

21.—HURTWOOD SCHOOL

Hurtwood School has closed, and the century-old Gypsy encampment has been destroyed.

Hurtwood was not the first Gypsy school; but it was the first official attempt to educate the English Gypsy. The school was opened by the Surrey Education Committee in 1926, under the charge of Mr. Milner. Only four of the forty pupils could read or write. In addition to the ordinary rudiments of education, the children have been instructed in various handicrafts, such as basketry, woodwork and rug-making, also in gardening. Nor has the physical well-being of the pupils been neglected; smoking has been discouraged, and has almost entirely disappeared during school hours.

The Hurtwood Gypsy colony has dwindled since 1926. When the school was first opened there were 260 Gypsies at Hurtwood. At the close of last year the colony numbered 60, and the scholars numbered 19.

The bungalows provided for the colony at East Walton contain a living room and three bedrooms, and the *Romané* are pleased with their new quarters. The portable school building, which has served Hurtwood for so long, has been taken down, and removed to East Walton for erection beside the Council School, of which Mr. Milner is now master.

What will be the end of the effort to civilize the Gypsy? If it means the ultimate merging of the *Romano* into the *gajo* the movement is to be deplored. But I, for one, firmly believe that, in spite of intermarriage, gentile regulations, and education, the Gypsies will remain a distinct and independent race until the end of the world.

If education will tend to bring out the best traits of the *Romano*, it will be a blessing to the race—many of the younger generation are finding their lack of education a serious handicap in modern conditions of life. The Uzhorod experiment, described in *JGLS.* (3) xiii. 117-19, has been an undoubted success, tending to bring out the best traits of the Gypsy character, and to develop the latent talents of the pupils.

Provost McCormick, in his able article on the Perthshire Education Committee's experiment (*JGLS.* (3) xii. 142-7), pointed out some of the difficulties which beset the path of the would-be civilizer of the Tinkler-Gypsies, and we are pleased to learn that one or two of his proposals have already been effective in Scotland.

Will the Gypsy continue to be a picturesque and interesting figure, or will he become an ideal citizen? No one would venture to call the average Gypsy of to-day an ideal citizen, or the average ideal citizen either picturesque or interesting.

The world needs the picturesque for its own sake, and we can ill spare the *Romano* as we now know him.

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