talking to his friends and
playing with the flexible handle of
his whip, turning it this way and
that.

So she was worth a thousand
gold pieces to Ilie! She remembered
how Gregory had turned around
and looked at her when she had
swum away from him. She remem-
bered the manner in which he had
danced with her at that wedding in
Sulina. He danced beautifully and
was strong. Only he took too much
for granted. He was so young, yet
he walked around as if he knew
everything. She hoped her father
would not sell her for that price. He
had asked two thousand. They
wouldn't give two thousand. She
knew that, Ilie was a proud trader.
He wouldn't want it known that
Manu had set a price from which
he hadn't been able to budge him.
No, Ilie wouldn't give two thousand—
But what if he did? She would be-
come Gregory's wife—then—and go
away from him and his people. Her
father would be alone. Yes—but
the whole world would know Ilie had
paid two thousand gold pieces for
her.

Gypsy girls, all their jewelry on
their necks, hair and arms, dressed
ready for the wedding, came into
Leyla's tent.

"Ah, Leyla. You are going away
soon. Ilie offers a thousand gold
pieces!"

"I know the Ilies," an older wo-
man chirped in. "I know them.
They are wonderful people, the Ilies.
They know how to manage a wo-
man before they have hair on the
face. I married one of them—
whe!"

Leyla pointed to a little dagger
which she carried in the knot of
her hair. "No one has ever touched
me, and no one ever shall."

"Ha, ha, ha," the older woman
laughed. "I thought so, too, when
I was young—but when you are
married to a real man, whe!"

The girls went out one by one to
spread the news of what Leyla
had said.

Ilie made believe he intended to
leave there and then, to see what
effect it would have on Manu.

Gregory, the whip sticking out
from the creased uppers of his boots,
his black mustache waxed, his hair
combed slickly back, walked toward
Leyla, who had come out to sit on
the seat of her father's wagon.

"My father has offered a thous-
and gold pieces for you," he said.
"It is his whim to have you as a
daughter-in-law. Why don't you tell
your father to say the good word?
Or is there somebody else, eh?"

Leyla made believe she hadn't
heard him.

"I have been told," he continued,
"that you have been playing with a
dagger and saying things."

"I am playing with my dagger
whenever I want to play with some-
thing," Leyla answered.

And suddenly she cried out pas-
sionately: "It is two weeks now
that I have seen you every day.
You are always walking around with
long whips and set faces. Both of
you are always bending or breaking
something. Your father wants to
buy you something to break, some-
thing you would take pride in
breaking. You want to break Manu's
daughter. But you never will—never,
never."

"Never! Wait and see—"

And, breaking the handle of his
whip as he left, Gregory ran toward
the group around his father and
Manu.

"Eleven hundred," he shouted.

The Gypsies rose to their feet

and began to shout. "Eleven hun-
dred. Eleven hundred."

It would be a wedding such as
they hadn't seen in years. Ilie's son
was taking the deal out of his
father's hands.

"Two thousand," Manu answered.
"Thirteen hundred," Gregory cried
out elbowing his way to the front.
The women began to dance around
and around, beating copper dishes
with their fists. Fiddlers began to
tune their instruments.

"Two thousand," Manu said, turn-
ing pale at the thought of losing his
daughter to such a man.

Gregory opened his mouth again,
but his father put his hand over it.
"Leave me be, and count your
money, father," he ordered.

The old Gypsy brought out ten
little bags of a hundred gold pieces
from his leather belt and threw them
on the ground. Gregory threw three
more bags from his copper-studded
belt.

"Fourteen hundred."

"Sixteen," yelled Gregory without
looking at her.

The Gypsies wondered. They had
seen Leyla and Gregory talk. Some-
thing had happened between the two.
"Two thousand," Manu repeated,
taking his daughter's hand in his.

"Seventeen," Gregory called. "Is
that enough?"

"Two thousand," Manu repeated
without raising his eyes.

Gregory, who had emptied his
father's pockets and his own, beck-
oned to a friend to come nearer and
raised three fingers, asking for a
loan of three little bags of gold. He
threw those, too, on the pile.

"Here are your two thousand.
When Ilie's son wants something, he
gets it," and the young Gypsy look-
ed at Leyla triumphantly.

The trembling hand of Manu cov-
ered the small pile of gold bags. The
deal was closed. The Gypsies were
wild. Such a deal! Tall fur caps
went up in the air. Pistols were
shot. Fiddlers began to play. How-
ever, before Manu had gathered the
pile toward him, Leyla said some-
thing softly in his ear.

"But why didn't you tell me?"
Manu asked sharply.

"I didn't believe Gregory would
give two thousand gold pieces."

"And what now?" the old man
asked.

"There has been no wedding yet,"
Leyla whispered. "Only a deal. Buy
me back."

The Gypsies looked on, watching
Manu and his daughter. What had
happened?

Gregory was beyond himself with
anger. "She is mine now, isn't she?"
he asked his father. "Tell me, isn't
she?"

It was an old custom among Gyp-
sies. Before the wedding was cele-
brated, the bride could be bought
back. Until she was bought back,
however, even if it took years of
toil and saving, a girl was not al-
lowed to marry, though the groom
had married meanwhile.

Leyla took a hand in the proceed-
ings. "Quiet. Calos, black brothers,"
she called. "I have told my father
I don't wish it to be, and he is ready
to buy me back."

The fiddlers stopped tuning their
violins. The women began to cry.
Gregory's friends took him away
with them, while Ilie was asked to
go to his wagon to give father and
daughter time to talk the matter
over.

Manu took his trembling daughter
to his breast.

"What has he done to you? What
has he said to you? Why didn't
you tell me?"

"I didn't believe he would pay two
thousand gold pieces to break some-
thing—to break Leyla. He wants
to marry me so he can tame me,
beat me. I did not expect him to
pay so much for that."

"I thought you loved him."

Leyla closed her eyes. "I thought
so, too. I also thought that he loved
me, me, me. But now I know, that
only his pride wants me. Two thou-
sand gold pieces for that—and not
because he loves me."

"Oh, Leyla! They will take every-
thing we have."

"Give them everything," Leyla
cried. "Leave us only the two horses
and the wagon. You will be hap-
pier with me alone than with their
two thousand gold pieces. Oh, Tatuca,
father mine. The fairs that have
given us more than wealth have
hung chains on our necks. The six-
ty horses we have, and the goats
and the dogs and the cows, and the
two old men to help care for them,
and the fodder we carry along are
heavy chains, chains. We haven't
been to half so many places this
year as we have been before. We
have had no time to laugh, to play,
to sing. We have become sad as Gor-
gios. Give everything. Hang it all
upon their necks, and let the two of
us drive at top speed from one place
to another, as we used to. We shall
cross rivers. We shall cross the sea.
Give them everything."

"You have brought up your daugh-
ter with as much indulgence as if
you were a woman Manu."

"No Stephen. I have brought her
up to have as much pride as if she
were a man. Call Ilie. Call them
all."

Leyla sat herself between her fa-
ther and her uncle. How proud she
was of her father! She wouldn't
change him for a thousand Grego-
ry's. The twenty little gold bags
were still on the ground. The other
Gypsies formed a circle all around
them. Gregory was sitting near his
father. His lips trembled. He couldn't
take his eyes off Leyla. When all
were silent again, Manu said:

"I have sixteen hundred gold
pieces of my own, and I offer them
to you, Ilie, to buy my daughter

back. Such is my wish—and hers."

"If she is worth two thousand to
me," Gregory's father answered, "she
is worth more than that to you.
You have driven a hard bargain,
Manu. Try to outdo me now, if
you can."

"It is all I have," Manu answered
humbly. "If I had more, I would
give more."

"Then let her wait," Ilie answer-
ed, rising to his feet. "Come, Grego-
ry. Come, harness the horses.
Let's go. Come."

"That isn't all we have," Leyla
called out. "Don't go yet. Here is
more."

And tearing off her bracelets and
rings, and pulling the earrings from
her ears, she threw them on the pile.
Gregory had taken the deal out of
his father's hands a while ago. She
was doing the same now. Her
trinkets were worth more than the
sixteen hundred gold pieces.

As Ilie didn't show himself satis-
fied, Leyla laughed heartily!

"We have sixty horses and goats,
and cows and dogs. Take them.
There are two trunks of clothes that
are mine. Do you want them?
Take them also. Take everything,
and leave us only two horses and
the wagon. And all the Gypsies from
the Carpathians to the Black Sea,
from the Danube to the Pruth River,
shall know how much it is worth
not to be the mother of Ilie's son's
children. Had I and my father
twice as much, I would tell you,
'take everything.'"

No one had expected such a sudden
turn of affairs. Brides had been
bought back before that. The rep-
utation of the groom had never been
involved. It was a bargain between
traders. It was like buying a horse
one regretted having sold.

Gregory's knees sagged under him.
Cold chills traveled up and down his
spine. Leyla had slipped away from
within his grasp. The light of her
eyes blazed like torches. He had
never seen her so happy, so terri-
bly happy. He had never thought a
woman could be so beautiful. Why
had he spoken to her so stupidly?
What had he done—that? He loved
her. Life without her was a dreary
waste. It had all happened because
of the talk he had heard for years
and years about how one should
treat women—

His father looked at him, tempted
by what he offered to come to his
purse so easily. He would buy an
other wife for his son. He would
split the profits with Gregory. Eight
hundred gold pieces and thirty horses
apiece—bracelets, rings—They were
partners in this deal.

"What say you, my son?"

But Gregory did not hear. He
was only thinking of the woman he
had lost.

He looked at Leyla. She looked
at him. His pride was gone. His
head hung on his chest. His eyes
were like those of a sick man. He
had wanted to break her, and she
had broken him—He still heard her
ringing voice—"All shall know how
much it is worth not to be so."

Leyla's uncle, Stephen, rose to his
feet and said: "Let there be quiet
and peace. Leave them alone,
brothers. Come away, tzigans. Let's
leave them alone."

Even Manu rose and went to his
own wagon.

The two youngsters remained alone.
Leyla looked at the young Gypsy.
Was it only his hurt pride, or did
he really love her? He was only a
boy now. His stupid pride had broken
him until he had appeared much
older. She felt so much older than
he was. He seemed like an orphan
who had lost his mother on a lonely
road; so hopeless, so forlorn! She
drew nearer to him.

"There will be other girls, Grego-
ry," she consoled. "More beautiful
and kinder than I am. With the
wealth you now have, you will soon
be married. Do not grieve so."

He did not answer.

"Another moon and you will for-
get, Gregory. Believe me, you will."

He smiled forlornly.

"You don't love me. You only
wanted to break me, Gregory. I am
not worth two thousand gold pieces.
I am not. I am not worth two
thousand gold pieces as a toy Grego-
ry, do you hear me?"

He sighed, and tears sprang into
his eyes. "I didn't know what it
feels like to be broken—I didn't."

He broke her heart. Gregory in
tears! Tall, proud Gregory in tears!
She had more than evened her score
with the boy. He had nothing. They
were both free. He was handsome
and young. She loved him. He had
hurt her pride, and she had paid him
in the same coin. He would never
again attempt to show his superi-
ority. Now they knew each other
well. They both knew how ready
each one was to stake everything
against humiliation. There was not
another man like him within a
thousand miles. On fast horses
they could be across the Danube, far
from everybody, in a couple of
hours. They could be across the
Carpathians before winter had start-
ed, far from the voices of his people
advising him how to treat a woman.
He would be hers and hers alone.
They would live together like two
equals and not like master and
slave.

"Gregory, these two white horses
are the fastest of father's herd.
There are no faster horses in your
father's herd. No one would be able
to overtake us, once we get a little
start from here. Let the Gypsies
celebrate a loud wedding without
bride and groom. Will you come
with me now, all alone?"

The same voice that had shattered
him galvanized him back to life.

"Leyla!"

Two powerful arms lifted her on
to the back of a horse. He was on
the other one in an instant. The
Gypsies looked on, shouting not-
withstanding what had happened.

Ley