HUNGARIAN LITERATURE

AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL SURVEY

EMIL · REICH

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Hungarian Literature

AN HISTORICAL & CRITICAL SURVEY

BY

EMIL REICH

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WITH AN AUTHENTIC MAP OF HUNGARY

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PREFACE.

The present book is the first attempt in the English language at a connected story of Hungarian literature. The remarkable success achieved by a few Magyar novelists in English-speaking countries, together with the growing recognition of the international importance of Hungary as a state and a nation, seem to justify the assumption, that the Anglo-Saxon peoples too, are not unwilling to learn more about the intellectual life of the Magyars than can be found in the ordinary books of reference.

The main object of the author, himself a Hungarian, has been to impress the reader with a vivid picture of the chief currents and the leading personalities of Hungarian literature. Magyar literature is too vast a topic to be fully treated within the very limited space of a small essay like the present. By introducing the comparative method of historical investigation and analysis, by means of which Hungarian works are measured, contrasted to, or compared with works of English, French, German, Italian or the ancient classical writers, the reader may obtain, it is hoped, a more life-like idea of a literature hitherto unknown to him.

No nation outside Hungary has facilities of studying Magyar literature as great as those offered to the English

public in the incomparable library of the British Museum. Nearly every Magyar work of any importance may be found there, and the catalogues of those works are, in the strict sense of the word, correct. This latter circumstance is chiefly owing to the labours of an English scholar, whose name no Hungarian can pronounce without a feeling of reverential gratitude. Mr. E. D. Butler, of the British Museum, the author of the only authentic and comprehensive, if small, English work on Hungary (his article "*Hungary*" in the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*) is, to our knowledge, the only English student of Magyar language and literature who has thoroughly grasped the philology and spirit of that language and the distinctive qualities of Magyar writers. He will, we trust, pardon our patriotism for shocking his excessive modesty by this public acknowledgment of his merit.

May this book contribute somewhat to increase the interest of the great British nation in a nation much less numerous but in many ways akin.

The map of Hungary accompanying this book is, we venture to say, the first map published outside Hungary based on the most careful comparison of the original sources. The greatest pains have been taken to ensure absolute accuracy of names of places and of county boundaries, according to the most recent data.

EMIL REICH.

17, TAVISTOCK ROAD, W.
June 15th, 1898.

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HUNGARIAN LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

Of the nations in the south-east of Europe, the Hungarians, or Magyars, are probably the most renowned, and at the same time, the least known. Although their extensive country has now been in their possession and under their rule for over one thousand years, and albeit the historic *rôle* of the Hungarians, rather than that of Hungary, has been and is one of no common magnitude, in that, without their secular and successful fight against Osman ascendancy, Europe could scarcely have maintained its civilization in the countries east of Munich: yet in spite of all such claims to attention on the part of western nations, Hungary and the Hungarians are still largely unknown in England, France and America.

In English-speaking countries no serious attempts have as yet been made either to tell the stirring story of Hungary's past, or to analyse

the rich possibilities of her future. Except single and singular features of Magyar life or natural products, such as the famous "Hungarian" bands of the Tsiganes or gypsies and their "weird" music; Hungarian flour and Hungarian wine; and most of all the figure of Hungary's greatest political orator, Louis Kossúth; except these and a few more curiosities relating to Hungary, the proud nations of the west of Europe do not, as a rule, take notice of all the rest of the life of a nation of eighteen million persons.

The festivities of the Hungarian millennium celebrated the year before last, came to the western world as a surprise. Few Englishmen were prepared to realize the fact that, at a time when their ancestors were still under small princes of mixed blood, and, moreover, constantly exposed to, and finally nearly absorbed by foreign conquerors, the Hungarians had already reared a solid fabric of government on the site on which for now over a thousand years they have withstood the armies, the diplomacy and the alien immigration of the Turks, the Germans and the Slavs. Unconquered by force or disaster, and not denationalized by either the Germans or Slavs around them, the Hungarians have maintained almost intact the language and music they brought with them from the Steppes of Asia; and when in the ripeness of time a Magyar literature was

beginning to develop, it proceeded on lines neither German nor Slav, but thoroughly Hungarian.

This literature is both in extent and quality, one of the most remarkable of the lesser literatures of Europe. The number of writers of Magyar works is no less than 5,000; and their works cover all the provinces of poetry and of philosophic, historic or scientific inquiry into nature or man. While accepting the standard of criticism adopted by the recognized arbiters of literary greatness, we have no hesitation in saying that Hungarian Literature has a number, if a limited one, of stars of the first magnitude, and no inconsiderable number of lesser lights. This fact acquires still greater importance from the consideration that the bulk of Hungarian Literature properly speaking dates back little over a hundred years; and that many, far too many Hungarians have, up to recent times, left their native country and, writing their works in German or French, added to the literature of nations other than their own. Comparatively few, exceedingly few, Englishmen have enlisted among the writers of nations outside the United Kingdom; very many, exceedingly many Hungarians have, under stress of various circumstances, written in Latin, German, French or English, and thereby reduced the bulk and often the quality of Hungarian Literature proper. The number of works in Magyar published

from 1531 to 1711 is 1,793. During the same period 2,443 non-Magyar works were published in Hungary. The preceding two totals were given in 1879 and 1885 respectively. Up to April, 1897, 404 more works had been discovered, belonging mostly to the class of non-Magyar books printed in Hungary down to 1711. When, however, we inquire into the number of works written by Hungarians and published outside Hungary, down to 1711, we learn that no less than about 5,000 works were written and published by Hungarian authors, in 130 non-Hungarian towns, during the period ending 1711.* At a time when all the western peoples had long ceased to use Latin for all literary purposes, the idiom of Cicero was still the chief vehicle of thought in Hungary. Nearly all through the eighteenth, and during the first quarter of the present century, the number of works written by Hungarians in Latin far outnumbered the works written by them in Magyar. It was even so with German; and many a famous German author was really a Hungarian; such as Ladislaus Pyrker, Nicolaus Lenau, Klein (J. L.), the great historian of the drama, Charles Beck, the poet, Fessler, the historian, etc.

In comparing Hungarian Literature with the

* The above statistics are taken from the *Régi Magyar Könyvtár*.

literature of the Germans, French or English, we cannot but recognize, for the reasons just mentioned, that the splendour and comprehensiveness of the Literature of those nations cannot be found in that of the Magyars. At the same time we make bold to point out an advantage which Hungarian Literature has over the literature of many another nation, if not in the past, certainly in the future. This advantage is in the Hungarian language. The Magyars have a language of their own. It is not a borrowed language; not one taken from another nation, in whose use it had been for centuries.

The Americans, both in North and South America, although they are in nearly everything else the counterparts of their European parent-nations, have yet preserved the idioms of the latter. In politics, social constitution, individual temper, and attitude of mind, the North and South Americans are—a long stay in that continent has convinced us of that—utterly different from either the English or the Spanish. The Americans proper have indeed built up, or developed into a nation of their own. For good or for bad, they have a distinct and novel national personality. One thing excepted; that one thing, however, is a vital element in the intellectual activity of a nation. We mean, of course, Language. The Americans have moulded and coloured all the

old elements of their nationality into organs with a tone and hue of their own. Language alone they have, with slight differences, taken over and preserved in the very form and woof in which the English and Spanish had left it in the old colonies. Hence there is between the Americans, as a new nation, and their language, as an old and foreign idiom, a discordance and discrepancy that no genius can entirely remove. The words of a language are mostly gentry of olden descent. Between them there are associations and tacit understandings ill-fitted for an environment essentially different from their original cast. This discrepancy has, there can be little doubt, exercised a baneful influence on the literature of the American nations. It has baulked them of the higher achievements, and neither in the literature of North America nor in that of South America can we meet with literary masterworks of the first rank. Between the poets and writers of those nations and the languages they are using there is much of that antagonism which has always been found to exist between the cleverest of Neo-Latin poets and the language of Rome. Latin is a dead language; and all the intellectual atmosphere and soil that nurtured and developed it have long since ceased to stimulate. Accordingly, the Politiani and Sadoleti, the Sannazari and Buchanani, and all others who in modern times

have tried to revive Latin literature have entirely failed. As with individuals so it is with nations. The Belgians, or the Swiss in Europe are, like the Americans, in the false position of having each a distinct nationality of their own with languages not their own. This fundamental shortcoming has rendered and will probably, in all times, render them incapable of reaching the lofty summits of literature. Language is intimately allied to literature; language is the mother, and thought the father of literary works. Any lack of harmony in the parents must needs show in the offspring.

Now the Hungarians have not only a language of their own, but also one the possibilities of which are far from being exhausted. For the Hungarians therefore there is no danger of a false position, of an initial vice in the growth of their literature; and moreover there are immense vistas of literary exploits still in store for future generations. The quarries and mines of the Latin and Teutonic languages have, it may be apprehended, been worked so intensely as to leave scant margins for new shafts. French has changed little in the last three generations, and English and German little in the last two; while Italian and Spanish have long reached the beautiful but stereotyped plasticity of ripeness. Hungarian, on the other hand, is a young language. The number of people using and

moulding it has been considerably increased in the last generation, and most of its gold-fields and diamond-layers have not yet been touched by the prospector's axe. There is thus an immense future still open for Hungarian Literature, and this prospective, but certain fact ought never to be lost sight of in a fair appreciation of the literary efforts of the Hungarians.

Literature being a nation in words, as history is a nation in deeds, it would be impossible to grasp the drift, or value the achievements of Hungarian Literature without some knowledge of the Magyar nation in the past and in the present. It may be therefore advisable to premise a few remarks on Hungary and her history before entering on a narrative of Hungarian Literature.

CHAPTER II.

HUNGARY, in extent larger than the United Kingdom, is, geographically speaking, one large basin, watered by one large river and its affluents, and bounded by one imposing range of mountains. The river is called the Danube, the mountains are the Carpathian offshoots of the Alps. This geographical unity makes Hungary almost predestined to be the seat of one nation. The natural unity calls for, it may be presumed, the national. Yet the very richness of the soil, diversified as it is by the vegetable and mineral wealth of huge mountains, and the cereal and animal exuberance of vast plains has, in all times, attracted numerous tribes from eastern Europe and western and central Asia to the country of the "blue" Danube, and the "blonde" Theiss. Some of these nvaders succeeded for a time in establishing a kind of dominion over parts of Hungary. Thus the Huns in the fifth, the Gepidae in the fifth and sixth, the Avars in the seventh and eighth, numerous Slav tribes in the eighth and ninth

centuries were successively lords of the plains and some mountainous parts of Hungary. Not one of these peoples, however, could either maintain themselves as rulers, or quite disappear as dwellers. Already in the ninth century we find Hungary inhabited by more than fifteen different nations or portions of nations, offering then the same gorgeous medley of Humanity that is still so characteristic of the country. Where the above nations failed, the Magyars signally succeeded. They and they alone of all the numerous, if not perhaps innumerable nations that had tried to rear a lasting polity on the columns of the Carpathians, and behind the moats of the Danube; the Hungarians alone, we say, succeeded in establishing themselves as the permanent rulers of the Slav and Turanian peoples of Hungary, and as the members of a state endowed with abiding forces of order within and power without. From 996 to 1301 A.D., they took their dukes and kings from the family of the Árpáds, under whom they had entered (some 100,000 men, women, and children) the country. Saint Stephen (the first canonized king) consolidated their constitution. Without attempting to overrate the value of constitutions either grown or made, and, while laying due stress on that *geometria situs*, or providential strategy in the location of nations which has perhaps wrought the major part of

History, it is tolerably certain, that the constitution of Hungary, as developed under the Árpád dynasty, and as still surviving in some of its essential elements, has had a most beneficial influence on the public life of the Magyars. Like that of England, it combines the excellency of the Latin system of centralization, with the advantages of the Germanic custom of local autonomy.

Already in the early middle ages, Hungary was divided into counties endowed with self-government. At the same time there was a centre of government and legislation in the national assembly or diet, where king and subjects met to discuss the affairs affecting the peace or wars of the entire state. In 1222, or seven years after Magna Charta was signed at Runnymede, the Hungarians forced their King John, whose name was Andrew II., to sign the Golden Bull, which, like the English Charter, was to be the text of the country's constitution, all subsequent laws being in the nature of commentaries on that text. The elements of the Hungarian and English constitution being nearly alike, the domestic histories of the two nations bear, up to the sixteenth century, striking resemblance to one another. We learn of wars of the "barons" against the king, such as those under Henry III. and Henry IV. in England; we read

of the constant struggles of the "commons" (in Hungary consisting of the lower nobility, that is, of knights as distinguished from burgesses), for broader recognition of their parliamentary rights; of rebellions, like that of Wat the Tyler, of the peasants against their oppressors, the landed gentry; and of fierce dynastic struggles, like the Wars of the Roses. But while these historic parallels may be found in many another country of mediæval Europe with its remarkable homogeneity of structure, the distinctive parallelism between England and Hungary is in the tenacity with which the ruling people of both countries have carried over their autonomous institutions from the times before the Reformation to the sixteenth and the following centuries, or to the period of Absolutism sweeping over Europe ever since Luther had raised his voice for religious liberty.

All nations of Europe had constitutions more or less similar to that of England during the Middle Ages; for there was after all a very considerable amount of Liberty extant in mediæval institutions. But at the threshold of the sixteenth century, when new worlds were discovered by the genius and daring of the Portuguese and the Italians, the better part of the old world, that is, its Liberty, was completely lost, and sovereigns became absolute and peoples slaves. Three nations

alone amongst the larger states remained unaffected by the plague of absolutism then spreading over Europe; they alone preserving intact the great principles of local autonomy, central parliaments, and limited power of the Crown. These were the English, the Poles and the Hungarians. In these three countries alone there was practically no dead past as against a presumptuous present. The nation's past was still living in the shape of actual realities, and the growth of the constitution was, in spite of all sudden ruptures and breaks, continuous and organic. What the Stuarts were to England, the Habsburgs were to Hungary during the seventeenth century. Hence in both countries we notice continual rebellions and wars, both parliamentary and other. The Stuarts, however, were little aided by foreign powers in their attempts at crushing the autonomous rights of the English nation. On the contrary, one of the greatest statesmen of modern times, William of Orange, came, and with him several great powers of Europe, to the rescue of the people of England; and thus the end of the seventeenth century was also the termination of Absolutism in England. In Hungary it was the grave of Liberty. The Hungarian Stuarts, or the then Habsburgs, far from being deserted by the other Great Powers of Europe, were most efficiently abetted by

them. This happened of course in a way apparently quite alien to any desire to destroy the liberties of Hungary. Vienna, the capital of the Habsburgs, was, in 1683, besieged by the hitherto fairly invincible Turks, and Austria was menaced with utter ruin. The war being, on the face of it, a crusade, the Christian powers, and, chiefly, fat and gallant John Sobieski, King of Poland, came to the succour of Leopold of Austria. The Turk was beaten, and not only out of Austria, but also out of Hungary, where he had been holding two-thirds of the counties for over one hundred and fifty years. Hungary was almost entirely liberated from her Mahometan oppressor, and, such is the illogicality of History, for the very same reason nearly lost her autonomous existence. For the evil of foreign saviours now told on the Magyars. Had they driven back the Turk by their own efforts, the result would have been an unprecedented electrization and stimulation of all the forces of the nation. The Greeks after Salamis; the Romans after Zama; the English after Trafalgar had won not only a victory over an enemy, but an immeasurably increased vitality fraught with novel energies. The Hungarians after the capture of Buda and the Battle of Zenta, both achieved by Austria's foreign allies and foreign generals, had defeated the Turks indeed; but their own ends

too. Never was Hungary in a lower state of national stagnation than shortly after the peace of Carlovitz (1699), which put a formal end to Turkish rule in most of the Hungarian counties. Prince Francis Rákóczy II., who started the last of the Great Rebellions of the Magyars previous to 1848, and after the above peace, found no Holland rich in capital, no Brandenburg ready to hand with well-trained regiments, no Austria willing to avert side-blows from enemies, to help him in the manner in which the asthmatic Prince of Orange was helped against James II. and his powerful abettor. And when Rákóczy too had expended his forces in vain, Hungary fell into a decrepitude but too natural in a nation whose foreign foe had been conquered by its domestic oppressor.

The political bankruptcy of the Hungarians by the beginning of the eighteenth century is of such importance for the study of the history of their literature, that we cannot but attempt to search for some of the reasons and causes of this national disaster. The principal cause was, it would seem, the lack of that very class of citizens which had in England so potently contributed to the ultimate victory of popular freedom—the middle class. Hungary never recognized, nor tolerated the complicated maze of semi-public and semi-private institutions collectively called

Feudalism. Whatever the merits or demerits of that mediæval fabric may or may not have been, it is certain that the rise of the *bourgeois* class is owing directly, and still more indirectly to the action and re-action of Feudalism. The parallelism between England Poland, and Hungary pointed out above, must now be supplemented by the statement, that England alone of these three commonwealths had, through the invasion and conquests of the French Normans, received a large infusion of feudal institutions, and that therefore England alone was to create that powerful class of burgesses and yeomen, which was entirely lacking in both Poland and Hungary. Without such a class of "mean" citizens no modern nation has been able to consolidate its polity; and Hungary in the seventeenth century, being totally devoid of such a class, was in the long run bound to be wrecked by such a deficiency. We shall see how heavily the absence of a middle class told on the growth of Hungarian Literature.

During the eighteenth century and up to 1815, the great and scarcely interrupted wars of the Habsburgs enlisted all the powers of Hungary. In 1741 the Magyars, and they alone, saved Austria from what seemed to be inevitable dismemberment. From that date onward to the campaign of 1788 the History of Hungary is but

a chapter in that of Austria. Towards that latter date the wave of Nationalism started in France had reached Hungary. Like the Belgians and the Czechs (Bohemians), the Hungarians too began to revolt from the anti-nationalist and *egalitarian* autocracy of Emperor Joseph II., one of the characteristic geniuses of the last century, who was exceedingly enlightened on everything else but his own business. The old Magyar institutions, and weightiest amongst them, the Magyar language was, by the Hungarian diet, alas! not by the Hungarian people, decreed to be the public language of the country. Resistance to Joseph's "reforms" became so serious, as to prevail upon the dying monarch to revoke them, 1790; and under his successor, Leopold II., 1790-1792, who was of a less aggressive temper, Hungarian nationality seemed to approach its revival. This was, however, not to be.

The French Revolution, although essentially a nationalist movement, forwarded in Europe outside France, for nearly two generations after its rise, none but the cause of the monarchs. The Hungarians, who gave Austria many of her best generals, and fought in nearly all the battles of the Revolutionary Wars from 1792 to 1815, were in the end shorn of all their hopes and expectations by the successful fop who directed Austria's policy from 1809 to 1848. Prince Metternich had

not the faintest conception of the rights or wants of the Hungarians; and having brought to fall, as he thought he did, the French Revolution and its personification, Napoleon Buonaparte, he could not but think that a small nation, as the Hungarians, would speedily and lastingly yield to high-handed police regulations, to gagging the public conscience, and to unmanning the press. The year 1848 witnessed the final victory of the French Revolution all over Europe. Hungary, foremost amongst the countries where oppressed nations were demolishing the bulwarks of tyranny, freed herself from the yoke of Austrian ministers. The Austrian armies were driven out of Hungary; the Habsburgs were declared to have forfeited the crown of St. Stephen; and but for the help of Russia, the Austrian monarchs would have been deprived of more than one half of their empire. When a now nameless Hungarian general surrendered to the Russians at Világos (1849), Hungary was bodily incorporated with the Austrian Empire, and Czech and Austrian officials were sent down to germanize and denationalize Hungary. In 1860 the reaction set in. The nation, offering a passive resistance of a most formidable character, brought the Vienna Cabinet to its senses; and when, at Königsgrätz (July, 1866), the Prussians had routed the armies of Austria, Hungary's greatest political sage, Francis

Deák, aided by the Austrian minister, Count Beust, restored the ancient Magyar autonomy and independence. Ever since (1867) Hungary's relation to Austria has been that of confederation for purposes of foreign policy, and absolute independence for the work of domestic rule. The Emperor of Austria is at the same time the King of Hungary; and thus the two halves of the Empire are united by a personal link. Law and its administration; Parliament and municipal government; commerce and trade; in short, all that goes to form the life of a separate nation is, in Hungary, of as independent a character as it is in Austria. A Hungarian must, like any other foreigner, be formally naturalized in order that he may be considered an Austrian citizen, and *vice versâ*.

CHAPTER III.

THE preceding short survey of the history of Hungary may now be followed by a brief sketch of the character and temper of the Hungarians. The Magyar proper, and all the numerous individuals in Hungary who have become completely assimilated to and by the Magyar element, bear in character much similarity to the Poles on the one hand, and to the Spanish on the other. They are rhapsodic and enthusiastic; excellent orators and improvisators; and most sensitive as to their personal dignity and social respect. As their music so their character is written in passionate rhythms, moving from broad and majestic *largo* to quick and highly accentuated *presto*. Yet Hungarians, unlike Poles and Spaniards, do not let their rhapsodic impetus run away with them, and they have shown on all great occasions of their history, much coolness and firmness of judgment. Nor do they exaggerate their sense of dignity into bloated *grandezza*. They are rather humorous than witty; yet in

a country replete with so many idioms and peoples, there may be found curious borderlands of pun, wit, and humour. Passionately fond of music and dancing, to both of which the Hungarians have given a peculiar artistic development of their own, the Magyars have seldom manifested remarkable talent for architecture. Painting and sculpture have found many an able devotee in Hungary.

But it is in music that most artists of Hungary have excelled. Hungary is saturated with music. No student of Magyar literature can afford to neglect the study of Magyar music. The parallelism between the growth of Hungarian music and Hungarian Literature is not so complete, as that between German music and German literature. Yet nothing will furnish us an ampler commentary on Magyar lyrics or epic poetry, than that magnificent music which has inspired heroes on the battle-field, lovers in their closets, Bach and Beethoven in their studies alike. It is intense music of torrential and meteoric beauties, and a bewildering bass. Strange to say, Bach's preludes *à la fantasia* come nearest in character to the original Hungarian music, as played in the wayside inns of the immense *puszta*, or Plain of Hungary. In Hungary, all musical performances at social gatherings are entrusted to the gypsies, who undoubtedly added much outward ornament

and characteristic *fioriture* to the melodies and harmonies of the Hungarian people; yet the body and soul of that music are thoroughly Hungarian. Music in Hungary is the vocal and instrumental folk-lore of the people; and no lyrical poet of the Magyars could help writing without having in view the musical adaptation of his poem. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the continual indulgence in music has had its serious drawbacks. In a measure, music is the opium of Hungary. It fosters but too much that bent for dreamy idleness, which is the chief failing in the Hungarian character. Much has been done in recent times to inspirit the slumbering energies of the nation not only in the high walks of public life, but also in the lowly avenues of industrial, commercial, and other less picturesque activity. Still more remains to be done.

The lack of a middle class, or *bourgeois* proper, has retarded the growth of literature no less than that of political independence. Within recent times there were only two classes of Hungarians in Hungary, nobles and peasants. The floating and unassimilated portion of the population between these two classes remained either quite alien to Hungarian aspirations, or it attempted to imitate the nobles, of course chiefly in their less commendable qualities. The undeniable indolence of the small nobleman, or country-squire; his aversion

to town-life; his abhorrence of trades and crafts; all these and similar shortcomings inherent in a caste of nobles had a baneful influence on their numerous imitators. Literature is, as a rule, an urban growth. The urban element in Hungary, however—was till the end of the last century of very subordinate importance. The frequent social gatherings of the Hungarian country gentlemen and their numerous imitators were indeed full of spirited talk and engaging conversation. In what might be called the *Parlature* of a nation, or the aggregate of their private discussions, dialogues, speeches, etc., the Hungarians are and always have been very rich. Many a brilliant essay or novelette has been talked in Hungarian drawing-rooms and dining-halls, which in other countries would have made the fortune of a writer. In fact, there is little exaggeration in advancing the statement that the literature of a nation is the complement of its *parlature;* and where the latter is inordinately developed, the former is necessarily of a less exuberant growth. This "law," if so it may be called, operated with much force in a country where it is far easier to find listeners than readers. It also accounts for much that is characteristic of Hungarian prose. Like French literature, Hungarian poetry or prose applies more to the ear than to the eye, and accordingly suffers very much from

translation. That rich *parlature* in Hungary has, however, another and still more serious drawback. Up to 1870, in round numbers, there was in many parts of Hungary, more especially in the north-west and north, a custom of using, in common conversation, two or three idioms, almost at a time. Sentences were commenced in Latin, continued in Hungarian, and wound up in German, or Slovak. The constant use of several idioms, as it has rendered Hungarians peculiarly apt for the acquisition of foreign languages, so it has máde them more than apt to read and assimilate foreign literatures. This again made many a less enterprising mind hesitate, and likewise many a feeble mind but too prone to imitate, especially the German writers, both in style and subject. The originality of Hungarian authors was thus at times much impaired. In the course of the present work we shall meet with several cases. At present we must hasten to speak of the most potent of the factors of Hungarian Literature ; of the Hungarian language.

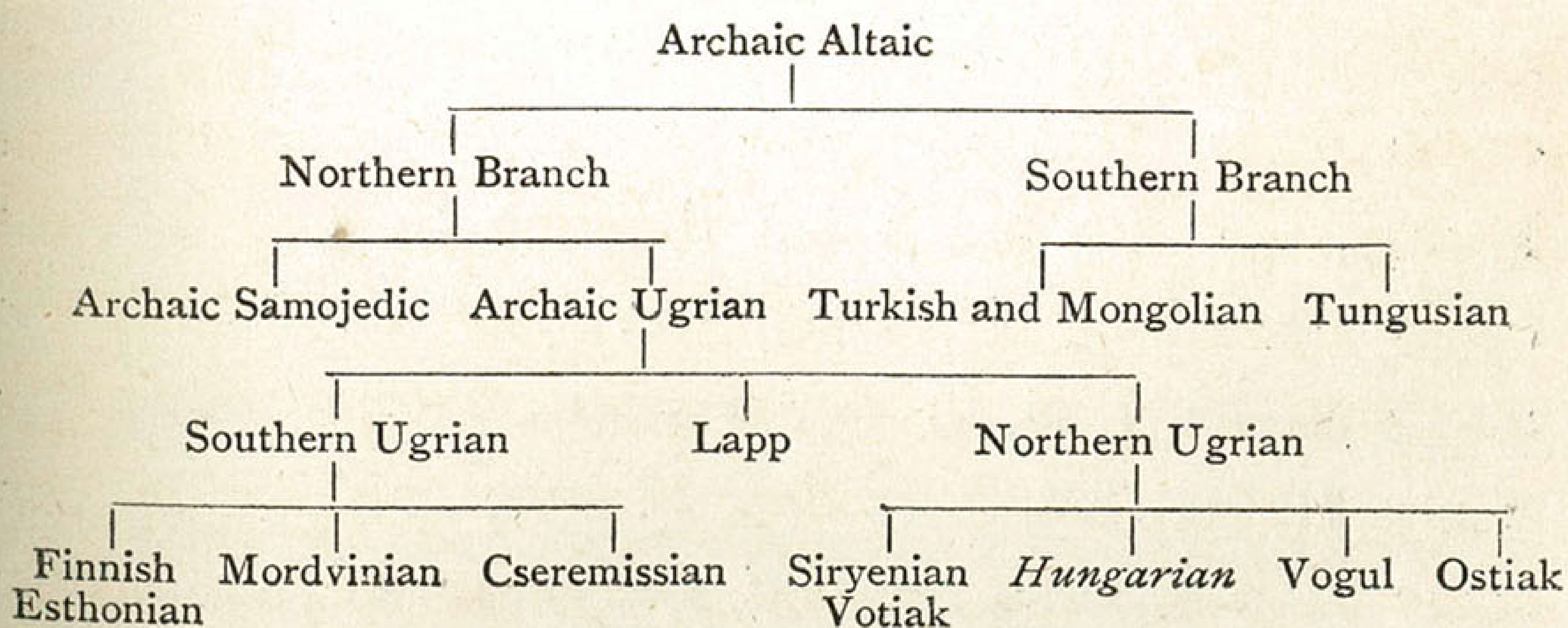
CHAPTER IV.

THE Hungarian language is totally different in vocabulary and grammar from the Teutonic, Latin, Slav, or Celtic languages. Between Russian and German, or between Russian and English there is much affinity, both groups of languages belonging to the Aryan, or Indo-German class of idioms. Between Hungarian and German, or Hungarian and Slav, there is no affinity whatever. The Hungarians have indeed inserted some Slav and German mortar into crevices left open by an occasional decay of the Hungarian material; but the structure and functions of the Magyar language are totally alien to either Slav or German idioms. It is an agglutinative language, the root of words being almost invariably formed by their first syllables, unto which all affixes and pronouns are soldered according to a fairly regular process of word and case-formation. In Aryan languages the root is, as it were, subterranean, and frequently hard to lay bare. In Hungarian the root is always transparent. The

vowels have a distinct musical value, and do not resemble the musically indeterminable vowels or diphthongs of English or German. Consonants are never unduly accumulated, as in Bohemian; and strong accents on one syllable of a word are unknown. Generally, the first syllable of the word has a heavier stress on it. Hungarian is rich both in its actual vocabulary, especially for outward things and phenomena, more especially still for acoustic phenomena; and in its prospective word-treasury. In few languages can new words, expressing shades and phases of meanings, be coined with greater ease. This facility applies to abstract terms as well as to material ones. It is probably not too much to say, that for purposes of Metaphysics or Psychology few languages offer so ample a repository and laboratory for terms as does the Magyar language. Although far from being as adapted for rhyme as English or German, yet Hungarian has many and sonorous rhymes. On the other hand, it crystallizes with readiness into all the metres of Greek or Latin poetry. A peculiarity of Hungarian (and Finnish) are the diminutives of endearment and affection.

The origin of the Hungarian language has been, and still is, a matter of great discussion between the students of philology. It is certain that Hungarian is not an Aryan, but an Ugor

(Ugrian) language, belonging to a vast group of languages spoken in parts of China, in Siberia, Central Asia, Russia, and Turkey. We here adjoin the genealogy of the Hungarian language as given by Professor Simonyi, of Budapest, who is considered one of the greatest living authorities on the history and grammar of the Magyar language. He says that Hungarian, together with Vogul, Ostiak, Siryenian, Votiak, Lapp, Finnish, Mordvin, and Cseremiss (spoken in the north and north-east of Russia) form the Ugrian language-group. This group is closely akin to four other groups, viz., the Samojed; the Turkish or Tartar; the Mongolian; and the Tungusian, or Mandchu groups. These five large groups are called the Altaic languages, and are all derived from an original Altaic idiom. Their mutual relations are shown in the following diagram taken from Professor Simonyi's work:



It will be seen that Hungarian is in near

relation to Finnish and also to Lapp, as had been recognized already by the Jesuit John Sajnovics (1770), and proved by the great traveller, Anton Reguly. It is, however, also related to Turkish; and this explains why the leading neo-philologists of Hungary (Budenz, Paul Hunfalvy, and Arminius Vámbéry) are, the two former in favour of a Finnish, the latter in favour of a Turkish origin and kinship of both the Hungarians and their language. Amongst the numerous students of that vexed question, no one has done more to excite the admiration of his compatriots and foreigners, and the applause of scholars, than Alexander Csoma de Körös, who sacrificed his life in the monasteries of Thibet in the noble attempt at discovering, by the laborious acquisition of Central-Asiatic languages, the origin of the Magyars. We confess that we entertain but scant sympathy for the belief in races and racial persistency. Wherever the Hungarians may have come from, and whether or no every one living Hungarian can trace his descent to one of the clans invading Hungary at the close of the ninth century is, in our opinion, immaterial. As a matter of fact, very few Magyar noblemen can trace their family beyond the year of the battle of Mohács (1526). It is quite different with the language of the Hungarians. Its origin and

character are, on the whole, pretty clear, and from the knowledge of its relations to kindred idioms, many a valuable conclusion may be drawn regarding the rise and nature of Hungarian Literature in the past and in the present. The greatest patriot of Hungary, Count Stephen Széchenyi, has tersely expressed the immense influence of language on the nation in the words: "Language carries the nation away with it." Our whole view of Hungarian Literature would be different if for instance the opinion of erudite Matthew Bél (Belius) as to the Hebrew origin of the Hungarian language had proved to be true. It would likewise essentially alter our conception of Magyar literary works if the opinion of Podhorszky as to the close relation between Hungarian and Chinese would not have been found untenable. But the physical origin of the Hungarians themselves is, at best, only an idle inquiry into insufficient records of the past.

CHAPTER V.

THE history of Hungarian Literature is divided into four distinct periods. The first comprises the time from the advent of the Magyars in Hungary to the Reformation (896-1520); the second, from the Reformation to the peace of Szathmár, or the termination and failure of Hungary's revolt from Austria (1520-1711); the third, from 1711 to 1772, or the period of stagnation; and finally from 1772 to our own days, or the period of the full development.

896-1520. The first period is exceedingly poor in written remains of literature. In fact, the first and thus the oldest literary relic of the Hungarian language is a short "Funeral Sermon" (*Halotti Beszéd*), dating from the first third of the thirteenth century; and for 200 years after that date, we meet, with the exception of a Hungarian glossary of the year 1400, recently discovered at Schlaegl, in Upper Austria, with no example of a Hungarian literary work of even slight extent. From the middle of the

fifteenth century we possess a fragment, called after the town where it was discovered, by Dr. Julius Zacher in 1862, the "*Königsberg* (in Prussia) *Fragment*." Thus, the number of extant, or hitherto discovered Hungarian works of even slight literary merit is, down to 1450 A.D., an almost negligible quantity. Mr. Szilády in his "Collection of Ancient Hungarian Poets" (*Régi Magyar Költök Tára*) has indeed communicated six and fifty mediæval Hungarian church-poems and other fragments; but of that number scarcely a dozen are original poems, the rest being mere translations of the then current church-poetry. The philologist may no doubt find much to glean from even this scant harvest of Hungarian Literature in the first period. For literature proper, it is of no account whatever. Yet it would be unfair to leave this period without even a passing mention of its oral literature, or epic and legendary stories, of which there must have been no small quantity in those agitated times.

The Hungarian naïve epic is lost. A glance at the habits of the Finns will, however, suffice to satisfy the inquirer that the Hungarians, like their cousins in Russia, must have cultivated the art of recitation and oral handing down of the glorious deeds of their ancestors, to no small extent. We now know that the immense

epic of the Finns, the *Kalevala*, has been transmitted from generation to generation by bards who had treasured up in their memories the endless *runot* recording the deeds of Lemminkäinen, Väinämöinen, and Jlmarinen. The Hungarians, too, had their bards, called *igrigeczek*, or *hegedösök* (violinists); and at the manors of the nobles or the courts of the kings, old heroic songs were recited about Attila, King of the Huns; his brother, Bleda; the fearful battle on the Catalaunian fields (Chalons-sur-Marne, 451 A.D.); the building of the castle of Buda; the siege of Aquileia; and the last fatal wedding of the terrible Hun. These Hun epics were widely known and recited in mediæval Hungary, as witnessed by the chronicles of those times. The people firmly believed themselves to be the successors of Attila's hordes, and this belief, although absolutely discountenanced by modern historians, is still lingering in the spinning-halls of Hungarian villages, and in lecture halls in England and America.

The circle of those oral epics comprised also the Magyar heroes proper. There were stories about Álmos, father of Árpád, the conqueror of Hungary; others about the "Seven Magyars" (*Hét Magyar*); the conquest of Transylvania by doughty Tuhutum, one of Árpád's generals; the flight of King Zalán, defeated by Árpád; the

exploits of valiant Botond, Lehel (the Hungarian Roland), Bölscü, and other paladins of Árpád's times, etc. In the fragments from Priscus, the Byzantine rhetorician and historian; in the chronicles of Ekkehard, the monk of St. Gallen; and in the "Anonymus," or one of the chief, but hitherto, fatherless chronicles of Hungary, the above and some more heroic stories and epical records may be found.

In addition to the heroic epic, the Hungarians, like all the rest of the Christian nations of the west, had a considerable tradition of legends and lives of saints. Fortunately for Hungary, it had become, by the end of the tenth century of our era, both the hierarchical and political interest of one of the most learned and most statesmanlike of the popes, Sylvester II., to detach Hungary completely from the Eastern, or Greek Church; and to adopt it, by sending a royal crown to Stephen, duke of the Hungarians, into the world of Roman Catholicism. Had Hungary joined the Eastern Church, it could never have withstood the ambition and supremacy of the German Emperors, aided by the Popes of Rome. Having, however, adopted the Roman, or progressive form of Christianity, Hungary was endowed with occidental or richer seedlings of civilization. St. Mary was made the patroness of Hungary; and all through the Middle Ages,

she was adored and glorified in legends and songs. Some of these Hungarian legends about the Virgin Mary we still possess; likewise, the life of St. Margit, the daughter of King Béla IV.; the famous story of Josaphat and Barlaam, one of the most popular of mediæval Christian legends, taken originally from Indian (Buddhistic) sources; the life of St. Catherine of Alexandria, etc. The most characteristically Hungarian of these legends is, as to its subject, the life of St. Margit. As to its literary merits, it is, alas! a dry chronicle without any charm of form or diction at all. Nor did the Hungarians, as far as we know, succeed in throwing one or another of their crusading heroes into strong epic relief. The crusaders, in spite of their marvellous deeds, lent themselves far more to good chronicling than to epics. Their inherent poetic vice of being, or trying to be, saints rather than heroes rendered them unfit for real epics.

CHAPTER VI.

1520-1711. THE Reformation made rapid headway in Hungary. From the very beginning, Protestantism in Hungary had a political element, in that its rise was coeval with the accession of the Catholic Austrian dynasty so unwelcome to many Hungarians. Theological and political opposition thus gave a more than ordinary impetus to the study of all the questions and problems agitated during the Reformation. The most prominent result of that movement was a revival of the national feeling; and coupled with that, a regeneration of Hungarian Literature. The vast intellectual revolution of the fifteenth century, commonly called the Renascence, had, of course, left its traces in Hungary too. One of the most popular of Magyar Kings, Matthew Corvinus (1458-1490), invited a number of Italian scholars and artists to Hungary, such as Anton Bonfini, of Ascoli (1427-1503), Marzio Galeotto, of Narni, in Umbria (1427(?)-1497), Peter Ranzanus, of Palermo;

Thaddeus Ugoletus, of Parma; Bartholinus Fontius; Felix of Ragusa; etc.

These scholars and artists, ably assisted by the Hungarian John Cesinge, or Janus Pannonius (1432-1472), and chiefly by the generous and refined king himself, brought some new leaven into the stagnant intellectual life of Hungary. In addition to the university founded by King Lewis the Great, at Pécs (1367), a new university was founded at Pozsony, where the Danube enters Hungary; the king's famous library (the *Corvina*) became the delight of scholars; and a printing press was established at Buda (1473). The king's victorious campaigns against the Hussites (see Jósika's novel, "*The Bohemians in Hungary*"), the Turks and the Austrians, gave rise to numerous poems and songs composed by unknown poets; and his age, called the Age of the Hunyadis, the king being a Hunyadi, bade fair to be one of great intellectual brilliancy too. However Matthew's premature death and the ensuing political troubles put an end to such prospects. It was left for the passions roused by the Reformation to kindle the fire which the torch of the Renascence had been unable to light. In all the countries where the deep influence of the Renascence preceded that of the Reformation, the intellectual capital of the country was not impaired, even when its

political was. In Hungary, the Renascence left too slender traces to guard the nation from falling into lawless writing about the topics of the day, regardless of the rules and classical measure so deeply impressed by the Renascence on the more fortunate nations of Italy, Spain, France and England. Hence the immense mental and emotional stir imparted by the Reformation was not sufficient to raise up great writers in Hungary. In fact, Hungary was, on a smaller scale, in a mental condition exactly similar to that of Germany. There too the Renascence had scarcely begun to do its beneficial work, when the Reformation swept everything before it. The consequence was the same. Luther himself, although one of the geniuses of language; Fischart, a very demon of language; and Hutten, the great champion of thought and liberty, together with numerous minor lights, were, in spite of efforts without number, debarred from creating a great German national literature. It was only much later, when the Renascence had done its work in Germany too, that the Germans, following in the wake of the Greeks, Romans, French, English, Spanish and Italians, were able to create a great national literature of their own. The same remark holds good for Hungary too.

Protestantism in Hungary assumed all the aspects it had taken in Germany and Switzerland.

There were Lutherans proper, and Calvinists; Anabaptists and Unitarians. The Geneva of Hungary was the town of the "*cives*," Debreczen, east of the middle Theiss, in a large plain. Melius, or Peter Juhász (1536-1572) was the "pope" of the Magyar Calvinists; as Matthew Biró de Déva, 1500(?)-1545, was that of the Lutherans. Both preached in Hungarian and published a number of doctrinal and controversial writings in Hungarian; and both were followed by many a writer whose enthusiasm was the better part of his ability. The Bible, portions of which had been translated into Hungarian before the Reformation, was now published in Magyar in its entirety. This most excellent translation, executed chiefly by Caspar Károlyi, was printed at Vizsoly, in the county of Abauj.

The number of Hungarian poets writing in Hungarian during the sixteenth century is more than one hundred; most of them being Protestants. In the first years of the Reformation, their works were mostly of a religious character, such as psalms and prayers. Amongst these we may mention the religious poems of Andreas Batizi, Matthew Biró, and Gál Huszár. The constant wars with the Turks or infidels added a peculiar intensity to the religious passions of the time; and accordingly the first Hungarian drama, "The

Marriage of Priests" (*A papok házassága*), published in Cracow (then belonging to Poland) in 1550, and written by Michael Sztárai, was in reality an exposition of Protestantism in the form of a drama. "Moralities," and mordant satires against priests and the Catholic Church generally, were frequent. Didactic poetry, so closely allied with the moralizing spirit of early Protestantism, was ably represented by Gábriel Pesti, whose translation of Æsop's "Fables" appeared in 1536 (in Vienna); and by Caspar Heltai, who likewise translated fables from ancient authors, 1566.

From the second half of the sixteenth century we possess a great number of rhymed stories, taken from the Bible, from foreign novels or from Hungarian history. One of the most famous of the authors of such stories was Sebastian Tinódy, whose "*Chronicle*," or poetical narrative of contemporary events appeared in Kolozsvár, in Transylvania, in 1554. As a poetical work it is scarcely of any value, with the exception of the music accompanying it. As a faithful picture of the Hungary of that time it will continue to be valuable to the patriot and historian. The language is heavy; the form is unshapely. In some respects superior to Tinódy were Stephen Temesváry and Matthew Nagy de Bánka; the latter being the bard of the great John Hunyadi. One, Albert Gergei, of whose

personal circumstances nothing is known, composed, chiefly from Italian sources, the story of a young prince fighting innumerable foes and surmounting difficulties of all sorts in search of the fairy whom he, in the end, does not fail to win. This story ("*Argirius Királyfi*") has ever since the sixteenth century been the most popular chap-book amongst the lower classes in Hungary. Its *naïveté* and good epic tone render it agreeable even to a more cultured taste. Another poet of the second half of the sixteenth century, Peter İlosvai, composed, probably from the floating folk-poetry of his age, a poetical narrative of the life of Nicolas Toldy, one of the most popular heroes of the Magyars, who lived in the fourteenth century, under King Lewis the Great, and was of Herculean strength. His feats are sung in İlosvai's poem (published at Debreczen in 1574) in an effective, if rough, manner. A number of Magyar novels may also be found; but nearly all were translations from German or Latin novels of the time. The sixteenth century produced even a few Magyar works of historic and philologic character. John Erdősi, or Sylvester, wrote the first grammar of the Magyar language (1539); Gabriel Pesti gave, in 1538, a short dictionary of the Magyar language; John Decsi de Baranya published in 1588 a collection of about 5,000 Magyar proverbs; Stephen Székely de Bencéd and Caspar Heltai published

"World-Chronicles," in 1559 and 1575 respectively. Very many memoirs and journals of that time are still unpublished.

We must now mention the greatest of all the Hungarian poets of the sixteenth century, whose name we have so far left unnoticed because, by one of the strange freaks of life, the manuscripts of his lyrical poems, on which rests his great fame among Magyar poets, were first discovered only twenty-four years ago (in 1874), and some of them even after that date, and were therefore never largely known to the contemporaries of their author. This poet is Baron Valentin Balassi (1551-1594). He came from a magnate family, and so great were the gifts with which nature had endowed him, that men praised him as a model of heroism, and women worshipped him as the embodiment of chivalrous charm. In the troubles of his time, both political and social, he took more than one part; and he may be considered as at once the Knight Errant and the Parsifal of Hungary in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Highly cultivated and sensitive as he was, he could not but respond to the religious impulses of his time, and so became the author of many a religious poem. On his wanderings, which took him not only over the whole of his own country, but even as far as North Germany and probably also to England, he saw

all forms and aspects of life. His lyric sentiments he embodied in the so-called "Flower Songs" ("*Virág-énekek*"), which are full of that *verve* and sweetness so characteristic of the best lyric poets of Hungary. He also introduced a new form of lyric stanza—the Balassi Stanza—which consists of nine short lines, the end-rhymes of which are the same in the third, sixth, and ninth lines, while the remaining three couples, have each their own rhymes.

1711.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING the seventeenth century Hungary was oppressed by two evils of apparently antagonistic character; either of which, however, was to have the same fatal effect on Hungarian Literature. On the one hand, nearly two-thirds of Hungary proper, as apart from Transylvania, was under Turkish rule; on the other, the Habsburgs, then at their apogee, waged a relentless war against the liberties and independence of the Hungarians both in non-Turkish Hungary and in Transylvania. In the latter country, the Bocskays, Bethlens, and Rákóczys had in succession contrived to establish a Hungarian principate which, although acknowledging Turkish ascendancy, yet retained many of the rights of sovereignty. These two sets of circumstances were in themselves hurtful to the development of anything relating to Hungarian nationality, and most of all to Hungarian Literature. The counties under Turkish rule could not, by the very nature of the oppression under which they smarted, produce

any literary movement at all. The counties under Austrian rule were held in bondage both political and intellectual, which stifled all attempts at a national literature. The sages have as yet not been able to prove, that a republican government must of necessity be beneficial to the material and political welfare of a nation. As to the intellectual progress of a nation, on the other hand, Liberty is generally taken to be an indispensable condition. Literature is possible only where there is at least a republic of minds. The Austrian government took good precautions to render the rise of such a republic in Hungary an impossibility. All the higher and middle schools in Austrian Hungary were, during the seventeenth century, in the hands of the Jesuits. The order of Jesus has not, as is well known, prevented a very great number of its members and pupils from rising to eminence in Theology and in Science. It could not, owing to its cosmopolitan and anti-national constitution, further movements of national literature. Quite apart from the debatable nature of its moral and political teachings, it retarded or stopped all such movements by employing in its schools the Latin language as the vehicle of instruction. At Nagyszombat (in 1635); at Kassa (in 1657); at Buda (in 1687), the Jesuits founded, or taught in, universities, where lectures on all branches of knowledge were delivered in the mongrel language

of the mediæval Scholastics, which has always had a baneful influence both on knowledge and its students. In the Protestant schools, the number of which exceeded seven hundred and fifty, the same radically false system was observed. The consequence was, that the vast majority of Hungarians had never received a living knowledge of either the history of Man or of Nature, and could accordingly turn their dead intellectual capital to no account. The only Hungarians whose mental acquirements had sufficient vitality to serve as stimulants to literary production of a higher type were such as could read Italian or French, that is, works, written in one, and thus fertilizing another living language. Such exceptional individuals could then be found only amongst the wealthy classes, or in other words, amongst the magnates. Thus it happened that all great literary work in Hungarian produced during the seventeenth century was done by the great noblemen, and by them alone. Hungary may therefore afford a fair test for the curious problem, whether from an aristocracy of birth can be recruited that aristocracy of genius the work of which forms a nation's great literature. In Hungary, the aristocracy of birth proved, on the whole, unequal to such a task. The Hungarian magnates of the seventeenth century did much creditable work in *belles-lettres*, and some also

in graver departments of literature. Yet, they were unable to originate more than a temporary and inferior reform; and, moreover, they did, as we shall see, serious harm to the literary life of the nation at large, in that they were not able to engage its interests in the growth of its literature.

Of these magnates, the eloquent Cardinal Primate of Hungary, Peter Pázmány (1570-1637), Archbishop of Esztergom, claims our attention first. In his thirteenth year he became a convert to Catholicism, and later a Jesuit; and so intense was his zeal for the Church of Rome, that most of his active life was spent in a propaganda, by writings even more than by words, for his church, and with a constant literary warfare with the non-Catholics of Hungary. He is said to have converted no less than thirty of the noblest families of his country to the Catholic persuasion. At his time, perhaps the greatest number of Protestants were in Transylvania, whose princes were warm-hearted protectors of the Reformation; and since they cultivated the Hungarian language in preference to any other, Pázmány thought it wise to use the same idiom in his controversial writings. Pázmány's theological armoury is taken chiefly from the controversial works of his French colleague and contemporary, the famous Jesuit Bellarmin. In his style, however, he shows considerable originality. He prefers the strong,

racy expressions, proverbs and similes of the common people. His is a direct and vigorous, rather than an artistic style. The strange contrast between his popular vocabulary and the scholastic fence of his thoughts lends a peculiar flavour to his *Hodegus* or "*Kalauz*" (1613), and his sermons (*Prédikácziók*," 1636). Among his numerous Protestant opponents were: Peter Alvinczi, of Kassa; and George Komâromi Csipkés, of Debreczen; the latter translated the whole Bible into Hungarian. As a sad contrast to the splendid career of the convert Pázmány, we may mention here the life-long sufferings and wanderings of the loyal Protestant Albert Molnár de Szencz (1574-1634), who was persecuted wherever he came, in Germany, Austria, Hungary or Transylvania; and who, one of the true epigones of the Conrad Gesners and Sylburgs, published, in the midst of poverty and misery, Hungarian dictionaries; a valuable Hungarian translation of the Psalms (1607, after French models), which is in use to the present day; a Hungarian Grammar (1610); and a Hungarian translation of Calvin's *Institutio*. Finally, the gorgeous picture of the Cardinal cannot be set off to more advantage, than by a slight mention of the fanatic and obscure *Sabbatarians* ("*Szombatosok*"), in the background, whose religious poetry is no uninteresting evidence

of the Hungarian theological literature of that time.

Amongst the numerous *protégés* and pupils of the victorious archbishop we find also Count Michael Zrinyi (1618-1664), a descendant of the famous Zrinyi, who, in 1566, defied single-handed the invasion of Sultan Soliman the Splendid, by offering him, with a handful of men, unconquerable resistance in the Castle of Szigeth, some twenty miles west of Pécs. Count Michael was one of the best educated men of his time, and equally great as a patriot, poet and general. The sad state of Hungary could not but affect deeply a man, whose historic *rôle* seemed to be clearly indicated by the glorious heroism of his ancestor. Having travelled abroad, especially in Italy, where Tasso's religious epic *Gerusalemme liberata* was read then more than ever after, he conceived the idea of stirring up a vast crusade against the Turks, by singing the deeds of his great-grandfather in an epic at once political and religious. This epic is commonly called the "Zrinyiad" ("*Zrinyiász*"), and consists of fifteen cantos, written in rugged and rough style. It reveals much power of description and religious enthusiasm ; but it is lacking in form and moderation ; nor can the portraits of its heroes be called plastic by any means. It is, from the artistic standpoint, spoiled by the

deficiency above mentioned; the central hero is too perfect to be lastingly interesting. Old Zrinyi is capital matter for ballads; for an epic he is too faultless. On the other hand, the "Zrinyiad" is one of the most effective of patriotic epics. Like the epic works of Klopstock in Germany, or "*Ossian*" in England, it had at the time of its appearance a great national value, apart from its literary merits. In telling the Hungarian nation in tones of sacred anger, that the Turkish oppression was due to the depravity of the Magyars, in exhorting them in vigorous modes to rally and shake off the yoke of the infidels, Zrinyi added an internal lustre to his work which even now, after more than two centuries, has not lost much of its splendour. Like the daring and glorious deed of his ancestor, his poem is more of a patriotic than an historic event. It were only gross exaggeration to count the "Zrinyiad" amongst the world's great epics. The poet might well belie history in letting his ancestor personally kill the great Sultan. It would be dishonest to add to the glory of the poet by ignoring the truth of the literary canon.

As to the other magnates who wrote poetical works in Hungarian during the seventeenth century, it will be sufficient to say, that their poems were meant chiefly for the gratification

of their authors; and although some of them were printed in book form, yet the bulk was left in the well-deserved obscurity of family archives. The most noteworthy of these poets were: John Rimay de Rima (1564-1631), an imitator of Balassi; Peter Beniczky de Benicze (1606(?)-1664); Count Stephen Kohári (1649-1731); Baroness Catherine Sidonia Petrőczi; Count Peter Zichy; Count Valentin Balassi, the second poet of that name (1626(?)-1684); and Baron Ladislas Listhy (1630-1660(?)), whose epic, "The Disaster of Mohács" ("*Mohács veszedelme*"), betokens a remarkable talent for versification.

So exclusive was the influence of the magnates on the literature of that time, that the one remarkable poet of the seventeenth century who was no magnate himself, although a nobleman, selected as the subject of his epic poem a romantic event from the life of one of the leading magnates. Count Francis Wesselényi besieged, in 1644, the Castle of Murány, defended by the beautiful widow, Mary Szécsi. In the end he won both the heart of the heroic beauty and the castle. This famous event forms the burden of one of the most popular of Hungarian poetical narratives, briefly called, "The Venus of Murány" ("*Murányi Vénus*, 1664), written by Stephen Gyöngyössi. Its language is musical, and the narrative tone very felicitous. The poet

has evidently made a close study of Ovid, and frequently reaches the light touch and charm of the Roman; he even adds an element of romance, which has endeared his work to more than six generations of Hungarian readers. The metre is Alexandrine.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMIDST the din and excitement of the endless wars in Hungary, both civil and foreign, during the seventeenth century, the agitated mind of the common people vented itself in numerous ditties, skits and lampoons, which, after the name of one of the national parties, have been called *Kurucz-poetry*. It consists almost exclusively of largely unprinted little poems, mostly political, and depicts the agonies and torments of the patriots. Some of them are good and true in tone, and even powerful in the expression of hatred and satire. The one ever-memorable folk-poem of that time, however, was not written in words. The profound passions aroused by the last great revolution under the romantic Francis Rákóczy II., towards the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, were incarnated in inimitable fashion in the "*Rákóczy march*," the most fanaticising of all war-marches. Whoever actually composed it (tradition ascribes it to a Hungarian gipsy-woman by the name of Panna Czinka),

that march spells a whole period of Hungarian history, just as Milton's *Paradise Lost* spells a whole period of English life. The Magyar nation was at the end of the seventeenth century far too unpractised in literary architecture to rear its pangs and longings into a dome of words. It was, however, then as now sufficiently imbued with the power of musical creation, to embody its woes in the fiery rhythms of the most heroic of martial songs.

CHAPTER IX.

DURING the period in question very little was done for historic and scientific studies. John Cséri de Apáca (1625-1660), an enthusiastic student and patriot, published a small Hungarian "*Encyclopedia*" (1655), in which the elements of knowledge, both philologic, natural and mathematical are given in a simple and clear manner. Francis Páriz-Pápai published a much used dictionary of the Hungarian and Latin languages (1708). The nine books of the chronicle of John Szalárdi, who died 1666 ("*Siralmas Krónika*"), form the first attempt at historiography in the Hungarian language. Some of the leading men of that age left memoirs; and grammarians were also not wanting. The great philosophic wave, sweeping over Europe in the seventeenth century (Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Pierre Bayle), left scarcely any traces in Hungarian Literature, except in Cséri's Encyclopedia, where Cartesianism is not quite absent.

CHAPTER X.

1711-1772. THE period bounded by the years 1711-1772 is one of decline. During these years, which comprise the reigns of Emperor Charles VI., and most of that of Austria's greatest ruler, Maria Theresa (1740-1780), there was practically very little Magyar literature; and the little was bad. Hungarians of that period wrote, as a rule, in Latin; and the subjects they selected were those of laborious erudition; philology; descriptive natural science; annalistic history; historic theology. This decline in national literature was only another phase of the decline of the Magyar idiom. For, both in Transylvania, which was now again, as formerly, united with Hungary, and in Hungary proper, the Hungarian language ceased to be used in the schools, at the county-sessions, in the law-courts, and in polite society. In all these centres of intellectual intercourse, Latin, German or French were used instead of the sonorous language of Árpád. In Catholic and Protestant schools alike instruction was

given in bad Latin. At the county-sessions; in the national parliament; and in the law-courts, Latin alone was used; while the higher classes of society were talking either in German or in French. For the latter fact, there is a simple explanation at hand. When, in 1711, Hungary was at last "pacified," it had become evident to the most patriotic of the leading families, that further armed resistance to the Habsburgs being impossible, the only chances of promotion for their children were at the court of Vienna. This involved the adoption of Viennese manners, and Viennese mediums of conversation; that is, of French and German. No sooner was that done by the aristocratic families of Hungary, than the abnormal state of the then national literature revealed all its latent barrenness. As has been seen in the preceding chapters, all the great Hungarian writers from 1600 to 1711 were recruited from the class of the magnates. When, now, after 1711, the magnates flocked to Vienna, there to undergo a thorough process of Germanization, or rather Austrianization, there was no class of writers left in Hungary to take their place. Hence the sudden dearth of great writers, and the astounding decline of Hungarian Literature. To this must be added the fact, that German literature which was naturally destined to have a considerable influence on Hungarian

writers, both from geographical contiguity, and on account of the general knowledge of German in the then Hungary; that German literature, we say, was not beginning to reach its classical period before the sixties of that century, and could therefore stimulate Hungarian Literature but very little. It is much more difficult to account for the exclusive use of Latin in the schools and in parliamentary debates. Had the use of Latin in the schools been accompanied by the study of Greek and Greek literature it would probably have wrought very much less mischief.

Unfortunately for Hungarian Literature, the study of Greek was almost entirely neglected in the last century. *Graeca non leguntur.* The immense power of æsthetic education inherent in Greek classical works could thus not benefit the Hungarians. Nay, it may be said in strict truth, that for Hungarians, naturally inclined as they are to grandiloquence and redundancy, both of words and thought, the study of Latin literature, untempered by that of Greek, was in many ways harmful. Many Latin poets and prose-writers lack that simplicity and moderation, which mark off Hellenic authors from all but the very best writers of all ages. The exclusive study of Latin was therefore doubly harmful to the Hungarians: first, in that it made them neglect their own language; and secondly, in that it supplanted

the study of Greek literature. The exclusive use of Latin in all the schools and colleges of Hungary during the last century was, however, part of that general obscurantism weighing on all the educational institutions of the Habsburg empire. Both Charles VI. and Maria Theresa left the instruction of youths in the hands of monks and priests. Previous to the abolition of the order of the Jesuits (1773) that order had no less than thirty "*gymnasia*," or higher colleges in Hungary. After its abolition, these colleges were placed in the hands of other orders, such as the Præmonstratencians, the Benedictines, Paulists and Franciscans. As in Austria, so in Hungary, the regular clergy, more still than the secular, attempted to shut off their pupils from the new light rising in France, England and Germany, and for that purpose the habitual use of scholastic Latin was one of the most efficient means. At the Protestant schools, of which the most famous were at Debreczen, at Sárospatak, and at Pozsony, in Hungary proper; and at Nagy Enyed, Kolosvár, Marosvásárhely, and at Udvarhely, in Transylvania, instruction was likewise given in Latin. Nor can it be seriously maintained that the Protestant teachers were more prone to let in the new light than were the Catholic.

1772.

CHAPTER XI.

In poetry proper, it is for the present period customary, but scarcely necessary, to mention the Jesuit Francis Faludi (1704-1779), who has put some wise saws and moral platitudes into light verse; and Baron Ladislas Amadé (1703-1764), whose not unmelodious lyrics were sufficient to give the successful courtier a mild reputation as an interesting poet. In dramatic poetry there is nothing worth mentioning. The Jesuits occasionally had their pupils play a patriotic or religious drama made *ad hoc*, and good *pro tunc*. Of prose-writers there is one, and one only, whose "Letters" written from Turkey, where he was in exile, have abiding literary value. This was Clement Mikes (1690-1761), who was brought up by Prince Rákóczy, to whom he proved constant under all circumstances, and for this reason Mikes still belongs to the generation of Hungarian nobles who cultivated their language with the pride of true patriots. The "Letters" are not only full of historic interest, especially with regard to the

interior condition of the then still mighty Turkish empire, but also as specimens of pure, idiomatic and well-balanced Hungarian prose.

The remarkable works in History, Theology or Science of that period were, as noticed, written in Latin. Of learned works written in Hungarian the two best were by men who had spent their youth in the preceding century, and were thus less afflicted with the gangrene of the decadence of the period from 1711 to 1772; Michael Cserei (1668-1756), and Peter Apor (1676-1752), both of very great nobility. Cserei wrote a "*Transylvanian History*" ("*Erdélyi Historia*"), in which the events from 1661 to 1711 are told in a lively, naïve and pleasing style. Apor is the author of a remarkable work on the history of the manners, customs, and institutions of ancient Transylvania. It is entitled "*Metamorphosis Transylvaniae*," and its object is to show, by contrast, how low the country had sunk from its former glory. His satire is not infrequently both scathing and well-expressed.

The bent for erudite laboriousness gave rise to several works on the history of Hungarian Literature. The still-life of the small town of Bártfa in the county of Sáros must have hung heavily on the hands of David Czwittinger, one of the lawyers of that town, who published, in 1711, a dry list of Hungarian writers, in alphabetical order. He was distanced by the indefatigable and patriotic Peter

Bod (1712-1769), who had, like so many Protestants, spent several years at Dutch universities, where he amassed much polyhistoric knowledge and a good library. There, no doubt, he also acquired the taste for literary history, and in his "Hungarian Athenæum" ("*Magyar Athénás*, 1766) he collected much material bearing on the lives and works of no less than six hundred Hungarian authors. In Law or Philosophy there appeared, during this period, no work in Hungarian claiming our attention.

CHAPTER XII.

1772-1825. AFTER a period of decadence, lasting for over sixty years, Hungarian Literature was again brought to a state of revival and progress, which has gone on almost uninterruptedly to the present day. This revival is part of an immense revolution which swept over most countries of continental Europe in the second half of the last century. The most conspicuous and best known event of this Modern Renascence is the series of terrific upheavals and wars commonly called the French Revolution. It is, however, quite evident that the French Revolution was only the politic aspect of a vast movement, which in many countries outside France assumed the garb of intellectual revolutions. Thus the mental achievements that, in their totality, are called the "classical period" of German literature (1750-1805) are in the domain of Thought and Sentiment, a revolution no less colossal and far-reaching than were the ever-memorable proceedings of the French *assemblées*, or the bloody epics of

the Revolutionary campaigns. Both were gigantic onslaughts against the *Ancien Régime* in institutions, manners, thought and sentiment. Accordingly, the course of both revolutions was—making due allowance for externals—essentially the same. As the French Revolution landed in, or rather was brought to its final consummation in the titanic and all-embracing personality of Napoleon, so German literature met its final trysting-place and culmination in the orchestral mind of Goethe.

The minor nations of Europe were seized by the same Revolution, if in a manner considerably less intense. The very aggressiveness of the French Revolution, its encroachments on the territories of Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Austria, prevented those minor nations from enacting their Revolution at once in its intellectual and political aspects. While fighting the French, they were all engaged in following them on the lines of the Revolution, first (1790-1830) for intellectual freedom ; and then, after the defeat of the French armies (1830-1848), for the very political ideals that the French had been the first to proclaim. For, this was the immense advantage of the French over the other nations on the continent : they had brought their intellectual revolution through men like Turgot, d'Alembert, Diderot, Voltaire, Rousseau, etc., to maturity, before they started for their crusade of politic liberty ; whereas

the other nations were a generation or two behindhand, and still in the throes of their intellectual renascence.

This is not the place for a laborious inquiry into the causes of that immense Revolution which has, towards the end of the last, and in the first five decades of the present century, completely altered the face of European civilization. It is nevertheless necessary to give some account of such causes as were instrumental in ripening the intellectual aspect of that Revolution in Hungary. Among the leading causes was a structural change in the population of Hungary on the one hand, and the reaction against the provocative and anti-national measures of the Habsburgs on the other.

Up to the sixties of the last century, the population of Hungary consisted practically of (1) a rural population, comprising both magnates, noblemen and peasants; and (2) a small urban population, comprising largely foreign or Germanized craftsmen and tradespeople. Under such circumstances, literature, which is pre-eminently an urban growth, could not develop. For, not only was the urban population too small and too much immersed in material pursuits, but the only intellectual class, viz., the aristocracy, was living in the country, that is, in an atmosphere unfavourable to continuous literary efforts. By the end of the sixties, however, the structural change, above

indicated, took place. Owing to a series of measures issued by Maria Theresa and Joseph II., the rural population of Hungary was liberated from its most odious fetters. Bondage, and a sort of serfdom (*jobbágyság*), with all its concomitant evils were almost abolished. Numerous rural families left their obscure abodes, repaired to the towns, and urban life, for the first time in Hungarian history, was raised above the low level on which it had been vegetating for centuries. With the increase of urban population came an increase of wealth and comfort ; a greater activity in commerce, both mercantile and social. Many a gifted Hungarian, who would have previously spent his days in the obscurity of his county, now willingly lived in one of the rising towns. With an accelerated speed of work came a more rapid appreciation of talent, and a greater number of authors. The influx of the rural population to the town facilitated that mutual action and reaction between Nature and Man, which, in one form or other, is the main spring of literature. In England, too, the great period of Shakespeare was preceded by a similar structural change in the population. The dissolution of the monasteries and the numerous enclosures of commons, depriving as they did, hundreds of thousands of rural people of their means of livelihood, drove them into the towns, which rapidly ozonified that atmosphere of great

intellectual stir, without which no great writers are possible. In Germany, too, the period of Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe was preceded by a new influx of the rural population into the towns devastated by the thirty years' war. Nor can it be doubted that Italy, in possession of highly-organized and rich towns long before any other mediæval nation, took, for this very reason, the lead in all literary matters.

This broad fact of Hungarian history (totally neglected by the historians of Hungary, probably because of its very broadness), must therefore be considered as the prime mover in the revival of Hungarian Literature. It created that mysterious propelling power which in times of progress everybody feels and nobody can account for. It was the latent and constant stimulus to renewed mental labour, and to keener delight in it. Like great rivers it was swelled by smaller affluents of causes. Thus that great structural change in nearly all parts of Hungary was accompanied by two structural changes in limited layers of Hungarian society. Maria Theresa, probably with a view of carrying Austrianization into the very hearts of the Hungarian nobles had, in 1760, established the famous Hungarian Guard in Vienna. Each county in Hungary was to send up a few young noblemen to Vienna, where they were clad in sumptuous style, and treated with all the seductive arts of a

refined court. Thus a considerable number of Hungarian noblemen were given an opportunity for that higher education and refinement, which in former times had been the privilege of the select few. Vienna was in many ways a centre of Franco-German civilization, and the young Magyar noblemen derived, from a lengthy stay in the Austrian capital, a benefit similar to that for which English gentlemen flocked to Paris in the thirteenth and seventeenth century. This then, constituted one of the minor changes in the intellectual development of one class of Hungarians. There was also another change. Joseph II., in dissolving over a third of the existing monasteries, and a great number of monastic orders too, set free a number of educated men, who would have otherwise led a sterile life in the lonely cells of their monasteries. They now began to devote their unexpected leisure to pursuits of a different kind ; and some amongst them became workers in the field of literature. Thus a new source of literary production was opened up.

To these structural changes in the population of Hungary, that is, to the home and internal cause of a potential revival, now came the external agency of those anti-national measures against Hungarian institutions, which Maria Theresa, with fine womanly tact, had used in a tentative manner, but which were applied by Joseph II. in the most

reckless and irritating fashion. Joseph had one ideal: the homogeneous Austrian state. Like all ideals it was unrealisable. It was worse than that: it was suicidal. The Austrian empire has its very *raison d'être* in the heterogeneity of its constituent parts. To level down the Austrian "lands" to one and the same pattern, is to deprive them of all vitality. They live by contrast to one another. Unable to be quite independent each by itself, they would, if unconnected by some common tie, only serve to aggrandize either Prussia, Russia or Italy, and so upset the balance of Europe in a fatal manner. United by the dynastic tie, they form an imposing, if incongruous whole, the component parts still retaining very much of a strong individuality. Any attempt at forcing them into blank uniformity must needs be answered by a still stronger attempt on their part to rend the dynastic tie asunder. The various provinces have, since 1648, and with respect to Hungary, since 1711, made no civil war on one another. Not one of them had, as had Prussia in Germany since Frederick II.'s time, or England since Cromwell's time, the supremacy over the rest. Their sole union and bond was in their common dynasty. To try to reduce them to one and the same level, as Joseph II. did, was both the worst dynastic and national policy imaginable. The Austrian provinces, then or now, if reduced to complete

uniformity, will first of all abolish the dynasty—as superfluous. In the *egalitarian* ordinances of Joseph II. there was so much that was subversive of the very pillars and coping-stones of the whole Austrian edifice, that the Hungarians, as well as all the other nationalities under his rule (Belgians, Czechs, Poles, etc.), forthwith rose in a body in defence of their privileges, charters, rights; in fact, of their existence severally and collectively. The Emperor wanted to abolish the Hungarian language, Hungarian institutions, Hungarian society. At once the Hungarians, who had then almost entirely neglected their language, learned to regard it as the chief palladium of their nationality. Hungarian periodicals were started; such as the "*Magyar Múzsa*" (since 1787); "*Magyar Múzeum*" (since 1788, in Kassa); "*Mindenes Gyüjtemény*" (since 1789); "*Orpheus*" (since 1790, edited by Kazinczy); "*Urania*" (since 1794, edited by Kármán), etc. Hungarian actors were encouraged; Hungarian literary societies were started, the oldest being that founded by John Kis, at Sopron, in 1790. These efforts were immeasurably increased in efficiency by the publication of very numerous Magyar works in nearly all *genres* of literature, and in styles and "schools" of great divergency. The members of the Guard naturally proceeded on French lines, taking the great French writers, and chiefly Voltaire, as their model.

The foremost members of the new urban element, which also included many an unfrocked monk, coming as they did from the country where the Magyar language and folk-poetry had never died out, and where the national pulse beat strongest, proceeded on national lines. The older country-gentry, and numerous released monks, conversant above all with Latin literature, proclaimed the classical metres and forms as the only safeguard and aim of literature; while another section of the new urban element followed in the wake of the Germans, whose classical writers were just then at the height of their fame. This great divergence of schools was in itself proof of the definite revival of Hungarian Literature. In the spiritual republic, no less than in the political, parties are of the very essence of vigorous life. By the end of the last century there could have no longer been any doubt about the strong vitality of Hungarian Literature.

1825.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE first of these "schools" to publish serious works with the intention of reforming the literature of Hungary, were the members of the Hungarian Guard at Vienna, and chiefly George Bessenyei (1747-1811).* In 1772 he published a tragedy, entitled "Agis" ("*Agis tragédiája*") in which he attempted to give, within the strict rules of the Franco-Aristotelean tri-unity of time, place and action, a model for his contemporaries. In point of language, *Agis* is not without some merits; as a dramatic work it has long been regarded as a failure. Bessenyei was more successful in his comedies ("Philosophus," etc.), in which he even contrived to create a type, *Pontyi*, representing the narrow-minded, ultra-conservative country-squire of his time. His style is held to be much better still in his prose works containing philosophical

* We may mention, that Bessenyei was, to a certain extent, preceded by two amiable and cultivated writers; Baron Lawrence Orczy (1718-1789), and Count Gedeon Ráday (1713-1792).

essays after the rationalistic fashion of his epoch. Amongst the numerous colleagues and literary followers of Bessenyei were: Abraham Barcsai (1742-1806), Alexander Báróczi (1735-1809), who excelled chiefly in translations from the French; Ladislas Baranyi, Joseph Naláczi, Bessenyei's own brother, Alexander, who tried his hand at Milton's "*Paradise Lost*," etc. To the Bessenyei circle ("*Bessenyei György társasága*") belonged also Paul Ányos (1756-1784), in whose mournful and sentimental poems there are many traces of genuine poetry. Nor must Joseph Péczeli be forgotten (1750-1792), who through his numerous translations from French and English works (Edward Young's "Night Thoughts") and his "Fables" ("*Mesék*") deserved highly of Hungarian Literature.

The next in time and merit was the school of the Classicists, or more properly speaking, Latinists. The first four remarkable members of that school were all unfrocked priests. Baróti David Szabó (1739-1819), and Joseph Rajnis (Reinisch) were ex-Jesuits; Nicolas Révai (1750-1807) was a Piarist, and Benedictus Virág (1752(?)-1830) an ex-Paulist. The circumstances of their mental development above indicated led them naturally to an imitation of the Latin poets; and Virág in Hungary, like Ramler in Germany, or Cowley in England, was held to be one of the numerous

"Horaces," in whom the nascent literatures of Europe were happily so rich. In ripe mellowness of formal beauty and musical ring Virág cannot, we are afraid, be said to have seriously challenged the laurels of the friend of Augustus. His *Works* (*Poëtai Munkák*, 1799) are, on the other hand, inspired by a noble glow of patriotism, which might have added some lustre to the poems even of Flaccus. Virág translated Horace into Hungarian, as Baróti had done with the *Aeneid.* The poetical works of the other two ex-priests were of an inferior kind.

To the above two schools now was added the third; the national or genuinely Magyar school. The two former laid special stress on purity and perfection of form, both external and internal. In fact, the classicists came near sacrificing everything else to correctness of form. In this they were partly justified, partly supported by the peculiar adaptability of the Hungarian language to the most complicated of classic metres. Hexameters or alcaics are just as natural to Hungarian, as they are to Greek and Latin; and infinitely more so than to any other Indo-German language of Europe. The classicists, and especially the greatest of them, Berzsenyi—see below—were able to handle the most national and intimate subjects in the most foreign of verse-forms, and with perfect ease too. This seemed to go far in convincing

many writers, that classical forms were the only ones to adopt, and classical models the only ones to follow. The prosodic wealth of the Hungarian language is, however, not exhausted by its classic metres by far. From time immemorial Hungarian poetry was wedded to Hungarian music, and the latter, with its pointed rhythms and sudden irruptions of cadences, was quite unfitted for the stately calm of antique metres. In German classical music, classical metres, such as the hexameter or the alcaic may be, and have been employed. In Hungarian music they are out of place altogether. Here, then, was the inner justification of the "Magyar" school. Its members strongly and rightly felt, that in the cult of antique prosody the classicists had overstepped the bounds; that Hungarian poetry needed forms and moulds other than those of Virgil or Horace; and that the short cross-rhymed stanza was to Hungarian Literature, what the violin and the "*czimbalom*" (dulcimer) were to Hungarian music. It is impossible to play Hungarian music on the organ.

Of the Magyar school was Adam Horváth (1760-1820), who in addition to an epic called "*Hunnias*" (1787), in which he tried to sing the exploits of John Hunyadi after the battle of Varna (1444), published a number of simple poems in the style of the folk-poetry of the Hungarian peasants. By refining the prosody of

that *genre* he introduced it into the literary world. The most successful of the Magyarists was Count Joseph Gvadányi (1725-1801), whose "A Village Notary's Travel to Buda" ("*Egy falusi nótárius budai utazása,*" 1790), was a felicitous attempt to expose, in the form of a novel in verse, the utter decadence and denationalization of the town-people and the gentry of the middle of the last century. The "notary" has survived as a type. Gvadányi's other novels are on the same lines, all of them being animated by a resolute patriotism. He was followed by Andreas Dugonics (1740-1818), an ex-Piarist, whose "*Etelka*" a novel (1788) became very popular, chiefly owing to its strongly accentuated patriotism and anti-Austrian feeling, and also to the racy, popular language he used. He also compiled a valuable collection of Hungarian proverbs and apophthegms ("*Magyar példabeszédek és jeles mondások*"). The number of writers belonging to the Magyar school in the two last decades of the eighteenth century is considerable. They all excel in patriotic verve, and much of the anonymous work done at that time for the restoration of Hungarian Literature is due to them. We cannot here give more than a list of a few names. John Kónyi, Stephán Gáti, Francis Nagy, the first Hungarian translator of the Iliad, and Joachim Szekér, who did much for the bettering of female education in Hungary. Separate mention must

be made of a number of Magyarist poet-naturalists, whose centre was the city of Debreczen, and amongst whom were John Földi (1755-1801), who wrote some remarkable works on Hungarian prosody in its relation to music; and Michael Fazekas, whose "*Ludas Matyi*," a chap-book written in the interests of the peasants, has long been one of the most popular comic stories. Nor were the usual excrescences of the juvenile epoch of a new language wanting. A limited class of now obscure writers (Gregory Édes, John Varjas, etc.), abused the great flexibility of the Hungarian language in verse-forms and metres of the most absurd kind. They were the caricaturists of the rapidly growing Magyar idiom.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE formation of different schools of literature was of great benefit to the growth and advance of Hungarian poetry and prose. Many a minor talent could and did, by clinging to and being supported by a "school," steady his work. After the lapse of some time, however, the exclusiveness of "schools" would have done great harm to the higher development of Hungarian Literature. By 1795 more than schools and literary guilds was needed. The nation wanted powerful individualities who were, so to speak, schools themselves. Fortunately for the cause of the Hungarian intellect, such men did arise in time. The first of them was Francis Verseghy (1757-1822). An ex-Piarist, and involved in the conspiracy of Martinovics: he had gone through the experiences of a priest, a politician and a state-prisoner. His poetical works, which are very numerous, manifest a tender, yet strong mind, much ease of form, and a power of

satire. He translated the *Marseillaise* into Hungarian. He is at his best in short poems. What raises him above most of his predecessors is his considerable independence as a poet. He clings slavishly to no school, and succeeds in combining some of the excellencies of all. In genius he was far excelled by tempestuous John Bacsányi (1763-1845), who espoused the cause of the French Revolution, did some work for Napoleon, and was in 1814 taken back to Austria, where he died an exile. He brought Ossian's poems to Hungary; and in his fierce poems all the fire of the revolutionary fever may be felt. Yet with all that he could reduce to fine proportions and to efficiency neither his life nor his work. In the melancholy and sweet poems of the ex-priest, Gabriel Dayka (1768-1796), the Hungarian Hölty, which have to the present day lost nothing of their Wordsworth like delicacy, we have the first instalment of those mournful *largos*, in which Hungarian Literature is as rich as is Hungarian music.

These three writers were as the forerunners of literary individualities of a much higher type. The first of them was Joseph Kármán (1769-1795). He too spent some time in Vienna, where then centred the political and social life of a large portion of Europe. Like so many more Hungarians, he burst into enthusiasm for his

country by staying and living amongst a foreign people who, in the nobler traits of character, were decidedly inferior to the Magyars, and who yet were considered to be their rulers. The people of Austria, and especially the Viennese, are utterly different from the Hungarians. Their love of the burlesque, of the grotesquely funny, of the clownish, stood out then, as it still largely does, in sharp contrast to the dignified gravity of the Magyars. To be considered as subject to people so very much less adapted for the functions of government than themselves, was at all times galling to the Hungarians; and perhaps never more so, than in the nineties of the last century, when a mighty wave of opposition to the Habsburgs was sweeping over Hungary. Kármán's was a most sensitive soul. He fully realized that to render Hungarian Literature more perfect and independent was first of all a great political deed. He keenly felt, that Hungary, unless emancipated intellectually, must fall a victim to the then immense ascendancy of Austria. Every good poem, every good novel, written by a Hungarian in the language of his country, was then of more service to Hungary than all the proceedings at the national assemblies. Kármán, despite his extreme youth, at once set to work. He proclaimed that Pesth ought to be the literary

centre of Hungary. He started a quarterly ("*Urania*"), and hastened to write his "*Memoirs of Fanny*" ("*Fanni hagyományai*"). The latter is a novel in the form of letters and leaves from a diary. Fanny, the heroine, loves with all the inconsiderate passion of a young girl, a young man, whom she is not allowed to marry. She dies of a broken heart in the arms of her lover. The plot of the novel is of the simplest. The excessive sentimentality of the heroine, who is, as it were, drowned in the floods of her own feelings, is to our present taste somewhat overdone. With all these shortcomings, however, Kármán has poured over his little story so much of the golden light of fine, unaffected style, and has enriched it with so many touches of the most effective descriptions of scenery, that "*Fanny*" will always rank among the foremost of the literary products of the kind, of which Goethe's "*Werther*" is the most famous.

The second great poet was Michael Vitéz Csokonai (1773-1805). Born at Debreczen, a town whose famous fairs brought together annually an immense concourse of the agricultural and trading people of Hungary, Csokonai was at an early age imbued with the riches of the gallery of types for which his country has always been so remarkable. Although at all periods of his

irregular and vagrant life Csokonai kept in close touch with books, Bürger amongst the Germans, Pope amongst the English, and Metastasio amongst the Italians, being his favourites; yet the real source of his surprising fertility of invention, and surety of draughtsmanship was laid in his constant contact with the people itself. His proud and independent character, the ruggedness of which was not rendered less objectionable by an independent fortune, drove him from post to post. As a roving poet he visited most of the counties, making friends everywhere, protectors and helpers nowhere; and when he finally returned to his old mother's house, his health was irretrievably shattered by poverty, privations and occasional excesses. He is a great poet. His language is full of savour and truly Magyar. He has abundant and merciful humour, without lacking wit. Frequently he soars to philosophical heights of thought, where, like the eagle, he broods alone. In his lyrical poetry there is much of the rhapsodic frenzy, which was to make Hungary's greatest poet, Petőfi, as unique in poetry, as Liszt is in music. Csokonai's most famous poem is a comic epic, somewhat in the style of the *Rape of the Lock*, called "*Dorottya*," or the *Triumph of the Ladies at the Carnival* (*A dámák diadalma a farsangon*"), in four parts. It narrates the

warfare of the ladies of a small town, under the leadership of an old maid (Dorottya), with the men of the same place. The women complain of the shortness of the carnival, of the rarity of weddings, etc., and attempt to steal the registers of births compromising to many of them. In the end, the women fall out amongst themselves, Venus steps in, rejuvenating Dorottya, and making peace by marrying the contending parties to each other. The tone of that comic epic is throughout one of genuine mirth, and the language forms a fit drapery of the fleeting scenes of this charming carnival. The types stand out with great plasticity, and in this respect at least, Csokonai's *Dorottya* need fear no comparison with Pope's masterpiece. The critics of his time did not recognize Csokonai's greatness; and his townsmen, nearly all of them rigid Calvinists, did not think much of a poet in whose stanzas wine flowed abundantly, and love was rampant in forms at times unrestrained. When, therefore, some years after the poet's death, admirers of his wanted to have his statue erected at Debreczen, and the words, "I too lived in Arcadia" engraved upon it, the good burghers of Debreczen violently opposed the suggestion. For, as if trying to give the departed poet exquisite material for another comic epic, they alleged, that by "Arcadia," was

meant, as they had learned, a country with good pasture, especially for donkeys; and since they solemnly protested against being considered donkeys, etc., etc. From this incident followed the so-called Arcadian lawsuit ("*arkádiai pör*").

CHAPTER XV.

In the literature of all civilized nations we meet with certain writers, whose great effect on their contemporaries was owing less to the absolute excellency of single works of theirs, than to the general tone and power of suggestion inherent in all their individuality. Such are, in England, Dr. Johnson and Thomas Carlyle; in France, Diderot and Renan; in Germany, Hamann and Herder. Without being creative geniuses, they influence their time as if they were such. One does so by the brilliancy of his talk, like Johnson; the other by pamphlets or essays *de omni re scibili*, like Herder; a third by boldly attempting to rear a new intellectual world in the place of the fabric of old literature and knowledge, like Diderot. The merit of such men is immense, yet relative. They deserve more highly of literary men, than of literature. They spread interest in or taste for good literature. They are critical, not constructive; and so decidedly preparatory and temporary is their work, that in the whole range of the world's

literature there has so far been one man, and one alone, whose genius shone equally in this preparatory or critical work, and in the still more precious work of positive creativeness too. That man was Lessing. In him the critical faculty did not seriously impair the creative; and he rendered immense services to German literature both by what he destroyed, by what he suggested and by what he created.

Hungarian Literature was fortunate enough to find one of those initiators and suggestive stimulators during the period of its great revival, in the person of Francis Kazinczy (1759-1831). His work has frequently been compared to that of Lessing. No greater injustice could be done to Kazinczy. To compare him to the author of "*Laokoon*," "*Emilia Galotti*," and "*Anti-Goetze*," is to render him much smaller than he really was. Without being a Lessing by far, he had a very considerable and beneficial influence on Hungarian writers, many of them greater than he. He was the son of a well-to-do gentleman of the county of Bihar, which has a population of both Magyars and Roumanians, and does not therefore belong to the counties where the purely Magyar spirit is permeating all the phases of life. To this circumstance, no less than to his education, must be ascribed Kazinczy's little sympathy with the strongly Magyar and nationalist aspirations of the

Debreczen school. His youth he spent chiefly in North Hungary, where the study of German literature was then rife in the better circles of society. Having acquired a competent knowledge of German, French and English, he poured forth, since 1791, numerous, most carefully composed translations from Shakespeare (*Hamlet*), Goethe, Molière, Klopstock, Herder, Lessing, etc. From 1794 to 1801 he was kept in various state prisons, for having been, as was alleged, implicated in the conspiracy of Martinovics. This terrible experience left no particular traces either on his mind or on his character. Subsequently, as previously, nay during his imprisonment, he was busy with the elaboration of essays, critical, historical, or novelistic, all of which had two distinct aims: first—to reform the Hungarian literary language, by the introduction of new words and especially new idioms; secondly, to reform Hungarian Literature by modelling it after the standard of Greek master-pieces. Both lines of reform were in the right direction. The Hungarian language was in Kazinczy's youth still far from developed. Its vocabulary was limited mostly to the designation of things material, and quite fallow for the production of terms expressing things abstract or æsthetic. It resembled a country in which there is abundant currency in the shape of small coin; it lacked gold coins and bank-notes of great value.